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WELCOME TO QATAR

2022



Doha named Arab Tourism Capital for 2023

QNA — CAIRO

The Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism, in its 25th session at the Arab League General Secretariat HQ yesterday, named Doha as Arab Tourism Capital for 2023.

Addressing the meeting, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the Arab League H E Salem Mubarak Al Shafi, who chaired Qatar's delegation to the meeting, extended thanks to the Council and to the Arab Tourism Organization and its

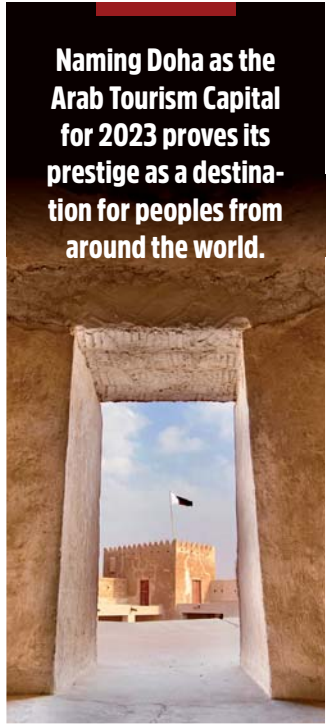
President Bandar bin Fahd Al Fuhaid for their efforts exerted in this regard.

Naming Doha as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2023 sincerely reflects and proves its prestige as a destination for peoples from around the world while hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which kicked off on November 20 and is slated to run through December 18, he said.

The State of Qatar proves its potentials for good organisation, management and hospitality, he said, stressing that billions of people who watched the World Cup worldwide closely saw the tolerance, good treatment and hospitality of the country's leadership, government and people to hundreds of thousands of World Cup fans.

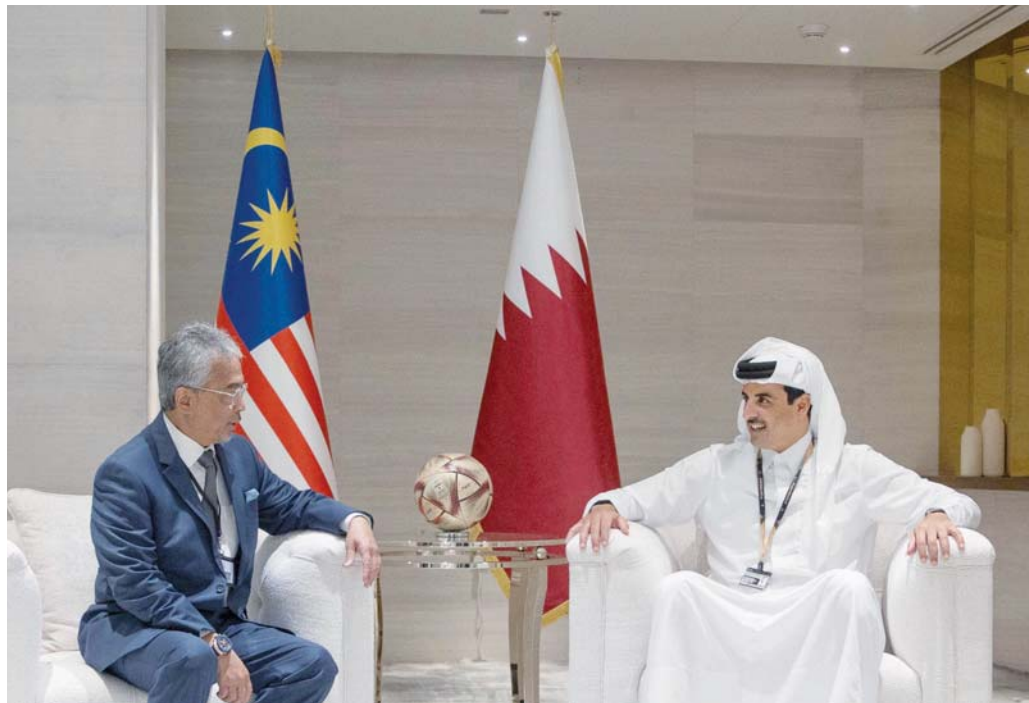
This contributed to refuting the allegations and lies promoted by some parties with special agendas that Qatar is unable to organise the World Cup, he added.

The Permanent Representative of Qatar to the Arab League affirmed Qatar's successful hosting of World Cup is a success for all Arabs, adding that naming Doha as Arab Tourism Capital for 2023 bolsters this success, and represents an appreciation for the country's tremendous efforts to reach this widely acknowledged prestigious position.



Naming Doha as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2023 proves its prestige as a destination for peoples from around the world.

Amir meets King of Malaysia



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani met at Lusail Stadium yesterday with HM King of Malaysia Al Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatu'ddin Al Mustafa Billah Shah and the accompanying delegation, who are visiting the country to attend part of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 matches. At the outset of the meeting, HM the King of Malaysia congratulated H H the Amir on the hosting the World Cup, wishing good luck to the participating teams. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and means of strengthening and promoting them, in addition to issues of common concern.

49 percent of waste collected from FIFA World Cup stadiums recycled

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

To enhance state's efforts to deliver the most sustainable and carbon-neutral FIFA World Cup, about 49 percent of waste collected from stadiums, the venues of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 has been recycled so far.

"Tonnes of waste have been

collected from stadiums, venues of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022," said Eng. Samira Muhammad Al Dosari from the Department of Radiation and Chemical Protection of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, while speaking to Qatar Radio recently.

"The collected waste, which include cardboard, plastic, glass are being sent to recycling

factories run by the Ministry of Municipality," said Al Dosari. She said that a part of these wastes are being converted into eco-friendly clean energy.

To enhance the recycling process, the Ministry of Municipality deployed a number of mobile waste transfer stations ahead of World Cup and added many more vehicles to its cleaning fleet. ➔P7

Qatar's distinct hosting of World Cup is a response to sceptics: AL

QNA — CAIRO

Arab League (AL) praised yesterday the distinct organisation of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and confirmed that the tournament is a response to those who are sceptical of the ability of an Arab state to organise such a global sporting event.

This came in the General-Secretariat of Arab League's speech delivered by the Director of the Economic Integration Department at the Arab League Dr. Bahjat Abul-Nasr in the opening session of the 25th meeting of the Executive Office of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism.

Dr. Abul-Nasr extended congratulations to the State of Qatar for the distinct organisation of the World Cup, which is considered a response to those who are sceptical of the ability of an Arab state to organise such an important global event.

The events of the conference kicked off yesterday and will run for two days at the headquarters of the Arab League with the participation of a delegation from Qatar headed by the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the Arab League H E Ambassador Salem Mubarak Al Shafi.



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Semi-Final
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World Cup bridges gaps; important legacy to move forward: Experts

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 has been an 'eye opener' to the cultural heritage of Qatar and the region.

Over the past four weeks the tournament has paved way for international fans to rethink about misconceptions and stereotypes about Middle East and the Arab world, claimed experts yesterday.

The World Cup has been a catalyst to break the barriers and bridge gaps in understanding of Qatar and the region — it is a 'very important legacy,' said Community Arts lead, Qatar Foundation, Ameera Al Aji.

"The World Cup is clearing the misunderstanding about local culture and heritage that we have in Qatar. This is a very important legacy to move forward — that we break the

gap between communities and we correct the misunderstandings about us as a country," she told *The Peninsula* on the sidelines of the discussion on 'Cultivating Arab Heritage and Culture during the First World Cup in the Region.'

The discussion organised by Qatar Foundation (QF) at the Host Country Media Center in Msheireb Downtown Doha heard how the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 taking place in the Middle East for the first time. It plays an integral role in bringing the rich culture of the nation and the region to the attention — and the hearts and minds — of new global audiences.

"The World Cup has also created a warm and emotional link between the people of Qatar and people from around the world. It makes our hearts glad too," said Al Aji during the discussion. ➔P4

Argentina storm into World Cup final



Argentina's Lionel Messi celebrates with teammates after beating Croatia 3-0 in the first semi-final at Lusail Stadium yesterday. Argentina reached Sunday's final where they will face the winners of the second semi-final between reigning champions France and Morocco to be played at Al Bayt Stadium today. **Story: Page 1 Sport**



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On the Occasion of
Qatar National Day, 18th of December
and in remembrance of the historic day in 1878, when Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani,
founder of the State of Qatar set up the pillars of the Modern State of Qatar,

We extend our heartiest congratulations and greetings to

His Highness
Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar

His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
Father Amir

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

And to all the honourable people of Qatar
We hope for more returns of this memorable occasion and wish that Qatar always enjoys security,
welfare and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness The Amir



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‘Rumi: The Musical’ brings alive heritage of the east

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar Foundation’s (QF) D’reesha Performing Arts Festival entertains audiences with Rumi: The Musical, a show about the philosopher poet’s legacy. Final performance will be held today, Wednesday. It is inspired by the poetry of Jalal Al Din Rumi, one of the greatest philosophers in the Islamic world. “The musical is inspired by the global scale of Rumi’s

outreach and influence, which has always broken cultural borders, and has resonated with hearts and minds across continents. The musical performance was a grand score which combined Middle Eastern elements with classical influences of contemporary musical theatre, and lyrics derived from Rumi’s poetry,” said Nadim Naaman, Rumi: The Musical co-composer and script writer, who also is playing the role of Rumi in the show.

Rumi: The Musical performance is also co-composed by Dana Al Fardan, a renowned Qatari contemporary composer, singer and songwriter; and is led by a cast of 14 actors who have appeared in popular West End and Broadway shows such as Les Misérables, The Phantom of The Opera, The Prince of Egypt, collectively representing the countries of Iran, Lebanon, Egypt, Oman, Mauritius, Pakistan, India, Malta and many others.

“As Qatar invites the world to see that the Middle East can be a home for sporting success, I passionately wish for the Middle East to be seen as a thriving home for the arts too. I’m hugely proud and excited for my co-writer Dana Al Fardan to be able to present this musical in her home country, and hope that our audiences will find an inspiration to explore music and theatre. And that the region as a whole will continue to recognise that, just as sport can, the arts

can be a wonderful unifying platform for the success and talent of a nation and its people,” Naaman said. QF’s D’reesha Performing Arts Festival will conclude on December 17. Held under the theme ‘Travel and Adventure’, it will showcase a variety of performances in Arabic and English, from music and poetry to visual arts and theatre, with the new D’reesha of Invention showcasing scientists, scholars, and researchers from the Arab world.

World Cup bridges gaps; important legacy to move forward: Experts

FROM PAGE 1

The discussion took place as the second edition of QF’s D’reesha Performing Arts Festival runs until December 17 at Oxygen Park and Al Khater House at Education City. Al Aji also highlighted that a key element of QF’s community development focus is a commitment to promoting, preserving, celebrating and solidifying the unique identity and spirit of Qatar and the Arab world. The discussion also explored Qatar National Library’s and Qatar Museums’ role for the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage.

She said that the Library has “welcomed the world” during the World Cup and international visitors were happy to have the books they were looking for, said Director of Strategy and Strategic Projects at Qatar National Library, Hind Al Khulaifi.

“Not only have we been able to welcome the world, we have also been able to show people that we’re not so different, and we have more in common that they might think,” she added.

Museums around the country demonstrate the Arab history and heritage, said Acting Deputy CEO of Exhibitions and Marketing and Director of Centralised Museums, Qatar Museums, Sheikh Reem Al Thani.

“Our collections reflect the diversity of the Arab world and create visual connections that help to clear people’s minds of misconceptions and stereotypes. We are telling them things in our voice, and from our understanding and our reality,” she added.



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Speaker of Egyptian House of Representatives arrives in Doha

Speaker of the House of Representatives of Egypt H E Chancellor Dr. Hanafy El-Gebaly arrived in Doha yesterday to attend the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 matches. His Excellency and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Hamad International Airport by Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim, and Ambassador of Egypt to Qatar H E Amr El Sherbini.

PM meets Interpol chief

QNA — DOHA

Prime Minister and Minister of Interior H E Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani met yesterday with Secretary-General of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) H E Jurgen Stock and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of their visit to the country.

During the meeting, they discussed cooperation and relations between Qatar and Interpol. The Secretary-General praised the security readiness for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, stressing that Interpol will benefit from Qatar's experience in securing major events and will use it in the upcoming tournaments.

They also touched on important issues in police work, combating terrorism and organised crime, and cybersecurity.



Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim meeting with Speaker of the Croatian Parliament H E Gordan Jandrokovic in Doha yesterday.

Shura Council Speaker meets Croatian counterpart

QNA — DOHA

Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim met yesterday with Speaker of the Croatian Parliament H E Gordan Jandrokovic, who is visiting Qatar to attend the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 matches.

The meeting reviewed parliamentary cooperation and relations between the two friendly countries, and ways to boost and develop them.

During the meeting, the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament hailed Qatar's great organisation of the World Cup, which reflected the country's

excellent level of preparations for the global event.

He also expressed admiration for the country's current multi-field progress and renaissance.

The meeting was attended by a number Their Excellencies members of the Shura Council.

Souq Waqif businesses see sales rise twofold

JOELYN BALUYUT
THE PENINSULA

Momentum has continued into the third week of the World Cup with sales still soaring at Souq Waqif, a traditional market popular with locals and tourists.

The Peninsula talked to three salespeople, who said they are earning more even before the start of the football fiesta as tourists began arriving. They observed that although sales have been generally on an upward trajectory as the competition approaches the finals, the largest increase in sales was during the first week of the World Cup.

Samim from the Souq Waqif Store said that the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 has been a big boost for their business. "Our average daily sales are between QR3,000 and QR3,500, and that foreigners and residents are mostly buying flags, shawls, jerseys and hats."

For Mohammad, whose shop sells tea bags, and other kitchen items, his most selling product is the tea bags. He noticed that not only football fans are buying World Cup memorabilia, but also items that they don't have back home. "The tea bags are the tourists' favourite item, which is also like a picnic bag, perfect for the weather nowadays."

Ali who's been working at Souq Waqif for 11 years said the World Cup has helped them increase their sales. "We are earning between QR3,000 and QR4,500 daily, compared to the average QR1,000 to QR2,000, so it's double income, which is a very good business."

He explained that they added World Cup-related items to their usual clothing and accessories merchandise. "Fans like jerseys which are cheap and priced at QR40 or less, whether it is a terno, a jersey or a shorts. The Argentina-themed

items are best-selling ones. Other best-selling items include shawls and hats shaped like a football and with horns. We also have thobe designed for some of the teams qualified."

Kash from Toronto said that Souq Waqif is one of his top five preferred places in Qatar. "I've been here a couple of times since I arrived last week, it's always a different feeling whenever I come. I bought some souvenirs for my family back home, like the thobe and head-dress, and other items such as magnet and bags. I'm also thinking of buying the lamps."

"Souq Waqif is very vibrant and also a perfect meeting place where everyone comes here, celebrate and cheer for their team. I've bought some souvenirs for my friends in Spain. I bought shawls, thobes for my husband and seven-year old son, and the headdress for myself," Tania from Spain said.



Prime Minister meets Hungarian counterpart

Prime Minister and Minister of Interior H E Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani met yesterday at Lusail stadium with Prime Minister of Hungary H E Viktor Orban and the accompanying delegation, who are visiting the country to attend the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 matches. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and the means to enhance them, as well as issues of common interest.



وَحَلَّتْ نَامُصْلِدُ قَوْتِنَا
قِيمِرْ بِنْ حَمْد

On the occasion of
Qatar National Day
18th of December and in remembrance
of the historic day in 1878 when
Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani,
founder of the State of Qatar, set up the
pillars of the Modern State of Qatar,
We extend our heartiest congratulations
and greetings to

His Highness
Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar

His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
Father Amir

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

and to all the honorable people of Qatar
We hope for more returns of this memorable occasion
and wish that Qatar always enjoys security,
welfare and prosperity under the wise
leadership of His Highness The Amir



Congratulations



We extend our heartiest greetings to



on the grand opening of their

New Hypermarket, Street No. 16, Industrial Area

With best wishes



Foreign Minister meets Croatian counterpart

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met yesterday with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia H E Gordan Grlic-Radman, who is visiting the country to attend the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 activities. They discussed cooperation and relations between the two countries and means of supporting and enhancing them, in addition to discussing a number of issues of joint interest. During the meeting, the Croatian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs congratulated Qatar on its success in organising the World Cup.

Oklahoma Governor congratulates Qatar for success in hosting World Cup



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met yesterday with Governor of the State of Oklahoma in the United States of America H E Kevin Stitt who is visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed joint action between Qatar and State of Oklahoma, including ways to support and enhance it, in addition to an array of topics of common interest. The Oklahoma Governor extended his congratulation to Qatar for its success in organising the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

National Day emphasises loyalty, unity: Minister of Communications

QNA — DOHA

Minister of Communications and Information Technology H E Mohammed bin Ali Al Mannai said Qatar's National Day embodies the connotations, values, and principles that the Qatari nation cherishes, and it is an occasion to emphasise the importance of loyalty and unity among all people of the country.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he extended his greetings to Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, and the honourable Qatari nation, on the occasion of the National Day.

“On this national occasion, I pray to God to grant our country prosperity, security, and stability, hoping that the State of Qatar will achieve more in all fields,” the Minister said.

He pointed out that this year's slogan for the National Day (Our Unity Source of Our Strength) embodies all the noble and sincere meanings that reflect the secret of our country's development.

“The success of the development

On such an occasion, we must be proud that God has gifted the State of Qatar with wise leaders who have been loyal to their country and their citizens since the era of the founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani.

H E Mohammed bin Ali Al Mannai
Minister of Communications and Information Technology



journey witnessed by the State of Qatar lies in our solidarity, as we stand together proud of our identity and rich history. Following the path of the founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani (may God rest his soul in peace), we bear the responsibility of protecting the country. We renew the pledge to serve our dear homeland, maintain its position among developed countries, and reinforce the values of loyalty and allegiance towards our wise leadership,” the Minister added.

“On such an occasion, we must be proud that God has gifted the State of

Qatar with wise leaders who have been loyal to their country and their citizens since the era of the founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani (may God rest his soul in peace). Since then, and until now under the wise leadership of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, our country has witnessed one achievement after the other. Our blessed journey embraces the success rooted in our values and principles, which helped us achieve sustainable development,” HE said.

The Minister considered that the

coincidence of our country's celebrations of the National Day in December with the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 is an appropriate opportunity to introduce the whole world to our country's culture, rich heritage, and noble values, as the World Cup event will make Qatar the focus of the world's attention, and thus everyone will know about our achievements and the development that our country is witnessing.

“With the celebration of the National Day this year, we celebrate all the achievements we accomplished over the past year,” he said, adding that it is also an occasion to confirm that the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is working hard to enhance the ICT sector in Qatar under the directives of H H the Amir, as per the strategy that achieves Qatar National Vision 2030.

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology extended his sincere gratitude and appreciation to Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for all his support in developing the country's sectors and achieving Qatar National Vision.

49% of waste collected from FIFA World Cup stadiums recycled

FROM PAGE 1

Doha South Transfer Station, which was designated for waste generated from the World Cup activities, has a capacity of about 1,300 tonnes per day. It is equipped with a primary sorting system for recyclable materials and transferring them to recycling plants.

Transfer stations play an effective role in the collection of waste, facilitate the process of transporting them according to the latest technologies of international standard, to be transferred later to the waste treatment centre to complete the disposal process, and to generate electricity, produce fertilisers and extract recyclable materials.

The transfer stations receive waste from General Cleanliness Department in small trucks with loads ranging from 3 to 7 tonnes. These stations compress wastes into large-sized vehicles with a capacity of 22 tonnes after which these vehicles transport the compressed waste to the waste treatment centre.

The Ministry recently strengthened the cleaning fleet with 110 new vehicles equipped with the latest technologies. The experience of recycling wastes obtained during FIFA Arab Cup 2021 is proving to be a great help for the recycling practices during FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

In a statement issued by the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy on November 6, it said that the extensive testing took place during the FIFA Arab Cup 2021.

Waste generated from the 19-day tournament (FIFA Arab Cup 2021) was segregated into organic, plastic, metal, electronic and cardboard. Remaining waste was sent to the Ministry of Municipality's Domestic Solid Waste Management Centre for further treatment in a waste-to-energy plant.

Municipality holds inspection drive in Al Sailiya Central Market

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Al Rayyan Municipality, represented by the Health Control Department of the Municipal Control Department, has carried out intensive inspection campaigns in Al Sailiya Central Market.

The campaigns aim to ensure the safety of local and imported vegetables and fruits, coinciding with the increase in demand for vegetables and fruits, and out of the municipality's concern for the public health of consumers.

Al Sailiya Central Market is built following the latest international standards to serve the needs of all categories: producer, trader and consumer. Spanning over 78,000 square metres, the market is situated in a central location, around 25 minutes from the heart of Doha.

The market is divided into several connected and air-conditioned sections.

'World Cup an opportunity to renew commitment to rights'

QNA — DOHA

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) celebrated World Human Rights Day, which is observed every year on December 10, the day the UN General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

World Human Rights Day 2022 comes under the theme “Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All.”

NHRC Chairperson, H E Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah said that celebrating World Human Rights Day represents an exceptional event, both locally and internationally, in light of the international incidents making the world a global village.

She added that this year's World Human Rights Day comes days after commemorating 20 years of establishing the NHRC amidst Qatar's big strides toward protecting human rights, its relentless endeavor to establish a state of law and human rights, and its aspiration to achieve more dignity, freedom, justice, and

NHRC Chairperson H E Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah rejected the false and misleading systematic malicious campaigns, saying these campaigns contradict the reality and atmosphere experienced by the fans on the ground and contradict the statements of the ILO and EU officials who visited Qatar and witnessed the truth.



Union officials who visited Qatar and witnessed the truth.

She renewed her call to international human rights organizations, including UN Special Rap-

equality for every human living on its soil.

Al Attiyah indicated that this year's World Human Rights Day comes as Qatar is hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 with millions of multicultural and multilingual fans gathered together in respect, giving this year's World Human Rights day more momentum making these people united under the human rights umbrella that encompasses everyone.

She also stressed that this global sporting event, being held for the first time in the Arab and Islamic region, besides the event's humane nature and its concision with the occasion of World Human

Rights Day, constitutes an opportunity to renew the firm commitment toward the human rights, its universality, and inclusivity as the pillars of the world where peace, development, tolerance, and respect for diversity and difference prevail.

Her Excellency also reiterated NHRC's rejection of the false and misleading systematic malicious campaigns with the continued success of Qatar 2022, and that these campaigns contradict the reality and atmosphere experienced by the fans on the ground and contradict the statements of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and European

porteurs and world parliament representatives, to witness the facts with transparency. The Chairperson noted Qatar's welcome to UN or European missions, adding that all the UN and EU missions that visited Qatar praised the legislative advancement describing them as unprecedented. Some European delegations stated that Qatar's respect for human rights exceeds what they see in their European countries, adding that some European parliament representatives admitted that their countries do not have the same respect for human rights as what they witnessed in Qatar.

Uniting people, breaking down social barriers part of World Cup legacy: Al Thawadi

QNA — DOHA

Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy H E Hassan Al Thawadi said that hosting the FIFA World Cup in Qatar had united people from different cultures and backgrounds.

He was speaking at a special event organised by the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Titled ‘The Power of Innovation for a Post-Pandemic World’, the event was held at Katara Cultural Village in Doha and focused on ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing at all ages, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The event was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Minister of Public Health H E Dr. Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari, co-founder of Microsoft and Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Bill Gates, FIFA World Cup Ambassadors David Beckham and Nadia Nadim, and football legends Didier Drogba and Michael Essien. The event also looked at how innovation in medicine and science can help prevent a global pandemic in the future.

“Our ambitions for this tournament were grand and I'm proud to say we have been able to achieve them. Uniting people, breaking down social barriers and bridging the gap between East and West are all part of the legacy of staging the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East



Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy H E Hassan Al Thawadi with Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates.

and Arab world,” said Al Thawadi, Secretary General, SC, and Chairman, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Al Thawadi, who was

speaking to *Al Jazeera* news anchor Folly Bah Thibault, continued: “We've always said that we need more platforms to bring people together from

different backgrounds, different walks of life, different beliefs and different ideas to get together and understand that we don't necessarily have to agree on things but we can still progress and co-exist in a positive way. This World Cup has been able to achieve that. We have seen the exchange of culture, whether it's in terms of food, clothes or having a life-changing experience.”

With only three matches to go, Qatar has delivered a groundbreaking edition of the tournament. As well as being the first FIFA World Cup in the region, Qatar 2022 is also the most compact edition of the event in modern history, allowing fans to attend more than one match a day. It has also delivered numerous legacy programmes related to human,

social, economic and environmental projects. Al Thawadi said major sporting events have a special ability to unite people from across the globe.

“Global sporting events have a spark that inspires us all. What we need to do is ensure this spark doesn't just remain in Qatar — but across the Middle East and around the world. It has broken down stereotypes and created bonds. Our responsibility, no matter who we are, is to take that spark and start planting the seed internationally because we need more opportunities to bring people together as a global community. For me, that's one of the biggest legacies of this World Cup.” Al Thawadi also spoke of his pride in delivering the first global event attended by millions of fans since the pandemic.

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EDITORIAL

Bringing people together

AS we reach the final days of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, one thing has been very, very, clear to all that this World Cup is the most inclusive and Doha hosted a diverse set of fans. This was evident at all the stadiums, fan zones and at various tourist spots across the country. For the past few weeks, Doha has been a melting pot of various cultures, languages, and costumes – all coming together to celebrate the beautiful game of football.

Qatar has a very diverse resident population with people from several countries co-habiting in a peaceful and respectful way. In addition to this, the world cup brought fans from several countries to Doha to witness one of the biggest sporting spectacles in the world. It is very heartening to see fans from places who otherwise found it difficult to attend World Cup due to cost or visa issues coming to Qatar to enjoy multiple matches.

In an interview recently with The Washington Post, Qatar’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani stressed the inclusivity part of Qatar 2022.

“We believe that this is the most inclusive World Cup. There are a lot of people from different countries, from different backgrounds who have never been able to come and enjoy the World Cup. If you look at the demography of the fans, Indian fans are there, fans from Pakistan, from Southeast Asia, from the Far East, from the Arab region, from Europe, from Latin America, from Central Asia. All of them, they are coming here and enjoying the football,” he told the newspaper.

This point was amplified by the visiting fans and media as they were posting videos and pictures of fans of various countries singing and dancing together. There was no animosity between different supporters just friendly banter and a lot of selfies. Some journalists, who have covered multiple World Cups, were pleasantly surprised by the bonhomie among the visiting fans, and Qatar residents, which they have not witnessed before.

“We’ve always said that we need more platforms to bring people together from different backgrounds, different walks of life, different beliefs and different ideas to get together and understand that we don’t necessarily have to agree on things but we can still progress and co-exist in a positive way. This World Cup has been able to achieve that. We have seen the exchange of culture, whether it’s in terms of food, clothes or having a life-changing experience,” words by HE Hassan Al Thawadi, Secretary General, SC, and Chairman, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, summed up it well.

Hard bargains, no lectures: What Africa needs at Biden’s summit

ASHLEY SIMANGO — AL JAZEERA

Starting yesterday, United States President Joe Biden is hosting African presidents, prime ministers and monarchs for a US-Africa Leaders’ Summit. In the past, such glittering meetings have often devolved into neo-colonial lectures, with African leaders passively listening to the US president hypocritically say out vague notions of spreading “liberal democracy” values.

But times have changed. For all its challenges, Africa’s global stature is at its most attractive in modern history – and our leaders must drive a hard financial bargain with the US, extracting maximum value for the continent through their negotiations and discussions with Washington.

They must not let the summit ebb into waffling lectures from the US on “values” it does not itself practice at home or abroad. Instead, African leaders must grab the microphone – and, if needed, be uncompromising about the continent’s economic interests.

Africa is in demand For decades the US did not prioritise Africa – Washington adopted an “anchor states” model to Africa, working primarily via a handful of powerful, regional actors to leverage influence. It could afford to do that, in good measure, because its supremacy on the continent, as in other parts of the world, was largely unchallenged – especially since the end of the Cold War.

That is no longer the case: China is the continent’s biggest trading partner, with mounting influence. The US and European Union covet what Africa could offer: support on the war in Ukraine, cooperation in climate change reduction and access to rare earth minerals critical to the West’s competition with Beijing on everything from computing to sophisticated weaponry.

Which brings me to the strategic leverage that Africa today enjoys. The US-led West is keen to reduce Chinese and Russian military forays into Africa. For instance, in November, Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director David Cohen met Teodoro Nguema, heir to the throne in the oil-rich, deeply autocratic Atlantic Ocean state of

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin meeting with Angolan President Joao Lourenco during the US-Africa Leaders Summit in Washington, DC, yesterday.

Equatorial Guinea.

The US’s supreme interest in Equatorial Guinea is to prevent China from establishing a naval base on Africa’s vital Atlantic coast – and thus facing the US East Coast. Never mind democracy.

In other words, the US knows exactly what it wants to gain from Africa. Here is the question, though: Does Africa know what it wants from the US? Neutrality on Ukraine When it became apparent that many African nations would take a neutral position on the war but aggressively lobby all sides for an immediate end to hostilities, Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, began circling Africa trying to diplomatically upstage Russia. On this front, African leaders need to tell Biden that they will stick to their current course, balancing relations between the West and Russia, while calling on all sides to stop dangerous weapons build-ups and, of course, the war.

Turkey and India can serve as examples. After all, the US and Russia are both weaponising the “pornographic” spectacle of food shortages in Africa to soil each other’s image. On the money If there is one area where Africa today can negotiate harder with the US, it is on commodities, rare earth minerals and their economic partnership more broadly.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, is home to the world’s largest-known deposits of cobalt and is a major source of lithium – both of which the US craves in its fierce quest to beat China in next-generation computing, decarbonisation, and electronic war-gaming.

The US Defense Department has opened talks with Malawi’s

Africa is in demand For decades the US did not prioritise Africa – Washington adopted an “anchor states” model to Africa, working primarily via a handful of powerful, regional actors to leverage influence.

miners to avoid leaning too much on China, which by 2019 was supplying 80 percent of America’s precious earth minerals.

The EU, which is Washington’s closest ally, is so desperate for energy amid the war in Ukraine that Mozambique started shipping liquefied natural gas to Europe in November. This partly helps lessen pressure on the US to fill up the EU’s Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) storage tanks.

At a time when Russia is doling out mercenaries, and China cash, to African leaders in exchange for strategic influence and resources, the US and its allies know that they cannot afford business as usual with the continent. So it is important that African leaders speak – as best as possible – in one voice to negotiate preferential trade regimes and access to finance at fair interest rates.

There is already evidence that this can be done: Consider the case of Zambia, which counts China as its biggest trading partner. As Lusaka looks to restructure its sovereign debt, the US has asked Zambia’s creditors like China and France to accept their losses. As Stephen Chan, a professor at London’s School of African and Oriental

Studies, said in November, we may now see “competitive posturing” from the US and China to demonstrate who is “more generous” towards Zambia.

The Biden administration has already announced that it will use the summit in Washington to pledge support for the African Union to be included in the G20 – a sign that the US recognises the growing clout of the continent. But African leaders should press for more than just a seat at the global high table. They can learn from supposedly staunch allies of the US, like Saudi Arabia, which drive hard bargains with Washington to protect their national interests, even if that means limiting oil production to keep crude prices high. Saudi Arabia does not easily tolerate intimidation from Washington. Nor should African nations.

Go big or go home At the climate talks, COP27, in Egypt in November, there was a glimmer of optimism that emerged in the manner in which Africa carried out its climate diplomacy. Presidents from Africa took to the podium to lambast the US and other industrialised nations for creating the climate crisis and demanded tangible billions in climate reparations funds.

Biden’s summit in Washington is an opportunity to build on Africa’s status as an influential geopolitical player. Our leaders need to look their US counterparts in the eye, secure the best deals possible for the continent and its individual nations, and not let the US set the agenda with its hypocritical preaching on liberty and democracy. The US might be the world’s biggest power. But this could be Africa’s moment.

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Renewables to overtake coal as world’s top energy source by 2025, IEA says

RACHEL PANNETT THE WASHINGTON POST

The world is set to add as much renewable energy in the next five years as it did in the past two decades, as a global energy crisis sparked by the war in Ukraine accelerates growth in renewables such as wind and solar, the International Energy Agency says.

Led by solar energy, renewables are poised to overtake coal as the largest source of electricity generation worldwide by early 2025, helping to keep alive the global goal of limiting Earth’s warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit), according to the Paris-based agency’s latest forecasts.

“Energy security concerns caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have motivated countries to increasingly turn to renewables such as solar and wind to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels,” the IEA said in a report on

renewable energy published this month. Global renewable power capacity is now expected to grow by 2,400 gigawatts between 2022 and 2027, an amount equivalent to the entire power capacity of China today, according to the IEA report, the latest on the renewables sector. Global solar capacity is set to almost triple over the next five years, surpassing coal and becoming the largest source of power capacity in the world, the IEA said.

The capacity increase forecast in the report is 30 percent higher than the renewables growth the IEA was predicting only a year ago. More than 90 percent of global electricity expansion will be from renewable sources in the next five years, the IEA said.

“Renewables were already expanding quickly, but the global energy crisis has kicked them into an extraordinary new phase of even faster growth,” IEA Executive

Director Fatih Birol said in a news release. The IEA described the war in Ukraine as a “decisive moment” for renewables in Europe, where governments and businesses are looking to rapidly replace Russian gas with alternatives.

In the wake of the conflict, Germany – already a leader in renewable technologies but reliant on Russia for the bulk of its oil, natural gas and coal – brought forward its goal of 100 percent renewable power by more than a decade to 2035. The IEA said Europe could roll out wind and solar even faster if European Union members agree to measures including streamlining and reducing permitting timelines, improving auction designs and providing better visibility on auction schedules, as well as improving incentives to support rooftop solar.

Outside Europe, growth in renewables is being driven by

China, the United States and India – all of which are introducing regulatory and market reforms faster than anticipated to combat the energy crisis. China alone is expected to account for almost half of new global renewable power capacity over the next five years, under a blueprint released as part of its five-year plan in June.

In the United States, the Inflation Reduction Act has provided new support. The act, passed in August, includes \$369 billion in climate- and energy-related funding – much of it aimed at high-tech solutions to help nudge the world’s biggest historical emitter toward a greener future.

“The current energy crisis can be a historic turning point towards a cleaner and more secure energy system,” said Birol. “Renewables’ continued acceleration is critical to help keep the door open to limiting global warming” to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Mass long-COVID disability threatens economy

BLOOMBERG

Forget the work-from-home revolution or quiet quitting: The Covid-19 pandemic’s biggest impact on the US labor market will be as a mass disability event. It’s a shock that the economy is not well prepared to handle.

An estimated 1 in 4 COVID-19 patients experience symptoms lasting months. In principle, not all of them should have to leave the labor force. First, they should be able to call in sick. If work-impairing symptoms persist beyond a week or two, they should have the option of requesting reduced hours or claiming short-term disability benefits. Only in severe cases,

lasting several months or more, should they have to transition to long-term disability insurance.

Unfortunately, that’s not how things operate in practice. Almost a quarter of US private-sector workers can’t take any paid sick days. More than half have no access to short-term disability insurance, and those that do must fight to get long-COVID-19 claims approved. Affected workers have a right to request workplace accommodations such as part-time schedules, but employers have ample leeway to deny such requests as unreasonable.

Keeping one’s job isn’t guaranteed, either. Under at-will rules, employees can be fired for

missing work, even if due to illness (rather than disability). Although federal law guarantees up to 12 weeks of job protection to people who are ill or caring for a newborn or seriously sick family member, it covers only those who have been on payroll for 12 months – which, as of 2018, was just 56% of workers.

All this adds up to a big potential hit to the nation’s productive capacity. Estimates based on Census data suggest that long COVID-19 is keeping the equivalent of as many as 4 million working-age adults away from work – roughly the number of disabled veterans in the US.

There’s no indication that the number of affected workers is

decreasing as people recover: The share of employees officially out sick or working part-time due to illness, for example, keeps rising.

More COVID-19 is coming, both short and long. The Centers for Disease Control estimates 300,000 new cases a week, and hospitalizations are again on the rise. People will keep getting sick for reasons beyond their control. And given the policies the US lacks – including universal access to paid sick days, short-term disability, job protection and part-time accommodation – many will lose earnings and jobs, or end up out of the labor force completely. Given the challenges the economy already faces, that’s a loss the country can ill afford.



Hamad Bin Jassim Industrial Training Institute in India is an educational edifice with developmental dimensions

Built by Jassim and Hamad bin Jassim Charitable Foundation

- Preparing experienced cadres who have passed the best vocational education
- The institute has a capacity to pass 300 students annually



- ◆ Hamad Bin Jassim Institute for Industrial Training has contributed greatly in changing the lives of many young people in the region who are enrolled in its various vocational programmes.
- ◆ The programmes are run by qualified trainers enabling students to join the labor market and to support their families and contribute the local economy.
- ◆ The center is enabling the youth of the region to bring about positive changes from economic and social aspects to improve their social status making them productive to support their aspirations for a better life.

Hamad Bin Jassim Industrial Training Institute provides advanced training in many industrial fields, which are represented by many specializations that have been adopted and prepared following needs of the local labour market in the state, including: Department of Electricity, Mechanics, Welding, Plumbing and Ship Mechanics.

These departments include 12 sub-units with a capacity of 300 students in a year.

The launch of the Hamad Bin Jassim Industrial Training Institute, which started its academic year 2018-2019, contributed to providing advanced education that seeks to build a generation armed with skills and professionalism and make them more competitive.

In terms of preparing experienced cadres who have passed the best vocational education, enabling them to set off on their own and start a successful practical life in a way that supports the industrial sector in India

and the business world as a whole. Since the beginning of the study at the Institute, efforts have been made to build an advanced educational system with good financial and economic feasibility for rural areas in Kokun, and this vision was produced by the feasibility study.

The economic reality in developing countries indicates a great demand for skilled technicians to meet the demand of job market, and this is what the institute seeks to achieve through its various efforts and its work mechanism at the level of different specializations.

80% of the training period during the school years is devoted to practical training, while the remainder is distributed in the fields of theoretical training related to the streams of commerce, arithmetic, science, engineering, employment skills, the library.

There are various extra-curricular activities that contribute to adding an element of fun to the process educational and that would be a catalyst



for their great efforts. Hamad Bin Jassim Industrial Training Institute reflects the institution's objective and scientific strategy in implementing its development projects in many countries of the world by conducting a feasibility study and field assessment of the project's expected impact on the economic, social and developmental levels.

This is in cooperation with many institutions and bodies operating in those countries, and the institute is a vivid example of the qualitative impact that the Jassim and Hamad bin Jassim Charitable Foundation initiatives have on the lifestyle of those needy communities.

It is enhancing the living conditions of the population by providing them with various technical skills in many industrial fields that qualify them to make a significant impact on

The launch of the Hamad Bin Jassim Industrial Training Institute, which started its academic year 2018-2019, contributed to providing advanced education that seeks to build a generation armed with skills and professionalism and make them more competitive.

the labour market and mitigate the negative effects of unemployment on society as a whole.

This slogan is a practical interpretation of the vision of the Jassim and Hamad bin Jassim Charitable

Foundation "Health and Education for a Better Life".

Based on this development strategy, the vocational specializations provided by the Hamad Bin Jassim Industrial Training Institute, which is recognized by the National Council for Vocational Training and the Directorate of Vocational Education and Training in Maharashtra, are at the forefront.

The needs of the labour market, not only at the level of the state, but also at the level of the country, where the Hamad Bin Jassim Institute for Industrial Training has become one of the tributaries supporting the local market of the state by building cadres of a high level of competence and professionalism who will form the carriers of the main renaissance of their local economy and play an important role in improving the standard of living families in that area.



Over QR1.4 million in aid for needy families and groups

- ◆ The Jassim and Hamad Bin Jassim Charitable Foundation unveiled the value of local aid amounted to more than QR1,444,374 during the past November. The aid purposes varied between providing monthly financial aid and in-kind social assistance.
- ◆ The month of November witnessed a remarkable expansion in terms of coverage of segments benefiting from the assistance provided by the Foundation, and included a number of needy families, payment of tuition fees for a number of local school and university students, in addition to support for a number of civil society organizations in the country.

These monthly and continuous aids come throughout the year due to the great interest that the Jassim and Hamad bin Jassim Charitable Foundation attaches to projects and initiatives inside Qatar.

The Foundation aid for people inside Qatar occupies considerable size of the charity's aid priorities, based on its assumption of its social responsibilities that enhance its vision of "health and education for a better life".

Health and Education

In view of the importance that the Foundation attaches to the fields of health

and education, in line with the vision of the Foundation, the Foundation took the initiative to provide financial support to many students in various educational levels, with a total value of QR917,243. These aid targeted students with limited income and find difficulties to pursue their educational path being not able to pay tuition fees and this segment includes students at different educational levels in private and community schools in addition to private universities and academic institutions.

The aid is aimed at meeting the necessary needs of the students to enable them of continuing their educational and academic achievement without financial obstacles. This is in addition to continuing to support the



Hamad Bin Jassim Center for Computing Science Education, which was established by Jassim and Hamad Bin Jassim Charitable Foundation in cooperation with Carnegie Mellon University.

Financial aid

In the context of financial and in-kind aids, the Jassim and Hamad bin Jassim Charitable Foundation adopts a flexible and effective mechanism in order to reach the largest segment of the needy groups inside Qatar and support their urgent needs of all kinds. The Foundation provided financial aid and in-kind assistance worth QR496,631. The support in

November included Qatar Diabetes Association and Aman Center, where the aid amounted to QR30,500.

Sustainable initiatives

The charitable initiatives and projects implemented by the Jassim and Hamad bin Jassim Charitable Foundation are characterized by their sustainability nature due to the fact that they are self-financing, and devote in their orientations the principle of social solidarity, by ensuring continuous social assistance to needy and needy families and alleviating the financial burdens they face.

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‘Forum of Organizations from Local to Global’ kicks off in Darb Al Saai

QNA — DOHA

The two-day “Forum of Organizations from Local to Global”, organised by the Ministry of Culture, kicked off on Monday evening as part of the Darb Al Saai activities held under the slogan “Our Unity is the Source of Our Strength”.

Minister of Culture and Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the National Day celebrations, H E Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani, attended the forum along with a large number of guests of the Ministry of Culture, and Darb Al Saai audience.

Director of the Department of Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture Maryam Yassin Al Hammadi moderated the forum, which was attended by Acting Secretary-General of the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science H E Ali Abdul Razzaq Marafie,

Representatives from Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science; GCC; Unesco; ALECSO; and ICESCO participated in the forum.

and Director of the Department of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities in the Secretariat General of Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Dr. Saad bin Mohamed Al Zughaibi, Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) H E Dr. Mohamed Ould Amar, and Director-General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) H E Dr. Salim bin Mohammed Al Malik.

Representative of the United

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in the Arab Gulf States and Yemen and Director of the Unesco Office in Doha, Salah El Din Zaki Khaled, and Program Specialist in the Cultural Sector at the Unesco Doha Office Rasul Samadov also participated in the forum.

Ali Abdul Razzaq Marafie gave an introduction to the objectives and tasks of the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, which was established on Feb. 25, 1962, to contribute to achieving the goals of international organisations in line with the goals of education in Qatar and its objectives through implementing many programmes, projects and activities in various fields, in cooperation and coordination with national, regional and international partners to promote citizenship, human rights, justice,



Minister of Culture and Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the National Day celebrations, H E Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani, and other officials attending the forum at Darb Al Saai.

and human dignity.

He added that the commission seeks to make the membership of Qatar in international, regional, and Arab organisations a successful investment that benefits all aspects of educational, scientific, and cultural activity in the country and contribution to the national development process in accordance with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

He explained that the commission provides support to the competent agencies in the country to meet the needs of the ministries and institutions concerned in the country regarding the activities and programmes of organisations related to education, culture, and science.

PHCC advises healthy diet during winter

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has advised people to maintain a healthy diet during winter and take precautions to prevent colds and flu.

Dietician at PHCC’s Rawdat Al Khail Health Center, Sally Elghafir, said, “With winter approaching, diseases like colds and flu are common; therefore, people should take precautions and eat healthy. Some people find it difficult to maintain a healthy diet or exercise during winter, which may weaken the immune system and increase the risk of disease.”

Elghafir advised the public to eat fruits as a source of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and plant nutrients. Winter fruits include oranges, mandarins, kiwis, and berries as they contain vitamin C that

helps boost immunity. Eating whole fruits rather than juicing is recommended to keep fiber and nutrients.

Leafy vegetables are recommended, as they are rich in antioxidants and vitamin C, such as lettuce, cabbage, and radicchio, in addition to orange vegetables, as they are rich in potassium and vitamin A, such as pumpkin, carrots, and sweet potatoes. Garlic and onions are also recommended to help boost immunity, as they contain sulfuric acid compounds. Vegetables can be added to daily meals — to salads or soups, or to legumes.

Legumes of all kinds are rich in nutrients, fibre, and proteins, such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas, and can be added to vegetables or prepared as a warm soup dish to energize and warm up the body during winter.

Elghafir added that drinking water and fluids is essential during winter, such as herbal drinks including anise, chamomile and ginger, as they contain antibacterial and antimicrobial properties, as well as antiseptic properties. It is preferable to drink these herbs warm without adding sugar.

The meat group is characterized by high zinc, iron, selenium, and folic acid, which helps boost immunity. It is preferable to eat oily fish, as it contains omega-3, which helps strengthen the body and boost immunity against colds and flu. In addition to a hot chicken soup with vegetables, which contains antioxidants that fight off colds. Elghafir also recommended eating foods rich in probiotics that help nourish beneficial gut bacteria. Probiotics is found in many foods, such as yogurt, sauerkraut, onions, garlic, bananas, and asparagus.

She noted that following a healthy diet is essential for maintaining the functions of the immune system. The more we have variety in fruits and vegetables, the more we get nutrients that boost immunity.

Elghafir advised the public to stay hydrated during winter by drinking water regularly, as well as exercising, avoiding smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and getting enough sleep.



Al Diplomacy Magazine highlights sports diplomacy

QNA — DOHA

Al Diplomacy Magazine of the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its new issue, highlighted Qatar’s sports diplomacy in celebration of the country’s current hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The issue began with excerpts from a speech by Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at the opening session of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in which His Highness welcomed the world to Qatar to enjoy this unique championship. It also carried a report on the great success for Qatar’s sports diplomacy and the affirmation of H H the Amir on every occasion that the State of Qatar will fulfil its promise of organising an exceptional edition of the World Cup.

The issue also highlighted the efforts of Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in the sports field and in the consolidation of sports diplomacy which led to the State of Qatar winning this

right to organize the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The new issue of the magazine also included excerpts from an interview given by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani to News Asia channel in which he emphasised Qatar’s keenness to ensure the best experience for fans during the tournament.

Al Diplomacy Magazine devoted the file of this issue to its interviews with a number of heads of the country’s diplomatic missions in Arab and international capitals about the World Cup in Qatar and the role of sports diplomacy in consolidating the status of the State of Qatar regionally and globally.

The magazine also shed light on the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum at the Khalifa International Stadium and the eight World Cup stadiums. It also featured a number of topics and articles on sports diplomacy and its role in promoting development and peace.

Shura Council attends Effective Development Cooperation Summit

QNA — DOHA

The Shura Council participated yesterday in a parliamentary session held via video conference within the activities of the Effective Development Cooperation Summit organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC).

Member of the Shura Council H E Yousef Bin Ahmed Al Kawari represented the Shura Council in the session.

Held under the title: Parliaments and Effective Development Cooperation: the Oversight Challenge, the session was intended to highlight the different methods through which accountability can be enhanced with respect to the development cooperation through the parliamentary oversight. The discussions focused on the importance of introducing the parliamentarians to the development cooperation concept and how the parliaments can enhance the utilisation of resources more effectively and responsibly, in addition to discussing the most prominent challenges facing the parliamentarians when they fully embark on discharging their legislative and oversight functions.

GPEDC is an alliance that includes an array of the development actors such as governments, parliaments, local authority, civil society, private sector, unions and foundations from donor and recipient countries.

‘Qatar Social Work’ continues World Cup, National Day events at Katara

QNA — DOHA

Qatar Social Work, an affiliate of the Ministry of Social Development and Family, continues its events in Katara that were launched on November 18 and will run until December 18 in celebration of the FIFA World Cup Qatar and Qatar National Day.

The events are intended to introduce Qatar Social Work to the public and highlight the services it offers for the community, and to propagate the culture of social work and raise the community’s awareness on the skills of dealing with various categories of the community.

Qatar Social Work Director of Communications, Noor Al Mohannadi lauded the great services offered by the supporters, including the Damaan Islamic Insurance Company (Beema) and Qatar Navigation Q.P.S.C. (Milaha), which provided big support to the foundation in the organisation of these events, adding that such support will undoubtedly be beneficial for all segments served by the centers affiliated with Qatar Social Work.

She extended her thanks and appreciation to the partners in the National Service Academy (Miqdam) for the great cooperation in organising the events and receiving the masses and those participating in the competitions; hailing the efforts made by the Cultural Village Foundation, Katara and its great cooperation during the whole period of the events.

She added that the foundation received roughly 15,000 visitors and has distributed over 400 prizes daily to the masses participating in the events and competitions in Katara.

Milaha Vice-President and

Corporate Communications, Muna Al Bader said that Milaha is extremely happy to support a joint social cooperation project with Qatar Social Work to further highlight this social aspect which is vital for the life of every single person, and is essential for any community on earth; pointing out that Milaha prioritises the social work, which is considered a robust foundation within its social responsibility system that aims to consolidate the culture of social work and human development in the Qatari community in pursuit of preserving its supreme values and traditions inherited from the ancestors.

Academy Captain Director of Public Relations, Jassim Mohammed Al Jaber clarified that within the framework of the existing cooperation between the two institutions, the National Service Academy offers an array of events and activities associated with the events of the national day in Katara.

This is along with the events held in Katara stage presented by specialists from the Nutrition Department of Miqdam with the objective of raising the awareness on the problems of Individual and group diet, and ways to solve them, in addition to a variety of cultural and religious competitions aimed at increasing the cultural and religious credit of the attendees.

He noted that several sports and kinetic sports competitions were held under the supervision of the physical development department, including self-defence that aim to upgrade the core skills of self-defence, where a special corner of electronic marksmanship was added with the objective of educating the attendees on the basics of marksmanship.

HBKU Press celebrates momentous National Day coinciding with FIFA World Cup final

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) Press will proudly celebrate a historic occasion in Qatar’s history, as Qatar National Day coincides with the final of the first-ever FIFA World Cup in the Middle East.

Taking place on December 18, HBKU Press is preparing for the festive season with a diverse array of books to appeal to an international readership of all ages and reading levels.

“HBKU Press wholeheartedly celebrates this particularly momentous Qatar National Day, and proudly offers comprehensive catalogues which reflect the natural and social diversity of Qatar,” says Bachar Chebaro, Executive Director of HBKU Press.

“We strive to provide a variety of genres in both

Arabic and English to be as widely accessible as possible, and we encourage everyone to take this opportunity to learn more about Qatar, its sports history, and its rich culture through our books.”

Journeys on a Football Carpet by Matthias Krug combines football with national history for an insider’s perspective on the inspiring development of Qatar before and leading up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In examining the challenging journey undertaken by Qatar after winning the bid over a decade ago, this book explores just how it was able to use its dreams to realize one of the biggest sporting achievements in history. It is available in both Arabic and English for all readers interested in critical behind the scenes commentary.

HBKU Press will take

the opportunity to highlight and celebrate the historic achievements of local Qatari athletes who defied all odds on their path to greatness.

The Girl Who Dreamed of Climbing Mount Everest, also by Krug, tells the incredible true story of Aisha Al Naami, the first female Qatari adventurer and mountain climber as she faced numerous internal and external challenges on her way to the top of the highest mountain in the world.

From the same author, The Boy Who Wanted to Box Like Ali, draws inspiration from Qatari sportsman Sheikh Fahad Al Thani who forged his own path to bring boxing to his home country and become a champion in his own right. Finally, in How to be an Ironman, Qatari athlete Dr. Nasser Al Mohannadi narrates his own story of how he became one of the first Qataris ever to complete the notoriously challenging Ironman race in 2016. An essential read to any aspiring athlete, this book can be read in both Arabic and English.

Younger readers and visitors caught up in the football excitement will be

delighted by Football Stadiums of Qatar, a board book for those just beginning their reading journey.

Ahmed and his friends Nasser and Aisha take readers on a colourful tour through Qatar, exploring each of the unique football stadiums constructed ahead of the World Cup.

Readers can continue their adventures with Ahmed and his friends in One Week in Qatar, a similarly illustrated board book for our youngest readers and visitors who have an interest in everything Qatar has to offer. From national landmarks to parks and natural spaces, this book helps young readers build their vocabulary to identify the most common characteristics and objects unique to Qatar.

For first time visitors to Qatar, browsing through Hayakom: Welcome to Qatar is highly recommended for a comprehensive look through everything the peninsula has to offer. Stunning images of Qatar from the capital city of Doha to the sand dunes of Zekreet fill the pages of this book as Faisal takes his friends on a local journey to discover all the natural as well as man-made wonders of his home country. This book is available in both Arabic and English.





MoFA Secretary-General meets Cypriot counterpart

Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi met yesterday with Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cyprus H E Cornelius Cornelio, who is currently visiting the country. During the meeting, they reviewed cooperation between the two countries.

Northwestern Qatar scholars explore FIFA World Cup effects on region

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

As Qatar hosts the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab World, scholars from Northwestern University in Qatar are engaged in research projects examining the social, cultural, and innovational effects of the tournament in the region. Professors Craig LaMay, Susan Dun, and S Venus Jin are among the Northwestern Qatar faculty leading these research projects. Working on the sidelines of the tournament, they are examining the broader relationship between politics and sports media piracy in the region. Qatar's use of Virtual Reality (VR) technology to promote its tournament, as well as the sentiment of the media coverage of Qatar in the years since it has been named host of the World Cup.

LaMay, professor in residence and director of the Journalism and Strategic Communication Programme, along with 12 international scholars, is the co-author of Football in the Middle East:

State, Society, and the Beautiful Game, a newly published book exploring how football is affecting people, societies and governments across the region.

In a comparative study published in the Journal for Sports and Tourism, Jin, professor in residence and director of the Communication Programme, analysed the ways VR content has been used as a tool by Russia and Qatar to promote their stadium designs, facilities, and cultures in the build-up to their FIFA World Cups in 2018 and 2022.

According to Jin, co-author of Lev-eraging virtual reality (VR) for sports public relations and sports journalism, "experiential media technologies and virtual reality have transformed the ways public relations professionals tell stories about mega sporting events." But considering the novelty of such tools, she said, "limited studies have focused on how and the extent to which PR and sports journalistic content productions use VR technologies."

In a different light, Dun, associate professor in residence, is focusing her

research projects on assessing the impact of the 2022 FIFA World Cup on Qatar as the host nation. One study she led with Northwestern Qatar alum Hatim Rachdi assessed more than four million posts about Qatar on Twitter to further explore whether the country's nation-branding attempts are reflected in public perceptions.

"As the world's most popular sports event, the FIFA World Cup has the possibility to enhance host nations' images internationally, but we were not aware of empirical work attempting to assess public perceptions of Qatar, despite the considerable attention it has been paid," said Dun. "What we found was that, contrary to the expectations of the organizers in Qatar, host nation status has not necessarily brought better nation branding or enhanced soft power, especially in the Global North."

Research and creative scholarship are among the many ways Northwestern Qatar community members are engaged with the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Hyatt Plaza to mark QND with traditional, entertainment activities



Hyatt Plaza's exterior and interior views decorated with Qatar National Day theme.



THE PENINSULA — DOHA

In celebration of Qatar National Day 2022, Hyatt Plaza Shopping Mall has prepared dazzling, traditional activations, and captivating family-friendly entertainment.

The festivities will include Arda shows, a henna station, a traditional tent where patrons can get the chance to take memorable photographs with falcons, and a designated kids' area for families to enjoy an

The festivities will include Arda shows, a henna station, a traditional tent where patrons can get the chance to take memorable photographs with falcons and a designated kids' area.

array of activities such as face painting and other various entertaining and educational workshops.

Patrons will also be treated to a variety of fabulous stage shows, and a diverse selection of sports-focused activations

such as the "GOOOAL" event. They will be given the prime chance to win invaluable giveaways and prizes that are presented by Hyatt Plaza Sponsors. They will also be treated to customary Qatari Hospitality Traditions on arrival, which feature

free Arabic coffee and exceptional dates, which will be presented at all mall entrances.

"Qatar National Day is a prime opportunity for us to convey our sincerest gratitude to this beloved country and give back to our patrons and share in our mutual pride and sense of community.

"Here at Hyatt Plaza, we are proud to celebrate this day with our community, partners, and visitors who share our verve for this beautiful country we all call

home, and who wish for its continued growth and prosperity," said Feroz Moideen, CEO of Qatar Central Markets Company (QCMC).

Hyatt Plaza's walls will be adorned with national day decorations that were specifically designed in anticipation of the joyous occasion.

These decorations will no doubt captivate the patrons and will create a dynamic atmosphere to be enjoyed by everyone. Hyatt Plaza's national day

celebrations are an extension of Qatar Central Markets Company's commitment to celebrating Qatar's pride and unity and bringing the community together in an atmosphere of fun, joy, and entertainment.

"We are elated to celebrate this prideful and joyous event with all the citizens, residents, and visitors of Qatar. It is a sincere expression of our commitment and adoration to our beloved nation and its people," concluded Moideen.

QRCS distributes winterisation kits to 3,816 beneficiaries in Gaza

THE PENINSULA — DOHA/ATHENS

Under the Warm Winter Campaign 2022-2023 #HumanityFirst — #GiveThemWarmth, Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has distributed winterisation kits to poor families in Gaza, as a protection against the cold weather of the winter.

In a statement, Dr. Akram Nassar, head of QRCS office in Gaza, said, "In the face of difficult humanitarian conditions suffered by the people of Gaza, we distributed a total of 636 winterisation kits, which contained 1,272 blankets, 1,272 mattresses, 636 carpets, and 636 electric heaters, for the benefit of 3,816 people, at a total cost of QR 332,500". One of the recipients of winterisation kits is Khamis Mohamed (35), who was waiting for his kit at the warehouse of Palestine's Ministry of Social Development in northern Gaza.

"I am undergoing from difficult economic conditions, due to the lack



A woman receiving winterisation kits from the QRCS volunteers.

of job opportunities in Gaza," said Mohamed. "I support six children, who are desperate for their basic needs. I suffer even more because my home's roof is made of metal sheets, which causes the home to be too cold during the winter. This is not

good for the health of my children, and the home is often damaged by rainwater leakage. Definitely, the winterisation kit I received will ease the burden of the winter, and the blankets in particular will give my children warmth and safety".

Municipalities conduct inspection of food outlets

THE PENINSULA — DOHA/ATHENS

Doha Municipality, represented by the Health Control Section of the Municipal Control Department, continued inspection campaigns of food establishments in various areas to ensure their compliance with requirements to ensure health and safety of consumers.

The municipal inspectors carried out an inspection campaign in the

Pearl-Qatar to ensure that food establishments and food and beverage outlets comply with the health requirements in accordance with Law No. 8 of 1990 regarding the organisation of food control, and this is done using the latest devices provided by the Ministry to the inspectors.

Meanwhile, Al Rayan Municipality represented by Health Monitoring Department also conducted

inspection drives in different places across the municipality.

The inspection drives covered food establishments on Salwa Road and Woqod Petrol Station at Al Karaana to check the safety of food products and compliance with health requirements.

This is within the framework of the municipality's efforts to intensify campaigns on food establishments to ensure the health of consumers.

'Save the Dream', IOTC collaborate to mitigate radicalisation through sport

THE PENINSULA — DOHA/ATHENS

Save the Dream, a global initiative established by the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) with the support of Ooredoo as Technology Partner, took part in the final conference of the Radical (Ex) Change project, under the theme "Mitigating Radicalisation through Sport," which took place recently in Athens, Greece, organised by the International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC).

The conference was organised within the framework of 'Network for the exchange of good practices on the integration of youngsters at risk of radicalisation through sport' Radical (Ex) Change project. Radical (Ex) Change is a two-year Preparatory Action funded by the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture — Unit C4 (Sport), which aims at developing a collaborative network amongst the organisations working on Sport for Development and Peace and those engaged in the prevention of marginalisation and radicalisation.

Sixty experts, representatives from Greek governmental authorities, United Nations agencies, the Olympic movement, Academia, civil society, sport organisations, NGO's and the private sector took part in the conference.

During roundtables' discussions, the experts shared their knowledge and expertise on the current situation of radicalisation and violent extremism in the European countries, shared their views on the role of sport as a powerful platform to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, and discussed the framework, policies, strategy and lessons learned in the context of preventing radicalisation and violent extremism.

Additionally, the IOTC and its partners supporting the project presented the "Handbook on Preventing Radicalisation of Youth at Risk Through Sport",

Experts shared their knowledge on radicalisation and violent extremism in the European countries.

one of the programme's deliverables. Lastly, the Centre announced the launch of the Radical (Ex)Change Network, and invited all participants to join forces in order to continue the efforts of tackling this challenging and evolving phenomenon, focusing on educating the youth, creating awareness and bringing change globally.

Radical (Ex) Change project is coordinated by the IOTC, with the support and collaboration of the University of the Balearic Islands, Save the Dream and the European Multisport Clubs Association.

IOTC Director, Dr. Constantinos Filis said: "While radicalisation is not a new phenomenon, the trends, means and patterns of radicalisation evolve, and responses have to be adapted. The more we get used to it, the more difficult it becomes to tackle such phenomena. We can use sport, in programmes, especially educational ones, to make those programmes more attractive and easier for young children to learn from. Sport, as a powerful platform, can contribute significantly to the gradual building of a Culture of Peace. We aim to embrace the young generation to instill sport and the ideals of peace, as a part of their everyday life."

Save the Dream Senior Manager, Paolo Casilli said: "It is important to demystify the term radicalisation and promote the exposure of the community to different point of views: this is beneficial and fosters diversity as means to enrich rather than divide. Sport generates goodwill and the role of the community in promoting sport-based programmes for vulnerable young people is an effective strategy for creating belonging and preventing radicalisation."

Ramaphosa dodges impeachment vote in parliament

AFP — CAPE TOWN

South Africa's scandal-engulfed President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday easily survived a vote in parliament on whether to initiate impeachment proceedings that could have forced him out of office.

After a heated debate, his ruling African National Congress (ANC) party defeated the motion by 214 votes to 148, with two abstentions through open voting.

The "inquiry will therefore not be proceeded with", declared National Assembly Speaker Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, preventing an impeachment over allegations he concealed a huge cash theft at his farm.

The removal of Ramaphosa could have thrown the Africa's most industrialised country into political instability. Ramaphosa — championed as a graft-busting saviour after corruption-stained predecessor Jacob Zuma — escaped thanks to the support of a majority of MPs from the ANC, which has been further divided by the scandal.

The extraordinary parliamentary session opened noisily in Cape Town to discuss the findings of an independent panel which said Ramaphosa may be guilty of serious violations and misconduct.

The 70-year-old president survived the day, thanks to his party's majority in parliament. Last week, he secured the renewed backing of the ANC, which holds 230 of the

After a heated debate, President Cyril Ramaphosa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) party defeated the motion by 214 votes to 148, with two abstentions through open voting.

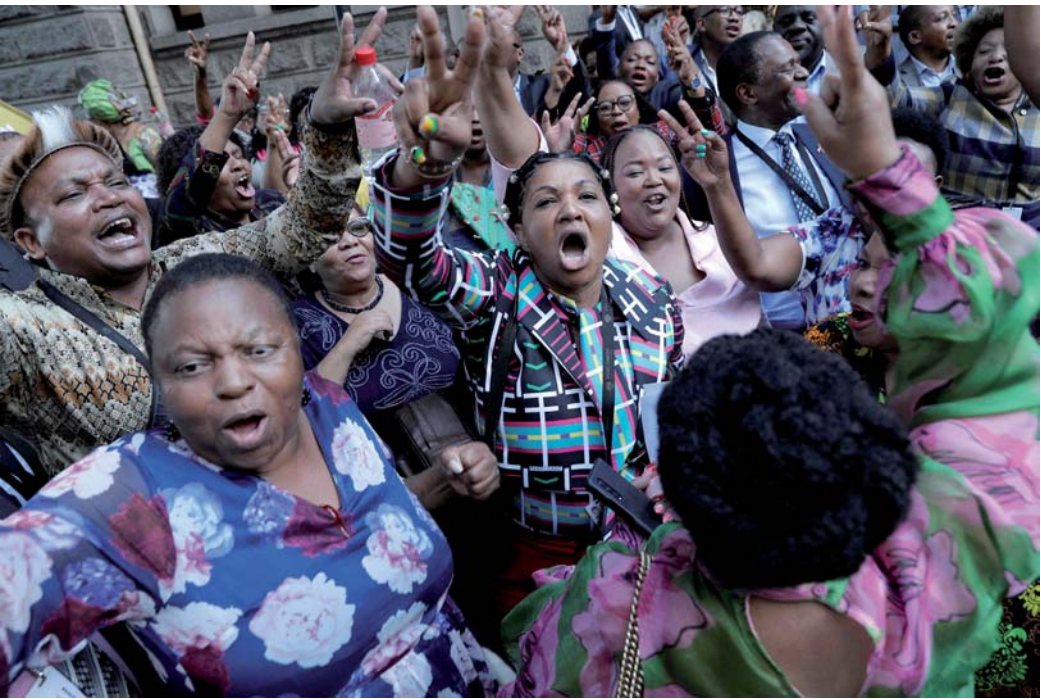
National Assembly's 400 seats, after mounting a legal bid to have the damning report annulled. Some of his party MPs were absent during voting.

Justice Minister Ronald Lamola trashed the report saying "there is not sufficient evidence to impeach the president". "The panel report has set the bar too low to impeach a sitting president," he said.

The ANC national executive had vowed last week to shoot down any attempt to force Ramaphosa from office.

That decision upset some, who said the executive had forced their hand. A few ANC lawmakers, including Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma — Ramaphosa's rival, a cabinet minister and Zuma's former wife — defied the party command.

Ramaphosa's graft-tainted predecessor Zuma survived several no-confidence motions during his tenure before his own party forced him to resign in 2018. Opposition parties presented a largely united front on the issue.



African National Congress (ANC) Members of Parliament cheer following a vote in parliament on whether to initiate impeachment proceedings that could have forced South African President Cyril Ramaphosa out of office, at a parliamentary session in Cape Town, yesterday. (AFP)

Julius Malema, the fiery leader of the second largest opposition Economic Freedom Fighters party, expressed "deepest disappointment" in Ramaphosa who was once a "celebrated... architect" of South Africa's constitution.

Vuyolwethu Zungula, leader of the African Transformation Movement, a small opposition party which tabled the motion for the parliament-sanctioned inquiry into the scandal, said the "watershed moment" would "affirm that no one is above the law".

Ramaphosa, who was at his

home during the vote, kicked off his day in the capital Pretoria, attending under pouring rain a police graduation ceremony.

The President, who was a wealthy businessman before entering politics, found himself in hot water in June when a controversial ex-spy boss filed a complaint against him to the police. Arthur Fraser alleged Ramaphosa had concealed the theft of several million dollars from his farm in 2020.

He accused the President of having the burglars kidnapped and bribed into silence instead of reporting the matter to the

authorities. Ramaphosa has not been charged with any crime and has denied wrongdoing.

The findings of the three-person special probe, issued last week, brought forward details that have left South Africa agog.

Ramaphosa acknowledged the theft of \$580,000 in cash that was stashed under sofa cushions at his farm — a safer place, his employees said, than the office safe. He said the money was payment for bufaloes bought by a Sudanese businessman, who recently confirmed the transaction in interviews with British media.

Protests in Sudan against deal to end post-coup crisis

AFP — KHARTOUM

Hundreds of Sudanese protesters took to the streets yesterday to protest a recent deal aimed at ending the crisis caused by last year's military coup, witnesses said.

"No to the settlement," protesters chanted, heading toward the presidential palace in the capital Khartoum.

Near-weekly protests have rocked Sudan since army chief Abdel Fattah Al Burhan led an October 2021 military coup derailing a transition to civilian rule. Sudan's short-lived transition was installed following the 2019 ouster of president Omar Hassan Al Bashir.

On December 5, military leaders and multiple civilian factions signed the deal as the first component of a planned two-phase political process.

But critics have slammed the deal, which largely fell short on specifics and timelines, as "vague" and "opaque".

"We are against this deal, which doesn't provide any clarity regarding our demands of justice and accountability," said Nisreen, a 38-year-old protester in Khartoum.

"We no longer trust the military. We gave them the trust once before and they later launched the coup." Others carried banners demanding justice for people killed during anti-coup protests.

At least 122 people have been killed during a crackdown on demonstrations. Last week's deal was signed by Burhan and his deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo as well as civilian groups including the Forces for Freedom and Change.



A man walks past a car, stuck in the mud after heavy rains caused floods and landslides, on the outskirts of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, yesterday. (REUTERS)

55 dead as floods batter Kinshasa

AFP — KINSHASA

At least 55 people died yesterday as the worst floods in years battered DR Congo's capital Kinshasa following an all-night downpour, according to an official toll.

Major roads in the centre of Kinshasa, a city of some 15 million people, were submerged for hours, and a key supply route was cut off.

City police chief General Sylvano Kasongo gave a provisional toll of at least 55 dead, concentrated especially on hillside locations where there had been landslides.

Witnesses saw the bodies of nine members of a family who had died after the collapse of their home in the Binza Delvaux district. "We were woken up at around 4am by water entering the house," a relative said.

"We drained the water out, and thinking that there was no more danger we went back indoors to sleep — we were soaked," he said. The family went back to bed and "just afterwards the wall collapsed".

Located on the Congo River, Kinshasa has seen a huge population influx in recent years. Many dwellings are shanty houses built on flood-prone slopes and the city suffers from inadequate drainage and sewerage.

A major landslide occurred in the hilly district of Mont-Ngafula, smothering National Highway 1, a key supply route linking the capital with Matadi, a port further down the Congo River and a crucial outlet to the Atlantic Ocean.

Prime Minister Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde said at the scene that around 20 people there had died when "homes were

swept away". Searches are continuing for survivors, he said.

The streets in the up-market government district of Gombe, which houses ministries and embassies, were also inundated. In November 2019, around 40 people in Kinshasa died in floods and landslides. Mont-Ngafula was one of the worst-hit areas, but a local resident said the flooding this time was even worse.

"We've never seen a flood here on this scale," said Blanchard Mvubu, who lives in the Mont-Ngafula neighbourhood of CPA Mushie. "I was asleep and I could feel water in the house... it's a disaster -- we've lost all our possessions in the house, nothing could be saved." He added: "People are building big houses and that blocks up the drains. The water can't move freely and that's what causes the floods."

IN BRIEF

Netanyahu ally chosen as new Israel parliament Speaker

JERUSALEM: Israel's parliament elected a close ally of prime minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu as its new Speaker yesterday to oversee the passage of legislation that will help his formation of a government. Yairiv Levin, a senior member of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, was chosen as Speaker to replace Mickey Levy from outgoing Prime Minister Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid party. Levin may not be Speaker for long, with some Israeli political pundits forecasting he will be tapped for a prominent cabinet role in Netanyahu's new coalition. In a general election last month, Netanyahu and his allies won 64 of parliament's 120 seats, giving them the opportunity to form a majority government. But Netanyahu's coalition talks have proved complicated, with controversial far-right leaders demanding sensitive posts. — *AFP*

Jihadist-hit Niger brings back former soldiers, police

NIAMEY: The Sahel state of Niger is urging former soldiers and police to get back into uniform to help the years-long battle against jihadists, security sources said yesterday. The authorities began an operation on Monday aimed at mustering a thousand men, "who won't go directly to the front, but will be used to secure important sites", one source said. Colonel Abdoulaye Mounkaila, a retired officer and member of Niger's Military Reserve Commission, said the defence ministry was "appealing to former soldiers and gendarmes who have been retired five years" or less. The returnees — for which specialists are particularly sought — will provide "relief for the defence and security forces, which are constantly on active duty", he said. Niger, the poorest state in the world by the benchmark of the UN's Human Development Index, is struggling with two jihadist emergencies. Militants who swept in from neighbouring Mali have been carrying out bloody attacks in the southwest of the country since 2015. — *AFP*

Uganda forces kill 11 ADF rebels

KAMPALA: Ugandan forces killed 11 ADF rebels after they crossed into the country from the Democratic Republic of Congo, the army said yesterday, in the first known incursion by the group this year. The Allied Democratic Forces — which the Islamic State group claims as its Central African offshoot — is accused of slaughtering thousands of Congolese civilians and carrying out bombings in Uganda. An "estimated 20-30 ADF fighters last night crossed River Semliki... Our intelligence got wind of them and they were intercepted," Brigadier-General Felix Kulayigye, spokesman for the Ugandan military, said. "A fight is on to decisively deal with the group," he said, adding that 11 rebels had been killed while eight others had been taken into custody. The ADF is among the most violent of more than 120 armed groups active in the DRC's volatile east. — *AFP*

Somalia not yet in famine but still in danger, says UN report

AP — NAIROBI

Somalia has not yet fallen into famine but several parts of the country are in danger of it in the coming months, according to a new food security report on the Horn of Africa's worst drought in decades.

The report released yesterday by United Nations and other experts says more than 8 million people are badly food insecure as Somalia faces "an unprecedented level of need" after five consecutive failed rainy seasons and "exceptionally high" food prices. Thousands of people have died.

The report warns that

famine is projected between April and June of next year in two parts of Somalia's southwestern Bay region and among displaced people in the town of Baidoa and the capital, Mogadishu. It says the "most likely scenario" will see more than 700,000 people in those areas in famine.

Several other parts of central and southern Somalia also will see an increased risk of famine if a sixth straight rainy season fails early next year, the report says.

Food security experts earlier this year warned of famine in parts of Somalia by the end of this year without an increase in

international humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian workers say the war in Ukraine has diverted the funding of some key donors.

Famine is the extreme lack of food and a significant death rate from outright starvation or malnutrition combined with diseases like cholera. A formal famine declaration means data shows more than a fifth of households have extreme food gaps, more than 30 percent of children are acutely malnourished and over two people out of 10,000 are dying every day.

"They should not wait for the famine to be declared, we have been telling them," Islamic

Relief's country director, Aliow Mohamed, said of governments and other donors in an interview last week.

Neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya also are struggling in the drought, but the new report is a grim look at Somalia's multiple crises. Insecurity caused by the Al Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab extremist group limits access to hungry people, and its fighters have destroyed water wells and food sources in retaliation for its losses in a new government offensive.

Meanwhile, food and fuel prices in Somalia have soared, part of a global problem. And crops have suffered, making

food even more scarce for the months to come.

"Many households have already lost or sold their last breeding animal," the new report says. Millions of livestock in the country of pastoralists have died, leaving families without their traditional source of wealth and health.

The Islamic Relief country director described the flow of desperate people arriving in Baidoa, with some walking hundreds of kilometers to seek help and dozens of families arriving daily. Last month, he met a heavily pregnant woman who had walked barefoot for a week with two of her seven

UN children's fund seeks \$2.6bn for Middle East and North Africa

AFP — AMMAN

The UN children's agency Unicef appealed yesterday for \$2.6bn from international donors to fund life-saving aid across the war-torn Middle East and North Africa.

Unicef said the emergency funding would enable it to "deliver lifesaving assistance to over 52.7 million children in need" in 2023.

"With almost half of the countries in the region living in crisis or undergoing ripple effects of conflicts and wars, children remain the most affected and in massive need of assistance," said the agency's regional director, Adele Khodr.

"Year after year, a dire situation gets much worse with many families becoming poorer as they face the impacts of multiple crises," she added.

The region is home to some of the world's longest-running conflicts. Almost 12 years of war in Syria have left more than 6.5 million children dependent on aid. Conflict in Yemen has created what the UN has dubbed the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Unicef said the Middle East and North Africa, including Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Libya, Jordan and the Palestinian territories, account for 25 percent of the global funding it is seeking from donors for next year.



Six dead in shootout in rural Australia

AFP — SYDNEY

Six people died, including two police officers in their twenties, when a routine missing persons investigation turned into an hours-long siege at a remote Australian property, police said yesterday.

Four officers arrived at a tree-lined property near the small town of Wieambilla late Monday afternoon.

“As soon as they entered the property, they were inundated with gunfire,” said Queensland Police Union president Ian Leavers, “they never had a chance.” “Two police officers were executed in cold blood,” he said.

The deceased were identified as 26-year-old Rachel McCrow and 29-year-old Matthew Arnold. Both joined the force in the last two years and

Mass shootings are rare in Australia, which has some of the toughest gun laws in the world.

were still constables.

“Those officers paid the ultimate sacrifice to keep our community safe,” said Queensland Police Commander Katarina Carroll, holding back tears as she briefed the public on the “extraordinarily distressing” events.

A 58-year-old neighbour believed to have heard the commotion and investigated the scene was also shot and “declared deceased at the location”, according to police.

A ‘heartbreaking’ day

Two other officers survived the attack and were taken to hospital with minor injuries.

One of the survivors was Constable Keeley Brough, who sent frantic messages to loved

ones as suspects tried to smoke her out of surrounding bushland where she hid, local media reported.

She has been a police officer for just eight weeks, officials said.

Aerial images from the scene showed an unremarkable zinc-roofed bungalow, a burned-out vehicle and smoke still lingering around the property.

After an initial clatter of gunshots, a specialist team of more than a dozen officers with air support was rushed to the scene.

By 10:30 pm local time, following an hours-long siege, two male suspects and one female suspect were dead.

Police did not reveal the suspects’ identities, but officers were believed to have been searching for a former primary school principal who went missing late last year.

Local media reported the property was registered to the missing man’s brother and sister-in-law.

It is believed the brother was a regular poster to conspiracy theory websites, railing against “secret societies” and shadowy intelligence agencies conducting “(false) flag operations.” Investigations are under way into the incident and police handling of the situation.

Mass shootings are rare in Australia, which has some of the toughest gun laws in the world.

A ban on automatic and semi-automatic weapons has



Police work near the scene of a fatal shooting, where police shot multiple people at a remote Queensland property after an ambush in which two officers and a bystander were also killed, in Wieambilla, Australia, yesterday. (REUTERS)

been in place since a 1996 mass shooting in Port Arthur, Tasmania in which a lone gunman killed 35 people.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the scenes in Wieambilla as “terrible”.

It was, he said, a “heartbreaking day for the families and friends of the Queensland Police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty”.

Queensland officials have ordered flags to be flown at half-staff at government buildings.

Beijing ‘shocked’ by attack on Afghan hotel hosting Chinese visitors

AFP — KABUL

Beijing said yesterday it was “shocked” by a deadly attack on a Kabul hotel popular with Chinese business visitors, adding that five of its nationals were wounded.

The Taliban claim to have improved security since storming back to power in August last year but there have been scores of bomb blasts and attacks, many like this one claimed by the local chapter of the Islamic State group.

“This terror attack is abominable and China is deeply shocked,” foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said in Beijing.

“As far as we know, five Chinese citizens were injured in the terrorist attack, and several Afghan military and police were also killed.” The Taliban’s chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, however, said Monday only three attackers were killed in the raid on the Kabul Longan Hotel. Two foreigners were hurt escaping from the building, he said.

Mujahid told AFP yesterday “a few other” injuries may have since been reported.

The Italian non-governmental organisation Emergency NGO, which operates a hospital just one kilometre from the blast site, said Monday they had received 21 casualties, including three people dead on arrival.

Taliban casualty figures following such incidents are usually lower than those reported by hospitals and other independent sources.

Yesterday, the hotel facade was blackened by fire that erupted during the attack and windows of the 10-storey building had also been blown out. “I heard the sound of a loud explosion and shots. Of course everyone was scared,” said a vendor in an adjacent street, asking not to be identified.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for Monday’s attack, issuing photos of two men it said were the perpetrators.

It also claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing outside the Russian embassy in



A view of the damaged hotel building in Shahr-e-Naw neighbourhood, which was attacked by Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Kabul, Afghanistan, yesterday. (REUTERS)

September that killed two staff, as well as an attack on Pakistan’s mission this month that Islamabad decried as an assassination attempt against the ambassador.

No country has recognised Afghanistan’s Taliban government but China, Russia, and Pakistan are among a handful that have maintained their embassies in Kabul.

“This looks like (at least in part) a campaign to dent the efforts of the Taliban, IS-K’s rival, to gain legitimacy both at home and abroad,” tweeted Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center think tank.

China, Pakistan, and Russia

were expected to base decisions about international recognition on security rather than the Taliban’s human rights record, he said.

In Beijing, Wang reminded Chinese nationals that foreign ministry advice was to evacuate from Afghanistan as soon as possible. Chinese business visitors have flocked to the country since the Taliban’s return in pursuit of high-risk but potentially lucrative business deals.

China shares a rugged 76km border with Afghanistan and it has long feared Afghanistan could become a staging point for minority Uyghur separatists in China’s sensitive border region of Xinjiang.

India reports injuries on both sides in border clash with China

REUTERS — NEW DELHI

Indian troops prevented Chinese soldiers from entering Indian territory on December 9 during a border scuffle that led to injuries on both sides, India’s defence minister said yesterday, in the first such clash since 2020 between the Asian giants.

The incident occurred in the Tawang sector of India’s northeastern Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China’s south and is also claimed by Beijing.

The Indian troops “illegally crossed the line to block” a routine patrol of Chinese border troops, a spokesperson from the Western Theatre Command of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) said yesterday.

“We urge the Indian side to strictly control and restrain the front-line troops, and work with China to maintain peace and security on the border,” the spokesperson said.

An Indian defence source told Reuters that patrolling teams from both sides came face-to-face at one of the peaks there and that in an ensuing hand-to-hand fight, some soldiers fell on the rocky surface and injured themselves. Two other sources said around half a dozen Indian soldiers suffered minor injuries.

The defence source said the un-demarcated border, called the Line of Actual Control (LAC), means soldiers from both sides cross over into each other’s territory every now and then. Such events are then raised in flag meetings so that they do not escalate.

BTS star Jin begins South Korea army duty amid tight security, cheering fans

REUTERS — SEOUL

South Korea’s military got a new recruit yesterday: Jin, the oldest member of K-pop phenomenon BTS, began 18 months of mandatory national service, complete with newly shaven head.

Dozens of fans braved freezing, snowy weather to speed him on his way at his bootcamp in the eastern county of Yeoncheon, where frontline troops are deployed on guard against North Korea.

“I wish it was a warm day,” Lee Jin, 24, told Reuters outside the camp, where about 300 military, police and fire officials maintained tight security. “I hope he will be treated well without discrimination.” BTS announced plans in October to sign up for mandatory military service, starting with Jin, who turned 30 on December 4, after having postponed his service

for the maximum time allowed.

“He is so skinny,” said Mandy Lee, a 30-year-old fan from Hong Kong. “I want him to eat more and stay healthy and safe.” The band will reunite in 2025 after pursuing individual projects.

After five weeks’ training at the camp, about 45km from the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone that separates the two Koreas, Jin will be deployed to a unit that has not yet been specified.

“Now it’s time for a curtain call,” Jin wrote on BTS fan platform Weverse early yesterday before entering the camp in a car. His shaved head was “cuter” than he imagined, he joked when he posted a photograph of it the previous day.

BTS’ management, Big Hit Music, said there would be no official event and asked fans to avoid travelling to the boot camp, citing safety concerns.

South Korea requires military service of about two years from all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 28, but it revised the law in 2019 to let globally recognised K-pop stars delay signing up until 30.

Some lawmakers have pushed for a shorter term, granted to medal winners at the Olympics and Asian Games, as well as some classical musicians, but a bill is still pending.

Yesterday, Yonhap news agency said another BTS member, Suga, has been judged unfit for active duty and would do community service instead.

Big Hit declined to confirm the report on privacy grounds, but said all band members would fulfil their duties.

Many artists have received the “entertainment soldier” designation to allow them to keep a hand in by performing for troops or appearing in propaganda.



Police officers stand guard near a South Korean army boot camp near the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas as fans and members of the media wait for the arrival of Jin, the oldest member of the K-pop band BTS, in Yeoncheon, South Korea, yesterday. (REUTERS)

IN BRIEF

Pakistan court adjourns Imran Khan’s disqualification case

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani high court adjourned the case by former prime minister Imran Khan that contests his disqualification as a lawmaker.

The case has been adjourned until December 20 by Islamabad High Court, Khan’s lawyer Gohar Ali Khan said by phone. Pakistan’s Election Commission disqualified the former cricket star in October for hiding money earned from selling state gifts received in overseas trips. Khan has denied any wrongdoing. -*Bloomberg*

New Zealand stubs out smoking, passes wide-ranging tobacco ban

WELLINGTON: New Zealand will phase in a near-total tobacco ban from next year, prohibiting anyone born after 2008 from ever purchasing cigarettes and reducing the amount of nicotine in products sold in the meantime.

Under legislation passed by parliament yesterday, cigarettes will be much weaker, more difficult to buy and permanently unavailable to anyone currently under 14 years old.

The legislation effectively raises the smoking age every year, and is designed to almost immediately reduce the number of people using tobacco products.

The new rules are a step “towards a smokefree future”, according to cabinet minister Ayesha Verrall, who was the driving force behind the legislation.

“Thousands of people will live longer, healthier lives and the health system will be NZ\$5bn (\$3.2bn) better off from not needing to treat the illnesses caused by smoking, such as numerous types of cancer, heart attacks, strokes, amputations,” she said in a statement.

The number of adults smoking in New Zealand is already relatively low at just eight percent.

However, the “Smokefree Environments” bill passed yesterday is designed to reduce that number to less than five percent by 2025.

As well as a steadily increasing age limit, the new law will slash the number of retailers able to sell tobacco products to a maximum of just 600 nationwide, a massive drop from the current figure of 6,000.

It will also reduce the amount of nicotine in tobacco products. “It means nicotine will be reduced to non-addictive levels and communities will be free from the proliferation and clustering of retailers who target and sell tobacco products in certain areas,” Verrall said.

Critics have warned that New Zealand’s strict policy could fuel an unregulated illegal market in tobacco items.

The new laws do not ban vape products. -*AFP*

Auction for 100-island Indonesian archipelago delayed after backlash

JAKARTA: An auction for development rights to an eastern Indonesian archipelago of more than 100 islands has been delayed until January, Sotheby’s said, days after backlash broke out over the sale.

The Widi Reserve is part of the Coral Triangle, the most biodiverse marine area on Earth, which passes through six countries, including the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

The rights were due to go under the hammer in New York last Thursday but the sale has now been pushed back to late January, according to the famous auction house.

Zackary Wright, Sotheby’s Asia-Pacific vice president, told AFP the sale was delayed because of “overwhelming interest” and to give buyers “more time... to work through due diligence”.

But the move came after stinging criticism from environmental groups that said selling the development rights would harm the untouched paradise island chain.

“The islands are a sea migration route with mangrove forests and corals -- a perfect zone for ecosystem regeneration,” Greenpeace Indonesia campaigner Afdillah Chudiel told AFP.

“That area should be protected for the conservation, not for tourism purposes.” Parid Ridwanuddin, a campaigner for conservation group Walhi, said the auction’s claim that the islands were “uninhabited” showed the auctioners’ ignorance towards the culture of Indonesia’s maritime people.

“The so-called uninhabited islands have ecological and cultural functions for the local people. They use the islands for planting their food,” he said.

“They really need these islands.” PT Leadership Islands Indonesia (LII), a Bali-based development firm that holds 70-year management rights to the islands and is the seller in the auction, said that it planned to build on less than 0.005 percent of the reserve. LII is advertising the archipelago as a chance to build luxurious resorts and homes across 17 islands, with the potential for a 1,000-metre private airstrip.

But Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry spokesperson Wahyu Muryadi told AFP the company had not acquired a business development permit and the islands could not be owned by foreigners or traded.

The company said it did not have the permit yet “because it is not currently using the waters” for business activity.

No estimated sale price for the rights has been given by the auction house or the company. -*AFP*



UK announces crackdown on illegal immigration

REUTERS — LONDON

Britain yesterday said it planned to bring in new legislation to prevent migrants who cross the English Channel from remaining in the country, as the government tries to control a surge in people arriving in small boats on its southern coast.

The number of people arriving in England across the Channel has more than doubled in the last two years, with government figures showing Albanians account for the highest number of people arriving by this route.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a new five-point strategy for dealing with illegal immigration, including plans to fast-track the return of Albanian asylum seekers, and clearing the initial backlog of almost 150,000 asylum cases by the end of next year by doubling the number of caseworkers.

“If you enter the UK illegally you should not be able to remain here,” Sunak told parliament. “Instead, you will be detained and swiftly returned either to your home country or to a safe country where your asylum claim will be considered.”

Migrants arriving on small boats has become a major political issue for the Conservative government, particularly in working-class areas in the north and central England, where migrants are blamed for making it harder to find work and stretching public services.

Sunak said a new unit would be created to tackle crossings, and that in future migrants would be housed in

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a new five-point strategy for dealing with illegal immigration, including plans to fast-track the return of Albanian asylum seekers, and clearing the initial backlog of almost 150,000 asylum cases by the end of next year by doubling the number of caseworkers.

disused holiday parks, former student accommodation and surplus military sites rather than hotels. Britain’s interior minister, Home Secretary Suella Braverman, recently called the wave of arrivals an “invasion” and described many of the migrants as “criminals”, leading to an angry response from Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama. Sunak said that over the coming months thousands of Albanians would be returned home.

Successive British governments have promised to stop the arrival of small boats. Despite that, a record 44,867 people have crossed the Channel on small boats to enter Britain this year. Concerns over the level of immigration were a driving force the vote for Brexit in a 2016 referendum, with supporters calling for Britain to “take back control” of its borders.

Sunak said the public are “right to be angry” and said the current system was unfair on those with a genuine case for asylum. “It is not cruel or unkind to want to break the stranglehold of criminal gangs who trade in human misery,” he said. “Enough is enough.”

The announcement was strongly welcomed by most Conservative members of parliament, who fear they will face

defeat at the next election if the government fails to resolve the issue.

Some Conservative lawmakers, like the former minister Simon Clarke, wanted the government to go further and consider leaving the European Convention on Human Rights next year to make it easier to design new policies if the government’s latest strategy failed to deter the crossings.

Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer said the last time the government changed the immigration system they made it worse, while some charities said the problem would continue until the government allowed asylum claims outside Britain.

Britain’s government earlier this year announced plans to deport migrants to Rwanda alongside other efforts, hoping it would act as a deterrent to those arriving in small boats.

The policy was the subject of a legal challenge in London’s High Court in early September when a coalition of human rights groups and a trade union argued the Rwanda policy was unworkable and unethical.

Sunak said the government would be restarting flights to Rwanda and announced parliament would be asked to set quotas for how many can be admitted for humanitarian reasons.



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky listens via video-link during the French-Ukrainian conference for resilience and reconstruction at the Ministry of Economy in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

Ukraine’s allies pledge over €1bn in immediate winter aid at Paris meet

REUTERS — PARIS

Some 70 countries and institutions worldwide pledged more than €1bn (\$1.05bn) in immediate aid to help Ukraine get through a harsh winter as Russian forces batter its energy grid and other critical civilian infrastructure.

France hosted the global meeting to discuss what could be offered between now and March to maintain water, food, energy, health and transport during Ukraine’s typically frigid winter.

Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said over €1bn had been pledged with some €415m devoted to Ukraine’s energy sector, hammered by Russian air strikes. The rest of the funds will

be channelled to Ukraine’s health, food, water and transport sectors, with almost €500m still to be allocated, she said.

“This is a powerful signal to show the civilised world is supporting Ukraine,” Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal told reporters in Paris. “We are grateful to the countries that remain by our side when we are suffering the aggression by Russia on our territory and our civilian infrastructure.”

The conference was also an opportunity for French President Emmanuel Macron to display solidarity with Ukraine.

Macron said France would provide Ukraine 63 electric generators on top of the 100 delivered in November. With an additional €48.5m, French

aid would reach €200m this year, according to Macron.

Addressing the meeting by videolink, Zelenskiy said Kyiv needed at least €800m of emergency aid to tackle what he said was Russia’s “energy terrorism” and help Ukrainians get through the winter.

“It’s a lot but the price is less than the cost of (power) blackouts,” Zelenskiy said.

The international meeting also established an online mechanism so that Ukraine can submit its urgent needs and donor countries can respond promptly. A second meeting between France, Ukraine and some 500 French companies will look into what can be invested to assist Kiev in the short to longer term.

Residents told to stay home as rain and floods batter Portugal

REUTERS — LISBON

Heavy rain battered parts of the Iberian peninsula on yesterday, flooding streets, sweeping away cars and forcing authorities in Portugal to close some roads and mobilise the armed forces to support clean up efforts.

The Lisbon mayor’s office put the city on a “red” warning and urged people to stay home and avoid commuting to the capital in the estuary of the Tagus River.

Since midnight, the Civil Protection Authority has reported nearly 1,500 incidents across Portugal, mainly in Lisbon and the districts of Santarem, Portalegre and Evora, including flooded streets, tunnels, train stations and shops.

A spokesperson for the armed forces said civil authorities had asked for help to pump out water in flooded areas. Schools in Oeiras, part of the Lisbon district, shut and students were sent home.

The emergency plan for the Tagus River has been activated, meaning there is a risk it could overflow. Weather agency IPMA said rainfall was likely to remain “strong and persistent” throughout the rest of the day.

The mayor’s office said that city buses and trams were not operating, the metro was not fully functioning and some train stations were inaccessible due to flooding.

Heavy rain hit other parts of the country, with IPMA declaring an “orange” weather alert in all but one of the mainland districts.

Neighbouring Spain was also affected, with the central-western region of Extremadura put on the second highest level of emergency. Heavy rain caused a road to collapse and a group of ten people had to be rescued.

Lisbon’s city hall has been criticised for failing over the years to build infrastructure to prevent flooding. Mayor Carlos Moedas said work to build a 5km drainage tunnel should start soon. “You have to think about the infrastructure — it’s a long-term issue,” said Stefani Nolasco, 23, a manager at a flooded restaurant in Alges.



Rail workers strike in Britain

A traveller stands in front of a closed gate, as rail workers strike over pay and terms, at Blackfriars station in London, Britain, yesterday. UK rail workers began a two-day national strike, kicking off a month of walkouts involving nurses to passport control workers that could spell Christmas misery for millions. (REUTERS)

EU agrees to give Bosnia candidate status

AFP — BRUSSELS

EU countries agreed yesterday to grant Bosnia candidate status to join the union, putting the volatile Balkan nation at the start of a long road to membership.

Russia’s war on Ukraine has breathed fresh life into the European Union’s willingness to consider letting in more of its eastern neighbours after years at a standstill.

The EU is concerned that

other powers, such as Russia or China, might spread their influence into the Balkans if countries hopeful of joining the bloc are thwarted.

European affairs ministers meeting in Brussels gave the green light to Bosnia becoming a candidate after the bloc’s executive arm in October recommended they launch the membership process. The step is expected to be signed off formally by EU leaders at a summit

in Brussels tomorrow. Czech Europe Minister Mikulas Bek, whose country holds the bloc’s rotating presidency, said member states were “sending a strong message of its commitment to EU enlargement”.

The move comes despite long-standing concerns over the political situation in Bosnia, a country of three million people burdened with ethnic divisions since its devastating war three decades ago.

UK launches mass genome sequencing programme for newborns

AFP — LONDON

UK health authorities yesterday announced a pioneering research programme using the genomes of 100,000 new-born babies, to detect rare genetic illnesses and speed up treatment.

The £105m (\$129m) publicly funded “Newborn Genomes Programme” — billed as the largest study of its kind in the world — will establish whether genomic sequencing to diagnose such conditions should be rolled out across the whole country to ensure earlier interventions.

Some 200 conditions

affecting a total of 3,000 newborn babies every year in the UK will be screened.

“We will only be looking at conditions that are treatable and early childhood conditions,” said Rich Scott, chief medical officer for Genomics England, which was set up by the health ministry in 2013.

They include biotinidase deficiency — a genetic disorder in which the body is unable to metabolise the vitamin biotin.

David Bick, clinical advisor to the programme, said the condition, which can lead to seizures, severe skin rashes and neurological problems, can be

prevented by over-the-counter vitamins. “We don’t want to wait until they arise to treat them,” he added.

Scott said that as well as pinpointing conditions, the programme, which is due to begin next year, will give an idea of public attitudes towards the lifetime storage of genomic data.

Potentially, the information could be used to help with an individual’s future healthcare needs “to predict to diagnose or to treat conditions, for example, if they fall sick later on”, he added.

The researchers intend to recruit from a broad spectrum

of participants from different backgrounds, and in whom there is not necessarily an identified pre-existing risk.

If the trials prove successful, researchers aim to sequence the entire genome of newborns, alongside the existing heel-prick tests already carried out for nine rare but serious diseases in newborns, including sickle cell disease and cystic fibrosis.

Two other research programmes were also announced: one, with £22m of government funding, is to sequence the genomes of up to 25,000 participants from non-European

backgrounds, who are “currently under-represented” in research.

It aims to better understand DNA and its “impact on health outcomes” and to help “reduce health inequalities and level up patient outcomes across all communities”, according to the Department of Health and Social Care.

The other, with initial funding of £26m, focuses on the evaluation of sequencing to improve accuracy and speed in cancer diagnosis. In total the government has announced £175m in funding for genomics research.

IN BRIEF

Notorious far-right German attacker tries to break out of jail

BERLIN: The assailant behind a deadly far-right attack in Germany in 2019 briefly took two prison officers hostage in an attempt to break out of jail, German authorities said yesterday. Stephan Balliet, now 30, was sentenced to life in prison for trying to storm a packed synagogue in the eastern city of Halle, then killing two people. The justice ministry for the state of Saxony-Anhalt said on Twitter that two prison officers had been temporarily held at the Burg prison, near the city of Magdeburg, on Monday. The situation was successfully defused when other prison officers overpowered the assailant, the ministry said. The prisoner temporarily seized two prison staff in an escape attempt that involved the threat of using some type of weapon, said Franziska Weidinger, justice minister for Saxony-Anhalt. “He did not succeed,” she added. — **AFP**

Boy shot by Greek police dies

ATHENS: A 16-year-old boy shot in the head by Greek police has died of his injuries, the hospital where he was being treated said yesterday. The shooting on December 5 of the Roma teen sparked clashes between the police and protesters in Greece’s second city Thessaloniki. It came a year after another Roma youth was killed by officers near the port of Piraeus and on the eve of nationwide protests commemorating the police killing of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos, whose death in 2008 shocked the nation. “Today... despite the enormous efforts of staff in the intensive care unit, the patient died,” Ippokratio Hospital said. The teenager was shot by a police motorcyclist after reportedly driving away from a service station without paying for €20 (\$21) of petrol. Police said that the youth had “tried to ram police motorbikes” and made other “dangerous manoeuvres” as he fled. An officer has since been charged with attempted manslaughter. — **AFP**

Police target climate activists in raids

BERLIN: German investigators yesterday raided the homes of several climate activists belonging to the group “Last Generation”, accusing them of backing a “criminal association”. Eleven sites were targeted in the searches across the country, the prosecutor of Neuruppin district, in Brandenburg state, said. The investigation concerns the activists’ protest in April when they turned off fuel supplies to oil pipelines affecting sites including the PCK oil refinery in the town of Schwedt. The climate group’s spokeswoman Carla Hinrichs confirmed the raids on Twitter, saying that her apartment was searched yesterday. Electronic devices like laptops and mobile phones as well as placards were seized in the raids. — **AFP**

US rolls out red carpet for African leaders

Nearly 50 heads of state or government have descended on Washington for three days of courtship by President Joe Biden after years of inroads in the continent by China and Russia. Biden plans to unveil \$55bn for Africa over three years.

AFP — WASHINGTON

The United States yesterday rolled out the red carpet to leaders from across Africa as it started unveiling \$55bn in support as part of a renewed bid to win back influence on the continent.

Nearly 50 heads of state or government have descended on Washington for three days of courtship by President Joe Biden after years of inroads in the continent by China and Russia. Biden plans to unveil \$55bn for Africa over three years.

The White House said the United States would invest \$4bn by the 2025 fiscal year to train African health workers.

The summit will also address the immediate security concerns of Africa. US leaders met yesterday with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, voicing guarded hope at progress in the turbulent country.

Welcoming African entrepreneurs for a reception on Monday evening, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States was guided by the principle of partnership. "We can't solve any of the really



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) and US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin meet with Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh, Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum during the US-Africa Leaders Summit 2022 in Washington, US, yesterday. (REUTERS)

big challenges we face if we don't work together. So it's about what we can do with African nations and people, not for them," Blinken said.

Biden during the summit will outline

US support for the African Union to gain a formal berth in the Group of 20 club of major economies, months after he threw support behind a permanent African seat on the UN Security Council.

IN BRIEF

Mexico to host next round of Colombian peace talks

CARACAS: Colombia's government and its largest remaining rebel group on Monday said they will continue to hold peace talks in Mexico following three weeks of negotiations in Venezuela's capital that have only yielded modest results. Negotiations between Colombia and the National Liberation Army, known as the ELN, were suspended in 2019. But President Gustavo Petro restarted peace talks with the group in November, shortly after he was elected and became the nation's first leftist president. Delegates from Petro's government and the ELN published a statement in which they announced they had agreed on a plan to provide humanitarian relief to rebel fighters in Colombian prisons and also to villages in two regions of Colombia that have been hard hit by the conflict. Mexico, Norway, Venezuela, Chile and Cuba are acting as guarantor nations in the ELN peace talks. — **AP**

Lula ratified as Brazil's next president

BRASÍLIA: Brazilian president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva broke down in tears Monday at a ceremony ratifying his election win, which cemented the veteran leftist's comeback for a third presidential term. Speaking after receiving the official "diploma" declaring him the winner of Brazil's October 30 presidential runoff, the 77-year-old ex-metalworker was overcome with emotion as he praised "the boldness of the Brazilian people in handing this document to someone who's been attacked so many times for not having a university diploma." Lula, who is set to be inaugurated on January 1, defeated far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro in the runoff. — **AFP**

US conducts hypersonic missile test

WASHINGTON: The US Air Force announced that it successfully tested a hypersonic missile, a cutting edge strategic weapon that is also being developed by China and Russia. The AGM-183A Air-launched Rapid Response Weapon (ARRW) was launched from a B-52H bomber on Friday off California's coast and "reached hypersonic speeds greater than five times the speed of sound, completed its flight path and detonated in the terminal area," the Air Force said. "This test was the first launch of a full prototype operational missile," it added. — **AFP**

Detained Peruvian former president says he will 'never give up'

AFP — LIMA

Former Peruvian president Pedro Castillo, who was removed from office and arrested last week on charges of rebellion and conspiracy, insisted yesterday that he would

"never give up" his cause.

Castillo also called on police and the military to "stop killing" protesters demanding his release and reinstatement, after violent clashes between security forces and demonstrators left seven people dead in recent days.

"I will never give up and abandon this popular cause that brought me here," he said during a court hearing.

Castillo was arrested last Wednesday. Within a matter of hours his vice-president Dina Boluarte was sworn in as

Castillo's successor. However, Castillo's supporters began protesting almost immediately, with matters escalating on Sunday when two people were killed in clashes. Another five people died on Monday in more violent clashes.

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