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Ajyal Film Festival

7—13 November 2021

Qatar has highest number of GSAS-certified green buildings

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

Qatar's sustainability drive and climate change adaptation efforts have started bearing fruit, with an increasing number of government and private bodies adopting sustainable practices and green building standards.

Following the trend in the government sector of designing green buildings, the country's private sector has also come forward with innovative sustainable building designs, cutting electricity and water consumption and reducing waste.

Qatar has 1,406 sustainability certified buildings, according to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. "Qatar has the highest number of buildings (1,406) with Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS), green building standards," the Ministry said in a tweet yesterday.

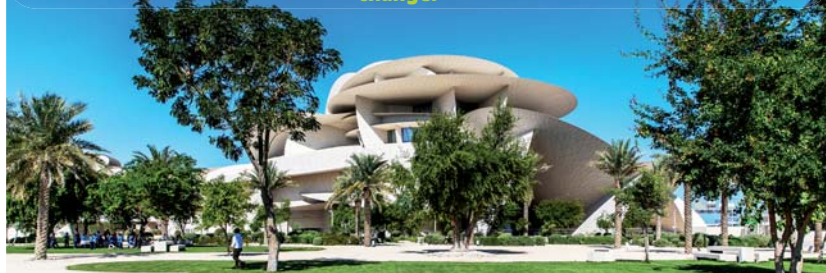
1,406

Buildings in the country with Global Sustainability Assessment System standards certification.

Qatar has undertaken several initiatives to ensure sustainability and address climate change.

25%

Qatar has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030.



GSAS under the Gulf Organization for Research and Development (GORD) green building rating system is awarded for the efficient operations

and maintenance of existing facilities. GSAS is the MENA region's first green building certification system that assesses and guides projects on

reducing their environmental footprint during design, construction, and operations stages.

Representing green building regulations within Qatar Construction Specifications, GSAS is aimed at improving the design, construction and operations of buildings while also identifying sustainability challenges specific to MENA's built environment.

Qatar has intensified efforts to ensure the sustainability and address climate change in many ways. Qatar and the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) signed recently a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of adaptation to climate change and green growth at the GGGI headquarters in Seoul, Republic of Korea. This is part of major efforts by the country which seeks to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 25% in a business-as-usual scenario by 2030, enhance ambient air quality

standards and update limit values by 2024 amongst other targets.

This is adapted by Qatar National Environment and Climate Change Strategy (QNE) which was released recently, charting the next chapter in the nation's environmental journey.

The strategy will also provide a framework to realise Qatar's 2030 ambitions while paving the way for long-term environmental management.

A new cross-ministerial taskforce, under the guidance and direction of Qatar's leaders, will be set up to lead and review QNE's implementation. This will be done together with the amendment of critical policies and regulations to support these changes. A dedicated budget will be set aside to drive implementation efforts, alongside investment into innovative technology, and capability and awareness building efforts.

➔P4

Tarsheed cuts per capita water, power consumption by 18%

SIDI MOHAMED
THE PENINSULA

The National Programme for Conservation and Energy Efficiency (Tarsheed), an initiative of Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa), has successfully raised long-term awareness of water and energy wastage across all sectors and reduced per capita consumption of electricity and water by around 18 percent.

Water demand has increased over the last ten years by an average of 10.6 percent annually. Qatar's water security goals depend on water conservation, effective water usage and water recycling.

The information was shared in Qatar National Climate Action Plan 2030 released recently by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.

Kahramaa President Eng. Essa bin Hilal Al Kuwari earlier said that in 2020, Tarsheed programme reduced



Kahramaa has successfully raised long-term awareness of water and energy conservation among the public as water demand has been rising by an average of 10.6 percent annually over the last ten years.

electricity consumption of 289 gigawatt hours (GWh), water consumption of 32 million cubic metres (m3) and natural gas consumption of 3,207 million cubic feet (MCF), representing a financial saving of QR300m.

Moreover, Qatar has also strengthened its national conservation laws, and passed laws to reduce domestic

consumption and encourage adoption of water and electricity-saving technologies. An example of this is the prohibition of use of desalinated potable water for cooling and instead requires the use of treated sewage effluent or seawater as substitutes.

It has implemented improved standards for domestic and industrial electrical and electronic equipment such as air conditioners, thereby reducing electricity consumption in buildings, and also promotes development and use of large-scale centralised district cooling, with a range of energy and infrastructural cost and consumption benefits.

The Doha North Sewage Treatment Plant is the largest wastewater treatment facility in the region, and the first to include a thermal drying plant. This process significantly reduces the amount of bio-solids sent to landfill and minimises drinking water waste.

➔P4



Qatar mission honours US Ambassador to UN

Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, H E Ambassador Sheikhha Alya Ahmed Saif Al Thani, hosted a dinner in honour of Ambassador of the US to the UN, H E Linda Thomas-Greenfield. Permanent Representatives of Lebanon, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Switzerland, Turkey and European Union to the United Nations also attended the event on Friday.

9th Ajyal Film Festival opens today

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

A celebration of new and independent voices in cinema from Qatar and around the world, the ninth Ajyal Film Festival — a stand-out event in the region — opens today to welcome the community with a wide range

of activities curated to deliver memorable film experiences.

The weeklong film and cultural showcase offers something for everyone, marking the return to an action-packed week of a wide range of in-person and online experiences, enabling film lovers from

around the world to explore compelling stories by outstanding filmmakers.

This year's theme 'Press Play!' encourages the community to return to the much-missed physical togetherness and celebratory moments at the 9th Ajyal.

➔P4

Qatari Diar launches, leases 26-storey towers 'The JACX' in NY

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatari Diar, a global leader in sustainable real estate, in partnership with fellow developer Tishman Speyer, officially launched The JACX project with an on-site opening event and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Qatari Diar announced the completion and leasing of all areas of The JACX project in Long Island, New York,



Chairman of Qatari Diar, Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa Al Thani; CEO of Qatari Diar, Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah; and Chief Executive Officer of Tishman Speyer, Rob Speyer, cutting the ribbon to launch The JACX project, in New York, USA.

USA, during the official opening of the project.

The project is one of the largest commercial projects in Long Island that was implemented in partnership with fellow developer Tishman Speyer, the prestigious American real estate company. The office tower is set to become one of the most influential commercial developments of Long-Island City. Qatari Diar Company owns

80% of the project. The opening ceremony was attended by Chairman of Qatari Diar, Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa Al Thani; CEO of Qatari Diar, Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah; Chief Executive Officer of Tishman Speyer, Rob Speyer; President of Long Island City Partnership, Elizabeth Lusskin; and representatives from the city of Long Island, a number of dignitaries, investors and representatives of the relevant authorities.

The JACX, which was delivered by Qatari Diar alongside Tishman Speyer, is a 1.2 million square feet creative office development featuring two 26-storey office towers, a one-acre podium elevated five-stories above street level that is landscaped to represent a tranquil City Park, and 50,000 square feet of retail space for commercial use. All spaces, whether office or commercial, have been fully leased.

This distinguished project was designed to meet the modern needs of new work environments, whether for entrepreneurs or large companies, which are considered long-term.

The tenants of the project included a number of large companies and prestigious establishments such as Bloomingdale's and WeWork, a leading

provider of office workspaces.

In addition to the New York-Presbyterian Hospital, the building also contains a variety of commercial and service activities such as restaurants, halls, dining and a fitness centre, in addition to a variety of stores, offices and different companies which will

provide economic recovery and development in Long Island for long and in the near future.

Chairman of Qatari Diar Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa Al Thani, said: "Qatari Diar is extremely proud to add The JACX to our growing US portfolio, alongside our projects in Washington DC.

➔P4

The 1.2 million square feet creative office development features two 26-storey office towers, a one-acre podium elevated five-stories above street level that is landscaped to represent a tranquil City Park, and 50,000 square feet of retail space for commercial use.

The project has created 952 jobs during its construction alone, and once fully occupied, an estimated 3,380 permanent roles will exist within the building. The economic benefit for the area is estimated at \$254.5m.



Qatari Diar Company owns 80% of the office tower project



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OFFICIAL NEWS

Amir condolences with Amir of Kuwait

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, and Prime Minister and Minister of Interior H E Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani sent yesterday cables of condolences to the Amir of the sisterly State of Kuwait H H Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah on the death of Sheikh Saud Abdul-lah Saud Al Malik Al Sabah. -QNA

MoEHE concludes virtual exhibition

QNA — DOHA

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), in cooperation with Qatar National Research Fund, has concluded the activities of the virtual exhibition of the National Science Research and Innovation Week, which was launched on November 1.

A total of 1,569 students from 184 public and private schools in various academic levels took part in the scientific research competition for the academic year 2020-21, and 810 research projects were submitted, of which 261 were qualified.

The National Science Research and Innovation Week is an annual national creative event that aims to celebrate scientific research, enhance and develop scientific and research skills among students and teachers, and instil a spirit of cooperation and competition, as well as providing the necessary support for them to achieve excellence and success, and providing the opportunity for distinguished research projects to participate in regional and international competitions.

The National Science Research and Innovation Week witnesses a growing increase in the number of participating schools and the number of attendees, and a development in the quality of research.



Cyprus President receives credentials of Qatar’s Ambassador

President of the Republic of Cyprus H E Nicos Anastasiades received yesterday the credentials of H E Ali Yousef Al Mulla as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Qatar to the Republic of Cyprus. The Ambassador conveyed greetings of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to President of the Republic of Cyprus. For his part, the President of Cyprus entrusted the Ambassador with his greetings to H H the Amir.

Qatar Tourism’s ‘Iconic Limousine Design’ contest closes with record submissions

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar Tourism and partner Mowasalat (Karwa) garnered an overwhelmingly positive public response to its “Iconic Limousine Design” competition.

With more than 450 designs, a Qatar Tourism committee will review and shortlist entries based on identified criteria. Due to the large number of submissions, this review period will now end on 22nd November, after which shortlisted designs will simultaneously be put to a public and jury vote, from 23rd-30th November.

Part of Qatar Tourism’s Service Excellence program, the Iconic Limousine Design contest features reflections on Qatar’s: culture and heritage, progressive future, or sustainability and eco-friendly vision. Shortlisted designs will be those that best meet the contest criteria. A jury panel will review the shortlisted designs, and select a design to adorn a new fleet of electric limousines for travellers and residents.

This process will occur at the same time as the public vote, whereby the design with the most votes will receive the “People’s Design Choice” award. The Iconic Limousine Design contest is part of Qatar Tourism’s Service Excellence program.

Through this, QT collaborates with sector stakeholders to ensure an unparalleled visitor experience across each touch-point of the journey.

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Qatari Diar launches, leases 26-storey towers ‘The JACX’ in NY

FROM PAGE 1

He said: “The building now joins some of the most celebrated and iconic landmarks to grace the New York skyline, and we’re delighted to be placed amongst them. It is the first project that Qatari Diar and Tishman Speyer have collaborated on together in the US, and we hope that the success of The JACX will provide a foundation for further projects in New York, wider US and across the world in years to come.”

CEO of Qatari Diar, Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, said Qatari Diar has sensed from the beginning a growing demand to develop a project like The JACX, which offers a significant addition in office and commercial space to the business community in Long Island.

This was clearly evident in the increased demand for the project, as all the offered spaces were leased during the initial launch of the project to a number of reputed companies and organisations such as Bloomingdale’s, WeWork, New York-Presbyterian Hospital, as well as a number of diverse restaurants, a fitness centre and retail stores.

Despite the pandemic that caused one of the largest waves of economic downturn in the United States, the project was able to maintain its attractiveness and increase the demand for it

during this period, he said.

“Now today, as we officially launch the development for the first time, we see the vision become a reality as The JACX continues to breathe new life into the community and beyond. It is great to see the wealth of benefits and opportunities that the project provides the neighbourhood come to life — ranging from new jobs through to medical facilities and retail services, and we’re extremely proud to have delivered such a transformative offering to the City. Thanks to this, the economic benefit for the area is estimated at \$254.5m — an impressive contribution that we are delighted to be behind. Moreover, the project has created 952 jobs during its construction alone, and once fully occupied, an estimated 3,380 permanent roles will exist within the building.”

He said that department store, Bloomingdales, will occupy a space at The JACX early next year, providing many of these job opportunities for the area, joining leading shared office space provider, WeWork.

“The tenancy of the New York Presbyterian Hospital is providing new and much-needed services to the neighbourhood, and the extensive amenity offering — including the food hall, fine dining restaurant, grocery



Qatari Diar Chariman Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa Al Thani speaking during the opening ceremony.

store and fitness centre, serves both tenants and the wider community.

“Qatari Diar’s sustainability vision is at the heart of their approach for The JACX and was also addressed at the ceremony,” said Al Attiyah.

“We are pleased to see the environmentally responsible design that The JACX boasts come to life in what will be home to thousands of innovators, creators, leaders and entrepreneurs. We are passionate about creating entirely new destinations that are

at the forefront of sustainability around the world, and we’re delighted to add The JACX to our repertoire through its credentials — including the park and numerous energy-saving designs throughout the building,” said Al Attiyah. Rob Speyer, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Tishman Speyer, said: “We are proud to have partnered with Qatari Diar, a global leader in sustainable real estate, to deliver a world-class creative office building that will have a lasting, positive impact on the

surrounding community. The JACX is an impressive addition to our global portfolios. Our shared success here will pave the way for collaborations in the future.”

President of the Long Island City Partnership and Executive Director of the Long Island City Business Improvement District, Elizabeth Lusskin, said, “It would be impossible to overstate the significance of this building — it is the culmination of decades of work to build New York City’s 4th Central Business District in Long Island City, a gorgeous addition to the skyline, home to a series of neighbourhood changing amenities, and presenter of a beautiful streetscape befitting this central crossroads. But it was not easy, and we commend Tishman Speyer and their partners — for having the vision, fortitude, and patience to pull this off. The thousands of employees The JACX will house, and the tens of thousands of workers and residents who are already enjoying it every day, are the fortunate beneficiaries.”

Qatari Diar and Tishman Speyer were joined at the ceremony by the Long Island City Partnership, who supported the economic vision for The JACX and wider Long-Island community. With this now a reality, The JACX is set to revitalise and reimagine Long-Island City both in the near future and in years to come.

MoPH reports 124 new virus cases, 87 more recoveries

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) reported 124 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, among them 25 were travellers returning from abroad.

Also 87 people recovered from COVID-19 yesterday, bringing the total number of people recovered in Qatar to 237,987.

As many as 1,501 COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered in last 24 hours, while 4854,499 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered since the start of the National COVID-19 Vaccination Program. Also 84.4 % of the total population is now fully vaccinated with two doses.

The Ministry also said that, in recent weeks the combined impact of COVID-19 restrictions and increasing vaccination rates, and the overwhelming support of the community, has resulted in a consistent reduction in the number of new daily infections in the country.

“However, it is still important to be cautious as the second wave is not yet over and there are still two highly contagious and highly virulent strains of the virus that are actively circulating in the community,” the ministry said.

Phase four of the gradual lifting of restrictions began on October 3 and is part of the four-phase plan to gradually lifting COVID-19 restrictions in Qatar.

“For now, it is important that people, including those who are vaccinated, continue to wear a mask as advised and maintain social distancing,” it added.

9th Ajyal Film Festival set to open today

FROM PAGE 1

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: “As the world slowly returns to a new normal, there are few places better equipped and prepared to restart, rejuvenate, and reignite a passion for the arts

than Qatar. The ninth Ajyal Film Festival returns to its original week-long run as we continue to present the Festival in an innovative hybrid format and expand the accessibility of all our programming to everyone in the community. Key to Ajyal are the life changing learning, friendships and unforgettable memories that film brings our youth and their families, as people from all walks of life come together to celebrate the joy of creativity.

“We admire the commitment and dedication of the filmmakers, who overcame the challenges of the pandemic to create extraordinary works of art. As we continue to experience unprecedented challenges, we are thankful for the commitment of our community to carry the spirit

of Ajyal forward and help us realise our vision for Ajyal 2021, as we celebrate the resilience and positive spirit of our nation.”

At Ajyal 2021, there is something for every film lover to explore — from intense dramas that present harsh human realities to inspiring adventures, much-loved classics, horror capers at midnight screenings, cine-concerts that will delight the little ones, and standout short films made by Qatari and international talents.

In addition to the festival home venue of Katara, the incredible Ajyal selection of internationally award-winning features and compelling short programmes films will also be screened at VOX Cinemas, Doha Festival City. Audiences across the city can participate in the diverse offerings, with the festival’s physical presence to include additional locations at Sikkat Wadi Msheireb and the drive-in cinema in Lusail.

Building on the continued success of the festival and its public programme, Ajyal’s strong reputation for curating award-winning international films is reflected in this year’s line-up of 85 films from 44

countries including 31 features and 54 shorts, which includes 22 incredible films by Arab filmmakers and 32 extraordinary women directors. Amplifying unique and compelling emerging and established cinematic voices, these spirited films address real-life issues from around the world to promote greater understanding and empathy.

Ajyal 2021’s opening film reflects this sentiment with A Hero (Ghahreman), directed by acclaimed two-time Oscar winning Iranian filmmaker and DFI collaborator Asghar Farhadi.

Among many recent international standout successes including the Grand Prix at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival, the film has garnered global awards and critical acclaim and is the official submission of Iran to the upcoming Academy Awards.

There are 13 films supported by the Doha Film Institute, including recipients of the Spring/Fall Grants, co-financing, Qatari Film Fund and mentorship through the year-round labs and development workshops.

The 2021 Made in Qatar programme presented by

Ooredoo, includes 10 films that represent the rise of our home-grown talent and storytellers. This year’s programme includes World Premieres as well as films presented to international audiences at leading film events in Locarno and Venice. A crowd-pleasing highlight of Ajyal 2020, DFI’s Drive-In cinema at Lusail in partnership with Qatar Toursim returns with a diverse lineup of family-friendly titles and midnight horror screenings to appeal to all members of the family.

The crowd-pleasing Ajyal Creativity Hub returns as the prime destination in Qatar for multisensory experiences. Hosted at Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, activities at the Hub include Geekdom, Qatar’s largest and one-of-a-kind pop-culture event; Ajyal Tunes, celebrating the country’s musical talents with three themed musical concerts and the multimedia Art Exhibit.

Curated by Sheikh Khalifa Al Thani, this year’s profoundly powerful Ajyal Art Exhibition, ‘We Will Not Leave’, presents the works of Qatari and Palestinian artists who highlight the harsh realities of the Palestinian people in solidarity.

Qatar has highest number of GSAS-certified green buildings

FROM PAGE 1

The launch of QNE is a landmark step to champion environmental growth and prosperity in Qatar. QNE will drive a new trajectory that not only accelerates tangible impact across specific environmental domains, but also installs a robust policy framework, strong governance, and solid capability infrastructure to safeguard Qatar’s environment for future generations.


The State of Qatar recently submitted its second report on the National Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nation, in which it pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030.

Tarsheed cuts per capita water, power consumption by 18%

FROM PAGE 1

From this plant, and others, Ashghal provides its customers with high-quality treated wastewater for non-potable uses, including cooling, landscape irrigation, fodder cultivation, road beautification and cleaning sand for construction, said the Qatar National Climate Action Plan 2030.

The National Development Strategy-2 prioritises efficient water management as a key adaptation measure. These measures include expanded use of treated sewage effluent and development of water management in industrial zones. In 2015, the volume of treated sewage effluent reached 98.2 percent of total wastewater.



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QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

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RFQ-363639	Supply of 50 Kg PP/PE for a period of 3 years with 2 Years Extension Option	500/- (non-refundable)	499,000/- (Four Hundred ninety-nine Thousand Only)	07.11.2021 08.11.2021 09.11.2021 10.11.2021 11.11.2021 14.11.2021 15.11.2021	16.12.2021

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS.

- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures are specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Tender Documents may be collected on the dates indicated above, against payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable) from the QAFCO Housing Section, relocated to Training Center Building (near Al Banush Club) at Mesaieed Residential Area, Tel. 44760093 / 44770330, as per Normal working hour: 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours
- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company’s following Account at any QNB branch:
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 - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA00000000013025828058**
 - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their companys’ name and Tender number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and produce it during tender collection as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender number and bidder’s name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also bring a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender, while collecting the Tender Document
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Housing Section, between 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 –1400 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the “Tender Closing Date”.


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Tender Invitation

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1	SUP/C/FMD/5345/21 E WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL	07/11/2021 to 22/11/2021	0	0	30/11/2021

Scope of Work:
To collect, transfer, treat, recycle and dispose of e-wastes. (Electronic Waste) from Qatargas Location on call basis.

Bid Validity: Bid should be valid for 180 days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
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‘Dominican Week’ to boost commercial, cultural ties with Qatar

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

In an initiative to enhance cultural and trade ties between Qatar and Dominican Republic, a ‘Dominican Week’ will be held in Doha.

From November 15 to 19 the week will also focus on promoting the Dominican Republic as a destination for investment, trade, tourism and culture, said Ambassador of Dominican Republic to Qatar, H E Georges Bahsa Hazim, during an event held at the Alwadi Doha – MGallery Hotel Collection.

“The relations between the two countries are as fruitful as possible, we continue exploring points of cooperation and strengthening commercial ties. Recently we have set a primary mission of our embassy to

promote more great work that has been done in both sides to expand our bilateral exchange,” said Hazim.

“We have countless unexploited opportunities of investment that the Qataris are already finding interesting, and due to the increased interest, we have assembled a whole week of promotion for investment and cultural expression - Dominican Week in Qatar,” he added.

A delegation of high ranking officials and representatives of private sector are also scheduled to participate in the Dominican Week in Qatar.

“We have planned several events including expert panels on how to do business in the Dominican Republic, cultural presentations, Dominican art exhibition of a renowned Dominican painter and a



Ambassador of Dominican Republic to Qatar Georges Bahsa Hazim speaking during the event. PIC: SALIM MATRAMKOT / THE PENINSULA

Dominican pop up restaurant,” said Hazim.

A two Michelin-star celebrity chef Maria Marte will be serving

her unique fusion cuisine to Alwadi Doha - MGallery Hotel Collection for three nights. The high-end pop-up venue will feature a specially curated nine-course menu of Dominican culinary delicacies.

Dominican Republic, known for its warm people, blue ocean waters, white sand beaches and rich culture is also expecting to attract more visitors from Qatar and the region.

Ambassador of Dominican Republic to Qatar Hazim anticipates that direct flight from Qatar to the Dominican Republic would begin next year as result of ongoing

From November 15 to 19 the week will also focus on promoting the Dominican Republic as a destination for investment, trade, tourism and culture, said Ambassador of Dominican Republic to Qatar, H E Georges Bahsa Hazim, during an event held at the Alwadi Doha – MGallery Hotel Collection.

discussions.

“We are always welcoming tourists to our beautiful tropical country and the opening of a direct flight from Qatar to the Dominican Republic will come to increase the number of visitors we will receive from Qatar and the region,” said Hazim.

Bilateral trade between Qatar and Dominican Republic is still growing and both countries are working to create the right platform for the two countries

expand the trade offer. At the moment the main imports from the Dominican Republic have been electrical products, instruments, and apparatus used in medical sciences.

“The sectors with greater potential and attractiveness for Qatar is energy, medical products, electronics, textiles, agribusiness especially fruits that are increasing their presence and acceptance in Qatar and many more,” said Hazim.



Participants during the ‘Pink Ride’ event in Lusail.

‘Pink Ride’ event raises breast cancer awareness

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) in cooperation with Qatar Cyclists Centre, organised the ‘Pink Ride’ event, which aims to spread awareness about breast cancer, as part of the ‘Blossom’ campaign.

The event was organised under the auspices of Mowasalat (Karwa) as an official sponsor and Floward Company as co-sponsor, which included a bicycle ride in Lusail, series of awareness lectures and workshops that would support the awareness campaign.

Huda Al Yafei, Director of Programs and Events Department at QCS, said, “It is beautiful to find this great support from all individuals and institutions operating in the country, which contributes

significantly to increasing the charity’s awareness and educational activities in the community, which raises awareness among citizens and residents of the disease.”

She thanked all supporting partners for their active contribution to spreading awareness of the disease through this campaign, wishing all parties in the country to join hands together to fight cancer, which is a social responsibility.

Fahad Saad Al Qahtani, CEO of Mowasalat, said, “For us, CSR is not limited to a particular programme. Our commitment to the community is reflected in what we say and do every day. Mowasalat commits to its responsibility and supports initiatives that directly, positively impact Qatar’s society. Health is one of the foundation pillars

of a happy people. We are glad that we can team up with the Qatar Cancer Society for its important initiative to educate women about breast cancer.”

Abdulaziz B. Al Loughani, CEO of Floward said, “At Floward we always work to offer our support to causes that matter to our communities, and health is at the core of these causes.

“Whenever we launch a campaign, we collaborate with entities who are specialists in the matter and offer our support in any way possible. That’s why we collaborate with QCS, the leading cancer charity in Qatar, to help them raise awareness about early detection. We want to thank them for all the work they do and for giving us the opportunity to support such an important cause.”

beIN Group media partner for Ajyal Film Festival

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

beIN Media Group, the global sports and entertainment media group, has been revealed as one of this year’s Media Partner for Doha Film Institute’s (DFI) Ajyal Film Festival 2021 that will run from today to November 13.

The festival, now in its 9th year, is designed to bring generations together through the magic of film and is an unmissable staple in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) film scene. Through this collaboration, beIN will broadcast live from the red carpet event at Katara Village, Qatar - direct from its specially-curated on-site studio, covering the opening red carpet ceremony (November 7, 17.30 MECCA) and the closing ceremony (November 13).

beIN’s coverage of the week-long festivities will be available in Arabic on both Jeem TV and beIN Drama. The duo, Presenter Marwa Khamis and Marianne Azzi, will be covering the event live throughout the week from the red carpet - interviewing the directors, attendees, and jurors, and bringing viewers all the

behind-the-scenes action.

There will also be a special appearance from Anbar, the much-loved Jeem puppet, live from his very own puppet booth, interacting with the younger audience.

beIN will also provide glimpses of the Ajyal Film Festival through daily snippets across its social media platforms, presented in English by beIN’s Nicky Crosby.

The Ajyal Film Festival features an incredible line-up of 85

collection represents a diverse array of content from across the Mena region and provides a powerful and much-needed platform for representation.

Commenting on the announcement, Mohammad Al Subaie, CEO of beIN Mena, said: “We’re delighted to be supporting the Ajyal Film Festival once again this year. Our ongoing partnership with DFI demonstrates not only our focus on bringing world-class content to our viewers, but also our commitment to promote stories from this culturally-rich region by the many young and talented filmmakers that exists across Mena.”

The opening film of this year’s festival, *A Hero*, by acclaimed two-time Academy Award winning filmmaker and DFI collaborator, Asghar Farhadi, received a five-minute standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival and also won the Grand Prize.



QDB

بنك قطر للتنمية

QATAR DEVELOPMENT BANK

INVITATION TO TENDER

44

Qatar Development Bank (QDB) hereby invites FACILITY SYSTEM SERVICE PROVIDER (FSSP) Contractors to participate in the following Tender:

Tender Ref.	Project Title	Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Tender Closing Date
RFQID_002239	Provision of Facility Management Services & Maintenance Services for Al Furjan Markets & Multi-Storey Carpark	Provision of Maintenance Services	QR. 1,500.00 (non-refundable)	QR. 250,000.00	06 th December, 2021 12:00 PM

- The Pre-Tender meeting to be held on **14th November 2021, 10:00 AM** Via Video Conference (Microsoft Teams), in the presence of QDB Representatives.
- The Tender Document for the above will be sent electronically through our **Procurement Department’s E-Procurement System** to Tenderer’s individual email address, after the submission of original bank receipt against payment of non-refundable Tender fees (as mentioned above) which should be paid to **Qatar National Bank (QNB), Account No. (0001-818570-003)** in the name of Qatar Development Bank. Bank receipt may be submitted on the same day of this advertisement until **11th November 2021 from 8:30 AM until 2:00 PM**.
- Tenderer shall submit the hard copy of the Original Tender Bond issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **150 days** from the Tender Closing Date or any issued extension.
- Technical & Commercial Tender Submission shall be submitted electronically through our **Procurement Department’s E-Procurement System**. Submission requirements are detailed in the Tender Document mentioned herein.
- All Tender Clarifications should be sent to email: eprocurement@qdb.qa not later than **17th November 2021**. Any Tender Clarifications after this date shall not be entertained.

For more information and inquiries, please call 44300154 or e-mail procurement_info@qdb.qa

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QRCS honours doctors, volunteers engaged in COVID-19 response

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has honoured the physicians and volunteers contributing to the COVID-19 response efforts.

As many as 150 participants made a cycling tour from Katara to Al Duhail Sport Club and then back on the same course, as a thank you message for those heroes at the forefront of the response.

Following the tour, an honouring ceremony was held, which was supported by several sponsors, including Katara Cultural Village, Al Duhail Sport Club, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Qatar Cycling Center, the General Directorate of Traffic, Baladna, Al Rawda Water Company, and Wooden Bakery.

The event was attended by Secretary-General of QRCS, Ali bin Hassan Al Hammadi, CEO of QRCS, Eng. Ibrahim Abdullah Al Malki, representatives of the partners, and over 50 organisers.

In his speech, Al Hammadi

As many as 150 participants made a cycling tour from Katara to Al Duhail Sport Club and then back on the same course, as a thank you message for those heroes at the forefront of the response.

said: “Notably, the doctors and volunteers engaged in the COVID-19 response showed extraordinary dedication and creativity in doing their job. They even undertook extra tasks to ensure the best outcomes, working as one team and one family.

“The coronavirus pandemic was an unprecedented global emergency that affected the life of everyone in all countries, leaving millions dead and livelihoods lost due to strict lockdown.”

In Qatar, he said, the biggest

challenge was to secure enough numbers of workforce such as physicians, nurses, paramedics, and well-trained volunteers to help the concerned government organisations and sectors.

“As an auxiliary to the State of Qatar in social and humanitarian fields, QRCS automatically converted into one of the public organisations concerned with responding to the pandemic. Under the Supreme Committee for Crisis Management, all QRCS’s resources were put at its direct disposal, including the medical professionals of Workers’ Health Centres and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as well as the male and female volunteers highly qualified in disaster response,” said Al Hammadi.

Eng. Al Malki said: “There is no room to elaborate on the achievements made by our doctors and volunteers throughout the emergency, but their heroic attitude at the hardest times is unforgettable. They faced fear with utmost courage and determination, being always there where needed. They stayed out of



Secretary General of QRCS, Ali bin Hassan Al Hammadi with participants during the honouring ceremony.

home for many months, with the sole mission of serving and protecting the people of Qatar.”

“Just a few highlights to demonstrate their impressive work: medical services were

provided by 641 physicians, first responders, nurses, technicians, health educators, and trainers. The Volunteer for Qatar campaign saw a wide public response, recruiting over

17,000 young women and men from all walks of life, inspired by a desire to extend help for those who needed care and psychological support,” said Eng. Al Malki.



Students and teachers during the celebration of Kerala ‘Piravi’ Day at Loyola International School.

Loyola International School celebrates Kerala Pairavi Day

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Malayalam Department at Loyola International School (LIS) has celebrated Kerala ‘Piravi’ with zeal and enthusiasm.

Piravi in Malayalam means birth. November 1, 2021 marks the 65th formation day of Kerala, one of the states of India.

Students and teachers came dressed in the traditional attire of Kerala setting the mood for the activities and the day ahead.

The department brought Kerala into a room with the charts and pictures of Kerala Piravi celebrations, floral decorations, balloons, charts and various other decorations in the presence of honourable guests, LIS Director Sarath Koduru; LIS

Coordinators, Biby Mytheen and Shazia.

The programme kicked off with a warm welcome speech from Head of the Department of Malayalam, Geetha Suryan, followed by melodious welcome song by Grade 3 students.

The programme paved the way to remember and honour their mother tongue and mother land. Meghana enlightened the mass about the importance of the day. Students of the school celebrated and exhibited their joy through dances, storytelling, folk song, group dance, group song, poems and quiz. Gayathri concluded the celebrations with a vote of thanks.

The cultural fiesta was all in the air in the campus the whole day.

WISH showcases role of nurses at ICN 2021 Congress

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The World Innovation Summit for Health, Qatar Foundation’s global health initiative, has continued to promote the role of nurses as leaders in addressing some of the world’s biggest healthcare challenges through its hosting and participation in the International Council of Nurses (ICN) 2021 Congress.

Held bi-annually, the ICN Congress brings together nurses from around the world to share best practice, research and knowledge. This year’s theme was “Nursing Around the World”, and participants showcased their innovations and expertise in areas such as the future of healthcare and digital health and innovation through a range of live events and sessions.

In recent years WISH, through its research and global initiatives, has worked to empower nurses to take positive action, and identify where investments need to be made to develop effective nursing leaders who can drive change.

At ICN 2021, the “Nurses for Health Equity” session hosted by WISH focused on a recent WISH report of the same name. The report looks at how COVID-19 has played a pivotal part in highlighting the importance of nurses and their role in providing high-quality

healthcare as well as making expert contributions across policy, education, and research domains.

In alignment with the vision of ICN and the values of the World Health Organization (WHO), WISH continues to highlight the need for empowering nurses and investment in nurses and nursing, in order to strategically address the social determinants of health and move towards health equity in both health systems and communities. The session provided guidelines across several key areas, including education and training, working with individuals and communities, and the role of healthcare organizations as employers, managers and commissioners, among others.

Those participating in the session were Dr. Billy Rosa,

Chief Research Fellow at the Department of Psychiatry in Behavioral Sciences at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, Howard Catton, CEO of the ICN, and Ariani Pertiwi, Secretary of the Undergraduate Nursing Programme at the Faculty of Medicine, Public Health and Nursing at the University of Gadjah Mada in Indonesia.

Commenting on how nurses can be encouraged to push for health equity, Dr. Rosa, who is also one of the authors of the report, said: “Nurses are already empowered as advocates. What we have to do is support them in realising the potential that they have. What makes an effective advocate is somebody who can use science and patient stories to be memorable, and to make an impact towards policy change. Nurses have the

opportunity and the ability to lean into the evidence to make sure they are bringing the data forward for evidence-based changes.”

The second session that WISH hosted at the event was titled, “Nursing-led Research: A Call to Action”, and examined the role of nurses in leading research, including the challenges they face, emerging opportunities, and the way forward.

Those participating in the session were Dr. Deborah White, Dean and Professor at University of Calgary in Qatar, Professor Rowaida Al Maaitah, Professor at the Faculty of Nursing at Jordan University of Science and Technology, Professor Lisa Bayliss-Pratt, Pro-Vice Chancellor at Coventry University and Programme Director for the Nursing Now Challenge, and Jeannine Blake, Intensive Care Nurse and PHD Candidate at University of Massachusetts Amherst.

WISH CEO, Sultana Afdhal, joined the session to announce two new nursing-led research grants which are funded by WISH and open to entries from around the world. The grants will be awarded to projects that address themes including sustainability, disability, and health in a post-COVID world, and one will be dedicated to a research project that is conducted in Arabic.”



Participants during Nurses for Health Equity Session.

HBKU co-hosts 8th Arab-American Frontiers of Science, Engineering and Medicine Symposium

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) co-hosted the eighth Arab-American Frontiers of Science, Engineering, and Medicine Symposium online from November 1-4.

In his opening speech, Dr. Ahmad M. Hasnah, HBKU President, highlighted the importance of the Arab-American Frontiers programme, which is celebrating 10 years, and how it contributes to HBKU’s own mission to develop national research capabilities that drive collaboration with the world’s best institutions. “We believe that promoting science among the young generation is key for the

development of Qatar, the Arab region, and the world at large. I urge you all to build as many bridges as you can with other scientists from the Arab region. Take this opportunity to collaborate, speak, and debate different ways that we could work together, as the result depends on your ability to build those bridges,” he said.

QNRf’s Dr. Munir Tag, Senior ICT Programme Manager, highlighted that QNRf funded collaborative projects with the US in all areas of science and technology, including energy, health, sustainable development, society and digital technology, which yielded high quality results.

“We look forward to transforming the outcomes of these projects into business

opportunities and deeper impact for societal and economic benefits,” he said. He also renewed QNRf’s commitment to engaging with its partners and to further developing these projects’ research outcomes; advancing cutting-edge research and innovation in science, engineering, and medicine; and fostering closer ties between Arab and American researchers, which were initiated through QNRf funding programmes.

The 2021 symposium featured more than 20 speakers and 64 poster presenters. Five sessions focused on research in the fields of advanced materials; e-health; water, food, and energy; emerging technologies and society as well as cybersecurity.



Students and officials attending the workshop.

Qatar University organises workshop on viral genomics, bioinformatics

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar University (QU) Biomedical Research Center (BRC) organised a workshop on “Viral Genomics and Bioinformatics”.

The workshop, which was held from October 31 to November 4, was organised by Dr. Hebah AlKhatib from Qatar University, with the support of Qatar Genome Programme, and the sponsorship of Qatar Scientific Company. The training consisted of a series

of lectures and hand-on sessions, to provide the participants with basic knowledge on viral genome sequencing and data analysis.

Participants learnt to analyse large sequencing datasets using graphical user interface (GUI) programmes as well as command-line tools.

In addition to gaining knowledge and skills, the workshop aims to provide an environment for exchanging ideas and developing future collaborative projects between

different stakeholders interested in virology research in Qatar. The trainees represented different institutions and stakeholders in Qatar.

The continuous emergence of new viruses such as the recent SARS-CoV-2, along with the ongoing evolution of new viral strains, raises the alarm about the importance of preparedness planning, and building knowledge to ensure effective responses to emerging infectious diseases.

Bhavans Public School students shine in chess tournament

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

An Inter-School Chess Tournament for Indian Schools was conducted by Noble International School in association with Indian Sports Centre.

Students of Bhavans Public School won the overall championship in the tournament among 17 CBSE schools in Qatar. From Bhavans Public School, under 17 years category, Alan Byju secured the first prize, under 14 years,



Aman Anupama Sumith

Alan Byju

Jayaditya Gantayet

Aman Anupama Smith got first prize and Jayaditya Gantayet received the second prize. Bhavans Public School was

declared the overall champion of the tournament by securing maximum points in the tournament.

HMC's Nursing and Midwifery Department completes Intern Development pilot programme

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Hamad Medical Corporation's (HMC) Nursing and Midwifery Strategy 2019–2022 supports the modernisation of the nursing and midwifery practice, which includes the implementation of new ways of working, new roles and new ways of delivering education and training, according to international best practice.

An importance milestone of this strategy has been the successful completion of the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)/Clinical Midwife Specialist (CMS) Intern Development pilot programme.

Oncology has been one of the first areas to incorporate and benefit from specialist nurses in developing and delivering specialised nursing services. Eleven Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) interns recently celebrated the successful completion of this educational programme, which is designed to build and enhance the advanced clinical practice role for nursing and midwifery.

The programme aims to support the professional growth of the nurses and midwives and promote CNS/CMS integration within the interprofessional teams through a series of outcome-focused, experiential learning activities. The National Center for Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) clinical leadership is committed to incorporating advanced nursing practices.

Mariam Al Mutawa, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer and



Participants, mentors and faculty of the Intern Development pilot programme.



Mariam Al Mutawa

Executive Director of Nursing (EDoN) at Rumailah Hospital, explained the importance of the CNS/CMS intern role. "We wanted to develop an opportunity for our aspiring nurses and midwives to accrue valuable experience in actual clinical situations with the mentoring and support of the experienced staff who are committed to promoting advanced nursing and midwifery practices at HMC.

This CNS/CMS pilot

programme has helped our nursing and midwifery education team to test out the education program they have developed and have the certainty that it is suitable for HMC and the patients we serve in Qatar."

The programme, which ran from June to September 2021, concluded with a Recognition Day on October 18, held at Itqan Clinical Simulation and Innovation Center to mark the accomplishments of all participants, including interns, mentors and faculty. Interns were awarded 39 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours in recognition of having fulfilled all the educational requirements of the programme.

The programme was developed by the Nursing and Midwifery Education Department (NMED) in partnership with Al Anoud AlMarri, A/EDoN and Credentialing Manager for Corporate Nursing and Midwifery Workforce and

Wellbeing. Additional expertise and special collaboration came from the Mental Health Service (MHS), the National Center for Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) and the Advanced Practice Nursing Network.

To support educational quality assurance and continuous improvement, feedback was gathered from the interns following completion of the pilot program. Jacqueline Sullivan, Acting Assistant Executive Director of Nursing shared insights about the positive program feedback: "Our teams made every effort to ensure that our intern programme was developed in accordance with the highest international best practice to ensure that participants who completed the education program can work competently and effectively in autonomous practices as well as alongside physician colleagues. We are delighted that 100% of the interns said they would highly recommend this programme to other CNS/CMS interns within HMC."

Ooredoo supports local arts and culture

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Ooredoo has announced its role as strategic sponsor for the ninth edition of the Ajyal Film Festival 2021, as well as an official sponsor of the 'Made In Qatar' programme at the Festival.

Ajyal Film Festival, Doha Film Institute's annual signature event, is an annual celebration of cinema for people across generations. Over the past eight years, Ajyal has inspired audiences to be entertained by film, but also to better understand its powerful potential as a tool for positive social change. This year's Festival will take place from November 7 to 13, 2021.

Screenings and events at the Festival provoke creative interaction, stimulate cinematic dialogue and inspire communities to take active interest in the film industry, and showcase emerging talent and important voices from Qatar and beyond.

The 'Made In Qatar' programme, presented by Ooredoo, is a captivating selection of documentaries, short form narratives and animations that highlight emerging and established talents who call Qatar home by showcasing their work on the local, regional and international stage.

Continuing to keep the health and safety of the audiences as a top priority, the 2021 event will be held in a hybrid format of both in-person and online activations. This year's festival theme, "Press Play" encourages all of us to move forward out of pause mode and rekindle our passion for play, exploration, and discovery through shared cultural experiences

Speaking about the sponsorship, Sabah Rabiah Al Kuwari, Director PR at Ooredoo, said: "Our corporate social responsibility strategy includes a firm focus on supporting our local community, and on promoting arts and culture initiatives within the community. Sponsorship of this event is the ideal opportunity for us to demonstrate these commitments, and further, enables us to help shine the spotlight on Qatar as a hub of arts and culture within the region. We're delighted to support the Ajyal Film Festival again, and look forward to seeing what's on offer at this year's event."

On Ooredoo's continued support for the Ajyal Film Festival, Fatma Al Ghanim, Director of Marketing and Communications at Doha Film Institute, said: "Ajyal 2021 reflects our deepened understanding of the world and our greater appreciation, now more than ever, of the importance of communities coming together for creative expression and exchange.

"Over the past eight years, Ajyal has had a distinctive impact on the progress of our country — and of our homegrown film industry. A source of national pride, the festival unites people across borders and shines a spotlight on new cinematic voices. We are thankful to the team at Ooredoo for sharing in our mission and being an important part of our journey to empower local talent and amplify their voices.

DFC unveils new clothes collection via Fashion Festival

JOELYN BALUYUT
THE PENINSULA

Doha Festival City (DFC) unveiled on Friday its 'Fashion Festival', featuring 23 brands.

Talking to *The Peninsula*, DFC Marketing Manager Hisham Elzubeir said the festival highlights the amazing choice DFC has to offer.

"DFC has 435 retailers, which is the largest collection in Qatar, and so to highlight that choice by having different kinds of brands and bringing them all together — whether it's make-up, hair, fashion, catering — to come together in unison in such an amazing event is a great opportunity and a great thing to have," he said.

As the government relaxes domestic COVID-19 restrictions, holding such an event is "exciting", as Elzubeir narrated.

The Fashion Festival will continue on weekends through November.

He added that conducting the festival compared to the previous years is different. There are only 40 VIP seats and the extra seats are on first come, first served basis.

The Fashion Festival will be broadcast via YouTube and a recap video will likewise be posted on Facebook and Instagram.

Moreover, compared to the previous year, the conduct of the festival showed a boost on the sales performance among its retailers. Elzubeir said, "Some brand items were sold out on the same day the fashion show was conducted. This kind of show has a very positive impact to our business



retailers." The festival will run on weekends for the whole

month of November and will feature a broad selection of



Children participate in the 'Fashion Festival' at Doha Festival City.

bridal wear, evening wear, sports wear and casual wear.

The Friday show highlighted the collection from Monsoon Apparel; Salam Kido, a kids premium fashion brands; and Mothercare, the premier global retailer in the mother, baby and children's market.

On Saturday, it featured

United Kingdom brands such as the online fashion retailer Boohoo, Debenhams, and George W Davis.

On November 11, it will showcase sports brands including NBA, Go Sport, and Fila. On November 12, it will present fast fashion brands including LC Waikiki, MAX, and Napapijri; and on November 13, it will show American Eagle, Armani Exchange, and Scotch & Soda. Meanwhile, on the third week, it will highlight brands from By Nour Couture, Verona, and Fouad Sarkis.

On November 19, it will present Hera, List Roma, and Ciragan Dantel. The show will conclude on November 20 with the latest collections of high-end fashion retailer Harvey Nichols, shedding light on its exclusive women's and men's collections through three dedicated fashion shows.

VCUarts Qatar symposium to focus on environment in Islamic art

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) — a Qatar Foundation partner university — has announced that the 9th biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art will be held online from November 8 to 15 and will focus on 'The Environment and Ecology in Islamic Art and Culture'.

Presentations are scheduled for the evening, allowing for greater engagement with the global audience, especially those in the region.

The symposium, which takes place every two years, addresses the histories of environmentally-oriented visual cultures that traverse geological time, from early settlements across core Islamic lands to the broader Muslim diaspora that characterises the present.

The theme should resonate with academicians and the wider community alike, as the effects of climate change and global warming have been recurring topics of debate and discussion in boardrooms, through international meets, and all the way to school debates.

Given the universal relevance of the theme, the 2021 event saw organisers Radha Dalal, Interim

The biennial symposium addresses the histories of environmentally-oriented visual cultures that traverse geological time, from early settlements across core Islamic lands to the broader Muslim diaspora that characterises the present.

Director of Art History and Associate Professor of Islamic Art, VCUarts Qatar; Jochen Sokoly, Associate Professor of Islamic Art, VCUarts Qatar; and Sean Roberts, Lecturer in Early Modern Art, University of Tennessee, modifying the open invitation process employed in 2019, to include voices from outside the field.

"We opted for a blended approach in both inviting specialists to initiate the discussions and seeking proposals from the wider community of academics, artists, curators, and activists to further the discourse," Dalal said.

"The response to the call for proposals was overwhelming with competitive submissions from nearly every part of the globe. So much so that selecting the most relevant

papers from this high-quality pool was in itself a challenge. A total of 17 speakers will discuss, debate, and explore several outstanding topics ranging in diversity from Umayyad rural landscapes to eco-mosques in contemporary Tanzania."

The exciting line-up will see the opening address delivered by Nasser Rabbat on The Quest for Thermal Delight. A renowned educator and architect, Rabbat is the Aga Khan Professor and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Other presentations include D. Fairchild Ruggles' Cultivars and Calamities in Al-Andalus: On Nature and Human Will; Amanda Boetzkes' Behind the Sun: The Theater of Oil Expenditure; T. J. Demos' Climate Justice Now! Art and Environment in the Middle East; Farid Esmail's Context as 'Form' Generator; Anna M. Gades' Muslim Arts and Material Ethics; and Rebecca Zorach's "A luminous golden spirit owns us": Legal Sculpting and the Rights of Nature.

Additionally, the Symposium will feature panel discussions that explore the intersections between art and ecology within a historical framework, and in the context of today's climate emergency.

Engineers Australia Qatar Chapter to celebrate 6th anniversary on Nov 14

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Engineers Australia Qatar Chapter will celebrate its 6th anniversary on November 14, 2021, in Doha.

Engineers Australia is the trusted voice of the profession and is the global home for engineering professionals renowned as leaders in shaping a sustainable world.

With around 100,000 individual members spread over 120 countries, Engineers Australia is the profession's peak body being the voice of the profession to advance the science and practice of engineering for the benefit of the community.

Founded in 1919 as the Institution of Engineers Australia, its work has underpinned the progress of the nation for more than a century and continues to shape the future of creating healthy, just, prosperous, secure and sustainable communities. Engineers Australia provides its members with a foundation of history, governance and commitment. From this foundation we build benefits for the profession and its practitioners. We serve engineers, and Australia, with absolute dedication to industry, infrastructure and individual needs.

It also works towards recognition of individual and engineering outcomes

With around 100,000 individual members spread over 120 countries, Engineers Australia is the profession's peak body.

through its Chartered members, an array of awards, assessment of competence, accreditation of engineering courses, and support to professionals who wish to immigrate to Australia and make Australia home.

Engineers Australia keeping an eye on Qatar's dynamic economy, opened its Qatar Chapter in 2015 and has been operating in Qatar since then. Every Year Engineers Australia Qatar Chapter celebrates its anniversary with Australian Ambassador and other dignitaries attending the event.

This year's event will be organised on November 14, 2021, at 6:30pm onwards at Al Wajba Ballroom at Intercontinental Hotel, West Bay, Doha.

This is a great networking opportunity for those who aspire to become members of Engineers Australia or wish to immigrate to Australia.

It is not mandatory to be Australian to become a member. Those who wish to register for the event can do so by visiting www.engineersaustralia.org.

EDITORIAL

Al Sadd will retain its status

XAVI Hernandez became the face of Al Sadd since he joined the club in 2015 as a player. The Barcelona legend bagged many trophies with Qatar's football giants as a captain before guiding them to titles as a manager.

The Spaniard is no more associated with the reigning Amir Cup and the QNB Stars League (QSL) champions as he takes over as manager of FC Barcelona, where he played for 17 years, making 767 appearances and winning 25 trophies, including four Champions League wins and eight league titles.

Barcelona in the post-Lionel Messi era have been struggling and are ninth in La Liga after winning only four of their opening 11 games, leaving them nine points adrift of leaders Real Sociedad. After the sacking of manager Ronald Koeman last month, the Barcelona management was desperate to bring back Xavi at Camp Nou as a manager.

Initially, Al Sadd were reluctant to let Xavi go because Qatar's football season is in crucial stage but later agreed to Barca's request after the Spanish legend showed keen interest in returning to his home club.

Al Sadd, after Xavi's release clause was met, announced on Friday that the Spaniard is free to leave the Qatari club following six years of brilliance.

The matter was resolved amicably with Al Sadd wishing good luck to the legend. Al Sadd CEO Turki Al Ali said: "Xavi is an important part of Al Sadd's history and we wish him success. Xavi and his family will remain welcome in Doha, and our relationship will continue." The 41-year-old is expected to be officially unveiled as Barcelona manager at the Camp Nou on Monday.

Xavi, who took over as Al Sadd manager in 2019, mentored 'The Wolves' to seven titles including back-to-back Amir Cup crowns. Al Sadd particularly have been phenomenal in recent times as they are unbeaten in the last 36 QSL games. They also seemed to have mastered the famous tiki-taka style under him.

Al Sadd will miss the Spaniard after his service as player and as a coach but the club that has a rich history of winning trophies will definitely overcome absence of one of the great names in modern football.

'The Wolves' are the most formidable side among Qatar's football clubs and are leading the current QSL season by three points.

There is a break in the QSL and Al Sadd is expected to find Xavi's replacement during this time. Fans are confident that the record 18-time Amir Cup champions will maintain their fine form and continue winning the major trophies in the post-Xavi era.

The Peninsula Local focus, Global vision

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Jordan to harmonise strategies confronting effects of climate change

QNA

Jordan is one of the first countries in the region to realize, from an early stage, the importance of climate change and the necessity of planning at the national and sectoral levels to confront the negative effects of climate change.

Jordan sought to develop a national plan to adapt to climate change and improve infrastructure to confront potential negative effects.

Jordan is keen to have a strong presence in the regional and international scenes in efforts to combat climate change, as an example of this is the file of development projects and environmental investments, which was present during the meetings and discussions of King Abdullah II of Jordan during his recent visit to the United States, in addition to his meetings with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the announcement of a new agreement between Jordan and the World Bank coupled with improving the investment in climate and stimulating the growth of the economy responsive to climate change.

According to the Jordanian Ministry of Environment, Jordan submitted the first national communications report and signed the United Nations Framework Convention in 1998. Jordan is considered the first developing country to play this role. It also carried out an assessment study entitled "Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change." The project to build an experimental biogas facility to generate electricity and reduce methane emissions was implemented in 2000, and in 2001, the National Climate Change Committee was established to follow up on

AI Khashashneh stated that his country had signed a document in which it committed itself to reducing gas emissions by 16 percent, which was updated two weeks ago to double the commitment to the reduction.



Oval Forum and long colonnaded street or cardo ancient Greco-Roman city Gerasa. Modern Jerash on background.

climate change issues in Jordan, and in 2003, Jordan began work efforts in the field of clean development mechanism.

The Ministry of Environment is the concerned body to follow up on the Clean Development Mechanism in Jordan. It also has a key role in identifying and approving the projects of the Clean Development Mechanism. Also, Jordan has started a project for self-assessment of national capacities for global environmental management, for market readiness, which aims to support and assist countries in identifying appropriate market instruments to scale up mitigation efforts in line with climate change mitigation and development goals.

Jordan has also ratified a number of international agreements including the Framework Convention on Climate Change. This agreement is an umbrella for global climate action and aims to strengthen the global response to the threat posed by climate change in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication efforts.

In exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the Secretary-General of the Jordanian Ministry of Environment Dr. Mohammed Al Khashashneh, confirmed that the Jordanian government has committed to developing the exploitation of renewable energy in the National Energy Sector Strategy (2007–2020) and the updated strategy (2015–2025) by reaching 15 percent of electricity generated from renewable energy sources by the end of 2025.

He explained that this plan aims to expand the use of renewable energy with a contribution rate of 35 percent before the end of 2023, which

is equivalent to 2.2 gigawatts and may reach 3.2 gigawatts.

Al Khashashneh added that this, in turn, will be reflected in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which will help achieve the targeted indicators of Jordan's commitments towards climate change and international agreements in this regard.

He added that this plan targets a set of axes, including direct proposals for large and central projects, which are implemented according to the direct bid system, renewable energy systems in transit and small ones supported by the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Fund, in addition to projects funded by donors and private sector projects in various economic sectors. The plan also includes the main indicators to follow up the implementation on the ground and follow up the development of policies aimed at encouraging investment in renewable energy projects, as well as the need to develop electrical networks for transmission and distribution, and to spread awareness and knowledge of the importance and how to benefit from renewable energy projects.

Al Khashashneh confirmed that the renewable sector witnessed a major boom after 2015 through the implementation of major wind and solar projects, and in 2018, the share of installed capacities of renewable energy increased to about 18 percent, with more than 1,100 megawatts, including 826 megawatts of Solar energy, 284 megawatts of wind energy, 12 megawatts of hydro and 3.5 megawatts of biogas.

He explained that Jordan is committed to cooperating with other countries, at the regional and international levels, to achieve the

nationally determined contributions, and to take strong climate measures that raise the level of ambition in order to maintain the average global temperature within 1.5 degrees Celsius, in addition to its commitment, at a high political level, to support the implementation of projects such as energy , agriculture, water, tourism, transportation, and waste management, but they need the support of donors and international agencies.

In this regard, Al Khashashneh stated that his country had signed a document in which it committed itself to reducing gas emissions by 16 percent, which was updated two weeks ago to double the commitment to the reduction.

Al Khashashneh indicated that it is possible to remove carbon from the energy mix, in parallel with providing a reliable supply of electricity in 2018, explaining that the supply of electricity that was generated from solar photovoltaic and wind energy contributed to avoiding the release of about 1.5 million tons of carbon emissions.

He indicated that there are plans and strategies that have been developed aimed at reducing the use of traditional means of transportation to reduce gas emissions and switching to electric transportation, noting that 15 percent of cars in Jordan are hybrid and electric, and Jordan aims to reach 50 percent within the next 10 years.

To conclude his statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Al Khashashneh indicated that climate action in Jordan has become a priority in various sectors, but Jordan still lack the international financial aid stipulated in Paris Agreement.

Blacklisting this Israeli spyware firm is only a first step

THE WASHINGTON POST

The Israeli spyware firm NSO Group has made a habit of brushing off bad news stories, about authoritarian regimes' use of its product to snoop on dissidents by simply denying its involvement. The company cannot, however, write off the latest headline: The United States has added NSO to a blacklist prohibiting it from receiving U.S. technologies after finding its tools have indeed helped foreign governments "maliciously target" officials, activists, academics and journalists.

The move on Wednesday was a step major and modest at the same time. The practical, legal implications are relatively straightforward:

NSO Group and the other three entities included in the designation effectively can no longer do business with any U.S. firm, which could prove challenging since products and services from Amazon, Microsoft, Dell and other U.S. companies have been essential to NSO in disseminating its spyware. That spyware exploits system vulnerabilities to gain access to users' accounts and devices. The reputational effect may be even more significant, a potential deterrent to customers and investors alike. NSO had hoped to make an initial public offering at a multibillion-dollar valuation.

Now what about the rest of this sprawling and shadowy industry? Spyware

has proved a threat to civil society around the globe. The de facto shunning of a particularly skilled purveyor is progress, but what's really needed are hard and fast rules to check the proliferation of a technology ostensibly designed to catch criminals but all too commonly exploited to quash opposition. These rules are essential not only here but in all nations with a stated commitment to democracy. Ideally, governments would pledge not to procure spyware from any company or country that doesn't do due diligence on its clients. They would also create export-control regimes mandating independent, public, human rights assessments for the development

and sale of these tools, including investigations into the rule of law in the end user's country. NSO Group has adopted a human rights policy, but the enforcement mechanism has been little more than "trust us."

President Joe Biden's administration showed with this week's decision that it is prepared to confront the spyware hazard. But a global challenge needs a global response. Perhaps beginning in the upcoming Summit for Democracy, the United States must lead the way to that answer - ensuring that companies no longer can get away with selling a dangerous product merely by refusing to acknowledge that the danger exists.

Quote of the day

If a multi-ethnic Bosnia is pushed towards disintegration, that will inevitably have an impact on other unresolved conflicts in the Western Balkans such as that between Serbia and Kosovo.

Christian Schmidt, Bosnia's Peace Envoy



Oil tanker explodes in Sierra Leone, killing at least 92

AP — FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

An oil tanker exploded near Sierra Leone's capital, killing at least 92 people and severely injuring dozens of others after large crowds gathered to collect leaking fuel, officials and witnesses said yesterday.

The explosion took place late Friday after a bus struck the tanker in Wellington, a suburb just to the east of Freetown.

The mortuary at Con-naught Hospital reported 92 bodies had been brought in by yesterday morning. About 30 severely burned victims were not expected to survive, according to Foday Musa, a staff member in the intensive

It was not immediately known how many people were undergoing treatment for burns because patients were taken to hospitals and clinics across the metropolitan area.

care unit. Injured people whose clothes had burned off in the fire that followed the explosion lay naked on stretchers as nurses attended to them yesterday. Hundreds of people milled outside the main gates of the mortuary and near the hospital's main entrance, waiting for word of their loved ones.

It was not immediately known how many people were undergoing treatment for burns because patients

were taken to hospitals and clinics across the metropolitan area.

Video obtained by *The Associated Press* of the explosion's aftermath showed a giant fireball burning in the night sky as some survivors with severe burns cried out in pain. Charred remains of the victims lay strewn at the scene awaiting transport to mortuaries.

President Julius Maada Bio, who was in Scotland

attending the United Nations climate talks yesterday, deplored the "horrendous loss of life."

"My profound sympathies with families who have lost loved ones and those who have been maimed as a result," he tweeted.

Vice-President Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh visited two hospitals overnight and said Sierra Leone's National Disaster Management Agency and others would "work tirelessly" in the wake of the emergency.

"We are all deeply saddened by this national tragedy, and it is indeed a difficult time for our country," he said on his Facebook page.



The scene after a fuel tanker explosion in Freetown, Sierra Leone, yesterday

13-year-old Palestinian killed by Israeli fire in West Bank

AP — RAMALLAH, WEST BANK

A 13-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed by Israeli fire during clashes in the occupied West Bank on Friday, Palestinian health officials said.

The teen, identified as Mohammad Daadas, died as a result of a gunshot wound to the stomach during clashes with Israeli forces near the northern West Bank village of Deir Al Hatab, said the health officials' statement. Daadas was taken to a nearby hospital, where

medical staff pronounced him dead. The Palestinian Red Crescent medical service said the Israeli army fired live ammunition, as well as tear gas and rubber bullets, at protesters while also closing off surrounding roads, preventing their ambulances from entering the site. No other serious injuries were reported.

In a statement issued later yesterday, the army said dozens of Palestinians near Deir Al Hatab began hurling rocks at Israeli troops who responded

with live fire.

According to *Wafa*, the Palestinian news agency, Daadas was from the Askar refugee camp on the outskirts of the northern city of Nablus.

Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians are common across the West Bank on Fridays. Over the past six months, there have been weekly clashes in the nearby town of Beita, where Palestinians hold demonstrations against the establishment of an unauthorised Israeli settlement

outpost that they say was built on their land. At least five protesters have been killed in the violence.

Under a deal in June between the Israeli government and the settlers of Eviatar, the settlers left the outpost but the settlement's buildings remain intact and under army guard. The Palestinians have rejected the deal, saying it is a step by Israel towards taking their land.

Last week, the Israeli authorities approved 3,000 new settler homes in the West

Bank, while also agreeing on Thursday to build 1,300 housing units for Palestinians who live in areas of the West Bank that are under full Israeli control.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 war and has established dozens of settlements where more than 500,000 settlers live. Palestinians seek the territory — along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip — as part of their future state and view the settlements as a major obstacle to resolving the conflict.

US asks some employees in Ethiopia to leave

REUTERS — NAIROBI

The United States has ordered non-emergency government employees in Ethiopia to leave due to an armed conflict, civil unrest and ethnic violence, its embassy in Addis Ababa said yesterday.

"Incidents of civil unrest and ethnic violence are occurring without warning. The situation may escalate further and may cause supply chain shortages, communications blackouts, and travel disruptions," the embassy said on its website.

Prime Minister Ahmed Abiy's government declared a national state of emergency on Tuesday, saying it was locked in an "existential war" with forces from the northern Tigray region and their allies.

Forces allied to the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front have been advancing, and unveiled an alliance with other factions on Friday aiming to remove Abiy from power, by force if needed.

The conflict in the north of Ethiopia started a year ago when forces loyal to the TPLF seized military bases in the Tigray region. In response, Abiy sent troops, which initially drove the TPLF out of the regional capital but have faced a sharp reversal since June this year.

Saudi air defences destroy drone launched towards Abha airport: SPA

REUTERS — CAIRO

Saudi air defences intercepted and destroyed an explosives-laden drone targeting Abha International Airport in the southwestern part of the kingdom, the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said yesterday.

The news agency cited the Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen.

The coalition, which intervened in Yemen in March 2015, has often retaliated against cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia with air strikes in Yemen.

Iraq PM orders probe into deaths, injuries during Friday clashes

REUTERS — BAGHDAD

An investigation has begun into the deaths and injuries of demonstrators and security forces after clashes in Baghdad on Friday, the *Iraqi News Agency* (INA) reported, citing Iraq's Joint Operations Command.

Prime Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimy ordered the formation of a committee to investigate following clashes between Iraqi security forces and supporters of parties that are disputing the results of a general election in October. A Joint Operations Command statement did not mention the number of deaths and injuries.

The statement added that "the negligent will be brought to legal accountability for their negligence and violation of the

explicit orders of the commander in chief, which stressed that live bullets should not be fired under any circumstances," *INA* reported.

Al Kadhimy also ordered compensation for victims of the clashes and decided to personally supervise the progress of the investigation, *INA* said.

It was the first significant violent clash between government forces and supporters of the political parties, most of which have armed wings and are aligned with Iran, since those groups lost dozens of parliament seats after the October 10 vote.

Police fired tear gas and live ammunition into the air as scores of the protesters threw stones and tried to advance towards Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, which houses

government buildings and foreign embassies, the security sources said.

Hospital sources said that more than 21 protesters were hurt mostly from smoke inhalation and nine policeman injured from being pelted by stones. The parties that made the biggest gains in Iraq's October election include that of populist cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, who publicly opposes Iranian interference in Iraqi politics and has called for all remaining Western troops to withdraw from the country.

The Iran-backed groups disputing the election result are also Shia but follow an Iranian model of theocratic governance which the nationalist Sadr and many ordinary Iraqi Shia Muslims reject.

As per Al Kadhimy's orders,



Mourners carry coffins of supporters of Iraqi Shia armed groups who were killed in clashes with Iraqi security forces on Friday, during a funeral in Najaf, Iraq, yesterday.

the investigation committee will include the security of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), a state-sanctioned umbrella organisation of mostly Shia militias backed by Iran, *INA* said.

Iraq's majority Shia have

dominated government since the US-led overthrow of Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003. Sunnis and Iraqi Kurds, the next biggest religious and ethnic groups in Iraq, lead significant alliances in parliament.

IN BRIEF

Saudi Arabia logs 42 new virus cases

RIYADH: Saudi Ministry of Health reported yesterday 42 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of infections in the Kingdom to 548,890. The Ministry also reported one new death, putting the tally of fatalities at 8,803. Meanwhile, as many as 33 cases have recovered, raising recoveries to 537,794, the Ministry added. — *QNA*

Turkey test-fires air defence missile

ISTANBUL: Turkey successfully test-fired long-range indigenous air defence missile Siper, a top defence official said yesterday. Different tests of the air defence system, which is planned to enter the army's inventory in 2023, will continue, Ismail Demir, the head of Turkey's Defense Industries Presidency, tweeted. He said Turkey will continue to produce new weapons and will have up to six different air defence systems. The Siper project is led by Turkey's defence giants ASELSAN, ROKETSAN and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey. Besides Siper, Korkut, Sungur and Hisar air defence systems are in place. — *Anadolu*



Turkey's Bosphorus Bridge

The 15 July Martyrs Bridge, known as the Bosphorus Bridge, which links the city's European and Asian sides, is pictured as fog covers the Bosphorus strait in Istanbul, Turkey, yesterday.

Sudan activists reject power-sharing with army, call nationwide strikes

AP — KHARTOUM, SUDAN

Sudan's protest movement has rejected internationally backed initiatives to return to a power-sharing arrangement with the military after last month's coup, announcing two days of nationwide strikes starting today (Sunday).

The movement called for the establishment of a civilian government to lead a transition to democracy.

The call came as a leader of the country's main political party accused the military leadership of negotiating in bad faith. The Sudanese military seized power on October 25, dissolving the transitional administration and arresting dozens of government officials and politicians. The coup has

been met with international outcry and massive protests in the streets of Khartoum and elsewhere in the country.

The takeover has ended the country's fragile planned transition to democratic rule, more than two years after a popular uprising forced the removal of longtime autocrat Omar Al Bashir and his government. Since the coup, the international community has accelerated mediation efforts to find a way out of the crisis, which threatens to further destabilise the already restive Horn of Africa region.

The Sudanese Professionals' Association, which led the uprising against Al Bashir, said late Friday that mediation initiatives which "seek a new settlement" between the military

and civilian leaders would "reproduce and worsen" the country's crisis.

The association vowed to continue protesting until a full civilian government is established to lead the transition.

Under the slogan of: "No negotiations, no compromise, no power-sharing," the association, which has a presence across the country, called for strikes and civil disobedience today and tomorrow (Sunday and Monday).

On Thursday, the top US diplomat spoke separately by phone with the military leader, Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and Abdalla Hamdok, the deposed prime minister who was put under house arrest during the coup. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged for an immediate

return to a civilian-led government and for the release of those detained in connection with the coup. Sudan's state-run *SUNA* news agency reported that Burhan vowed to "complete the transition and preserve the country's security ... until reaching an elected civilian government."

Al Wathig Al Berier, the secretary general of the Umma party, urged the international community on Friday to pressure the military to de-escalate. Since the coup, the generals have continued to dismantle the transitional government and arrest pro-democracy leaders. The Umma is Sudan's largest political party and has ministers in the now-deposed government.

"We truly need to prepare

the atmosphere and de-escalate matters so that we can sit at the table," Al Berier said. "But clearly the military faction is continuing with its plan and there are no efforts to show good will." He was referring to Thursday's arrest of leaders from the Forces for Freedom and Change, a coalition that was born out of the 2019 protest movement. The military detained three leaders of the movement shortly after they met with UN officials in Khartoum. The meeting was part of UN-led mediation efforts.

Al Berier said the mediation efforts have yet to produce results, blaming the military for that failure. He warned of possible bloodshed since the military and the protest movement

have become increasingly entrenched in their positions. He urged the international community to increase pressure on the military leaders to reverse the coup.

"In these initial stages, we hope that they continue strong pressure. This pressure has to be more than just tweets. This pressure needs to have mechanisms that could create real pressure on the military component," he said.

In other developments, the board of deans of Khartoum University officially suspended classes indefinitely after security forces stormed the university grounds on October 25, the day of the coup, and beat and insulted students and professors. The classes had already stopped since the coup.

UN investigator: Crimes against humanity under Myanmar military rule

AP — UNITED NATIONS

The head of the UN body investigating the most serious crimes in Myanmar said that preliminary evidence collected since the military seized power on February 1 shows a widespread and systematic attack on civilians “amounting to crimes against humanity.”

Nicholas Koumjian told UN reporters that the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, which he heads, has received over 200,000 communications since the army takeover and has collected over 1.5 million items of evidence that are being analysed “so that one day those most responsible for the serious international crimes in Myanmar will be brought to account.”

In determining that the crimes against civilians appear to be widespread and systematic, he said investigators saw patterns of violence — a measured response by security forces to demonstrations in the first six weeks or so after the military takeover followed by “an uptick in violence and much more violent methods used to suppress the demonstrators.”

Particular groups were targeted, especially for arrests and detentions that appear to be without due process of law. And this includes, of course, journalists, medical workers and political opponents, the UN official said.

“This was happening in different places at the same time, indicating to us it would be logical to conclude this was from a central policy,” Koumjian said.

“And, also, we saw that particular groups were targeted, especially for arrests and detentions that appear to be without due process of law. And this includes, of course, journalists, medical workers and political opponents.”

Myanmar for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions.

As the generals loosened their grip, culminating in Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi’s rise to leadership in 2015 elections, the international community responded by lifting most sanctions and pouring investment into the country.

The February 1 military takeover followed November elections which Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party won overwhelmingly and the military rejects as fraudulent.

Since the takeover, Myanmar has been wracked by unrest, with peaceful demonstrations against the ruling generals morphing first into a low-level insurgency in many urban areas after security forces used deadly force and then into more serious combat in rural areas, especially in border regions where ethnic minority militias have been engaging in heavy clashes with government troops.

Christine Schraner Burgener told The Associated Press shortly before her 3 ½ year term as the UN special envoy for Myanmar ended on Oct. 31 that “civil war” has spread throughout the country.



A file photo shows Myanmar citizens living in India hold a candle vigil, organised by Chin Refugee Committee, to pay tribute to people who died in Myanmar after the military coup, in New Delhi.

The UN investigative body was established by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council in September 2018 with a mandate to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Myanmar.

Koumjian, an American lawyer who served as an international prosecutor of serious crimes committed in Cambodia, East Timor and Bosnia, was appointed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as its head in 2019 with instructions

to prepare files that can facilitate criminal prosecutions in national, regional or international tribunals to prosecute genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Koumjian said his team has been collecting evidence from a wide variety of sources including individuals, organizations, businesses and governments, and the evidence includes photographs, videos, testimonies and social media posts “that could be relevant to show that crimes happened and who is responsible for those crimes.”

The investigative body has received information from social media companies, which he wouldn’t name except for Facebook because it had made its cooperation public.

“We began engaging with Facebook as soon as we were created in 2019, and they have been meeting with us regularly,” Koumjian said.

“We have received some, but certainly not all, that we have requested. We continue to negotiate with them and actually I am hopeful that we are going to receive more information.”

Ardern welcomes signs of greater US presence in Indo-Pacific

REUTERS — WELLINGTON

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern welcomed signs from the United States of a bigger engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, saying in an interview that her government has “mature” ties with China that allow for disagreement.

Ardern will host an online summit next week of leaders from the Asia-Pacific, including the United States, China and Japan, to discuss how the region can recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis.

In the interview to air on Sunday on the US network NBC, Ardern said that under President Joe Biden, the United States has “an incredibly important role” to play in strategic defence, economy and trade ties in the region.

“We welcome that physical presence, being part of important talks in our region,” she told the “Meet the Press” programme. “And we have seen, we have seen that greater... engagement in recent times.” Ardern reiterated her government’s position that New Zealand — which has major trade ties to China and has long been touted by Beijing as a model of its relations with Western countries — will pursue a policy of “integrity” with China.

“We do still believe that we have the maturity in our relationship to raise issues that we’re concerned about, be it human rights issues, be it labour issues, be it environmental issues,” Ardern said.

“And it’s very important to us that we continue to be able to do that and do that regardless of those trading ties.” Ties between New Zealand’s neighbour Australia and China have worsened markedly since 2018, when Canberra banned Huawei Technologies Co from its nascent 5G broadband network

Pakistan Taliban demand prisoner release as condition for talks

REUTERS — ISLAMABAD

The Pakistani Taliban have demanded that the government of Pakistan release a number of prisoners as a condition for talks aimed at laying the ground for full ceasefire negotiations, multiple sources in the group said.

The Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan or TTP and separate from the Afghan Taliban, have had two rounds of preliminary talks, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban, a commander based in the Afghan province of Kunar said.

Sources close to the matter said Sirajuddin Haqqani, the

head of the Haqqani Network and the current Afghan Taliban interior minister, was helping the talks.

The TTP, which combines a number of militant groups that have been fighting the government of Pakistan since 2007, is included on the US State Department’s list of foreign terrorist organisations.

Last month Prime Minister Imran Khan told Turkey’s TRT television that his government was in talks with parts of the TTP as part of a “reconciliation process”.

The release of the prisoners is meant to be a confidence-building measure, three TTP

commanders said, adding that the outcome of the talks was still uncertain.

“We aren’t too hopeful of the immediate results of the talks but our leaders had demanded the release of prisoners if they are sincere in meaningful negotiations,” a TTP commander said from Afghanistan’s Kunar province.

No comment was available from the Pakistani government. The interior ministry, foreign ministry and the ISPR, the armed forces communications wing, did not respond to emailed requests for comment.

According to negotiators, the two sides agreed not to issue

statements either supporting or opposing the peace process or against each other till the accord is signed and made public.

TTP spokesman Muhammad Khurasani said in a text message the group had “never refused meaningful talks” but that there were no developments on the ground yet.

TTP attacks have killed and wounded thousands of civilians and Pakistani service personnel over the years but the group was badly weakened by the Pakistan military’s Zarb-e-Azb operation in 2014 which drove it from its stronghold in North Waziristan.

However it has a force estimated at around 4,000-5,000

fighters, many based across the border in Afghanistan, and there has been a spate of incidents along the border since the Afghan Taliban seized Kabul in August.

Under the previous Western-backed government in Kabul, both Afghanistan and Pakistan accused each other of harbouring militant groups that mounted cross-border attacks.

Another Pakistani Taliban commander said the TTP leadership had consulted all factions in the movement, some of which had serious reservations about talking to the Pakistani government, but he said many ordinary fighters wanted to go home.



A view of a hospital's COVID-19 ward that caught fire in Ahmednagar, in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, yesterday.

10 patients die in Indian hospital fire

AP — NEW DELHI

Ten patients died yesterday after a fire broke out in a hospital’s COVID-19 ward in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, officials said.

An official told New Delhi Television that around 17 patients were in the ward in the city of Ahmednagar when the fire broke out. The remaining patients have been moved to a

COVID-19 ward in another hospital, district collector Rajendra Bhosle said.

While the fire has since been brought under control, the cause was not immediately clear, he added, saying officials will carry out an investigation.

The former chief minister of the state, Devendra Fadnis, took to Twitter to express his condolences and called for

“strict action” against those responsible.

Such incidents are not uncommon in India. In May, when the country was battling a devastating surge in coronavirus cases, a fire in a COVID-19 ward in western India killed at least 18 patients.

Poor maintenance and lack of proper fire-fighting equipment often cause deaths in India.

Rescuers in Australia search for man attacked by sharks

AP — SYDNEY

Rescue services in western Australia were searching for a man who was attacked by multiple sharks, police said.

Two teenagers on a boat saw what they believed was a shark attack at Port Beach in the North Fremantle suburb of Perth yesterday morning and alerted other swimmers to get out of the sea and called emergency services.

Police were unable to confirm how many sharks were involved in the attack but Western Australia Police Acting Inspector Troy Douglas said it was “obviously at least one.” Some reports quoting witnesses said the attack involved a White shark and a Tiger shark.

“I was about to go into the water and actually a lady stopped me and said ‘don’t go in there there’s been a shark

sighting,’” said Suzette Harding. “And then within a minute or so... these young boys in the dinghy came screaming up along the beach, waving everyone out of the water.”

Douglas said the 57-year-old man was a regular at the beach. He said the search would go on for as long as possible yesterday and resume at first light today, if he is not found.

Douglas praised the teenagers for making “a fantastic effort” and reacting quickly by alerting emergency services and providing information to assist the search.

At least five Water Police and rescue boats and two helicopters were scouring the area and an ambulance was sent to the scene.

All beaches in the area have been closed.

IN BRIEF

Afghan rights activist, three other women slain; two suspects held

ISLAMABAD: Two suspects have been arrested in connection with the killings of a civil society activist and three other women whose bodies were found in a house in northern Afghanistan last week, a senior Taliban security official and a co-worker of the slain activist said yesterday.

The suspects confessed to luring the women to the house in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, Sayed Khosti, the spokesman of the Taliban-run Interior Ministry, said in a video statement posted on Twitter.

He did not say whether the suspects also confessed to the killings. He did not offer a motive for the killings or identify the victims. The case is being referred to a court, he said.

One of the victims was Frozan Safi, 29, according to a local cultural center where she worked. — **AP**

South Korea to purchase 70,000 courses of new Pfizer COVID-19 pill

SEOUL: South Korea has agreed to buy 70,000 courses of Pfizer Inc’s experimental antiviral COVID-19 pill, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) said yesterday.

Pfizer on Friday said trial results showed that its Paxlovid pill reduced by 89% the risk of hospitalization or death in patients at high risk of severe illness within three days of the onset of coronavirus symptoms.

South Korea has already signed agreements to secure 200,000 courses of Merck & Co Inc’s COVID-19 treatment. It is looking to buy an additional 134,000 courses, though it is undecided of which treatment, KDCA said.

Last month, the government said it was in talks with Swiss pharmaceutical Roche Holding AG, which is developing an easy-to-administer antiviral pill for COVID-19. — **Reuters**

Son-in-law of Jokowi loyalist becomes Indonesia’s military chief

JAKARTA: An Indonesian parliamentary commission gave its nod for President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo’s nominee to lead the armed forces as the country seeks increased security to reopen its economy following the pandemic, and as maritime territorial disputes heighten. General Andika Perkasa, 56, will oversee the army, air force and navy, including the marines. His father-in-law, retired General A M Hendropriyono, is a former head of the state spy agency and a Widodo loyalist since he took office as governor of the capital, Jakarta.

As chief of staff, Perkasa will be responsible for defending the world’s most populous Muslim country, which has been the target of a string of terrorist attacks. Preventing such threats will be key to the success of Widodo’s plans to boost the economy by hosting international events, such as MotoGP, L’Etape Indonesia by Tour de France, and the G-20 next year. — **Bloomberg**

Climate march keeps up pressure on leaders at COP26

AP — GLASGOW

The public pressure that helped spur more world action on global warming was due to be on full display outside the UN climate summit yesterday, when thousands of demonstrators were expected to march through the rainy grey streets of Glasgow to demand leaders move faster to cut fossil fuels that are wrecking the climate.

Police helicopters buzzed over Glasgow early yesterday as authorities prepared for a second day of protests by climate activists. Scots are accustomed to inclement weather, and turnout for the march was expected to be strong despite stiff gusts and a drizzle that turned to cold rain.

Inside the more than half-mile-long conference venue, negotiators knuckled down for a seventh straight day of talks to finish draft agreements that can be passed to government ministers for political approval next week.

Among the issues being haggled over at the talks by almost 200 countries are a fresh commitment to the goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, getting countries to review their efforts more frequently, and financial support for poor nations.

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A Democratic and Republican delegation of US senators was scheduled to visit the summit yesterday. Off-year Republican victories that have unsettled members of President Joe Biden's Democratic Party gave the bipartisan visit more impact.

The summit's daily bustle of side events yesterday also saw British actor Idris Elba bring his star power to the UN talks, highlighting the importance of helping small farmers cope with global warming.

Elba, known for roles such as the HBO series "The Wire," BBC One's "Luther" and this year's Western film "The Harder the Come," attended with Sabrina Dhowre Elba, a model and producer and his wife. They took the stage yesterday in

support of the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Elba said he wanted to highlight the dangers of global food chains being disrupted as small farmers in particular are hit by erratic seasonal rains, drought and other impacts of climate change.

"This conversation around food is something that needs to be really amplified, and one thing I've got is a big mouth," said Elba, adding that 80% of the food consumed worldwide is produced by small-scale farmers.

Speaking on the same panel, Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate, 24, said global warming is already causing hunger for millions around the world, including in her country.

She said a shift from meat to plant-based diets could help prevent millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year while freeing up more land for food farming that's currently used for animal feed.

Yesterday's march was expected to draw a range of participants and ages, after tens of thousands of young people in the Fridays for Future movement protested Friday outside the conference's steel fences and turnstiles.

Speaking at the Fridays for Future rally, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, 18, branded the UN climate talks in



A demonstrator is detained during a protest against the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) on the King George V Bridge, in Glasgow, Scotland, Britain, yesterday.

Glasgow so far "a failure," accusing leaders of purposefully creating loopholes in the rules and giving misleading pictures of their countries' emissions.

"World leaders are obviously scared of the truth, yet no matter how hard they try, they cannot escape it," Thunberg said. "They cannot ignore the scientific consensus, and above all they cannot ignore us - the

people, including their own children."

Thunberg's mix of school strikes, blunt and impatient talk about government excuses, and mass demonstrations have galvanized climate protests since 2018, especially in Europe but to a lesser extent around the world.

The climate protest movement, and worsening droughts, storms and other

disasters that brought home to many the accelerating damage of global warming, has kept pressure on governments for stronger and faster action to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

The Fridays For Future protest was part of a series of demonstrations being staged around the world Friday and Saturday to coincide with the Glasgow talks.

Bulgaria's GERB party leads ahead of polls: Survey

REUTERS — SOFIA

Bulgaria's centre-right GERB party leads its rivals a week ahead of the country's third parliamentary election this year amid a prolonged political crisis, surging coronavirus infections and rising energy costs, a new opinion poll showed yesterday.

But neither GERB nor any of the other five parties expected to win seats in the new parliament is expected to win a majority, raising the prospect of tough coalition talks on forming a government in the poorest European Union member state.

Anger over endemic corruption put an end to GERB's almost decade in power this

spring, but wrangling among its political opponents prevented them from forming a government after either of the national elections in April and in July.

Former prime minister Boyko Borissov's GERB garnered 24.1% backing, up from 23.5% in July, when it took second place but still below the 26.1% it won in April, the opinion poll by Sofia-based Gallup International showed.

The political instability, concerns about the pandemic and a new obligatory health pass, as well as high energy costs in the EU's least vaccinated state, have helped GERB mobilise its regional structures and maintain its

support, analysts say.

GERB's main rival, the Socialists, remain a distant second with 15.6% backing, up from 13.4% in the July election, according to the survey, which was conducted from October 23 to 31 among 1,081 people.

A new centrist anti-graft party, We Continue the Change, set up by two Harvard-educated former interim ministers, came third with 13.7% support, the survey showed.

The new faction, which analysts say has the potential to unite GERB's opponents, may further expand its support, as most undecided voters are considering backing it, Gallup International said in a statement.

Support for the

anti-establishment ITN party, which came first in the July election with 24.1%, has tumbled to 11.3%, with many Bulgarians disappointed over its failure to forge a coalition government.

In a presidential election also due to take place on Nov. 14, incumbent President Rumen Radev, a harsh critic of Borissov, is seen winning 47.6% of the vote, below the 50% needed for an outright win, the poll showed.

Radev, endorsed by the Socialists, ITN and We Continue the Change party, is likely to face Sofia University Rector Anastas Gerdzhikov, backed by GERB, in a run-off of the election for the largely ceremonial post on November 21.

IN BRIEF

Russia not expecting progress at talks with US on visas, diplomats

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday said it does not expect progress in talks in the coming weeks with the United States on issues including visas and the size and functioning of their embassies, Russian news agencies reported.

With ties already at post-Cold War lows, Moscow and Washington are in a dispute over the number of diplomats they can post to each other's countries, though Russia has said it was willing to lift restrictions imposed in recent years.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov yesterday said recent contacts with Washington had simply involved the two sides repeating their previously stated positions, but that a new round of talks in a third country would take place in the coming weeks.

"There is no progress and, it seems, none is expected," Interfax cited Ryabkov as saying. — *Reuters*

Georgia's state security accuses jailed ex-president of plotting coup

MOSCOW: Georgia's state security service said yesterday that planned opposition protests were part of a planned coup devised and directed by jailed former president Mikheil Saakashvili, Russia's TASS news agency reported.

The claim sets the stage for a potentially tense standoff between security forces and opposition supporters, who plan to rally later on Saturday outside the prison where Saakashvili is being held in the town of Rustavi, southeast of the capital.

"The organisers of the protests plan to block government buildings," TASS quoted a state security spokesman as saying.

"Those actions aimed at violently seizing power are being planned by the convicted Mikheil Saakashvili from prison." Saakashvili, 53, has been on hunger strike for more than a month in prison, his lawyers have said.

Neither he nor his lawyers could be immediately reached for comment yesterday. Saakashvili faces a six-year sentence after being convicted in absentia in 2018 of abuse of power and concealing evidence when he was president, charges he rejects as politically motivated. — *Reuters*

New infections hit record as Russia's COVID-19 wave persists

MOSCOW: Russia's COVID-19 cases hit another one-day record as the country struggles to contain a wave of infections and deaths that has persisted for more than a month.

The national coronavirus task force on Saturday reported 41,335 new cases since the previous day, exceeding the previous daily record of 40,993 from October 31. The task force said 1,188 people with COVID-19 died, just seven fewer than the daily death record reported on Thursday.

Officials cite Russia's low vaccination rate as a major factor in the sharp rise in cases that began in mid-September. The task force reported about 57.2 million full-course vaccinations, or less than 40% of the country's 146 million people.

Last month, President Vladimir Putin ordered many Russians to stay off work between Oct. 30 and November 7. He authorized regional governments to extend the number of nonworking days, if necessary.

Several regions, including Novgorod in the northwest, Tomsk in Siberia, the Chelyabinsk region in the Ural Mountains and Kursk and Bryansk regions southwest of Moscow, have extended the nonworking period through the end of next week. — *AP*

Austria to bar unvaccinated from restaurants as cases rise

AP — VIENNA

Unvaccinated people in Austria who also haven't had COVID-19 will no longer be allowed to enter restaurants, hotels and hair salons or attend public events larger than 25 people under new rules that take effect on Monday, the government said.

Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg outlined the rules on Friday night after a meeting with state-level leaders to discuss the country's response to rapidly rising coronavirus cases.

"It is simply our responsibility to protect the people in our country," Schallenberg told reporters, noting the case numbers and increasingly full hospital intensive care units.

Previously, people could enter restaurants, hotels and other areas if they were vaccinated, had recovered from the virus or could show results from a negative test.

The government is planning a transition period for the first four weeks to encourage the unvaccinated to get shots.

During that time, anyone who has received one vaccine dose and has results from a valid PCR test will be allowed to attend events and enter the listed types of locations.

After four weeks, only people who are fully vaccinated or who have recovered from COVID-19 will be allowed entry.

Austria reported a pandemic high of 9,923 new confirmed coronavirus cases Saturday, surpassing its previous record of 9,586 last year.



Police cars are pictured beside an ICE (Intercity-Express) train in Seubersdorf, Germany, yesterday, after several people were injured in a knife attack in the ICE train between the south German cities of Regensburg and Nuremberg.

Several hurt in knife attack on German train

AP — BERLIN

A knife attack on a high-speed train in Germany has injured several people, police confirmed yesterday morning. Local police said that they received a call about the attack around 9am local time yesterday.

The train in question, one of Germany's high-speed ICE trains, was travelling between

the Bavarian cities of Regensburg and Nuremberg at the time of the attack.

One man has been arrested in connection with the attack at the train station in Seubersdorf, where the train is currently stopped, police said. Police said multiple people were injured but were unable to provide a specific number.

Around 200 people were

removed from the train and taken to a local restaurant for refreshments, according to German broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk.

Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said the background behind the "terrible" attack was "still unclear" and is "now being clarified." He said people in Seubersdorf, a municipality located about 473kmsouth of Berlin, faced no "acute danger."

Bosnia's disintegration would affect entire region, says peace envoy

REUTERS — BERLIN

If a multi-ethnic Bosnia is pushed towards disintegration, that will inevitably have an impact on other unresolved conflicts in the Western Balkans such as that between Serbia and Kosovo, Bosnia's peace envoy said yesterday.

German politician Christian Schmidt, who is international

High Representative in Bosnia, said this week that the peace deal that ended the country's war in the 1990s was at risk of unravelling unless the international community took measures to stop Serb separatists.

He was referring to moves by the Bosnian Serb leadership aimed at undoing key state institutions such as the joint armed forces, the indirect

taxation authority and the top judicial body, as well as other institutions.

"The unrest in this region will also affect the question of the difficult relationship between Serbia and Kosovo in the same or similar way," Schmidt said in an interview.

"Serbia should have an interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina staying together," he said,

adding that Belgrade's path towards European Union membership could be gravely affected by instability in Bosnia, where it supports its ethnic kin.

Asked if there was a realistic possibility of Bosnia breaking apart, Schmidt said it was not an imminent danger.

"But if the degradation of the Dayton treaty continues... there is a risk that the country

will break apart," he added.

The US-sponsored Dayton peace accord signed in 1995 ended the 3-1/2-year war among Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslim Bosniaks by splitting the country along ethnic lines into two autonomous regions — the Serb-dominated Serb Republic and the Federation shared by Croats and Bosniaks.

Biden: Infrastructure win a monumental step forward

AP — WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden yesterday hailed Congress' passage of his \$1 trillion infrastructure package as a "monumental step forward for the nation" after fractious fellow Democrats resolved a months-long standoff in their ranks to seal the deal.

"Finally, infrastructure week," a beaming Biden told reporters. "I'm so happy to say that: infrastructure week."

The House passed the measure 228-206 late on Friday, prompting prolonged cheers from the relieved Democratic side of the chamber. Thirteen Republicans, mostly moderates, supported the legislation while six of Democrats' farthest left members opposed it.

Approval of the bill, which promises to create legions of jobs and improve broadband, water supplies and other public works, sends it to the desk of a president whose approval ratings have dropped and whose nervous party got a cold shoulder from voters in this past week's off-year elections.

Democratic candidates for governor were defeated in Virginia and squeaked through in New Jersey, two blue-leaning

The House passed the measure 228-206 late on Friday, prompting prolonged cheers from the relieved Democratic side of the chamber. Thirteen Republicans supported the legislation while six Democrats opposed it.

states. Those setbacks made party leaders — and moderates and liberals alike — impatient to produce impactful legislation and demonstrate they know how to govern. Democrats can ill afford to seem in disarray a year before midterm elections that could give Republicans congressional control.

Voters "want us to deliver," Biden said, and Friday's vote "proved we can."

"On one big item, we delivered," he added.

The infrastructure package is a historic investment by any measure, one that Biden compares in its breadth to the building of the interstate highway system in the last

century or the transcontinental railroad the century before. He called it a "blue collar blueprint to rebuilding America."

His reference to infrastructure week was a jab at his predecessor, Donald Trump, whose White House declared several times that "infrastructure week" had arrived, only for nothing to happen.

Simply freeing up the infrastructure measure for final congressional approval was like a burst of adrenaline for Democrats. Yet despite the win, Democrats endured a setback when they postponed a vote on a second, even larger bill until later this month.

That 10-year, \$1.85 trillion measure bolstering health, family and climate change programmes was sidetracked after moderates demanded a cost estimate on the measure from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

The postponement dashed hopes that the day would produce a double-barrelled win for Biden with passage of both bills.

But in an evening breakthrough brokered by Biden and House leaders, five moderates agreed to back that bill if the budget office's estimates are consistent with preliminary



US President Joe Biden delivers remarks after late-night passage of a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, next to Vice-President Kamala Harris, at the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday.

numbers that White House and congressional tax analysts have provided. The agreement, in which lawmakers promised to vote on the social and environment bill by the week of November 15, was a significant step toward a House vote that could ultimately ship it to the Senate.

Elated by the bill's passage, Biden held forth with reporters for over a half hour yesterday morning, joking that his chances of getting the bill done had been written off multiple times, only for him to be able to salvage it. He said he would wait to hold

a signing ceremony until lawmakers — Democrats and Republicans who voted for it — return to Washington after a week's recess.

The president acknowledged uncertainty surrounding his larger social and environmental spending package, saying "time will tell" whether he can keep popular provisions like universal paid family leave in the final version.

He wouldn't say whether he has private assurances from moderate Democrats in the House and Senate to pass the nearly \$2 trillion bill, but said

he was "confident" he would get the votes.

Biden predicted Americans would begin to feel the impact of the infrastructure bill "probably starting within the next two to three months as we get shovels in the ground." But the full impact will probably take decades to be fully realised.

He added that he would visit some ports that would benefit from the legislation in the next week, as his administration tries frantically to ease supply chain disruptions that are raising prices on consumer goods before the holidays.

Voting lawsuit keeps Texas, Biden administration at odds

AP — AUSTIN

More and more, Texas and the Biden administration are dragging each other to court.

First it was over immigration enforcement on the US-Mexico border. Then a Texas ban on most abortions. Then this week, just days after the Justice Department urged the US Supreme Court to halt the nation's most restrictive abortion law, Attorney General Merrick Garland brought another lawsuit against America's biggest red state, this time over restrictive new voting rules.

With President's Joe Biden's own domestic priorities remaining stuck despite his party controlling Congress, his administration is simultaneously trying to knock down pillars of a hard-right agenda the Texas GOP muscled through over the last year. Doing so could provide a boost to Democrats, who are searching for a win as they confront an already stormy outlook heading into the 2022 midterm elections.

But putting up the fight is still short of sweeping federal legislation sought by Democrats, and a conservative

majority on the Supreme Court could ultimately stand in the way.

Although the justices signalled on Monday they would allow Texas abortion providers to pursue a court challenge to a controversial law that has banned most abortions in the state since September, it was not clear whether they would let the restrictions remain in place for now.

"It seems like every harmful law in the state of Texas ends up in federal court," Democratic state Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer said. "Republicans control every

lever of government in the state of Texas. If they wanted to celebrate Christmas in the month of April, they have the votes to do it. But just because they have the votes, that doesn't necessarily make it so."

Texas Republicans have defended their laws as legal, and Governor Greg Abbott reacted to the latest lawsuit by tweeting: "Bring it."

Depending on the party in the White House, big states have become eager centres of resistance. California proudly sued the Trump administration more than 120 times. During the

Obama administration, Abbott's biggest applause line was that his former job as attorney general was to go into the office, sue the federal government and go home.

Not even a week after Biden was sworn in, Texas eagerly resumed the role of chief antagonist to a Democratic president, suing over a 100-day moratorium on deportations. Texas has not let up since and rushed to challenge the Biden administration at just about every turn, including a lawsuit filed Friday over COVID-19 vaccine mandates for private businesses.

IN BRIEF

Former USC official pleads guilty in bribery

AP — BOSTON

A former athletics official at the University of Southern California pleaded guilty on Friday to her role in the college admissions bribery scandal, legal filings show.

Donna Heinel, the school's former senior associate athletic director, pleaded in US District Court in Boston, where the wide-ranging prosecution is based, to one count of honest services wire fraud. The *Boston Globe* reported, citing records.

Prosecutors agreed to drop several other charges in exchange for her guilty plea, according to court documents. An indictment accused Heinel and others of taking bribes from the scheme's admitted ringleader, Rick Singer. —AP

President: Families of separated kids deserve help

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden said yesterday that the families of children separated from their parents at the US-Mexico border during the Trump administration should be compensated, as his Department of Justice is in settlement talks with affected families.

Raising his voice, Biden said that regardless of the circumstances, people who had their children taken from them under the Trump administration's family separation policy, meant to deter families from crossing into the US illegally, should be remunerated.

Shortly after taking office Biden created a task force to attempt to reunify hundreds of children and parents affected by the policy. —AP

Cuba remittances policy needs more work, says US official

REUTERS — WASHINGTON

The White House has received recommendations for restarting remittances to Cuba but sent some back for further work to craft "innovative options" to ensure that money sent by Cuban Americans to families on the island does not fall into the hands of Cuba's government, a senior US official said on Friday.

President Joe Biden in July asked the Treasury Department and State Department to study the matter and report back on how to allow remittance payments — once a financial lifeline for many Cubans — without Cuba's government and military profiting.

The Biden administration slapped sanctions on Cuban officials and security forces in response to Havana's crackdown on protesters in July.

Strict limits on remittances were imposed by former President Donald Trump, who rolled back a historic rapprochement that his predecessor, Barack Obama, oversaw between the United States and its old Cold War foe.

Biden, who served as Obama's vice president, promised during the 2020 election campaign against Trump to re-engage with Cuba's communist government.

Relations have remained tense, especially since the protests erupted in July amid a severe economic crisis and a surge in COVID-19 infections. Thousands of people took to the streets, angry over shortages of basic goods, curbs on civil liberties, and the handling of the pandemic by authorities. Scores of protesters were arrested.

Brazilian singer and Grammy winner dies in plane crash

AP — SAO PAULO

Marília Mendonça, one of Brazil's most popular singers and a Latin Grammy winner, died on Friday in an airplane crash on her way to a concert. She was 26.

Mendonça's press office confirmed her death in a statement, and said four other passengers on the flight also perished. Their plane crashed between Mendonça's hometown Goiânia and Caratinga, a small city in Minas Gerais state located north of Rio de Janeiro.

Minas Gerais state's civil police also confirmed Mendonça's death, without providing details about the cause of the accident, which occurred shortly before arrival. Photographs and videos show the plane laying just beneath a waterfall; Mendonça had posted a video this afternoon showing her walking toward the plane, guitar case in hand.

The rising star performed country music, in Brazil called sertanejo. She was known for tackling feminist issues in her songs, such as denouncing men who control their partners, and calling for female empowerment.



A rescue worker carries a guitar as he leaves the wreckage of a small air plane that crashed with Brazilian country singer Marília Mendonça on board, near a waterfall area in Piedade de Caratinga, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, yesterday.

On Friday evening, the news triggered an outpouring of sadness on social media from all corners of Brazil, including fans, politicians, musicians and soccer players. Her Instagram account has 38 million followers.

"I refuse to believe, I just refuse," Brazil soccer star Neymar, who is a friend of Mendonça's, said on Twitter after the news broke. Brazil's government also offered its condolences.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro also used social media to mourn the passing "of one of the greatest artists of her generation."

"The entire country receives the news in shock," he said.

8 dead, several injured at Astroworld Festival in Houston

AP — HOUSTON

At least eight people died and numerous others were injured in what officials described as a surge of the crowd at the Astroworld music festival in Houston while rapper Travis Scott was performing.

Officials declared a "mass casualty incident" just after 9pm on Friday during the festival where an estimated 50,000 people were in attendance, Houston Fire Chief Samuel Peña told reporters at a news conference.

"The crowd began to compress towards the front of the stage, and that caused some panic, and it started causing some injuries," the fire chief said. "People began to fall out, become unconscious, and it created additional panic."

The show was called off shortly thereafter. The fire chief said "scores of individuals" were injured.

Officials transported 17 people to hospitals, including 11 who were in cardiac arrest, Peña said. It wasn't clear

whether all eight who died were among the 17 that had been transported to hospitals.

Many people were also treated at the scene at NRG Park, where a field hospital had been set up. About 300 people were examined at that site throughout the day, he said.

Astroworld is a two-day music festival that was scheduled to take place on Friday and yesterday in Houston. The event was sold out, according to the Astroworld website. Yesterday's perform-

ances have been cancelled.

The deaths called to mind a 1979 concert for The Who where 11 people died and about two dozen were injured as thousands of fans tried to get into Cincinnati's riverfront coliseum.

Scott, one of music's biggest young stars, released two new songs earlier Friday, "Mafia" and "Escape Plan." The 29-year-old Houston native has been nominated for eight Grammy Awards. He has a 3-year-old daughter, Stormi,

with Kylie Jenner, who announced in September that she's pregnant with their second child.

Drake joined Scott on-stage at the concert — which was livestreamed by Apple Music — and posted photos to Instagram after the performance.

Event promoters had arranged for medical units to be on scene at the festival, however once the crowd surge began, those units were "quickly overwhelmed," Peña said.