



Interior Minister meets Jordanian and Syrian counterparts

Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani met yesterday with Minister of Interior of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan H E Mazen Al-Faraya during His Excellency’s visit to Jordan. The meeting discussed bilateral cooperation and explored ways to strengthen and develop it, particularly in the security field, in addition to discussing several matters of mutual interest. The Minister of Interior yesterday also met with Minister of Interior of the Syrian Arab Republic, H E Anas Khattab, during His Excellency's visit to the country. During the meeting, they discussed cooperation relations between the two countries and ways to enhance and develop them, particularly in the security fields. They also discussed several topics of mutual interest.

Qatar, Sweden hold 5th round of political consultation



The fifth round of political consultations between the foreign ministries in the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Sweden was held in Stockholm yesterday. Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi headed the Qatari side, while Director-General for Global Affairs at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs H E Mikael Lindvall headed the Swedish side. During the consultations, both sides discussed ways to foster cooperative relations between the two countries. The consultations were attended by Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Kingdom of Sweden H E Nadia bint Ahmed Al Sheebi along with the accompanying delegation.

Qatar reaffirms commitment to international disaster relief

NEW YORK: The State of Qatar has reaffirmed its commitment to leveraging its resources and expertise to support countries and communities affected by disasters and crises. Through Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and national humanitarian institutions, Qatar has established air bridges that include the International Search and Rescue Group of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), medical personnel and field hospitals, in addition to providing medical supplies such as medicines, food baskets, and shelter materials, as well as advanced equipment to assist those affected in disaster-stricken areas. This was stated in a declaration by the State of Qatar, delivered by Second Secretary at the Permanent Mission of the

State of Qatar to the United Nations Abdulaziz Fadala Al Sulaiti during a meeting of the Sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly, its 81st session, regarding agenda item 88, entitled ‘United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters,’ held at the UN’s headquarters in New York. Al Sulaiti noted that the State of Qatar places special importance on the protection of individuals during disasters, a matter of growing concern given the increasing frequency and severity of such events. He pointed out that all countries across the globe are vulnerable to devastating natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes, which result in human and material losses that can sometimes be difficult for

any single nation to confront alone. This necessitates strengthening international cooperation to protect lives and uphold human dignity, in embodiment of the principles and purposes of the UN Charter. He explained that the State of Qatar has developed a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for addressing emergencies and disasters, managed by specialised national entities. These include the Supreme Committee for Crisis Management, the Civil Defence Council, the Doha Joint Rescue Coordination Center, the Standing Committee for Rescue and Relief Operations and Humanitarian Aids for Areas Afflicted by Catastrophes in Brotherly and Friendly Countries, and the Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities. — *QNA*

Honduras showcases heritage, culture at AFCD exhibition in Qatar

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The ninth edition of the Art, Fashion and Cultural Diplomacy (AFCD) exhibition, titled ‘Honduras, the Country of Deep Waters,’ celebrated the Central American country’s rich culture, history and heritage in Doha yesterday. It also featured more than 100 artworks by AFCD members. The exhibition brought together creative works by diplomats, their spouses and family members, offering visitors, as well as an insight into Honduras’ natural beauty and historical legacy while highlighting the role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening ties between nations. Head of Mission at the Embassy of Honduras H E Sophia Escobar Lanza, several ambassadors and their family members, AFCD Founder and Patron Farhan Al Sheikh Al Sayed, Secretary-General Rodica Grigoreta, and

participating artists and designers attended the event, held at the Honduras embassy. “The exhibition offers a wonderful opportunity to bring a glimpse of Honduras to Qatar through art and creativity. We hope visitors will discover more about our country, appreciate its beauty and culture, and feel inspired to visit Honduras,” Escobar Lanza told *The Peninsula*. She emphasised the importance of cultural exchange in fostering closer relations between countries. “Cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in building bridges between nations. While people in Qatar are familiar with their own country’s rich culture and heritage, we would also like Qataris, residents and members of the diplomatic community to learn more about Honduras and what our country has to offer,” she said. The Honduras section of the exhibition highlighted the

country’s diverse natural landscapes, including its mountains, lakes and waterfalls, alongside its colonial heritage, historic architecture and cultural legacy. It also showcased the country’s indigenous heritage and ancestral traditions. Visitors were introduced to traditional Honduran cuisine, including rosquillas, baleadas and traditional chicken empanadas. Honduras’ coffee culture also featured prominently, reflecting the country’s position as one of Central America’s leading coffee producers and a significant producer in the global market. The wider exhibition featured a diverse range of creative works by AFCD members, including paintings, ornamental art, fashion design, crochet, embroidery, bobbin lace, jewellery and photography. Speaking about the initiative, AFCD Secretary-General Rodica Grigoreta said the group was established a year ago to bring together diplomats,



Head of Mission at the Embassy of Honduras H E Sophia Escobar Lanza (centre); and AFCD Founder and Patron Farhan Al Sheikh Al Sayed with ambassadors and diplomats inaugurating the ninth edition of the Art, Fashion and Cultural Diplomacy exhibition, yesterday. PIC: SALIM MATRAMKOT/THE PENINSULA

ambassadors, their spouses and family members through art and creative activities. “We established Art, Fashion and Cultural Diplomacy a year ago with the aim of bringing together members of the diplomatic community through creativity. Our members participate in workshops, develop their artistic skills and share their work through exhibitions such as this

one,” she told *The Peninsula*. The group now has 55 members and regularly organises workshops, with participation and activities offered free of charge on a voluntary basis. “We want everyone to have the opportunity to participate, explore their creativity and enjoy the artistic process. Our workshops are entirely voluntary and free, allowing

members to learn, create and share their work. The exhibitions provide a platform to present the pieces they produce,” Grigoreta said. Beyond promoting artistic expression, the group also seeks to raise awareness of the cultural heritage of the countries represented by its members, including heritage recognised by Unesco.

NPC showcases strategic foresight to prepare Qatar’s future leaders

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The National Planning Council (NPC) concluded its participation in the Strategic Foresight Forum on Global Youth Competencies and Lifelong Learning, held from 12 to 14 October 2026 and organised by the Ministry of Sports and Youth in cooperation with the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Through its Strategic Foresight Corner, the Council offered a compact, interactive experience that enabled visitors to apply foresight thinking in a practical and accessible way. The experience guided visitors on a journey from identifying emerging shifts and future trends, through exploring challenges and their potential implications, to defining the key capabilities and competencies young people and leaders will need in the future.

Through its Strategic Foresight Corner, the Council offered a compact, interactive experience that enabled visitors to apply foresight thinking in a practical and accessible way.

The Council’s corner also featured an interactive experience entitled ‘What Will Leadership Require to Thrive in Qatar’s Future?’ Drawing on diverse future scenarios and challenges, the experience invited visitors to anticipate potential shifts, identify the capabilities and competencies needed to navigate them, and contribute to an interactive future-skills map reflecting their perspectives on the competencies young people and leaders will need in the future. During the forum’s opening session, entitled ‘Youth and Future Leadership: From

Anticipating Shifts to Creating Opportunities,’ the Strategic Foresight Researcher at the National Planning Council’s Center for Future Foresight and National Visions, Maha Al-Maadeed, presented Qatar’s experience in embedding strategic foresight as an institutional function within the national planning system. The session explored the key shifts shaping young people’s futures and the role of strategic foresight in transforming these shifts into opportunities and avenues for action. Al-Maadeed highlighted the role of strategic foresight in supporting long-term planning and preparing young leaders in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy. She also emphasised the importance of incorporating young people and their aspirations into national scenario-building and empowering them to interpret future

trends and navigate accelerating change. The forum aimed to strengthen young people’s strategic foresight capabilities and hone their skills in interpreting future shifts, building scenarios, and making informed decisions. It also provided a platform for exchanging expertise and perspectives on the future of youth, lifelong learning, and the competencies needed to keep pace with global change. The National Planning Council’s participation in the forum underscores the importance of strategic foresight in supporting decision-making, enhancing young people’s readiness for the future, and developing the competencies needed to navigate diverse and changing environments. It also highlights the State of Qatar’s experience in integrating strategic foresight into the national planning system and preparing the next generation of leaders.

MoT wins first place in DAST Innovation Category

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Transport’s (MoT) Qatar Activity-Based Transport Model (QABM) has won first place in the Innovation Category of the Dubai Award for Sustainable Transport (DAST). The DAST award recognised QABM’s excellence as an innovative national tool supporting strategic transportation planning and evidence-based, data-driven decision making. The award was received by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport H E Mohammed Abdullah Al-Maadeed, at the award ceremony held today under the patronage of Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, and Chairman of the Executive Council of Dubai H H Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The event was also

attended by several CEOs from the transportation industry from the MENA region. This achievement reinforces Qatar’s position in developing innovative, data-driven transportation solutions. It also supports the Ministry’s efforts to build an integrated, sustainable and resilient transportation ecosystem that improves the quality of life, enhances the efficiency of infrastructure investment, and responds to Qatar’s future growth and development requirements. “This achievement also recognises the Ministry’s efforts to develop an advanced national transportation modelling system. QABM simulates people’s daily activities and travel patterns, analyses transportation demand, assesses network performance, and tests the potential impacts of future projects and policies before implementation.

Winners of 12th Katara Prize for Arabic Novel honoured

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Katara Cultural Village Foundation announced the winners of the 12th edition of the Katara Prize for Arabic Novel during a ceremony held at the Katara Opera House. The event was attended by several ministers, ambassadors, diplomatic representatives, writers, intellectuals, media figures and members of the public.

In the published Arabic novels category, the winners are Samar Nour of Egypt for 'Asha the Scarab and the Moon', Maha Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Yamani of Saudi Arabia for 'My Hands Do Not Tremble', and Muhannad Rajab Al-Dabi of Sudan for 'The Siege of Gazelle Waw'. Each receives \$30,000, with their novels to be translated into English.

In the unpublished novels category, Sarah Selti of Algeria won for 'We Might Meet', Huda Al-Mashharawi of Palestine for

'Death Has Another Day', and Nasser Al-Sharif of Saudi Arabia for 'The Voice That Never Reached Ziryab'. Each also receives \$30,000, with their works to be published and translated into English.

Three critics were honoured in the studies and literary criticism category: Dr. Amal Younis Muhammad Irheim of Palestine for her study on contemporary Arabic novels and cinema focusing on Destinies (Masa'ir); Dr. Hamid El-Kattani of Morocco for 'The Arabic Novel on the Threshold of Development'; and Dr. Mahmoud Farghali of Egypt for 'Representations of the Environment in the Novel'. Each receives \$30,000, and the prize committee will oversee the printing, publication and marketing of the studies.

In the young adult novels category, the winners are Khadija Telli of Algeria for 'The Tailor of Tolga', Dr. Manal Taha Ahmed

Al-Jarash of Yemen for 'Sunglasses', and Hany El-Qot of Egypt for 'The Kingdom of Stone'. Each receives \$15,000, with their works to be printed and published.

Noha Fahim of Egypt won in the unpublished historical novels category for 'Sunset at the Alcazar', while Khalaf Al-Khalaf was recognised in the Qatari novels (published) category for 'The Covenant and the Pact'.

General Manager of the Katara Cultural Village Foundation Professor Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Sulaiti congratulated the winners, describing them as ambassadors of the Arabic word and culture. He noted that their contributions would enrich the Arabic literary canon and encouraged those who did not win this year to continue participating, affirming that participation itself is a victory for culture and the Arabic language.

Al-Sulaiti highlighted that the 12th edition recorded a



Minister of Environment and Climate Change H E Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie with General Manager of the Katara Cultural Village Foundation Professor Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Sulaiti and other dignitaries at the event.

record 2,610 entries, the highest since the prize's inception. This included 1,488 unpublished novels, underscoring Katara's role as a key platform for young and emerging writers. Participation from the Gulf region reached 245 entries, reflecting

the growth of Gulf narrative literature, alongside strong representation from Egypt, Sudan, the Levant, the Maghreb and non-Arab countries.

Director-General of ALECSO H E Dr. Mohamed Ould Amar expressed deep gratitude to His

Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, for his patronage of culture and creativity. He praised Qatar's pioneering role in advancing Arab culture and providing platforms for intellectual exchange.

Qatar takes part in WHO regional panel meetings

THE PENINSULA

CAIRO: The State of Qatar participated in the meetings of the Seventy-third Session of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, which concluded yesterday in Cairo under the main theme: "Together for a Healthier Future: Action, Access, Equity."

Assistant Undersecretary for Healthcare Regulatory Affairs at the Ministry of Public Health, Dr Ghanim Ali Al Mannai headed the delegation of the State of Qatar.

The meetings reviewed key health topics and issues, health priorities, and health strategies for the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

The State of Qatar's delegation also participated in a number of events held alongside the Regional Committee meetings.

Most notably, these included the High-Level Meeting of the Executive Sponsors of the Polio Legacy Challenge, as well as a side event organised by the Eastern Mediterranean Non-communicable Diseases Alliance titled "Advancing Adult Immunisation for Healthy Ageing and NCD Prevention in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Leveraging Gulf Leadership to Accelerate Regional Action."

Sidra Medicine to host 'Qatar Paediatric Endocrine and Diabetes Conference 2026'

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, will host the Qatar Paediatric Endocrine and Diabetes Conference (QPED 2026) from 27 to 28 November 2026. The conference will cover the latest approaches to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diabetes and endocrine disorders in children and adolescents.

Held under the theme "Advancing Excellence in Paediatric Endocrine and Diabetes Care," QPED 2026 will focus on developments that are changing the management of paediatric endocrine conditions. These include diabetes technologies, earlier intervention for Type 1 diabetes, new approaches to childhood obesity, precision medicine and emerging therapies for rare endocrine disorders.

Senior Attending Physician at Sidra Medicine and Conference Chair of QPED 2026, Dr. Khalid Hussain said: "Paediatric endocrinology is advancing rapidly, particularly in areas such as diabetes technology, precision medicine and emerging therapies. We are also seeing an important shift in Type 1 diabetes, with greater focus on identifying children at risk and considering interventions earlier in the disease pathway. QPED 2026 will provide a platform for healthcare professionals to discuss how



Prof. Khalid Hussain and Dr. Ahmed Al Hammadi (right)

these advances can be translated into better and more personalised care for children and their families."

The two-day scientific programme will address Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, childhood obesity, growth and puberty disorders, thyroid conditions, endocrine emergencies and rare endocrine disorders.

A dedicated session on the future of Type 1 diabetes will examine screening and prevention, immune-modulating therapies and cell-based treatments, including islet transplantation and stem cell approaches. The programme will also highlight continuous glucose monitoring, insulin pumps and hybrid closed-loop systems and their growing role in the management of childhood diabetes.

Childhood obesity will be another key focus of QPED 2026. Experts will discuss the recognition, evaluation and

management of obesity in children, as well as emerging treatment options.

Chair of Paediatric Medicine at Sidra Medicine, Dr. Ahmed Al-Hammadi said: "Children with diabetes and endocrine disorders often require care from multidisciplinary teams. Bringing together physicians, nurses, diabetes educators, dietitians, researchers and allied health professionals allows us to share knowledge across specialties and strengthen the way we manage these complex conditions. Our goal is ultimately to improve outcomes and quality of life for children and young people."

The conference is aimed at paediatric endocrinologists, diabetologists, paediatricians, primary care and family medicine physicians, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists. QPED 2026 will take place at the Sidra Medicine Auditorium from November 27 to 28 2026.

Qatar highlights support for 9.5 million displaced people

GENEVA: The State of Qatar emphasised that, over the past several years, it has strengthened its position as a strategic partner of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) through its continued support for humanitarian responses to emergencies worldwide.

This support has helped bolster UNHCR-led programmes across numerous fields, enabling more than 9.5 million refugees, forcibly displaced people, and members of host communities around the world to access essential assistance, services, and protection.

This was highlighted in remarks delivered by Second Secretary at the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office in Geneva Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Mansouri, during the general debate at the 77th session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), convened in Geneva.

The State of Qatar is grateful for the efforts led by UNHCR under the leadership of High Commissioner for Refugees H E Dr. Barham Salih to coordinate international efforts to protect refugees and build a better future for them, Al Mansouri said.

Al Mansouri vigorously condemned attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people or alter the geographic and demographic character of the occupied Palestinian

territory. He called on the international community to compel Israel to halt its settlement and expansionist plans.

UNRWA must be supported, and a just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees must be found in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions, he stressed.

Marking the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Al Mansouri eloquently underscored the importance of strengthening international protection for refugees and upholding international law.

The State of Qatar has supported the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and hopes that the 2027 Global Refugee Forum will provide an opportunity to renew commitments and expand partnerships, Al Mansouri pointed out.

Al Mansouri clarified that from 2012 through June 2026, the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) provided more than USD 544 million in aid to refugees and host countries, with funding distributed across multiple sectors, particularly education, health, relief, and economic growth.

The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation has recently renewed its cooperation with UNHCR to help 200,000 refugee children who are out of school gain access to education by 2028, he recalled. — *QNA*

Home healthcare services available across 25 health centres

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Under the slogan "Your Wisdom Gives Us Strength; Your Expertise Guides Us as We Shape the Future Together," the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) celebrated the International Day of Older Persons, observed annually on October 1, by organising a series of awareness activities and events across all its health centres.

The celebrations involved

patients receiving home healthcare services, their families, and caregivers during daily home visits, in addition to the distribution of symbolic gifts.

These activities reflected PHCC's commitment to the health and quality of life of older persons and its dedication to raising awareness of their health and social needs. They also highlighted the importance of integrated care that preserves their dignity, supports their

independence, and promotes their active participation in society.

The celebrations featured a range of educational and awareness-raising activities aimed at improving public understanding of age-related conditions and ways to prevent them, highlighting the healthcare needs of older persons, and promoting awareness of their rights and the importance of receiving

safe, comprehensive healthcare. The events also introduced the entities involved in providing services to this population and emphasised the importance of partnership and coordination among the various stakeholders supporting their care.

PHCC affirmed that organising these activities across all its health centres reflects its commitment to expanding outreach efforts and engaging older persons and their families

throughout the country. Home healthcare services are currently provided through 25 health centres across Qatar and are available to eligible Qatari patients and citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries aged 50 years and above, in accordance with the approved eligibility criteria for the service.

Home healthcare services provide integrated care through a multidisciplinary team.

QNA Director-General meets Chinese Ambassador

DOHA: Director-General of Qatar News Agency (QNA) Ahmed bin Saeed Al Rumaihi met yesterday with Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Qatar H E Cao Xiaolin.

The meeting discussed ways to enhance joint cooperation between the two countries in the field of media. — *QNA*

PISQ hosts Science Exhibition 2026-27 across all wings

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) successfully organised its Science Exhibition 2026-27 across the KG, Primary, Girls, Boys, and Cambridge Wings, providing students with a valuable platform to demonstrate scientific knowledge, creativity, innovation, environmental awareness, and practical learning.

The exhibitions reflected the school's commitment to developing scientific curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and an appreciation of how science and technology can contribute to a sustainable future.

The KG Wing Science Exhibition - Inter-House Competition introduced young learners to scientific exploration through colourful and imaginative projects based on pollution, saving the Earth, recycling, green vision, clean environments, mosaic art, eco-friendly models, ocean life, and other environmental themes. Through their creative

displays and enthusiastic presentations, the children demonstrated an early understanding of environmental responsibility and the importance of protecting the planet.

The Primary Wing Science Exhibition, held on October 4, 2026, showcased a diverse range of projects displayed across classrooms. The exhibition provided students with opportunities to explain scientific concepts and demonstrate their understanding through practical models. Parents of participating students attended the event, appreciated the efforts of the young scientists, and shared encouraging feedback. The Vice Principal and Primary Wing Coordinators acknowledged the dedication of teachers and parents whose collaboration contributed to the success of the exhibition.

At the Girls Wing, students from Grades 5-12 participated in the Internal Science Exhibition on October 4, followed by the presentation of selected projects at the Inter-Wing Competition

on October 5, 2026. The projects reflected scientific understanding, creativity, innovation, and confident presentation. PISQ Principal Ch. Muhammad Afzal, accompanied by the Vice Principals of all wings, visited the exhibition, interacted with students, explored their projects, and appreciated their efforts and innovative thinking. His encouraging words inspired the students to continue exploring scientific ideas and pursuing excellence.

The Boys Wing Science Exhibition featured projects addressing a broad range of scientific and technological themes, including environmental protection, biodiversity, robotics, smart irrigation, bio-plastics, gravity, optics, DC generators, the human respiratory system, renewable energy, water conservation, pollution control, recycling, automation, and sustainable technology. With the guidance and support of their Science mentors, students demonstrated how scientific principles can be applied to real-world challenges and practical solutions.



PISQ Principal Ch Muhammad Afzal inaugurating the Science Exhibition 2026-27.

The Cambridge Wing Science Exhibition highlighted the application of scientific principles through projects such as Physics of Drifting, Windmills, Wind Turbines, Maglev Trains, Volcanic Eruptions, Electroplating, Sound and Vibrations, Hydraulic Arms, Solar Energy,

Smart Fire Detectors, Iron Dome, and Water Filtration. Under the valuable mentorship of Yusuf Wasil, students confidently explained the concepts behind their models, connecting classroom learning with practical applications in science and technology.



Qatar, Canada discuss bilateral relations

Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah met with Ambassador of Canada to Qatar H E Karim Morcos, at his office yesterday morning. The meeting discussed cooperation between the two countries in areas of mutual interest.

Al Misnad meets envoy of Republic of Korea



Minister of State for International Cooperation H E Dr. Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad met yesterday with Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the State of Qatar H E Hong Jeepio. During the meeting, relations between the two countries were reviewed, in addition to a number of topics of common interest.



Minister of State for Interior meets envoys of China, EU

Minister of State for Interior Affairs H E Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal bin Mohammed Al-Thani met separately yesterday with Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Qatar H E Cao Xiaolin (pictured) and Ambassador of the European Union to Qatar H E Antonino Maggiore. Discussions during the meetings covered a host of topics of common interest, along with ways to foster cooperation and develop working mechanisms in relevant areas.

Qatar to attend Al Diwan Arabic Book Fair in Berlin

BERLIN: The State of Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Culture will participate in the fourth edition of Al Diwan Arabic Book Fair, set to be held in Berlin on October 16-18 with the participation of over 110 publishers from the Arab World and Germany.

The fair presents a diverse range of Arabic publications alongside a multifaceted cultural programme, creating spaces for encounter and dialogue among authors, translators, publishers, researchers, and readers from the Arab world and Germany. The fair's programme features an array of discussions, seminars, and literary gatherings.

The programme addresses a wide variety of topics, including translation between Arabic and German and its future prospects; the role of book fairs in cultural exchange; the Arabic novel within the Gulf region; and the function of cultural institutions as bridges for

A key highlight is a discussion with Saudi novelist Abdo Khal, winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (the Arabic Booker), who will reflect on his literary career and the position of the Saudi novel within the broader Arab cultural landscape.

dialogue and mutual understanding between societies.

It also explores digital literature and contemporary publishing, while including sessions that highlight Qatari cultural and maritime heritage, as well as Arabic poetry.

A key highlight is a discussion with Saudi novelist Abdo Khal, winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (the Arabic Booker), who will reflect on his literary career and the position of the Saudi novel

within the broader Arab cultural landscape.

Furthermore, the fair will conclude the "Treasures of Knowledge: A Dialogue with Arabic Manuscripts" series, organized in collaboration with the Berlin State Library, with a special event dedicated to the world of Arabic manuscripts and the creativity, knowledge, and stories they contain.

Another notable feature of the programme is the presentation ceremony for the Al Riwaq Prize for Science and Culture. Organized by "Al Diwan" (The Arab Cultural House) in partnership with the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB), the prize celebrates outstanding scholarly and cultural contributions.

The award reflects Al Diwan's commitment to supporting knowledge, research, and culture, while highlighting intellectual and scholarly contributions that enrich the Arab cultural landscape. — **QNA**

NU-Q to host public speaking masterclass with broadcast veteran Scheherazade Safla-Gaffoor

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) will host Fast FWD @ NU-Q, a professional development session featuring a masterclass on public speaking led by NU-Q faculty member and broadcast journalist Scheherazade Safla-Gaffoor.

Titled "Influential Public Speaking: Communicate with Confidence, Clarity, and Impact," the session will explore practical techniques for managing nerves, strengthening vocal delivery, and speaking with greater confidence and credibility in professional settings, from leading meetings to moderating panels.

Fast FWD @ NU-Q is a free professional development event for alumni of Qatar Foundation schools and current NU-Q juniors and seniors, offered in partnership between NU-Q's Executive Education Programme and Student Experience office. Along with the seminar, the event includes a networking meet-and-greet and a complimentary buffet lunch, giving participants the chance to build both practical skills and professional connections within Qatar's community.

Titled "Influential Public Speaking: Communicate with Confidence, Clarity, and Impact," the session will explore practical techniques for managing nerves, strengthening vocal delivery, and speaking with greater confidence.

An assistant professor in NU-Q's Journalism and Strategic Communications Programme, Safla-Gaffoor brings nearly 30 years of experience in broadcast journalism, on-air presenting, and podcasting to the session. Her career spans television networks across the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, including Channel Five in London, South Africa's first 24-hour news channel ENCA, TRT World in Turkey, and Al Jazeera English. She was also a senior reporter and producer for The Exchange and its flagship show Qatar365 on Euronews.

Beyond broadcasting, Safla-Gaffoor produces and hosts 1001, a podcast launched in March 2025 that

creates a platform for women across the Global South. The show explores topics ranging from the challenges of podcasting in a male-dominated industry to reporting from Cape Town's Cape Flats ganglands, and was a nominee for the Women Podcasters Network Awards 2026. She also teaches first-year journalism, broadcasting, and audio journalism at NU-Q.

Her work also explores representation in African media, including her doctoral research on the challenges facing Black women in South Africa's podcasting industry. She has brought these issues to international platforms, moderating "70 Years After Bandung: Lessons for a New Global Order" at the Middle East Council's conference on the legacy of the Bandung Conference.

The Fast FWD @ NU-Q Professional Development Seminar, "Influential Public Speaking: Communicate with Confidence, Clarity, and Impact," will take place on Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 9am at Northwestern University in Qatar, followed by a networking meet-and-greet session at 10.15 am and a complimentary buffet luncheon at 12.45 pm.

MoJ Undersecretary meets Head of ICRC delegation, discusses cooperation



DOHA: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Chairman of the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law, and Chairman of the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law, Saeed bin Abdullah Al Suwaidi met yesterday with Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Delegation in the State of Qatar, H E Charles-Richard Sabga.

Both sides discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law and the ICRC in areas of mutual interest. They also discussed prospects for future partnership between the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law and the ICRC.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice expressed his appreciation for the support provided by the ICRC to the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law during the stages of its establishment, emphasizing the importance of continued cooperation to support the Committee's work and achieve its intended objectives.

Sabga welcomed the appointment of Saeed bin Abdullah Al Suwaidi as the first Chairman of the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law. He further commended Qatar's legal expertise and the role it is expected to play in supporting the work of the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law. — **QNA**

Katara opens 'Shaping the Trace: The Evolution of Artistic Practice' exhibition

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Cultural Village Foundation – Katara yesterday opened the exhibition "Shaping the Trace: The Evolution of Artistic Practice" by Portuguese artist Cristina Alves.

The exhibition was organized in collaboration with the Embassy of the Portuguese Republic in the State of Qatar and was attended by General Manager of Katara Prof. Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Sulaiti alongside several ambassadors, representatives of diplomatic missions, and a group of artists and enthusiasts of the visual arts.

The exhibition features 54 artworks, offering a selection from various stages of the artist's creative journey. It traces the evolution of her visual language and technical approach over time, from her early

explorations in sculpture and form to her later mural works and richly textured sculptural compositions. In her pieces, the artist employs a diverse range of natural and recycled materials, presenting an artistic vision that examines the relationship between matter, form, and memory.

The works reflect the transformations within her practice, ultimately crystallizing into a unique creative identity she terms "Orisandscape." In her work, the artist employs a diverse range of materials and media, including natural fibres, recycled fabrics, ropes, shells, stones, metallic elements, and pigments, reconfiguring them into artistic compositions where organic elements intertwine with sculptural structures.

This aesthetic approach reflects her keen interest in natural details, the traces left by the passage of time, and



General Manager of Katara Prof Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Sulaiti along with visitors during the opening of the exhibition.

the transformations that objects undergo. The exhibited works explore

themes related to identity, human memory, and nature. Some

compositions draw inspiration from the sea and coastal communities, while others delve into concepts such as balance, liberation, change, and continuity. The exhibition highlights the artist's ability to transform simple, discarded materials into a new visual vocabulary, imbuing them with a presence and meaning that transcend their original functions.

This exhibition is organized as part of a cultural collaboration between Katara and the Embassy of the Portuguese Republic in the State of Qatar. It aims to foster artistic and cultural exchange, offering the public an opportunity to engage with diverse international artistic practices and discover new trends and approaches in contemporary visual arts. The exhibition will be open to visitors from October 15 to October 28, 2026, in Hall 2 of Building 47, between 10am and 10pm.

School roof collapse kills teacher, 32 children in northwest Pakistan

PESHAWAR: The roof of a school collapsed in Pakistan’s northwestern city of Peshawar, killing a teacher and 32 students, mostly aged under 14, health officials said yesterday, as residents and rescuers scrambled to pull children from the rubble.

Twenty more students were taken to hospital after the collapse, which authorities blamed on “weak infrastructure”. Others in the densely populated neighbourhood described a close call.

Asim Khan of Peshawar’s Lady Reading Hospital said the death toll had risen to 33 by yesterday evening, with most of the victims aged between four and 14.

“A total of 20 injured children were brought to the hospital, most of whom have

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed “deep sorrow and grief over the loss of precious lives”.

been discharged. Three severely injured children, who sustained head injuries, have been admitted to the hospital,” Khan said. The injured and deceased included 12 girls and a female teacher, Khan added.

A spokesman for the emergency rescue service in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province said schoolchildren were crushed and trapped after the roof gave way.

“When the Rescue 1122 emergency response teams arrived at the scene, they found that one roof had collapsed onto

another, causing the classroom below to be crushed and trapping children inside,” spokesman Bilal Ahmad Faizi said. Images released by the emergency services showed rescue workers in high-visibility vests scrambling to move debris, rubble and dirt. A senior Peshawar-based official told AFP that initial reports suggested the roof collapse was due to “weak infrastructure”.

“The school owner has been detained,” the official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to the media.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed “deep sorrow and grief over the loss of precious lives”, according to a statement. “The Prime Minister



People gather for funeral prayers of the victims in Peshawar, Pakistan, yesterday. (AFP)

extends his condolences to the bereaved families and prays for them to have the strength and patience to bear this irreparable loss,” the statement said.

President Asif Ali Zardari described the roof collapse as a

“heartbreaking tragedy”.

Resident Sher Ahmed blamed “substandard construction materials” for the tragedy and called for an investigation.

“With profound grief and

sorrow, I urge the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation and take strict action against anyone found responsible so that such tragedies can be prevented in the future,” he said. — **AFP**

India expected to overtake Japan as world’s 4th largest economy in 2027: IMF

BANGKOK: India is expected to become the world’s fourth-largest economy by 2027, overtaking Japan, according to International Monetary Fund projections that yesterday laid out the Asian nations’ contrasting trajectories.

The IMF said Japan would remain the fourth-largest country by nominal gross domestic product this year, but in 2027 India is set to take its place, with a GDP reaching \$4.52 trillion.

Japan is slated to slip to sixth

place that year, falling behind both India and the United Kingdom, the projection showed.

India has shown strong growth in recent years despite global economic headwinds, with the IMF this week raising its forecasts for 2026 growth to hit 7.0 percent.

Japan, by contrast, is plagued by an aging population and other structural problems that have seen the Asian giant’s growth stagnate.

The United States is the

world’s largest economy, followed by China and Germany.

Releasing the IMF’s regional economic outlook for Asia-Pacific yesterday, Asia Director Krishna Srinivasan said India entered the current energy price shock caused by the US-Israel war on Iran from a strong position.

“India entered this with very strong fundamentals,” he said. “Growth was strong, fiscal prudence was pretty much enshrined, they had lots of reserves and so on. And so in

that context, they have responded well to the shock.”

Growth in Japan, by contrast, is projected to slow to 0.7 percent in 2026, with the country hard hit by an increase in energy prices — and wider inflation — that has seen the Bank of Japan raise interest rates to their highest level in three decades.

The country, long haunted by deflation, has seen a sustained increase in consumer prices since the spring of 2022, and spiking energy prices from

the Iran war have further fuelled those rises. The fall of the yen, which hit its lowest level in 40 years against the dollar over the summer, is further driving up the cost of imports.

Japan’s aging population is also weighing on economic activity.

The IMF’s Srinivasan said Japan’s economy was benefiting from the boom in artificial intelligence investments, but not as much as its regional neighbours. — **AFP**

Oman, Pakistan stress diplomacy for regional de-escalation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar and his Omani counterpart, Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, held a press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday following the meeting of the Eighth Session of the Pakistan-Oman Joint Ministerial Committee.

Both ministers underscored the importance of continuing diplomatic efforts and prioritising dialogue to resolve disputes and de-escalate tensions in support of regional peace and stability.

Al Busaidi reemphasised the importance of dialogue and diplomacy, as well as constructive engagement, in addressing regional challenges, de-escalating tensions and resolving disputes to prevent further escalation.

He lauded Pakistan’s constructive role in supporting diplomatic efforts in the region, stressing their importance in building confidence and lending impetus to peaceful solutions to regional challenges. — **QNA**

Japanese PM to appoint Takebe as new farm minister

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said yesterday she has offered ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmaker Arata Takebe the post of farm minister to succeed Kazuo Yana, who stepped down a day earlier in what was effectively a dismissal over a string of scandals, Kyodo News reported.

Takebe will be joining the cabinet for the first time.

The 56-year-old is a sixth-term House of Representatives lawmaker for a constituency on Japan’s northernmost main island of Hokkaido.

He previously served as senior vice minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and director of the LDP’s Agriculture and Forestry Division, among other posts.

Takebe’s father, Tsutomu Takebe, held posts including farm minister and LDP secretary general.

Yana had come under fire for controversies over his past remarks and conduct, including suggesting that road budgets had been sharply cut for two municipalities whose mayors did not support him in the February general election. — **XINHUA**

Chad militia kills two soldiers in north

N’DJAMENA: Clashes between the Chad military and militia in the north of the country left two soldiers dead and nine others wounded, the military said yesterday.

The clashes took place on Wednesday in Miski, a town in northern Chad’s remote Tibesti region, a mountainous desert area bordering Libya and Niger that has long been plagued by tensions over rich gold deposits.

For years, local armed groups have blocked state access to the site and its resources.

A military unit overseeing mining activities came under attack from the “Miski self-defence committee, resulting in the deaths of two officers and nine wounded,” the army said in a statement.

The Miski self-defence committee also issued a statement yesterday saying it “deplored the loss of life” after Wednesday’s clashes, adding it refused to be “held solely responsible” for what it called “serious incidents”. — **AFP**

GCC Chief, Thai FM sign MoU to bolster relations

BANGKOK: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jasem Mohamed Albu-daiwi and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Sihasak Phuangketkeow signed yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the GCC General Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

The MoU aims to bolster relations of friendship and cooperation between both sides and develop frameworks for

dialogue and joint coordination, thereby contributing to elevating GCC-Thai relations towards broader horizons of partnership and cooperation across various fields of mutual interest.

The GCC Secretary General emphasised that the signing of the MoU represents an important step towards enhancing relations between the GCC and Thailand. He affirmed that it reflects a shared desire to establish an institutional partnership founded on

dialogue, mutual understanding, knowledge exchange, and exploring new avenues for cooperation, serving common interests and fulfilling the aspirations of both sides.

The Secretary General explained that the MoU encompasses consultation and coordination on political and economic issues of mutual concern, fostering cultural cooperation and people-to-people ties, alongside the potential to expand areas of cooperation in the future and formulate a joint

action plan to translate understandings into practical initiatives and programmes that advance bilateral relations.

Albudaiwi underscored the importance of building upon this milestone to bolster the GCC-Thai partnership and intensify communication and coordination across various levels, thereby supporting mutual interests and contributing to reinforcing stability, prosperity, and sustainable development for both sides. — **QNA**



Indonesia-Australia military drills

Indonesian marines and members of the Australian Defence Force take part in the ‘Keris Woomera’ joint military drills at Banongan beach in Situbondo, Indonesia, yesterday. (AFP)

Chinese Premier holds talks with Togo’s President of Council of Ministers

BEIJING: Chinese Premier Li Qiang held talks in Beijing yesterday with President of the Council of Ministers of Togo Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, who is on an official visit to China.

Li said that in recent years, under the strategic guidance of the leaders of the two countries, China-Togo relations have continuously reached new heights.

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Faure on Tuesday, and the two leaders elevated bilateral relations to a China-Togo community with a shared future for the new era and made new plans for expanding bilateral cooperation, Li said.

No matter how the international landscape may change, China is willing to work with Togo to always remain good brothers and good partners who trust each other, carry forward the traditional friendship, consolidate

political mutual trust, deepen cooperation in various fields, and better serve the modernization endeavours of both countries, he said.

Li noted that China is willing to deepen the synergy between their development strategies, explore and foster more growth areas for cooperation, and strengthen cooperation in such fields as infrastructure connectivity, agricultural modernization and finance, to jointly strengthen the driving forces for the development of the two countries.

China is willing to import more quality products from Togo, Li said, adding that Togo is welcome to make full use of policy facilitation measures provided by China, including the zero-tariff treatment and upgraded “green channel” for products exported to China.

The two sides can strengthen cooperation in such

areas as healthcare, youth, culture, think tanks and subnational exchanges to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples, Li said.

China is willing to work with Togo and other African countries to actively implement the 10 partnership actions between China and Africa and contribute to lasting peace, development and prosperity in Africa, he added.

Faure said the friendship between Togo and China has a long history, and China’s rapid development has set an example for the world. Togo firmly supports the one-China principle, and is willing to deepen practical cooperation with China in such fields as economy and trade, investment, agricultural products, customs quarantine science and technology, artificial intelligence, he said. — **XINHUA**

 World in brief

China-North Korea border bridge opens to traffic

SHENYANG: The new China-DPRK Yalu River bridge officially opened to traffic yesterday, with both sides jointly holding an opening ceremony on this cross-border artery. The cable-stayed bridge over the Yalu River serves as a cross-border transport link between the city of Dandong in northeast China’s Liaoning Province and the city of Sinuiju in North Pyongan Province in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The double-pylon and double-cable-plane bridge features a 28.5-metre-wide deck designed with four lanes for two-way traffic, while its water navigation clearance is designed for vessels of up to the 3,000-tonne class. The new bridge will further facilitate trade and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Wednesday. Dandong boasts China’s largest border trade port with the DPRK. — **XINHUA**

Sri Lanka warns of heightened flood risk

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka could face an increased risk of flooding in the coming months as heavy rainfall continues and the El Nino phenomenon strengthens to unusually high levels, the Department of Meteorology warned yesterday.

The department said data from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology showed that sea surface temperatures in the central Pacific had risen to 2.81 degrees Celsius above average, exceeding the 2.76-degree peak recorded in 2016.

Sri Lanka experienced widespread flooding during the 2016 El Nino event, and authorities said rapid warming in the Pacific and Indian oceans could increase the risk of flooding and landslides in the months ahead.

The department said unstable atmospheric conditions were expected to bring widespread thundershowers, with some areas likely to receive more than 75 mm of rain. The department said the country is already experiencing heavy rains and that water levels of several rivers are rising. — **XINHUA**

Afghanistan declares first province free of landmines

KABUL: Afghan authorities yesterday declared the central province of Bamiyan free of landmines and explosive remnants left over from past conflicts, making it the first province in the country to achieve this milestone.

Nearly 85 million square meters of land have been cleared of landmines and unexploded ordnance in Bamiyan over the past 36 years, according to Hafiz Mohammad Yusuf Hammad, spokesman for the authority. Approximately 262 incidents involving landmines and unexploded ordnance were recorded in the province during this period, resulting in 330 people killed or injured, Hammad said, noting that children accounted for the majority of the casualties.

Afghanistan remains one of the world’s most heavily landmine-contaminated countries. More than four decades of conflict have left a deadly legacy of explosive remnants that continue to kill or maim dozens of people every month. — **XINHUA**

Ukraine’s Zelensky defies Trump with Russian refinery strikes

KYIV: Ukraine will no longer abide by US President Donald Trump’s demands not to strike Russian oil refineries, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in remarks published yesterday, amid deepening tensions between the two leaders over a US-Russia diesel agreement.

Relations between Kyiv and Washington have soured since last week, when Trump eased sanctions on Russia in exchange for Moscow releasing large amounts of diesel onto global markets.

Zelensky described the deal as a “weak decision”, saying it would encourage Russia to prolong its four-and-a-half-year war with Ukraine, while several of Ukraine’s European allies criticised the agreement.

Addressing the criticism on Saturday, Trump claimed Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries were to blame for rising diesel prices and said it was “time for Ukraine to get a

new president”.

“The block (on attacking refineries) is out,” Zelensky told the *Financial Times* in an interview published yesterday. “We’re done.” Trump had announced on Sunday a surprise “energy ceasefire” between Russia and Ukraine, which Zelensky said he knew nothing about.

And earlier this week, Ukraine reported disruptions to a critical US satellite communications system that its army uses on the battlefield.

“We need HONESTY from our partners about this war,” Zelensky wrote on social media yesterday.

In an interview with British journalist Piers Morgan on Wednesday, Zelensky agreed that he felt “betrayed” by Trump’s diesel-supply deal with Russia’s Vladimir Putin.

He also questioned the advice that Trump was receiving, after senior Ukrainian



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte during their meeting on the sidelines of an EU summit in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

officials in Kyiv openly accused the United States of helping Russia. “It’s painful when President Trump chooses one side, not our side,” he said.

“I think his advisors are wrong... This is not (the) right side of history.”

The Kremlin accused Ukraine yesterday of derailing US peace efforts by resuming its strikes. Russia reported that an

oil refinery in Ryazan, south of the capital, Moscow, had been hit in a “large-scale attack”.

Kyiv “continues to launch strikes against these facilities,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

“It is coming into serious conflict with the peace efforts of the United States and American negotiators, who are making vigorous efforts to

initiate the peace process,” he added.

Much of the outrage in Ukraine this week has been over restrictions to the Starshield satellite communications system that its military relies upon to detect incoming Russian attacks and to coordinate its frontline response.

Defence officials confirmed that the United States had threatened to withdraw intelligence-sharing if Ukraine continued long-range strikes on Russian oil refineries.

Tech billionaire Elon Musk, who has also called for Zelensky to be replaced as leader, said his SpaceX company was not behind any disruption to the Starshield system.

“Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the US government,” he said. “Any limits on speed or usage are decided by the US military and ultimately POTUS,” he added, referring to Trump. — **AFP**

Four leaders of Colombian guerrilla group arrested in Ecuador

QUITO: Ecuador said yesterday police had arrested four leaders of a dissident faction of Colombia’s defunct FARC guerrilla group during anti-drug-trafficking operations in the border area.

Interior Minister John Reimberg said the four guerrilla commanders were from the Border Command, which refused to lay down arms when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a landmark peace deal with the Colombian state a decade ago.

The group, which engages primarily in drug trafficking, operates chiefly in the southern Colombian department of Putumayo but also in neighboring Ecuador and Peru.

Reimberg said the four were suspected of killing 11 soldiers and three police officers in the Amazon rainforest. They’ve also been linked to 25 other killings in the Ecuadoran Amazonian provinces of Orellana and Sucumbios.

“Today we deliver a resounding blow to the Border Command, a criminal organization linked to drug trafficking, arms trafficking, illegal mining, and acts of terrorism,” he wrote on X. He did not name the suspects nor give their nationalities. — **AFP**

37 housing protesters injured in police operation in Portugal

LISBON: Thirty-seven participants in a housing rights protest in Porto were injured in the early hours of yesterday when police took action to end a sit-in encampment that had been occupying Praca D Joao I since Saturday, two of them sustaining what the organizer of the protest described as serious injuries.

“At 0256 (0156 GMT) yesterday, police forces intervened at the housing encampment at Praca D Joao I, Porto, in an operation aimed at ending the protest,” the Movimento pela Habitacao said in a statement, adding that among those hurt was a person with a disability and that two people suffered fractures requiring hospitalization.

Following an emergency assembly, protesters voted to remain at the site and set up tents overnight, according to movement spokesperson Pedro Manuel.

The protest in Portugal is part of a broader wave of housing activism spreading across Europe. Encampments are currently active in at least 15 Spanish cities, and similar demonstrations have taken place in France, as citizens in multiple countries protest against surging rents and the lack of affordable housing.

In Portugal, housing prices rose 17.8 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026, the highest increase in the European Union, while median rents on new contracts grew 9.1 percent in the same period. — **XINHUA**

Mexican traveller nabbed with snakes, lizards at German airport

COLOGNE: German customs officials found 90 lizards and venomous snakes hidden in containers and socks in a Mexican traveller’s luggage as he arrived at an airport, authorities said yesterday.

The 45-year-old was stopped at Cologne airport last month and given a drug test after behaving in a “nervous” manner, the western city’s customs office said.

The results indicated the man, a firefighter who was not named by authorities, had taken cocaine.

Officials searched his suitcase but rather than finding narcotics, discovered around 90 snakes and lizards in plastic containers, shampoo and cream bottles, and socks.

“My colleagues at the airport are used to all sorts of travel souvenirs in suitcases, but we’ve never had 37 venomous snakes and 55 lizards from Mexico before,” said customs office spokesman Jens Ahland. — **AFP**

Swedish parliament rejects Andersson’s PM nomination amid coalition deadlock

HELSINKI: Sweden’s parliament yesterday rejected Social Democratic Party leader Magdalena Andersson’s nomination as new prime minister (PM), prolonging a political deadlock over government formation following last month’s general election.

Andersson, who served as Sweden’s PM from 2021 to 2022, received 99 votes in favor and 248 against in the 349-member Swedish parliament, the Riksdag, according to Swedish Television (SVT).

Following the vote, Andersson told SVT that the Riksdag was facing a difficult situation and that several rounds of voting might be needed before a new government could take office.

The vote came after Parliament Speaker Andreas Norlen nominated Andersson on Tuesday to lead a single-party Social Democratic government, despite the failure of negotiations among four parties that together secured a narrow parliamentary majority in the September election.

The Social Democratic Party, Left Party, Green Party and Center Party won a combined 176 seats, but remain divided over the composition of a new government.

According to SVT, coalition talks have been hampered mainly by disagreements between the Center Party and the Left Party, with the latter insisting on joining the government and securing cabinet posts, while the Center Party refuses to serve in the same government.

The Left Party, Green Party and Center Party all announced ahead of Thursday’s vote that they would oppose a single-party Social Democratic government.

Andersson acknowledged Tuesday that although progress had been made in coalition

negotiations, conditions were still not in place to form a government capable of securing sufficient parliamentary support.

The former PM was first tasked with exploring the formation of a new government on September 18, after outgoing PM Ulf Kristersson requested to be relieved of his duties following the election.

However, she returned the mandate on September 28 after the Left Party backed the Moderate Party’s candidate rather than the Social Democratic Party’s candidate in the parliamentary speaker election. Norlen subsequently reassigned her the task in early October, but negotiations remained inconclusive.

Under Sweden’s system of negative parliamentarism, a PM candidate can take office unless at least 175 of the 349 lawmakers vote against the nomination. — **XINHUA**

‘Great to be back!’ Harry, Meghan in first joint outing since return

LONDON: Britain’s Prince Harry and his wife yesterday carried out their first joint engagement since their surprise move back to the UK in August, with Meghan telling wellwishers: “It’s great to be back.” King Charles III’s 42-year-old younger son and Meghan, 45 -- who left Britain and quit royal duties in 2020 amid a bitter royal family feud -- were greeted with cheers as they arrived in the central English city of Nottingham.

The couple then stopped to chat and joke with the crowd as well as pose for selfies, give hugs and accept flowers.

The quasi-royal visit potentially puts the pair at odds with Buckingham Palace over their status while living back in Britain.

The king made it clear in a letter released last month that their position was “akin to private citizens” with charitable interests rather than public figures and that they should not be addressed as his and her royal highness.

Known formally as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, the last



Britain’s Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, greet wellwishers as they leave the Community Recording Studio in Nottingham, central England yesterday. (AFP)

time Harry and Meghan appeared together at a public event in Britain was when they attended the late Queen Elizabeth II’s funeral in September 2022.

The couple were in the city to visit three charities that support young people and local communities through music, film, sport and tackling food poverty.

Following a spectacular falling out with the rest of the

royal family, Harry and Meghan have sought to build bridges with Charles -- but they remain estranged from Harry’s older brother and heir to the throne, Prince William.

King Charles meanwhile visited Wales, where he addressed the Welsh parliament.

Anti-monarchy protesters could be heard chanting “Not my King” and “Down, down, down with the Crown” as

Trump scraps plan to livestream execution after huge backlash

WASHINGTON: The firing squad execution of a convicted military base shooter will not be livestreamed, US President Donald Trump announced yesterday, canceling a contentious plan by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The move to livestream Nidal Hasan’s execution was widely opposed at home and abroad, prompting outrage from both US Democratic and Republican politicians, the Catholic Church, rights groups and the United Nations.

The cancellation is a blow to Hegseth, who is already under fire over the stale-mated Iran war and its fallout, which are weighing on the Republican Party’s chances in upcoming midterm elections.

Hasan “will die, as scheduled, by firing squad, but this event will not be streamed,” Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

The US president indicated that he did not personally oppose the streaming plan, saying that it “might have been a strong deterrent for the World to witness how America deals with Terrorists and SCUM like Hasan.” But “many very good and well meaning people would rather not watch him die,” Trump said, adding that the execution could still be viewed in person by immediate family of the victims if they wanted to do so.

Hasan’s execution -- scheduled for December 3 at Fort Hood, Texas, where he gunned down 13 people in 2009 -- is set to be the first by a US military firing squad since 1945.

Hegseth said last week that “we’ll make sure that people are able to watch it, that it’s public,” later confirming that the plan was to livestream the execution. — **AFP**

Seven missing off Romania after drone attacks

BUCHAREST: Romania reported seven people missing yesterday after two drone attacks on ships in the Black Sea, where several vessels have been hit recently in suspected fallout from the Ukraine war.

The attacks are the latest in a series off the coast of Romania and neighbouring Bulgaria in recent weeks.

Writing on X after a meeting with the leader of Bulgaria and NATO chief Mark Rutte in Brussels to discuss the issue, Romanian President Nicosur Dan said the trend was “unacceptable” and “has to stop”.

“The situation in the Black Sea is serious. Commercial ships are being attacked and sunk. Seafarers killed, injured, and missing, very close to the shores of Romania and Bulgaria,” he said.

“Lives, global trade, and critical infrastructure are at stake.” On Wednesday evening, Romania said it was probing a

possible drone attack on the Comoros-flagged tanker Yara J.

It said a fire had broken out on board but the ship’s crew managed to douse the flames themselves.

Then, at around 7:00 am (0400 GMT) yesterday, Romanian authorities reported that a fire had broken out on another ship, the Wine Trader, approximately 13 nautical miles southeast of the Romanian city of Sulina.

The VesselFinder tracking website identified the ship, which was flying the San Marino flag, as a chemical tanker.

Speaking at the European Union summit in Brussels, Dan said both ships had been “hit” by “air drones”.

The Romanian Naval Authority said in a statement there were 12 people on board the Wine Trader.

“Five of the sailors... have been rescued. A further seven people are still missing,” it said, adding that the ship was not carrying any cargo. — **AFP**

‘Severe drought’ declared in parts of UK

LONDON: A “severe drought” was declared in parts of southern England yesterday by the UK government, which said it took the decision following an “unprecedented period of extreme weather”.

The United Kingdom experienced its hottest summer on record in 2026, featuring several heatwaves and an exceptional drought that resulted from a lack of rainfall not seen since records began in 1836.

More than 80 percent of England is currently in a state of drought as it continues to experience below average levels of rainfall into the autumn months.

“Record-breaking summer heat and severe drought have put our water resources under immense pressure,” said Environment Agency head Philip Duffy.

The “severe drought” status was declared in the English counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, East Sussex and West Sussex. — **AFP**

Costa Rica opens jail inspired by El Salvador mega-prison

COSTA RICA: Costa Rica opened a high-security jail on Wednesday inspired by a mega-prison in El Salvador that has become a symbol of the country’s war on gangs, widely criticized by human rights groups.

Costa Rican President Laura Fernandez, who took office in May, campaigned on a promise to crack down on the wave of crime sweeping what was once Central America’s safest country.

In a vast corridor with rows of cells, the right-wing leader and ally of US President Donald Trump vowed to “take a hard line” on crime, saying “those who break the law must pay the price.” The High Security Center against Organized

Crime (Cacco) in San Rafael de Alajuela will receive its first prisoners this month and eventually house 5,100 inmates.

They will wear orange jumpsuits, be subject to strict visitation rules and have the right to one hour per day outdoors.

Fernandez has cited iron-fisted Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, who has locked up thousands of suspected gang members without charges, as an inspiration on how to reduce crime.

Her election marked another win for the Latin American right, which has unseated a host of left-wing administrations in recent months, including in Chile, Bolivia and Honduras. — **AFP**