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## Qatar, US stress peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan

**QNA – DOHA**

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani held on Friday via telephone a conversation with President of the United States of America H E Joe Biden.

The call dealt with reviewing developments in the region, particularly the latest developments in Afghanistan. The two sides stressed the importance of protecting civilians, the peaceful transition of power, and de-escalating tensions towards a comprehensive political solution that guarantees security and stability to benefit the Afghan people.

The US President expressed his thanks to H H the Amir for the State of Qatar's contribution to the evacuation of civilians and the country's efforts in the peace process in Afghanistan. The call also dealt with the strategic bilateral relations between the two countries, and the scope for expanding and enhancing them.

## Amir, Iraq President discuss strengthening relations

**QNA – DOHA**

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani held a telephone conversation with President of the Republic of Iraq H E Dr. Barham Salih yesterday evening.

H H the Amir received from H E the Iraqi President, the two sides reviewed relations between the two brotherly countries and means of enhancing and developing them, in addition to a number of issues of mutual concern.

## MME launches investment portal to promote public-private partnership

**SANAULLAH ATAULLAH**  
THE PENINSULA

As part of its efforts to realise the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030, the Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME) has launched the investment portal 'Foras' to promote public-private partnership.

"We are pleased to present the investment portal 'Foras' (which means opportunities) to activate the role of partnership between the public and private sectors," MME said in a tweet.

The portal has been developed to ensure the quality of service provided to investors. Through the portal, the investor can fill out the form to request an investment project, allocated according to the type of entity, and send it along with required documents to the e-mail specified in the form.

Currently the priority is being given to projects related to environment, sustainability, waste treatment and recycling in order to contribute to achieving the goals of sustainable development in the country.

Moreover, the Ministry is working to coordinate with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the relevant authorities to unify efforts and to ensure the regulation of investment in the country and to provide an attractive investment environment and incentive packages that facilitate investment procedures in the fields relevant to the work of the Ministry.

A partnership application form for an investment project with the MME, for all external parties, has been issued.

A partnership application

form for an investment project with the private sector (for the sectors concerned and departments in the Ministry wishing to undertake an investment project through partnership with the private sector) has been also issued.

The investment opportunities in food security sector aim at raising country's self-sufficiency rates in plant, animal and fish products.

In the environment sector, it will contribute in achieving the sustainable development goals of the State of Qatar with the aim of protecting the



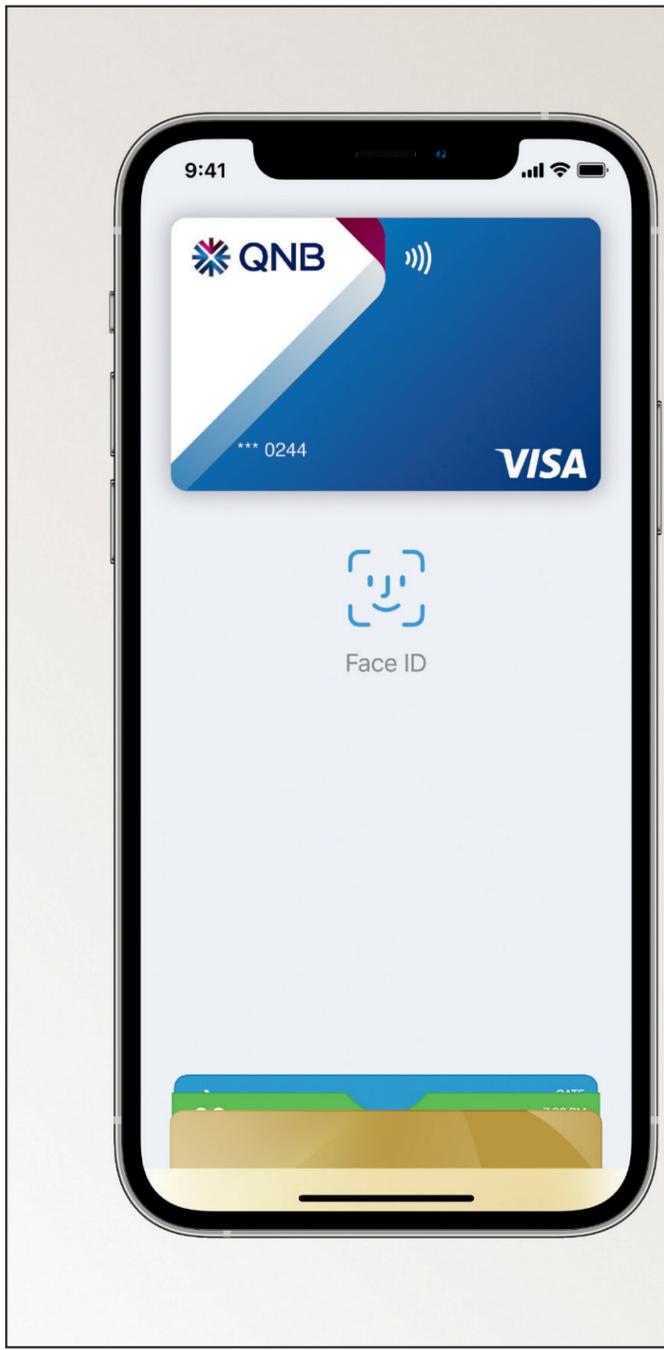
**بوابة الاستثمار INVESTMENT PORTAL**

- Portal offers investment opportunities in food security, sports, tourism, municipal services, and industrial sectors.
- The priority is being given to projects related to environment, sustainability and waste treatment and recycling.

environment for future generations.

The investment opportunities in municipalities will develop services provided by the municipality to preserve and beautify cities and villages.

➔P2



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MAGRIB	06.05 pm
ISHA	07.35 pm



**WEATHER TODAY**

32°C Minimum | 43°C Maximum

Hazy at places at first, becomes hot daytime and humid by night.

- ALRUWAIS : 30° → 37°
- ALKHOR : 31° → 42°
- DUKHAN : 29° → 39°
- WAKRAH : 29° → 43°
- MESAIED : 29° → 43°
- ABUSAMRA : 27° → 44°

HIGH TIDE 03:22 - 16:50  
LOW TIDE 10:38



## Deputy PM, US Undersecretary of State discuss ties

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah, who is currently visiting the United States of America, met with US Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security Affairs Bonnie Jenkins. The meeting dealt with reviewing bilateral cooperation between the two countries and the means to enhance them. The meeting was attended by Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the US H E Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad Al Thani, and a number of ranking officers at the Qatari Armed Forces. H E the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs also met with Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology in the National Security Council at the White House, H E Anne Neuberger. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral cooperation relations between the two countries, and ways to enhance them.

## 201 more recoveries; 190 new virus cases, reports MoPH

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has reported 190 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. Among them 69 were travellers returning from abroad.

A total of 201 people recovered from COVID-19

yesterday, bringing the total number of people recovered in Qatar to 227,197.

Meanwhile, 3,844 COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered in 24 hours, while 4,231,970 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered since the start of the National

COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

Also 92% of the eligible population (12 years and over) have now received at least one dose of the vaccine, whereas 79.8% of the total population has now received at least one dose of the vaccine.

## Qatar receives 48,000 doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar has received 48,000 doses of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca as part of its self-financing agreement with COVAX.

COVAX is a global initiative co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), GAVI (the Vaccines Alliance) and the World Health Organization, which works with governments and manufacturers to accelerate the development, production and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines around the world.

Till date, 1 billion doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine have been released for supply to more than 170 countries and accounts for approximately two thirds of COVAX supply to date.

Dr. Abdullatif Al Khal, the chair of the National Health Strategic Group on COVID-19 and Head of Infectious Diseases at Hamad Medical Corporation, said: "Qatar continues to make good progress in the roll-out of its National COVID-19 Vaccination Program. This recent arrival of AstraZeneca vaccines will contribute to Qatar's supply and enable it to continue delivering its vaccination program at pace.

"The vaccines will be administered to eligible members of Qatar's population as part of the vaccination program which is providing free vaccines to all citizens and residents. This will be an important step to support

**The vaccines will be administered to eligible members of Qatar's population as part of the vaccination program which is providing free vaccines to all citizens and residents. This will be an important step to support Qatar's strategic reserves of vaccine to serve the community.**

**Dr. Abdullatif Al Khal**

Qatar's strategic reserves of vaccine to serve the community. Qatar is a strong supporter of COVAX and is contributing \$20m to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, to aid its mission to accelerate global access to COVID-19 vaccines."

Sameh Elfangary, Country President for GCC and Pakistan, AstraZeneca, said: "I was delighted to see the arrival of further doses of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca to Doha. This is wonderful news for the people of Qatar. On behalf of AstraZeneca, I would like to thank our partners at COVAX for making this possible. All partners are working round the clock to ensure that as many COVID-19 vaccines can get to as many people as soon as possible."

## Ashghal starts construction work on Al Qubib Masjid Plaza project

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The Supervisory Committee of Beautification of Roads and Public Places in Qatar has announced start of implementation of Al Qubib Masjid Plaza project, within the works of third package of development and beautification projects in Central Doha.

The plaza is planned to be completed and opened for public in first quarter (Q1) 2022.

Project Design Manager at the Supervisory Committee, Eng. Laila Jassim Salem said that the design of the plaza is inspired by the elements of Qatari heritage, due to the plaza's location near Al Qubib Masjid at Souq Waqif and the old markets in the area such as Deira Souk, Al Jabr Souk and others.

The design has featured open air Qatari Majlis, a place

of the plaza, leading to it and to the masjid, to be like ornate carpets inspired by the decorations and inscriptions of traditional carpets and outfits.

Eng. Laila added that the plaza has entrances from three sides through the surrounding pedestrian paths on Ali Bin Abdulla Street, Al Jabr Street and Al Ahmad Street. It is also easily accessible from the masjid side.

Project Design Engineer, Eng. Sarah bint Mohammed Al Thani clarified that Al Qubib Masjid is one of the oldest mosques in the region, and the plaza aims to revive the idea of the masjid's classical courtyard, where people would meet after prayer and talk about their daily lives, which encourages communication between individuals in the area, spending a goodtime in the premises of

cosmetic lighting that matches the spirit and design of the plaza and its location near the masjid, in addition to planting a variety of local plants and trees, which contribute to providing shaded areas and giving a distinctive aesthetic appearance to the plaza.

A project engineer in the Doha Central development and beautification projects, Eng. Sarah Al Jassim said that construction works of Al Qubib Masjid Plaza is to be implemented on a total area of about 9,200 square metres, and it includes open green areas extending over an area of up to 1,518 square metres, including seating area. The project works also include the construction of walkways within the park, in addition to fancy lights.

Sheikha bint Yousef Al Jufairi, member of Central Municipal Council (CMC) representing the area commented that Qatar pays great attention to increasing green areas, which positively reflects on healthy environment and its climate, as it contributes to smooth weather and to reducing dust.

She said that the plaza at this remarkable location near Masjid Al Qubib adds beauty and attraction, as it gives people of the area and those who go to the masjid opportunity to spend good times at a location that reflects local identity and a healthy environment.



where people gather to discuss everyday issues. Eng Laila added that the shape of the floors and corridors in the plaza are designed in various shapes and colours, for example, the floors of the main corridors were designed for the visitors

healthy environment.

To increase the aesthetic element of the plaza, water bodies are designed with a distinctive central fountain, surrounded by tiered layers that fit the nature of the sloping land. It will also provide simple

## MME initiative to promote public-private partnership

FROM PAGE 1

In sports sector, it will create a sports environment that contributes to raising awareness of the importance of sport in the country.

The investment opportunities aim at encouraging sustainable development for a range of medium and light

industrial uses in the industrial sector.

The initiative also targets tourism sector for implementing the long-term objectives of the National Tourism Sector Strategy for economic diversification and growth. In public services sector, the investment opportunities aim

at providing public services by maintaining hygiene, waste management, greening and developing public areas in a sustainable manner.

To avail the opportunities, those interested can email the filled form along with all relevant attachments at PMDD@mme.gov.qa

## Qatar evacuates female students and media personnel from Afghanistan

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar will continue the evacuation missions in Afghanistan, said Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on her Twitter account.

In a tweet late Friday, H E Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater added that in the past 72 hours Qatar has evacuated over 300 mostly female students and over 200 media professionals, many of them with their families and kids are now safe in comfortable accommodation in Doha. This came in response to a tweet by CNN Chief International Correspondent Clarissa Ward about 10,000 stuck at Kabul Airport.

Meanwhile, the Government Communications Office (GCO) said in a tweet yesterday: "The Qatar Amiri Air Force has safely evacuated Afghan citizens, students, foreign diplomats, and journalists from Afghanistan. The State of Qatar will spare no



effort to support the Afghan people through diplomacy, dialogue and aid."

British Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa H E James Cleverly on his twitter account thanked Qatar's continued mediation role. "I

was speaking with @Lolwah\_Alkhater earlier about the situation in Afghanistan. I thanked her for Qatar's continued mediation role, and the help they have provided in getting British nationals back to the UK from Kabul," he tweeted.

## HEC Paris in Qatar, QFCA to develop talent and leadership

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

In an effort to create leaders who drive performance, HEC Paris, has entered into a corporate partnership with Qatar Financial Centre Authority (QFCA) to support the creation of a vibrant and efficient business ecosystem in Qatar.

The two entities have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), which will see HEC Paris in Qatar share its expertise and initiate activities to support QFCA's development strategy

including master classes, round table discussions and webinars and leadership development initiatives.

The leading business school will also look to showcase its thought leadership through research and publications focused on topics aligned to QFCA's areas of influence.

The MoU will also allow HEC Paris to offer preferential tuition fees for employees under QFCA enrolled in its degree programs in Qatar including its Executive MBA (EMBA) and its Specialized

Master's in Strategic Business Unit Management (SBUM).

Providing his full support to the partnership with QFCA, Dr. Pablo Martin de Holan, Dean of HEC Paris in Qatar, said: "We are proud to develop high potential men and women who will benefit from HEC Paris' rich and diverse learning environment, helping them be more effective in their roles throughout their careers."

Nasser Al Taweel, Deputy CEO, Chief Legal Officer, and Board Secretary of QFCA, said: "This MoU demonstrates QFCA's commitment to investing in the development of local talent, recognising that human capital is one of the most important assets of Qatar and a necessary foundation in supporting the advancement of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the development of a knowledge-based economy."

"We are grateful for the vote of confidence these major organisations are placing in HEC Paris in Qatar by entrusting us to help train and develop their mid and senior-level executives," said Joshua Kobb, Executive Director, Partnerships & Growth for HEC Paris in Qatar.



HEC Paris in Qatar and Financial Centre Authority officials during the signing of an MoU.



## FM meets UK PM's envoy to Afghanistan

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met yesterday with UK Prime Minister's Envoy to Afghanistan H E Sir Simon Gaas, who is currently visiting the country. The meeting dealt with reviewing bilateral cooperation between the two countries, and the latest security and political developments in Afghanistan. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed during the meeting on the importance of protecting civilians, intensifying efforts to reach a national reconciliation, and working towards a comprehensive political resolution that guarantees a peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan, in line with the gains made by the Afghan people. For his part, Sir Simon Gaas thanked the State of Qatar for its active contribution in the process of evacuating civilians in Afghanistan, and its strong efforts in the peace process in Afghanistan and the region.

## FM receives call from Dutch counterpart

QNA — DOHA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani received a phone call from Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands H E Sigrid Kaag yesterday.

During the phone call, the two sides reviewed the bilateral cooperation between the two

countries, the follow-up of the evacuation process of civilians and the latest security and political developments in Afghanistan.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs underlined the importance of protecting the civilians, and the need to intensify the necessary efforts to achieve the national reconciliation and to seek a comprehensive political

settlement that guarantees a peaceful transfer of power in Afghanistan, in line with the gains made by the Afghan people.

For her part, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands thanked the State of Qatar for its effective contribution to the evacuation of civilians in Afghanistan, and its unremitting efforts in the peace process in the region.

## QNL signs MoU with National Library of Korea

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar National Library (QNL) recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Library of Korea (NLK) to promote knowledge and learning through cultural exchanges and events.

Both libraries will work together to enhance research projects for the wider communities that they serve. The collaboration includes the exchange of educational, research and

publication materials, as well as knowledge and cultural exchange programmes and event participation. The libraries will work on mutual areas of common interest, including scientific, technical and cultural cooperation. The MoU was signed between Dr. Kawari and Dr. Hye Ran Suh, Chief Executive at the NLK.

Minister of State, Qatar and President of Qatar National Library, H E Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al Kawari said, "Knowledge is for all, and the NLK

is a knowledge treasure trove. The Library is on a mission to create positive influence through an exceptional environment for learning and discovery, and we are pleased to collaborate with the NLK to develop research projects that will enhance the knowledge of the wider communities. This collaboration is a testament to our commitment to provide our members with a comprehensive educational platform spanning countries and cultures."

## Education Ministry honours 47 from Al Rowad for Volunteer Work

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education represented by Private Education Affairs Sector, honoured 47 volunteers from Al Rowad for Volunteer Work in appreciation of their efforts in monitoring the precautionary and preventive measures taken by kindergartens and private schools to curb COVID-19 during the last academic year.

They were honoured in a ceremony held at headquarters of Scout and Guide Association of Qatar.

The event was attended by Commissioner General of Scouts and Guide Association of Qatar Jassim Mohammed Al Hardan; President of Al Rowad for Voluntary Work Dr. Youssef Ali Al Kadhimi and Director of Private Schools Affairs Department Rashid Ahmed Al Amiri.

Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Omar Abdel Aziz Al Naama presented certificates of thanks and



Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Omar Abdel Aziz Al Naama honouring a volunteer during a ceremony.

appreciation to the volunteers. Al Rowad for Voluntary Work has been also presented the Ministry's shield and a certificate of appreciation, praising its role and following up on the accomplishment of the tasks they were entrusted with.

Addressing the event, Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs Omar Abdulaziz Al Naama lauded the volunteers' efforts in assisting the Private Schools

Department in following the precautionary and preventive measures in private schools and kindergartens to curb the pandemic.

"The Ministry found that the volunteers excelled in accomplishing the required tasks. I felt great sincerity and dedication in following up every small and big thing, and they valued their concern for the safety of our students in schools," said Al Naama.

Director of the Private Schools Affairs Rashid Ahmed Al Ameri lauded the role of volunteers, explaining that their roles were complementary to the roles of management advisers, and they contributed to monitoring and following up on precautionary measures in more than 325 kindergartens and private schools.

Chairman of Al Rowad for Voluntary Work, Dr. Youssef Ali Al Kadhimi, praised the efforts of the volunteers and staff of the Private Schools Affairs Department in following up on the implementation of precautionary and preventive measures by private educational institutions against coronavirus.

He stressed that the good reputation of Al Rowad volunteers and their passion for serving others as volunteering increased their demand among various institutions and authorities, and now they will also participate in the constituencies' headquarters for the Shura Council elections, which reflects their great capabilities and qualifications.

## RACA marks World Humanitarian Day

QNA — DOHA

The Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities (RACA) celebrated the World Humanitarian Day which falls on August 19 each year, in the presence of RACA officials, representatives of Qatar Charity and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), and partners in the humanitarian work.

The celebration this year highlights the direct impact of climate emergency on the most vulnerable people of the world, raises awareness of their problems, and supports the efforts to deal with climate change.

It also commemorates the aid and other workers who were killed while working for humanitarian causes.

In a press conference held on the occasion, Director of Licensing and International Cooperation Departments at RACA Dr. Mohammed Salah stressed the importance of marking the World Humanitarian Day, highlighting a purpose of the United Nations Charter which stipulates to

achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character.

He noted that the press conference aimed at highlighting the unremitting efforts of Qatar through the Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities and the state charitable institutions in the field of international cooperation, humanitarian development, response to crises and humanitarian disasters, addressing climate change, and strengthening partnership with international bodies and United Nations institutions to coordinate humanitarian action.

He said that the Qatari humanitarian and charitable work has made many achievements based on the leading Qatari role in this field, to become a prominent mark in humanitarian and charitable work regionally and globally. This enabled Qatari charities to gain the trust of the international community and international humanitarian and charitable organisations.

## Ooredoo Group leads the way in developing agile digital working culture

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

In a move that continues its recent pilot initiative to adopt and support a more agile digital corporate culture, Ooredoo Group has confirmed a raft of changes to its working practices that will be in effect from September.

Results of the trial will be evaluated by the end of the year, when Ooredoo's management will decide if these changes will become permanent.

This comes as part of the company's continuous efforts to reinforce and live its core values of caring and connecting, which are guiding every initiative across all the Group's operations.

Having carefully analysed

the impact of workplace changes enforced by the pandemic situation, learned from the invaluable experiences gained and listened to feedback from Ooredoo family members, the company made the strategic decision to continue the pilot initiative with the aim of leveraging insights gained to further develop a more agile, modern digital working culture and create greater competitive advantage for the Group.

A leader in technology and innovation within telecommunications, and an employer of choice in the industry, Ooredoo Group is one of the first in Qatar to implement such changes with the aim of permanently changing its working environment. The planned changes include an option to work from



Chief Human Resources Officer, Ooredoo Group, Fatima Sultan Al Kuwari

home two days a week; flexibility in daily working hours; and the opportunity to extend working hours at the start of the week to enable a shorter working day on Thursday.

With the Group's

headquarters in Doha and its ten operating companies spread across its global footprint as far away as Algeria and Indonesia, a key factor driving the changes was a real need for flexibility due to the diverse time zones.

Differences of up to four hours could previously mean potential issues with alignment of working hours, and the Group's decision to implement greater flexibility is intended to facilitate more effective operations and enable a better work/life integration and balance.

Group Chief Human Resources Officer at Ooredoo Group Fatima Sultan Al Kuwari said: "While the pandemic situation necessitated many of the changes with which we are now working, the extension of our pilot initiative is driven by

overall market and industry development and our aim of capitalising on recent experience gained to create greater competitive advantage for our business.

"The adoption and development of a more agile, modern, digital working culture aligns with our strategy — a forward-thinking, future-proof strategy devised long before the pandemic hit — of complete digitalisation and of ensuring our organisational culture is fast-moving, innovative, efficient and imaginative enough to stay ahead of the demand curve."

The changes to working practice will continue until the end of December, when impact will be reviewed in order to decide on further implementation and permanency.

## Fourth edition of Qatari Success Festival to begin on Thursday

QNA — DOHA

The fourth edition of Qatari Success Festival will kick off on Thursday at Qatar National Convention Center, the Festival's Organizing Committee announced yesterday.

The festival will be held till August 28 in the framework of the activities of Doha Capital of Culture in the Islamic World 2021.

At a press conference, the Organizing Committee stressed the keenness on adhering to all COVID-19 precautionary measures, in accordance with the measures announced by the Ministry of Public Health, noting that all attendees must have received two doses of the vaccine.

The festival aims at highlighting the most successful experiences of Qatari influential and distinguished people in all fields, and allowing an opportunity for meeting between officials and the public by organising dialogue meetings attended by general managers, chief executives and directors of departments in various state institutions.

Head of the Organizing Committee Faisal Khalid Al Otaibi revealed that this year's edition will include many events and surprises, explaining that the festival will feature seven meetings cover various areas, including the "decision-makers meeting" which will host a number of officials to talks about their success stories.

## City Center Doha opens 30 new shops

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

In its aim to take part in the wave of revolution and success the country is undergoing, City Center Doha mall kick-starts the year with opening a trail of new shops that were hand-picked to serve the mall's visitors' needs and wants.

Being in the center of Doha and known for its long history in providing inclusive family-oriented experience for its visitors, 30 top-notch brands chose City Center Doha mall to become the home of their shops since January 2021 until now. The list of new shops was carefully chosen by the mall to deliver a variety of brands for the visitors and satisfy their day-to-day requirement and meet their lifestyle. The list has included several international and local brands from home furnishing, clothing shops to sports outlets and restaurants.

To name a few, the shops are English

Home, Adidas, Levi's, H&M, Brands, Red Tag, iSpot, Chef Al Fareej, Acai Vibes, Khosan Thai, Wok Wok, South Street Burger, Dairy Queen, Jollibee, Axa Insurance, Lovisa, Beauty Box, Kulud Pharmacy, Delft Blue, Abdul Samad Al Qureshi and more.

Commenting on it, Director of City Center Doha, Baris Sezen, said: "We are committed to deliver a comprehensive retail experience for the mall's visitors and guests, whether they are new in town, or have been here for a while, whether they are single or with their families, we strive to provide them with their day-to-day requirements and a home-away-from-home experience. Our commitment for developing the mall is ongoing and we promise our visitors that more is yet to come."

City Center Doha provides a wide variety of famous international, regional



A view of some newly opened shops at City Center Doha.

and local retail brands and services, spread across the five floors. It also features a range of family-oriented offerings which include a 14-screen cinema complex, more than 38 restaurants and a family

entertainment center. Visitors also have the chance to witness a range of spectacular functions, variety of shows, and seasonal events and activities targeting different age groups.

# Turkey administers 88 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines

ANADOLU — ANKARA

Turkey has administered more than 88 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines since launching a mass immunisation campaign in January, according to official figures on Friday.

According to the Health Ministry, over 45.6 million people have received a first dose and more than 34.8 million are now fully vaccinated.

Turkey has also given third booster shots to over 7.5 million people.

The data showed that 73.52% of the country's adult population has received at least one dose of a two-shot vaccine.

The ministry also confirmed 19,918 new infections and 204 coronavirus-related deaths in the last 24 hours, while as many as 15,561 more patients recovered.

"We have losses. The pandemic is untimely separating us from our loved ones. We must be careful and cautious. We will succeed with the vaccine," Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said on Twitter.

Turkey on Monday expanded its intensive vaccination campaign to include

**Over 45.6 million people have received at least the first dose, while more than 34.8 million are now fully vaccinated.**

everyone aged 15 and above, as well as children at least 12 years old who have a chronic disease.

A fourth dose of an mRNA vaccine is administered on demand for nationals who were previously given two doses of an inactive vaccine plus one dose of an mRNA but traveling to countries that only allow foreigners who had two doses of an mRNA jab, according to the Health Ministry.

People who have contracted COVID-19 will also be eligible for vaccination a month after recovery, as opposed to the previous period of three months.

Since December 2019, the pandemic has claimed over 4.4 million lives in 192 countries and regions, with more than 210.24 million cases reported worldwide, according to the US' Johns Hopkins University.



## Japan foreign minister visits Iraq

Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi elbow bumps his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein in Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday.

## Turkish president, Greek premier discuss Afghanistan, migration

ANADOLU — ANKARA

The president of Turkey and premier of Greece on Friday discussed recent developments in Afghanistan and the issue of migration in a phone call.

Turkey's Communications Directorate said in a statement that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis voiced their hopes for a smooth transition

in Afghanistan as the war-torn country is once again going through a critical period.

Unless a transition period is ensured, migration pressures which had already reached high levels, will present a serious challenge for all, Erdogan told Mitsotakis, said the statement.

The Turkish president also underlined that the new government to be founded in Afghanistan should be inclusive

and reflect the diversity of the Afghan people.

Taliban insurgents seized control of Afghanistan after taking Kabul on August 15, with the president and other top officials leaving the country.

The unexpected developments have triggered a rush to flee Afghanistan, including civilians who assisted foreign soldiers or groups and now fear Taliban retribution.

## Kenya court upholds order to halt president's constitutional changes

REUTERS — NAIROBI

Kenya's Court of Appeal has upheld a decision to stop President Uhuru Kenyatta from making broad constitutional changes, limiting his ability to prevent his estranged deputy from succeeding him next year.

The proposed amendments, popularly known as the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), would have been the biggest change to governance since a new constitution in 2010.

The court upheld a High Court decision in May that declared the proposed reforms illegal on the basis that Kenyatta acted unconstitutionally.

"The days of (an) unaccountable presidency are long gone," said Patrick Kiage, one of the appellate judges, rejecting the government's appeal.

The BBI has served as a lightning rod for the rhetoric of politicians jostling ahead of a general election due in August 2022. Kenyatta and Deputy President William Ruto have fallen out and they and their supporters are at odds over the proposals.

"I don't see the need to change the constitution," said Mwangi Kiunjuri, a Ruto backer who was sacked from the Cabinet by Kenyatta early last year. Kenyatta argued that the constitutional overhaul would promote power sharing among competing ethnic groups and was not intended to deny anyone the presidency.

The proposed amendments would have created 70 new constituencies and establish several powerful new posts: a prime minister, two deputies



Kenyan police officers detain a protester during the ruling of the Building Bridges Initiatives (BBI) case, at the Court of Appeal in Nairobi, Kenya, on Friday.

and an official leader of the parliamentary opposition.

Ruto's Kalenjin ethnic community teamed up with

Kenyatta's Kikuyu in the last two elections to defeat former Prime Minister Raila Odinga from the Luo, another large

ethnic group. The amendments are partly designed to tame Ruto's political ambitions to succeed Kenyatta by making it possible to weave an alliance against him, according to anti-graft campaigner John Githongo.

Ruto has been campaigning vigorously to inherit Kenyatta's Kikuyu voting bloc in the central region, some of whom have embraced his message.

"We don't want BBI... This is about politicians and their search for power," said Beatrice Kagure, a college student in the central town of Nyeri.

To win support for his reform drive, Kenyatta proposes to more than double county governments' allocation to 35% of the budget, to spread more resources to the grassroots.

## COVID-19 situation in Iraq dangerous: PM

QNA — BAGHDAD

Prime Minister of Iraq Mustafa Al Kadhimi has

described the public health situation in the country as dangerous, as a result of the spread of COVID-19. He

stressed the importance of adhering to precautionary measures to limit the spread of the virus.

## Ex-head of Tunisia's anti-graft panel says he's under house arrest

REUTERS — TUNIS

The former head of Tunisia's Anti-Corruption Committee has been placed under house arrest, he said on Facebook on Friday, hours after security forces took control of the commission's headquarters.

Chaouki Tabib was the head of the independent authority from 2016 until he was dismissed by former Prime Minister Elyes Fakhfakh in 2020.

"A security patrol stationed in front of my house informed me that a decision was issued to place me under house arrest... in violation of my right guaranteed by law and the constitution," Tabib said on Facebook.

Tunisian President Kais Saied, an anti-corruption independent, last month dismissed the prime minister, froze parliament and

assumed executive authority in a sudden intervention that his opponents have labelled a coup.

The move won widespread popular support, but also raised concerns among some Tunisians about the future of the democratic system that the country adopted after its 2011 revolution that triggered the Arab Spring.

Earlier on Friday, security forces cordoned off the headquarters of the Anti-Corruption Committee and evacuated its employees, in what appears to be an attempt by the authority to protect any corruption files.

Saied, who was elected in a landslide in 2019 vowing to stand up against graft, has said gangs involved in corruption in all sectors must be held accountable. Last week, officials in the phosphate industry were arrested over suspected corruption.



## Anti-vaccine protest

Anti-vaccine protesters hold placards a day after the country opened COVID-19 vaccinations for everyone 18 years old and above, outside Groote Schuur hospital in Cape Town, South Africa, yesterday.

## IN BRIEF

### Morocco wants strong ties with Spain: King

RABAT: Morocco is keen to strengthen ties with Spain after a rift between the two countries this spring, Moroccan King Mohammed said on Friday, though he added the crisis had shaken mutual trust.

"We are keen today to strengthen (ties) bearing in mind the need for a common understanding of the two nations' interests," he said in a speech.

However, he added that Morocco would not accept "that its best interests be trampled on".

This "unprecedented crisis ... shook mutual trust and raised many questions as to their future," said the king, noting that the two countries have discussed bilateral ties since the crisis.

Morocco looks forward to "usher in a new, unprecedented phase in the relations between the two countries, on the basis of trust, transparency, mutual respect and the fulfilment of obligations," he said.

Spain is Morocco's largest trading partner and the two countries have cooperated closely to stem illegal migration.

The king also said that Morocco's relations with France are "solid." The monarch also defended Morocco's security services and other national institutions against what he called a "full-fledged campaign" to tarnish their image. — Reuters

### Lebanon treasury to bear cost of fuel subsidies

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun said the government treasury will bear the cost of the continuation of fuel subsidies that was decided yesterday.

The central bank said earlier that the government had decided to raise the exchange rate used to price fuel to 8,000 pounds to the dollar from the previous level of 3,900 to the dollar, effectively increasing fuel prices.

The new exchange rate set for fuel imports remains, however, below the market rate of about 19,000 pounds to the dollar, which means a continuation of a policy to subsidise fuel, albeit by a small amount. — Reuters

### Millions face water shortages in Lebanon

BEIRUT: More than 4 million people in Lebanon could face a critical shortage of water or be cut off completely in the coming days, Unicef warned, due to a severe fuel crisis.

Lebanon, with a population of 6 million, is at a low point in a two-year financial meltdown. "Vital facilities such as hospitals and health centres have been without access to safe water due to electricity shortages, putting lives at risk," Unicef Executive Director Henrietta Fore said.

"If four million people are forced to resort to unsafe and costly sources of water, public health and hygiene will be compromised, and Lebanon could see an increase in waterborne diseases, in addition to the surge in COVID-19 cases," she said, urging the formation of a new government to tackle the crisis. — Reuters

### Saudi Arabia reports 11 COVID-19 deaths

RIYADH: Saudi Ministry of Health announced yesterday 409 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of infections in the Kingdom to 541,610.

The Ministry also reported 11 new deaths, putting the tally of fatalities at 8,469.

Meanwhile, as many as 710 cases have recovered, raising recoveries toll to 527,899, while the number of active cases reached 5242, including 1162 critical cases. — QNA

### QATARGAS OPERATING COMPANY LTD Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/RTO/5326/21 RLTO WASTE HANDLING AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES	11/08/2021 to 06/09/2021	0	500,000	13/09/2021

#### Scope of Work:

Contractor shall provide manpower, equipment, vacuum tanker, super sucker etc to collect, transport and dispose of different types of waste materials within Qatargas site and/or offsite locations for a duration of five (5) years.

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

#### Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:

ITT document for this tender will be available in Qatargas website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the Qatargas online platform (SMART by GEP).



# Crowds grow at Kabul airport; Taliban cofounder to meet leaders

REUTERS — KABUL

The United States advised Americans in Afghanistan to avoid travelling to Kabul airport yesterday, citing security risks as thousands gathered trying to flee the country almost a week after Taliban took control.

Crowds have grown at the airport in the heat and dust of the day over the last week, with mothers, fathers and children pushed up against concrete blast walls in the crush as they plead for their families to be allowed to leave.

The Taliban have urged those without travel documents to go home. At least 12 people have been killed in and around the single runway airfield since Sunday, Nato and Taliban officials said.

"Because of potential security threats outside the gates at the Kabul airport, we are advising US citizens to avoid travelling to the airport and to avoid airport gates at this time unless you receive individual instructions from a US

government representative to do so," a US Embassy advisory said.

A senior US military official said there had been short periods in the last 24 hours when the gates to Kabul airport have been closed, but no reported change in the "enemy" situation in and around the airfield.

A Taliban official said security risks could not be ruled out but that the group was "aiming to improve the situation and provide a smooth exit" for people trying to leave over the weekend.

The Taliban are still trying to hammer out a new government and the group's cofounder, Mullah Baradar, arrived in Kabul for talks with other leaders yesterday.

Switzerland postponed a charter flight from Kabul because of the chaos at the airport.

"The security situation around Kabul airport has worsened significantly in the last hours. A large number of

**At least 12 people have been killed in and around the single runway airfield since Sunday, Nato and Taliban officials said.**

people in front of the airport and sometimes violent confrontations are hindering access to the airport," the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

The United States had evacuated 2,500 Americans from Kabul over the past week, senior US officials said yesterday, adding that Washington was fighting against "time and space" to evacuate people from Afghanistan.

The Taliban official said the group planned to ready a new model for governing Afghanistan within the next few weeks, with separate teams to tackle internal security and financial issues.

"Experts from the former



US Marines provide assistance during evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport, in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Friday.

government will be brought in for crisis management," he said.

The new government structure would not be a

democracy by Western definitions, but "it will protect everyone's rights", the official added.

Baradar will meet militant

commanders, former government leaders and policy makers, as well as religious scholars among others, the official said.

## Hundreds arrested during Australia lockdown protests

AP — SYDNEY

More than 250 people who were protesting coronavirus lockdowns in Australia were arrested yesterday and many faced fines for defying health orders, authorities said.

At least seven police officers were treated for injuries after skirmishes broke out at some of the protests, which took place in multiple cities nationwide. The largest and most violent protest was in Melbourne. Many were organised by people in encrypted online chat groups.

Sydney has been in lockdown for two months, while Melbourne and the capital, Canberra, went into lockdown earlier this month. Under the rules of the lockdown, people are mostly confined to their homes and have limits placed on their social interactions.

Despite those measures, Sydney's New South Wales state reported a record 825 new daily community infections on Saturday. Several cities are battling outbreaks of the highly contagious delta variant. Protestors say the lockdowns should end, but authorities say they are necessary to suppress the spread of the virus and save lives.

In Melbourne, a crowd of about 4,000 mostly unmasked protesters let off flares, yelled and blasted music in the central city. Victoria state police arrested 218 people and issued more than 200 fines, each for more than 5,400 Australian dollars (\$3,850).

Six Victoria state police officers were hospitalized and three people remained in custody for allegedly assaulting police. Officers used pepper spray on several people, saying they were left with no choice. In New South Wales state, police said they arrested 47 people and fined more than 260 in relation to protests across the state.

# Malaysia's new PM takes office amid mounting health crisis

REUTERS — KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia swore in a new prime minister, Ismail Sabri Yaakob, yesterday as the Southeast Asian nation battles its worst COVID-19 surge and public anger grows over mismanagement of the pandemic.

The appointment of Ismail Sabri, 61, restores the role to a party tainted by graft accusations, after he secured a parliamentary majority from the same alliance that collapsed this week and replaced Muhyiddin Yassin.

Ismail Sabri, formerly Muhyiddin's deputy, was sworn in at the national palace after being picked by King Al Sultan Abdullah, the constitutional monarch.

He took the oath of office in front of the monarch and other coalition leaders, including



Malaysia's new Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob receives a document from King Al Sultan Abdullah during his inauguration at National Palace in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, yesterday.

former prime minister Najib Razak. King Al Sultan Abdullah

has previously said the new prime minister would have to

face a confidence vote in parliament to prove his majority.

Ismail Sabri starts his job at a time when Malaysia's infections and deaths relative to population rank as southeast Asia's highest. An online petition started this week drew 350,000 signatories opposing Ismail Sabri's appointment, citing his handling of the pandemic.

Friday's 23,564 cases were a record for a third straight day, taking the tally beyond 1.5 million.

Public anger has grown as infections spread despite multiple extended lockdowns and ramped up vaccinations. Since last month, Malaysians in need have hoisted white flags at their homes to seek public help.

Although Malaysia escaped the worst of the pandemic last year, a regional election led to a steady spike in infections

since the fourth quarter of 2020, with the Delta variant worsening the situation in recent months.

Flip-flops on lockdown measures, failure to act against politicians who violated rules and months of politicking have soured the public.

The pandemic has also dampened economic growth, with the central bank slashing its 2021 forecast twice this year.

With Ismail Sabri in office the post is being returned to the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which governed for more than six decades since independence, but was defeated in a 2018 election over a scandal at state fund IMDB.

He becomes Malaysia's third prime minister since the 2018 election, after UMNO pulled its backing for Muhyiddin last month.

## IN BRIEF

### South Korea sees 50% population fully vaccinated by end-September

SEOUL: South Korea expects half of its population to be fully inoculated by the end of September as the pace of vaccinations in the country picks up.

"The progress is faster than expected," President Moon Jae-in wrote in a Facebook post yesterday. "Over 50% of the population has now received their first vaccine dose, and the pace of them receiving their second shots is quickening." Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum has said that the government was looking at various ways, such as cross-inoculation with other companies, in order to reach a 70% first-shot vaccination rate by the end of September, and potentially a 70% rate for second shots by the end of October or at least mid-November. Currently, 22.3% of the population have been fully vaccinated, according to the Korea Disease Control & Prevention Agency. — *Bloomberg*

### Indonesia moves Afghan diplomatic mission to Pakistan

JAKARTA: Indonesia has moved its Afghanistan diplomatic mission from Kabul to Pakistan, its foreign minister said yesterday, after its air force evacuated dozens in the wake of the Taliban's seizure of power.

"Temporarily, the diplomatic mission in Kabul will be done from Islamabad," Retno Marsudi said in televised remarks at the Halim military airport in Jakarta.

The initial plan had been to "continue our diplomatic mission in Kabul with a small team" but changed due to a "new development", which she did not specify.

Four Indonesian diplomats in the Pakistan-based mission will assess the situation in Afghanistan daily to determine next steps, she said. — *Reuters*

# India approves DNA-based COVID-19 shot

BLOOMBERG — NEW DELHI

India has granted emergency-use approval to its first DNA-based vaccine against COVID-19 as the world's second-worst-hit nation seeks to bolster its immunisation drive to ward off a possible third wave of infections.

A three-dose vaccine developed by Ahmedabad-based Cadila Healthcare Ltd., which had reported 67% efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19 in clinical trials in July, was given the go-ahead on Friday, the government said in a statement. This is the second indigenously-developed shot to receive approval.

The shot, which Cadila claims works against newer strains, including the highly-infectious Delta variant, adds

to the country's arsenal in fighting the virus. COVID-19 has so far sickened more than 32.3 million in the South Asian nation and killed almost 434,000, especially during a devastating second wave a few months back. Speedier inoculations — known to reduce hospitalisation and deaths — are key to averting future virus waves in the densely-populated country.

The shot is "the world's first and India's indigenously developed DNA-based vaccine for COVID-19 to be administered in humans including children and adults 12 years and above," Cadila said in a statement. It also plans to seek approval for a two-dose regimen of the vaccine and make a 100-120 million doses annually.

India, which has fully vaccinated only 9% of its population, has now approved six vaccines. Two of them from AstraZeneca Plc and one from Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Ltd. are already widely in use. Russia's Sputnik V has been administered in small numbers, while shots from Johnson & Johnson and Moderna Inc. aren't being used as the makers continue to negotiate for legal indemnity.

Unlike traditional vaccines, Cadila's ZyCoV-D is a plasmid DNA vaccine that introduces a DNA sequence encoding the antigen in the body and not a weakened form of the pathogen. Tokyo-based AnGes Inc. and the US's Inovio Pharmaceuticals Inc. are among other companies working on DNA-based vaccines.

## Extra-low voltage and current systems

Nowadays, we see more and more enterprises invest in extra-low voltage (ELV) and current systems. These systems are energy and cost efficient and implementing them into what is called a "smart building" promotes both sustainability and interconnectivity within the infrastructure. It comes as no surprise that airports around the world are, too, beginning to incorporate the ELV systems into their construction. Hamad International Airport is no exception, having been supplied by the Bayanat Engineering group with Extra-low voltage and current systems.

"So, where exactly are these systems used?" one might ask. Spoiler: the employment of the ELV stretches across a number of sectors in the airport framework. It covers anything from security and communications to air conditioning to cell phone and wireless distribution - and these are only a few examples! But before exploring some of uses, let us first explain what Extra-low voltage and current systems are.

### Explaining ELV and low current systems

Extra-low voltage and current systems are put in places where a risk of an electricity-related hazard may occur. This, of course, implies a plethora of different infrastructure within an airport. In engineering, a device using the ELV system is one that operates in the range of 50 Volts alternative current (V a.c.) and 120 Volts direct current (V d.c.). Special isolating transformers deliver power to these devices through their secondary windings (coils that carry energy at the transformed voltage to the appliance). The secondary, as well as the primary windings' insulation is known for its high impulse withstand levels. In fact, the distance between the live elements (carrying the electrical current to the appliances) in an extra-low voltage system has to at least correspond to that of the two windings.

### The various uses of ELV in an airport

Now that the technical side of things is laid out, let us dive into the application of these structures. As previously stated, they are used in a variety of sectors around the aerodrome. Here are a few notable areas of their implementation:

#### Safety and security

Let us start with the most important — the safety of anyone present on the airport grounds. In previous articles, we have discussed the many security systems that are put in place in airports around the world. Extra-low voltage and current systems are also used in devices, tailored to ensure protection of the airport visitors. Namely, they are installed in the fire alarm and fire suppression infrastructure. These are programmed to immediately alert the airport staff about any emergency development within and without the building, while, at the same time, ensuring the overall safety of the aerodrome.

It is important to know that the airport data centres, that store customer information, and therefore have to be efficiently and carefully



Airports and Beyond

operated and protected at all times, also rely on the ELV set-up.

#### Communications and information

The information-communications sector is highly reliant on the system, too. For instance, ELV is used in command-and-control rooms, wayfinding, as well as in public announcements and messages that one could constantly hear at an airport, as a part of the Public address and voice alarm system (PA/VA). You might have guessed that it is also used in the digital signage and video walls, such as the electronic signboards that display arrival and departure times, or the baggage claim information. Video boards could also be used for a better visibility of information (due to their size), as well as for airport advertising. You might have seen one projecting right in front of the famous Lamp Bear, a landmark of the Hamad International Airport.

Another communications sector where the



ELV is used is the satellite and master antenna TV systems, such as that in Hamad International Airport.

#### Timing and smooth operating of the airport systems

ELV is also used in devices and infrastructure that are responsible for maintaining efficient functioning of the various airport sectors and systems; such devices include master clocks. These could be describes as "directing" parts of the synchronised airport clock network, relaying timing signals to the "slave" clocks. Building management systems (BMS) also operate on ELV.

As we have seen, airports become increasingly reliant on extra-low voltage and current systems, as more and more devices are developed to operate on these structures. For more information on airport and navigation solutions visit the website of Bayant engineering at bayanatenengineering.com

# EU warns Taliban it hasn't recognised their regime

AP — MADRID

The European Union's top officials warned the Taliban yesterday that the current conversations being held to secure the exit of as many Afghan evacuees as possible do not mean the bloc is prepared to recognise the new regime.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen acknowledged the necessity of continuing to engage with the Taliban during her visit, along with EU Council President Charles Michel, to a reception centre for evacuees established by Spain near Madrid.

"We do have operational contacts with the Taliban in this moment of crisis, because we need to discuss in these difficult times how we can facilitate it for people in Kabul to come to the airport," the EU leader said. "But this is completely distinct and separated from political talks. There are no political talks with the Taliban and there is no recognition of the Taliban."

She also said the continuance of European humanitarian aid to Afghanistan will hinge on the Taliban respecting

**European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen acknowledged the necessity of continuing to engage with the Taliban during her visit, along with EU Council President Charles Michel, to a reception centre for evacuees near Madrid.**

human rights, especially for women and girls.

"We hear the Taliban statement that stresses that women will have their right place in society and have the right to study and work, within the framework of Islam, whatever that means. But we also hear more and more reports of people being hunted down for their past work or opinions, and we hear of women being turned away when they show up at their

usual workplace," she said. "The €1bn set aside by the European Union for the next seven years for development aid is tied to strict conditions: respect for human rights, good treatment of minorities, and respect for the rights of women and girls."

The EU's top officials toured the facility at the Torrejón military airbase along with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who said it can hold 800 people.

Two planes sent by Spain to Kabul have already arrived at the air base. One brought back five Spaniards and 48 Afghans who had worked for Spain and their families. A second arrived late Friday with 110 more Afghans. A third flight with another 110 passengers has left Kabul for Dubai, which Spain is using as a stop-off point before the evacuees are flown to Madrid.

The air base is also receiving flights from the European Union with other Afghan evacuees. All are expected to spend up to three days there before moving to welcome centres elsewhere in Spain or going to other European countries.

Sánchez said the response



President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Council Charles Michel, and Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez attend a news conference at Torrejon Air Base in Torrejon de Ardoz, near Madrid, Spain, yesterday.

from other EU members has been positive and that some Afghan evacuees have already left for other EU countries.

Von der Leyen said EU staff is talking with American and Nato officials on the problem but also working "on the ground" in Kabul.

"It is a very difficult situation, it is changing by the minute, but there is intense

work being done to make the best of a very difficult situation," she said.

Von der Leyen, however, also urged international community to help those Afghans who will remain. She said the collapse of the Nato-backed democracy and the return of the Taliban to power has provoked the displacement of almost 3.7 million people.

Many European nations also fear another wave of migration similar to the one in 2015 provoked by Syrian's civil war.

"We must help ensure that displaced Afghans can return to their homes or at least have a prospect, whether they are currently in Afghanistan or in neighboring countries," she said.

## EU neighbours rebuke Belarus for migrant surge

REUTERS — WARSAW

The leaders of Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia came together yesterday to condemn Belarus for allowing migrants to illegally cross its borders into the European Union.

"All European Union member states have a duty to protect borders and to stop illegal entries," read a Polish government statement published after a videoconference of the countries' prime ministers.

In recent weeks, Lithuania has reported a surge in illegal border crossings from Belarus and accused Minsk of flying in migrants from abroad and dispatching them into the EU.

Earlier this month, Poland accused Belarus of sending a growing number of migrants over the border in retaliation for Warsaw's decision to give refuge to Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, a Belarusian athlete who refused to return home from the Tokyo Olympics.

Belarus officials did not immediately respond to a

request for comment.

Polish authorities have faced criticism from human rights groups for not accepting migrants, and for denying those at the border adequate medical care.

A read-out of the videoconference, circulated by the Polish Prime Minister's Chancellery, stated that all illegal migrants had been cared for appropriately.

"It's important to underline that those who did in fact cross the border are being cared for in special sites for this purpose," the statement read.

More than 30 migrants have been camping out in the forest along Poland's border with Belarus near the village of Usnarz Gorne for almost two weeks, Polish media reports say.

Poland's border guard was seen unrolling barbed wire along the border, footage from private broadcaster TVN showed.

Poland's Border Guard said in a tweet published Friday that it had already asked Belarusian authorities three times to intervene and that Belarus said it was doing so.

## Merkel's bloc steps up German election fight amid poll sag

AP — BERLIN

Chancellor Angela Merkel's would-be successor pledged yesterday to "fight with everything that I can" for victory in Germany's September 26 election, as the long-time leader's center-right bloc kicked off its official campaign amid a worrying sag in its poll ratings.

Merkel joined Armin Laschet, a state governor and leader of her Christian Democratic Union party, to appeal to voters to extend the party's long run in the chancellery. Laschet is running to succeed Merkel after her 16 years in office.

They both spoke at a rally in Berlin, with only a small crowd because of coronavirus restrictions, as recent polls have shown support for the Union bloc slipping as low as 23% — leaving it only a few points ahead of the center-left Social Democrats and the environmentalist Greens.

The polls also have shown dismal personal popularity ratings for Laschet, even as Social Democratic rival Olaf Scholz — the vice chancellor in

Merkel's coalition government — has gained ground.

Merkel announced in 2018 that she wouldn't seek a fifth term as chancellor. The Union took 32.9% of the vote in the last election, in 2017. In its best result under Merkel, the bloc won 41.5% in 2013.

Laschet assailed left-wing rivals, arguing that they plan tax increases that would risk strangling the economy even as it recovers from the pandemic and questioning how reliable they are on foreign policy matters.

He stressed the Union's law-and-order credentials and insisted that offering economic incentives rather than banning things is the best way to combat climate change without damaging industry.

"We will fight — I will fight with everything that I can — so that this country is not taken over by ideologues, so that we have the opportunity to implement our ideas for this modern Germany," Laschet said.

"That is what we are fighting for. We will give everything we can, we will make

the differences with the others clear. Who governs is fundamental. We want to govern."

Laschet is a centrist figure in Merkel's mold but doesn't appear so far to have inspired voters or to have impressed people with his management of the severe floods that hit his state, North Rhine-Westphalia — Germany's most populous — last month.

While Laschet has declined comment on the recent poll ratings, his rival for the nomination to succeed Merkel as chancellor has shown signs of impatience with the Union's campaign. Laschet emerged victorious from a battle in April with Markus Soeder, the head of the CDU's Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union.

In a speech at yesterday's rally, Soeder stressed that a centre-right win next month wasn't assured. He said the Union faces its most difficult campaign since 1998, when then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl — Merkel's one-time mentor — lost power and "the trend at the moment isn't heading steeply upward."

### IN BRIEF

#### Russia pledges retaliation after US sanctions

MOSCOW: Moscow pledged retaliatory measures after a new set of sanctions imposed by the United States on a Russian ship and two companies involved in the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, Russia's foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday.

The \$11bn project, which will double the existing Nord Stream pipeline across the Baltic Sea and allow Russia to bypass Ukraine when piping gas to Europe, has been a focal point of tensions between Moscow and Washington.

Washington imposed the sanctions on Friday on a ship, its owner and a construction company, but opponents of the project said the measures were insufficient to stop it. — Reuters

#### French health pass in full use, protests continue

PARIS: Thousands marched yesterday in cities across France to protest the COVID-19 health pass that is now required to access restaurants and cafes, cultural venues, sports arenas and long-distance travel.

For a sixth straight yesterday, opponents denounced what they see as a restriction of their freedom. Many criticized the measure, claiming the French government was implicitly making vaccines obligatory. In Paris, four demonstrations were organized by different groups and over 200 protests were taking place elsewhere in French cities and towns. — AP

#### Italy reports 45 deaths, 7,470 new cases

ROME: Italy reported 45 coronavirus-related deaths yesterday against 49 the day before, the health ministry said, while the daily tally of new infections rose to 7,470 from 7,224.

Italy has registered 128,728 deaths linked to COVID-19 since its outbreak emerged in February last year, the second-highest toll in Europe after Britain and the eighth-highest in the world. The country has reported 4.48 million cases to date.

Patients in hospital with COVID-19 stood at 3,733 yesterday up from 3,692 a day earlier. There were 40 new admissions to intensive care units, up from 26 on Friday. — Reuters



**QAFCO** QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY  
INVITATION TO TENDER

**QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER**

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER COLLECTION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
<b>SO-428</b>	Sale of 03 Nos. (1 No. Forklift & 2 Nos. Manlift) Obsolete Mobile Equipment	500/- (non-refundable)	10% of the Bid Value	22.08.2021 23.08.2021 24.08.2021 25.08.2021 29.08.2021 30.08.2021 31.08.2021	13.09.2021

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures are specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Tender Documents may be collected on the dates indicated above, against payment of Tender Fee (non-refundable) from the QAFCO Housing Section, relocated to Training Center Building (near Al Banush Club) at Mesaieed Residential Area, Tel. 44760093 / 44770330, as per Normal working hour: 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours
- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
  - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
  - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
  - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA00000000013025828058**
  - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their companies' name and Tender RFQ number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and produce it during tender collection as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender RFQ number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also bring a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from his company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender, while collecting the Tender Document
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Housing Section, between 0930 – 1100 hours during the Holy month of Ramadan and 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".



**Qatar Chemical Company Limited**  
Al Dafna – Arwal Tower – First Floor  
P.O. 24646 Doha / Qatar – Tel. 44847111 – Fax 44847695

**ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDER**

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/ENV/35/21	SALE OF USED OIL ON CALL-OFF BASIS FOR FIVE YEARS FOR Q-CHEM, Q-CHEM II, AND RLOC	QR 45,500/-	12:00 hrs. on 16 <sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Brief scope:**  
Company is using oils during the operations and maintenance routine and non-routine activities. Contractor is required to reuse, recover and/or treat the generated used oils as per the requirement of Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME). Contractor is responsible to collect, transport and reuse the used oil from Company facilities in Mesaieed and Ras Laffan on call off basis, as and when required by the Company.

Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

**A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email**  
For each tender pay a **non-refundable document fee (cash only) of QR 1,000/-** Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) – Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative **via email to [tadvertising@qchem.com.qa](mailto:tadvertising@qchem.com.qa)** In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, official email address, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents.

**B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email**  
Tender documents issuance from **22/08/2021 to 26/08/2021, 8am-12noon.**

**C. Proposal details**  
Proposals should be valid for **240 days** from the tender closing date.

Tender must be accompanied by a Bank Guarantee (Tender Bond) issued by one of the Qatari Banks or by a Bank operating in Qatar and should be valid for **240 days** from the tender closing date.

**D. Submission of Proposals**  
Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.

# Two dead as Hurricane Grace hits Mexico

**Local television showed severe flooding in Xalapa, with coffins from a local business floating down a waterlogged street. The nearby River Actopan burst its banks, shutting down a local highway, state authorities said.**

REUTERS — TECOLUTLA

Hurricane Grace pummeled Mexico with torrential rain and howling winds yesterday, causing severe flooding and killing at least two people, local media reported, after becoming one of the most powerful storms in years to hit the country's Gulf coast.

Grace was whipping up maximum sustained winds of 125 miles per hour, a Category 3 hurricane on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale, when it slammed into the coast near the

resort of Tecolutla in Veracruz state in the early morning.

A seven-year-old girl died due to a mudslide in Veracruz state capital Xalapa, while an adult was killed in Poza Rica further north by a collapsed roof, local media said. Veracruz officials said details would be given at a news conference.

Local television showed severe flooding in Xalapa, with coffins from a local business floating down a waterlogged street. The nearby River Actopan burst its banks, shutting down a local highway, state authorities said.

Grace also caused power cuts and brought down trees. Images posted on social media showed damage to buildings and cars submerged by the deluge of rain the storm brought.

State Governor Cuitlahuac Garcia said several rivers in Veracruz would flood, and urged the local population to take cover. "We repeat: withdraw to high ground and the municipal hostels," Garcia said in a statement.

Television footage also showed flooding in Ciudad



A woman stands amid the debris of her home which was destroyed when Hurricane Grace slammed into the coast with torrential rains, in Costa Esmeralda, near Tecolutla, Mexico, yesterday.

Madero in the southern reaches of the state of Tamaulipas near the border of Veracruz. Mexican state oil firm Petroleos Mexicanos's (Pemex) Francisco Madero refinery is in Ciudad Madero.

Mexico City's international airport said some flights were canceled due to the hurricane. National power utility the Comision Federal de Electricidad (CFE) reported 565,000 electricity users were affected by outages.

Grace weakened quickly as it moved across Mexico's mountainous interior and by 10am CDT (1500 GMT) was a tropical

storm, with top winds of 70mph. The center was about 25 miles north-northeast of Mexico City, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

Before Grace hit land, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador urged people in the states of Veracruz, Puebla, San Luis Potosi, Tamaulipas and Hidalgo to get to higher ground or shelters.

Many appear to have heeded the call.

Through Sunday, the NHC forecast Grace would dump six to 12 inches of rain over swaths of eastern and central Mexico,

and up to 18 inches (45 cm) in some areas. The heavy rainfall will likely cause areas of flash and urban flooding, it said.

Veracruz and its waters are home to several oil installations, including Pemex's port in Coatzacoalcos and its Lazaro Cardenas refinery in Minatitlan in the south.

Grace hit land well to the north of these cities.

Earlier in the week, Grace pounded Mexico's Caribbean coast, downing trees and causing power outages for nearly 700,000 people, but without causing loss of life, authorities said.

## Democrats raise \$100m through July, narrowly topping GOP

BLOOMBERG — WASHINGTON

The Democratic National Committee has raised a record \$100.2m through July, its best total in a non-election year, narrowly topping the \$97.9m raised by its Republican counterpart.

According to Federal Election Commission filings released Friday, the DNC took in \$13.1m in July. The group received a maximum \$365,000 donation from former Alphabet Inc chief executive officer Eric Schmidt, \$250,000 from investor George Soros, and \$100,000 from Seth Klarman of Baupost Group LLC. Bain Capital's Josh Bekenstein and his wife Anita Bekenstein each gave \$50,000.

Grassroots donors — those giving less than \$200 — combined to give \$3.5m. The Biden Victory Fund, which supported President Joe Biden's 2020 campaign, the DNC and state parties, transferred \$4m raised for the last election.

After spending \$8.3m in July, the DNC ended the month with \$67.9m cash on hand, its best total for this point in an election cycle. That still lags the Republican National Committee, which has a war chest of \$79m despite spending \$99.4m, or \$1.3m more than it's raised, so far in 2021.

The RNC's favorable cash balance comes from the windfall it enjoyed thanks to former President Donald Trump's post-election fundraising, when he repeatedly and falsely blamed widespread election fraud for his loss, and claimed he needed to raise money to challenge the results in court.

The RNC raised \$12.9m in July, with its biggest support coming from small-dollar donors, who gave \$6m. It spent \$15.6m.

# More winds threaten to blow California blaze into new fury

AP — PLACERVILLE

Crews were digging in and burning out fire lines amid fears that another round of high winds yesterday will bring renewed fury to a Northern California wildfire.

The Caldor Fire in the northern Sierra Nevada already destroyed dozens of homes and on Friday authorities closed down a 46-mile stretch of Interstate 50, the main route between the state capital of Sacramento and Lake Tahoe on the

Nevada border. The highway was closed after debris from the blaze fell onto the roadway and because of red flag warnings for 20- to 30mph winds that could gust to 40mph at times.

The road is a key checkpoint as crews struggle against the fire, which erupted earlier this week and grew to 10 times its size in only a few days, fueled by winds.

"We're going to invest everything we can into holding the fire south" of the road, said Eric Schwab, an operations section

chief with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Firefighters made progress on the fire's western side and burned vegetation to starve it of fuel and prevent the flames from heading into the evacuated community of Pollock Pines. On the northeast side, crews were protecting cabins in the dense forest area, fire officials said.

The Caldor Fire had now devoured nearly 120 square miles as fire crews battled it

amid heavy timber and rugged terrain.

The blaze was one of about a dozen large California wildfires that have scorched Northern California, incinerating at least 700 homes alone in and around the Sierra Nevada communities of Greenville and Grizzly Flats.

The fires, mainly in the northern part of the state, have burned nearly 1.5 million acres, or roughly 2,300 square miles and have sent smoke as far as the East Coast. They were

burning in grass, brush and forest that is exceptionally dry from two years of drought likely exacerbated by climate change.

Thousands of homes remained under threat in communities tucked away in scenic forests and tens of thousands of people remain under evacuation orders. Ten national forests in the region have been closed because of the fire threat.

To the northwest of the Caldor Fire, the massive Dixie Fire kept expanding and new evacuations were ordered.

# Haiti faces anger and despair a week after quake

REUTERS — MARCELINE

Tensions in Haiti were rising yesterday over a lack of aid to remote areas of the impoverished country hardest hit by last week's devastating earthquake that killed over 2,000 people.

Many Haitians whose homes and livelihoods were destroyed by the magnitude 7.2 quake that struck on August 14 said they were unsure how to even start rebuilding.

Exasperation over the time it was taking for aid to come through began to boil over on Friday, with residents attacking aid trucks in several towns across the south of the Caribbean nation.

A confrontation also erupted after former President Michel Martelly visited a local hospital in the city of Les Cayes, where one of his staff left behind an envelope of money that set off a violent scramble.

"We are concerned about the deteriorating security situation that may disrupt our assistance to vulnerable Haitians. We are talking to the authorities and all actors to try and prevent this," said Pierre Honorat, head of the United Nations' World Food Program in Haiti.

The official death toll from the earthquake stands at 2,189 people, with an estimated 332 people still missing. But residents in towns across the southern rural countryside are still digging for bodies believed to lie underneath the rubble.

Tens of thousands of homes are in ruins, leaving many families with no option but to sleep outside despite torrential downpours at night. The hurricane season



Followers of former Haitian President Michel Martelly fight over an envelope with a cash donation from a Martelly bodyguard during his departure outside the OFATMA hospital after Mertely left, in Les Cayes, Haiti, on Friday.

in the Caribbean runs until the end of November and Prime Minister Ariel Henry has warned residents to brace for more storms.

"After the emergency phase, which we hope will only last a few weeks, we will need to start thinking about reconstruction," Henry told a meeting with the Organization of American States on Friday, appealing to neighboring countries for support and aid.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Twitter that the USS Arlington naval vessel was heading to Haiti carrying

helicopters, a surgical team and a landing craft to assist in the relief effort. Several countries, including the United States, have already dispatched aid and rescue teams.

Reaching the areas most in need of help has been hindered by landslides and damage to the main highway, as well as gang fighting that has complicated travel between the capital Port-au-Prince and southern parts of the country where crops and access to drinking water have been destroyed. Some animals kept for food were also killed.

## IN BRIEF

### Peru's Castillo picks career diplomat as new foreign minister

LIMA: Career diplomat Oscar Maurtua was sworn in as Peru's new foreign minister on Friday to replace a leftist professor who resigned just weeks into the job over controversial comments he made before taking the role.

Maurtua already served as foreign minister in the early 2000s under centrist President Alejandro Toledo, and will now serve the far-left administration led by Pedro Castillo, a former elementary school teacher. His appointment is crucial to Castillo's political future, as his Cabinet will face a confirmation vote from the opposition-led Congress before the end of the month. He was sworn in during a ceremony at the government headquarters that was broadcast on state television, without further government comment. - Reuters

### Toronto's hospital network to sack employees unvaccinated by Oct end

TORONTO: A healthcare network that operates several hospitals in Toronto said on Friday it would sack any staff members who are not fully vaccinated by the end of October.

The University Health Network (UHN), which includes the Toronto General hospital and the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, said employees who are not vaccinated by October 8 will be placed on unpaid leave for two weeks. They will then be terminated if their vaccination status does not change by the end of the month.

Several Canadian companies have mandated in recent weeks that employees must be fully vaccinated by the fall in an effort to fight the Delta variant.

The federal government last week said it will soon require all federal public servants and many other workers to be vaccinated. The health network said it had contacted over 900 staff members who hadn't provided their vaccination status, adding that employees must have received their first dose by September 8. - Reuters

## Superstar bash in Central Park expected to draw thousands

AP — NEW YORK

The sounds of song were to be ringing out from Central Park yesterday, with thousands expected for a superstar-laden concert that was meant to celebrate New York City's recovery from the coronavirus.

Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, Jennifer Hudson, Carlos Santana, LL Cool J and Andrea Bocelli are among the performers at what is being billed as the "Homecoming Concert."

The event comes after a

series of hip-hop concerts in the last week at outdoor venues around the city.

Despite the joyful intention, the concert is taking place when there are worries about the contagious delta variant of COVID-19.

New York City over the past week has averaged just under 2,000 new cases of COVID-19 a day, according to state statistics. That's up from just under 200 cases per day in late June. Only some 54% of all city residents are fully vaccinated against the virus.

# Biden sees dip in support amid new virus cases: Survey

AP — WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is facing a summer slump, with Americans taking a notably less positive view of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and his job approval rating ticking down.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 54% of Americans approve of Biden's job performance, down slightly from 59% last month. While that's still a relatively solid rating for a president during his first year in office, particularly given the nation's

deep political polarization, it's a worrying sign for Biden as he faces the greatest domestic and foreign policy challenges of his presidency so far.

The biggest warning sign for the president in the survey centers on his handling of the pandemic. Last month, 66% of Americans approved of his stewardship of the public health crisis; now, that number has fallen to 54%, driven by a drop in support from Republicans and independents.

That decline in support coincides with other storm clouds gathering over Biden's

presidency, most notably the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan as US troops withdraw and the Taliban cement their control of the country.

The poll, conducted August 12-16, as news of the Taliban's movement into Kabul was widely reported in the United States, shows Americans about evenly divided over Biden's handling of foreign policy (47% approve, 51% disapprove) and national security (52% approve, 46% disapprove).

Biden's domestic policy agenda also faces an uncertain

future on Capitol Hill, with Democratic leaders trying to mend party divisions over a pair of infrastructure bills and few signs of progress on voting rights or police overhaul legislation.

Still, Biden's advisers believe his presidency is likely to rise or fall on his handling of the pandemic. As recently as early summer, the White House was all but declaring victory over the virus, backing the lifting of public health restrictions and encouraging vaccinated Americans to enjoy a return to normalcy this summer.

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CHAIRMAN  
**DR. KHALID BIN THANI AL THANI**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
**DR. KHALID MUBARAK AL-SHAFI**  
editorinchief@pen.com.qa

MANAGING EDITOR  
**MOHAMMED OSMAN ALI**  
osman@pen.com.qa

## EDITORIAL

### *The facilitator of peace*

**THE** key role of the State of Qatar in the ongoing global discussions and efforts for peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan is not a role emerging from the Taliban's swift takeover of the country but it goes a long way back as the country facilitated many rounds of talks between the United States and Taliban representatives in Doha.

As well Qatar has hosted numerous rounds of talks between the Taliban and representatives of the Afghan government since September 2020 with an aim of reaching a political solution to the protracted conflict.

As major actors of the world have been relying on Qatar's pivotal role in restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan, Qatar is witnessing extensive contacts and discussions with various world leaders and top diplomats from across the world.

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani discussed on Friday via a telephone conversation with President of the United States of America H E Joe Biden the latest developments in Afghanistan, strategic bilateral relations and the scope for expanding and enhancing them.

The US President expressed his thanks to H H the Amir for his country's contribution to the evacuation of civilians and the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan.

As many countries are struggling to speed up the pace of evacuations of their citizens and vulnerable Afghans amid the chaos, the two leaders stressed the importance of protecting civilians, the peaceful transition of power, and de-escalating tensions towards a comprehensive political solution that guarantees security and stability to benefit the Afghan people.

The strong Qatar-US strategic ties and partnership require constant coordination at all levels of security, defence and diplomacy to ensure security and stability in the region, a fact confirmed by a number of meetings of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah with top US defence officials, including the US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin.

Al Attiyah and Austin reviewed bilateral military relations between the two nations and ways to strengthen them.

Doha as a valuable asset to global powers not only embraces the diplomatic role and is coordinating international efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan but also actively contributing to the efforts of evacuation of nationals of many countries from Kabul.

For this purpose Qatar sent to Kabul its evacuation missions which in the past two days evacuated over 300 mostly female students and over 200 media personnel with their family members "who are now safe in comfortable accommodation in Doha", as stated by H E Lolwah Al Khater Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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D-RING ROAD, POST BOX: 3488, DOHA - QATAR  
EMAIL: editor@pen.com.qa

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OFFICE: TEL: 4455 7741 / 767  
FAX: +974 4455 7758

MANAGING EDITOR: TEL: 4462 7505

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR: TEL: 4455 7769

LOCAL NEWS SECTION: TEL: 4455 7743

BUSINESS NEWS SECTION: TEL: 4462 7535

SPORT NEWS SECTION: TEL: 4455 7745

ONLINE SECTION: TEL: 4462 7501  
email: INFO@PEN.COM.QA

PUBLIC RELATIONS: TEL: 4455 7613  
email: PR@PEN.COM.QA

MARKETING: TEL: 4455 7657  
email: marketing@pen.com.qa

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT: TEL: 4455 7837 / 857  
FAX: 4455 7870, email: adv@pen.com.qa

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A file photo of people receiving vaccine against COVID-19 at the centre set up at QNCC.

## Origin-tracing: Scientific cooperation instead of political manipulation

At present, the COVID-19 is still ravaging across the world with variation and surges. To cope with the pandemic remains as our top priority. However, recently there has been much debate on the origin of the COVID-19, which has become the focus of the international community. I would like to share with you some of my opinions.

First of all, respecting science is the fundamental way in origin-tracing. It is a serious scientific matter, and we should let the scientists conduct evidence-based research to find its source and better prevent future risks. Historically, places in which first cases have been reported may not turn out to be the origin of the virus, as is in the case of HIV infection, which was firstly reported in the US, did not necessarily have originated in the US. Similarly, the first reported case of COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan does not mean the origin of the virus is Wuhan, but still needs further studies. As for the so-called "lab leak" accusations, the WHO expert group has already reached a scientific conclusion in the WHO-China joint research report that it is extremely unlikely, and recommended further research on earlier cases worldwide. These findings and recommendations are widely recognized by the international community and scientists, and must be respected and implemented by all parties. The future work of global origin-tracing should and must proceed from the above basis, instead of reinventing the wheel.

Second, it is general consensus of the international community to oppose manipulation. Origin-tracing should never yield to political interference,



ZHOU JIAN  
AMBASSADOR OF CHINA TO QATAR

and any political manipulation is disrespecting science, human conscience and the lives of millions of people. Unfortunately, certain countries put up the show of "thief shouts to stop the thief," spreading the "political" virus, politicizing the pandemic, stigmatizing the virus, and using the origin-tracing as a tool, forced the WHO Secretariat to propose a second phase origin-tracing, and even called for intelligence group to investigate in China's so-called "lab leak" based on the presumption of guilt. It is not only inconsistent with the 73rd WHA's resolution, but also ignores the conclusions and recommendations of the first phase joint research report, which shocked lots of scientists. Actions speak louder than words, and people can't be fooled. So far, no one at the Wuhan Virus Institute has ever been infected by COVID-19. More than 70 countries have sent letters to the WHO Director-General to express opposition to politicization of origin-tracing and support the WHO-China joint report by writing, issuing statements and sending notes. More than 30 countries have expressed objections or reservations to the

second-phase origin-tracing plan. This shows that opposing political manipulation has become the majority consensus of the international community. These voices of justice should and must be taken seriously.

Third, solidarity and cooperation is the key to defeating the pandemic. Origin-tracing is not to blame any country, still less to divide the international community. We can only truly defeat the virus through solidarity and cooperation. China has always participated in origin-tracing cooperation with an open attitude. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, China has taken the lead in working with the WHO on origin-tracing, and has twice invited WHO experts to China for joint research. Early this year, international experts from more than 10 countries including the US, UK, Japan and Australia were invited to China for origin-tracing studies, and have worked 28 days in Wuhan. They went to all the places they wanted to go, met all the people they wanted to meet, reached a scientific conclusion in the joint WHO-China study report that a laboratory leak is extremely unlikely. What China has done has set a good example for origin-tracing works and provided firm support for the global fight against the pandemic. China stands ready to continue working with the international community, actively and steadily carry out origin-tracing in countries and places around the world, and jointly maintain a sound atmosphere for global fight against the pandemic.

Like China, Qatar also respects science. We are glad to

**Origin-tracing should never yield to political interference, and any political manipulation is disrespecting science, human conscience and the lives of millions of people.**



see that under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, Qatar respected the rule of science in the face of unknown virus, followed scientific methods in decision making, patient treatment, vaccination, prevention, and has successfully controlled the pandemic, safeguarding people's health, and bringing economic development back to order. In addition, Qatar plays an active role in international cooperation against COVID-19. So far, Qatar has provided medical assistance to more than 80 countries and international organizations, contributed in the equitable distribution of vaccine globally, demonstrating its international responsibility. We highly appreciate Qatar's efforts.

On the issue of origin-tracing, we need to uphold an open, transparent, scientific and cooperative manner. We should cooperate rather than discredit; seek for truth, not lies; respect science, and oppose political manipulation. In the next step, China is ready to work with Qatar and other partners to support and participate in global origin-tracing cooperation, and jointly contribute to an early and complete victory over the pandemic for all mankind.

## Afghan army's total collapse forces 'soul-searching' at Nato meeting

JOHN HUDSON & MICHAEL BIRNBAUM THE WASHINGTON POST

The collapse of the Afghan military after 20 years of international support and training, billions of dollars spent and thousands of lives lost forced a sobering round of soul-searching at an emergency meeting of Nato foreign ministers on Friday, according to diplomats involved in the discussions.

In a joint statement, the 30-member alliance hailed that "for the last twenty years, we have successfully denied terrorists a safe haven in Afghanistan." But in the closed session of ministers, the discussions were far less congratulatory. "How was it possible that we invested 20 years into this country and into training and equipping police forces and army, when there was so

little resistance?" said one European official, recounting a pointed question that was asked during the virtual session. "Soldiers threw away their arms or escaped into neighboring countries." Diplomats spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss details of a closed meeting and the failure of the longest-running Nato mission in recent history.

Nato troops were involved in both combat and noncombat roles in Afghanistan, including a recent mission to train and assist Afghan security forces.

Within a little more than a week, Taliban fighters overran more than a dozen provincial capitals and entered Kabul with no resistance. Scores of Nato-trained Afghan security forces simply melted away.

Some Nato diplomats said the chaotic situation in

Afghanistan would weigh heavily on the alliance, which is just starting to recover from the instability caused by former president Donald Trump, who routinely questioned the alliance's relevance.

Diplomats specifically complained about a lack of consultation with Nato allies by the Biden administration before it decided to pull US forces out of Afghanistan, several said. The resulting chaos has forced member states to launch rescue missions of citizens in Afghanistan, with countries including France and Britain sending special forces teams to escort citizens trapped outside Kabul.

In the long run, said one senior European diplomat who took part in Friday's discussions, the chaos will raise questions about "how to proceed in

an alliance when Europeans and Americans have not opposite but different interests and how Europeans should be prepared to spend more and take more risks." At a briefing following the meeting, Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that there were "hard questions" member nations would need to ask themselves about the mission in Afghanistan and that he intends to "conduct a thorough assessment of Nato's engagement" there.

"We were clear-eyed about the risks of withdrawing our troops," Stoltenberg said. "But the speed of the collapse of the Afghan political and military leadership and armed forces was not anticipated." The evacuation of citizens from Nato member countries also dominated the discussions, officials said.



### Quote of the day

**13 countries have thus far agreed to at least temporarily host at-risk Afghans evacuated from Afghanistan and a dozen more have agreed to serve as transit points for evacuees, including Americans and others.**

**Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State**