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‘All arrangements for new academic year complete’

DOHA: Over 131,000 students will head to their classrooms on Sunday, September 1, in 215 public schools, 70 integration schools, seven Al Hidayah Special Needs Schools, and 64 kindergartens.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Director of the Department of Schools and Student Affairs of the MoEHE, Mariam Al Nisf Al Buainain, said the ministry is all set to welcome the students after finalising preparations for the new academic year.

She affirmed that the ministry is committed to offering quality educational atmosphere through developing all the fundamental components of education, including the pedagogical cadres, infrastructure and educational resources in coordination with relevant bodies.

She highlighted that the educational system comprises private schools that offer

◆ In the preparatory schools, teaching hours on Wednesday will be extended to match the rest of days of the week, so that the school day will continue until 1.30pm, except on Thursday, when it will end at 12.40pm.



◆ The arrangements included preparing the school environment, ensuring the school capacity, transportation and maintenance, canteen catering services tenders and follow-up plans on safety procedures in emergency situations.

professional technical skills that would provide the Qatari community with highly talented students who can advance the development process Qatar is witnessing.

Al Buainain pointed out that the registration of students in public schools and kindergartens has begun via 'Maarif' portal on the MoEHE website. She called on parents to capitalise on this online service to register their sons and daughters and fill out all the required forms.

MoEHE is committed to enhancing the life quality of

students and to that end it has embarked on launching projects that aim to enhance students' cultural and social skills, Al Buainain underlined, affirming that these skills will help them succeed in their careers as the ministry strives to forge close partnership with parents in pursuit of achieving an educational atmosphere that abounds with support and cooperation.

The preparations comprise a plethora of themes and initiatives and educational curricula as declared by the ministry in alignment with the third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. Additionally, the announcement of these updates is part of the ministry's unwavering efforts to strike a balance between academic achievements and upgrading personal and psychosocial capabilities of students.

These updates are related to all academic classes such as kindergarten, secondary schools with a special emphasis on skills of the 21st century, such as digital competency, emotional intelligence and critical thinking, along with academic skills that help advance students' capabilities, in addition to keeping pace with best global practices in education and enhancing students' physical and psychological health.

The updates in curricula comprise adjustments to some educational aspects, such as devoting free reading to kindergarten pupils in their early age and increase the span of sport activities, while in elementary schools the students' capabilities will be enhanced in terms of linguistic and technical aspects.

Moreover, in preparatory schools the students will overwhelmingly focus on reading and writing the Arabic language, in addition to subjects that would meet their proclivities. — **QNA ➡ P2**

Mowasalat deploys 3,000 eco-friendly school buses for new academic year

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Mowasalat (Karwa) has deployed about 3,000 eco-friendly school buses equipped with latest safety and security technology to ferry students for the new academic year 2024-25, said a top official.

"We have acquired a fleet of diesel buses with Euro 5 standard and ten electric buses for schools to cut carbon emissions," said Strategy Management Office Director at Mowasalat (Karwa) Mohammed Ahmed M K Abukhadija.

Speaking to *The Peninsula* on the sidelines of a launch ceremony of back-to-school campaign yesterday at Doha Festival City, Abukhadija said drivers of school buses and supervisors underwent training to ensure a safe transport of the students.

Mowasalat in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, has launched the back-to-school campaign for the new academic year 2024-2025 under the slogan "My School is My Second Home."

The campaign started

Mowasalat (Karwa), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, has launched the back-to-school campaign for the new academic year 2024-2025 under the slogan "My School is My Second Home."



Children during a back-to-school campaign at Doha Festival City.

yesterday, and will continue until August 31, with the goal of mentally preparing students for the new school year in an environment full of educational and entertainment activities.

The event is being held at Doha Festival City daily from 3pm to 9pm and includes a variety of activities targeting children and students of different ages, such as educational and recreational games that contribute to enhancing students' skills and abilities.

Additionally, workshops are provided, aiming to raise awareness about the importance of learning in a healthy

and positive school environment.

Several government and private entities are participating in the event, offering engaging sessions on topics such as kids' health, road safety basics, and other areas that support the overall development of students and help prepare them for the new academic year.

Strategy Management Office Director at Mowasalat (Karwa) Mohammed Ahmed M K Abukhadija said: "We are proud of our ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in supporting the back-to-school campaign. We

believe in the importance of these activities in creating an inspiring and motivating educational environment for students, helping them to be optimally prepared to return to school with renewed spirit and great enthusiasm."

He added, "Our role at Mowasalat is not limited to providing a safe and reliable school transportation services, but also includes our ongoing commitment to training our drivers to the highest standards of safe driving through the Karwa Academy and ensuring that our fleet of school buses is equipped with the latest safety technologies." ➡ **P3**

QCAA reveals 10% increase in air travellers in July

JOEL JOHNSON
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar continues to experience a positive trajectory of growth in its aviation industry with its growing number of travellers to the country.

In its latest Preliminary Air Transport Statistics, Qatar Civil Aviation Authority highlighted that the number of air passengers in July 2024 totalled 4.7 million, a significant increase of 10 percent as compared to 4.3 million travellers registered during the same period last year.

The data also showed that flight movements continued to surge by 7 percent during the month, as Qatar registered 24,179 flight movements as compared to 22,598 in July 2023. On its social media platform, QCAA stated that air cargo and mail also recorded an increase of 13.9 percent in July 2024 carrying 222,415 tonnes as compared to 195,244 tonnes in July 2023.

During the same month, Doha's Hamad International Airport (HIA) announced that the country experienced its "busiest month" in its operations, by witnessing 4.73 million passengers.



الهيئة العامة للطيران المدني
CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
قطر QATAR

Qatar Civil Aviation Authority highlighted that the number of air passengers in July 2024 totalled 4.7 million, a significant increase of 10 percent as compared to 4.3 million travellers registered during the same period last year.

Officials noted that the remarkable achievement placed the airport as a key global aviation space by highlighting the surge in flight frequencies by the airport's airline partners due to the rise in demand for summer.

On the other hand, the country's national carrier, Qatar Airways, announced the expansion of its network of destinations and launched seasonal summer operations, in addition to enhancing the airport's connectivity. ➡ **P2**

UDST welcomes over 1,500 new students to academic year 2024-2025

M MAZHARUL HAQUE
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) began a two-day orientation event called 'Ahlan' yesterday. The event provides essential guidance and support to help new students transition into university life.

Students engaged in interactive sessions designed to introduce them to campus life and its facilities. They also had the chance to meet faculty members and deans from various UDST colleges as well as connect with their peers and Student Affairs divisions, including Sport and Wellness, Counselling and Accessibility Services, Admissions and



While we work hard, we also embrace university life with various extracurricular opportunities.

Dr. Salem Al Naemi, President of UDST

Registration, and Student Central Services.

The UDST has begun the 2024-2025 academic year with over 7,500 students, including 1,500 new joiners for the fall semester with more than 20 percent of the

student body being Qatari.

These students, both new and returning, have joined one of the university's five colleges, which collectively offer over 70 programmes in Business, Computing and Information Technology, Engineering and Technology, Health Sciences, and General Education.

The Qatari students have shown a strong interest in the programmes offered at the College of Business and the College of Computing and Information Technology, with the majority concentrating on Data and Cybersecurity and Human Resource Management.

Additionally, 70 new local and international faculty members have joined the university, bringing global

experience to enhance the world-class education that UDST offers.

The event exemplifies UDST's vibrant campus culture and plays an important role in helping new students successfully navigate their university environment. Beyond offering academic advice, it highlighted extracurricular activities, including various student clubs, which offer opportunities for students to engage in and experience university life fully.

In his welcome message to the students, Dr. Salem Al Naemi, President of UDST, said: "The skills and knowledge you acquire here will naturally make you stand out and shine brightly in any setting. You

will have the chance to apply your knowledge in labs, use simulators, participate in training sessions, innovate in our workshops, go abroad for summer programmes, and compete in both local and international competitions.

"While we work hard, we also embrace university life with various extracurricular opportunities. We hold sports in high regard, having won numerous medals, and we are excited for you to help us achieve even greater success."

This academic year, the UDST has introduced new programmes designed to meet market demand and contribute to economic and technological growth in Qatar and beyond. ➡ **P2**



Awqaf Minister meets Rector of Thailand's Fatoni University

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs H E Ghanem bin Shaheen Al Ghanem met yesterday with Rector of Fatoni University and Chairperson of 'Madinatussalam' charitable foundation in the Kingdom of Thailand Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, and his accompanying delegation, who is visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed topics of common interest.

QCAA reveals 10% increase in air travellers in July

FROM PAGE 1
The overall flight movement at HIA last month increased by 3.9 percent compared to June.
However, in June, Qatar's air cargo registered a positive momentum as the aviation authority revealed an increase of 10.1 percent, taking the total to 214,823 tonnes, when compared with 195,029 tonnes in June 2024.
In terms of the flight movements in June, the report showed a rise of 11.3 percent as compared to the same month last year. QCAA stated that 23,257 flight movements were reported in the month while June 2023 saw 20,891

aircraft movements.
Additionally, the number of air passengers also went up by 16.4 percent during the month, when compared to June 2024. Qatar witnessed 4.351 million air passengers arriving at HIA, while 3.738 million travellers visited the country in June 2023.
The noteworthy growths in in-flight activities and air travellers reflect positive indications for the region's economic revitalisation. HIA's splendid facilities and services have drawn passengers and airlines from across the globe, accelerating and boosting the aviation sector's growth and connectivity.

Amir sends congratulations to President of Uruguay

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay H E Luis Lacalle Pou on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. — **QNA**

Amir sends condolences to President of DR Congo

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani sent yesterday cables of condolences to President of the Democratic Republic of Congo H E Felix Tshisekedi, on the victims of the boat accident in the Lukenie River in Mai-Ndombe province, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.
Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani also sent a cable of condolences to Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo H E Judith Suminwa Tuluka, on the victims of the boat accident in the Lukenie River in Mai-Ndombe province, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. — **QNA**

CEO of Media City Qatar visits Alaraby Television Network

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As part of the strategic plan to develop the media landscape in Qatar and the region, Eng. Jassim Al Khouri, the newly appointed CEO of Media City Qatar, visited Alaraby Television Network.
The visit aimed to familiarize himself with the project that recently relocated from London to Lusail and explore potential collaboration opportunities that could benefit both parties.
During his visit, Al Khori had the opportunity to tour the facilities of Alaraby Television Network, which include state-of-the-art studios designed to meet the growing needs of the

news channel Alaraby Television and the general entertainment channel Alaraby 2.
He was introduced to the technology used in the development of these facilities and their versatile applications, which include broadcasting live news, special coverage, program production, and creating digital content. Additionally, he was introduced to the latest studio dedicated entirely to filming using augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies.
The visit also featured a special appearance on a new season episode of the show "SayidatiSadati" hosted by the esteemed broadcaster Aref Hijjawi. The show, set to return

next month, provided Al Khori an opportunity to discuss Media City Qatar's strategy aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030, which aims to diversify income sources and enhance the country's economic growth prospects.
Al Khori emphasised that "Media City Qatar is a project that combines advanced infrastructure with licensing systems that adhere to the most flexible and transparent legal frameworks, creating an inclusive environment for investors, companies, and media outlets to operate in one of the most comprehensive media free zones worldwide."
Al Khori also highlighted the success of Alaraby Television



CEO of Media City Qatar Eng. Jassim Al Khouri (right) during his visit to Alaraby Television Network.

Network's experience, noting that "its successful relocation from London to Lusail makes it a national champion in the media sector and undoubtedly serves as an incentive for other media institutions to move to Qatar."

DAAM finances series of initiatives launched by Ministry of Social Development and Family

DOHA: The Social and Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM) has signed agreements with the Ministry of Social Development and Family to support three initiatives: "Aazim" programme, Family Charter, and "Mn Al Watan".
These agreements embody DAAM's commitment to funding social enterprises that inspire the Qatari youth and promote productivity, strengthening the efforts of institutions focused on women and family economics, extending necessary support and developing productive families through training, providing support services, and providing marketing opportunities for these products.
"Aazim" programme focuses on promoting financial sustainability. It encourages Qataris to shift from

consumption to production, supporting income diversification and resource preservation. Additionally, the programme offers training on optimal methods for saving and spending to achieve financial sustainability, particularly among youth. DAAM's support for the programme aligns with QNV 2030, ensuring a sustainable future for the country.
The second initiative, Family Charter, focuses on the legal framework governing family relations in the State of Qatar. Addressing individual rights and duties within the family, the charter promotes balance, justice, and mutual respect.
The programme covers financial, economic, educational, and health rights, with a particular focus on

protecting children and women.
Lastly, "Mn AlWatan" (From the Homeland) initiative is one that consolidates the culture of production and develops a system conducive of an industrious family. It enhances family efficiency, boosts productivity, and develops skills through integrated services ranging from idea generation to market access.
Since its establishment in 2010, DAAM has laid the groundwork for numerous vital projects spanning the cultural, sports, and social domains. The contributions from joint stock companies listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange are considered one of the most important financial resources of the Fund, making them a key partner in achieving community development. — **QNA**



Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry receives copy of Qatari Ambassador's credentials

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Azerbaijan H E Yalchin Rafiyev has received a copy of the credentials of H E Mohammed bin Hamad Al Hajri, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar to Azerbaijan.

'All arrangements for new academic year complete'

FROM PAGE 1

In the preparatory schools, teaching hours on Wednesday will be extended to match the rest of days of the week, so that the school day will continue until 1.30pm, except on Thursday, when it will end at 12.40pm. This will allow additional time to develop students' skills and stimulate their creativity, while aligning with Qatar's aspirations to enhance its educational system and improve its quality.
In the secondary schools, the school day will be extended until 1.30pm throughout the week to enhance students' academic and practical skills, preparing them for success in their professional lives and for university education.
The arrangements include

preparing the school environment, ensuring the school capacity, transportation and maintenance, canteen catering services tenders, and follow-up plans on safety procedures in emergency situations.
These also included filling vacancies by appointing teachers according to high standards in terms of academic qualifications and practical experience, including graduates of the "Tomouh" programme implemented by the ministry in cooperation with Qatar University's College of Education.
Several new specialised schools will be opened and many workshops, and awareness and educational meetings will be held over the course of the year.
In remarks to QNA, Acting

Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs, Dr. Hareb Mohammed Al Jabri, said the new government scholarship plan for the academic year 2024-25 aims to offer 1,500 scholarships, up from 700 during the previous year. This is driven by an increase of educational tracks from three to eight in a bid to meet the Qatari labour market needs. The preparations for the new academic year are being made in cooperation and coordination between the MoEHE and the Ministry of Interior to ensure the safety and security of students and smooth traffic flow.
These preparations highlight the importance the state gives to education as the main important incubator for building the nation in line with QNV 2030.

Lusail University offers 20 academic programmes for academic year 2024-25

DOHA: Lusail University will offer 20 bachelor's and master's programmes for the academic year 2024-25, the university president Prof. Nizam Hindi said.
Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Prof. Hindi said the university managed since its opening to offer contemporary academic disciplines including 15 BA and five MA programmes.
The BA programmes are available in four colleges: Education and Arts, Commerce and Business, Law, and Information Technology, and the MA programs are in Digital Marketing, International Affairs and Public

Policy in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Applied Linguistics and Teaching English to Non-Native Speakers, Criminal Justice in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and International Law in cooperation with the French University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.
Prof. Hindi said the students started their new academic year after completing the introductory meetings last week. He pointed out that Lusail University received a new group of faculty members in all specializations to join the distinguished

academic cadres, stressing the university's keenness to attract the best elements and provide the highest academic quality for its students.
Prof. Hindi added that the new year resumes the achievements over the past years at various educational, research, institutional and infrastructure levels, as it opens a new building for boys to accommodate the increasing numbers, in addition to continuing to expand the partnership relations it has established with the local community and with research and higher education institutions, both in Qatar and internationally. — **QNA**

UDST welcomes over 1,500 new students to academic year 2024-2025



UDST President Dr. Salem Al Naemi (front row third left) along with faculty members and students during an orientation session.

FROM PAGE 1

These programmes include a Master of Science in Process Safety launched at the College of Engineering and Technology, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing with three tracks at the College of Health Sciences.
The first track admits students who are high school graduates, the second one admits registered nurses with a diploma to pursue their bachelor's degree and the third one is dedicated to licensed practising nurses who wish to pursue their Bachelor of Science in Nursing.
The College of Computing and Information Technology is offering a Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Cybersecurity in addition to a combined Arabic and English track in the Bachelor of Science in Digital

Communication and Media Production. The College of Business is offering a Bachelor of Business Administration in Logistics and Supply Chain Management and a Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Entrepreneurship.
Moreover, the UDST continues to support Qatari students and the children of Qatari women by offering tuition fee exemptions for Bachelor's degree and diploma programmes. The university remains committed to providing applied Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, along with diplomas and certificates, all designed to support human, social, and economic development both nationally and internationally. The university is also preparing to host significant conferences and major events throughout the coming months.



Minister of Labour meets Ambassador of Iran

Minister of Labour H E Dr. Ali bin Smaikh Al Marri met H E Ali Saleh-Abadi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the state of Qatar yesterday. During the meeting, they reviewed key issues of mutual interest in the labour sector.

Mowasalat deploys 3,000 eco-friendly school buses for new academic year

FROM PAGE 1

Director of Public Relations and Communication Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Maryam Abdullah Al Mohannadi, said, “We take pride in the continued fruitful partnership with Mowasalat in the ‘Back to School’ campaign held under the slogan ‘My School is My Second Home,’ and we appreciate their efforts to contribute to preparing our students for the school year through enjoyable and purposeful entertainment activities.”

The back-to-school campaign is an annual initiative

aimed at engaging students in fun and educational activities that help alleviate the anxiety and stress that may accompany the start of the school year, especially among new students.

This campaign reflects the commitment of Mowasalat and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to providing full support to students and parents to ensure a successful and fruitful start to the new academic year.

The back-to-school campaign, focusing on involving children and students in various educational and recreational activities, is designed to prepare

them psychologically and mentally for the new school year.

The campaign’s primary goal is to reduce feelings of fear and anxiety among new students, especially in early childhood, where they need support, care, and encouragement.

The campaign aims to reassure parents, students, and educators by addressing these concerns.

This year’s festival includes several activities, events, and games aimed at children, and several parties will participate by providing awareness workshops and interactive activities on the stage.

CGB, Mada Center partner to enhance employment for people with disabilities

DOHA: The Civil Service and Government Development Bureau (CGB) signed yesterday a cooperation agreement with Mada Assistive Technology Center to enhance digital access and develop a comprehensive work environment that serves all employees, especially people with disabilities, as part of the keenness to implement the best international practices in the fields of civil service and government development.

In charge of Civil Service Affairs at the CGB, Yaqoub Saleh Al Ishaq said that the scope of work is of great importance due to its role in improving digital access by adopting the National Employment Platform (Kawader) and (Mawared) to facilitate access to government services and provide the necessary technological support to enable employees with disabilities to perform their work efficiently and without any obstacles. He said this

cooperation will contribute to building the workforce’s capabilities by training employees of human resources departments in government agencies on best practices in employing and supporting people with disabilities and promoting a comprehensive work culture that adopts best practices in civil service and government development.

Acting CEO of Mada, Amani Al Tamimi said that Mada is pleased to witness the launch of a strategic partnership between Mada Center and the CGB, aiming to build new capacities in the sector of employing people with disabilities in government agencies.

She said that this partnership is an important step toward achieving a more inclusive society, where everyone enjoys equal opportunities. Mada believes that employing people with disabilities is not just a moral duty, but an investment in human

competencies and capabilities, which contributes to enhancing productivity and innovation in government institutions by providing the necessary training for human resources officials.

She said Mada is confident that this partnership will bring about a positive change in the work culture in government agencies, and will lead to an increase in the number of people with disabilities benefiting from job opportunities. Mada aims for this partnership to be a model to be emulated at the national level, and to contribute to achieving Qatar’s vision of building an equal society for all.

The agreement aims to improve digital access and adoption of digital platforms for the CGB and empower employees with disabilities by activating the use of assistive technology to empower them in their work environment.

— QNA



Officials signing the agreement yesterday.

Zulal Wellness Resort fuses tradition and modernity, leads in wellness tourism

FAZEENA SALEEM THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In the Middle East, the wellness industry is evolving as more people focus on overall health and preventive care.

From Qatar, Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som leads this change by blending Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine (TAIM) with modern wellness practices and by offering programmes for physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.

“As a key player in the region, Zulal is committed to innovation and sustainability as well as community engagement – factors that help shape the future of wellness in the Middle East,” said Holger Glaser, Resort General Manager in an interview with *The Peninsula*.

Zulal Wellness Resort is the

largest wellness center in the Middle East, and it’s the first in the world to combine ancient TAIM wisdom with modern health treatments. It stands out as a unique wellness destination in the Middle East, offering accessible location and stunning landscapes for all guests.

“Personalisation is at the starting point of every wellness retreat and every guest at Zulal Wellness Resort undergoes a private consultation with a health and wellness adviser to assess their current health goals and identify a personalised wellness retreat,” said Glaser.

“Another key differentiator is our focus on family wellness. We have tailored programmes for children, teens and adults, allowing families to enjoy wellness together,” he added.

The comprehensive

wellness retreats at Zulal Wellness Resort offer a wide range of holistic treatments, including TAIM therapies that promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

These treatment include Hijama (cupping therapy); Massage Al Batin for the abdomen to relieve stress and improve digestion; Massage Al Ra’s for the head to ease tension and promote relaxation and the Traditional Qatari Hamiz, a deep tissue massage that revitalises the body using local herbal oils and quartz stones. They also provide a TAIM consultation where a specialist assesses each guest’s needs and suggests the best treatments, herbal remedies, and lifestyle changes. TAIM practices are also part of daily life at the resort.

“The expert professionals



Holger Glaser, General Manager of Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som

delivering these treatments, therapies and services are all highly skilled and highly qualified professionals in their field. Zulal Wellness Resort also offers integrated holistic practices and healing modalities such as Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese

“We continue to offer a place where guests can find peace, balance and rejuvenation.”

Medicine and energy healing. These diverse approaches cater to a much broader audience and provide unique experiences to guests with specific wellness goals and expectations,” said Glaser. The state-of-the-art gym facilities at Zulal Wellness Resort are second to none ensuring guests have access to the latest fitness experiences including Neurac Method and Gyrotonics. Facilities include a snow cave, Himalayan salt therapy room, sauna, steam room, fully equipped fitness

centre, premium spa facilities, meditation spaces, therapy rooms and machine reformer Pilates studio.

At Zulal Wellness Resort, sustainability is a key part of everything, and the facility strives to make a positive impact on both the environment and the local community.

Zulal Wellness Resort looks forward to continue leading in wellness tourism by offering a blend of TAIM and embracing new wellness trends.

“We also plan to enhance our family programmes, ensuring guests of all ages can enjoy wellness together. As we grow, we aim to share the unique Zulal experience with more people globally and continue to offer a place where guests can find peace, balance and rejuvenation,” said Glaser.



The event continues at Sport City Metro Station until September 3, 2024.

Qatar Rail's 'Back to School' event at Sport City Metro Station offers school supplies

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: On the new school academic year, Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail), in collaboration with a group of leading school supplies providers in Qatar, launched the “Back to School” event at Sport City Station in Doha Metro, from August 25 to September 3, 2024.

This event is part of the “Metro Events” series, which the company holds for the public at metro stations throughout the year.

This initiative comes under the company’s long-term strategic plan to transform metro stations into destinations and living communities through active engagements with the

public. The “Back to School” event, hosted at the Sport City Station on the metro’s Gold Line, runs daily from 2:00pm to 10:00pm and offers the public and customers an opportunity to explore exclusive offers from bookstores and retailers specialising in school supplies as the new school academic year approaches.

Several retail spaces within Sport City Station have been allocated to prominent bookstores to display their various promotional products amongst other retailers offering school supplies and related items.

The public can easily access the event through the metro’s three lines by heading to Sport City Station on the Gold Line or directly through

the station entrance adjacent to the parking facilities around Khalifa International Stadium.

During the event, several activities will be held for the public, which can be followed along with updates on the event through Qatar Rail’s social media channels. Activities dedicated to children are held in cooperation with the Panda House of the Ministry of Municipality, as well as KidZMundo Doha.

Qatar Rail launched the “Metro Events” series in 2023 with the “Sport? This way!” and “Journey toward Health”. Additionally, numerous successful events have been organised as part of this series within the metro network.

MSDF to launch awareness campaign to promote family cohesion

DOHA: The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF) will launch an awareness campaign on the International Year of the Family on Monday, to be held under the slogan: “Family is The Treasure of a Nation.”

The awareness campaign coincides with the Back-to-School season and includes various activities aimed at enhancing family cohesion and compassion as part of an initiative to promote virtue.

This campaign will involve several key and active parties alongside MSDF, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), and the Family Consulting Center (Wifaq), which will all unite in their efforts to hold workshops to raise awareness about the importance of strengthening family cohesion and compassion.

Aimed at parents and school students, the campaign seeks to promote family cohesion, enhance national entities’ collaboration on promoting complementary roles, and reinforce certain values, especially compassion, due to its positive impacts on the family and the community.

An introductory meeting will be held for school principals and students to inform

them of the campaign’s objectives, highlight the value of compassion particularly among family members and emphasise the importance of instilling it in students. The meeting will also discuss the significance of the family unit, the importance of family cohesion, strengthening religious and moral values, and promoting a compassionate approach to addressing family challenges.

Commenting on the campaign, Director of the Family Development Department at MSDF, Dhabiya Al Muqbali said that the International Year of the Family awareness campaign aims to consolidate and intensify efforts towards family cohesion, adding that the family is at the centre of global focus thanks to its significance and prominent role in shaping a child’s personality.

Al Muqbali stressed the vital role of the family and educational institutions in instilling virtue in the younger generations, passing down moral values and traditions from one generation to the next through continuous education and guidance to enable individuals to build a better future for themselves and their communities.

Head of initiative and community partnership department at the Ministry of

Interior’s Community Police Department, Lieutenant Colonel Jarallah Salem Al Nabit stressed the need for enhanced cooperation and effective partnership between the Ministry of Interior, represented by the Community Police Department, and MSDF. He added that this will take the form of awareness programs, lectures, and security exhibitions aimed at monitoring negative phenomena and behaviors in the community, along with enhancing the communal sense of belonging in order to address social and family issues and prevent crime.

Director of the Public Relations and Communication Department at MoEHE, Maryam Abdullah Al Mohannadi said MoEHE believes in education as a shared responsibility with the family given that it is the primary social unit and most influential environment in a child’s upbringing.

Acting Director of the Community Awareness Department at Wifaq, Lulwa Al Yazidi explained that the centre’s participation in the awareness campaign underscores its belief in the importance of and need for family cohesion, being a crucial factor in family stability and strengthening family bonds. — QNA



Al Muraikhi bids farewell to Senegalese Ambassador

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi met yesterday with Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to Qatar H E Dr. Mouhamed Habibou Diallo on the occasion of the end of his tenure. Separately, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs also met yesterday with Ambassador of the Republic of El Salvador H E Milton Alcides Magana Herrera on the occasion of the end of his tenure. Al Muraikhi thanked the Ambassadors for their efforts in supporting and strengthening relations, wishing them success in their new duties.

Aljazeera Media Institute concludes summer camp

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Al Jazeera Media Institute concluded the first edition of its summer camp “I’lam”, in which it provides training for 173 male and female school students in the State of Qatar. The summer camp consists of thirteen intensive media training programs led and presented by a selected group of trainers and experts from the Institute.

In this regard, Iman Al Ameri, Director of Aljazeera Media Institute, said that the summer camp was an endeavor to enhance media culture, deepen the awareness of young people about the importance of media literacy and highlighting

the important role of means of communication and their impact on various aspects of life.

Al Ameri pointed out that the number of male participants reached 88 trainees compared to 85 females, pointing out that the number of Qatari participants in the program reached 117 trainees, which reflects the extent of awareness and perception among young people groups and their commitment to deepen and develop their talents and capabilities and investing time in sustainable education and development.

“I believe that this spirit of partnership and keenness to acquire knowledge and mastery of skills is a key pillar in building

a leading generation capable to contribute effectively to progress and advancement of societies and nations,” added the Director of the Institute.

It is noteworthy that Camp programs consist of intensive practical exercises that covers various media fields such as: arts of recitation, voice development, dialogue management, facing the camera, preparing and presenting podcast content, mobile photography arts, montage, art of speaking, negotiation and persuasion, in addition to a special course designed for those who frequently appear on various media outlets focusing on the role of official spokesperson.

MoPH delegation visits Thailand to strengthen relations in food safety

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: A delegation from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) recently visited the Kingdom of Thailand following an invitation from the Thai Embassy in Qatar. The purpose of the visit was to exchange expertise and strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries in the field of food safety.

This visit is part of the Ministry of Public Health’s efforts to enhance international cooperation in food safety and exchange knowledge and expertise with partner countries.

The delegation was led by Wasan Abdulla Al Baker, Director of the Food Safety Department at the Ministry of Public Health, and included Khalid Al Sulaiti, Head of the Ports Health and Food Control Section, and Najat Al Abdulmalik, Head of the Food Safety Laboratories Section.

During their visit, the delegation met with several relevant officials and experts in the Kingdom of Thailand. They reviewed the procedures for granting halal certifications for food products exported to Qatar and discussed the possibility of signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of food

safety between the two countries.

The delegation’s visit included an inspection of the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards in Thailand, where they were briefed on good agricultural practices and phytosanitary measures. The delegation also visited central laboratories in Thailand and Kasetsart University, where they held a meeting with the university’s president and

programmes and discussed best practices and import protocols for food products.

As part of future cooperation, the delegation from the Ministry of Public Health also visited Chulalongkorn University, where they held a meeting with Dr Wilert Puriwat, the university president, and toured the university’s Halal Science Centre. This included an overview of the HAL-Q system research, an inspection of the halal lab-



MoPH delegation with local officials during their visit to Thailand.

were introduced to the university’s projects and research in the field of food safety.

Additionally, the delegation visited the Faculty of Agro-Industry and the Food Research Institute, as well as the Thai Ministry of Public Health, where they held a meeting with Dr Narong Aphikulvanich, Secretary-General of the Thai Food and Drug Administration. During this meeting, they learned about Thai standardisation

oratories, and discussions on potential academic collaboration in halal sciences.

The delegation’s visit also focused on understanding food safety controls by inspecting the laboratories of the Food and Drug Administration and Suvarnabhumi Airport. Additionally, they toured the air cargo area and the goods inspection facilities within the logistics zone, including the Laem Chabang Port.

Carnegie Mellon Qatar welcomes record number of first-year Qatari students

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: On the anniversary of Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar opening its doors in Education City in 2004, the campus welcomed one of the largest first-year classes in history, including a record number of Qatari students. CMU-Q is a Qatar Foundation partner university.

Admission to the Class of 2028 was the most competitive ever, with more than 2,800 applications for just 115 available spots. A record number of Qatari students are enrolled, and the entire class hails from 40 nations, including the first CMU-Q students from Bhutan and Thailand.

Michael Trick, dean of CMU-Q, welcomed the students at the First-Year Convocation Ceremony: “A few things have stayed the same over the last 20 years. Our partnership with Qatar Foundation continues to provide an exceptional educational experience, and we still remain, at our heart, Carnegie Mellon. Class of 2028, you are now part of this 20-year legacy. Welcome.”

The First-Year Convocation Ceremony



CMU-Q students at the First-Year Convocation Ceremony

included the CMU-Q faculty, alumni representatives, and family members of the new students. The new students began their

studies in one of four academic programs: biological sciences, business administration, computer science and information systems.

QRDI Council partners with CRA to elevate consumers’ experience

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation (QRDI) Council, in partnership with the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA), has announced a new call for innovation addressing current unmet challenges in Digital Multi-Channels through Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chatbots. Interested startups, Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and corporates are invited to submit their proposals for innovative solutions that can provide a seamless consumer experience across multiple digital platforms. Submissions are due by September 10, 2024.

Nada Al Olaqi, RDI Program Director at QRDI Council,

commented on this initiative, stating: “We are excited to launch this innovation project that leverages the power of Generative AI to enhance consumer interactions, making them more efficient, intuitive, and satisfying. This initiative also contributes to building a dynamic innovation ecosystem by creating new opportunities in the tech sector, connecting innovators with opportunity owners, and fostering a culture of innovation. Our collaboration with CRA is a strategic move to integrate cutting-edge solutions into our digital infrastructure, ultimately enhancing the overall customer experience in Qatar.”

“The Communications Regulatory Authority is committed to leveraging the power of

TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

Tender Reference	Tender Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond Value	Bid Closing Date
EN/6068/08/2024	Provision of Legal Representation for AMLAK and its Subsidiaries for a period of two (2) years with an option to extend for one (1) year.	QAR 1,500	QAR 40,000	18-SEP-2024

QATAR PROPERTIES HOLDING CO. FOR OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT (AMLAQ)
Procurement Department is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders.

Tender fee: Interested bidders shall first deposit the respective non-refundable tender fee as mentioned above into the following AMLAK’s bank account:

Account Name: Qatar Properties Holding Co. Operations & Management

Account No.: 100230199

Swift Code No.: QISBQAQ

IBAN: QA69QISB011583620020100230199

Bank Name: QATAR ISLAMIC BANK

Tender Document Issue Date: From **26th August 2024** until **01st September 2024** between 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM except Friday and Saturday. The tender fees should be paid to AMLAK account before **01st September 2024, 12:00 PM**. Tender documents will not be issued if fees are paid after the above deadline.

Interested bidders shall request the tender document by providing clear copies of the following documents to AMLAK Procurement’s email procurement@amlak.com.qa via a single email.

- Bidder’s tender fee receipt clearly highlighting “AMLAQ Tender reference number” and “bidder’s name”.
- Authorization letter on company’s letterhead detailing the Commercial Registration number, full name, telephone, and email id of the company’s focal point for all tender communications.

AMLAQ Tender Committee will verify all the above documents and issue the tender documents to all bidders who have fully complied with the above requirements. The commercial bid must be valid for 120 days from the bid closing date.

AMLAQ tendering qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

For any clarification, please contact +9744707148.

QatarEnergy LNG
Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/OFS/6773/24 REPLACEMENT OF FIRE RATED DOORS ON CALL-OFF BASIS AT OFFSHORE FACILITIES	26/08/2024 to 09/09/2024	0	160,000	23/09/2024

Scope of Work:
QatarEnergy LNG facilities at Offshore requires replacement/installation of fire rated doors on call-off basis. Contractor shall supply fire rated doors, provide necessary manpower, equipment, tools & consumables for the required scope of replacing fire rated doors. The duration of Contract shall be five (05) years with a sole option for Company to extend it further for up to two (02) years.

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

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

Note: Effective from 1st July 2023, bids received from Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Bid Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years and insurance companies are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal:- <https://icv.qa/en-US/>

Generative AI to significantly enhance consumers’ experiences, in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030, which prioritizes improving residents’ quality of life and delivering services that meet global standards.”, said Amel Salem Al Hanawi, Director of the Consumer Affairs Department at CRA. She added: “We aim to provide seamless, real-time interactions and personalized services to the consumers. This initiative is an important step towards fostering a digitally advanced society, ensuring efficient and effective communication, and maintaining Qatar’s leadership in the global digital landscape.”

CRA has successfully transformed its consumer protection processes into a comprehensive digital system, integrating all stakeholders and public channels through a central CRM system. Through this opportunity, CRA seeks innovative technologies to create Generative AI chatbot that are both informative and transactional. The chatbots should intuitively detect consumer complaints and inquiries, providing high accuracy in handling and analysing information in real-time. Proposed solutions are required to authenticate users through the National Authentication Services (NAS) before releasing updates or processing transactions, in addition to aligning with CRA’s Applicable Regulatory Frameworks.

Israel and Hezbollah trade heavy fire before pulling back

JERUSALEM: Israel launched a wave of airstrikes across southern Lebanon early yesterday in what it called a preemptive strike to avert a large Hezbollah rocket and missile attack. The Lebanese group said it fired hundreds of rockets and drones to avenge the killing of a top commander last month.

Both sides halted the heavy exchange of fire by mid-morning, signalling no immediate further escalation. It came as Egypt hosted high-level talks aimed at a ceasefire in the 10-month-old war in Gaza that diplomats hope will ease regional tensions.

Israel and Hezbollah said they aimed only at military targets. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, said its attack had been delayed to give ceasefire talks a chance and the target was an Israeli military intelligence base close to Tel Aviv.

Israel's military said one soldier with the navy was killed and two others were wounded either by an interceptor for

Hezbollah said it targeted an Israeli military intelligence base close to Tel Aviv.

incoming fire, or by shrapnel from one. Two Hezbollah fighters and a militant from an allied group were killed, the groups said.

Hezbollah called its attack on Israeli military positions an initial response to the killing of Fouad Shukur in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut last month. Nasrallah said assaults on Israel will continue "because there is still the response of (allies) Iran and Yemen."

Air raid sirens were reported throughout northern Israel, and Israel's international airport closed and diverted flights for about an hour. Israel's Home Front Command later lifted restrictions in most areas.

An Israeli military spokesman said Hezbollah intended to hit targets in northern and central Israel. He said initial assessments found

"very little damage" but the military remained on high alert. He said around 100 Israeli aircraft took part in the strikes.

Hezbollah said its attack involved more than 320 Katyusha rockets aimed at multiple sites in Israel and a "large number" of drones. It said the operation targeted "a qualitative Israeli military target that will be announced later" as well as "enemy sites and barracks and Iron Dome (missile defence) platforms."

Hezbollah said the strikes would allow it to launch more attacks deeper into Israel, but a later statement said "military operations for today have been completed." It dismissed Israel's claim to have thwarted a stronger attack. Neither Israel nor Hezbollah provided evidence for their claims.

Lebanon's caretaker Economy Minister Amin Salam, after an emergency government meeting, said officials were "feeling a bit more optimistic" about a de-escalation. "We feel more reassured since both sides confirmed that the



A drone is intercepted over north Israel yesterday. (AFP)

expected operations ended," he said.

US President Joe Biden was "closely monitoring events in Israel and Lebanon," according to Sean Savett, a spokesman for the National Security Council. The Pentagon said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with his Israeli counterpart, Yoav Gallant. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. CQ Brown, is on a regional visit that includes Israel, Egypt and Jordan.

Randa Slim, a senior fellow at the Washington, DC-based Middle East Institute, called the exchange of fire "still within the rules of engagement and unlikely at this point to lead to an all-out war."

Hezbollah began attacking Israel almost immediately after the start of the war in Gaza, . Israel and Hezbollah have exchanged fire almost daily, displacing tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border.

Hezbollah, which fought Israel to a stalemate in 2006, is believed to be far more powerful now. The United States and Israel estimate it has some 150,000 rockets and is capable of hitting anywhere inside Israel. The group has also developed drones capable of evading Israel's defences, as well as precision-guided munitions. — **AP**

Saudi Arabia, Bosnia and Herzegovina FMs discuss relations

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister H H Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud discussed, in Riyadh yesterday, with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Elmedin Konakovic, the latest international developments and the efforts made regarding them.

The meeting also discussed relations between the two countries and ways to intensify joint coordination pertaining to the issues that concern the two countries. — **QNA**

Saudi Arabia to host donor conference to support refugees in Sahel and Lake Chad

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia will host a donors conference to support displaced persons and refugees in the Sahel and Lake Chad region on October 26, 2024, in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The conference comes in response to the severe humanitarian crisis in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mali, Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported. It seeks to mobilise resources for humanitarian and development initiatives targeting affected populations, including displaced persons and refugees, with a particular focus on the United Nations coordinated humanitarian response plans, in addition to raising awareness of the multifaceted crisis and addressing it by building strong partnerships to enhance effective humanitarian response and greater support for long-term solutions. — **QNA**

Lebanon's five-time former prime minister Salim Hoss dies at 94

BEIRUT: Five-time former Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss, who served during some of the most tumultuous years of his country's modern history, died yesterday at age 94, the current premier said.

Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati described Hoss, who was also a former government minister and member of parliament, as the "conscience of Lebanon" in a statement announcing his death. He added that Hoss "passed away at the most difficult and delicate stage in which Lebanon needs its conscience." Mikati was referring to fears that Lebanon could be pulled into a full-on war with Israel.

He served as prime minister for four terms during the country's 15-year civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990.

Hoss "was a prominent economist and a role model for his expertise, ethics and knowledge," Mikati said. "He placed the country's supreme interest and the interest of citizens above all considerations."

Hoss was often described as a technocrat and widely respected as a rare statesman in a country marked by political and sectarian divisions.

He served as prime minister



Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss (centre) is showered with rice during a visit to the southern Lebanese village of Khiam on May 25, 2000, after the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the western sector of the occupied zone in southern Lebanon. (AFP)

for four terms during the country's 15-year civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990. His final term in office was from 1998 to 2000.

At one point, he presided over one of two duelling governments. After the term of President Amin Gemayel ended in 1988 with no successor elected, Lebanon became ruled by two governments, one headed by Michel Naim Aoun in Christian east Beirut and another by Hoss in Muslim west Beirut.

By convention the prime minister of Lebanon is always a Sunni Muslim, the president a Maronite Christian and the speaker of Parliament a Shia Muslim. — **AP**

IOF commit three massacres, slaughter 71 civilians in Gaza

GAZA: The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) murdered more than 40,405 Palestinian civilians and injured more than 93,468 others (mostly children), since the beginning of the Israeli occupation's genocide against the Gaza Strip in October 2023.

Palestinian Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip stated that the IOF committed three massacres against Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip, adding that the hospitals in Gaza received 71 martyrs and 112 wounded Palestinians in the past 24 hours. The bodies of thousands of Palestinian martyrs and wounded civilians are still under the rubble and scattered on the streets, as the IOF has been preventing ambulance and civil defense crews from reaching them, the statement added.

The Israeli occupation has been carrying out violent shelling and bombardment on various parts of the Gaza Strip all day, targeting homes, streets and gatherings of armless displaced civilians, and slaughtering and wounding dozens of Palestinian civilians.

The Israeli occupation continues committing genocide on the Gaza Strip for the 324th consecutive day, through carrying out countless air strikes and artillery shelling, and committing massacres against civilians, amid a man-made catastrophic humanitarian situation created by Israel.

Meanwhile, Israeli occupation forces detained at least 35 Palestinians, including minors and freed prisoners, from across the occupied West Bank during the past two days, said the Palestinian Prisoners Society and the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs. It said the detentions were conducted across most of occupied West Bank. — **QNA**

At Beirut airport, flights cancelled amid escalation

BEIRUT: Dozens of passengers at Lebanon's only international airport were anxiously checking announcement boards yesterday as more flights to the capital were cancelled or delayed amid escalating hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.

Beirut International Airport was functioning but many passengers were stuck as major airlines announced flight suspensions, after Israel and Hezbollah announced broad strikes in an escalation of cross-border hostilities.

"We came at 4:30 am (0130 GMT) for our flight at 8:00 am but they told us it was cancelled," said Elham Shukair, a passenger headed to the United States via Jordan.

Seated on her bag in the arrivals hall, she said she had booked another flight later yesterday with Lebanon's Middle East Airlines in the hope of reaching Amman and making her onward connection.

Yesterday, other passengers sat on the floor in the departures hall as screens showed cancelled or delayed flights, while the arrivals area was largely empty.

"Our flight is still scheduled but it is delayed," said Diala Hatoum, who was set to travel with her son.

"We will see, we are waiting now," she added.

Passengers at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport also faced uncertainty after aviation authorities delayed or redirected flights. The airport resumed operations from 7:00 am (0400 GMT) following a brief suspension, but dozens of passengers were left stranded after some flights were cancelled or delayed. Air France and its subsidiary Transavia said they were suspending flights to Beirut and Tel Aviv scheduled for Sunday and Monday, adding that the move could be extended depending on the situation in the Middle East. Royal Jordanian Airlines announced the suspension of Beirut flights "due to the current situation".

The UAE's Etihad Airways said it had also cancelled its services yesterday to and from Beirut and Tel Aviv.

On Friday, German airline giant Lufthansa said it was extending a suspension of flights to Beirut until September 30 and to Tel Aviv until September 2. Lebanon's civil aviation authority emphasised yesterday that "the airport is functioning normally" despite some disruptions.

There is "no truth" to rumours that all flights have been cancelled, said a statement from the authority carried by the official National News Agency. — **AFP**



Passengers wait for their flights at the Beirut International Airport in Beirut yesterday. (AFP)

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Egypt's Sisi calls for 'decisive' global stance for Gaza ceasefire

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi warned against further regional escalation yesterday in a meeting with the United States' highest-ranking general, as cross-border hostilities between Israel and Lebanon intensified.

Sisi "warned of the dangers of a new front opening in Lebanon and stressed the necessity of preserving Lebanon's stability and sovereignty", according to a statement from the president's office.

His meeting in Egypt with US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., the United States's highest-ranking military officer, came hours after Israel launched air

Egypt has again urged restraint and de-escalation, while the United States said its military was "postured" to support its ally.

strikes on Lebanon.

Key mediator Egypt has again urged restraint and de-escalation, while the United States — Israel's top arms provider — said its military was "postured" to support its ally.

The visit comes amid planned talks in Cairo, to be attended by CIA chief William Burns, aimed at a truce in the Gaza Strip that has seemed

increasingly unlikely.

Sisi yesterday called for a "decisive stance from the international community" and a stronger response "to joint Egyptian-American-Qatari efforts" for a ceasefire and hostage-prisoner exchange, which would enable a "path to calm and stability in the region," his office said.

An official from Netanyahu's office said a decision would be made late in the day about whether Israeli spy chiefs would attend the talks in Cairo.

Hamas has said a delegation would go to Cairo but only to meet with Egyptian officials rather than participate in the discussions. — **AFP**



Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi (right) meeting with US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Charles Brown in Cairo yesterday. (AFP)

At least 13 dead after boat carrying migrants sinks off Yemen's coast: UN

CAIRO: A boat carrying migrants sank off the coast of Yemen, leaving more than two dozen people dead or missing, the UN migration agency said yesterday, the latest in a string of shipwrecks that have left scores dead. Despite a nearly decade-long civil war, Yemen — which borders Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the northeast — remains a major route for migrants from East

Africa trying to reach wealthy Gulf countries for work.

The vessel was carrying 25 Ethiopian migrants and the boat captain and his assistant, both Yemeni, when it capsized Tuesday off the province of Taiz, the International Organization for Migration said in a statement. The bodies of 11 men and two women were recovered along the shore of Bab El Mandeb Strait that links the Gulf

of Aden to the Red Sea, while the 14 others — including the two Yemenis — remain missing.

The migrants departed from Djibouti, IOM said.

"This latest tragedy is a stark reminder of the perils faced by migrants on this route," said Matt Huber, IOM's acting chief in Yemen. "Every life lost in these dangerous waters is one too many, and it is imperative that we do not normalize these

devastating losses." According to the agency, the number of migrants arriving in Yemen has tripled in recent years, from about 27,000 in 2021 to more than 97,200 last year, the IOM said, and about 380,000 migrants are currently in the conflict-ridden country.

To reach Yemen, migrants are taken by smugglers on often dangerous, overcrowded boats across the Red Sea or Gulf of

Aden. Over the past decade, at least 2,082 migrants disappeared along the route, including 693 who drowned, the IOM said. In June, at least 49 migrants were killed in a shipwreck off Yemen's southern coast that also left 140 missing, according to the IOM. Another 62 migrants died in two separate shipwrecks off the coast of Djibouti in April as they tried to reach Yemen. — **AP**

Ten dead in northern Ethiopia landslide: State media

ADDIS ABABA: Ten people have been killed in a landslide in northern Ethiopia's Amhara region, according to local state media, the latest natural disaster to strike the country.

The Amhara Media Corporation (AMC) reported Saturday that "10 people have died in the disaster", quoting local administrator Tesfaye Workneh who said four bodies had been pulled from the mud.

The report did not indicate what time the landslide occurred on Saturday in the North Gondar zone in Amhara region, or whether there was a search ongoing.

Eight other people were seriously hurt in the incident and were receiving treatment, the AMC said, citing the local official.

As many as 2,400 people had been "displaced by the disaster and are currently sheltered in local social institutions", it added.

Photographs shared on the AMC's official Facebook page showed people carrying what appeared to be at least one body from the epicentre of the huge mudslide.

It is the latest of a series of landslides that have occurred in Ethiopia as a result of heavy seasonal rains.

A recent United Nations OCHA report, citing the Ethiopian Metrology Institute, warned "of high risks of further flooding and landslides in most parts of the country".

A massive landslide killed 229 people and displaced thousands more when it struck a remote community in Kencho Shacha Gozdi in southern Ethiopia in July.

A week after the tragedy, six people were killed in the Gishere district in the neighbouring Sidama regional state, local officials said.

Earlier this month, at least 11 people perished in a landslide in southern Ethiopia in the Kawo Koisha district of the Wolaita administrative zone. — **AFP**

At least 15 civilians killed in northern Mali drone strikes: Local sources

DAKAR: At least 15 civilians including children were killed yesterday by drone strikes in Mali's north, where the army and its Russian allies are fighting separatists and insurgents, local sources said. The separatists blamed "the army of the Malian junta and Russian mercenaries from the Wagner group" for the strikes at Tinzaouatene, near Algeria, giving a provisional death toll of 21 civilians, including 11 children.

"These initially targeted a pharmacy, then other strikes followed, targeting human gatherings near the first damage," said spokesman Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadan.

A local politician told AFP at least 15 civilians were killed in the strikes.

Meanwhile a local NGO official said "at least 20 civilians including children" had been killed in the drone strikes yesterday, and a retired local official told AFP at least 20 people were left dead. After an eight-year lull, hostilities between Bamako and separatists fighting for an independent homeland resumed in August 2023. The West African nation's military leaders who seized power in a 2020 coup have made it a priority to retake all of the country from separatists and insurgent forces linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

Under Colonel Assimi Goita, the junta broke off its traditional alliance with former colonial ruler France, turning towards Russia instead.

This led to troops from the Wagner mercenary group being deployed to the country, though the junta insisted they were only there as "instructors". In late July, Tuareg-led separatists claimed to have killed 84 Wagner fighters and 47 Malian soldiers after three days of intense fighting on the outskirts of Tinzaouatene. — **AFP**

Ghana opposition party pledges to revive economy

WINNEBA: Ghana's main opposition party on Saturday presented its programme for the upcoming presidential elections, promising at a rally to stamp out corruption, transform the economy, and create jobs.

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) drew thousands to the coastal town of Winneba, with supporters draped in the NDC's green, black, red, and white colours, who danced and chanted as they waved placards.

Former President John Dramani Mahama, the NDC's candidate in the December 7 elections, painted a grim picture of the current state of the West African nation under the rule of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) administration and its candidate, the current vice-president Mahamuda Bawumia.

"Ghanaians can take no more of the hardship, impunity, state capture, hypocrisy, lies, and bad governance inflicted over the two terms of this outgoing administration," Mahama said.

The party's first woman vice-presidential nominee, Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, attended the rally.

The party pledged to address unemployment, tackle the alarming depreciation of Ghana's cedi currency, and establish special courts to handle corruption cases.

It also promised free tuition for the first year in public universities, and initiatives to eradicate period poverty for girls in school.

Mahama called the ruling NPP "the biggest political scam pulled on Ghanaians since our independence in 1957." Despite being a major gold and cocoa producer, the country is grappling with its worst economic crisis in years as it faces galloping inflation and widespread youth

unemployment. President Nana Akufo-Addo, who has led the country since 2017, is stepping down after serving the maximum two terms permitted by the constitution.

Mahama, who was president from 2012 to 2017, lost to Akufo-Addo in both the 2016 and 2020 elections.

Both candidates this year hail from the northern regions of Ghana. — **AFP**



Supporters of former Ghana president and presidential candidate for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Dramani Mahama, gather during the party's manifesto launch ahead of the 2024 Presidential Elections in Winneba, Ghana, on August 24, 2024. (AFP)

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Turkiye floods leave one dead, one missing

ISTANBUL: Floods caused by torrential rain in central Türkiye have killed one person and left one missing, authorities and media said.

The body of a 52-year-old shepherd was found near the town of Kirsehir about four kilometres (2.5 miles) from the place where he went missing, the DHA news agency

reported late Saturday.

Rescue teams helped people stuck in their homes after landslides in the region, the report added. Kayseri province governor Gokmen Cicek said on the X social media platform that one person was missing.

The neighbouring province of Sivas has also been hit by floods. — **AFP**

Huthi-struck oil tanker could spill 'million barrels'

WASHINGTON: The United States warned on Saturday of a potential environmental disaster in the Red Sea after Huthi rebels struck an oil tanker off the Yemeni coast.

The Greek-flagged Sounion was struck on Wednesday off the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, with the Iran-backed Huthis claiming to have hit the vessel with drones and missiles.

On Friday, the UKMTO maritime agency said three fires had been spotted on the ship, while a video released by the Huthis on social media allegedly showed three explosions on the ship.

The 274-meter long vessel had departed from Iraq and was destined for a port near Athens, carrying 150,000 tonnes of crude oil.

"The Huthis' continued attacks threaten to spill a million barrels of oil into the Red Sea, an amount four times the size of the Exxon Valdez disaster," US State Department Matthew Miller said Saturday in a statement.

The Exxon Valdez spill in 1989 released 257,000 barrels along the

On Friday, the UKMTO maritime agency said three fires had been spotted on the ship, while a video released by the Huthis on social media allegedly showed three explosions on the ship.

coast of Alaska.

"While the crew has been evacuated, the Huthis appear determined to sink the ship and its cargo into the sea," Miller said.

The Sounian's crew of 23 Filipinos and two Russians were rescued by a ship with the European Union's Aspides mission.

The naval mission also warned the unmanned vessel represented "a navigational and environmental hazard."

The Huthi rebels launched their campaign against international shipping in November, saying it is in support of Gaza amid the Israeli war on the strip.

In March, the Belize-flagged, Lebanese-operated Rubymar became the first ship targeted by the Huthis to sink during the conflict.

The Rubymar sank in the Red Sea

with 21,000 metric tonnes of ammonium phosphate sulfate fertilizer on board.

The Librian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier Tutor also sank in June after being struck by the Huthis.

Multiple sailors have also been killed or wounded in the attacks, which have severely disrupted global shipping.

"Through these attacks, the Huthis have made clear they are willing to destroy the fishing industry and regional ecosystems that Yemenis and other communities in the region rely on for their livelihoods," Miller said Saturday.

"We call on the Huthis to cease these actions immediately and urge other nations to step forward to help avert this environmental disaster," he added. — **AFP**

Rohingya refugees mark anniversary of exodus

COX’S BAZAR: Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who live in sprawling camps in Bangladesh yesterday marked the seventh anniversary of their mass exodus, demanding safe return to Myanmar’s Rakhine state.

The refugees gathered in an open field at Kutupalong camp in Cox’s Bazar district carrying banners and festoons reading “Hope is Home” and “We Rohingya are the citizens of Myanmar,” defying the rain on a day that is marked as “Rohingya Genocide Day.”

On August 25, 2017, hundreds of thousands of refugees started crossing the border to Bangladesh on foot and by boats

amid indiscriminate killings and other violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine state.

Myanmar had launched a brutal crackdown following attacks by an insurgent group on guard posts. The scale, organization and ferocity of the operation led to accusations from the international community, including the UN, of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Then-Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ordered border guards to open the border, eventually allowing more than 700,000 refugees to take shelter in the Muslim-majority nation. The influx was in addition to the more than 300,000 refugees who

had already been living in Bangladesh for decades in the wake of waves of previous violence perpetrated by Myanmar’s military.

Since 2017, Bangladesh has attempted at least twice to send the refugees back and has urged the international community to build pressure on Myanmar for a peaceful environment inside Myanmar that could help start the repatriation. Hasina also sought help from China to mediate.

But in the recent past, the situation in Rakhine state has become more volatile after a group called Arakan Army started fighting against Myanmar’s security forces. The renewed chaos forced

more refugees to flee toward Bangladesh and elsewhere in a desperate move to save their lives. Hundreds of Myanmar soldiers and border guards also took shelter inside Bangladesh to flee the violence, but Bangladesh later handed them over to Myanmar peacefully.

As the protests took place in camps in Bangladesh yesterday, the United Nations and other rights groups expressed their concern over the ongoing chaos in Myanmar.

Washington-based Refugees International in a statement yesterday described the scenario.

“In Rakhine state, increased fighting between Myanmar’s military junta and the AA

(Arakan Army) over the past year has both caught Rohingya in the middle and seen them targeted.

The AA has advanced and burned homes in Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and other towns, recently using drones to bomb villages,” it said.

“The junta has forcibly recruited Rohingya and bombed villages in retaliation. Tens of thousands of Rohingya have been newly displaced, including several who have tried to flee into Bangladesh,” it said.

Unicef said that the agency received alarming reports that civilians, particularly children and families, were being targeted or caught in the crossfire,

The refugees gathered in an open field at Kutupalong camp in Cox’s Bazar district carrying banners and festoons reading “Hope is Home” and “We Rohingya are the citizens of Myanmar,” defying the rain on a day that is marked as “Rohingya Genocide Day.”

resulting in deaths and severe injuries, making humanitarian access in Rakhine extremely challenging. — **AP**

Indonesia: 13 killed in flash flood on eastern Ternate Island

TERNATE ISLAND: Torrential rains caused a flash flood on Indonesia’s eastern Ternate Island, sweeping away residential areas and leaving 13 people dead yesterday, officials said.

The deluges cut off the main road and access to the village of Rua in North Maluku province, the most hard-hit area, and buried dozens of houses and buildings under the mud. Search and rescue teams worked with locals to recover the bodies and look for those still missing.

The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency says high-intensity rain is still possible in the Ternate City area and its surroundings in the coming days. Local authorities advised residents to remain vigilant and heed instructions in case of further flooding. Heavy rains cause frequent landslides and flash floods in Indonesia where millions live in mountainous areas and near floodplains. — **AP**

Nearly 3.28 million tourists arrive in Philippines in seven months

MANILA: A total of 3,276,731 foreign tourists visited the Philippines from January to July this year, 11.5 percent higher than the same period of 2023, a member of the House of Representatives said yesterday.

Marvin Rillo, vice chair of the House Committee on Tourism, said South Korea, the United States and China have been the country’s main sources of international visitors so far this year.

Rillo said the Philippine government has allocated 6.4 billion pesos (113.78 million U.S. dollars) in fresh funding in 2025 to develop more access roads to tourist spots across the archipelagic country. The fund is under the Tourism Road Infrastructure Program in the 2025 national budget, which the House and the Senate have been scrutinizing for the approval of President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos later this year.

“Congress is determined to provide all regions across the country ample support to upgrade their access roads and bridges leading to their tourism sites,” Rillo said. — **XINHUA**

Floods ease in Bangladesh but 300,000 still in shelters

FENI: River waters in low-lying Bangladesh are receding after days of deadly floods but 300,000 people are still in emergency shelters requiring aid, disaster officials said yesterday.

The heavy floods, which killed at least 18 people in Bangladesh, have added to the challenges of a new government that took charge this month after a student-led revolution.

Rescue teams, including joint forces of the army, air force and navy, are helping those forced from their homes and bringing aid to those who have lost everything, disaster management minister Faruk-e-Azam said.

“The flood situation is improving as the flood water started to recede,” Azam told **AFP**.

More than 307,000 people are in shelters and more than 5.2 million have been affected by the floods, the ministry said.

“Now we are working to restore communication in the affected areas so that we can distribute relief food,” Azam said.

“We are also taking steps so that contagious diseases don’t spread.” Ordinary Bangladeshis have been crowdfunding relief efforts.

The floods add to the woes of a nation still reeling from weeks of political turmoil that culminated in the toppling of autocratic leader Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India by helicopter. She was replaced by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, who is heading an interim government that faces the monumental task of charting democratic reforms ahead of expected new elections.

Highways and rail lines were damaged between the capital Dhaka and the main port city of Chittagong, making access to badly flooded districts difficult and disrupting business activity.

Monsoon rains cause widespread destruction yearly but climate change is shifting weather patterns and increasing the number of extreme weather events.

The South Asian nation of 170 million people is crisscrossed by hundreds of rivers and has seen frequent floods in recent decades.

Much of the country is made up of deltas



Border Guard Bangladesh personnel distribute relief materials to flood affected people in Daganbhuiyan, Bangladesh, yesterday. (**AFP**)

where the Himalayan rivers the Ganges and the Brahmaputra wind towards the sea after coursing through India.

It is among the countries most vulnerable to disasters and climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index.

Hard-hit areas include the southeastern regions around Chittagong and Cox’s Bazar, home to around a million Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar.

Floods across the border in upstream India have also left a trail of destruction, with at least 24 people killed in eastern Tripura state since Monday.

India’s Tripura disaster management authority said the waters were also receding but that more than 100,000 people were still sheltering in some

500 relief camps.

Many of their homes were swamped by the floods, with a total of 1.7 million people affected, it said.

The floods have also fuelled anger between Dhaka and New Delhi, with India’s foreign ministry rejecting accusations it was to blame for the floods and denying it had deliberately released water from an upstream dam.

India was a key supporter of Hasina and many Bangladeshis have since been openly critical of their bigger and more powerful neighbour for backing her 15-year rule.

India said its own catchment area had experienced the “heaviest rains of this year” this week, and that the flow of water downstream was due to “automatic releases”. — **AFP**

36 killed in two separate bus crashes in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Two separate bus crashes hours apart in Pakistan yesterday left at least 36 people dead and dozens more injured, officials said.

The first happened when a bus carrying Shia Muslim pilgrims returning from Iraq through Iran fell from a highway into a ravine in southwest Pakistan, killing at least 12 people and injuring 32 others, police and officials said.

The driver lost control on the Makran coastal highway when the brakes failed, while passing through Lasbela district in Baluchistan province, local police chief Qazi Sabir said.

Authorities in Baluchistan said that arrangements were being made to send the bodies of the pilgrims to Punjab

province for burial. Maryam Nawaz, the chief minister in Punjab, expressed her condolences after the crash.

Hours later, 24 people were killed when a bus fell into a ravine in the Kahuta district of the eastern Punjab province, police and officials said, including two women and a child. Omar Farooq, a senior government official in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, said there were no survivors.

Initially, local police said that there were seven injured, but later doctors and government officials said that everyone onboard the bus died in the crash. Raja Moazzam, a rescue official, said most of the bodies had been identified.

According to residents, the bus crash

happened early yesterday and locals initially took part in the rescue work, and ambulances of emergency service crews arrived later.

The bus was heading to the Pakistan-administrated Himalayan region of Kashmir when it fell from the Panna bridge in the Kahuta district, said Sardar Waheed, a senior government official, adding that heavy machinery was used to lift the wreckage to ensure no one was trapped underneath.

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in separate statements, offered their condolences and expressed sorrow over the two crashes.

They asked authorities to ensure the provision of the best medical treatment

for the injured pilgrims.

The crashes yesterday occurred days after 28 Pakistani pilgrims were killed in a bus crash in neighbouring Iran while heading to Iraq. A Pakistani military plane flew the bodies of the victims home on Saturday to be buried in the southern Sindh province.

Thousands of Shias travel to Iraq’s holy city of Karbala to commemorate Arbaeen — Arabic for the number 40 — to mark the death of Prophet Muhammad’s grandson, Hussein, who became a symbol of resistance during the tumultuous first century of Islam’s history.

Bus crashes are common in Pakistan, mostly because of negligence by drivers, who often violate traffic rules. . — **AP**

Thai officials raid illegal bitcoin mine after power outages

BANGKOK: Thai authorities raided an illegal bitcoin mine west of Bangkok after residents complained of frequent blackouts in the area for more than a month, local authorities said yesterday.

Police and officials from the Provincial Electricity Authorities (PEA) raided the house in Ratchaburi town on Friday.

“We found bitcoin mining rigs, pointing to people using this house to operate a mine and using power they didn’t fully pay for,” said Jammong Chanwong, a chief district security officer. He told **AFP** records showed that electricity consumption in the house was large, but they had paid for very little of it.

Mining virtual currencies such as bitcoin requires powerful computers that consume huge amounts of electricity.

Bitcoin miners are considered manufacturers in Thailand and must pay associated taxes, but illegal mining has been on the rise for years. Jammong said his team tried to enter the house on Thursday but a guard denied them entry. They then returned with a search warrant and found most of the equipment had been moved.

He said the house had been rented by a company for around four months, but the power outages began mid-July when the mine likely became fully operational.

No-one was arrested during the raid, he added. It was fourth time this year that authorities have raided an illegal bitcoin mine in Ratchaburi province. — **AFP**

Six dead, four missing in Nepal landslide

KATHMANDU: Three houses were swept away by a landslide in central Nepal early yesterday morning, leaving six people dead and four others missing.

Another person was injured in the disaster sparked by hours-long torrential rain in Shailung Rural Municipality of Ramechhap district at around 0300 a.m. local time.

“Our team is searching for the missing people,” Kaushal Neupane, spokesperson for the district police, told Xinhua.

A bridge over a local stream was swept away by floods, making commuting with other parts of the district difficult, he said.

Monsoon rain-related disasters had left 195 people dead, 247 wounded and 49 others missing as of Friday, according to Nepal Police. — **XINHUA**

China says it rescued ‘personnel’ after Philippines collision

BEIJING: China’s coast guard said it rescued Filipino “personnel” who fell overboard yesterday after a Philippine vessel collided with one of its ships near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea.

The Philippines slammed China’s claims as “completely unfounded”.

The two nations have had repeated confrontations in the waters in recent months, and on Saturday Manila accused China of recently twice firing flares at one of its patrol aircraft.

China has continued to press its claims to almost the entire sea and has ignored an international tribunal ruling that its assertions have no legal basis.

Beijing accused the Philippine vessel of “deliberately” colliding with a Chinese Coast Guard ship.

It said the collision took place near the disputed Sabina Shoal, 140 kilometres (86 miles) west of the Philippine island of Palawan and about 1,200 kilometres from Hainan island, the closest Chinese landmass.

China Coast Guard spokesman Gan Yu said the collision occurred when a Philippine vessel refused to comply with “control measures” after attempting to deliver supplies to another vessel “illegally stationed” near Xianbin Reef in the Nansha Islands — using the Chinese names for the Sabina Shoal and the Spratly Islands also claimed by Manila.

“China warns the Philippines to immediately cease its infringing actions, otherwise the Philippines will bear all consequences resulting from this situation,” Gan said.

The Philippines said that its ships encountered “aggressive and dangerous maneuvers” from the Chinese side when they were on a humanitarian mission to resupply Filipino fishermen with diesel, food and medical items.

The Chinese vessels “made close perilous maneuvers that resulted in ramming, blasted horns, and deployed water cannons”, leading to an early termination of the resupply

operation after their ship experienced engine failure, a statement from Manila’s National Task Force on the West Philippine Sea said.

“These unprofessional, aggressive, and illegal actions posed serious risks to the safety of the Filipino crew and the fishermen they were meant to serve,” the statement said, adding that no one was harmed.



A Chinese coast guard ship (right) collides with the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources vessel BRP Datu yesterday, near Sabina Shoal in disputed waters of the South China Sea. (**AFP**)

UK PM to warn life will ‘get worse before it gets better’

LONDON: Prime Minister Keir Starmer is poised to warn tomorrow that life in Britain will “get worse” before it gets “better”, in his first major speech since taking office.

Starmer, whose Labour Party was elected by a landslide on July 4, is expected to use the speech to ramp up attacks on the legacy left by the ousted Conservatives.

His comments come after criticism that Labour is seeking a pretext to raise taxes, despite pre-election promises that certain taxes would not be hiked.

“We have inherited not just an economic black hole but a societal black hole. And that is

why we have to take action and do things differently,” Starmer will say, according to excerpts of the speech released in advance.

“Part of that is being honest with people — about the choices we face. And how tough this will be. Frankly — things will get worse before we get better.” Finance minister Rachel Reeves in recent days warned of “difficult decisions” over whether to cut spending or increase taxes in her first budget on October 30.

Since Labour’s election victory, Reeves has repeatedly accused the ex-prime minister Rishi Sunak’s Tories of leaving

His comments come after criticism that Labour is seeking a pretext to raise taxes, despite pre-election promises that certain taxes would not be hiked.

a £22bn (\$29bn) black hole in this year’s budget.

But opponents say she would have been aware of the state of the country’s finances months ago and is simply preparing the ground for unpopular announcements.

Starmer is expected to tell the public that things are “worse

than we ever imagined”.

The same theme has been adopted by ministers across government since July 4.

Commentators, however, have warned that the electorate could quickly tire of Labour blaming the Tories if it does not make clear progress in fixing some challenges facing the nation.

Main election issues included long waiting times for treatment under the state-funded National Health Service (NHS), immigration and a cost-of-living crisis that has triggered widespread strikes even by emergency health care staff.

“In the first few weeks, we

discovered a £22bn black hole in the public finances. And don’t let anyone say that this is performative, or playing politics,” Starmer will say.

“The OBR (Office for Budget Responsibility) did not know about this. They wrote a letter saying so. They didn’t know — because the last government hid it.” The prime minister will also address the recent riots sparked by a mass stabbing in which three young girls aged between six and nine-years-old attending a Taylor Swift themed dance class were killed.

He is expected to say that the rioters were able to exploit “the cracks in our society after

14 years of populism and failure”, referring to the Conservatives’ time in office.

Officials have blamed far-right elements for helping to stir up the disorder, which targeted mosques and hotels housing asylum-seekers as well as police officers and other properties.

The authorities have cited misinformation spread online that the suspect was a Muslim asylum-seeker for fuelling the violence.

Axel Rudakubana, who was aged 17 at the time, was actually born in Britain to parents who hail from Rwanda, an overwhelmingly Christian country. — **AFP**

German police say Syrian suspect confesses to knife rampage

SOLINGEN: German police said yesterday that a Syrian man has given himself up and confessed to killing three people and wounding eight others in a knife rampage at a street festival.

The random attack as thousands of people gathered on Friday night in the western city of Solingen has stunned Germany.

Two men aged 56 and 67 and a 56-year-old woman were killed, officials said.

Four of the wounded remained in a serious condition. All of the victims were stabbed in the neck, according to police.

Police said in a statement that the suspect was a 26-year-old Syrian who had “given himself up to authorities... and declared himself responsible for the attack”. German prosecutors said they had launched a “terrorist” investigation.

According to the *Bild* and *Spiegel* newspapers, the suspect arrived in Germany in December 2022 and had a protected immigration status often given to those fleeing war-torn Syria.

The jihadist Islamic State group’s Amaq propaganda arm has claimed responsibility for the attack, saying “the perpetrator of



Members of a special police unit escort a man suspected to be responsible for the Solingen knife attack from a helicopter to the office of the Federal Prosecutor in Karlsruhe, Germany, yesterday. (AFP)

the attack on a gathering of Christians” in Solingen “was a soldier of the Islamic State”. IS said the attack was carried out as “revenge for Muslims in Palestine and everywhere”, in an apparent reference to the Gaza conflict.

The claim could not be immediately verified.

German Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck said the suspect was not known to the security services as an extremist considered dangerous.

Habeck — who called for tougher knife laws yesterday — said “Islamic terrorism” was one of “the biggest security dangers”

Germany faces.

The attack took place as thousands of people gathered for the first night of a “Festival of Diversity”, part of a series of events to mark Solingen’s 650th anniversary.

The whole festival has now been cancelled.

Witness Lars Breitzke told the Solinger Tageblatt newspaper he was near the attack, close to the main stage, and “understood from the expression on the singer’s face that something was wrong”.

“And then, a metre away from me, a person fell,” said Breitzke, adding that when he turned around, he saw other people on the ground in pools of blood. German officers indicated yesterday that a suspect arrested a day before at a raid at a hostel for asylum seekers, not far from the scene of the attack, was being considered a “witness”.

A 15-year-old boy was also arrested, suspected of failing to report a criminal act.

National and local leaders, including Chancellor Olaf Scholz, said the country had been “deeply shocked” by the deaths in Solingen, a city of 160,000 people.

Germany has been on high alert for extremist attacks since the Gaza war erupted on October 7 with the Hamas attacks on Israel. German street festivals and markets have previously been hit.

A truck rampage at a Berlin Christmas market in 2016 killed 12 people. — **AFP**

EU ‘extremely concerned’ over Venezuela election crisis

BRUSSELS: The EU said it is “extremely concerned” about the deepening political crisis in Venezuela, where the results of the presidential election last month have been rejected by the opposition, the bloc’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said yesterday.

Caracas has still not provided the “necessary evidence to assess the electoral process”, Borrell said. The opposition has insisted its candidate won.

“Only complete and independently verifiable results will be accepted and recognised,” the EU’s top diplomat added.

Borrell said according to some polling station records, opposition leader Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia “would appear to be the winner of the presidential election by a significant majority”.

He appealed for polling station records to be published in full “to ensure that the will of the Venezuelan people is respected”.

The country’s strongman leader Nicolas Maduro has called for the arrest of Gonzalez Urrutia, who has not been seen in public since leading a July 30 opposition march. Prosecutors summoned him for questioning Saturday.

Protests following the disputed vote on July 28 left 27 people dead, 192 injured and about 2,400 arrested. — **AP**

Toll rises to 12 in Balkan migrant boat tragedy

SARAJEVO: The death toll from the sinking of a migrant boat on the Bosnia-Serbia border rose to 12 on Saturday after local residents found another body, the authorities said.

The vessel, which was carrying 28 to 30 migrants, capsized Thursday in the Drina river in a bid to cross from Serbia to Bosnia, leaving a nine-month-old baby girl and her mother among the dead.

The authorities called off the search Friday night saying that all bodies that were reported missing had been recovered.

“The body of the twelfth migrant, who died when the boat overturned on the Drina River, was found today in the town of Tegare near Bratunac,” the head of Bosnia’s civil protection service Boris Trninic confirmed to SRNA news agency. — **AFP**

Pope Francis calls for more help for mpox victims

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis yesterday highlighted victims of the mpox virus in his weekly prayers and called on governments and the pharmaceutical industry to do more to get vaccines to the worst hit countries.

“I pray for all the infected people, in particular the population of Democratic Republic of Congo, so affected. I express my closeness to the local

churches most touched by this disease,” the pope said during his Angelus prayers in St Peter’s Square. The World Health Organization this month declared the surge of mpox cases from DR Congo to other African nations to be a global health emergency. It has also called for greater production and sharing of vaccines.

“I encourage governments and private industry to share

the technology and available treatments so that nobody lacks adapted medical care,” the pope said. While mpox has been known for decades, a new more deadly and more transmissible strain — known as Clade 1b -- has driven the recent surge in cases.

Clade 1b causes death in about 3.6 percent of cases, with children more at risk, according to the WHO. — **AFP**

Telegram chief Durov to appear in court after French arrest

PARIS: Telegram chief executive Pavel Durov is to appear in court yesterday after being arrested by at a Paris airport for offences related to his popular messaging app, sources told AFP.

Russia has accused France of “refusing to cooperate” following the arrest of the Franco-Russian billionaire, 39, at Le Bourget airport on Saturday night. Durov had arrived from Baku, in Azerbaijan, one source close to the case said.

France’s OFMIN, an office tasked with preventing violence against minors, had issued an arrest warrant for Durov in a preliminary investigation into alleged offences including fraud, drug trafficking, cyberbullying, organised crime and promotion of terrorism, one source said.

Durov is accused of failing to take action to curb the criminal use of his platform.

“Enough of Telegram’s impunity,” said one investigator who expressed surprise that Durov flew to Paris knowing he was a wanted man.

Russian authorities said they had demanded access to Durov but had no response from France.

“We immediately asked French authorities to explain the reasons for this detention and demanded that his rights be protected and that consular access be granted. Up to now, the French



Pavel Durov, CEO and co-founder of Telegram speaks onstage during day one of TechCrunch Disrupt SF 2015 at Pier 70 on September 21, 2015 in San Francisco, California. (AFP)

side is refusing to cooperate on this question,” Russia’s embassy in Paris said in a statement reported by the Ria Novosti news agency. Businessman Elon Musk, who owns the X social media platform, posted a hashtag #FreePavel and commented in French, “Liberte Liberte! Liberte?” (Freedom

Freedom! Freedom?).

Former US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr said, also on X, that “the need to protect free speech has never been more urgent”. The encrypted messaging app, based in Dubai, has positioned itself as an alternative to US-owned platforms, which have been criticised for their commercial exploitation of users’ personal data.

Telegram has committed to never disclosing information about its users.

In a rare interview given to right-wing talk show host Tucker Carlson in April, Durov said he got the idea to launch an encrypted messaging app after coming under pressure from the Russian government when working at VK, a social network he created before selling it and leaving Russia in 2014. He said he then tried to settle in Berlin, London, Singapore and San Francisco before choosing Dubai, which he praised for its business environment and “neutrality”. — **AFP**

Paris commemorates 80th anniversary of liberation in WWII

PARIS: Paris yesterday celebrated the 80th anniversary of its liberation from German troops in World War II with tributes, military marches and the hoisting of a flag at the Eiffel Tower.

On August 25, 1944, the 2nd French Armoured Division entered the capital under the command of General Philippe Leclerc de Hautecloque, ending 1,500 days of German occupation.

Their triumphant arrival followed a tumultuous week of strikes, combat at barricades and street battles between French Resistance fighters and occupying forces.

Yesterday a parade, which organisers said was both “military and popular”, was to follow one of the itineraries of the French division from the south of the capital to its centre.

President Emmanuel Macron is scheduled to speak at a ceremony at the end of the march before an audience including prominent cultural figures, including American actor Jodie Foster, and Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo.

A torch for the Paris Paralympics, which open Wednesday, will be lit, followed by a flyover by the Patrouille de France, a unit of French air force fighter planes. — **AFP**

French authorities arrest suspect in explosion at synagogue

NICE: French police have apprehended and detained a suspect in an arson attack on a synagogue in a southwestern Mediterranean town that injured a police officer, the country’s acting interior minister said yesterday.

Two cars parked at the Beth Yaacov synagogue complex in the seaside resort town of La Grande Motte, near Montpellier, were set ablaze just after 8 am Saturday. Firefighters discovered additional fires at two entrances to the synagogue. A police officer who walked up to the site was injured after a propane gas tank placed near the burning vehicles exploded.

Five people, including the rabbi, who were present in the synagogue complex at the time of the attack were unharmed, it added.

“The alleged perpetrator of the arson attack on the synagogue has been arrested,” Gerald Darmanin, the acting interior minister, said in a post on X. — **AP**

Reuters says team member missing in Russian strike on east Ukraine hotel

KRAMATORSK: A member of the Reuters news agency was missing and two others were wounded in a Russian strike on a hotel in the east Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk, the agency said yesterday, while Russian attacks killed 12 civilians across the country in the last 24 hours.

In another deadly day in the two-and-a-half year war, six civilians were also killed in Ukrainian strikes on Russian border regions, Russian officials said. The attacks on both sides came a day after Kyiv celebrated independence from the Soviet Union and after a prisoner of war swap between the warring sides.

Moscow has continued its strikes and advance in eastern Ukraine, despite Ukraine’s push into the Kursk region. In the east Ukrainian city of



Ukrainian emergency services carry out a search and rescue operation among the rubble of a destroyed hotel after a strike in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region yesterday. (AFP)

Kramatorsk, a search and rescue operation was underway after a strike

crew covering the war were staying. Kramatorsk — the last major city under Ukrainian control in the Donetsk region — is often used as a base for aid workers and foreign journalists. “One of our colleagues is unaccounted for, while another two have been taken to hospital for treatment,” Reuters said, adding that it was “urgently seeking more information”.

The agency said “three other colleagues have been accounted for” and said it was “working with the authorities in Kramatorsk, and supporting our colleagues and their families.” The head of the Donetsk region, Vadym Filashkin, said earlier two journalists were wounded while one was missing, saying the strike happened “in the middle of the night.” — **AFP**

late on Saturday on the Hotel Sapphire, where Reuters said six of its

Harris campaign says it raised \$540m in just over a month

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris's US presidential campaign said yesterday that it has raised more than half a billion dollars in just over a month, "a record for any campaign in history." The eye-watering amount of \$540m, raised since Harris launched her campaign after President Joe Biden dropped out of the White House race on July 21 and endorsed her, comes as she and Republican rival Donald Trump embark on the final 10-week sprint to election day on November 5.

Trump, whose campaign was thrown when Biden stepped aside, reported having \$327m cash on hand at the start of August. Just before Harris took to the stage at the DNC on Thursday to accept her party's nomination, "we officially crossed the \$500m mark," campaign chair Jen O'Malley Dillon said in a memo. "Immediately after her speech, we saw our best fundraising hour since launch day,"

Harris's campaign appears to have energised large and small donors alike -- a turnaround from the uncertain period after a disastrous Biden debate performance in June.

she continued. "In just over a month since we launched our campaign, Team Harris-Walz raised \$540m - a record for any campaign in history." The sum reflects funds raised across the campaign, the Democratic National Committee and joint fundraising committees, the statement said.

One-third of those donations were from first-time contributors, O'Malley Dillon said. Harris's campaign appears to have energised large and small donors alike -- a



US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff walk from Marine Two to board Air Force Two at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, Illinois, as they return to Washington, DC, on August 23, 2024. (AFP)

turnaround from the uncertain period after a disastrous Biden debate performance in June, when major donors reportedly halted fundraising. It also appears to have mobilized what O'Malley Dillon called "a virtual army of volunteers," with the convention seeing grassroots

workers signing up in droves. "Meanwhile, Donald Trump's battleground infrastructure remains incredibly sparse," she said. Harris and Trump are neck and neck in the polls less than three weeks before their September 10 debate in Philadelphia.

Harris, 59, a former senator from California and prosecutor, left the Democratic convention in Chicago with momentum, having outraised Trump and erased the polling leads he enjoyed before she replaced Biden on the Democratic ticket. — **AFP**

Back-to-work order issued for two major Canada railroads, union plans lawsuit

TORONTO: The Canadian arbitrator appointed to resolve a messy railroad labor dispute to protect the North American economy has ordered employees at the country's two major railroads back to work so both can resume operating.

Saturday's order means Canadian National will be able to continue operating the trains it restarted Friday morning just over a day after it locked out workers. But Canadian Pacific Kansas City likely won't be able to restart its operations before 12:01am today, when workers were ordered to return.

Railroads play a crucial role in the economy with CPKC and CN delivering more than CAS1bn (\$730m) worth of shipments a day and carrying billions of dollars of goods between the US and Canada every month. Even though both companies' trains in the United States and Mexico continued operating, the lockouts caused a significant disruption. A number of smaller short-line freight railroads that handle local deliveries continued operating across Canada but were unable to hand off shipments to either of the major railroads while they were idle.

The Teamsters union said that it will comply with the Canada Industrial Relations Board order and send its members back on the job, but it will also move forward with a legal challenge of the arbitration order.

"This decision by the CIRB sets a dangerous precedent. It signals to corporate Canada that large companies need only stop their operations for a few hours, inflict short-term economic pain, and the federal government will step in to break a union," said Paul Boucher, President of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, which represents more than 9,000 engineers, conductors and dispatchers at both railroads. — **AP**

Venezuela opposition candidate issued summons over vote dispute

CARACAS: Venezuelan prosecutors have summoned opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia for questioning today as part of a criminal investigation following the country's disputed presidential election claimed by strongman Nicolas Maduro.

"Citizen Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia" is summoned "on August 26 at 10 am for an interview," prosecutors said Saturday, as part of an investigation into the opposition's publishing of electoral records which it claims show Maduro was clearly defeated.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab, a Maduro ally, had foreshadowed the summoning Friday, saying Gonzalez Urrutia would have to explain his "disobedience." Saab said the opposition's website, where it has posted a detailed breakdown of election results, had "usurped" the powers of the Maduro-aligned CNE electoral council.

Opposition leader Maria



Venezuelan opposition presidential candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia shows his ballot as he votes in Caracas during the presidential election on July 28, 2024. (AFP)

Corina Machado was defiant, calling in a post on X for Venezuelans to take to the streets again on Wednesday.

"One month after our glorious victory, in which Edmundo Gonzalez was elected President, Venezuelans again take to the streets," she said, calling for supporters to come "with family, with your children, with your

grandchildren and with your voting record in hand." The CNE declared Maduro the winner of the July 28 election with 52 percent of votes cast, but has refused to publish detailed results, claiming hackers had corrupted the data.

An observer mission from the US-based Carter Center said there was no evidence of a

cyber attack.

The polling station-level results published by the opposition show that Gonzalez Urrutia, a 74-year-old retired diplomat, defeated Maduro with 67 percent of the vote.

Maduro has called for the arrest of Gonzalez Urrutia, who has not been seen in public since he led a march on July 30 with Machado.

Machado, banned from running in the election, is also in hiding. She has demanded that Maduro enter into transition negotiations, which he has rejected outright.

On Saturday, she said in a televised Fox News interview that Maduro had unleashed a brutal "campaign of terror." She pledged to "keep on fighting, peacefully protesting, increasing pressure domestically and internationally, until Maduro understands that his best option is to accept the terms of a negotiation that would bring us to a transition to democracy." — **AFP**



Annual AAFCA TV Honors

FROM LEFT: Reggie Rock Bythewood, Channing Godfrey Peoples and Gina Prince Bythewood attend 6th Annual AAFCA TV Honors presented by the African American Film Critics Association at The Hollywood Roosevelt on August 24, 2024 in Los Angeles, California. (Getty Images via AFP)

Bezos' Blue Origin suffers fiery setback building new rocket

FLORIDA: Blue Origin sustained failures in recent weeks of testing including a factory mishap that damaged a portion of a future New Glenn rocket, the long-awaited centerpiece of the Jeff Bezos-backed startup's push to take on SpaceX.

The upper portion of one rocket crumpled into itself, in part due to worker error, while it was being moved to a storage hangar, according to people familiar with the situation. In a separate incident, another upper rocket portion failed during stress testing and exploded, the people said. Repairs are underway, another person said, noting there were no injuries during either episode.

The previously unreported incidents illustrate the hurdles Blue Origin is grappling with while ramping up production of New Glenn, which is four years overdue. At the same time, new Chief Executive Officer Dave Limp has hired a slate of executives to shake the company out of a years-long R&D slump.

Blue Origin is rushing to meet a tight deadline to debut the rocket in October for a NASA mission called Escapade. New Glenn's launch is set for roughly two months from now because at that time Mars will be close enough to Earth. After October, the planets won't align like that again for roughly another two years.

It's not clear whether the recent incidents would impact the launch schedule. The two mishaps involved hardware slated for the second and third flights of the New Glenn rocket, which are supposed to happen after the October debut. A Blue Origin spokesperson said it's on track to launch New Glenn

Putin played on Trump's ego, top adviser says in new book

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump was determined during his presidency to cozy up to Vladimir Putin despite Russia's interference in US democracy and objections by advisers, a former top aide claims in a new book, according to an excerpt published Saturday.

The new behind-the-scenes details from H R McMaster, Trump's second national security adviser, come as Americans are set to decide whether the former president should return to the White House and as US officials warn of fresh foreign election meddling.

"After over a year in this job, I cannot understand Putin's hold on Trump," McMaster, in an excerpt from his memoir published in the *Wall Street Journal*, says he told his wife in March 2018.

A former lieutenant-general, McMaster became Trump's national security adviser in February 2017, and says that from the beginning, discussions of Vladimir Putin and Russia "were difficult to have with the president." He says Trump connected "all topics involving Russia" to the federal investigation into Moscow's interference in the 2016 election and possible ties with Trump's campaign, a probe which would dog his entire presidency.

US officials have warned this year of new efforts by foreign powers, including Russia and Iran, to meddle in the November election, in which Trump is facing Vice President Kamala Harris.

McMaster says an "over-confident" president Trump sought early in his administration to improve relations with Russia by building a personal rapport with Putin.

But the Russian president, "a ruthless former KGB operator, played to Trump's ego and insecurities with flattery," McMaster says.

"Trump had revealed his vulnerability to this approach, his affinity for strongmen and his belief that he alone could forge a good relationship with Putin," he added. — **AFP**

'Deadpool' and 'Alien' top box office again

LOS ANGELES: In a sleepy summer weekend at the box office, holdovers reigned supreme as newcomers landed without a splash.

"Deadpool & Wolverine" reclaimed first place at the North American box office in its fifth weekend with \$18.3m. Its cumulative international earnings now sit at over \$1.2bn.

The Walt Disney Co, which owns 20th Century Studios, claimed the top two spots on the charts for the second weekend in a row with "Alien: Romulus" following close behind the foul-mouthed superhero movie. The latest installment in the 45-year-old franchise brought in \$16.2m in its second weekend after a promising opening. Disney's "Inside Out 2" also

remained on the charts, raking in \$2.1m domestically in its 11th weekend. Its global earnings are now over \$1.6bn.

"This is an incredible turnaround for Disney, who almost fell off the radar, shockingly enough, last year and over the course of the pandemic," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "They got a couple of billion-dollar films out so far and 'Moana 2' is still up on the way. This is a huge comeback year for Disney - no question about it."

Romantic drama "It Ends With Us," another repeat chart-topper, landed in third place for the second consecutive weekend with \$11.9m. The Sony movie starring Blake Lively and

Justin Baldoni, who also directed, has made \$242.6m to date globally. It cost only \$25m to produce.

The new releases were victim to the crowded movie marketplace, resulting in what Dergarabedian called "box office déjà vu," with the familiar films dominating and making it harder for the new releases to find their footing. Dergarabedian says the upcoming Labor Day holiday will likely benefit the newer titles as word-of-mouth spreads and more people head to theaters during the long weekend.

"Blink Twice," directed by Zoë Kravitz and starring her life partner Channing Tatum, saw a modest opening, taking in

\$7.3m and claiming fourth place on the charts. The Amazon MGM Studios psychological thriller follows Tatum as tech magnate Slater King, who whisks two women away to his private island. While it may seem like a picture-perfect vacation at first, much more sinister events unfold as the visitors learn the truth about the island and the billionaire. The film's budget has been reported at \$20m.

Rounding out the top five was "The Forge," a faith-focused coming-of-age movie about a young man finding his way through Christianity. The film opened with \$6.6m and received an A+ CinemaScore from audiences. It was released by Affirm Films, Sony's faith-based banner. — **AP**