The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision
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BOOK VISIT

BILATERAL TALKS

Amir, German President discuss regional issues

QNA — DOHA

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and President of the Federal Republic of Germany H E Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen and develop them in various areas of joint cooperation.

During the talks held at the Amiri Diwan yesterday, H H the Amir and H E the German President also discussed current regional and international issues and developments, most notably developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. In this regard, H H the Amir stressed the importance of reaching permanent ceasefire, protecting civilians, delivering humanitarian aid to the people of the Gaza Strip, and finding solutions that guarantee the establishment of two states in accordance with international and UN resolutions.



Chief of the Amiri Diwan H E Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al Khulaifi, and a number of Their Excellencies senior officials attended the session.


Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani meeting President of the Federal Republic of Germany H E Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the Amiri Diwan yesterday

On the German side, it was attended by Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office H E Tobias Lindner, Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Office of the Federal President Ambassador H E Wolfgang Silbermann, Head of Crisis Affairs at the Federal Foreign Office H E Jens Jokisch, and a number of members of the official delegation.

H H the Amir and H E the German President held a bilateral meeting, during which they discussed several issues of common interest and cooperation between countries.

NEED TO IMPLEMENT INTERNATIONAL LAW FAIRLY

Gaza pause due to intensive diplomatic efforts, Amir's personal attention: PM

QNA — NEW YORK

Speaking in the UN Security Council briefing on Palestine issue, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani has said that Qatar would like to see international law implemented fairly, objectively, with no preference made to any party.

He further stressed that the international community's silence and its double standards in addressing crimes and atrocities committed by the Israeli occupation against civilians, civilian facilities remains a stain on humanity that could undermine trust in the international system and its organizations.

He stressed that the current cycle of violence places a responsibility on the international community, specifically this Council, not to allow this situation to continue, as it is time to work hard and take real measures towards achieving just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

The Prime Minister affirmed that the tireless diplomatic efforts made under the guidance and personal attention of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and in partnership with President of the Arab Republic of Egypt H E Abdel Fattah El Sisi, and US President Joe Biden resulted last week in a four-day humanitarian pause agreement.

The agreement was later extended for two days after another agreement, in addition to the release of more than 90 civilian women and children hostages in the Gaza Strip and 210 Palestinian women and children detained in Israeli prisons, and also allowed the entry of additional relief aid into the Gaza Strip that was much-needed.

He was speaking in the UN Security Council briefing on the item regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine issue, held yesterday at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The Prime Minister affirmed that current events have proven that any attempts to circumvent the just settlement, whether with partial solutions and political maneuvers aimed only at delaying and buying time, or using the iron fist in its various violent forms with the aim of getting rid of the Palestinian people, are doomed to fail.

He said that Arab countries are calling for peace not war, and that it would better, rather than telling lies regarding Arab countries, to focus on the crucial matter at hand, which is the status of the peace accord agreed to by Israel but yet refused to grant the Palestinian people their independence and rights.

He said that its important, when discussing the post-war period, to stress that there can't be peace in the region without a comprehensive, fair, and permanent settlement to the Palestinian issue. ➔P2

30 Palestinians released on 6th day of truce

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The official spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Majid bin Mohammed Al Ansari has said that "in accordance with the terms of the 6th day of the humanitarian pause agreement, 30 Palestinians, will be released today (Wednesday) in exchange for the release of 10 hostages in Gaza."

"In addition 2 Russian citizens & 4 Thai citizens outside the framework of the agreement were handed over to the ICRC," said Al Ansari on X platform.

Palestinians released from Israeli prisons include 16 minors and 14 women. Israeli hostages released from Gaza include 5 minors and 5 women, those of dual nationality within the group are: - one Dutch minor, three Germans and one American.

This would be the sixth group released under the truce agreement brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the United States.

Three aircraft belonging to the Qatar Armed Forces arrived yesterday in the city of El Arish in the Arab Republic of Egypt, carrying 108 tonnes of aid.

Doha Forum to focus on 'Building Shared Futures'

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

Under the patronage of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the 21st edition of the Doha Forum will bring together world's top decision makers, policy leaders and experts to discuss about challenges and critical issues facing the world.

The hybrid event will be held on December 10 and 11 under the theme 'Building Shared Futures' at the Grand Sheraton Hotel.

Executive Director of the Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences (PCOC), Mubarak Ajlan Al Kuwari said yesterday that at a time of unprecedented geopolitical dynamics, the 21st edition of Doha Forum will welcome many notable guests under its core values of dialogue, diplomacy and diversity.

According to Al Kuwari policy makers from Eastern Asia and Latin America will be also part of this year's Forum and it will provide the opportunity to corporate with policy makers from all continents.

"Never before has it been of greater importance to gather the world's leaders and leading policy makers in the name of diplomacy, diversity and dialogue. We look forward to welcoming our guests to Doha for the forum's 21st Edition and facilitating and encouraging discussions of critical significance to the world," Al Kuwari said addressing a press conference held at the Diplomatic Club.

He emphasised that regional and international issues will be discussed over two days including the crisis in Gaza, Sudan, Yemen and Syria. Also other challenges facing the world in areas including energy, climate change, sustainability and Artificial Intelligence will be part of the discussions. ➔P5



President of Brazil arrives in Doha

President of the Federative Republic of Brazil H E Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva arrived yesterday in Doha on an official visit to the country. His Excellency and his accompanying delegation were welcomed on arrival at the Hamad International Airport by Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al Khulaifi, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Brazil H E Ahmed Mohamed Ali Mohamed Al Shaibani and Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the State of Qatar H E Marcelo Dantas.

HISTORIC EVENT

Qatar 2022 opening ceremony wins international award

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The Opening Ceremony of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 picked up a gold medal at a prestigious international awards ceremony held in Italy.

Topping the category of Best Sporting Event, the spectacular Opening Ceremony of the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world was recognised by the judges of the BeaWorld Festival – an awards ceremony which recognises the best creative talents in the world of sports and events.


Topping the category of Best Sporting Event, the spectacular Opening Ceremony of the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world was recognised by the judges.

Selected from 333 competing events from 24 countries, the Qatar 2022 Opening Ceremony was recognised alongside Al Nehem the WhaleShark - The Lusail Icon, which won best Creative Installation.

The Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup Opening Ceremony was an unforgettable 30-minute ceremony, which became part of football's history and brought Qatar's vision of unifying the world to life.

Overseen by the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, and the Qatar 2022 LLC, the iconic Opening Ceremony was conceived and produced by Balich Wonder Studio, with the support of the well-known Qatar artist Ahmed Al Baker as co-artistic director.

Meanwhile, the WhaleShark – The Lusail Icon, was named as best Creative Installation, recognising the work of creator Marco Balich in using Qatar 2022 as a backdrop to symbolise Qatar's interest in conserving its natural environment. After becoming a social media sensation, seen by millions of people all over the world, the WhaleShark is now a permanent icon of sustainability as well as a new landmark for the country.

EDITORIAL ↘09
Mediation for peace
QATAR HAS been playing a leading role to stop the war in the Gaza Strip where weeks of aerial bombing and ground campaign by Israeli military has killed more than 15,000 people.

BUSINESS ↘ 13
Made in Qatar expo opens with 450 companies
THE ninth edition of the 'Made in Qatar' exhibition was inaugurated under the patronage of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Minister of Commerce and Industry H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Qassim Al Abdullah Al Thani.

SPORT ↘ 19
Drag racers ready for second round of Qatar Championship
RACERS ARE preparing for the second round of Qatar Drag Racing Championship which will start with practice sessions at Qatar Racing Club (QRC) today.



Amir, German President discuss ties



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and President of the Federal Republic of Germany H E Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier hold talks at the Amiri Diwan, yesterday. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them.

Gaza pause due to intensive diplomatic efforts, Amir's personal attention: PM

FROM PAGE 1

This should be in line with international legitimacy resolutions, the Arab Peace initiative on the basis of a two-state solution with an independent Palestinian state on the borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, and with the Palestinian people getting all their rights.

He explained that Qatar hastened, since the start of this episode, to communicate closely with regional and international partners and the United Nations, in an effort to reduce the escalation, stop the bloodshed of civilians, and address humanitarian issues, including the release of detainees and the delivery of urgent aid, based on its belief in the importance of diplomacy and peaceful efforts to settle conflicts, in coordination and working with brothers in the Arab and Islamic countries.

The Prime Minister expressed Qatar's thanks to the members of the Security Council for welcoming these efforts, expressing the hope that what has been achieved so far will be built upon to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable agreement that ends war and bloodshed.

He also praised the efforts of the Council members, which led, after a long wait, to the adoption of resolution 2712 as a first step in the right direction, which includes calling on the parties to comply with international law, calling for urgent truces and humanitarian corridors for extended periods, releasing hostages, and refraining from depriving civilians of basic services. He expressed Qatar's aspiration for additional steps from the Council to demand a permanent ceasefire, and to take measures to ensure the flow of adequate humanitarian aid.

OFFICIAL NEWS

Sheikha Jowaher meets Germany's First Lady

QNA—DOHA: CONSORT of H H the Amir H H Sheikha Jowaher bint Hamad bin Suhaim Al Thani met yesterday at the Lusail Palace with First Lady of the Federal Republic of Germany H E Elke Budenbender.

During the meeting, they exchanged cordial talks and topics of mutual interest.

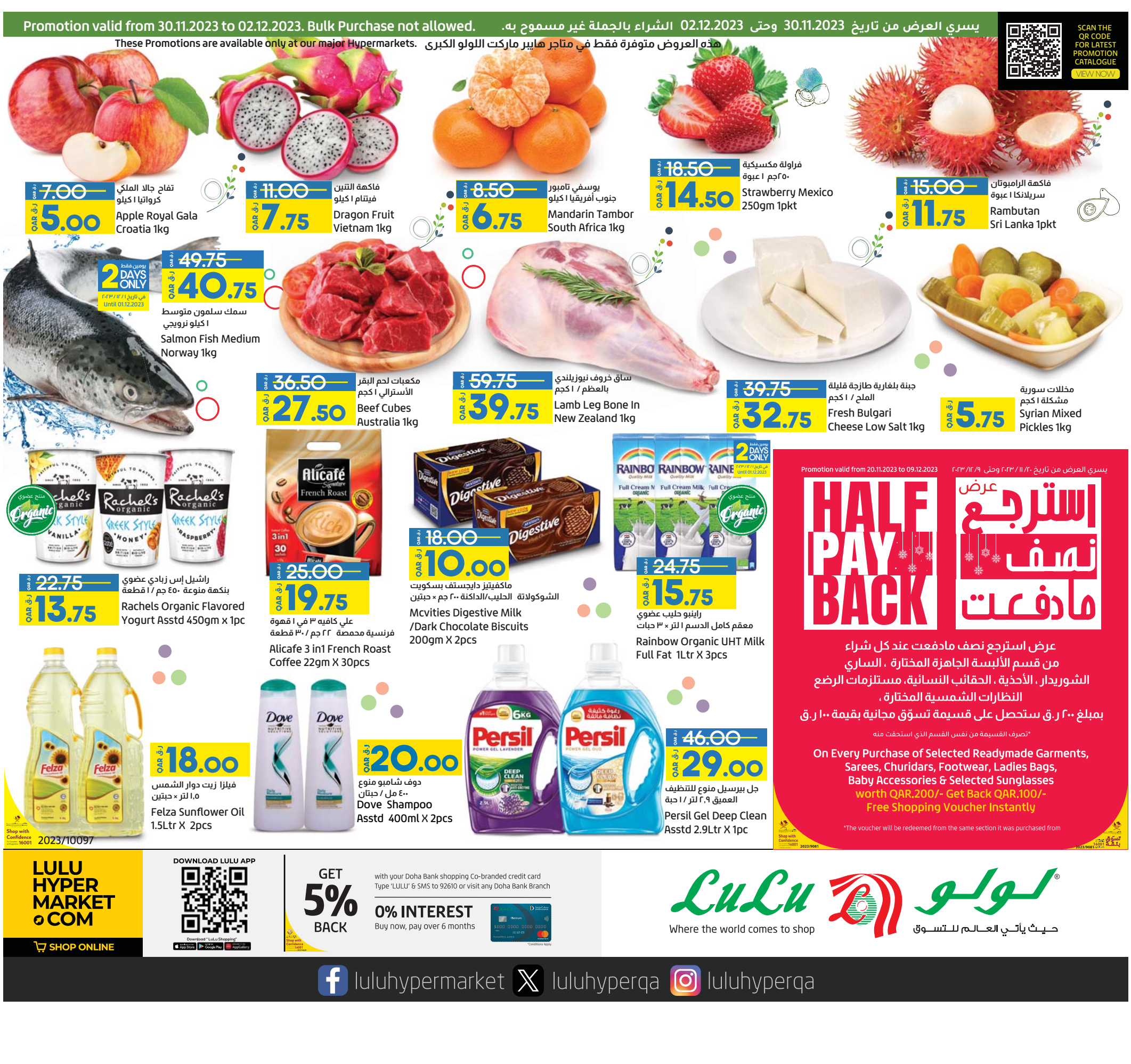
Her Highness also hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of H E First Lady of the Federal Republic of Germany and the accompanying delegation.

Three Qatar planes with aid sent for people of Gaza

QNA—EL ARISH: Three aircraft belonging to the Qatar Armed Forces arrived yesterday in the city of El Arish in the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt, carrying 108 tonnes of aid, consisting of basic food supplies and shelter equipment, provided by the Qatar Fund For Development, the Qatar Olympic Committee, the Qatar Red Crescent Society, and Qatar Charity, in preparation to be transported to Gaza, bringing the total number of planes sent to 30, carrying a total of 1,018 tons of aid.

Minister of State for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater received the aid at El Arish International Airport.

The aid is part of the State of Qatar's full support to the brotherly Palestinian people subjected to difficult humanitarian conditions.





H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of the Education Above All Foundation, along with other dignitaries and participants during the plenary session on education.

Sheikha Moza witnesses WISE 2023 session on education in times of war

QNA — DOHA

H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of the Education Above All Foundation, witnessed the plenary session organised by the foundation under the title "Education in Times of War" during the activities of the World Innovation Summit for Education 2023 (WISE).

Meanwhile, H H Sheikha Moza met with H E Ziroat Mirziyoyeva, the First Lady of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the sidelines of WISE 2023. During the meeting, the two discussed topics of mutual interest including education and cultural exchange.

The session, attended by First Lady of Uzbekistan H E Ziroatkhon Hoshimova, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation (QF) H E Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, and a number of Their Excellencies Ministers and officials, focused on raising global awareness about the Gaza Strip crisis, the importance of educational recovery, dealing with trauma, and psychosocial support.

University Professor and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Development at Columbia University Jeffrey Sachs talked about the significant role of education in sustainable development and the necessity of adhering to it, especially in times of war and crisis, calling for thinking about the turmoil that the world is witnessing today and trying to find a solution to it.

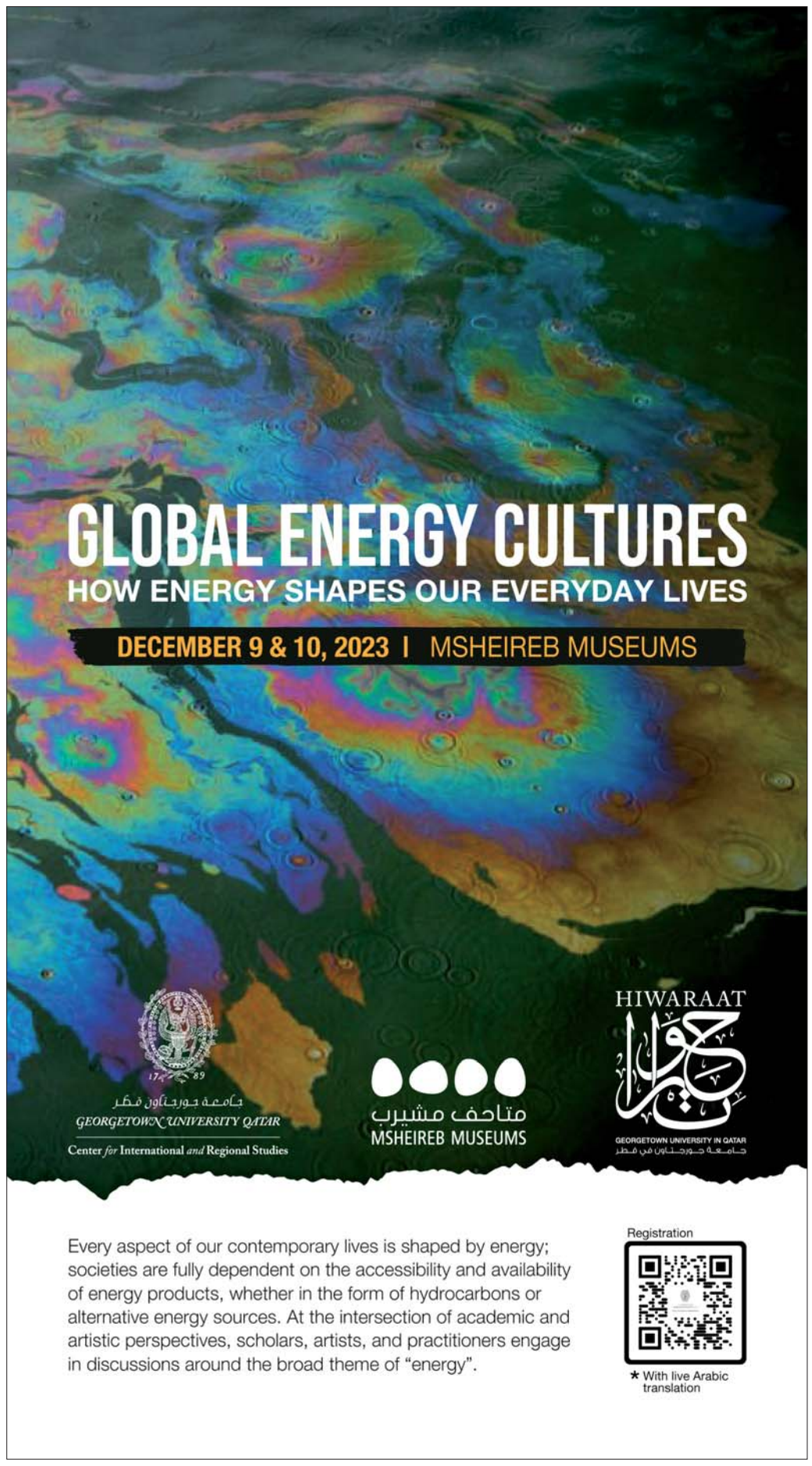
During the session, Al Fakhoora Scholarship Graduate Athar Ahmed reviewed her personal experience and the humanitarian crises she had been exposed to since her childhood, beginning with hearing the roar of planes and the sounds of bombing, artillery, bombs, and tanks, and seeing her family members covered in their blood and their body parts scattered, as a result of the bombing of their home in Gaza, and how the Al Fakhoora scholarship had the credit to her transformation and personal development and the catalyst for change and advancement again.

For his part, Founder and CEO of the Centre for Mind-Body Medicine James Gordon talked about the centre's role in Gaza and how its programmes were developed to deal with the traumas suffered by society there, especially children.

He pointed out that trauma in Gaza results from seeing blood and body parts, but what exacerbates its difficulty is that the trauma is collective.

He pointed out that the centre's programme in Gaza was able to train more than 1,500 teachers, counsellors, and medical workers to enhance children's recovery from trauma, and who in turn were able to treat more than 85,000 children in various areas, including shelters, schools, mosques, and others, and also teach them some exercises that help them recover from trauma and share their experiences with their peers.

In turn, Ameera Harouda, a journalist from Gaza and one of the war survivors, explained how people and children felt safe and reassured in schools that were not spared from the bombing.





PM attends meeting of Arab-Islamic Ministerial committee in New York

QNA — NEW YORK



Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani (fourth left) and other participants at the meeting.

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani took part in the meeting of the members of the Ministerial committee assigned by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit with Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China H E Wang Yi, held yesterday in New York.

HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs also took part in the meeting of the members of the Ministerial committee assigned by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit with UN Secretary-General H E Antonio Guterres.

Also participating in the meetings were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan H E Dr. Ayman Safadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia H H Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt H E Sameh Shukri, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine H E Riyad Al Maliki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey H E Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia H E Retno Marsudi, and Secretary-General of the League of Arab States H E Ahmed Aboul Gheit. The meeting was also attended by Foreign Minister of Malaysia H E Zambry Abdul Kadir and Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates, representative of the Arab group in the UN Security Council H E Khalifa bin Shaheen Al Marar.

The meeting focused on the developments in the situation in the Gaza Strip, the results of the humanitarian pause -particularly the release of a number of prisoners and hostages- and the efforts for reaching an immediate ceasefire, in addition to the importance of permanent members of the UN Security Council fulfilling their responsibilities to protect civilians and ensure adherence to international law and international humanitarian law.

The members of the Ministerial Committee stressed the importance of the international community taking all effective measures to ensure the securing of relief corridors for the delivery of urgent humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

They renewed the call for returning to the path of just, lasting and comprehensive peace, by implementing international resolutions related to the two-state solution, and enabling the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights to establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The committee members also renewed their call on the international community to fulfill its responsibility to reject all forms of selectivity in applying international legal and moral standards, and to protect the Palestinian people from crimes committed by the occupation forces and settler militias against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

> The meetings focused on the developments in the situation in the Gaza Strip and the results of the humanitarian pause and the efforts for reaching an immediate ceasefire.

WISE 11 wraps-up showcasing diverse perspectives of AI in education

THE PENINSULA — DOHA



Minister of Education and Higher Education H E Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi (fifth right) and Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation H E Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani (sixth right) with other officials and dignitaries during the closing session of WISE 11 yesterday.

The world is at a tipping point for human evolution because machines are about to profoundly change the way we live, the way we work, and even experience what it means to be human, said Nina Schick, one of the first Generative AI experts and Founder of Tamang Ventures Limited, at the 11th edition of Qatar Foundation's WISE Summit, that concluded yesterday.

Referring to the exponential rate at which the capabilities of AI systems are advancing, Shick emphasised, "In this new age of intelligence – a revolution – the default is going to be a symbiotic relationship with machine and human working together."

In the masterclass 'Critical Thinking in the Digital Age: AI, Information Literacy, and the Battle Against Disinformation,' Dr. Marc Owen Jones, Associate Professor, Middle Eastern Studies Department at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), delved into the challenges faced by education systems in identifying and combating misinformation and advised on ways to tackle AI-generated propaganda. The session offered a timely analysis of media bias, particularly in the context of Gaza, and raised important questions around information literacy, essential infrastructure, and technologies for education.

Drawing further attention to the ongoing challenges in Gaza, Education Above All (EAA), the official strategic partner of WISE 11, hosted a special plenary session to discuss solutions and initiatives for educational recovery and to explore the accessibility of digital data and technologies in conflict-affected communities.

A panel titled 'AI for Common Good' explored the collective impact of AI applications in the fields of research, education, policy, philanthropy, and media on cultivating the next generation of leaders and problem-solvers. The session saw the participation of H E Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi, Minister of Education and Higher Education, who highlighted Qatar's ongoing efforts as well as future plans in integrating AI into its education system.

The Minister said, "Qatar is one of the early adopters of a national K-12 AI curriculum. It aims at preparing students for a workforce that increasingly involves AI technologies and skills."

The 'Empowering the Global South: Capacity Building for Self-determination' panel gathered panelists Yaser Bishr, Senior Advisor on Digital Transformation in the Chairperson's Office of Qatar Museums, and Nariman Moustafa, Research Scholar at the Brookings Institution, among others, to probe questions on the role of the Global South in shaping the discourse on AI, and maintaining the integrity of local communities and individuals' autonomy in an increasingly automated world.

European co-founder and CEO of The Wolfram Group, Conrad Wolfram, delivered a keynote speech during the closing ceremony on the critical importance of computational thinking in the age of AI. He examined the interlink of the study of mathematics and computational methods to nurturing critical thinking and creativity skills, and argued for a shift toward prioritizing the utilization of computational tools in education systems to address real-world challenges.

Spotlighting collaborative efforts investigating complex challenges in education, WISE 11 revealed seven global research projects examining diverse topics such as the impact of learning festivals in strengthening communities, impact of student and teacher well-being on learning, and education and employment for persons with disabilities (PwDs).

The two-day summit gathered more than 2,000 stakeholders in education, distinguished experts in innovation and technology, as well as young trailblazers to spark conversations focused on the safe, ethical and effective adoption of AI in global education systems.

CABINET MEETING

Cabinet approves draft decision on formation of National Committee for Port Security

QNA — DOHA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs H E Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting held at its seat at the Amiri Diwan yesterday.

The Cabinet was briefed on the Shura Council's approval of a draft law amending some provisions of Law No. 9 of 1987 on combating drugs and dangerous psychotropic substances and regulating their trade and use.

The Cabinet gave approval of a draft law to repeal Law No. 2 of 1991 on the imposition of fees for issuing certificates issued by the Ministry of Interior and its affiliated entities, and Law No. 7 of 1991 on the imposition of fees for issuing certificates issued by the Ministry of Defence, and referring it to the Shura Council.

It also approved a draft Cabinet decision amending some provisions of Resolution No. 33 of 2006 on the Formation of the National Committee for Port Security. It also gave approval of the State of Qatars accession to the agreement (ARASIA 2017).

The Cabinet took necessary measures to ratify: An agreement between the government of the State of Qatar and the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the elimination of double taxation with regard to taxes on income and the prevention of tax evasion and avoidance.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of cybersecurity between the National Cyber Security Agency in the State of Qatar and the Cyber Security Agency in the Republic of Singapore. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a political consultation mechanism between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

The Cabinet also gave approval of a draft agreement between the government of the State of Qatar and the government of the State of Kuwait on the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of financial evasion regarding taxes on income and capital.

Germany's First Lady visits Museum of Islamic Art

QNA — DOHA

First Lady of the Federal Republic of Germany H E Elke Budenbender visited yesterday the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA).

The Germany's First Lady toured the museum, and was briefed on its holdings of the Islamic art masterpieces, which include metal and wood artifacts, ceramics, jewelry, textiles, coins, and glass.

Her Excellency also saw art collectibles that was collected from three continents, dating back fourteen centuries

She received an explanation of the establishment of the Museum of Islamic Art, stages of its establishment, and its role in spreading science and culture, encouraging creativity, and communicating with the cultures and arts of the world.

Qatar's role in Middle East is very important, says Portugal FM

QNA — BRUSSELS

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic H E Joao Cravinho praised the role played by Qatar in the Middle East, describing it as very important, especially given the very concerning situation in this region.

Speaking to QNA, he expressed his deep gratitude to Qatar for its appreciated efforts regarding the recent situations in the Gaza Strip. He also expressed confidence that Doha will continue to play its active role in this regard, a role that is widely appreciated by everyone.

"We, Portugal are grateful for the role played in helping to release and bring people out of the Gaza Strip, some people who are Portuguese," he added.

"But, most importantly, we are now in the fifth or sixth day of a temporary ceasefire, which Qatar has been working together with Egypt and the United States of America."

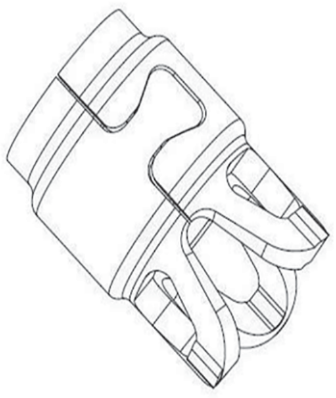
He pointed out, "It is very important that Qatar continues to play this role because we need the temporary ceasefire to become a permanent ceasefire and because that is the basis for beginning to talk about how to reach the two-state solution."

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SL. NO.	TENDER NO.	TENDER SALE PERIOD START DATE	TENDER SALE PERIOD END DATE	TENDER CLOSING DATE	TENDER BOND	BOND CURR.	TENDER FEE	FEE CURR.
1.	LT23MT0005	30.11.2023	06.12.2023	25.12.2023	2,000.00	QAR	N/A	
Title of Tender:	SALE & REMOVAL OF FACILITIES ITEMS							
Mid-Tender Meeting Location:	To be advised if required							
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time:	To be advised if required							
2.	LT23MT0108	30.11.2023	06.12.2023	25.12.2023	2,000.00	QAR	N/A	
Title of Tender:	SALE & REMOVAL OF DRILLING AND IT ITEMS							
Mid-Tender Meeting Location:	To be advised if required							
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time:	To be advised if required							

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* Changes to Tender Sale Period and Bid Closing Date will be updated in QatarEnergy website only.
* Brief Scopes of Work for the above tenders are posted on the QatarEnergy website
* Suppliers and Contractors who are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QatarEnergy are instructed to maintain their Company Registration and Communication details upto date and valid via QatarEnergy e-Registration system on urgent basis.
* No queries will be entertained, or bids received, from entities who have not purchased tender documents in compliance with the above provisions.
* QatarEnergy invites all prospective Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in QatarEnergy Tenders to register online and obtain a QatarEnergy SAP Vendor Code, a mandatory requirement for the issue of Tender Documents by QatarEnergy.
* Prospective Qatar based Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in future QatarEnergy Tenders shall obtain an ICV score. Relevant information pertaining to ICV, ICV Scorecard, ICV Certification, and ICV Guidelines are available on the ICV Digital Portal - https://icv.qa/en-US



Minister of Transport H E Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti with Minister of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia H E Budi Karya Sumadi during their meeting in London yesterday.

Transport Minister discusses bilateral relations with Brunei, Indonesian counterparts at IMO Assembly

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Minister of Transport H E Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti held separate meetings in London with Minister of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia H E Budi Karya Sumadi, and Minister of Transport and Infocommunications of the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam H E Pengiran Dato Shamhary Mustapha, on the sidelines of his participation in the 33rd Session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Assembly, which is meeting in London.

The two meetings discussed Qatar's cooperation relations with Indonesia and Brunei in the areas of transportation, and ways to further enhance them, particularly in maritime transportation and ports, in addition to discussing the latest technologies on protecting the marine environment.

Qatar's relations with Belize and Cyprus in areas of transportation, and ways to further enhance them, particularly in the realms of maritime navigation and ports, were the center of discussion as Minister of Transport H E Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti held separate meetings in London with Minister of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance of Belize Hon. Michel Chebat, and Deputy Minister of Shipping of Cyprus H E Marina Hadjimanolis, on the sidelines of his participation in the 33rd Session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Assembly, which is meeting in London.

MORE CONNECTIVITY

Qatar Airways to increase flight frequencies for winter holiday season

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar Airways continues to augment its growing network with increased flight frequencies, in time for the winter holiday season.

Passengers planning to relax on white-sand beaches or discover a vibrant new city can now enjoy more exciting options when booking their travels. Greater connectivity to Amsterdam, Bangkok, Barcelona, Belgrade and Miami, through the award-winning Hamad International Airport is currently available for booking on qatarairways.com.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al Meer, said: "Qatar Airways is an airline that continually enhances its offerings to business and leisure travellers across the globe. The award-wining airline is proud to announce its expanded flight frequencies to its ever-growing network, and we look forward to seeing our passengers enjoy greater connectivity across the globe via our home hub, Hamad International Airport, starting this winter season."

The expanded array of flight options across a global network of over 170 exciting destinations enable seamless connectivity through the award-winning Hamad International Airport in Doha.

Qatar Airways network increases Bangkok flights from 35 weekly to 38 weekly effective December 15; Amsterdam – from 10 weekly to 14 weekly effective December 16; Belgrade – from 7 weekly to 10 weekly effective December 23; Barcelona – from 18 weekly to 21 weekly effective January 1, 2024; Miami – from 7 weekly to 10 weekly effective January 13, 2024.

The expanded array of flight options across a global network of over 170 exciting destinations enable seamless connectivity through the award-winning Hamad International Airport in Doha. From the luxurious departure lounge to the oasis-styled Orchard, Hamad International Airport is the epitome of modern elegance. It is one of the few Middle Eastern hubs to connect with all six continents, putting it at the very heart of international air transport.

Now is the perfect time to plan your next holiday and discover unique cities like Amsterdam with a laid-back atmosphere and a vibrant tourist scene. Sample Miami's sizzling nightlife, long, white beaches and luxury boat trips or book a flight to Bangkok with Qatar Airways and you'll arrive at one of the world's most exciting and popular destinations with plenty of charm and character.

A cultural epicentre for southern Europe, Barcelona is an eclectic location that is full of interest and Belgrade, which means "White City," is the capital of Serbia and a steadily growing tourist magnet. Book a flight ticket to any of these amazing destinations and discover a world of possibilities this winter season.

MoEHE, INJAZ Qatar sign cooperation agreement

QNA — DOHA

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and INJAZ Qatar have signed a cooperation agreement to integrate life and professional skills programs into the primary and early education curriculum in state schools in Qatar.

The signing, which took place at the Ministry's headquarters, was attended by MoEHE Undersecretary Dr. Ibrahim bin Saleh Al Naimi and Chairperson of INJAZ Qatar and INJAZ Al Arab Sheikha Hanadi bint Nasser bin Khalid Al Thani. The cooperation agreement aims to develop and refine students' skills in financial literacy, labor market readiness, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship, and creating a sense of responsibility at an early age.

MoEHE Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Maha Zayed Al Ruwaili and CEO of INJAZ Qatar Emad Abdulazim Al Khaja signed the agreement.

In a statement, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at MoEHE, Maha Zayed Al Ruwaili, said: "Our partnership with INJAZ Qatar aims to develop the personal skills of our students and provide them with information and practical experiences related to life situations, to prepare an educated Qatari generation, which contributes to transforming Qatar into an advanced country capable of achieving sustainable development and ensuring the continuation of a decent life for its people generation after generation."

HE Sheikha Hanadi bint Nasser bin Khalid Al-Thani, Founder and Chairperson of INJAZ Qatar, expressed her pride in this partnership, which allows more students to communicate through various programmes that aim to ensure students' professional success.

The life skills project for primary-stage students consists of five programmes offered in Arabic to students from the first to the sixth grade. The programme for first- and second-grade students is titled "Our Families," introducing students to the concept of personal economy, raising their awareness about the role of money in societies, and providing them with practical information about earning, saving, and sharing money.

Qatar Indicators Conference to be held on Monday

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The first conference on the economic indicators of Qatar will be held in Mondrian Lusail Hotel on Monday, December 4, with the participation of speakers and experts from ministries and university professors from inside and outside Qatar.

The 'Qatar Indicators Conference' is organised by *Dar Al Sharq* and will be inaugurated by Qatar Chamber First Vice Chairman, Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Twar Al Kuwari.

In this regard, Deputy CEO of Dar Al Sharq and Editor-in-Chief of *Al Sharq* newspaper Jaber Salem Al Harami said that the conference will serve as an annual platform to bring together stakeholders to discuss Qatar's positions in global economic indicators. Speaking to Qatar TV yesterday, he said that the challenge is not to obtain advanced positions, but how to continue and advance in these positions.

About eight speakers will participate in the conference in two discussion sessions. In the first session, Dr. Buthaina Hassan Al Ansari, a strategic planning expert and author of the book *'The Power of the State - Economic Indicators for the State of Qatar',* and Dr. Samer Abu Rumman, a professor at Princeton University in the United States, who also collaborated in writing the Charitable Work Environment Index report issued by Indianapolis University.



Deputy CEO of Dar Al Sharq and Editor-in-Chief of *Al Sharq* newspaper Jaber Salem Al Harami



Dr. Buthaina Hassan Al Ansari, author of *'The Power of the State - Economic Indicators for the State of Qatar'*



Qatar Chamber First Vice Chairman, Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Twar Al Kuwari

Associate Professor at the College of Business and Economics at Qatar University Dr. Jalal Al-Qannas, will participates in the session. The title of the session is 'A closer look at the economic indicators of the State of Qatar'.

The second and most important session is the one in which three ministries participate, entitled (Qatar Centers in Economic Indicators), in which Assistant Director of the Planning and Quality Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Fawzi Khamis will review the important role that the Ministry plays in monitoring and feeding international institutions with information about the country in the economic indicators.

Director of the Land Transport Planning Department at the Ministry of Transport Saleh Saeed Al Marri will also participate in the session, reviewing Qatar's centers in the field of infrastructure and transportation and presenting a number of recommendations that contribute to maintaining the centers of Qatar. As for the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Aisha Jassim Al Kuwari, a second project coordinator, will contribute to the session with important information about the advanced positions of Qatar in this field.

Qatar is considered advanced in four important international indicators: the Economic Competitiveness Index, the Economic Freedom Index, the Transparency Index, Corruption Perceptions, and the Global Peace and Security Index. Qatar ranked among the top twenty countries in the index and ranked 12th in 2023, advanced by six places, as it was ranked 18th in 2022 out of 64 developed countries included in the report.

CLASSIC COLLECTIONS

'Vintage Sports Cars Exhibition' unveiled at City Center

The exhibition is open to the public until December 19, inviting guests to immerse themselves in the elegance and legacy of these meticulously preserved automobiles.

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

City Center Doha, one of the largest and most prominent malls in Qatar, has announced the launch of a breathtaking 'Vintage Sports Cars Exhibition' in partnership with Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani Museum. Showcasing a stunning collection of 11 unique and rare automobiles, this exhibition promises to captivate the hearts of car enthusiasts and history devotees alike.

The inauguration ceremony was honoured with the presence of H E Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani, Founder of Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani Museum, joined by Rashid Bin Ali Al Mansoori, CEO of Aamal Company, alongside the management of City Center Doha, media representatives, and social media personalities.



Founder of Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani Museum H E Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani cutting the ribbon to declare the exhibition open alongside the CEO of Aamal Company Rashid bin Ali Al Mansoori, management of City Center Doha, and other officials.

This collaboration marks a momentous occasion, merging the rich automotive heritage curated by the Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani Museum with the vibrant ambience of City Center Doha Mall, creating an unparalleled experience for all attendees.

Murat Kayman, General Manager of City Center Doha, commented: "We are thrilled to host this extraordinary exhibition, showcasing these remarkable vintage sports cars in collaboration with the Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani Museum. This is a wonderful opportunity for our visitors to delve into the beauty and history of these iconic vehicles, a testament to the enduring allure of classic automotive craftsmanship."

The 'Vintage Sports Cars Exhibition' is located on the 3rd floor of the City Center Doha Mall, near to the cinema, and can also be accessed through the corridor next to Jack & Jones.

It is open to the public until December 19, inviting guests to immerse themselves in the elegance and legacy of these meticulously preserved automobiles.

City Center Doha is committed to providing exceptional experiences for its visitors with its local activations, attractions, and practices that aim to attract not only tourists but also locals and residents, creating a memorable experience for everyone. With further exciting activities lined, it is no wonder why City Center Doha is considered one of the best malls in the region.

Visit www.citycenterdoha.com for more details.



Founder of Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani Museum H E Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani (fourth left) with CEO of Aamal Company Rashid bin Ali Al Mansoori (centre) alongside the management of City Center Doha, and other officials at the event.

Doha Forum to focus on 'Building Shared Futures'

Established in 2000, Doha Forum promotes the interchange of ideas, policymaking, and action-oriented recommendations.

FROM PAGE 1

Managing Director of Doha Forum, Fatema Al Baker speaking at the press conference shared more details about the sessions and specific topics of discussions.

She said that the dialogue and discussions will be around four critical topics international relations and security, economic policy and development, cyber security, data privacy, and artificial intelligence and sustainability.

According to Al Baker, the Forum will host 18 main sessions, panel discussions, newsmaker interviews besides 35 side sessions promoting exchange of ideas, policy making, and the provision of viable recommendations.

Established in 2000, Doha Forum promotes the interchange of ideas, policymaking, and action-oriented recommendations.

HIGHER EDUCATION

First edition of Cultural Day of Lusail University inaugurated

QNA — DOHA

Several university officials and students attended performances presented by a group of students of various nationalities.

Minister of Culture H E Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani inaugurated yesterday the first edition of the cultural day of Lusail University, with the participation of 30 countries.

The participating countries offer various activities that reflect aspects of their customs, traditions and cultural values, ranging from displaying traditional costumes and theatrical performances to cultural events that express the cultural heritage and civilisational legacy of those countries.

Assistant Undersecretary for Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Culture Dr. Ghanem bin Mubarak Al Ali said that the Ministry was keen to sponsor the first cultural day held at Lusail University as it supports culture in various fields.

Several university officials and students attended performances presented by a group of students of various nationalities, he added. He expressed the Ministry's aspiration to build bridges of cooperation with various state agencies given its interest in the cultural aspect and aim of highlighting it and reaching to other societies.

Al Ali pointed out that the Ministry of Culture focuses mainly on young people and educational institutions in Qatar and holds many events such as the University Poet competition which brings universities and their students skilled in poetry, as well as holding seminar seasons.

Vice President for Student Affairs at Lusail University Fatma Al Mesleh said that the university is committed to providing a diverse and comprehensive environment for students. Lusail University includes nearly 70 different nationalities, who are Qatar Scholarship Programme students or local students.

Director of Student Life at Lusail University Talela Al Kuwari stated to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that Lusail University stands out for its cultural diversity among students who are from different nationalities.

She added that the first edition of the cultural day is an opportunity for students to express their culture and identity as well as deepen communication between people.

The cultural day at Lusail University is a lively gathering within the cultural scene movement in Qatar. It aims to expand students' awareness of each other's cultures. discover and refine their talents, as well as promote cultural and creative rapprochement on the Gulf, Arab and international scales.



Minister of Culture H E Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani during inauguration of the first edition of the cultural day of Lusail University, yesterday.



Senior officials of Unimoni Exchange during the inauguration of its newest branch at Al Khor Mall.

Unimoni Exchange opens at Al Khor Mall

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The opening of the new branch aims to improve customers' access to its services and address the growing demand augmented by the ongoing multi-billion dollar projects in Ras Laffan Industrial City.

Unimoni Exchange, a leading remittance and foreign exchange company licensed by the Qatar Central Bank, has opened its newest branch at Al Khor Mall.

The branch was inaugurated by Hamad bin Ghanim Al Hodaifi Al Kuwari, Executive Director, Unimoni Exchange, in the presence of other members of the management team, customers, service partners as well as the dignitaries from the Al Khor community.

The opening of the new branch aims to improve customers' access to its services and address the growing demand augmented by the ongoing multi-billion dollar projects in Ras Laffan Industrial City.

Hamad Bin Ghanim, Executive Director of Unimoni Exchange, said: "The opening of our new branch marks a significant achievement in our growth journey. Our primary objective is to extend the reach of our services, aligning seamlessly with the growing national economy.

"We are dedicated to meeting the evolving requirements of our diverse customer base, which includes residents, tourists, and corporates."

Floyd Johny, General Manager of Unimoni Exchange, said: "We have a robust network of branches spread across Qatar and the new branch in Al Khor, a key market is a step towards the company's vision of being the trusted neighbourhood brand for remittance and foreign exchange services. As we continue to expand our branch network, we are continuously investing in our digital capabilities to offer seamless online experiences to our valued customers."

Unimoni Exchange LLC is an ISO 9001:2015 certified financial services company in Qatar, operating eleven branches located across Qatar.

Its online channel provides customers with the flexibility to make international money transfers from the comfort of their home, office or pretty much anywhere whilst also ensuring the safety and security of their personal information.



Georgetown's DC and Doha campuses collaborate

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Going beyond traditional classroom learning in order to equip students with the skills needed to navigate a complex world, Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), in collaboration with the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, recently held its flagship one-credit International Negotiation Simulation Programme.

This year's simulation, titled "Great Power Competition in the Gulf: Crisis, Opportunity, and Conflicting Interests," saw 35 students majoring in economics, politics, history, and culture take on the role of diplomats to resolve a hypothetical international crisis.

Co-organised annually by Dr. Christine Schiwietz, Assistant Dean at GU-Q, and James Seevers, Director of Studies at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy (ISD) at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service in Washington, DC, this immersive simulation aims to provide students with a real-world understanding of international negotiations and geopolitics in the Gulf region. Roland McKay, a career member of the US Foreign Service and experienced diplomat, also provided invaluable insights, reinforcing the program's connection to actual diplomatic practices.

Dr. Schiwietz emphasised the significance of this exercise, stating, "The crisis simulation is uniquely positioned to offer students a transformative, hands-on experience that mirrors real-world diplomatic challenges. Drawing on our campus in DC provides unparalleled resources and expertise for students here in Qatar, and hosting this exercise in the heart of the Gulf further provides an unparalleled perspective on the region's intricate dynamics."

The simulation's scenario, set in a hypothetical 2030, required teams of students representing the countries involved to navigate international diplomacy amid rising tensions between the United States and China in the Gulf region. The involvement of Natalie Baker, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Doha, added a dimension of real-world diplomacy to the exercise.



Participants during the programme.

James Seevers highlighted the educational value of the program, saying: "Through this simulation, students not only learn about the complexities of international relations but also develop essential skills in negotiation and strategic thinking." Additional faculty guidance was provided by GU-Q professors, Professor Kareema Daoud-Akguc and Dr. Nadine Ghamloush.

Before the fast-moving diplomatic debates and negotiations even began, students prepared by attending five mandatory modules.

Ministry of Justice organises training courses on cybercrime for legal professionals

QNA — DOHA

Centre of Legal and Judicial Studies at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has organized five legal training courses for a number of legal professionals in the different ministries, government bodies and real estate agents.

The ministry clarified in a statement today that the courses dealt with various legal topics.

The first session included practical provisions of the law of bidding and tendering and its implementing regulation, while the second covered the legal provisions regulating the work of home users, and the third dealt with the legal and practical aspects of compensation cases in Qatari law.

It added that the fourth session discussed the judicial seizure provisions for employees of the general civil aviation authority" and the fifth explored real estate brokerage provisions and the brokers obligations in the field of combating money laundering and terrorism financing.

In its statement, the MoJ noted that these training courses were part of the integrated training plan developed by the Centre of Legal and Judicial Studies at the Ministry to keep up with the State's training needs, according to the national development strategies matching the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Spectacular extravaganza marks Loyola International School's annual celebrations

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The two-day event at Al Arabi Sports Centre unfolded in three captivating sessions, drawing students, teachers, parents, and supporters into a realm of creativity

Loyola International School transformed its annual day celebration on November 24th and 25th into a captivating spectacle under the theme, "Wings of Imagination."

The two-day event at Al Arabi Sports Centre unfolded in three captivating sessions, drawing students, teachers, parents, and supporters into a realm of creativity. Esteemed guests, including Ambassadors and education leaders, added luster to the occasion.

Shanavas Bava (President of ICBF), Milan Arun (First Lady President of ICC), and AP Manikantan (President of ICC) graced the first session. H E Md. Nazrul Islam, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the State of Qatar, presided over the second, and H E Vipul, Ambassador of India to the State of Qatar honoured the third.

In a stellar tribute to India's pride, the annual day celebration spotlighted the nation's pioneering lunar explorations mission – Chandrayaan 3. The celebration also featured a heartfelt tribute to the chairman, a nod to all the achievers (academic and activities), and captivating performances by about 1,500 students.

Reflecting on the school's journey, LIS leaders Anup Chakravarthy, Sarat Koduru, and Pramod Kumar Ranwaka expressed pride in the school's achievements and its continuous progress. The event's success, marked by standing ovations, showcased the limitless power of imagination and the school's unwavering commitment to excellence.



Students perform a programme during the celebrations.

First-of-its-kind project wins faculty's applause

Media Department students present graduation project on Expo 2023

'Expona 2023' is a unique graduation project with new ideas reflecting successful coordination between a university and a media outlet.

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA



Assistant Professor of Media Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi (second right), Dr. Kamal Hamidou (second left), Associate Professor Dr. Mohamed Elamin Musa (first right), Dr. Mohammed Siddiq (first left), and Assistant Professor Dr. Eiman Eissa (back) evaluating the 'Expona 2023' graduation project.

A group of students from the Department of Mass Communication of Qatar University have presented their graduation project on Expo 2023 Doha. The project included field reports on the Expo prepared by the graduating students.

The students developed their print and online journalism graduation projects in the form of printed and electronic newspapers.

The graduation project titled "Expona 2023" was supervised by Assistant Professor of Media at Qatar University and Editor-in-Chief of *The Peninsula* newspaper Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi.

The project was discussed by Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi, Professor Dr. Kamal Hamidou, Associate Professor Dr. Mohamed Elamin Musa, and Lecturer Dr. Mohammed Siddiq from the Department of Mass Communication, QU.

The editorial team of the project included students Suhail Al Hadidi, Ahmed Al Kubaisi, Abdul Rahman Al Obaidli, Faisal Al Qahtani and Issa Balanki. They presented the project to the faculty on November 28.

Presenting their graduation project, the students discussed their selection of "Expona" as the title of their project and the experiences they obtained during their visits to Expo 2023 Doha and *The Peninsula* newspaper.

Student Faisal Al Qahtani said: "The graduation project for me and my classmates is a newspaper on Expo 2023 Doha. There are two copies — a hard copy and a soft electronic copy."

He said the topic of the project was selected in line with a giant international horticultural event, the Expo 2023 Doha, which is going on in Qatar, the second largest event after the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Given the importance of the event, we discussed with project supervisor to select Expo 2023 for our graduation project and got approval.

Since the project supervisor is also Editor-in-Chief of *The Peninsula*, we got opportunities to access the headquarters of the newspaper where we received the necessary support to carry out our project, he said.

Student Abdul Rahman Al Obaidli said: "Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha, Qatar which is being held in Doha under the theme "Green Desert, Better Environment", aims to inspire and inform guests and the international community about innovative solutions to mitigate desertification.

He said the theme has been found to inspire the international community to explore and adopt innovative solutions to mitigate desertification.

"The event focuses on modern agriculture, technology and innovation, environmental awareness, and sustainability," said Al Obaidli.

> We are very happy to witness the project through which we managed to create partnership between the Department of Mass Communication and *The Peninsula*, a leading Qatari media outlet. For this project, the students worked in an actual media environment within the editorial board of the newspaper and completed the project in a professional environment.
>
> **Dr. Kamal Hamidou**

> The students of the Department of Mass Communication at QU have made a significant effort, under the supervision of Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi, in completing this promising media project, which resulted in a newspaper and a news web site that contained various arts of news writing and editing, as well as an elegant design which is in harmony with the nature of the Expo.
>
> **Dr. Mohamed Elamin Musa**

> Implementing the project and completing it in the manner in which it was presented for discussion indicates that the students understood the requirements for writing journalistic projects and were able to implement it as required, also benefiting from the distinguished supervision of Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi.
>
> **Dr. Mohammed Siddiq**



FROM LEFT: Students Faisal Al Qahtani, Abdul Rahman Al Obaidli, Suhail Al Hadidi, Issa Balanki, and Ahmed Al Kubaisi presenting print copy of the graduation project and website of the newspaper (seen in the background). PICS: SALIM MATRAMKOT/THE PENINSULA

The discussing on the graduation project began with opening remarks by Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi in which he stressed the importance of the project.

He also appreciated the students' efforts for preparing a unique graduation project.

The professors lauded the project's coordination between QU Department of Mass Communication and *The Peninsula* newspaper, a leading media outlet.

They also lauded the various aspects of the project in term of selecting a very important and relevant topic to educate the community about the importance of preserving environment and sustainability for climate change.

> The project presented a unique idea which distinguishes it from other graduation projects which were discussed recently at the university.
>
> **Aqsa Nori, lecturer**

The professors suggested some minor changes to improve design of the newspaper for better outlook, while appreciating efforts by the supervisor and students for presenting a distinguished project.

Dr. Mohammed Siddiq said the graduation project is an integrated project that meets all the aspects covered by the exhibition, and the coverage meets all journalistic requirements.

He said the students were able to conduct press reports in the required manner and provided reports that met the media reporting requirements that must be met in all press reports, whether in print or digital newspapers.

"Implementing the project and completing it in the manner in which it was presented for discussion indicates that the students had understood the requirements for writing journalistic projects and were able to implement it as required, also benefiting from the distinguished supervision of Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi," said Dr. Siddiq.

He said the project's production was generally good, with some simple technical observations that can be avoided in the future, adding that the distribution of photos, topics, and choice of font was appropriate.

Dr. Mohammed Siddiq said: "The project is interesting and excellent in general. To improve further, I would like to suggest to make some changes like a bigger font for page numbers and bold headlines to make it more visible and prominent."

He also suggested use of more graphics, sub headlines and pictures to further improve the display of the publication.

"My suggestions are related to design of the newspaper which could not take more than a few minutes to improve. However, you did a great job. Thanks for your efforts and time," said Dr. Siddiq.

Associate Professor Dr. Mohamed Elamin Musa said the topic of the graduation project is very important in a way that the Expo 2023 runs for six months, and this newspaper could be used during the event.

"Visitors to the Expo can benefit from this project which covers all the necessary details about the event."

He suggested that on the last page it should be mentioned that the newspaper was prepared as a graduation project supervised by Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi and with the support of *The Peninsula* newspaper.

Dr. Musa also suggested some minor changes to the design for a better display.

Dr. Mohamed Elamin Musa said the "Expona 2023" graduation project is one of the most distinguished graduation projects, as it chose an exceptional global event hosted by Doha for six months.

"The students of Mass Communication Department at QU have made a significant effort, under the supervision of Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi, in completing this promising media project, which resulted in a newspaper and a news website that contained various arts of news writing and editing, as well as an elegant design which is in harmony with the nature of the Expo," said Dr. Musa.

He said one of the most prominent communication messages presented by this project is the importance of integration between academic media training institutions, represented by the Department of Mass Communication at QU, and the leading media institutions in Qatar, represented by *The Peninsula* newspaper.

"We hope that this project will be an initiative of cooperation and integration between the Department and Qatari media outlet, and that it will be an incentive for media students to enter journalism."

Professor Dr. Kamal Hamidou said the graduation project was very important in a way that it provides a valuable document on Expo 2023 during the event and after it for those interested to know about this international horticultural event.

He said the students made great efforts in covering almost all aspects of this huge event which reflect in the newspaper in term of the number of stories and attractive subjects.



Assistant Professor Dr. Mohamed Elfateh Hamdi (right) and lecturer Chaker Ayadi reading the newspaper prepared by the students.

Speaking to *The Peninsula*, Dr. Hamidou lauded Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi's efforts in supervising a comprehensive graduation project covering all aspects of the subject and facilitating students in doing their assignments including training and projects.

"We are very happy to witness the project through which we managed to create partnership between the Department of Mass Communication and *The Peninsula*, a leading Qatari media outlet," said Dr. Hamidou.

For this project, he said, the students worked in an actual media environment within the editorial board of the newspaper and completed the project in a professional environment.

"They went to the field not as students, but almost as journalists working with The Peninsula to prepare the project on a new and important topic related to the Expo 2023," said Dr. Hamidou.

Assistant Professor Dr. Mohamed Elfateh Hamdi said the students presented a very important graduation project in a professional way.

He said the hard copy of the project was presented in a very attractive way including articles, graphics and photographs covering all aspects of the Expo 2023. "Both the hard and soft versions of the project are excellent and meet professional standard. The topic of the project is also very important and relevant," said Hamdi.

> The hard copy of the project was presented in a very attractive way including articles, graphics and photographs covering all aspects of the Expo 2023.
>
> **Dr. Mohamed Elfateh Hamdi**



Cover page of the newspaper

> The graduation project Expona 2023 is a praiseworthy achievement because it combines academic theories and practical journalism.
>
> **Dr. Eiman Eissa**

Assistant Professor from the Department of Mass Communication at Qatar University, Dr. Eiman Eissa said: "The graduation project Expona 2023 is a praiseworthy achievement because it combines academic theories and practical journalism."

She said the project also helps strengthening the country's efforts for Expo 2023. "Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi provided academic and professional guidance, which was transformed into a professional work consisting of a news website and a printed newspaper to provide purposeful and integrated press coverage characterised by professionalism and creativity," said Dr. Eissa.

Aqsa Nori, a lecturer at the department, said the project presented a unique idea which distinguishes it from other graduation projects which were discussed recently at the university.

"The project reflects great efforts made by Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi as supervisor of this fantastic project and his students. I am impressed with articles of the newspaper and the display," said Nori.

Chaker Ayadi, another lecturer, said the students presented a high level project in term of content and display. "The newspaper contains many articles on Expo 2023, meeting journalistic quality," said Ayadi.

> The students presented a high-level project in term of content and display.
>
> **Chaker Ayadi, lecturer**



Students with project supervisor, Assistant Professor of Media Dr. Khalid Al-Shafi.

BLOCKADE OF GAZA

Hamas eyes truce extension for hostage releases

AFP — GAZA STRIP

With 60 Israeli hostages and 180 Palestinian prisoners already released, more were set to walk free yesterday.

Hamas is willing to extend a truce for four days and release more Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, a source close to the group said yesterday, as mediators sought a lasting halt to the conflict.

A current truce is scheduled to expire early today after a six-day pause in a conflict sparked by deadly Hamas attacks that prompted a devastating Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip.

With 60 Israeli hostages and 180 Palestinian prisoners already released and more were set to walk free on yesterday under the agreement, conflict mediator Qatar said negotiators were working for a "sustainable" ceasefire.

Hamas yesterday "informed the mediators that it is willing to extend the truce for four days," a source close to the group told *AFP* on condition of anonymity.

Under that arrangement, "the movement would be able to release Israeli prisoners that it, other resistance movements and other parties hold during this period, according to the terms of the existing truce," the source added.

Adviser to the Prime Minister of Qatar and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Majed Al Ansari told a Doha news conference on Tuesday that negotiators were seeking "a sustainable truce that will lead to further negotiations and eventually to an end... to this war."

A source with knowledge of the talks added in comments to *AFP* yesterday that discussions were "focused on building on the progress of the extended humanitarian pause agreement and to initiate further discussions about the next phase of a potential deal."

After a 48-hour extension of an initial four-day truce, a new group of 12 hostages — 10 Israelis plus two Thais — were freed from Gaza on Tuesday, with 30 Palestinians released by Israel.

An *AFP* journalist saw masked and armed fighters from the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad hand over hostages to Red Cross officials in Rafah, near the border with Egypt.

The Israeli hostages freed were all women, including 17-year-old Mia Leimberg, who returned to Israel with her mother and aunt.

The grandmother of 12-year-old Eitan Yahalomi, who was released on Monday, said the boy had been held in solitary confinement for 16 days.

Hamas has released one Russian-Israeli, 20 Thais and one Filipino outside the scope of the truce agreement.

Thailand's foreign ministry said 17 of the released Thai hostages would arrive back in the kingdom today.

It said about 13 Thais remained among the hostages held in Gaza.

Among the Palestinian prisoners freed in Tuesday's exchange was 14-year-old Ahmad Salaima who returned to his home in east Jerusalem to cheers and hugs from relatives.

"When Ahmed was in prison, we couldn't visit him, even though he's the youngest Palestinian prisoner," his father Nayef said.

Israel's government received a list of the new hostages to be freed yesterday, Israeli media reported. There was no official confirmation.

Some of the hostages in Gaza are in the hands of another Palestinian group, Islamic Jihad.

Its spokesman Musab Al Breim told *AFP* on Tuesday in the southern Gaza town of Khan Yunis that "the war is now continuing in indirect negotiations with the Israeli occupier".



A newly released Palestinian prisoner is carried during a welcome ceremony in Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank, on November 28, 2023. (AFP)

Eight-year-old, teen shot dead in West Bank

AFP — RAMALLAH

An eight-year-old boy and a teenager were killed by the Israeli army yesterday in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

The ministry said in a statement that "Adam Al Ghul, eight years old, and Bassem Abu El Wafa, 15 years old, were killed by bullets from the occupier".

CCTV footage circulating online and on television news shows a boy being struck by a bullet and falling in the street, sending other children fleeing.

Other images show a teenager also being hit by a bullet and falling, then appearing to call for help as more shots hit the ground around him and other people run for cover.

The teenager can be seen struggling on the ground in apparent agony for at least half a minute.

An official with the Palestinian Red Crescent told *AFP* that the boy and the teen had been on a side street of central Jenin's main thoroughfare, an area theoretically off limits to the Israeli military as it is under the sole control of the Palestinian Authority.



Protest in support of Palestinians

People hold up placards and Palestinian flags during a protest in support of the people of Gaza in central Tunis, yesterday. (AFP)

GCC countries demand end of Israeli aggression

QNA — NEW YORK

In a unified stance, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries demanded an end to the brutal aggression perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces in the Gaza Strip, outright rejecting the characterisation of this aggression as self-defence.

This came during the statement made by Omani Deputy Permanent Representative in the Permanent Delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations in New York Khalid bin Saleh Al Rabkhi, on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries during the General Assemblys discussion of Item 35 entitled (The Question of Palestine).

The GCC countries praised Security Council Resolution 2712 issued on Nov. 15, 2023, which calls for a mandatory ceasefire, and supported the General Assemblys resolution issued during the emergency special session on Oct. 27, 2023, which stipulated an immediate ceasefire and the entry of aid.

The Council countries called for the immediate implementation of these decisions without restrictions or conditions and categorically rejected any efforts or approaches to forcibly displace the Palestinians from their land.

The GCC countries welcomed the humanitarian pause agreement achieved through the joint mediation of the State of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the United States of America, between Israel and Hamas.

The GCC countries denounced the ongoing Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people, including the use of internationally banned weapons. They urged the international community to hold the Israeli occupation authorities accountable for these inhumane crimes that are a blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

The GCC also firmly rejected and denounced any attempts to annex settlements in the West Bank to Israel, representing a clear violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and relevant international resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 2334 of 2016, the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The continuous construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories by Israel was also condemned.

Additionally, the GCC condemned the repeated incursions into the courtyards of the Blessed Al Aqsa Mosque by Israeli settlers under the protection of Israeli forces.

These incursions were viewed as a serious breach of international law, a violation of the sanctity of the Al Aqsa Mosque, and a provocation to Muslims worldwide.

South African MPs defer vote on health insurance law

BLOOMBERG — CAPE TOWN

South African lawmakers agreed to defer a vote on a controversial national insurance plan that seeks to reform the nation's health system.

A motion was adopted in the National Council of Provinces yesterday to move the vote to December 6. The legislation is being presented to lawmakers after pleas from opposition parties, doctors and business groups to change it.

The bill seeks to ensure all South Africans have access to quality health-care services and provides for the establishment of a fund that will be used to pay for almost all medical treatment from accredited providers, with rates to be set by the state. Private insurers will only be able to pay for products and services that aren't covered by the fund.

Lawmakers have failed to consult adequately or take the concerns of numerous clinician bodies into account, according to the South African Health Professions Collaboration, which represents 25,000 doctors.

"The potential consequences of rushing through the NHI Bill without critical amendments are far-reaching and will further undermine the country's ability to deliver quality health care to the very patients it seeks to protect," it said in a statement.

"The bill will also have severe repercussions for the economy and the country's long-term economic sustainability."

Once approved by the NCOP, the bill will be referred to President Cyril Ramaphosa, who can either sign it into law or request lawmakers to amend it.

Passing the legislation without modifications would set the stage for a court challenge on the grounds that it erodes the constitutional rights of both patients and healthcare professionals — and that input from interested groups wasn't given adequate consideration.

P IN BRIEF

African ministers agree to accelerate digitalisation

XINHUA—ADDIS ABABA: African ministers in charge of communications and information communications technology have passed new decisions, aiming at accelerating Africa's digital transformation, boosting socioeconomic development, creating jobs and improving the lives of people across the continent.

The decisions were made on Tuesday at the conclusion of the 5th Specialized Technical Committee (STC) meeting on Communications and Information Communications Technology (ICT) in Africa. According to a statement issued by the African Union (AU), the ministers have expressed commitment to promoting the nexus between digitalisation, climate change, infrastructure and energy to maximize the benefits of digital solutions.

EU cancels DR Congo election observer mission

AFP—BRUSSELS: THE European Union said yesterday it was cancelling its deployment of election observers to the Democratic Republic of Congo ahead of next month's polls due to "technical" reasons.

The announcement comes a day after the EU said the team could not spread out around the vast central African nation because of "security reasons".

The DRC, an impoverished country of about 100 million people, is in the grip of unrest, with dozens of armed groups active in its east, where UN peacekeepers and East African Community troops are deployed.

EXTREME WEATHER

Climate crises drove 27 million children into hunger in 2022

AFP — NAIROBI

Extreme weather events in countries vulnerable to climate change drove more than 27 million children into hunger last year, Save the Children said on Tuesday.

The figure represented a sharp 135 percent increase over 2021, the UK-based charity said in an analysis ahead of the COP28 climate summit opening in Dubai today.

It said children made up nearly half the 57 million people pushed into crisis levels of acute food insecurity or worse across 12 countries because of extreme weather in 2022, according to data from the IPC hunger monitoring system.

Out of the 12, countries in the Horn of Africa were most affected, with Ethiopia and Somalia accounting for about half of the 27 million children facing hunger, Save said.

"As climate-related weather events become more frequent and severe, we will see more drastic consequences on children's lives," Save's CEO Inger Ashing said in a statement.

The charity called on leaders meeting at COP28 in Dubai to take action on the climate crisis by recognising children as "key agents of change" but more broadly to address other causes of food insecurity such as conflict and weak health systems.

Save highlighted the situation in Somalia, which is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, locked in a vicious cycle of drought and floods.

It said the recent torrential rains and flooding that have engulfed many parts of the country had displaced about 650,000 people, about half of them children.

Elsewhere, Save noted that two million children in Pakistan remained acutely malnourished after floods that swamped a third of the country last year.

Across the planet, Save estimated that 774 million children — or one third of the global child population — are living with the dual impacts of poverty and high climate risk.



Iraqis mark 2019 anti-govt protests

An aerial view shows Iraqis gathering at the Zeitoun bridge in Iraq's southern city of Nasiriyah in Dhi Qar province yesterday, to honour the memory of the anti-government protesters killed in the 2019 protests. (AFP)

Mali govt to probe Tuareg rebel leaders as 2015 peace deal crumbles

AP — BAMAKO

Mali's military government has announced an investigation into the Tuareg rebel leaders who signed a peace agreement in 2015 and now accuse the government of failing to comply with it, as experts worry that the deal crucial to establishing a measure of stability in the country's north is collapsing.

The public prosecutor at the Bamako Court of Appeal on Tuesday ordered the probe into the rebel leaders who at times have sought to create the independent state of Azawad and have attacked Mali's security forces in recent months.

The government of the West African nation has referred to the rebels as a "terrorist group."

The developments could mean more violence in a region already under threat from fighters linked to Al Qaeda and where both UN peacekeepers and French forces have withdrawn in recent months.

The Tuareg rebellion in Mali's north has been a source of conflict for decades. More than a decade of instability has followed their rebellion in 2013, though i n 2015 the Tuareg rebel groups signed the peace deal with the government that was welcomed by the United Nations.

In a televised statement, the public prosecutor announced that specialists in fighting terrorism and transnational organized crime would launch an investigation against "terrorist leaders and other signatories" to that agreement.

Key leaders of the Tuareg rebellion were named in the statement as well as leaders of the Al Qaeda-linked JNIM group.

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EDITORIAL

Mediation for peace

QATAR has been playing a leading role to stop the war in the Gaza Strip where weeks of aerial bombing and ground campaign by Israeli military has killed more than 15,000 people, including at least 6,150 children and 4,000 women. Another 36,000 thousand, mostly women and children, are injured while 6,800 remain missing. Another 242 Palestinians have been killed in the occupied West Bank since October 7.

Under the leadership of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatar has worked hard with other brotherly and friendly countries to achieve a humanitarian pause in the conflict, which has seen many hostages and prisoners reunited with their families on both sides. The truce has also facilitated the entry of much-needed humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, which had been under a complete siege since October 7.

H H the Amir has held talks with a number of GCC, Arab, Muslim, European and the US leaders for de-escalation and end to the conflict. The Amir received German President H E Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Doha yesterday. They discussed bilateral ties and the situation in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinians territories. The Amir stressed the importance of reaching a permanent ceasefire, protecting civilians, delivering humanitarian aid to the people of the Gaza Strip, and finding solutions that guarantee the establishment of two states in accordance with international and UN resolutions.

Qatar has also been active on the humanitarian front, sending assistance for the people of Gaza. The State has so far dispatched 27 aircraft carrying 910 tonnes of aid including six ambulances. Qatar has also evacuated 20 Palestinians holding Qatar residence permits from the Gaza Strip and is working to evacuate more residency holders.

The current pause agreed between Israel and Hamas with the mediation of Qatar, Egypt and the US will last until early Thursday. Qatar is making diplomatic efforts for extension in the pause, release of more civilians and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In the initial four days of the truce, Hamas released 69 hostages while Israel released 150 Palestinians prisoners. On day five, Israel freed 30 Palestinian civilians while 10 hostages were released from Gaza. Given the destruction and suffering caused by the Israeli bombing campaign, it is essential that both sides agree to another extension and permanent ceasefire in the conflict. The international community must also play its role and ensure an end to the conflict. It is also time the world worked in earnest to find a permanent solution to the conflict with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision

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Qatar and Germany: Deep friendship, strategic partnerships serving common interests

QNA



Since the establishment of the distinguished Qatari-German relations, both countries have demonstrated a mutual commitment to developing and enhancing their growing friendship and cooperation. Within the framework of continuing this commitment, President of the friendly Federal Republic of Germany H E Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier embarked on a visit to Qatar on Wednesday.

The Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani will welcome German President at the Amiri Diwan to discuss bilateral relations and explore ways to support and develop them in various areas, particularly in the trade, economic, and investment fields, and will review regional and international issues of mutual interest.

This visit provides an opportunity to further advance, strengthen, and broaden the relations between Doha and Berlin, serving their common goals and the aspirations of their friendly people. The visit and the talks that will take place during it, are also expected to enhance bilateral partnership opportunities, open new horizons for cooperation, especially in the energy, economic, and investment sectors, explore wider opportunities, and strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries in a way that benefits both nations and their peoples in all areas.

The diplomatic relations between the State of Qatar and the Federal Republic of Germany were established in 1973. Qatar is considered a key partner for Germany in the Middle East and North Africa region, based on over 60 years of trade relations and nearly half a century of political and diplomatic ties, which have positively impacted the people of both nations.

The Qatari-German relationship is based on a solid foundations of trust, mutual respect, and joint interests. These strategic relations, supported by close cooperation relations, have been strengthened further in recent years in light of Qatar's expanded political role represented in its mediation efforts in regional and international conflicts. There is ongoing dialogue and constant consultation between the two sides regarding political coordination on regional issues and urgent international files.

The two countries are linked by several economic agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), including the agreement on the mutual protection and promotion of investments, and others in the fields of industry, trade, health, culture, sports, archaeology, solar energy, civil aviation, and air transport. There is also the agreement to establish a joint committee for trade, economic and technical cooperation, which has organized numerous sessions over the years.

In May, Qatar and Germany signed an MoU to establish a strategic dialogue between the two countries, providing an important platform for discussing energy issues and cooperation.

The Qatari-German relationship is expected to witness a new impetus and broader horizons, given the momentum from high-level visits between Doha and Berlin. Notably, the Amir's visit to the Republic of Germany in October, and in May 2022, and the German Chancellor H E Olaf Scholz's visit to Doha in September of last year.

During these visits, the two sides discussed relations and ways to enhance them in all aspects. The two countries also signed a Joint Declaration of Intent to enhance cooperation in the energy field within the framework of a successful and ongoing dialogue between Qatar and Germany. This cooperation is expected to develop into an energy partnership by building trade relations in field of liquefied natural gas (LNG) that serve the interests of both countries and achieve their climate action ambitions. This partnership is anticipated to diversify Germany's energy supply through LNG imports from Qatar, while facilitating bilateral cooperation in hydrogen energy and renewable energy sources.

In November last year, QatarEnergy signed a two long-term LNG sale and purchase agreements (SPAs) between QatarEnergy and ConocoPhillips affiliates in Doha for the delivery of up to 2 million tons per annum (MTPA) of LNG from Qatar to Germany. According to the agreement, a ConocoPhillips wholly owned subsidiary will purchase the agreed quantities to be delivered ex-ship to the "German LNG" receiving terminal, which is currently under development in Brunsbuttel in northern Germany, with deliveries expected to start in 2026. Germany, Europe's largest gas market, has a significant demand in the industrial, electricity, and domestic consumption sectors.

Qatar is considered a key partner for Germany in the Middle East and North Africa region, based on over 60 years of trade relations and nearly half a century of political and diplomatic ties, which have positively impacted the people of both nations.

The Qatari-German economic relationship has seen steady growth over the past six decades. The State of Qatar has emerged as a significant economic partner for Germany in the region. Germany ranks third among European countries in attracting Qatari investments, following the UK and France. The State of Qatar is one of the largest investors in Germany, contributing around 25 billion euros. Qatari investments cover an array of sectors including the automotive, communications, hospitality and banking, and other important sectors. In September 2022, the Qatari Ministry of Commerce and Industry signed a strategic partnership agreement with the German Association for Small and Medium Businesses, to open a representative office for the association in the State of Qatar - the first of its kind in the Gulf region. This agreement contributes to increasing the presence of German companies in Qatar and reflects positively on the movement of trade and investment and the establishment of fruitful partnerships between the business sectors in both countries.

Over 300 German companies contribute to Qatar's economic development, operating in vital sectors such as energy, construction, services, railway development, trade, contracting, communications, and medical equipment, among others.

Qatar holds significant stakes in major German commercial and banking groups and is considered the largest shareholder in the automotive giant Volkswagen Group, with an investment of 9 billion US dollars. Qatar's investments are not limited to the industrial and technology sectors. They also extend to the shipping sector, investing in Hapag-Lloyd, one of the world's largest shipping companies, and in Hochtief, the largest construction company in Germany, which operates globally. Additionally, Qatar invests in RWE AG (RWE), one of the world's largest renewable energy producers, with a total value of 2.4 billion euros.

The trade volume between Qatar and Germany exceeded 2 billion dollars in 2022. Recently, there has been an increased frequency of German trade delegations visiting Doha, reflecting the German private sector's interest in exploring investment opportunities in Qatar and forming alliances with Qatari companies in various fields, including energy and manufacturing.

To attract foreign investments, the State of Qatar, aligned with its National Vision 2030, has created a conducive investment climate through a series of laws and legislation that attract investment, coupled with the country's political and social stability, strong and balanced relationships with all parties, as well as its strategic geographic location as a major commercial gateway connecting East and West.

Why recognizing Palestine is key to ending war in Gaza

DAOUD KUTTAB — THE WASHINGTON POST

President Biden recently declared his desire to see a "revitalized" Palestinian government that could bring together Gaza and the West Bank under "a single governance structure." That is a worthy aim, and Biden certainly deserves points for declaring it. But Palestinians can be forgiven for wondering: Was the US president really serious about this statement? If so, there's one step that he can take right now toward achieving his goal: Recognize Palestine as a member state in the United Nations.

In 2012, the UN General Assembly recognized Palestine as a nonmember observer state. By now, 139 countries have recognized the state of Palestine within the borders of June 4, 1967. The United States and most European countries have repeatedly called for a two-state solution but have refused to recognize Palestinian statehood. The Biden administration even refused to recognize Palestine's status as a state under occupation. Over the past decade or so, senior Israeli officials, understanding these signals from Washington, have refused to engage with the Palestinian leadership. Washington's refusal to recognize a Palestinian state deprives Israel of any reason to take the Palestinians seriously. It is this egregious lack of political imagination on the Americans' part that has helped bring us to the catastrophe that is now engulfing the region.

Recognizing Palestine as a full member state would have a number of positive effects. It would demonstrate that Biden is truly serious about his professed aim of a two-state solution. And it would undermine the positions of radicals on both sides - the Palestinian extremists who refuse to recognize Israel, as well as those on Israel's far right, who want to annex all the Palestinian territory west of the River Jordan.

Biden is right to say Palestinians urgently need a "revitalized" political structure - presumably based on the will of the Palestinian people as expressed through free elections. But such elections will be almost impossible to conduct unless Palestinian voters can be sure that their votes will bring them closer to freedom from occupation and endless violence. In this sense, recognition and new elections are two indispensable components of the same strategy.

Parallel to US recognition of Palestine, the international community should supervise elections for a new Palestinian leadership that will negotiate with Israel on all issues that would need to be agreed upon by the two neighboring states. Here, too, Biden and current Palestinian leaders can start by acknowledging the mistakes they've made in this respect. In 2021, the Palestinian authorities announced the dates for parliamentary and presidential elections. The prospect of a free vote produced a genuine sense of excitement in the West Bank and Gaza, where Palestinians had spent 15 years without a chance to pick their leaders.

But Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, got cold feet, fearing competition from a new generation of younger and more popular figures, such as the imprisoned leader Marwan Barghouti. Abbas canceled the elections - and Biden did not object. In July 2022, during a visit to Bethlehem in the West Bank, Biden told Abbas that the time was "not ripe" for peace talks.

With Abbas unable to produce results even as Israel was increasing its pressure on the Palestinians, the military wing of Hamas argued that Israel and the world understood only force. Given the circumstances, many Palestinians found it hard to disagree. In light of everything that has happened since, it should be clear that the United States missed a huge opportunity to undermine the extremists. Now, Washington must demonstrate that it is serious about giving Palestinians a chance to determine their own future.

The prospect of negotiations toward the establishment of a Palestinian state might seem far-fetched in the wake of the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7 and Israel's horrific retaliation in Gaza. But just as diplomacy has shown success on the hostage issue, Biden's recognition of Palestine - which he could achieve simply by directing his UN ambassador not to veto a Security Council resolution - could be a game changer. Last week, Spain said it might recognize Palestine on its own if the European Union fails to do so. While such gestures by individual countries are welcome, a Security Council vote affirming Palestinian statehood, which is binding in international law, would send a powerful message to all parties about the seriousness of the international community. Such a step would offer Palestinians hope that they can still achieve freedom from occupation and would reinforce the cease-fire process by providing a clear political road map.

Domestically, recognizing Palestine would also help Biden reestablish his credentials with the young Americans, progressives, Muslim Americans and Arab Americans in his party who are deeply disillusioned by the one-sidedness of his Israel policies.

Any serious effort to find an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict needs to dispense with the piecemeal solutions that have been tried so far. The strategic aim should be the creation of an independent and democratic Palestinian state. Once this goal has been firmly established, Palestinians and Israelis can then work to fill out the details regarding borders, Jerusalem, refugees, settlers, security and future Israel-Palestine relations.

This is the only path that offers a viable way out of the current crisis. This opportunity should not be missed.

Australia issues apology to thalidomide survivors

AFP — SYDNEY

Australia issued a national apology yesterday to survivors of the thalidomide drug scandal, which Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called one of the "darkest chapters" in the country's medical history.

Thalidomide was a "wonder drug" prescribed in the 1950s and early 1960s to help pregnant women cope with morning sickness, but it was later discovered the chemical also caused severe birth defects in children.

The Thalidomide Trust estimates more than 10,000 babies worldwide were impacted by thalidomide before it was pulled from shelves in the 1960s.

"Every day between then and now, Australians affected by thalidomide have been owed an apology," Albanese said in a speech to parliament as Australian thalidomide survivors watched on.

"Today, at long last, Australia will say sorry.

"This apology takes in one of the darkest chapters in Australia's medical history." The British government made a similar apology in 2010.

LEGAL REPRIEVE

Pakistan court acquits former PM Nawaz Sharif in corruption case

An official of the Islamabad high court confirmed the acquittal in one case, and Sharif is still appealing a second conviction over investments in steel companies.

AFP — ISLAMABAD

A Pakistan high court yesterday quashed a graft conviction against three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who returned from self-imposed exile last month to launch a political comeback.

Sharif is currently on bail appealing several convictions for corruption in an attempt to clear his name ahead of elections scheduled in February, with his primary opponent Imran Khan in jail.

"I had left all the matters to Allah and Allah has honoured me today," Sharif told reporters outside the Islamabad High Court. An official of the Islamabad high court confirmed the acquittal in one case, and Sharif is still appealing a second conviction over investments in steel companies.

Sharif was jailed for 10 years in 2018 for corrupt practices linked to his family's purchase of upscale London flats.



Pakistan's former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (third left), brother of Pakistan's current Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, leaves from a property in west London on May 11, 2022. (AFP)

He was ousted and barred from politics for life in 2017 for failing to declare parts of his income.

Sharif, who has been prime minister three times but has never completed a full term, has always maintained that the charges were politically motivated.

His political fortunes have risen and fallen on his relationship with Pakistan's military establishment — the country's true kingmakers who have ruled directly for more than half of its history and continue to enjoy immense power.

"Now everything is moving in favour of Nawaz Sharif," said political analyst Hasan Askari.

"This appears to be a political game managed by powerful personalities and institutions," he told AFP.

Sharif's fortunes changed when Khan had a spectacular falling out with the military.

The former cricketing superstar was later jailed in connection with several cases he says are designed to keep him from contesting elections next year.

Nawaz Sharif's younger brother Shehbaz came to power in a coalition that ousted Khan.

That government oversaw a change to the law limiting the disqualification of lawmakers from contesting elections to five years — paving the way for his return.

Family of last Afghan held in Guantanamo calls for his release

AFP — KABUL

The family of the last Afghan held at the US detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba called for his release yesterday at a press conference in Kabul.

Muhammad Rahim was one of hundreds of suspected militants captured by US forces during the United States' "war on terror" and held in the secretive prison.

US authorities faced accusations of torture and abuse against prisoners at the facility, where many were held without charge or the legal power to challenge their detention. Most of the inmates have been released over the years, including senior Taliban leaders, but Rahim remains.

"I urge the American authorities and leaders to release my son," said Rahim's mother Safoora Bibi, breaking down in tears.

Rahim's family said he was arrested in Pakistan in 2007. The US government transferred Rahim in 2008 to Guantanamo Bay, according to a Pentagon announcement cited by Amnesty International at the time.

The CIA accused him of being a close associate of Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden. His family said they still do not know why he was arrested. Rahim's uncle Muhammad Ali called on Afghanistan's Taliban authorities to work for his release.

"We want the Islamic Emirate to listen to us, they are now the government," he told reporters, using the Taliban's formal name for Afghanistan.

"They should serve their people, we call on them as well to tell the United States to release him." In June last year, Afghan Asadullah Haroon was freed from Guantanamo Bay after 15 years following negotiations between Washington and Taliban authorities.

US President Joe Biden's administration has been working to reduce the number of detainees and eventually shut down Guantanamo Bay, which lies on the island of Cuba but is under US jurisdiction.

P IN BRIEF

India forms high-level panel to probe US security concerns

XINHUA—NEW DELHI: India's foreign ministry yesterday said it has set up a high-level committee to look into the security concerns raised by the United States on a nexus between organized criminals, gun runners and terrorists.

British daily *Financial Times* last week reported that the United States authorities thwarted a plot to kill a Canadian and American citizen Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. It said the United States issued a warning to the Indian government over concerns that it was involved in the plot. India has constituted a high-level inquiry committee to probe the matter, said India's foreign ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi."Government of India will take necessary follow-up action based on the findings of the inquiry committee," he said.

S Korea's Yoon apologises for losing World Expo 2030 bid

SPUTNIK—MOSCOW: SOUTH Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol apologised to the nation yesterday after the Asian nation lost its bid to host the World Expo 2030 in the port city of Busan to the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh, saying that South Korea's private and public sectors "ran hard together."

"Our predictions based on the stances we sensed during contact made by the private and public sectors appear to have been far off ... I offer my sincere apology for disappointing our people, including the citizens of Busan. It is all my own shortcoming," Yoon was quoted by the Yonhap news agency as telling reporters at his presidential office. The South Korean leader said that the country's private and public sectors "truly ran hard together," pointing to his over 150 meetings with 96 international leaders and the efforts of government and business officials, including Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, Busan Mayor Park Heong-joon, SK Group Chairman Chey Tae-won and Samsung Electronics Executive Chairman Lee Jae-yong.

Philippines bans vote machine firm implicated in US bribery probe

AFP — MANILA

The Philippines' election regulator yesterday banned a voting machine firm from bidding for election contracts after the company was implicated in a corruption probe launched by the US government.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) said it banned Smartmatic Philippines Inc., a local unit of its London-headquartered parent firm, due to the threat it posed to the "integrity" of future Philippine elections.

The ban stems from an investigation launched by the US Justice Department against former Comelec chairman Andres Bautista for alleged corruption, conspiracy, wire fraud and money laundering, according to the Comelec ruling released to reporters.

"Given the gravity of allegations related to bribery and compromised procurement processes, as independently determined by foreign bodies, the Commission recognises the imminent threat to the strength and integrity of our democratic processes," it said.

"Smartmatic Philippines, Inc. is disqualified and disallowed from participating in any public bidding process for elections." But Comelec officials stressed to reporters that the ban does not mean the integrity of the 2016 and 2022 presidential elections — for which Smartmatic won contracts for vote-counting machines and related services — had been compromised.

Bautista, who has previously denied the allegations, had awarded Smartmatic a $199 million contract to supply the Philippines with 94,000 voting machines for the 2016 presidential election won by former leader Rodrigo Duterte.

The Comelec ruling said US prosecutors accused Bautista, the election commission chairman between 2015-2017, of "receiving bribes in exchange for awarding a contract for election machines to Smartmatic Corp." and for having "laundered the bribe money through multiple entities".

Xi in Shanghai first time since 2020, showcasing tech, finance

BLOOMBERG — SHANGHAI

China's President Xi Jinping visited Shanghai for the first time in three years, putting a spotlight on the mainland's top financial center as investors look for policymakers to boost waning private sector sentiment and the technology sector.

Adding to the symbolism of the two-day trip, Xi was accompanied by his top economic chieftan, Vice Premier He Lifeng, along with the chief of staff, Cai Qi. Xi inspected the Shanghai Futures Exchange and attended an exhibition at the city's sci-tech innovation center, learning about efforts for the megapolis to become an international financial and technology hub, state broadcaster *CCTV* reported.

Xi observed a walking robot while attending an exhibition, footage also showed. Shanghai is a major outpost for some of China's biggest tech operations.

During the visit that ended yesterday, Xi also stopped at a government-subsidized rental housing community to observe progress in social housing construction. The president was seen chatting with residents while inspecting homes, broadcast footage showed. China in recent months has amped up efforts to support the property sector after a sharp downturn that has hurt economic growth.

Xi observed a walking robot while attending an exhibition, footage also showed. Shanghai is a major outpost for some of China's biggest tech operations, including SMIC, which made the 7 nanometer processor hailed as a major triumph after years of US sanctions. Other top firms include the artificial intelligence company SenseTime Group Inc., which has approval to roll out large-language models to the public, and e-commerce startup PDD Holdings Inc.

While the report didn't specify any particular firms that Xi stopped at, the visit to one of China's key tech hubs has been keenly awaited since news of the plan was reported. It may offer reassurance to the business community after crackdowns on private sector actors over the past few years wiped out the equivalent of billions of dollars worth of market values from tech and other enterprises.

The Chinese leader's first public visit to Shanghai since November 2020 comes a year after the city saw rare street protests against strict Covid curbs that upended business activity and daily life. The trip is also likely to be viewed as a signal of China's determination to reinvigorate investor confidence as the nation's post-pandemic recovery continues to struggle.

Myanmar military pounds Rakhine town during clashes

AFP — BANGKOK

Myanmar's military is carrying out a sustained offensive involving fighter jets to regain control of a key town from an armed ethnic minority group, its fighters and residents said yesterday.

The Arakan Army moved into Pauktaw, a town of 20,000 people close to a crucial deepwater port in the capital of western Rakhine state, on November 15.

It opened a new front in an offensive by an alliance of ethnic minority groups across northern Myanmar that has shocked the nation's junta, cut trade routes to neighbouring China and led to more than 330,000 people being displaced since last month.

Pauktaw has become one of the key battlegrounds, and residents contacted by AFP on Wednesday reported heavy battles in and around the town, which is 25 kilometres (16 miles) from Sittwe, the state capital.

"They (the junta) have been firing heavy weapons at the town continuously," one resident told AFP by phone, requesting anonymity for security reasons.

"Yesterday a jet fighter dropped two bombs that started a fire," said the resident who said they were sheltering in a nearby village, adding the blaze was still burning.

AFP has reported fighting in Pauktaw over the past two weeks. But the accounts from the residents, as well as a statement from the Arakan Army (AA), provided the most detailed accounts of the battle for control of the town.

A resident of Sittwe said the military was shelling Pauktaw from bases around Sittwe.

DEADLY FLIGHT

One confirmed killed as US Osprey crashes off Japan

AFP — TOKYO

A US Osprey military aircraft crashed yesterday off a Japanese island, killing one crew member and leaving five unaccounted for, the coastguard said, in the latest incident involving the tilt-rotor military aircraft.

One unconscious person had been found in the sea near the scene of the crash off the island of Yakushima but was later "confirmed dead in hospital", the coastguard said in a statement. It also revised downwards an earlier statement to say that six crew had been on board instead of eight.

An emergency management official in the Kagoshima region where the crash took place said police had received information that the aircraft had been "spewing fire from a left engine".

The US military in Japan, where it has around 54,000 personnel, was not immediately available for comment.



A US military Osprey aircraft flies at the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in the centre of the city of Ginowan, Okinawa prefecture on August 23, 2022. (AFP)

The coastguard said it has mobilised patrol ships and aircraft around Yakushima, which lies south of Japan's southernmost main island of Kyushu.

Japanese broadcaster NHK reported that the Osprey was on its way from the Iwakuni US base near Hiroshima in the Yamaguchi region headed for the Kadena base further south in Okinawa. NHK also cited defence ministry sources as saying that the aircraft was a CV-22 Osprey belonging to the US Yokota air base in Tokyo.

EXPANSION OF ALLIANCE

Ukraine will not be invited to join NATO in 2024: Hungary FM

SPUTNIK — BUDAPEST

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Kiev and its allies should be prepared for a "long and hard fight."

Participants in the meeting of NATO foreign ministers yesterday agreed that Ukraine will not receive an invitation to join the alliance at the next summit in 2024, which will be held in Washington, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said yesterday.

"Today, the allies emphasised that in the current circumstances, there can be no talk of Ukraine's membership in NATO, so it became clear to everyone that until the next summit and at the next summit, Ukraine will not receive an invitation to NATO, despite the fact that NATO will celebrate at the next Washington summit 75th anniversary," Szijjarto told reporters after a NATO-Ukraine Council meeting, as broadcast on social media. Commenting on NATO's reform plan for Ukraine, the minister said that it contains a clause on the rights of national minorities and Hungary will seriously monitor its implementation.

"Ukraine's membership in NATO is untimely for two reasons. The first is the Washington Treaty establishing NATO, the 10th article of which states that only those countries that would contribute to North Atlantic security can join the alliance," he said, adding that the admission of Ukraine into the alliance would lead NATO to the threat of a direct clash with Russia, which would mean World War III.

The second reason why Ukraine's membership in NATO is untimely is that the alliance is a values-based community, according to the Washington Treaty, the minister said, noting that "it is obvious that there is no place in the alliance for a country that constantly takes away, violates, revokes the rights of national minorities."

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said after the council meeting that Kiev and its allies should be prepared for a "long and hard fight," adding that the transfers of the F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine will not make significant changes to the situation on the battlefield.

"I think it is important that of course F-16's will make a difference. They will strengthen Ukraine's capacity to inflict losses on the Russian invading forces. And F-16's will also help to further strengthen Ukraine's air defences. At the same time, I think we need to now realise that there is not a silver bullet, not a single system that by itself will change fundamentally the situation on the battlefield. This is a question of many different capabilities are working together at the same time that will push the Russians back. We have to be prepared for a long and hard fight," Stoltenberg was quoted as saying by NATO at a briefing.



Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba (centre) and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg (right) arrive to attend the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting on Ukraine at NATO Headquarters in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

Latvia's top diplomat stakes claim to be next NATO boss

AFP — BRUSSELS

Latvian Foreign Minister Krisjanis Karins told AFP yesterday he was "ready" to succeed Jens Stoltenberg as head of NATO, urging members to look across the alliance for its next boss.

"If there's interest, I would be ready and I think I have experience and certain qualities and skills that I could bring to the table," Karins, a former prime minister of his country, said after a NATO meeting in Brussels.

He insisted he was not yet an "official candidate" being proposed by Latvia's government. Stoltenberg — who has had his tenure extended twice in the face of Russia's war on Ukraine — is expected to leave when his current term ends next autumn.

Outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte has put himself forward and is seen as a clear front-runner by diplomats with backing from heavyweights including France and Germany.

Karins said he "can only speak well" of Rutte — who would become the fourth Dutchman to head the alliance — after working with him on the European stage for years.

But the Baltic leader said NATO should look beyond the small group of core countries for a next boss and turn its eyes to newer members closer to the Russian threat in the east. Another potential name in the running for the job is Prime Minister Kaja Kallas from Latvia's neighbour Estonia.

"What's important is that in this process, we look throughout the entire alliance at potential candidates," Karins said. "It is no longer a small alliance fighting a Cold War. It is now a very broad alliance, 31 countries soon to be 32, which spans basically the entire continent."



Latvian Foreign Minister Krisjanis Karins during an interview in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

Latvia's top diplomat said it would send a "good signal" if the next NATO chief came from a country that reached the alliance's two-percent target on defence spending.

"For the believability of the secretary general, if that individual comes from a country which meets that there's no one can say: 'Well, wait a minute, your country's not doing it'." Latvia's military spending this year reached 2.25 percent of gross domestic product and is set to hit 2.5 in 2025.

Rutte has not managed to get the Netherlands beyond the two-percent target during his 13 years in charge, but his government has pledged the country will reach it next year.

Russia fails to win seat on chemical watchdog board

AFP — THE HAGUE

Russia lost out yesterday in its bid for re-election to the decision-making body of the OPCW chemical watchdog.

Four Eastern European countries were competing for three seats on the OPCW Executive Council, warring neighbours Russia and Ukraine, plus Poland and Lithuania.

Russia received the fewest votes, meaning it has no seat on the board for the first time in the organisation's history. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 for its efforts to rid the world of the scourge of chemical weapons.

It played a key role during the Syria civil war when Damascus agreed to dismantle its chemical weapons arsenal and ship it for destruction under the aegis of the OPCW.

This deal stopped Barack Obama from launching military action after a chemical attack in the Ghouta suburb of Damascus that crossed the "red line" set by the then US president.

In July, the OPCW was able to announce the milestone that all the world's declared stockpiles of chemical weapons were "verified as irreversibly destroyed".

Poland takes Germany to EU court over illegal waste

AFP — WARSAW

Poland's government said yesterday it had filed a complaint against Germany with an EU court, accusing its western neighbour of having failed to clean up waste deposited illegally on Polish territory.

The case concerns 35,000 tonnes of waste shipped illegally by German firms to seven different locations in western Poland in 2013-2018. "Poland has filed a complaint against Germany with the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) for failing to fulfil its obligations under EU law," the Polish environment ministry said in a statement.

Last month, Poland brought the matter before the European Commission — the EU's executive arm — which sided with Warsaw regarding the Tuplice site containing more than half of the waste.

"Germany has failed to comply with its obligations... by failing to take back, within the 30-day time limit, the waste from one location," the Commission said at the time.

The opinion from Brussels paved the way for Warsaw to submit a case to the court. "Despite its initial written assurances to the European Commission, the Federal Republic of Germany has taken no action to ensure that the waste is removed," Poland's environment ministry said.

Greek PM sees no impact on ties from Marbles feud

BLOOMBERG — ATHENS

Greece's relationship with the United Kingdom won't be affected by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's decision to cancel a planned meeting amid a revived dispute over the so-called Elgin Marbles, the Greek premier, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, said yesterday.

"I think that it will not affect the Greek-British relations in the long term. It is a relationship with historical depth," Mitsotakis said, describing the cancellation as an "unfortunate event."

It was the first public remark by the Greek leader after his return from UK, where Sunak cancelled at the last minute a scheduled meeting with Mitsotakis, reviving the centuries-long spat between the two countries over ownership of the marble sculptures that were part of the Parthenon in the Acropolis in the Greek capital.

Sunak's spokesman blamed the Greek government for the cancellation of the meeting, saying it failed to adhere to assurances it had given that Mitsotakis wouldn't use his visit to publicly discuss "ancient grievances" about the artifacts.

That contention was disputed by the Greek side, with officials pointing out it was clear that the issue of sculptures would be raised.

The Elgin Marbles are currently housed in the British Museum and both countries claim them as their own. In recent years, the sides had been close to resolving the dispute by brokering an arrangement for them to be displayed in Athens, from where they were taken by British diplomat Lord Elgin in the early 19th century.

But there are potentially broader implications for Sunak from cancelling the meeting. Mitsotakis's special adviser on international affairs, Aristotelia Peloni, said the pair were due to update the Greek-UK joint action plan on tackling migration agreed in 2020.

In an effort to de-escalate tensions, Greek Foreign Minister Georgios Gerapetritis and his UK counterpart, David Cameron, met on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Brussels at the latter's request.

The diplomats agreed there is a mutual need to safeguard bilateral ties to address common challenges, despite differences over the sculptures, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Mitsotakis said yesterday he also saw a "positive" outcome from the feud, because "Greece's fair request for reuniting the Parthenon marbles got greater publicity."



Early winter snowfall in France

An aerial photograph shows a car driving on a road surrounded by a forest covered by snow in the Vosges Mountains near Saint-Maurice-sur-Moselle, eastern France, yesterday. (AFP)

Court clears France justice minister of conflict of interest

AP — PARIS

A special court cleared France's justice minister of conflict of interest yesterday, ruling he was not guilty of having used his office to settle personal scores, in the first such trial of a French government minister while still in office.

Eric Dupond-Moretti had denied wrongdoing and refused to resign before or during his two-week trial, defying what had been an unwritten rule until recent years that members of government quit when put under investigation.

Yesterday's verdict was a political victory for him and his allies. Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said she was happy to say that Dupond-Moretti would stay on in his role. "The justice minister will now be able to continue his work as part of the government team ... I am delighted," she said on X, formerly Twitter. A high-profile lawyer before his time in government, Dupond-Moretti had been accused of abusing his position to order probes targeting magistrates who investigated him, his friends and his former clients.

He was tried in a special court for alleged wrongdoing by the government created in 1993, the Court of Justice of the Republic. Three professional magistrates joined by 12 members of parliament - six from the lower house and six from the Senate - heard the case, and a majority of eight votes was required to decide on the question of guilt.

The proceedings marked the first time in modern France that a government minister was put on trial while still in office for actions taken as a minister, according to legal historians. The court previously tried 11 former government members, and convicted seven of them, over the past three decades.

Dupond-Moretti left the court a few minutes after the verdict without speaking. Defense lawyer Jacqueline Laffont expressed "satisfaction" and "huge emotion" at the decision, which she said showed her client "for three years had been unjustly accused."

"It is the victory of law ... also the victory of the separation of powers," Laffont said, adding: "Law triumphed and justice triumphed." Remi Lorrain, also a defense lawyer, added that the verdict is a "surprise only for those who misunderstood." He said the ruling "shows that Eric Dupond-Moretti never wanted to take revenge on anyone."

Dupond-Moretti was appointed justice minister in the government of President Emmanuel Macron in July 2020. A few months later, two magistrates' unions and an anti-corruption association, Anticor, filed complaints against him. The lawyer for magistrates' unions, Christophe Clerc, said the verdict represented "imperfect justice," but said that the group believes that the prosecution could deter conflicts of interest in the future.

Anticor posted a statement on its X account noting with regret that the ruling was made by a special court for government ministers. "Justice for ministers is unfortunately a political justice, in clear violation of the principle of equality before the law," the group said.

Anti-corruption group Transparency International France called in a statement for a "reinforced ethical vigilance" especially when newly-appointed government members are making their "first steps."

Dutch version of British Royal book scrapped amid race reports

AFP — THE HAGUE

The Dutch version of a new book about the British Royal Family has been withdrawn amid reports it accidentally revealed which royal commented about the skin colour of Harry and Meghan's baby.

Publisher Xander said in a statement it was "temporarily withdrawing the book Eindstrijd by Omid Scobie from sale." "An error occurred in the Dutch translation and is currently being rectified," the publisher added.

According to reports in the British media, the book inadvertently named the royal at the centre of a racism row that further widened the split between Harry, Meghan and the rest of the family.

In 2021, Meghan, who has a black mother and a white father, told US chat show host Oprah Winfrey that a member of the family asked how dark their unborn first child's skin would be.

Then Prince Charles, now the king, dismissed claims that he was the royal involved. His son William told reporters: "We are very much not a racist family."

Harry himself said he did not view the comment as "racist", rather a case of "unconscious bias." But the revelations were described as a "bombshell" that pitched the royal family into a major crisis.

The Sunday Times reported that an understanding had been reached that Harry and Meghan would not raise the issue again, either in last year's Netflix miniseries or Harry's memoir Spare.

NEW GOVERNMENT

Milei announces his pick for economy minister

AP — BUENOS AIRES

Argentina's President-elect Javier Milei announced yesterday he has chosen Luis Caputo, a former finance minister and Central Bank chief known as an expert in markets, to lead the Economy Ministry when the right-wing leader takes office on December 10.

The pick confirms that Milei, a libertarian outsider, is building a more orthodox team to manage Argentina's economy, which is suffering from red-hot inflation running at an annual rate of 143%.

"Yes, the economy minister is Luis Caputo," Milei said in a radio interview shortly after landing from a two-day trip to the United States, where he met with officials from the Biden administration.

As the first finance minister in former conservative President Mauricio Macri's government, Caputo was in charge of a debt restructuring and later became Central Bank chief.

Macri's party backed Milei in the November 19 presidential runoff and now his allies are jockeying for positions inside the president-elect's Cabinet, leading to some tensions with his traditional libertarian allies.



Luis Caputo

Milei had previously said he was going to hold off until his inauguration to unveil the post of economy minister, because he feared his choice could get blamed for any economic woes before he even takes office.

One of Milei's main campaign promises involved getting rid of the Central Bank of Argentina as he said the country's three-digit inflation rate was largely due to the monetary authority's penchant for printing money.

The closure of the Central Bank was part of a broad plan that would eventually lead to the dollarisation of the economy, replacing the local peso currency with the US dollar. Since his election, Milei has made clear the dollarisation plan is on the backburner and could only become a reality once a slew of other measures are taken to shore up the economy.

"In conceptual terms, the central axis is to close the Central Bank, and subsequently, the currency (will be) whichever one Argentines choose freely," Milei said in an interview shortly after his victory, characterising a potential change in the national currency as "a second-order issue." His office has insisted that it plans to close the Central Bank.

Caputo's naming is no surprise as he was part of the small group of Milei aides who accompanied the new president-elect to Washington.

Milei had previously praised Caputo for his market expertise. In a television interview last week he said he believes Caputo could overcome the problem of short-term notes known as "Leliqs" - short-term loans the Central Bank makes to banks as a way to vacuum up excess pesos - and "end controls on the exchange rate."

"There is no greater financial expert in Argentina than Luis 'Toto' Caputo. He is the ideal person to dismantle this problem." Milei, an admirer of former President Donald Trump, said he received a positive reception at the White House on Tuesday when he met with national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

"We were able to present our economic program and have also outlined our international alignment. The response was truly very positive," Milei said. "We staunchly defend the ideas of freedom, liberal democracy, and align ourselves neither with autocrats nor with those who do not respect freedom or democracy, nor with the communists. This stance was very well received by the White House."



Argentine President-elect Javier Milei (right) departs from the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, next to the White House, in Washington, DC, on November 28, 2023. (AFP)

Ottawa, Google reach deal to support Canadian media

AFP — OTTAWA

The Canadian government and Google have reached a deal to support the country's media, heading off an imminent threat by the digital giant to block news on its platform, sources said yesterday.

That threat was made in response to Ottawa's Online News Act, which was due to come into force on December 19. Meta has also pushed back against the looming regulations.

Two sources familiar with the months-long negotiations told AFP the two sides had agreed on a framework that would establish regular payments by Google to help Canadian media.

Several Canadian media said it would see Canadian news continue to be shared on Google's platforms in return for the company making annual payments to Canadian news companies in the range of Can$100m.

The amount is less than the government had estimated the compensation should be, but heads off a potential online blackout for news in Canada, where Google and Meta are the dominating platforms.

The agreement will reportedly allow Google to negotiate with a single group representing all Canadian media, rather than one-on-one deals that it feared risked opening it up to massive payouts.

"It is one more solution to ensure the viability of the media and restore a balance between commercial platforms," Radio-Canada quoted an unnamed source as saying.

The Online News Act builds on similar legislation introduced in Australia and aims to support a struggling Canadian news sector that has seen a flight of advertising dollars and hundreds of publications closed in the last decade.

Meta and Google, which together control about 80 percent of all online advertising revenue in Canada, worth billions of dollars, have been accused of draining cash away from traditional news organizations while using news content for free.

Ottawa had estimated the Online News Act could cost the pair a combined Can$230m ($170m) by requiring them to make commercial deals with Canadian news outlets, or face binding arbitration.

According to the original draft regulation unveiled in September, the rules would apply to companies with global annual revenues in excess of Can$1bn, operating a search engine or social media platform actively used by at least 20m users and that distributes news.

That effectively means only Google and Meta would be affected.

Meta has called the bill "fundamentally flawed" and since August has blocked access in Canada to news articles on its Facebook and Instagram platforms.

Kamala Harris will attend COP28 summit in Dubai

BLOOMBERG — WASHINGTON

US Vice President Kamala Harris will attend the COP28 climate summit in Dubai, people familiar with the matter said Tuesday night.

Harris is set to join Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other high-ranking American officials at the two-week event that begins today. She is expected to address the summit later this week.

President Joe Biden isn't planning to attend COP28, according to people familiar with the situation. Under Biden, the US rejoined the Paris Agreement and has been an active member in the conference of parties that meets annually to negotiate for efforts to shrink global greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a warming world.

He attended the last two summits, making a quick stop in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, last year and traveling to Glasgow, Scotland in 2021.

The vice president has increasingly focused on climate change, including the administration's implementation of the landmark Inflation Reduction Act enacted last year.

White House spokespeople did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

John Kerry, the president's special envoy on climate change, will be in Dubai for the whole of the summit, which runs from November 30 to December 12.

Formal negotiations at COP28 will center on the response to warnings countries are falling short in slashing emissions enough to keep warming to 1.5C, a critical tipping point, and possible commitments to phase down fossil fuels.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron as well as King Charles III are among the world leaders expected in Dubai.



People celebrate the Supreme Court's ruling that declared the contract with Canadian mining company First Quantum and its subsidiary Minera Panama as "unconstitutional," in Panama City, on November 28, 2023. (AFP)

Panama to shut down First Quantum mine after ruling, says President

BLOOMBERG — PANAMA CITY

Panama's government said it will shut a $10bn copper mine owned by First Quantum Minerals, damping hopes that the company might reach a new deal to keep operating after a supreme court ruling against it.

Authorities will start "the transition process for the orderly and safe closure of the mine," President Laurentino Cortizo said in a post on X Tuesday. He didn't say how long the process might take. Production had already been halted after protesters blocked supplies from reaching the mine.

The announcement caps a dramatic six weeks in Panama, after widespread protests erupted over a decision to approve a new multi-decade operating contract for First Quantum's mine. Cortizo initially shocked investors by announcing a referendum on the project, but then backtracked to await a ruling from the Supreme Court. On Tuesday, the court unanimously ruled the law approving the contract was unconstitutional. The closing of the mine would deprive the government of one of its biggest sources of revenue and increases the chances of a protracted legal battle between the Canadian miner and Panama in international arbitration. First Quantum declined to comment on Cortizo's statement on Tuesday, but said earlier it was studying the supreme court ruling and reserved its legal rights.

Six-planet solar system in perfect synchrony found in Milky Way

AP — CAPE CANAVERAL

Astronomers have discovered a rare in-sync solar system with six planets moving like a grand cosmic orchestra, untouched by outside forces since their birth billions of years ago.

The find, announced yesterday, can help explain how solar systems across the Milky Way galaxy came to be. This one is 100 light-years away in the constellation Coma Berenices. A light-year is 5.8 trillion miles.

A pair of planet-hunting satellites - NASA's Tess and the European Space Agency's Cheops - teamed up for the observations.

None of the planets in perfect synchrony are within the star's so-called habitable zone, which means little if any likelihood of life, at least as we know it.

"Here we have a golden target" for comparison, said Adrien Leleu of the University of Geneva, who was part of an international team that published the results in the journal Nature.

This star, known as HD 110067, may have even more planets. The six found so far are roughly two to three times the size of Earth, but with densities closer to the gas giants in our own solar system. Their orbits range from nine to 54 days, putting them closer to their star than Venus is to the sun and making them exceedingly hot.

As gas planets, they're believed to have solid cores made of rock, metal or ice, enveloped by thick layers of hydrogen, according to the scientists. More observations are needed to determine what's in their atmospheres.

This solar system is unique because all six planets move similar to a perfectly synchronized symphony, scientists said. In technical terms, it's known as resonance that's "precise, very orderly," said co-author Enric Palle of the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands.

The innermost planet completes three orbits for every two by its closest neighbour. It's the same for the second- and third-closest planets, and the third- and fourth-closest planets.

The two outermost planets complete an orbit in 41 and 54.7 days, resulting in four orbits for every three. The innermost planet, meanwhile, completes six orbits in exactly the time the outermost completes one.

IN BRIEF

Over 70% of Canadians want Trudeau to step down: Poll

SPUTNIK—WASHINGTON: SEVENTY-TWO percent of Canadians would like to see Justin Trudeau step down as prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party, an Ipsos poll showed yesterday.

The figure is a 12 percentage point increase from September.

Even among Liberal Party voters, a third want him to step down, which is a 5 percentage point increase from September.

Unlike Trudeau, the leaders of the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois all retain the support of the majority of Canadians, respectively with 56%, 51%, and 67% wanting them to remain at the helm.

The poll also explored how many Canadians would consider voting for the Liberal Party if other prominent party members were to become its leader. A quarter of Canadians would vote for the Liberals if Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland was in charge. Twenty-one percent would support the ruling party if Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly became the head of the Liberals.

Seven killed in police raid in northeastern Brazil

AFP—BRASÍLIA: SEVEN people were killed and two arrested yesterday in a large police operation in northeastern Brazil aimed at dismantling a criminal gang, authorities said.

Police said around 100 officers were involved in the operation in the town of Cristinapolis, in the state of Sergipe.

The seven killed were "suspects with links to a criminal faction" involved in drug trafficking, robberies and homicides, police said in a statement.

Officers also carried out 23 search and seizure warrants, including in a prison.

Police said the operation was launched after an anonymous tip that a prison inmate was the leader of the criminal gang, which has been fighting a bloody turf war with a rival drug gang.

Sergipe, Brazil's smallest state, is home to 2.2 million people. Cristinapolis, population 17,000, is about 120km from the state capital, Aracaju.

The state borders Bahia, which has been hit by a wave of violent crime and registered the most deaths in police operations of any state in Brazil last year: 1,464.

Police in Brazil often face accusations from human rights groups of using excessive force, particularly in poor black communities.

Four reporters shot, injured in southern Mexico

AFP—ACAPULCO: FOUR journalists were shot and wounded in southern Mexico on Tuesday, officials said, the latest in a series of attacks that make the country one of the most dangerous for reporters.

Attackers on a motorcycle opened fire on three of the journalists around noon in Chilpancingo, the capital of Guerrero state, where they were covering a murder, the local prosecutor's office said.

The journalists — identified as Jesus Antonio de la Cruz, Oscar Guerrero and Victor Mateo Francisco — sustained injuries to the back, arm and neck, according to prosecutors.

The media advocacy group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said the trio were in stable condition.

"RSF calls on the authorities to act quickly to ensure their protection & that of their families," RSF said on X, formerly Twitter.

The three journalists cover political and crime stories for different local media, according to the group.

A fourth journalist was wounded by gunfire in the city of Apatzingan in the neighbouring state of Michoacan, local police said.