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Qatar Tourism records over 3.5 million international visitors by end of Sept

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DOHA: Qatar Tourism announced performance results for the first three quarters of 2025, confirming sustained growth in arrivals and accommodation demand as the country prepares for a full schedule of events in the final quarter and early 2026.

International visitors reached over 3.5 million by the end of September, recording a 2.2 percent increase compared with the same period in 2024. The GCC remained the largest contributor at 36 percent of total visitors, followed by Europe with 25 percent and Asia and Oceania with 22 percent.

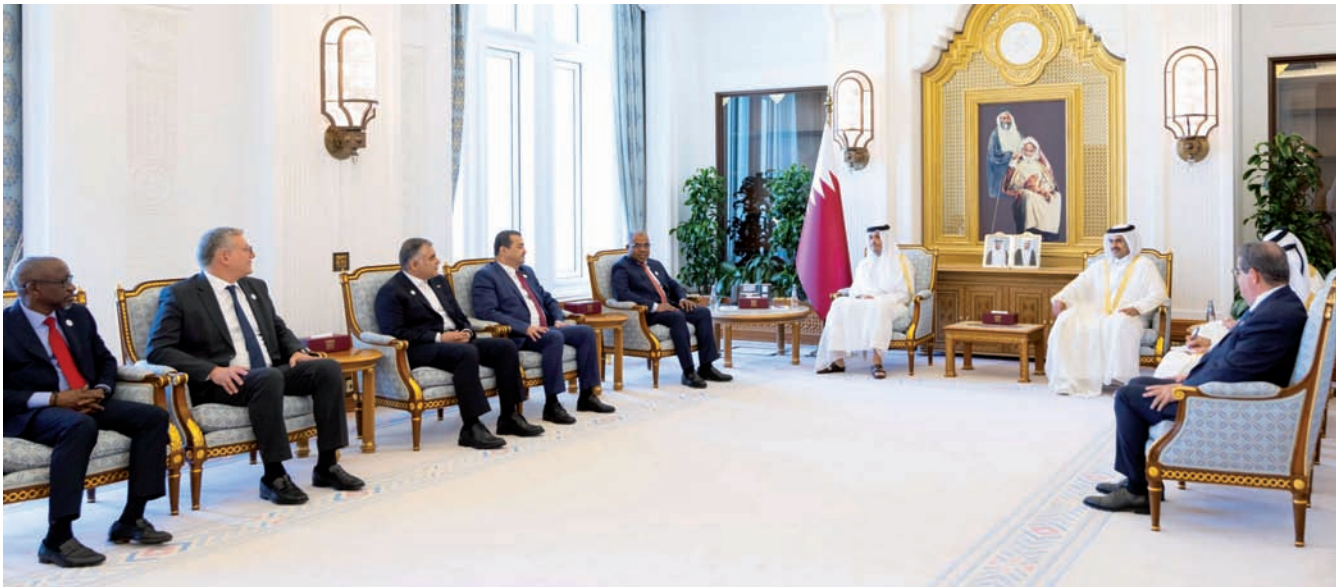
Of all arrivals, 60 percent entered by air, 33 percent by land and 7 percent by sea, reflecting consistent movement across all entry points. Q3 has also witnessed exponential increase in visitor numbers from China that saw 37%

and Australia that saw 31% growth.

Hotel and hotel apartment capacity reached 41,733 room keys. Average occupancy across all accommodation categories YTD Q3 stood at 68 percent, an increase of 2.4 percentage points from last year. Total room nights sold rose to 7.7 million, showing an 8% year-on-year demand growth.

As Qatar enters the final quarter of the year, Visit Qatar is preparing to activate a full programme of events confirmed under the Qatar Calendar 2025–2026. The fourth quarter marks the start of a series of international sports tournaments, cultural programmes and entertainment events expected to attract residents, regional travellers and international visitors.

Visit Qatar will host the Doha International Military Music Festival (Doha Tattoo), welcoming international military bands and ceremonial ensembles. ➔P2



Prime Minister meets ministers participating in GECF

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani met yesterday with Their Excellencies Ministers of Oil, Gas, and Energy participating in the Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in Doha. His Excellency welcomed the guests, wishing them success in their meeting. The Prime Minister reiterated Qatar's call to enhance dialogue and cooperation among the GECF's member states to ensure the security of natural gas supplies and the stability of global gas market.

Minister Al Kaabi stresses need to oppose energy trade barriers

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THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Minister of State for Energy Affairs H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to cooperate with member states to promote natural gas as a primary vehicle to achieve access to cleaner energy.

Minister Al Kaabi was heading Qatar's delegation to the 27th Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) held in Doha, yesterday.

Delivering the opening remarks during the meeting, Minister of State for Energy Affairs said, "We must be clear in our opposition to trade barriers and discriminatory



Despite geopolitical tensions and faltering climate policies, the outlook for natural gas and particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG) is positive.

It is driven by economic growth in Asia, a growing desire for cleaner and more economic sources of energy, and booming power demand from data centres and artificial intelligence.

H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi

measures that disadvantage energy products, especially natural gas."

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particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG) is positive.

It is driven by economic growth in Asia, a growing desire for cleaner and more economic sources of energy, and booming power demand from data

centres and artificial intelligence, Minister Al Kaabi added.

Also addressing the meeting, Minister of Oil and Gas in the Government of National Unity of Libya, President of the 27th GECF Ministerial Meeting, H E Khalifa Rajab Abdulsadiq noted that forecasts indicate oil and gas will continue to supply no less than half of the world's energy needs. Therefore, efforts to marginalise or eliminate fossil fuels are neither realistic nor sustainable and in fact pose a threat to the global economy.

Highlighting the role of natural gas as a cornerstone in achieving a balanced energy transition, the Minister pointed out that according to GECF projections, natural gas will account

for approximately 26% of global energy supply by 2050.

He said, however, achieving this requires strong policy frameworks, long-term investment, and sustained international support for the role of natural gas in achieving global sustainable development.

Expanding cooperation between energy-producing and consuming countries is essential to ensure stability, predictability, and confidence in global energy markets, he added.

For his part, GECF Secretary General Eng Mohamed Hamel noted that the world today faces a complex interplay of challenges, ranging from persistent energy poverty and economic disparity to geopolitical tensions,

supply chain disruptions, trade crises, and the need for environmental sustainability.

The GECF Secretary General said that amid these undeniable risks, natural gas stands as a beacon of stability, being a clean, reliable, affordable, and flexible energy source that fuels sustainable development and enhances energy security.

Global gas consumption reached an all-time high in 2024, contributing 40% to the incremental growth in global primary energy demand, the highest share among hydrocarbon sources. Looking ahead, the demand for natural gas is expected to grow by 1.6% this year and by 32% by mid-century, he added. ➔P2

Qatar, Saudi Arabia discuss media cooperation

DOHA: Chairperson of Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) H E Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani discussed yesterday with Minister of Media of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia H E Salman bin Yousef Al Dosari further media cooperation between the two countries.

The talks held within the framework of the media committee emanating from the Qatari-Saudi Coordination Council were also attended by CEO of QMC H E Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani and Director-General of Qatar News Agency (QNA) Ahmed bin Saeed Al Rumaihi.

Attending from the Saudi side were Undersecretary of the Ministry of Media for External Media H E Dr. Khalid Al Ghamdi, Acting President of the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) H E Ali bin Abdullah Alzaid, and CEO of the Saudi Broadcasting Authority H E Mohammad bin Fahd Al Harithi.

The two sides discussed the programmes and projects of exchange and partnership between the two countries in



Chairperson of Qatar Media Corporation H E Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani (centre); CEO of QMC H E Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani (left), and Director-General of Qatar News Agency Ahmed bin Saeed Al Rumaihi (right) during the meeting.

the media field, within the scope of the Media Committee's work. They praised the role of media institutions in both countries in providing media content that professionally reflects the strong fraternal ties between

both nations, in line with the aspirations of their wise leaderships and serving the interests of their fraternal peoples.

The Chairperson of the QMC indicated that what unites the two fraternal peoples provides

an ideal environment for developing media initiatives and projects that express the shared values and reflect the depth of the ties, close relations, and kinship that bind the two fraternal countries. — QNA ➔P2

EAA Foundation, IRC launch 'Hope for Tomorrow' initiative in Gaza, West Bank to support children

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, a global education and development organisation, supported by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and in collaboration with the Teacher Creativity Centre (TCC) and Sesame Workshop, has launched the "Hope for Tomorrow" early childhood development (ECD) initiative to support the well-being, learning, and resilience of young children and their caregivers affected by the crisis in Gaza and the West Bank.

The fifteen-month initiative aims to reach approximately 250,000 children and 500,000 caregivers through a combination of in-person and remote ECD services, including educational media such as the Arabic-language programme Ahlan Simsim. The initiative

focuses on play-based learning and responsive caregiving to create safe, inclusive spaces that promote healing, emotional regulation, and early learning.

It will also equip caregivers, educators, and frontline providers with the training and tools necessary to support children's development even in times of crisis.

CEO of Education Above All Foundation, Mohammed Al Kubaisi said, "Building on our partnership with the International Rescue Committee and Sesame Workshop, we are reaffirming our commitment to ensuring that every child, no matter their circumstances, has the chance to learn, play, and heal.

"This initiative represents more than immediate relief; it is an investment in recovery, resilience, and the right to education for children living through crisis." ➔P3

Arab and Islamic states slam Israeli Knesset's approval of sovereignty over West Bank

DOHA: Qatar, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Turkiye, the Republic of Djibouti, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the Republic of The Gambia, the State of Palestine, the State of Kuwait, the State of Libya, Malaysia, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the League of Arab States, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, have condemned Israeli Knesset's approval of two draft laws seeking to impose "Israeli sovereignty" over the occupied

West Bank, and its illegal colonial settlements.

In a joint statement, the group denounced the Israeli moves as "a blatant violation of international law, and of United Nations Security Council resolutions particularly Resolution 2334, which condemns all Israeli measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, and status of the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967, including East Jerusalem". It also referenced the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which affirmed the illegality of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian

land and invalidated colonial settlement construction and annexation measures in the occupied West Bank. The coalition reaffirmed that "Israel has no sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territory".

Welcoming the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ issued on Oct 22 on Israel's obligations in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the coalition highlighted the Court's emphasis on "Israel's obligation under international humanitarian law to ensure that the population of the OPT, including Gaza, has the essential supplies of daily life,

and to agree to and facilitate by all means at its disposal relief schemes on behalf of the population, including through the United Nations and its entities, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)".

"The Court confirmed Israel's obligation to respect the prohibition on the use of starvation, recalling Israel's blocking of aid into the Gaza Strip and reaffirmed the prohibition of mass forcible transfer and deportation, recalling that this also includes inflicting conditions of life that are intolerable. — QNA ➔P3



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Kuwait lauds Qatar’s efforts to reach Gaza ceasefire

NEW YORK: Kuwait, on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, commended the efforts of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States of America in their efforts to reach a comprehensive ceasefire agreement, secure the release of hostages and prisoners, and ensure the safe and sustainable flow of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. This came in a statement by Kuwait on behalf of the GCC member states before the Fourth Committee on Decolonization at the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The statement considered this agreement a step that should pave the way for a serious political process that

ends the occupation and paves the way for a just and comprehensive peace.

The statement affirmed the GCC states’ commitment to the unity of the Palestinian territories as an indispensable condition for the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967, borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

It explained that settlement policies, the construction of the separation wall, and the fragmentation of the Palestinian territories between the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem are all practices that undermine opportunities for peaceful coexistence and empty any political process of its substance. — *QNA*

Deputy PM honours winners of 39th Infantry Competition

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DOHA: Under the patronage and in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani, and with the attendance of Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces H E Lt. Gen. (Pilot) Jassim bin Mohammed Al-Mannai, the 39th Infantry Competition for the year 2025 concluded at the Military Parade Centre.

The Support Force Command achieved first place in the overall competition ranking, followed by the Military Police Forces in second place, while Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College came in third.

The closing ceremony was attended by a number of senior QAF officers.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani honouring a winner at the conclusion of 39th Infantry Competition 2025.



Chairperson of Qatar Media Corporation H E Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani and Saudi Arabia's Minister of Media H E Salman bin Yousef Al Dosari leading respective delegations at talks yesterday.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia discuss media cooperation

FROM PAGE 1

He added that the executive steps taken in the field of cooperation and partnerships between media institutions in both countries over the past period represent a promising achievement, although the ambition is to reach new levels of integration and sustainability between the media institutions, as a model to be emulated in bilateral relations.

The Minister of Media of Saudi Arabia emphasised that cooperation and partnership

relations between the relevant media institutions in both fraternal countries are at their best. He voiced his aspiration to expand the horizons of cooperation and partnership between media institutions and bodies in both countries in a way that reflects the distinguished level of relations and serves the shared media vision.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the two sides agreed on a number of media initiatives, including training young media professionals, discussing

broadcasting rights for the national teams’ matches, and a project to produce a television drama that addresses the long-standing historical relations between the two fraternal countries and societies. It was also agreed to form a joint working group to follow up and work on developing an executive plan for the proposed initiatives, projects, and programmes, with the group holding its meetings every month, alternating between one of the two countries.

Minister of State for Energy Affairs stresses need to oppose energy trade barriers



Minister of State for Energy Affairs, H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi; Minister of Oil and Gas in the Government of National Unity of Libya, President of 27th GECF Ministerial Meeting, H E Khalifa Rajab Abdulsadiq; and GECF Secretary General Eng. Mohamed Hamel with other dignitaries during the meeting yesterday.

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The ministerial meeting discussed a number of issues of importance to the mission of the Forum, particularly regarding the role of natural gas in the ongoing energy transition to low-carbon energy.

The GECF is an intergovernmental organisation that provides a framework for exchanging experience and information among its member

countries.

As the gathering of the world’s leading gas exporting countries, the GECF seeks to build a mechanism for a meaningful dialogue between gas producers and consumers in order to improve the stability and security of supply and demand in gas markets around the world.

With 20 member countries as of 2025, the GECF enjoys a

prominent position in global energy markets and among international energy organisations.

Together, they represent 72% of the world’s gas reserves, 44% of the marketed production, and 56% of pipeline exports.

Moreover, the GECF member countries collectively account for more than half of the world LNG exports (52%).

National Museum of Qatar opens landmark exhibition to celebrate 50th anniversary

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) opened A Nation’s Legacy, A People’s Memory: Fifty Years Told, a landmark exhibition celebrating the museum’s 50-year journey, alongside a series of milestone events including recognition of major donors.

The exhibition offers a comprehensive survey of NMoQ’s origin, growth, and evolution, tracing its journey from its founding in 1975 as the first national museum in the region to its reinvention in 2019 as a cutting-edge experiential museum housed in an iconic building designed by French architect Jean Nouvel.

The exhibition was unveiled by H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, in the attendance of Mohammed Saad Al Rumaihi, CEO, Qatar Museums, and Sheikh Abdulaziz Al Thani, Director of National Museum of Qatar among other dignitaries.

The 50th anniversary celebrations



Chairperson of Qatar Museums H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani at the event yesterday.

of NMoQ commenced with the symbolic voyage of the historical dhow Fateh Al Khair across Doha on October 22, 2025. Sailing along the Corniche, the dhow, bearing the museum’s logo on its sail, reflected NMoQ’s narrative

of continuity, resilience, and transformation. The ceremony featured cultural maritime performances by renowned Qatari singer Munsoor Al Muhannadi, alongside national performers and institutions, highlighting

a collective pride in Qatar’s heritage and reaffirming the museum’s role as a bridge between past and present, where history inspires future generations.

The celebrations paid tribute to the significant donations that have enriched Qatar Museums’ collections and supported the preservation of the nation’s cultural heritage. These gifts reflect a deep sense of civic pride and the shared commitment among individuals, families, and institutions to safeguarding Qatar’s legacy for future generations.

The celebrations continued with the Anniversary Awards Dinner: Recognising Evolution – A Journey from Tradition to Tomorrow, highlighting Qatar’s cultural transformation from its historic roots to its contemporary vision. Staff members, including the Content Committee of both the old and new museums and key contributors will be recognized for their invaluable contributions. Guests gathered in the Baraha, beneath the museum’s striking

architecture, where a symbolic stage between the Old Palace and the modern NMoQ represented the meeting point of heritage and innovation. The evening included a live musical performance by Dana Al Meer and Hala Al Emadi, whose fusion of traditional Arabic and modern sounds reflected the evolving identity of Qatar.

The night concluded with Taste Evolution: The Collaboration Dinner, a culinary experience crafted by Chef Noof Al Marri and QC+’s Michelin-starred Chef Jeremy Cheminade.

Sheikh Abdulaziz Al Thani said, “For half a century, the National Museum of Qatar has safeguarded the legacy of our nation and our national treasures while continually developing new means of storytelling through the latest advances in technology. With A Nation’s Legacy, A People’s Memory: Fifty Years Told, we invite audiences to join us in celebrating the institution’s remarkable record of honouring our heritage while imagining what is to come.”

MoCI closes Sky Motors - Rox agency for one month

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has issued Administrative Decision No. (30/2025) ordering the administrative closure of Sky Motors – Rox agency for one month for failing to provide warranty services on behalf of the manufacturer, in a violation of Article (9) of Law No. (8) of 2008 on Consumer Protection and its Executive Regulations.

The closure followed the detection of six violations based on consumer complaints.

Official reports confirmed that the agency failed to provide warranty and maintenance services, including the supply of spare parts and repairs, for imported Rox vehicles, despite being the authorised local agent of the brand – causing considerable harm to consumers.

The Ministry affirms that this measure is part of its ongoing efforts to bolster market monitoring and ensure suppliers’ compliance with national laws and regulations.

The Ministry stresses that it will take strict action against any breaches that impact on consumer rights or impair fair competition.

Qatar Tourism records over 3.5 million international visitors by end of Sept

FROM PAGE 1

Preparations are ongoing for the T100 Triathlon World Championship Final, taking place in Lusail City as part of the global T100 series.

Lusail International Circuit will host the Formula 1 Qatar Grand Prix, supported by transport, hospitality and fan management coordinated with Visit Qatar and relevant partners. The inaugural Doha Film Festival organised by the Doha Film Institute will also take place this season.

In coordination with the Local Organising Committee for Football Events, Visit Qatar is supporting operational planning for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, the FIFA U-17

World Cup Qatar 2025 and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup 2025TM. These tournaments will be held across stadiums in Doha, Lusail and Al Rayyan, with operational readiness including stadium services, fan arrivals, accommodation, ticketing and international media logistics.

With consistent performance across the first three quarters of the year and a unified national events calendar, the tourism sector remains aligned with the Third National Development Strategy (2024–2030) by contributing to economic diversification and expanding access to cultural, sporting and leisure activities for residents and visitors.

The winter season extends into 2026 with a line-up of cultural and lifestyle experiences across Qatar.

On the cultural front, key highlights include the second editions of “Sealine Season” in Sealine and “Brouq Season” in Ras Abrouq, preparations for Art Basel Qatar at the National Museum of Qatar.

Food and cultural programming under Visit Qatar will include the Qatar International Food Festival and the Throwback Food Festival. These are complemented by ongoing events at Katara Cultural Village, Souq Waqif and Al Bidda, where regular heritage, cultural and family activities continue to take place.

Qatar attends Ukraine Mine Action Conference

TOKYO: Qatar participated in the Ukraine Mine Action Conference, held in Tokyo, on October 22–23, with the participation of senior representatives from more than fifty countries and international organisations. The Qatari delegation was headed by Ambassador of Qatar to Japan H E Jaber Jaralla Al Marri, with the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Defense.

The conference, organised by the Government of Japan in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations, aimed to raise awareness and promote partnerships and international cooperation in the removal of landmines and unexploded ordnance in Ukrainian territories. Qatar’s participation in this international event reflects its continued commitment to supporting humanitarian and development efforts. — *QNA*



Minister of Environment and Climate Change H E Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie and other ministers from the GCC countries at their meeting in Kuwait yesterday.

Ministers discuss GCC-wide environmental cooperation

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The State of Qatar took part in the 27th meeting of the Committee of Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs in GCC countries, held in Kuwait yesterday.

Qatar was represented at the meeting by Minister of

Environment and Climate Change H E Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie.

The meeting discussed a number of topics on the agenda, including ways to enhance Gulf-wide environmental cooperation, follow up on the implementation of joint strategies and initiatives for

environmental protection, and review the efforts of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME).

The session also featured a presentation highlighting key regional programmes related to marine and environmental sustainability.

Arab and Islamic states slam Israeli Knesset's approval of sovereignty over West Bank

FROM PAGE 1

"The court further reaffirmed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and independent statehood, recalling that Israel's territorial claim over East Jerusalem has been declared null and void by the Security Council, which includes the 'Law to Cease UNRWA Operations in the Territory of the State of Israel',

which purports to apply to East Jerusalem".

The group warned against the continuation of Israel's unilateral and illegal policies and practices, urging the international community to shoulder its legal and moral responsibilities.

They called for pressure on Israel "to cease its dangerous escalation and unlawful

measures in the occupied Palestinian territory and to uphold the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish their independent and sovereign state on the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital as the only path towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace that ensures security and stability in the region".

Qatar celebrates 80th anniversary of UN's founding, lauds its vital role

DOHA: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) organised a celebration on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations (UN) and the organisation's international day, which falls on October 24 annually, as part of celebrating the existing cooperation between Qatar and the UN.

Minister of Social Development and Family H E Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi affirmed that over the past eight decades, the UN has been the cornerstone of the multilateral international system and a comprehensive platform for promoting international peace and security, advancing sustainable development, and protecting human rights around the world.

In her speech at the ceremony, she said that with the celebration of this distinguished legacy, Qatar reaffirms its deep appreciation for the vital role played by the UN and renewed its firm commitment to the principles upon which the organisation was founded.

Al Nuaimi explained that this celebratory occasion represents an opportunity to review achievements and to explore the prospects for future joint action to confront the renewed challenges in the world, which today require strengthening international cooperation and adherence to the principles of the UN Charter and the values of solidarity, partnership, and mutual



Minister of Social Development and Family H E Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi addressing the event.

respect, for a better future for humanity.

She expressed Qatar's pride regarding its close and strategic relationship with the UN and its various bodies and agencies, noting that this partnership is based on solid foundations of cooperation and coordination on many priority issues.

Director of International Organizations Department at MoFA H E Sheikha Hanouf bint Abdulrahman Al-Thani said that this occasion is the culmination of a long journey of collective action to serve international peace and security, and to promote development, justice, and human rights around the world.

In her speech, she highlighted the UN's pivotal role in addressing global challenges,

and referred to the close partnership between Qatar and the UN. Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations H E Amina Mohammed said that with the celebration of UN Day, which marked 80 years since the UN Charter came to be, through which nations chose cooperation over conflict and declared that peace, justice and dignity are the right of everyone, everywhere.

Representative of Unesco for Gulf States and Yemen, and Director of its Doha Office, H E Salah Khaled, said Qatar hosts 13 UN agencies, with more than 300 staff working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, support Qatar National Vision 2030, and respond together to regional and global challenges. — *QNA*

Ministry of Labour hosts consultative meeting with private sector CEOs

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Labour convened a consultative meeting with the CEOs of leading private sector companies and institutions, reinforcing its commitment to strong public-private partnerships.

The session was chaired by Khames Mohammed Al Naimi, Assistant Undersecretary for Manpower Affairs in the Private Sector.

The meeting aimed to foster strategic dialogue and collaboration to enhance Qatar's work environment and promote the employment of Qatari professionals, in line with the national workforce nationalisation initiative, "Empowering Qatar." Attendees reviewed existing cooperation frameworks and explored opportunities to expand and strengthen these initiatives.

The discussions focused on the challenges facing private sector employers

in recruiting, training, and retaining national talent. Innovative approaches were also considered to enhance sector competitiveness and ensure sustainable growth, in accordance with the objectives of the Private Sector Nationalisation Law. Al Naimi highlighted the importance of a coordinated approach between government and private entities to drive workforce nationalisation. He reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to creating sustainable employment opportunities for Qatari citizens across strategic economic sectors. He also stressed the value of actively engaging with private sector partners to incorporate their insights and recommendations on attracting and nurturing national talent.

This meeting forms part of a series of periodic consultative sessions organised by the Ministry with private sector stakeholders. These engagements aim to continuously improve the work



Ministry of Labour officials meeting some private sector CEOs.

environment, increase the participation of Qatari professionals, and build a strong base of skilled personnel capable of driving a more productive and transformative labour market.

The initiative aligns closely with

Qatar's National Development Strategy and the broader objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030, aiming to cultivate an effective and highly productive workforce ready to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving economy.

Qatar attends meeting of ambassadors to Arab League

CAIRO: Qatar participated in the meeting of Permanent Representatives to the League of Arab States, held yesterday at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo.

The meeting discussed the ongoing preparations and arrangements for the 10th meeting of Permanent Representatives to the League and Ambassadors of the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the European Union (EU), scheduled to be held in Brussels, Belgium, on November 4.

Maryam Ahmed Al Shaibi, acting Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of the State of Qatar to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States, headed the State of Qatar's delegation to the meeting. The meeting aims to deepen relations between Arab and European Union countries and enhance mechanisms of joint cooperation.

The Permanent Representatives were briefed on the latest developments of preparations for the meeting in Brussels and discussed the press statement to be adopted in this regard. During the meeting, the permanent representatives expressed their aspiration to advance joint cooperation to broader horizons in the future. — *QNA*

EAA Foundation, IRC 'launch Hope for Tomorrow' initiative in Gaza, West Bank to support children

FROM PAGE 1

Following the recent ceasefire, communities across Gaza are struggling to rebuild amid one of the world's most devastating humanitarian crises. With 90 percent of the population displaced, families face severe shortages of clean water, food, healthcare, and shelter, while the destruction of schools and hospitals has left children traumatised and without access to safe learning spaces. According to Unicef, 95 percent of schools in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. In June 2025, the Palestinian Ministry of Education reported that

over 16,000 students in Gaza had been killed, and at least 25,300 others injured. In the West Bank, more than 130 students have been killed, and nearly 900 injured since the escalation of violence.

David Miliband said, "We are glad to partner with Education Above All Foundation, supported by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), and Sesame Workshop to support the well-being, development, and educational advancement of young children impacted by the crisis in Gaza and the West Bank. This initiative comes in response to an unprecedented

crisis. Building on the success of our early childhood development initiative Ahlan Simsim, 'Hope for Tomorrow' is an investment in the unwavering commitment to healing and hope in the face of profound adversity."

Ultimately, "Hope for Tomorrow" seeks not only to provide immediate relief but to lay the foundation for long-term recovery, healing, and resilience—ensuring that children and families in Gaza and the West Bank have the opportunity to rebuild their lives with dignity, hope, and the promise of a better future.

Qatar Amiri Air Force wins Armed Forces Futsal Championship

DOHA: The Qatar Armed Forces Futsal Championship for the 2025-2026 season has concluded with the Qatar Amiri Air Force team crowned champions after defeating the Qatar Amiri Naval Forces team on penalties, following a 3-3 draw in regular time. Organised by the Military Sports Association, the tournament featured nine teams. President of the Military Sports Association, Major General (Dr.) Yousef Desmal Al Kuwari, presented the trophies and medals to the winners. — *QNA*

Qatar Airways wins 'Best Airline App 2025' award

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Airways has been recognised with the 'Best Airline App 2025' award at this year's World Aviation Festival, the largest aviation technology event in the world.

The winner was announced during the 'Battle of the Airlines Apps', a unique, side-by-side judged contest that began with travellers nominating their favourite airline app prior to the event.

Then the five top-rated apps were evaluated by a jury based on user experience, mobile services, and digital innovation after each airline presented their digital platform.

Qatar Airways Senior Vice President Business-to-Consumer, Christophe Guittard, said: "Receiving the most coveted recognition for an airline app reflects the exceptional quality and ambition behind our app. It reinforces our longstanding



commitment to setting the benchmark for digital excellence. More than just a travel companion, the Qatar Airways app is a powerhouse of smart technology and innovation designed to inform, guide and support our customers in any imaginable situation. It delivers an exceptional level of traveller satisfaction through speed, personalization, intuitive navigation, and exclusive world-first experiences that redefine what passengers can expect from a digital airline platform."

French business delegation visits Qatar

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: A delegation from the Mouvement des Entreprises de France à l'International (MEDEFI) led by Arnaud Pieton, CEO of TechnipEnergies and President of the France-Qatar Council of MEDEF International; and Patrick Pouyanné, CEO of TotalEnergies, visited Doha on a business mission on October 21 and 22.

The delegation was composed of executives from twelve French companies, active in the sectors of energy (TotalEnergies, TechnipEnergies, John Cockerill Group), environment (EGIS, Suez, Veolia), transport (Airbus, RATP Dev, Keolis), finance (Tikehau Capital, Audacia) and tourism (Accor).

The delegation was received by Qatari authorities and key economic actors. The delegation met Minister of Finance H E Ali bin Ahmed Al-Kuwari; Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Director General of Qatar Rail H E Dr. Abdulla bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie; Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Attiya; and Minister of Commerce and Industry H E Sheikh Faisal bin Thani Al-Thani. The MEDEFI delegation met the President of Qatar Businessmen Association, as well as senior Qatar Airways executives.

The members of the delegation praised the historic strength of their relationship with Qatar and reiterated their readiness to support Qatar in achieving the objectives set out in Qatar National Vision 2030.

"The visit of a high-level economic delegation to Qatar and the quality of the exchanges with the Qatari authorities reflect the vitality and strength of the economic partnership between France and Qatar," said French Ambassador to Qatar, H E Arnaud Pescheux.

France is currently home to more than 120 companies that are established in Qatar, and which are fully contributing to Qatar's key projects in the fields of energy, defence, major infrastructure works, logistics and finance.

Minister of Commerce and Industry meets Pakistan PM

Minister of Commerce and Industry H E Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal Al Thani met yesterday with Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan H E Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during his official visit to Pakistan to chair the sixth session of the Qatar–Pakistan Joint Ministerial Committee for Economic, Commercial and Technical Cooperation. Both sides reviewed the strong and longstanding relations between Qatar and Pakistan, exploring ways to further strengthen cooperation across various sectors. Discussions focused on economic partnerships, trade exchange and the promotion of mutual investments.





Qatar participates in GCC Transport Ministers' meeting

Minister of Transport H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla bin Mohammed Al Thani headed Qatar's delegation to the 27th Meeting of the Committee of the Ministers of Transport of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) held in Kuwait. The ministers discussed several topics aimed at enhancing GCC cooperation in areas of transportation and took necessary decisions regarding the works of the GCC Railways Authority, work progress on the GCC Railway Project, the latest updates on the land transportation strategy, and the recommended amendments to the GCC uniform system for universal land transportation, and its implementing regulations. They also discussed several topics on maritime transportation and ports.

Lekhwiya, Qatar Volunteer Center partner to boost search and rescue capabilities

DOHA: Qatar's Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) and Qatar Volunteer Center, under the Ministry of Culture, have signed an MoU to enhance volunteer cooperation and search and rescue training.

The agreement, signed under the patronage of Minister of Interior and Commander of Lekhwiya H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, seeks to prepare volunteers to take part in missions carried out by the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group both domestically and abroad.

The signing ceremony was attended by Lekhwiya Deputy Commander H E Major General (Staff) Mohammed Misfer Al Shahwani and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture H E Dr. Ghanem bin Mubarak Al Ali.

Major Khalid Abdullah Al Hamidi, commander of the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group, described the partnership as a strategic step to strengthen coordination between Lekhwiya and other state institutions in fields requiring high discipline and operational efficiency.

"The partnership will help train volunteers and equip them with vital skills to ensure they are ready to

respond effectively in emergencies and rescue operations," Major Al Hamidi said. He added that volunteerism is a cornerstone of building a resilient society capable of facing challenges collectively.

The MoU also highlights the role of volunteers in recent domestic and international rescue efforts, with trained volunteers playing a crucial role in relief and emergency responses.

Meanwhile, Director-General of the Qatar Volunteer Center, Moeed bin Gibran Al Qahtani, welcomed the partnership as an important opportunity to empower Qatari youth and enhance their contributions to national development.

He noted that volunteer work in Qatar is evolving rapidly thanks to strong support from government institutions and collaboration across national agencies. The agreement marks a milestone in forging closer ties between security forces and civil society.

The MoU includes plans to launch specialised volunteer training in search and rescue, complementing existing programs in medical, media, protocol, and organisational volunteering. — *QNA*

Qatari Artist honoured at Kuwait International Music Festival

KUWAIT: Qatari artist Matar Al Kuwari held his head high as he was recognised at the 25th Kuwait International Music Festival.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the renowned composer and producer hailed the recognition as an acknowledgment of Qatari artists' distinguished role in the Arab music scene.

He added that the accolade further motivates him to continue creating and presenting new musical works that reflect Qatar's cultural identity in a contemporary style.

"It is a great honour to be among a group of distinguished honourees at this prestigious festival, which has a rich musical history," Al Kuwari said.

"I thank the State of Kuwait for this recognition, which reflects the depth of artistic and cultural ties between the two brotherly countries.

"For me, music is a bridge of love and peace—it knows no borders or language other than emotion—and this is what we are experiencing today at this festival that unites us through Arab creativity."

Al Kuwari praised the festival as an important platform for Arab artists to meet, exchange experiences, and build artistic and human connections that enrich the cultural scene in the Gulf and the wider Arab world.

The honour comes in recognition of Al Kuwari's significant contributions to Gulf and Arab music, and a career spanning many years during which he produced works that have become an integral part of Qatar's musical heritage. — *QNA*



Qatar, Albania sign MoU to boost diplomatic training cooperation

DOHA: Minister of State for International Cooperation H E Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad met yesterday with Secretary General of Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania H E Armand Skapi, during his visit to Qatar.

The two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation, explored

ways to enhance joint initiatives, and discussed key issues of mutual interest.

Following the meeting, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Albania's Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs signed an MoU to enhance diplomatic training cooperation. — *QNA*

Qatar Creates brings India's folk music to Doha with 'The Manganiyar Selection'

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Creates (QC) will present The Manganiyar Selection performance by renowned Indian director Roysten Abel, as part of QC's Fall/Winter 2025 season and ongoing Evolution Nation celebrations. The performance, in collaboration with the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi, India, will take place on October 27 at the Katara Amphitheater, bringing to Doha a spellbinding fusion of music, theatre, and visual artistry.

Described as a "symphony of sound and sight," the Manganiyar Selection features the hauntingly beautiful music of Rajasthan's Manganiyar community, performed within a dazzling stage of illuminated red cubicles that come alive with rhythm and light. The

show's unique combination of traditional folk music and contemporary theatrical design has captivated audiences in over 25 countries, including performances at the Lincoln Center in New York, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and The Barbican in London. Now, audiences in Qatar have a rare opportunity to experience one of the world's most celebrated and visually spectacular musical-theatre productions.

Be part of Qatar's evolving cultural story and witness The Manganiyar Selection, a performance that transcends borders and celebrates the universal language of art.

Tickets are now available at <https://ticketing.qcreates.com>. Category A ticket goes for QR200 while Category B and Category C are QR135 and QR70 respectively.

OSRSG CAAC and Northwestern University in Qatar students join forces to advocate for children affected by armed conflict

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Analysis and Outreach Hub of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG CAAC), based in Doha, concluded a successful collaboration with students from Northwestern University in Qatar aimed at raising awareness of the impact of armed conflict on children.

As part of this creative partnership, three workshops were held with students to present the Children and Armed Conflict mandate and explore ways to communicate about it. Afterward, Northwestern Qatar students Hamad Al-Jaffali and Hyemin Cho were selected to produce compelling visual materials about the grave violations identified by the United



Officials and students at the event.

Nations Security Council, specifically on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, which remains one of the most persistent and widespread threats facing children in conflict zones.

The students produced short

videos that highlight the experiences of children forced into armed conflict through thoughtful design and visuals. The materials will be featured on the official communication platforms of the OSRSG CAAC, including its website and social

media, and used during key advocacy and policy events globally.

To mark the conclusion of the project, the Analysis and Outreach Hub organized a showcase in Doha for the students' work, accompanied by a presentation of certificates and tokens of gratitude. The event also highlighted the power of youth-driven creative advocacy in supporting international efforts to protect children in conflict.

This initiative reflects the value of partnerships between the United Nations and academic institutions, particularly in empowering young voices to take part in global human rights work. The Analysis and Outreach Hub remains committed to deepening its engagement with students and universities in Qatar and across the region.

Abeer Medical Group founder recognised by Forbes Middle East

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: *Forbes Middle East* has honoured Mohammed Alungal (**pictured**), Founder and President of Abeer Medical Group, by including him in its prestigious list of "Top Healthcare Leaders 2025, recognizing his visionary leadership and lasting impact on the regional healthcare sector.

Under the guidance of Mohammed Alungal, Abeer Medical Group has evolved into one of the leading healthcare providers in the GCC and India, known for its commitment to quality, accessibility, and innovation in patient care. The group operates a wide network of medical centres, hospitals, and diagnostic facilities serving millions across the region.

Reflecting on the recognition, Mohammed Alungal said, "This acknowledgment by *Forbes Middle East* is a proud



moment for Abeer Medical Group and its entire team. It reflects our shared mission to make advanced, compassionate healthcare accessible to everyone."

With this latest recognition, Abeer Medical Group and its founder continue to strengthen their position as key contributors to the region's evolving healthcare ecosystem — setting new standards for excellence and innovation.

Meryal Waterpark launches its first-ever Winter Mirage Fest

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: This winter, Meryal Waterpark invites guests to step into a world of imagination, connection, and seasonal celebration with the launch of its first-ever Winter Mirage Fest. Running from November 1, 2025 until February 15, 2026, 7 days a week from 3om till midnight, the festival reimagines Qatar's winter landscape by blending festive charm, adventure, and immersive entertainment for visitors of all ages.

Nestled within the heart of Qetaifan Island North, Meryal Waterpark is widely recognised for its world-class attractions, record-breaking slides, and cultural storytelling. The Winter Mirage Fest continues this legacy by transforming the park into a winter-inspired destination that defies expectations and delivers moments of pure joy.

The experience brings together an exciting variety of activities including arcade games, roller coaster, carnival games, arts & crafts, ice skating & sliding tubes, paintball arena, carousel, Inflata splash and F&B trucks. These attractions are paired with ambient lighting, seasonal music, and curated entertainment to create an atmosphere that feels both magical and meaningful.

Speaking on the launch, Stefano Capacetti, Managing Director of Rixos Premium



Qetaifan Island North, Meryal Waterpark, and Azure Beach Doha, shared, "The Winter Mirage Fest represents our commitment to innovation and experience-led storytelling. At Meryal, we believe in creating not only thrilling adventures, but also emotional connections that stay with our guests long after their visit.

"This festival brings a fresh perspective to Qatar's winter season and invites everyone to celebrate joy, togetherness, and imagination in a truly unique setting."

Set against the vibrant backdrop of

Meryal Waterpark, the Winter Mirage Fest promises an immersive celebration where families, friends, and guests of all ages can enjoy a season filled with wonder, joy, and unforgettable experiences, transforming the park into a truly unique winter escape by the sea. With the Winter Mirage Fest, Meryal Waterpark continues to solidify its position as a cultural and entertainment landmark in Qatar, delivering creative seasonal experiences that combine authenticity, storytelling, and world-class hospitality.

No reduction in Gaza hunger since truce: WHO

“The situation still remains catastrophic because what’s entering is not enough,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters, speaking at the UN health agency’s Geneva headquarters.

GENEVA: The World Health Organisation said yesterday there had been little improvement in the amount of aid going into Gaza since a ceasefire took hold -- and no observable reduction in hunger.

“The situation still remains catastrophic because what’s entering is not enough,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters, speaking at the UN health agency’s Geneva headquarters.

Since the US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect on October 10, there has been “no dent in hunger, because there is not enough food”, he warned.

Israel repeatedly cut off aid to the Gaza Strip during the war, exacerbating dire humanitarian conditions, with the United Nations saying it caused a famine in parts of the Palestinian territory.

But while the agreement brokered by US President Donald Trump provides for the



Displaced Palestinians gather to receive food portions outside the damaged Imam Al Shafi Mosque, where families have taken shelter, in the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City, yesterday. (AFP)

entry of 600 trucks per day, Tedros said currently only between 200 and 300 trucks were going in daily.

And “a good number of the trucks are commercial”, he said, pointing out that many people in the territory have no resources to buy goods.

“That reduces the beneficiary size,” he said.

The WHO chief hailed that the ceasefire was holding despite violations, but warned:

“The crisis is far from over, and the needs are immense.

“Although the flow of aid has increased, it’s still only a fraction of what’s needed.”

Gaza’s health system had been ravaged during Israel’s two-year war in the Palestinian territory following Hamas’s deadly October 7, 2023 attacks.

“There are no fully functioning hospitals in Gaza, and only 14 out of 36 are functioning at all. There are critical

shortages of essential medicines, equipment and health workers,” Tedros said.

He said that since the ceasefire took effect, WHO had been sending more medical supplies to hospitals, deploying additional emergency medical teams and striving to scale up medical evacuations.

He warned that “the total cost for rebuilding the Gaza health system will be at least \$7bn”. — **AFP**

Turkiye in talks over Gaza task force role

ANKARA: Türkiye is in talks with its other countries over its potential participation in an international Gaza peacekeeping mission with its military “ready” if needed, a defence ministry source said yesterday.

“We are continuing contact with our counterparts regarding our participation in the task force to be established in Gaza,” the source said.

The task force will operate as part of the US-led Civil-Military Coordination Centre (CMCC) for monitoring the ceasefire, which is based in the southern Israeli town of Kiryat Gat and was inaugurated on Tuesday by US Vice President JD Vance.

“The CMCC has been established to facilitate the formation of the Gaza task force. Under this structure, an International Stabilisation Force (ISF) will be set up that will be in charge of monitoring the ceasefire and preventing conflict,” the source said. “For now, nothing is confirmed about the level of Turkey’s participation in such structures but it will probably be confirmed next week.”

Asked if the Turkish military would participate, the source said it had “experience from previous peace missions” and was “ready to undertake any task assigned to it.. to establish and maintain peace”.

Israel’s relationship with Türkiye has nosedived since the Gaza war started in October 2023 with Israeli adamantly opposed to a Turkish presence in Gaza — but the source said as a guarantor of the ceasefire deal, Türkiye had leverage.

“Israel might not be willing to accept Türkiye’s presence but there is an agreement and Türkiye is one of the guarantors,” the source said. Speaking at the inauguration of the CMCC on Tuesday, Vance also refused to rule out a Turkish presence.

“We’re not going to force anything on our Israeli friends when it comes to foreign troops on their soil. But we do think that there’s a constructive role for the Turks to play, and frankly, they’ve already played a very constructive role,” he said.

Meanwhile, Turkish disaster response specialists sent to help locate Palestinian and Israeli bodies, remained near Egypt’s border with Gaza yesterday, awaiting Israeli authorisation to enter the territory. — **AFP**

Two killed in Israeli strikes on east Lebanon

BEIRUT: Two people were killed in Israeli air strikes on mountainous areas in eastern Lebanon yesterday, according to the health ministry, with the Israeli military saying it had struck Hezbollah targets.

“The strikes launched by the Israeli enemy on the eastern and western mountain chains resulted in an initial death toll of two,” the Lebanese health ministry said in a statement.

Lebanon’s official National News Agency had earlier said that “Israeli warplanes launched a series of violent strikes on the eastern mountain range” in the Bekaa region near the border with Syria.

The NNA also said two Israeli strikes targeted the Hermel range in the country’s northeast. — **AFP**

57 South Koreans arrested in Cambodia over cyberscams

PHNOM PENH: Cambodian authorities arrested 57 South Koreans for alleged involvement in transnational cyberscams, a government commission said yesterday, days after dozens accused of working in the illicit networks were repatriated.

The multibillion-dollar scam industry has ballooned in Cambodia in recent years, with thousands involved -- some willingly and others forced by organised criminal groups, experts say.

Cambodia’s anti-cyber-crime commission said in a statement that local authorities raided a building where scam operations were suspected in the capital Phnom Penh on Wednesday. Police arrested 57 South Koreans and 29 Chinese nationals during the operation, the commission said. — **AFP**

Bangladesh court to deliver verdict against Hasina on November 13

DHAKA: The verdict in the crimes against humanity case against ousted Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina will be delivered on November 13, the attorney general said, as the trial ended yesterday.

Hasina, 78, has defied court orders to return from India to face charges of ordering a deadly crackdown in a failed attempt to crush a student-led uprising. “If she believed in the justice system, she should have returned,” Attorney General Md

Asaduzzaman said in his closing speech of the nearly five-month-long trial in Dhaka.

“She was the prime minister but fled, leaving behind the entire nation -- her fleeing corroborates the allegations.”

Her trial in absentia, which opened on June 1, heard months of testimony alleging Hasina ordered mass killings.

Up to 1,400 people were killed between July and August 2024, according to the United Nations.

Prosecutors have filed five charges, including failure to prevent murder, amounting to crimes against humanity under Bangladesh law.

They have demanded the death penalty if she is found guilty. Chief prosecutor Tajul Islam has accused Hasina of being “the nucleus around whom all the crimes were committed” during the uprising.

Her co-accused are former interior minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, also a fugitive, and

ex-police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who is in custody and has pleaded guilty.

Witnesses included a man whose face was ripped apart by gunfire.

The prosecution also played audio tapes -- verified by police -- that suggested Hasina directly ordered security forces to “use lethal weapons” against protesters.

Hasina, assigned a state-appointed lawyer, has refused to recognise the court’s

authority. Defence lawyer Md Amir Hossain said she was “forced to flee” Bangladesh, claiming that she “preferred death and a burial within her residence compound”.

Her now-banned Awami League says she “categorically denies” all charges and has denounced the proceedings as “little more than a show trial”.

Asaduzzaman, the attorney general, said it had been a fair trial that sought justice for all victims. — **AFP**



World in brief

Benin opposition presidential candidate rejected

COTONOU: Benin’s electoral commission said yesterday it had excluded the main opposition candidate from standing in next year’s presidential election, helping the ruling party keep its grip on power.

The move should benefit Finance Minister Romuald Wadagni, the candidate of the presidential majority in parliament in April’s election. CENA, the electoral watchdog, rejected the candidacy of Renaud Agbodjo, the representative of the main opposition Democrats party, on the grounds that he did not have sufficient sponsors. — **AFP**

Nigerian troops kill 50 terrorists, thwart attacks

ABUJA: Nigerian troops yesterday killed over 50 terrorists while thwarting multiple coordinated attacks on military locations in the northeastern states of Borno and Yobe, local authorities said.

Sani Uba, spokesperson for the Joint Task Force in the northeast region, said in a statement that the suspected terrorists launched four-hour assaults on locations of troops covering the two states, starting from midnight. According to Uba, the troops “fought gallantly and professionally,” repelling the attacks and inflicting devastating losses on the terrorists. — **XINHUA**

India tightening AI rules to stem deepfake surge

NEW DELHI: India has proposed sweeping new regulations to govern artificial intelligence, aiming to curb a surge in misinformation and deepfake videos in the world’s most populous nation.

The Ministry of Information Technology announced the proposed amendments, citing “the growing misuse of technologies used for the creation or generation of synthetic media.”

“Recent incidents of deepfake audio, videos and synthetic media going viral on social platforms have demonstrated the potential of generative AI to create convincing falsehoods,” a briefing note from the ministry issued late Wednesday read.

“Such content can be weaponised to spread misinformation, damage reputations, manipulate or influence elections, or commit financial fraud,” it added. — **AFP**

CPC concludes fourth plenary in Beijing, adopts recommendations for China’s 15th Five-Year Plan

BEIJING: The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) convened its fourth plenary session in Beijing from Monday to Thursday.

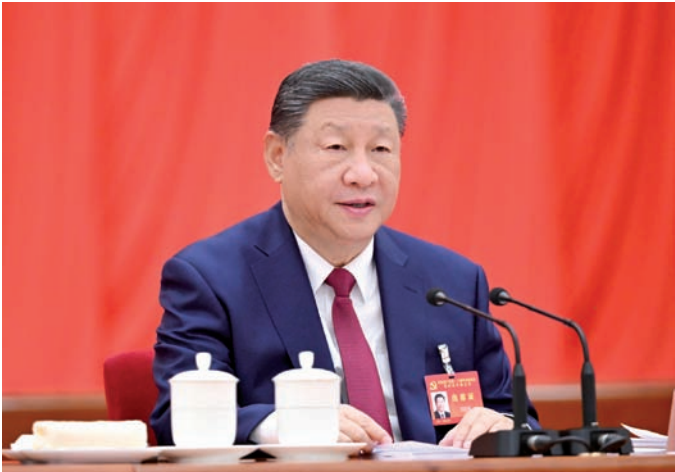
Participants at the session deliberated over and adopted the Recommendations of the CPC Central Committee for Formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, according to a communique of the session released yesterday.

The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee presided over the meeting. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, delivered important addresses, according to the communique.

The participants heard and discussed a report presented by Xi on the work of the Political Bureau. Xi also delivered explanatory remarks on the draft recommendations.

At the session, the CPC Central Committee fully affirmed the work of the Political Bureau since the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee.

China is now on the verge of accomplishing the major objectives and tasks of the 14th Five-Year Plan, according to the communique. Participants at the session gave a highly



General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee Xi Jinping delivers an address at the fourth plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee in Beijing yesterday. (Xinhua)

positive assessment of China’s major development achievements during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), which has marked a momentous and extraordinary period in the country’s development.

The 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030) will be critical as the country works to reinforce the foundations and push ahead on all fronts toward basically achieving socialist modernization by 2035, and it will thus serve as a key link between the past and the future, according to the communique.

At present, China remains in a phase of development where strategic opportunities exist alongside risks and challenges, while uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising.

“All of us in the Party must acquire a deep understanding of the decisive significance of establishing Comrade Xi Jinping’s core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and of establishing the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” said the communique. — **XINHUA**

Myanmar scam centre raid sends hundreds fleeing to Thailand

BANGKOK: More than 600 people fled one of Myanmar’s most notorious scam centres and crossed into Thailand, a Thai provincial official told *AFP* yesterday, after a military raid on the compound.

Sprawling compounds where Internet fraudsters target people with romance and business cons have thrived along Myanmar’s loosely governed border during its civil war, sparked by a 2021 coup.

A highly publicised crackdown starting in February saw around 7,000 workers repatriated and Thailand enact a cross-border internet blockade. But an *AFP* investigation this month revealed construction has continued apace at several compounds, while Starlink internet service receivers have been installed en masse, seeming to connect the hubs to the Elon Musk-owned satellite network. — **AFP**

Africa accounts for 40 percent of global conflicts: ICRC

ADDIS ABABA: Africa accounts for roughly 40 percent of the world’s armed conflicts, with some 50 ongoing clashes across the continent, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) vice-president told *AFP* yesterday.

The continent is home to roughly 1.4 billion people, and while it contains huge mineral wealth and the world’s most youthful population, many parts of Africa remain mired in poverty and insecurity.

“We now have more than 50 active armed conflict situations in Africa,” said the ICRC’s Gilles Carbonnier.

This represents a 45 percent increase since 2020, he said, and accounts for

“approximately 40 percent of total conflicts in the world”. “The humanitarian consequences are truly dramatic, because we have some 35 million people displaced due to these conflicts in African countries, and this represents almost half of the displaced people in the world,” Carbonnier said.

It comes as the ICRC, like many other humanitarian organisations, faces a decline in funding due to massive aid cuts by the United States and other Western countries this year —despite the “enormous” needs, he said. In July, an international study revealed that the withdrawal of US aid could lead to more than 14 million additional deaths by 2030 among the most vulnerable,

a third of them children. “This forces us to make very painful choices, where we must reduce, or even cease, some of our operations to prioritise others,” Carbonnier said.

The most “worrying” situation is Sudan, he said, gripped by a civil war since April 2023.

Clashes between the regular army and the Rapid Support Forces have left tens of thousands dead, displaced nearly 12 million people, in what the United Nations calls “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.”

“We have a health system that is largely destroyed,” he said, with the ICRC worried about the resurgence of cholera, malaria and dengue fever. — **AFP**

Zelensky hails Trump sanctions on Russia as ‘strong’ message

BRUSSELS: Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday hailed US President Donald Trump’s “resolute” decision to sanction Russia’s energy sector, as Washington’s patience finally snapped with Moscow for stalling peace efforts.

Russia said the sanctions risked hurting diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine and that it had developed “strong immunity” to Western restrictions. Its close ally China said they had “no basis in international law”.

But Zelensky called the measures “a clear signal that prolonging the war and spreading terror come at a cost”.

“It is a strong and much-needed message that aggression will not go unanswered,” he wrote on X as he arrived at an EU summit in Brussels.

Trump slapped sanctions on Russia’s two largest oil companies on Wednesday, complaining that his talks with Vladimir Putin to end the Ukraine war “don’t go anywhere”.

The US leader has held off pulling



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is welcomed by Croatia's Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic (left) during the European Council meeting in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

the trigger on sanctions against Russia for months but he eventually took the leap after plans for a fresh summit with Putin in Budapest collapsed.

Trump said that he hoped the “tremendous sanctions” against Russian

oil giants Rosneft and Lukoil would be short-lived. “We hope that the war will be settled,” he said.

The US sanctions came as the European Union also imposed a 19th package of sanctions on Russia over the war — targeting Moscow’s key energy revenues.

“This is a clear signal from both sides of the Atlantic that we will keep up collective pressure on the aggressor,” EU chief Ursula von der Leyen wrote on X.

The US measures represent a major stepping up of its actions against Russia and reflect Trump’s growing frustration at being unable to persuade Putin to end the conflict despite what he calls his personal chemistry with the Kremlin chief.

Despite Trump’s outreach to Putin, Russia has continued its heavy bombardments on Ukraine, targeting key energy infrastructure ahead of the winter.

Zelensky said he hoped that Trump’s shift on sanctions would also

herald a change of mind on giving Ukraine long-range Tomahawk missiles — after Kyiv came away from a meeting in Washington empty handed last week.

Kyiv and its supporters have already sought to seize on Trump’s demand for Russia and Ukraine to stop fighting along the current front line and shift the onus from Kyiv to Moscow to make concessions.

As part of the new EU measures, the 27-nation bloc brought forward a ban on the import of liquefied natural gas from Russia by a year to the start of 2027.

It also blacklisted over 100 more tankers from Moscow’s so-called “shadow fleet” of ageing oil vessels and imposed controls on the travel of Russian diplomats suspected of espionage.

While Europe welcomed Trump’s latest move, it also was looking at ways to shore up Ukraine’s finances as the war drags on through a fourth year. — **AFP**

Judge clears British ex-soldier of Bloody Sunday murders

BELFAST: A Belfast judge yesterday acquitted a British ex-paratrooper of killing unarmed civilians during the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre, a verdict condemned by victims’ relatives and Northern Ireland’s political leader.

Judge Patrick Lynch told the court he was satisfied there had been an intention to kill but that the prosecution had failed to “establish by whose hand the fatal shots were fired”.

“I find the accused not guilty on all seven counts,” he said, acquitting him of two charges of murder and five of attempted murder during one of the most bitterly contested events of the three-decade “Troubles” that plagued Northern Ireland. — **AFP**

Ukraine imposes blackouts after Russia strikes power infrastructure

KIEV: Ukraine’s state-run energy company Ukrenergo yesterday imposed rolling power outages nationwide after recent Russian missile and drone strikes on energy infrastructure.

Electricity restrictions will be in place from 7 a.m. to 11pm in 12 regions, the company said in a statement on Telegram. The measures will affect households, businesses and industrial users. Parts of the eastern Kharkiv region and the northern Chernihiv region were completely cut off from power as a result of the attacks. Overnight Wednesday, Russia launched a large-scale strike on Ukraine’s critical infrastructure, firing 405 drones and 28 missiles, according to the Ukrainian Air Force. — **XINHUA**

US military strikes another alleged drug boat in eastern Pacific, killing 3

WASHINGTON: The US military on Wednesday struck one more suspected drug-trafficking vessel in international waters in the eastern Pacific, killing all three people aboard, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Wednesday night.

“Today ... the Department of War carried out yet another lethal kinetic strike on a vessel operated by a Designated Terrorist Organization (DTO). Yet again, the now-deceased terrorists were engaged in narco-trafficking in the Eastern Pacific,” he wrote on social media platform X.

Hegseth again accused the vessel of carrying narcotics, saying it was traveling along a known narco-trafficking transit route. — **XINHUA**

France issues third arrest warrant against Syria’s ex-leader Assad

PARIS: French magistrates this summer issued a new arrest warrant against ousted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad over deadly chemical attacks in 2013, a judicial source said yesterday.

This means France has now put out three separate arrest warrants against the former dictator exiled in Russia, who ruled Syria from 2000 until he was toppled last year after more than 14 years of devastating civil war.

French investigators have since 2021 been looking into suspected Syrian government chemical attacks on Adra and Douma outside Damascus on August 4-5, 2013, and in Eastern Ghouta on August 21.

Around 450 people were hurt in the first attack, while American intelligence says over 1,000 were killed with sarin nerve gas in East Ghouta, a suburb of

Syrian capital Damascus.

Magistrates had in 2023 issued an arrest warrant in the chemical attacks case while Assad was still president, but the country’s highest court in July annulled it over it being ordered while his presidential immunity still applied.

This new arrest warrant issued after his fall from power replaces the previous one. It accuses him of complicity in crimes against humanity and complicity in war crimes in the chemical attack case.

Also in the same case, magistrates issued a warrant against Talal Makhoul, the former commander of the Syrian Republican Guard’s 105th Brigade, the judicial source said.

Assad and his family fled to Russia, according to Russian authorities, after Islamist-led fighters seized

power on December 8. Two other French warrants are already out for Assad’s arrest.

One was issued in January for suspected complicity in war crimes for a bombing in the Syrian city of Deraa in 2017 whose victims included a French-Syrian civilian.

And another was issued in August over the bombardment of a press centre in the rebel-held city in 2012 that killed two journalists.

Marie Colvin, 56, an American working for The Sunday Times of Britain, and French photographer Remi Ochlik, 28, were killed on February 22, 2012 by the explosion in the eastern city of Homs, which is being investigated by the French judiciary as a potential crime against humanity as well as a war crime. — **AFP**

Colombia calls for US to stop boat attacks

BOGOTÁ: The Colombian government has asked the United States to stop attacking vessels in the Pacific and the Caribbean as part of an operation that Washington says is targeting drug smuggling.

US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on Wednesday announced strikes on two alleged drug-running boats in the Pacific that left five people dead.

The strikes, which Hegseth said were carried out in international waters, bring the total number of such US attacks to at least nine, with 37 people dead, according to US figures. — **AFP**

Republicans struggle to explain shutdown of the House

WASHINGTON: This week, House Speaker Mike Johnson faced a tough-love complaint from a usually loyal soldier among rank-and-file Republicans. “This shutdown strategy is old and Republicans need to have new tactics,” Rep. Beth Van Duyne told House Republicans on a private call Tuesday afternoon, as federal agencies passed their third week without funding.

Because part of the exchange had leaked into the press, Johnson relayed his version of that discussion to reporters Wednesday. He was adamant that Van Duyne - “a dear friend,” as he put it - was not being critical but instead pushing for something to break up the monotony of the current impasse.

But her critique highlighted the growing struggles that House Republicans face in their effort to try to force



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson departs after holding a news conference with House Republican leadership at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, yesterday. (AFP)

Democrats into opening up the federal government.

Ahead of the shutdown, Johnson and House Republican leaders chose a classic congressional negotiation posture: They passed legislation that would temporarily fund the government back on Sept. 19, then closed up their chamber for legislative business. That decision was meant to jam Senate Democrats into voting for the GOP plan. The thinking was, if Democrats refused to do so, they would get blamed for the shutdown. — **THE WASHINGTON POST**

France to try soldier accused of leaking military secrets to journalist

PARIS: A military engineer is to go on trial, accused of leaking defence secrets to a journalist who wrote about the ultra-sensitive issue of France’s military cooperation with its ally Egypt, a source following the case and prosecutors said yesterday.

The case has sparked an outcry in France from journalists, who say that their sources must be protected. Investigative website Disclose published a series of articles in 2021, including one in which it alleged that the Egyptian state used a French counter-intelligence operation in Egypt, codenamed “Sirli”, for a “campaign of arbitrary executions” against smugglers on the Libyan border.

Disclose claimed that French forces were involved in at least 19 strikes against civilians between 2016 and 2018.

A journalist who co-wrote the article, Ariane Lavrilleux, was however not to be tried as the report was deemed of “public interest”, the source said. Prosecutors had in August urged the military member be tried for the lesser charge of “breach of professional confidentiality”, but the investigating magistrate on October 9 ordered he go to court in May next year charged with “leaking defence secrets”, it added. — **AFP**

Italy court re-examines German request for Ukrainian in Nord Stream case

ROME: An Italian court re-examined yesterday a German request for the extradition of a Ukrainian man arrested on charges of sabotaging the Nord Stream gas pipelines, but a decision was deferred, his lawyer said.

Serhii Kuznietsov, who was arrested in August on a German warrant, has denied being part of a cell accused of placing explosives on the underwater pipelines linking Russia with Europe in September 2022. Although a court in Bologna, northern Italy, approved his extradition in September, Italy’s top court blocked it last week over an issue with the European Arrest Warrant.

The Court of Cassation found the lower court had wrongly reclassified the alleged crime of sabotage as a terrorism-related offence.

It sent the case back for review by a different section of the Bologna Court of Appeal, which held a hearing yesterday. Kuznietsov’s lawyer, Nicola Canestrini, said he again opposed the extradition, noting concerns about detention conditions in Germany and the “political character of the alleged offence”. — **AFP**

UK police arrest three on suspicion of assisting Russian intelligence

LONDON: Three men in their 40s were arrested in London on yesterday on suspicion of assisting Russian intelligence services, UK police said.

The men are in custody and face questioning by counter terror police over alleged offences under the National Security Act, the Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

The trio, aged 48, 45 and 44, were arrested in west and central London. Searches were ongoing at these addresses as well as another location, the Met added.

“We’re seeing an increasing number of who we would describe as ‘proxies’ being recruited by foreign intelligence services and these arrests are directly related to our ongoing efforts to disrupt this type of activity,” said Dominic Murphy, head of the Met’s counter terrorism squad.

“Anyone who might be contacted by and tempted into carrying out criminal activity on behalf of a foreign state here in the UK should think again

“This kind of activity will be investigated and anyone found

to be involved can expect to be prosecuted and there are potentially very serious consequences for those who are convicted,” he added.

Last week, Ken McCallum, the head of the UK’s domestic intelligence agency MI5 warned that Russia, China and Iran had fuelled a dramatic rise in the threats to the UK from foreign states. He said agents were “routinely” uncovering plots from foreign states to carry out surveillance, sabotage, arson or acts of physical violence in the UK. — **AFP**

Spain finds flood victim one year after tragedy

MADRID: Spanish authorities yesterday said they had found the body of a 56-year-old man who died after being swept away in floods in the eastern Valencia region last year, the country’s deadliest such disaster in decades.

DNA analysis confirmed that a corpse found on Tuesday in the Turia river belonged to one of three people reported missing since the October 29, 2024 tragedy that killed more than 230 people, a Valencia court said in a statement.

The victim, like the two

other missing people, “had already been declared legally dead” and so the death toll had not increased, the court added.

The water had dragged the body some 30km from the town of Pedralba to the municipality of Manises outside the regional capital Valencia, Spain’s third-largest city.

A state funeral will take place in the city on October 29 to mark the anniversary of the disaster, which raised serious questions about the adequacy of alert systems and the emergency response. — **AFP**

UK govt under scrutiny over soaring migrant arrivals

LONDON: Nearly 37,000 migrants have arrived in the UK on small boats so far this year, figures showed yesterday, surpassing the full-year total for 2024, as the government faced fresh pressure over its attempts to stop the crossings.

A total of 36,954 undocumented migrants have crossed the Channel from northern France to England’s southern coast so far this year, compared with 36,816 for the whole of last year, the interior ministry figures showed.

The numbers will be a massive headache for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer (pictured), who had promised to “smash the gangs” of people smugglers charging migrants



huge sums for the dangerous journey.

The latest figures mean 2025 is set to have the second-highest number of small boat crossings, after the record was set in 2022 when more than 45,000 migrants made the trip.

Public frustration has grown in recent years about immigration levels, fuelling the rapid rise of Nigel Farage’s hard-right Reform UK party which Starmer had hoped to stem with a string of policy announcements including a returns deal with France. But results have not yet been forthcoming.

In the first six months of 2025, there was a 48-percent increase in the number of people arriving on small boats compared to last year, with the government blaming extended dry weather. The interior ministry said yesterday that 42 “illegal migrants” were returned to France under London’s “one-in, one-out” deal with Paris. — **AFP**

Tens of thousands attend rival political rallies on Hungary national day

BUDAPEST: Tens of thousands of Hungarians gathered in Budapest yesterday at rival rallies, as the government and the opposition each look to drum up support ahead of tense elections next year.

Nationalist Viktor Orban is facing an unprecedented challenge to his 15-year premiership from opposition leader Peter Magyar, who has been campaigning against what he calls a “corrupt” political elite.

Addressing a “peace march,” Orban — who has close ties with US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin despite Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine

— blamed Brussels for impeding Trump’s “mission” to try to end the war in Ukraine.

“Brussels has decided to go to war. If Brussels did not hinder the US president’s peace mission, the war would already be over,” Orban told tens of thousands of supporters in front of parliament, waving Hungarian flags.

“Those who believe they are supporting a change of government (in Hungary) are in fact supporting war, whether they realise it or not,” Orban added. Magyar will address a separate gathering of his supporters later yesterday. — **AFP**

EDITORIAL

Null and void Israeli acts

In an act widely condemned as a defiance of international legitimacy, the Israeli Knesset on Wednesday advanced a bill to extend Israeli sovereignty over parts of the occupied West Bank — a move many observers view as a direct assault on prospects for peace and regional stability.

The legislation, introduced by leader of the far-right Noam party, proceeded despite coinciding with US Vice President JD Vance’s visit to Israel underscored growing political friction between Washington and Tel Aviv.

The Knesset’s decision triggered a wave of international condemnation. Governments, organizations, and rights advocates across the globe decried the move as a grave violation of international law and a serious blow to the two-state solution, long seen as the cornerstone of any durable peace.

In a joint statement, a broad coalition of Arab and Islamic nations including Qatar, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and others denounced the Knesset’s move as “a blatant violation of international law and United Nations Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolution 2334.” Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation reaffirmed that Israel has “no sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territory.” It cited the International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) advisory opinion reaffirming the illegality of Israel’s occupation and settlement expansion since 1967, including in East Jerusalem.

All Israeli measures seeking to alter the demographic and geographic character of the occupied territories are null and void. These acts will only deepen instability and undermine regional peace efforts.

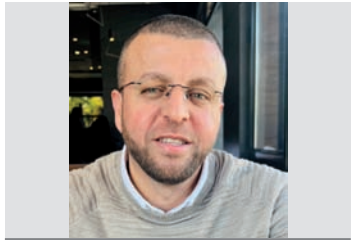
The joint statement of Arab and Islamic states welcomed the ICJ’s October 22, 2025, advisory opinion, which underscored Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law toward the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The Court reiterated Israel’s duty to ensure access to essential supplies and humanitarian aid — particularly through UNRWA — and condemned the use of starvation as a weapon and the ongoing blockade of Gaza.

Reaffirming the Palestinian right to self-determination, the Court declared Israel’s territorial claims over East Jerusalem “null and void,” rejecting legislation seeking to expel UNRWA from the city, as legally baseless.

Arab and Islamic nations urged the international community to shoulder its legal and moral responsibilities by pressuring Israel to halt its unilateral measures and violations in the occupied territories. They called for renewed commitment to the two-state solution, establishing an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital — the only path, they insisted, to achieving lasting peace and stability.

Under Netanyahu’s leadership, settlement activity has surged by nearly 40 percent, with record-breaking construction plans approved in early 2025 for over 41,000 units — the highest figure in six years. According to Palestinian sources, 770,000 Israeli settlers now live across 180 settlements and 256 outposts in the West Bank, including dozens classified as agricultural or rural.

In the occupied West Bank, the war continues



MOHAMAD ALQEEQ
AL JAZEERA

IT has been more than a week since the ceasefire was announced in Gaza. When we heard the news in the occupied West Bank, we celebrated. We felt relief and hope that the genocide is finally over. But we also realised that there is no ceasefire for us.

The daily violence we have been subjected to for decades is showing no signs of abating. Since October 7, 2023, the brutality of our occupier has only intensified. Today, life in the West Bank has become almost impossible.

After the ceasefire deal was announced, a friend’s little daughter cheered; she then asked to go with her grandparents to pick olives. He told her that it would be difficult to do, to which she responded, “Why? Isn’t the war over?” How do you explain to a child that the war ending in Gaza does not mean Palestinian families in the West Bank still can access their land to harvest olives? People still cannot reach their groves because of barriers set up by the Israeli military or they fear attacks by Israeli soldiers and settlers, or both.

There are daily violent assaults on Palestinian farmers and their land. Since October 7, 2023, there have been 7,154 attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestian people and property - some of them deadly.

Almost 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli army and settler mobs, including 212 children; more than 10,000 Palestinians have been displaced. Settlers and soldiers have destroyed 37,237 olive trees since October 7, 2023.

Even life in urban areas has become unbearable.

As a resident of Rawabi, a city north of Ramallah, I, too, feel the suffocation of the occupation every day.

If I need to travel outside my city to run errands, shop, obtain official paperwork, or anything else, I could get stuck at a checkpoint for hours and never make it to my destination. There are four iron gates, a military tower, and a barrier between Rawabi and Ramallah; they can make the 10-minute trip between Rawabi and Ramallah last an eternity.

Throughout the West Bank, there are 916 Israeli barriers, barriers and iron gates, 243 of which were constructed after October 7, 2023. These open and close at the Israeli army’s whim, meaning a Palestinian can get stuck at one barrier for hours. This disrupts every aspect of life — from family visits to urgent medical care to school attendance and transportation of goods.

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We have also been denied access to Jerusalem and thus our freedom of worship at Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Few Palestinians are given the special permits needed to enter the city. We last had access to Jerusalem more than 20 years ago. This means an entire generation of young people know nothing about the city except from the pictures and stories told by their parents and grandparents.

Even at night, the Palestinians are not left alone by the occupation. Any Palestinian home may be subject to a raid by the Israeli army, with soldiers breaking the front door, terrorising the family inside and detaining without charge some of its members. Neighbours would, too, be terrorised with Israeli soldiers firing tear gas canisters for no reason, just to cause more suffering.

The right to a normal life—to worship, to spend quality time with friends and family, to move freely, to access regular medical care and

education —are all denied to the Palestinians in the West Bank.

The spectre of annexation Over the decades since the occupation of 1967, Israel has managed to control almost half of the land of the West Bank. It has done so by constructing settlements and confiscating land from its Palestinian owners by declaring it either “state land” or “military zone”. The theft of Palestinian land accelerated after October 7; at least 12,300 acres (4,9787 hectares) were seized in two years.

In many cases, confiscated land is used to establish new settlement outposts or to expand existing settlements.

Settlement construction in the West Bank is not random. Rather, land is selected in a way that encircles Palestinian villages and towns, creating a settlement belt around them that prevents any form of geographical continuity between Palestinian territories, thus thwarting the dream of a future state.

To maintain these illegal settlements, Israel has also laid its hands on the West Bank’s natural resources. It has seized almost all water resources. This has ensured a massive water reservoir in the West Bank to serve the settlement expansion.

For the Palestinians, this has been disastrous. They are now almost completely dependent on Israeli water company “Mekorot”, which gives very small quotas of water to densely populated Palestinian areas, while settlers receive

several times the Palestinian share per capita.

Every summer, when drought settles in, Palestinians are forced to buy extra water at exorbitant prices from Mekorot. Meanwhile, Palestinian wells and rain water tanks are often attacked and destroyed.

Since October 7, 2023, the Israeli government has accelerated its efforts to carry out annexation. We feel that the seizure of Area C — an area established by the Oslo Accords where Israel has full civilian and security control — is imminent. This would mean razing Palestinian villages and communities and expelling people towards Area A, which constitutes just 18 percent of the West Bank. Area B will follow. The process of forced expulsion has already started with Bedouin communities in the two areas.

This is our reality here in the West Bank. While peace conferences and meetings were held and peace in the Middle East is declared, we know nothing of it. Every day, every hour, every minute, we are harassed, intimidated, dispossessed and killed.

For decades, Israel has rejected political solutions and pursued a policy of controlling land, people, and resources. It has continued to wage war on us even when its bombardment has stopped. The only way to achieve true peace is to acknowledge the occupation and end it.

— Mohamad Alqeeq is a political analyst and writer from the occupied West Bank.



Umm Jameela Abdul-Razzaq (right), a displaced Palestinian woman, swifts through debris with her grandson upon returning to her home, which was heavily damaged by Israeli bombardments in the Bureij refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday. (AFP)

Your protein powder isn’t poisoning you



LISA JARVIS
WP / BLOOMBERG

DON’T toss out your protein powder just yet. A recent report about lead levels in protein supplements sparked unnecessary alarm about a product that an increasing number of Americans are using to meet their fitness and nutrition goals.

The alarm is largely overblown. But the strong public reaction to what was once a niche product should cause us to take a beat and ask whether our growing protein obsession is healthy.

Let’s start with the study that triggered the panic. Consumer Reports said it tested 23 products, and two-thirds of the protein powders and shakes it analyzed contained more lead in a single serving than its experts said should be consumed in a day. Four products contained 400–1,500% of that amount.

But here’s the problem: the consumer advocacy group used the exposure limit

established by California’s Proposition 65, which arbitrarily set 0.5 micrograms of lead as its daily limit decades ago. The Food and Drug Administration, meanwhile, sets limits that are orders of magnitude higher – 2.2 micrograms per day for children and 8.8 micrograms per day for women of childbearing age.

“Had they used the FDA levels in their analysis, they would have come up with a drastically different, way less fear-based report,” says Lauren Colenso-Semple, a muscle physiology researcher.

Even the product that caused the most concern should carry an asterisk. Naked Nutrition’s Vegan Mass Gainer, which Consumer Reports said had about 1,600% of its – again, artificially low – lead level of concern, has a serving size of six scoops that pack a whopping 1,230 calories, Colenso-Semple notes. By contrast, typical protein powders typically have a serving size of a single scoop, containing 100–150 calories. In other words, the loudest alarm bells are ringing for a niche product intended for weight gain – one she doubts most people actually use.

For the vast majority of users, consuming typical protein powders in reasonable amounts poses little to no risk. Perhaps, then, the more germane question raised by the Consumer Reports study isn’t whether protein powders are

safe, but whether most of us truly need them in the first place.

As I’ve written, protein is definitely having a moment. Everyone is suddenly obsessed with cramming in extra protein throughout their day – whether that’s through powders, shakes, Greek yogurt, Starbucks lattes, protein-enriched Pop-Tarts, or, heaven forbid, a chicken smoothie.

It’s getting to be a bit much.

Whenever someone asks, “How much protein should I eat?” the answer depends on what they’re looking for from their diet, says Daniel Moore, a professor of muscle physiology at the University of Toronto. When it comes to staving off disease, the current recommended daily amount of about 0.8 grams per kilogram (roughly 54 grams per day for someone weighing 150 pounds) is sufficient for most people, he says. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that most Americans already exceed that benchmark with their regular diet. (The typical cooked chicken breast you might have for lunch or dinner contains about 30 grams of protein.) Nutrition experts generally agree that these requirements should be somewhat higher for anyone who is active, especially endurance athletes or individuals hitting an age where muscle

loss becomes a concern. And people taking obesity drugs like Wegovy and Zepbound, which can cause muscle mass to decline as the pounds come off, might also benefit from focusing more of their calories on protein.

Most of us need only a modest increase, depending on someone’s activity level and fitness goals. That means consuming about 1 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram per day, Moore says. Beyond that, however, the benefits become questionable. “Protein is the building block for muscle growth, and some people think, ‘Well, [if] some is good, more is better,’” he says. The research is mixed on whether the high protein intake some fitness influencers advocate is necessary or even helpful, he adds.

And since many of us can easily get adequate amounts from what we’re already eating, we should be mindful of where the quest for more protein can lead us astray. Big Food has been quick to capitalize on the public’s craving by introducing new versions of its popular products, boasting extra protein, tapping into a market projected to reach more than \$100 billion in 2030, up from \$67 billion in 2023, according to Grand View Research.

The problem is that few of those

“protein-upgrades” offer meaningful nutritional value. Any consumer who picks up a snack food with the word “protein” in bold letters splashed across the label should look closely at how many grams it actually provides (usually far too little to make a real difference) and how that compares to its total calories and sugar, Colenso-Semple says.

To state the obvious: a Pop-Tart with extra protein is still a Pop-Tart. The same goes for Doritos with protein or any of the other junk food brands out there hoping the protein imprimatur will convince you their products are healthy – or even less unhealthy.

In the end, most of what we need should come from whole, nutrient-dense foods. Anyone struggling to squeeze enough protein into their day should consider snacks that offer a healthy boost, such as hard-boiled eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, and lean meats like chicken and pork.

And if healthy snacking isn’t always feasible (or, if like me, you can only eat so much cottage cheese in one lifetime), protein powders are a reasonable option – one that fear-mongering reports shouldn’t scare you into throwing away.

— Lisa Jarvis is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering biotech, health care and the pharmaceutical industry.

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