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FIFA Qatar 2022 group stage best ever, says Infantino



FIFA President Gianni Infantino

FIFA President Gianni Infantino described the World Cup Qatar 2022 as the 'best ever,' following dramatic matches across all eight groups, record-breaking attendances and television figures across the world, and the FIFA Fan Festival in Doha proving hugely popular with fans supporting nations from every corner of the world.

In an interview published yesterday by FIFA's official website, Infantino praised the quality of the football involving the 32 teams that competed in the group stage – and highlighted the passion shown in the stadiums, FIFA Fan Festival and fan parks around Qatar.

"I have seen all the matches, indeed, and put very simply and very clearly, this has been the best group stage of a FIFA World Cup ever. So, it's very promising for the remainder of the FIFA World Cup," the FIFA president said. "The matches have been of great, great quality in beautiful stadiums – we knew that already. However, as well, the public who was there was incredible. Over 51,000 on average."

Infantino continued: "Record-breaking figures on TV – we already had over two billion viewers, which is really incredible. Two-and-a-half million people in the streets of Doha and a few hundred thousand every day in the stadiums, all together, cheering together, supporting their teams, fantastic atmosphere, great goals, incredible excitement and surprises."

The FIFA president said there are

no more small teams and no more big teams. "The level is very, very equal. For the first time as well, national teams from all continents going to the knock-out phase, for the first time in history. This shows that football is really becoming truly global."

"We hope that the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 continues and concludes as it has started – a fantastic success. I am sure that we will reach five billion viewers around the world."

Infantino continued. "When it comes to stadium attendances, the stadiums are sold-out, full practically at every match. The fan festivals, the different fan zones, are also very crowded with people celebrating and enjoying."

In conclusion, Infantino said: "And at the end of the day, we simply want to give some joy and some smiles to people all over the world. That's what football is about, that's what the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 is about, and that's what should also happen from now until the end."

Kahramaa, SC launch 'Sustainability Zone'

Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa), in cooperation with the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC), launched the "Sustainability Zone" initiative in the Kahramaa Awareness Park, to introduce the FIFA World Cup fans to the environmental sustainability efforts associated with hosting the tournament. The "Zone Sustainability" initiative will help fans be briefed on the various projects, initiatives and operations led by Kahramaa and the SC in the field of sustainability and combating climate change over the past ten years. The opening saw the display of a mural telling the history of electricity and water in Qatar and the launch of Carbon Zone and climate change in the park's inner building. **Page 12**

Karwa ferries more than 4.4mn passengers

Mowasalat (Karwa) transported more than 4.4mn passengers during the Group and Round of 16 stages of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. The Round of 16 stage concluded on Tuesday, the 17th day of the World Cup that kicked off on November 20. The company said it transported a total of 4,427,887 people since the start of the tournament until Tuesday. **Page 6**

Xi on 'epoch-making' visit to Saudi Arabia

Chinese President Xi Jinping began a visit to Saudi Arabia yesterday that Beijing said marked its biggest diplomatic initiative in the Arab world, as Riyadh expands global alliances beyond a longstanding partnership with the West. The White House said Xi's visit was an example of Chinese attempts to exert influence, and that this would not change US policy towards the Middle East. China, the world's biggest energy consumer, is a major trade partner of Gulf oil and gas producers. Bilateral ties have expanded under the region's economic diversification push, raising US concerns about growing Chinese involvement in sensitive infrastructure in the Gulf. **Page 11**

New Guinness World Record for Qatar



Qatar added yet another Guinness World Record to its credit yesterday when the Ministry of Culture revealed the world's largest painting on canvas – equaling to the dimension of a football ground – by artist, Imad Salehi. The event at Qatar University football stadium was attended by HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of State and Qatar National Library president Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari and other dignitaries. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam **Page 5**

Qatar hosting 'zero-crime' World Cup 2022: security committee

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 has turned out to be the safest event of its kind with zero major crime, a senior official said yesterday, while pointing out that the reports received by the National Command Centre (NCC) were few and minor compared to the number of fans.

"The event, with half of the days over, proved the success of all parties and their co-operation in organising," explained Brigadier Abdullah Khalifa al-Muftah, head of the Media Unit of the FIFA World Cup 2022 Safety and Security Operations Committee and Commander of the Security Media Sector and Community Partnership.

"Qatar is leading in international safety and security indicators, such as the Global Peace Index, the Numbeo Database, and other indicators," he pointed out at a press conference yesterday.

"The minor incidents were handled by the security authorities with



Officials at the press conference yesterday. **PICTURE:** Shemeer Rasheed

high efficiency. The fans experienced smooth entry and exit at stadiums and they were provided guidance and assistance at all events.

"The efforts of the tournament security force and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) have delivered the safest ever FIFA World Cup, in accordance with the best standards at competitive and non-competitive facilities.

"The appropriate security environment was provided for the participating teams and referees in the stadiums, training sites and residences. The security authorities were also keen to follow up and address any feedback from the fans through various media," he added.

Col Dr Jabr Hammoud al-Nuaimi, the official spokesman for the MoI

and the security force of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, said that all stakeholders made great efforts using the latest communication systems that linked all units through the operations rooms in the tournament facilities and the fan areas, linked to both the tournament command centre and the Central Operations Room of the NCC.

The total number of calls received by the NCC reached 585,606, including 16,000 in the official languages of the World Cup. The communications included inquiries, suggestions, and complaints in different languages, based on the diversity of the fans' languages.

Various security patrols took out 4,250 trips to secure the movement of the competing teams. As many as 21,579 vehicles underwent security screening to ensure the safety of tournament participants at 37 hotels, 36 stadiums and 8 main stadiums, the official added.

Qatar a model for sustainable development: UN

The United Nations (UN) has chosen Qatar as a model for Arab countries in the implementation of MARS for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDG team at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) said Qatar has been selected as a model for the use of MARS application (Monitoring Application for Reporting on SDGs), which is an application for monitoring and reporting on sustainable development goals in the Arab region.

The UN commends the completion of a national network in Qatar for the focal points of the 2030 SDGs. Qatar is the only country that completed the establishment of the network in a record time of four months, from March to July 2020. The network consists of 123 data providers (focal point of the 2030 SDGs).

The MARS application enables national statistical systems in the Arab region to manage data flow and facilitate the process of reporting data and information that are extracted from the administrative records of national agencies through the SDG focal points (data providers).

All of this is performed in line with the UN statistical calendar for reporting, i.e. the start and end date of the national communications. Later on, this exemplary experience will be generalised to other Arab countries.



In line with the SDG team's task to monitor the agenda for sustainable development in Arab countries, it presented a document at the 15th session of the Statistical Commission, held in Beirut on 16-17 November 2022 on "Improving monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Insti-

tutional Environment, and Production and Dissemination of Data", which overviews the progress made in improving monitoring of the 2030 agenda in the Arab region. Qatar was represented in this session by the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA). The document commended the experience of

Qatar in establishing a national network for sustainable development goals consisting of national entities or the so-called data and information providers to facilitate the process of reporting data and information coming from the UN.

The UN commends the completion of a national network in Qatar for the focal points of the 2030 SDGs. Qatar is the only country that completed the establishment of the network in a record time of four months

The document also indicated that Qatar is one of the advanced countries in the region in publishing national data on the UN databases through a special platform to monitor the sustainable development goals by uploading 169 indicators and 6,960 variables.

The PSA has issued five statistical reports on sustainable development goals since the announcement of the SDGs at the UN in 2015. These reports monitor the progress of sustainable development indicators in Qatar, which serves researchers, planners and policy makers in this field. It has also issued an explanatory infographic of the SDGs, which present the indicators in a simple and easy-to-understand manner.

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HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani with other dignitaries at the event.



HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani kicks a football to launch the conference.

Empower Youth Conference kicks off at FIFA Fan Festival



The opening ceremony featured a panel discussion titled 'Chasing the Dream.'

Education Above All (EAA) Foundation's Empower Youth Conference kicked off yesterday in the heart of the World Cup celebrations at the FIFA Fan Festival with inspiring stories about the role of football off the pitch from top athletes.

The event was attended by Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Salah bin Ghamem bin Nasser al-Ali, HE the Shura Council Deputy Speaker Dr Hamda bint Hassana al-Sulaiti and a group of ambassadors.

The theme for this year's three-day youth leadership conference, Football for Sustainable Development, will look at harnessing football's ability to create unity and integration in communities as well as act as a positive social catalyst for change. The opening ceremony featured a panel discussion titled 'Chasing the Dream,' with former Afghan refugee turned professional soccer player Nadia Nadim; the Pal-

The theme for this year's three-day youth leadership conference, Football for Sustainable Development, will look at harnessing football's ability to create unity and integration in communities

estinian women's national football team's first captain Honey Thaljeh, and the World Cup Legacy Programme Generation Amazing Foundation's executive director Nasser al-Khori, who all spoke about the role of football in improving lives beyond the pitch.

'Chasing Dreams,' a documentary about young Syrian refugees now playing semi-professional football in Brazil also featured in the opening along with a discussion with the film's producer and four of the young men featured in the film.

EAA's programme director for Reach Out To Asia, Abdullah al-Abdulla said: "The World Cup provides an amazing opportunity to develop leadership skills for youth which is at the heart of Education Above All's advocacy. Ensuring youth are

empowered to handle adversity will help us build a more sustainable and peaceful communities."

Al-Khori said: "Generation Amazing Foundation utilises the power of football to impart crucial life skills including communication, leadership, teamwork and compassion to youth and communities in need across the globe with the goal of advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Qatar National Vision 2030. This year's three-day conference is one more way GA boosts those efforts and ensures furthering a positive social legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 that lives beyond the tournament and impact lives for years to come." Started in 2009, Empower is the first youth led conference to focus on equipping young

people in Qatar and around the world to take active roles in building their communities and having a voice on global issues. It is a chance for youth aged 15-24 to take part in experiential learning and cross-cultural exchange of ideas, discover a sense of belonging to a common humanity, shared values, and responsibilities. This year's three-day conference for youth will explore the impact of football through a plethora of diverse speakers, panel discussions, and workshops online until tomorrow.

Empower runs as part of EAA's Scoring 4 the Goals Campaign, which aims to raise awareness and call for action to achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, the global agenda to bring a more prosperous and equitable future for all.

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Qatar in virtual anti-corruption conference

Qatar, represented by the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA), participated via videoconferencing in the fourth international conference of the anti-corruption commission in Palestine, which took place from Dec 5-7. The conference, titled 'Fighting corruption: a collective and integral national responsibility, loyalty, responsibility, commitment', aims to focus on the importance of collective national responsibility and determine the effectiveness of the roles of various parties in promoting collective national responsibility in combating corruption. It highlights the importance of community participation in anti-corruption efforts and showcases several successful experiences and reviews best international practices in this field. HE ACTA Chairman Hamad bin Nasser al-Misnad said that the anti-corruption process cannot be achieved by a single party, regardless of its efforts and capabilities, pointing out that this matter requires concerted national efforts of all sectors: public, private, and civil society, as the

United Nations Convention against Corruption, the Arab Convention against Corruption, and many international agreements have emphasised the necessity of this issue. Al-Misnad explained that anti-corruption policies must be comprehensive and consistent with all segments of society participating in developing and implementing them. He added that adopting this participatory approach in preventing and combating corruption enables identifying all aspects of this destructive phenomenon, knowing its real causes, and encouraging all concerned parties to participate effectively in combating it. HE al-Misnad stressed the keenness of Qatar to follow this participatory approach in its efforts to prevent and combat corruption, through government agencies, public institutions and bodies, the private sector, and civil society, in addition to ACTA's tireless work in exercising its functions and competencies. He highlighted the general awareness of national responsibilities. (QNA)

Qatar to host 'Arab Youth Anti-Corruption Hackathon'

The Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA) announced that Qatar will host the first edition of the "Coding4Integrity" initiative "Arab Youth Anti-Corruption Hackathon" to promote the development of sustainable solutions based on information and communication technology to combat corruption.



This edition will be held in partnership with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ACTA, and Microsoft Qatar, with the aim of co-operating with youth, promoting the development of sustainable solutions based on information and communication technology to combat corruption, and seeking to advance the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption.

HE ACTA Chairman Hamad bin Nasser al-Misnad affirmed that Qatar's sponsorship of the upcoming edition came from its pioneering

nities, and promoting innovation and technology.

It said that the upcoming edition would bring together computer programmers and others interested in information technology, especially people from 18-30 years old.

The "Coding4Integrity" initiative is one of the most important elements of the Global Resource For Anti-Corruption Education And Youth Empowerment (Grace) launched by the UNODC. It aims to benefit from youth energies and their innovative potential in developing technological solutions to combat problems regarding corruption affecting their local communities.

As part of this partnership, Microsoft Qatar will provide direct support to more than 150 young programmers from participating countries. Also, it will help the participants benefit from Microsoft's expertise in the mentorship and technological innovation fields. (QNA)

International praise for Qatar's efforts to reduce plastic pollution

The Asia Pacific Region Group of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) has praised Qatar's efforts to reduce plastic pollution and the organisation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup as the first carbon-neutral and environmentally-friendly tournament. The group noted the waste and trash sorting mechanism, and the measures adopted by Qatar to reduce the use of plastic in sporting events by reducing its consumption, and recycling it in an environmentally sound manner, as well as in line with the principles of the circular economy, and with the global trends of the Plastics Treaty. This came after the participation of Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, in the meeting of the Asia Pacific Region Group of the Intergovernmental



Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop a binding international law on plastic pollution, which was held in Uruguay from Nov 28 to Dec 2. The ministry's Department of Radiation and Chemicals Protection participated in the meeting. The draft of an international law on plastic pollution is one of the solutions aimed at mitigating the potential damage resulting from the mismanagement of plastic waste, as it is a global transnational challenge that requires concerted efforts and joint action to protect the environment. (QNA)

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Qatar attends preparatory meeting of GCC Supreme Council



Qatar participated yesterday in the 154th ministerial meeting of the Supreme Council of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) in its 43rd session, at the headquarters of the GCC General Secretariat in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Qatar's delegation to the meeting was headed by HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. During the meeting, the draft agenda was adopted, the items on the agenda were discussed, and draft decisions and recommendations were adopted. (QNA)

Cabinet approves draft law regulating use of fertilisers

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting held at its seat at the Amiri Diwan yesterday. Following the meeting, HE the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs issued the following statement:

The Cabinet considered the top-

ics on the agenda as follows:

First – The Cabinet approved a draft law amending certain provisions of Law No 24 of 2006 by issuing a law (system) regulating the fertilisers and agricultural soil conditioners in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and referred it to the Shura Council. The amendment aims to reinforcing of the penalty on

the infringement of certain provisions of the act.

Second – The Cabinet reviewed the memorandum of the General Secretariat of the Shura Council,

on the expression of interest, in the aspects associated with marriage and the views of the related concerned authorities in this

matter, and took the appropriate

decision regarding this issue.

Third – The Cabinet reviewed the following two topics and took the appropriate decision:

1- The findings report of the Protect Competition and Prevent Monopolistic Practices' Committee.

2- Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) consolidated and audited financial statements. (QNA)

Qatar, Ireland chosen for consultations on SDG Summit

QNA
New York

President of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Csaba Korosi chose HE Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN ambassador Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani and Ireland's Permanent Representative to the UN ambassador Fergal Mythen to facilitate and lead consultations on the Political Declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit during the 77th session of the General Assembly.

The High-Level Political Fo-

rum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will be held, under the auspices of the General Assembly, at the level of Heads of State and Government, in September 2023.

The Sustainable Development Goals Summit (SDG Summit) is scheduled to take place on Sept 20-21, 2023, at the UN Headquarters in New York. The summit enjoys great momentum, as it is an opportunity to follow up and address the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs.

The High-level Political Forum, which meets once every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly, provides high-level po-

litical guidance on the 2030 Agenda and its implementation, identifies progress and emerging challenges and takes further action to accelerate its implementation. The appointment of HE Sheikha Alya comes in recognition of Qatar's distinguished role in strengthening the global partnership for achieving sustainable development, as well as its efforts in the development field, working with partners and multilateral organisations, and providing the necessary resources and financing.

In 2020, HE Sheikha Alya was assigned to facilitate and lead negotiations for an agreement on a statement of the commemoration

of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and was also assigned in 2021 to facilitate negotiations on the reform of the UN Security Council.

HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani

Qatar affirms keenness on principles of joint responsibility and multilateral action

QNA
New York

Qatar affirmed its constant keenness on adhering to the principles of the joint responsibility and the multilateral action, and on continuing its policy which is based on the spirit of co-operation and initiative, and its pioneering role in providing development and relief aid that had a positive impact on the lives of millions of peoples worldwide.

This came in a statement delivered by the Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz al-Thani in the UN General Assembly session on the item entitled "Strengthening of the co-ordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance". The statement underlined that Qatar will spare no effort to continue supporting the United Nations' agencies and co-operating with them in their humanitarian efforts.

Sheikh Abdulrahman noted that Qatar has recently pledged to provide \$12mn in humanitarian aid in the Horn of Africa in particular, within the framework of its commitment to humanitarian action and its well-known efforts in pursuit of alleviating the humanitarian suffering, especially for the most vulnerable categories.

He indicated that such countries suffer from enormous challenges due to drought and food insecurity.

He also pointed out that Qatar has announced its contribution with \$20mn in support of the humanitarian programme "Grain from Ukraine" initiative that aims to help the African countries obtain the ex-

ports of Ukrainian foodstuff. Sheikh Abdulrahman asserted that Qatar did not hesitate to offer multi-year, non-earmarked core resources for the UN organisations, noting the efforts of Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD) which is working closely with strategic partners in numerous UN agencies, including the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

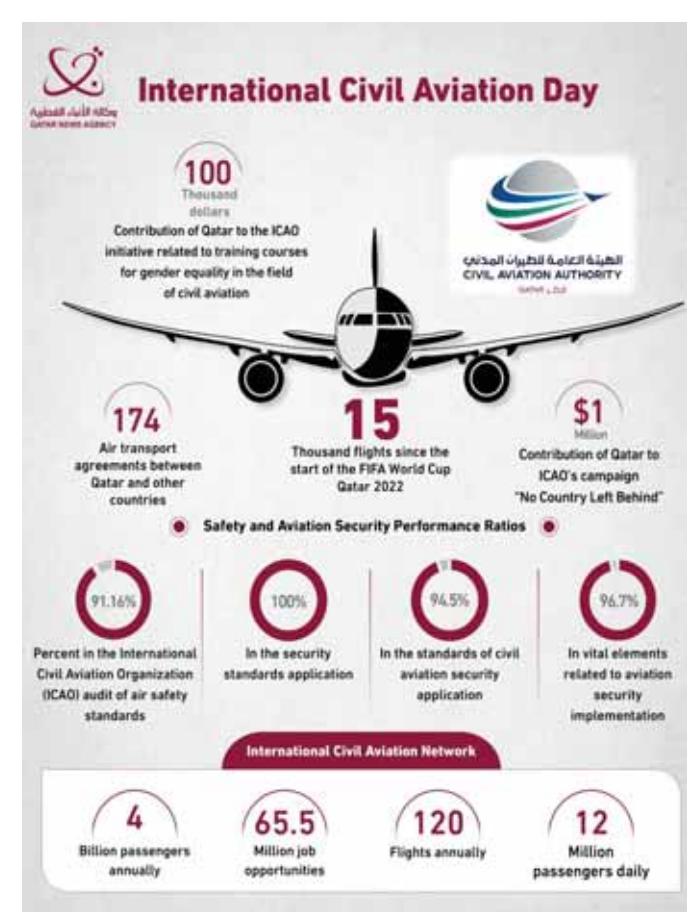
In this regard, he noted the contribution agreements signed with multiple UN organisations and entities, lauding the pivotal role undertaken by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

He noted that Qatar was among the first countries that have provided contributions to CERF to counter the emergencies. He added that QFFD continued its support and signed a contribution agreement for the period 2022-2023 to provide support to CERF with a total amount of \$2mn.

The statement stressed that Qatar is committed to providing the humanitarian and development aid to the brotherly Palestinian people, noting that it had raised the level of its donation to the core resources of UNRWA, and that Qatar was the first Arab country to sign a multi-year agreement with UNRWA to support its key resources in 2018.

The statement pointed to the report of the UN secretary-general on the provision of assistance to the Palestinian people, where the secretary-general stated that the fuel supplies from Qatar for Gaza Power Generating Company led to the stabilisation of electricity supplies to the sector, halting the cash assistance that was provided to many vulnerable families in Gaza, and made a crucial progress in constructing the vital water and drainage facilities.

Qatar records over 15,000 air traffic movements since start of World Cup



Qatar recorded a total of 15,100 air traffic movements as of Tuesday, Dec 6, since the start of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, according to the daily statistics published by the Ministry of Transport on its Twitter handle. This was disclosed as Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) marks the International Civil Aviation Day. The aviation sector in Qatar was able to make quality leaps and high rates in aviation safety and security, to score 91.16% in the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) audit of air safety standards, 100% in the security standards application, 94.5% in the standards of civil aviation security application, and 96.7% in vital elements related to aviation security implementation.

100% in applying the security standards of Annex 9 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation on Facilities and 94.5% in applying the standards of Annex 17 related to civil aviation security (the most important criterion in the field of security audit), while achieving 96.7% in the implementation of vital elements related to aviation security. Meanwhile, QCAA announced that Qatar has signed 174 air transport agreements, the most important of which is the comprehensive agreement with the European Union. (QNA)



Dignitaries at the event.

Qatar sets Guinness Record with largest canvas painting

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar added yet another Guinness World Record to its credit yesterday when the Ministry of Culture revealed the largest painting on canvas – equaling to the dimension of a football ground or 9,652sq m – by artist Imad Salehi. The event at Qatar University football stadium was attended by HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of State and Qatar National Library president Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari and other dignitaries.

The record was adjudicated by Shaddy Gaad, senior marketing manager, Mena region of Guinness World Records. Gaad said: "The previous record for the largest artwork on canvas was 1,595.76sq m set by Sasha Jaffrey in 2020. This painting measures 9,652sq m, which is the new Guinness World Record for the largest canvas painting."

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Salehi said: "It took me over five months to complete the painting. I used about 3,000 litres of paint and 150 brushes. I used to work around 14 to 18 hours a day. This whole idea started with the ball story which is the history of the World Cup." "I took it as a challenge and wanted to present it for Guinness World Record to coincide with the World Cup here in Qatar. I mixed it with Arabic culture with other cultures. When you explore the painting you can see the history of football. I have painted more than 10,000 figures on the entire canvas," he stressed.

Sheikh Faisal commented: "It is a great pleasure for me to witness this important event and Al Faisal Holding is among the supporters of this event. The huge piece of art by artist Salehi, expresses the close relationship between art, culture and sport, all of which would unite people and bring



HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of State and Qatar National Library president Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari and artist Imad Salehi with the citation from Guinness World Records.



A view of the Guinness World Record winning world's largest painting on canvas – equaling to the dimension of a football ground or 9,652sq m.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

them closer to each other. I also take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Culture for its remarkable efforts in supporting artists with creative ideas that would enrich the cultural and artistic scene in Qatar."

Maryam Yassin al-Hammadi, director of the Department of Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture added: "We salute the creative artist, Imad

Salehi, and the Ministry of Culture is proud of the existence of competitive international initiatives in which everyone contributes. This is not the first time that culture-related records have been set up, either directly or indirectly. This record coincides with Qatar's hosting of the World Cup and aims to unite the world through art and sports."

World Cup can raise awareness on SDGs

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The FIFA World Cup – football in particular – can play a key role in raising awareness on the importance of achieving the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), UN-Habitat executive director Maimunah Mohd Sharif has said.

"Local action is at the heart of sustainable development. This is what we mean when we talk about SDG localisation. Local and city governments must work side by side with national governments to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

"I hope this message will be loud and clear and that football fans can bring it home to their countries," she said.

Sharif took part in a cycling tour at Msheireb Downtown Doha on Tuesday, held on the sidelines of the tournament, as part of an environmental initiative titled "Cycle to Recycle". In partnership with Education Above All, it aims to create a movement that encourage alternative ways in promoting more sustainable cities.

She said that millions of football fans can learn more and help in achieving the SDGs by 2030. According to UN-Habitat, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a dedicated Goal on cities, SDG 11 – to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Sharif cited Msheireb, which was designed and built as a compact and walkable neighbourhood, as an example of urban regeneration: its walkways, piazzas and arcades encourage people to walk and has a sustainable transport system with the Msheireb Tram connecting directly to the metro. She noted that many buildings are



Maimunah Sharif takes part in a cycling tour at Msheireb Downtown Doha on Tuesday. PICTURE: Thajudheen

LEED-certified and Msheireb serves as an example of sustainable resource management and adoption of the 3R approach – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

"As I always like to do things my way, I can add a fourth R – Rethink.

We should re-think how we plan and manage our communities. SDG 11 (make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) is not a goal that stands on itself. It is strongly linked with other SDGs.

"If we plan and manage our cities sustainably, we help them to develop economically and reduce poverty and hunger, as stated in SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger).

"We can achieve better health outcomes – SDG3. We can spend more on

public services, education, and infrastructure – Goal 6. We can improve water and sanitation – Goal 6. And we can have better energy – Goal 7. To achieve our goals, we need to make our cities resilient," Sharif said.

She underlined the importance of having more public spaces, which means more football fields for children to raise future super stars. However, she noted that public spaces in cities not only provide space for physical exercise but also help build better communities.

"City governments who invest in public infrastructure get a positive return on their investment by reducing healthcare costs or enhancing productivity," Sharif added.

Thundery rain forecast after day of scattered showers



Overcast conditions and drops of rain yesterday. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam and Thajudheen

Thundery rain is expected in the country today along with strong winds and poor horizontal visibility, the Qatar Met department has said. The weather report forecasts thundery rain and strong winds in offshore areas, too, in addition to high seas. The Met department had recently said scattered rain is expected in the country from Wednesday, followed by a shift in wind direction to Northwesterly and a noticeable drop in the temperature. The rain would be of varying intensity, happening intermittently until Saturday, which may turn thundery at times. The winds will be mainly Southeasterly-Northeasterly, with speeds ranging from 6-16 knots and gusts exceeding 25 knots during thundery rain. Then, it is expected that the winds will shift to Northwesterly on Saturday (December 10) and continue to be so until the middle of the week, accompanied by a noticeable decrease in the temperature. Today's detailed forecast says it will be misty in some places at first, and cloudy at times, and there is a chance of scattered rain that may become thundery. Cloudy conditions are also likely offshore and there is a possibility of scattered rain there, too, which may turn thundery occasionally. The wind speed may go up to 30 knots during thundery rain both offshore and inshore, with the sea level rising to 10ft. The temperature is expected to range from 25-28C in Doha today. Cloudy conditions and scattered rain were reported from some places in Qatar yesterday along with thundery conditions at times.



FREE VEHICLE RECALL

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Ministry of Commerce and Industry
State of Qatar



Kia Carens

Manufacturing Year

2022 - 2023

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A possible defect in the Airbag control unit might result in the airbags not deploying if the vehicle is subjected to an accident

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Contact the dealer for the free required repair

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Green touch for World Cup festivities at MIA Park

Immersed in all the excitement and celebration during the ongoing FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, one can find in the heart of Doha a view like no other at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) Park, a Qatar Museums statement said.

MIA Park, open 24 hours, seven days a week, offers ample green space to unwind before or after the matches, watch the fireworks and other spectacular displays on the Corniche or simply enjoy an oasis of serenity.

MIA and MIA Park are accessible through the museum's main entrance and Qatar Museums Gallery - Al Riwaq entrance at the back of The Skyline or giant screen display.

While at MIA, a visit to the gift shop inside the Museum or the Pop-Up shop at MIA Park, is an opportunity to purchase a range of souvenirs including FIFA-licensed merchandise and product lines inspired by the "Baghdad: Eye's Delight" exhibition.

At the Al Riwaq gift shop, visitors have access to gifts inspired by the "Lusail Mu-



MIA and MIA Park are accessible through the museum's main entrance and Qatar Museums Gallery - Al Riwaq entrance at the back of The Skyline or giant screen display.

seum: Tales of A Connected World" and "Art Mill" exhibitions. Bring home a piece

carefully curated premium gift items that elevate one's gifting experience. MIA Café located inside the museum



MIA Park offers ample green space to unwind before or after the matches.

offers chicken and lamb machboos to chicken biryani, crispy bread with turkey and compote cheese to refreshing drinks,

with views of the Corniche and the scenic Doha skyline. A stroll at MIA Park engages guests with

an artful experience through public art installations by Yayoi Kusama. "My Soul Blooms Forever" is the largest outdoor exhibition of its kind to take place in the Gulf region.

The exhibition consists of monumental sculptures and installations throughout MIA Park and Al Riwaq, including recent work such as the giant Dancing Pumpkin (2020) and renowned works such as Narcissus Garden (1966/2022).

MIA Park also has a variety of food trucks and kiosks, including MIA Park Café, Voute Café, Hilal Food Truck, Al Riwaq Café, Go Fresh, Desi Dhaba, Home Burger Food Truck and Green & Go.

Abdulla al-Dosari, deputy director for Operations at MIA, said: "A visit at MIA and MIA Park creates moments that are actually a union of arts, culture and culinary discoveries. MIA Park offers a safe space to unwind, catch up with friends, enjoy family bonding over good food in a relaxed and serene environment. At MIA, we are all about creating moments that will last even beyond the tournament".



Karwa ferries more than 4.4mn passengers

Mowasalat (Karwa) transported more than 4.4mn passengers during the Group and Round of 16 stages of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The Round of 16 stage concluded on Tuesday, the 17th day of the World Cup that kicked off on November 20.

In a video message on social media yesterday, the company said it transported a total of 4,427,887 people since the start of the tournament until Tuesday.

Mowasalat (Karwa) buses, along the Metro and tram networks, have been playing a key role in transporting fans to and from stadiums and other places in the country.

Meanwhile, the company

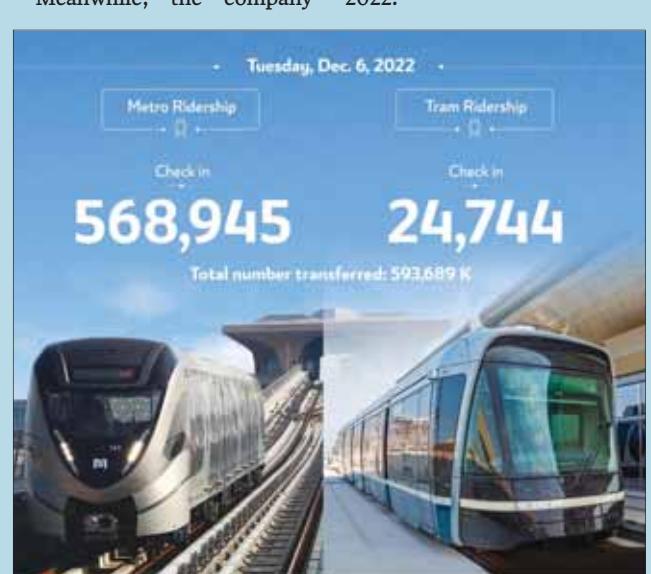
said a total of 2,304 buses were used to transport 233,260 fans on Tuesday.

In a related matter, the Ministry of Transport (MoT) informed through a tweet that a total of 593,689 passengers were ferried by the Doha Metro (568,945) and Lusail Tram (24,744) on Tuesday, while the Education City and Msheireb trams carried 10,976 people on the same day.

Meanwhile, 768 air movements were recorded at Hamad International Airport and Doha International Airport on Tuesday.

Qatar recorded a total of 15,100 air traffic movements as of Tuesday, since the start of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Meanwhile, the company



Qatar Museums installs new public artworks across Doha

As part of its plans to transform the nation's landscape into a vast outdoor art museum experience, Qatar Museums, in collaboration with the Supervisory Committee of Beautification of Roads and Public Places in Qatar (Ashghal), has recently installed several public artworks across Doha.

The newly installed public artworks include:

- Doha Mountains (2022) by Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone, on view along Doha's Ras Abou Aboud beachfront near 974 Stadium, echoes the Olympic Ring colours that encircle the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum.

- The Doha Modern Play-ground (2022), a site-responsive playground inspired by a group of six key modernist buildings in Doha, by Shezad Dawood at Al Masrah Park.

- Monira al-Qadiri's Zephyr (2022) is a large-scale recreation of a microscopic organism seen in fossilised marine algae found in the Arabian Peninsula. The Kuwaiti artist's work is located along the West Bay's North Beach.

- Here We Hear (2022) is a series of sculptures by Korean artist Sukil Seokyeong Kang at Corniche Park. Each individual sculpture provides shelter and an open square where individuals, families, and communities can share their own history. Delvendahl Martin Architects are the executive architects of the project.

- Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto's immersive installation Slug Turtle, TemplaEarth (2022), which pays homage to the natural environment and creates a space for meditation, reflection and communion between visitors and the spirit of the desert. Slug Turtle, TemplaEarth is a structure in Al Zubarah comprising eight football goal frames in an octagonal ring, centred on a ceramic earth globe sculpture and surrounded by a vast surface made of white crocheted netting.

- Al Jassasiya (2022) by Qatari artist Salman al-Malek is



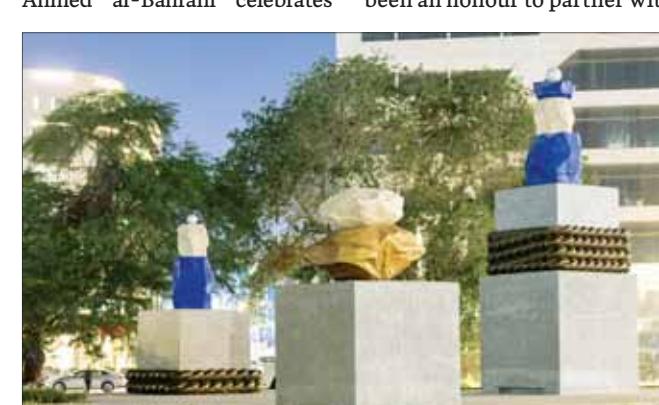
Al Jassasiya by Salman al-Malek.

an installation inspired by the Al Jassasiya site. The Jassasiya area was a seaport, located on the northeast coast of Qatar and the sculpture sits at Al Dastour Plaza.

- Toub Toub Ya Bahar (2022) situated at the Corniche waterfront by Qatari artist Salman al-Malek is inspired by an old song from Qatar and the Gulf. It translates to "Oh sea, have mercy on the sailors!". The song is about 'waiting' and it was sung by women in the community, for their sailors and divers.

- Standing over 21m tall and stretching over 31m long, Jeff Koons's inflatable Dugong (2022) is a mammoth form gliding effortlessly through a marine habitat; a new icon at the Corniche for Doha celebrating Qatar's natural heritage.

- Qatar-based Iraqi artist Ahmed al-Bahrahi celebrates



Milestones by Shua'a Ali.

a Dugong Family in Al Ruwais, highlighting the dugong's significance as part of Qatar's history and commitment to protecting the species.

- Acacia-Tree Seeds (2022) by Qatari Artist Mohamed al-Atiq, symbolises the good and bad nature of human beings and highlights the duality of humanity and art, by depicting the seeds from the Acacia tree.

- Milestones (2022) by Qatari artist Shua'a Ali on Grand Hamad Street is inspired by construction debris and location marks (Neshan) found in both urban and desert environments. The installation is a conceptual representation of an important period in the economic history of Qatar.

- Abdulrahman Ahmed al-Ishad, Qatar Museums' director of Public Art, said: "It has been an honour to partner with

Ashghal to install these incredible artworks by celebrated local, regional and international artists and we thank them for their generous support. Qatar Museums invites residents and visitors to Qatar to experience these pieces, which have transformed Qatar into an outdoor canvas."

Mohamed Arqoub al-Khalidi, chairman of the Supervisory Committee of Beautification of Roads and Public Places in Qatar, added: "Displaying artworks in public places such as parks and beaches is a part of the committee's commitment to increasing the presence of art all around

us. We look forward to further expanding the co-operation between the committee and Qatar Museums in this regard, as this plays a big role in highlighting Qatar's cultural identity to visitors but also benefits the citizens and residents of Qatar."

Throughout 2022, Qatar Museums has installed more than 40 new and commissioned public artworks across Doha in a variety of public spaces including parks and shopping areas, educational and athletic facilities, Hamad International Airport and Qatar Rail stations, as well as select stadiums that are hosting the FIFA World Cup matches.



Toub Toub Ya Bahar by Salman al-Malek.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ABDULLAH SHIKARI SHIKARI

holder of

PAKISTANI Passport No. BV5162722
QID No. 28558605225

hereby change my name

from

ABDULLAH SHIKARI SHIKARI

to

ABDULLAH MOHAMMAD
MOHAMMAD ZEI

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, GULARA TORUN

holder of

AZERBAIJAN Passport No. C01288856
QID No. 27403100019

hereby change my name

from

GULARA TORUN

to

GULARA MEHDIEVA

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

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ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MOHAMMAD SUMONRAJA AKON

holder of

BANGLADESH Passport No. EJ0693948
QID No. 29505000009

hereby change my name

from

MOHAMMAD SUMONRAJA AKON

to

MOHAMMAD SUMON REZA

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Kia model recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Al Attiya Motors and Trading Company, has announced the recall of Kia Carens, 2022-2023 models, due to a possible defect in the airbag control unit that might result in the airbags not deploying in the event of an accident.

The recall campaign comes within the framework of the MoCI's continuous efforts to protect consumers and ensure that dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said it will co-ordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquiries and suggestions through the following channels: call centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, Twitter: @MOCIQATAR, Instagram: MOCIQATAR, MoCI mobile app for android and iOS: MOCIQATAR.



It's going to be a celebration of our fashion, design and technology

■ M7 Director Maha Ghanem al-Sulaiti dilates on the finer points 'Qatar Fashion United' – the world's biggest fashion show – on December 16

On December 16, Doha will host the world's largest fashion show 'Qatar Fashion United' by Carine Roitfeld, as part of the series of cultural events and artistic performances organised by Qatar Creates initiative during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

On the interrelated relationship pitching fashion, culture, music, and sports, the Director of M7 – affiliated with Qatar Museums – Maha Ghanem al-Sulaiti told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that this exceptional global show sheds light on the close relationship between the fashion world and sports, and the impact they have on each other.

Like celebrities, many athletes have become stars and fashion models and have a significant share in the field of publicity and advertising, as well as hiring experts to take care of their appearance and fashion.

At the same time, we see many international fashion houses paying great attention to sports fashion of all kinds, highlighting the role of fashion and sportswear in many international sporting tournaments and events in helping athletes to perform optimally without any difficulty.

She pointed out the awareness of the vital role played by sports – such as football, in improving relations between peoples, understanding and assimilating the culture and traditions of other peoples, and discarding differences between them.

Al-Sulaiti indicated that this major show and rich cultural forum is sponsored by 'Qatar Creates,' which is a cultural initiative that celebrates, promotes, and praises the diversity of cul-

tural activities throughout the year, as well as being a platform for artistic and cultural events and activities in Qatar, which aims to nurture, support and care for talents.

Qatar Creates also allows various groups of residents, tourists, and fans to know about the upcoming cultural activities and enables them to access and attend them, providing them with a magnificent opportunity to watch and enjoy a variety of cultural and entertainment shows throughout the country, noting that – through its co-operation with partners in the museums, film, fashion, hospitality, cultural heritage, performing arts and private sector in Qatar, the initiative seeks to amplify the voice of the creative industries in Qatar, and to connect the public directly with various cultural events and activities.

On the role of M7 in this regard, she indicated that M7 of Qatar Museums is a cultural edifice and a platform for the innovation community and start-ups in Qatar.

M7 represents a space for all those interested in the creative industry, whether they are amateurs or institutions, and it is also an incubator for professional designers looking to seriously expand their business, work co-operatively with experts who provide training and workshops for emerging talents, and other offers that fulfil designers' requirements.

When we bring artists, talents, and designers together in one place, it becomes easier for everyone to get to know what is going on in the business and who is involved in it, thus participate effectively in the process of development and improvement together, she explained.

She said that the M7 aims to bring together all those within the creative scene and help them



Maha Ghanem al-Sulaiti

communicate with each other to develop the creative industry, adding that M7 also works on hosting various events, activities, and fashion and design programmes.

Regarding the position of Qatari designers in this event and the role of M7 in promoting the Qatari culture and identity, M7 Director stressed that – thanks to the attention and care provided by Qatar to the fields of arts, design, and fashion, we now have a young generation of fashion design specialists.

She added that at M7 is keen to nurture talents, innovators, and designers and provide them with all means of support to help them continue their participa-

tion in the process of construction and development.

She pointed out that M7 works hard to highlight the close relationship between fashion, heritage, and identity, as fashion represents the outer expression of the individual's culture and identity.

To preserve heritage and identity, M7 centre will organise several awareness campaigns among young generations to pay attention to local and traditional costumes.

M7 also hosts the 'From the Homeland' exhibition, which reflects the aesthetics of Qatari art with a contemporary touch by the hands of young Qatari designers and innovators incubated by the Nama Center.

The exhibition contributes to strengthening the Qatari identity, introduces the current generation to the heritage of handicrafts, contributes to encouraging entrepreneurs to show contemporary art in a Qatari spirit, and promotes small and micro projects affiliated with the Nama Center.

Al-Sulaiti also revealed the segments of Qatar Fashion United by CR Runway, noting they will include four uniquely designed and arranged sub-shows, including an opening segment in which ambassadors of 32 countries in the World Cup wear custom sports shirts.

Afterwards, two Qatari brands collaborate, namely: Alya al-Obaidi and Harlitz, to present a special show inspired by the craft of searching for pearls. al-Sulaiti noted that the second segment will be a 'world fashion tour,' explaining that it would be a major celebration of the exceptional work of a group of

designers from six continents, while the third and final segment – under the title of 'One Night in Qatar' will be a dazzling show of high-end fashion and evening wear designed exclusively by fashion experts and international brands of fashion shows (Qatar Fashion United).

This segment will introduce the participation of 21 Qatari brands presented by M7, which she described as Qatar's epicentre for innovation and entrepreneurship in design, fashion and technology, she added.

From this standpoint, M7 centre is keen to hold specialised and general workshops that shed light on local fashion and its role in preserving the identity and culture of the nation, while adding a sense of modernism to local fashion, to highlight its beauty, and encourage the younger generation, refine their skills in this field and spread the spirit of innovation among them.

In response to a question about her opinion on the popularity of Qatar's local costumes and clothing among international fans and their interest evident in how men and women are enthusiastically dressed in either the Qatari ghutra or abaya during Qatar's hosting of the World Cup Qatar 2022, al-Sulaiti underlined the sweetness of this gesture, adding that through this event, many designs that will be presented are inspired by the Qatari heritage.

The role of M7 centre is to shed light on the Qatari culture and present it to the world, she said, adding that tourists, visitors and foreign fans have shown a positive response to the Qatari costumes, which is very pleasant and admirable – giving Qatari a sense of pride to belong to this homeland. (QNA)

Katara launches 22 books on World Cup, Qatar players, sports

■ Simulated Maradona goal the highlight at 'Football and Sports Engineering' event

Prof Khaled bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, general manager of the Cultural Village Katara, yesterday released 22 books issued by Katara Publishing House, which deal with the FIFA World Cup since its inception in 1930 and events thereof.

Katara is hosting hundreds of cultural and sports-related events coinciding with the ongoing FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 for visitors and World Cup fans from the world over.

The 22 books by Katara Publishing House contain distinguished sport content and have been produced in "record time" to enrich the sports culture of those interested in football and the history of the World Cup, a press statement notes. All publications are in Arabic, while 10 books have been translated into English. These will be distributed in the VIP seating areas at stadiums where matches are being held and will also be available at the Katara Publishing House.

Among the most important of these publications is the book *World Cup Qatar 2022, Soft Powers in the Middle East*, authored by Dr Khaled al-Jaber, who has touched on the elements of soft power in the modern era, including sports.

The book *Football Stars in Qatar*, written by Prof Maryam al-Nuaimi, deals with the journey of 27 players who formed the first nucleus of football teams in Qatar.

Among the publications is also the book *Sports Engineering in the World Cup 2022* by Khaled Abdel Rahim al-Sayed, which deals with Qatar's facilities for the World Cup, and their connection to sustainability.

Prof al-Sulaiti also inaugurated a Qatar Society of Engineers event – Football & Sports Engineering.

Many major sports institutions and companies are participating in this event, including Paris Saint-Germain, Lusail Football Academy, Escara, and N.S.A Tech, the last two companies specialising in artificial intelligence.

The event includes various paragraphs and activities, including motor activities for children and adults,



Glimpses from the event



and interactive competitions that use artificial intelligence to analyse their results, including a competition to score a goal that simulates one of the most important goals by Argentina legend Diego Maradona.

The companies participating also provide ways to predict potential injuries to players. Through certain measurements, these technologies will help sports clubs avoid the absence of stars for long periods due to injury, the statement adds.

Meanwhile, other cultural, arts and entertainment events continue in all parts of Katara amid the distinguished and high turnout of World Cup fans and visitors.



#Qatar2022ForAll initiative spreads World Cup cheer in refugee camps

The #Qatar2022ForAll initiative is still making headlines in the host countries.

Co-launched by Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) and Qatar Charity (QC) in 16 countries just prior to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the humanitarian initiative is supported by Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), and beIN Sports.

In co-operation with their local partners, QRCS and QC installed dozens of sites with large public screens and amenities to watch the World Cup games; prepared pitches for youth teams to play friendly football matches; and held other entertainment, educational, and sports activities that have the same goals as the

global tournament.

The famous singers and music producers Humood al-Khudher and Maher Zain visited the fan zones at the Zaatari camp in Jordan, where adults and children gather to watch the World Cup matches.

The two men spent six hours at the tents of QRCS and QC.

They had a special evening with the fans watching a couple of World Cup games, in the presence of sportscaster Suwar al-Dahab.

Also, the two singers performed some songs including their masterpiece "Tahayya".

During the half-time, al-Khudher and Zain played a football match with the boys, and the attendance particularly enjoyed Suwar al-Dahab's enthusing voice.

They listened to some children telling their own stories



and dreams, predominantly their wish to continue schooling.

Hajar, the daughter of an assistant nurse at the QRCS-run Qatari Clinics of Zaatari, hoped to bring happiness to the refugees and their children.

90% grade.

Al-Khudher and Zain expressed their appreciation for the warm welcome, and the chance to bring happiness to the refugees and their children.

They thanked QRCS and QC for the creative and touching initiative, which contributed a meaningful humanitarian message to Qatar's success in organising the FIFA World Cup 2022.

QC installed a 700-person tent throughout the tournament and organised Telematch-like competitions and games for school students.

QRCS has another tent, with a

capacity of 500-700 visitors.

Together with Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCs), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Blue Mountain Foundation, QRCS is organising a 10-team football league, which lasts throughout the World Cup.

The two organisations believe that this initiative is part of the humanitarian efforts by Qatar and humanitarian organisations in areas of refugees and displaced people.

Realising the important global sports' goals of alleviating the suffering of vulnerable groups and supporting them physically and mentally, they are organising many sports and entertainment activities, and are creating suitable settings for the beneficiaries to watch football games and share the joy with Qatar and the world. (QNA)

Qatar Charity provides aid to quake-hit in Indonesia

Qatar Charity (QC) has provided urgent relief aid to those affected by the earthquake that hit Indonesia's West Java province. The assistance has benefited more than 4,000 people.

The relief aid, which came with the support of benefactors from Qatar, was delivered to the affected in the villages of West Java to alleviate their suffering.

The aid included food items,

drinking water, hygiene kits, and other items.

Khaled al-Yafei, director of the Emergency and Relief Department at Qatar Charity, said the aid is part of Qatar Charity's humanitarian and moral

duty towards the needy and those affected by disasters and calamities, indicating that such aid is provided through Qatar Charity's field offices worldwide and in co-operation with its local partners.

He added that Qatar Charity distributed aid to 1,000 families in four villages completely affected by the earthquake, which damaged buildings and displaced people from their homes.

Didi Farhan, the head of a beneficiary village, thanked the people of Qatar and Qatar Charity for providing relief aid and mattresses to the affected, indicating that the timely aid fulfilled the essential needs of the beneficiaries, who are unable to meet their basic needs. (QNA)

The goal is to give visually impaired and blind people the same experience as most of us would have at a football stadium," said Kelly, who trained Arsenal star Kieran Tierney and Stoke City defender Harry Souttar, who played for Australia at Qatar 2022, during his time at Celtic.

"The main difference between

normal TV commentary and audio descriptive is the detail you give.

Giving blind fans exceptional World Cup experience

• Doha resident Bryan Kelly discusses his role as audio descriptive commentator during Qatar 2022



Bryan Kelly

You need to describe the distances on the pitch, the players' facial expressions, the number of people in a wall, what type of corner is taken.

It's about trying to paint a picture in people's minds by following the ball and providing as much detail as possible."

An enrichment and personal development teacher at Oryx International School in Barwa City, Kelly had no prior experience of football commentary. But after encouragement from his wife, he signed up for training and was chosen to be part of the Qatar 2022 audio descriptive commentary team.

"Kelly's tournament highlight so far was his commentary debut - at Lusail Stadium on November 22.

"Saudi Arabia versus Argentina was an incredible game," said Kelly. "To start my commenting experience with that match was amazing. I also commented on the Brazil versus Serbia game, which was another great experience, just in terms of the atmosphere the fans created."

Kelly is hoping to continue working as an audio descriptive commentator in future.

"I have loved every second of it and it's something I'd love to continue in the future. It's been lovely for my family too, as they can tune in to the FIFA Interpreting app and hear it back home in Scotland. This service is going from strength to strength, so I'm interested to see how it all develops."

beIN Sports provides World Cup coverage to displaced people

beIN Sports, as the official broadcaster of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and an advocate for creating an inclusive and accessible football tournament for all, has expressed delight that its broadcast coverage is being made available at more than 20 special fan zones catering to thousands of refugees and displaced people across western Asia and North Africa.

Two separate initiatives running in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) – namely the #Qatar2022ForAll initiative and a separate programme of events by the Qatar Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza – are helping ensure that the historic World Cup is available to as

many people in the region as possible.

#Qatar2022ForAll is a humanitarian initiative led by the Qatar Red Crescent Society and Qatar Charity, in partnership with the Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and supported by the Qatar Fund for Development, beIN Sports, and the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy. It involves the creation of dedicated fan zones across a range of countries, including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen. All fan zones feature huge TV screens carrying beIN Sports' extensive coverage.

The aim of the #Qatar2022ForAll initiative is multi-fold with the ultimate objec-

tives being to promote a culture of peace and social integration, enhance the role of sports in alleviating the suffering of affected nations, provide mental support for displaced people and refugees, and share the joy of the first FIFA World Cup held in the region.

Meanwhile, the Qatar Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza organised screenings in the centre of Gaza City and in Ramallah. The fan zone in Gaza can accommodate up to 3,000 fans, while the set-up in Ramallah is able to host a further 1,000 spectators. The result is football fans gathering each night to watch FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 action, with traditional 'dabke'



shows and fireworks also occasionally occurring.

Fans are able to watch the games for free, courtesy of beIN, which collaborated with Qatar to ensure those who live in difficult economic situations in the Mena region can watch the tournament and feel part of this historic hosting of football's grandest showcase taking place in the Arab world for the first time, a press statement notes.

Jassim Abdulrahman al-Mufthah, director of Corporate Communications at beIN Mena, said: "This is a historic World Cup not only for Qatar and the Middle East, but for the entire Arab world, and we are proud to support this generous state initia-

tive. Football's ability to change perceptions, implement societal change, and boost sustainable development is well documented and we are pleased to be able to help provide a little escapism for the millions of refugees and displaced people."

by sharing the joy of the World Cup through our daily coverage.

"As part of its corporate commitment, beIN has always endeavoured to motivate people of all ages, ethnicity, gender and backgrounds with positive, inspiring events and stories by showcasing world class sports and entertainment content that transcends borders and unites people."



LaLiga TwentyNine's Doha brings together Omar Hussain Alfardan, Javier Tebas and Dani García

The LaLiga TwentyNine's Doha sports bar has now been open for two weeks, following its inauguration on November 22, and, to celebrate this, Omar Hussain Alfardan, the president and CEO of Alfardan Group, Javier Tebas, the president of LaLiga, and Dani García, a chef with three Michelin stars to his name, met together. Since its opening, hundreds of people have visited the two-storey space located in Kempinski Residence and Suites, in the heart of Doha, a statement said yesterday. The success of the venue, which has continually attracted both tourists and locals during these past two weeks, has marked a before and after for Doha's sporting and dining venues.

LaLiga, Alfardan Group and Dani García are working together as the driving force behind this sports bar, the first of its kind to open its doors outside of Spain, following the launch of the LaLiga TwentyNine's venues in Tarragona and in Madrid. Together, they have managed to create an interactive leisure and entertainment restaurant, where sports fans can enjoy unique experiences while savouring Michelin-starred cuisine. Each of the partners expressed their satisfaction during an event held there in the presence of La Liga's clubs and Alfardan key officials, at which various national and international sports topics were discussed.

José Manuel Franco, president of Spain's Supreme Council for

Sports and Secretary of State for Sports; Javier Carbajosa, Spanish ambassador to Qatar; and Hussain Omar Alfardan, business operations manager, Alfardan Automobiles were present. In the view of Tebas: "LaLiga TwentyNine's is a key project for us and this has been the first experience of it outside of Spain. This is why it has been so important for us to count on the support and vision of Alfardan Group, with whom excellence and best practice are always guaranteed. If the wonderful chef Dani García is then involved too, the result is a unique venue to enjoy great experiences surrounded by the best of sport and gastronomy."

Chef García, who has put together the venue's kitchen,

is also very excited about the project and said: "The success of this space lies in the fact that it is unique. We have been able to craft the perfect atmosphere so that football fans can enjoy the best sport in the world while tasting Spanish cuisine, which is one of the best in the world."

With the World Cup having turned Qatar into the sporting capital of the planet for a few weeks, this has contributed to the success of LaLiga TwentyNine's. Even once the tournament is over, this sports bar will remain open to offer both visitors and locals the best gastronomy and a space to enjoy the best sporting competitions, both local and international, the statement added.



(Right to left) Javier Tebas, José Manuel Franco, Javier Carbajosa, Omar Alfardan, Hussain Omar Alfardan, and chef Dani García at the event.

Qur'anic Botanic Garden donates seedlings to decorate stadiums



The Qur'anic Botanic Garden (QBG), part of Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), has donated a large collection of tree seedlings and saplings that the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy will use to decorate stadiums and facilities hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The initiative is part of the long-standing 'Ghars' campaign launched by QBG after Qatar secured the bid to host the World Cup.

The campaign will result in the planting of 2,022 trees by the time the FIFA World Cup 2022 ends, in a symbolic move that projects to the world Qatar's commitment to the environment.

Mohamed Hassouna, a hor-

ticultural expert at QBG, noted that the "ongoing co-operation between the Garden and the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy reflects the extent of integration and co-ordination among all state institutions to leverage the 2022 World Cup to build a sustainable legacy for Qatar and the entire Arab region."

"Since its inception, the Ghars campaign has inspired many green initiatives in Qatar at the national, institutional, and personal levels. Many similar campaigns have been already launched as a result, reflecting the success of the campaign and its impact on society and the environment," Hassouna said.

Japanese envoy lauds FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Despite their heartbreaking loss to Croatia, the Samurai-Blue and Japanese supporters have left a very strong and positive impression about Japan during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar on and off the pitch through their actions, Japanese ambassador Satoshi Maeda has said.

The envoy told *Gulf Times* that since the start of the tournament, he read many articles mentioning the politeness and discipline of the Japanese people such as the team members cleaning their locker room after the matches while supporters cleaned the stadium before leaving.

"This small act of respect towards the place that we visit is actually instilled in every Japanese since early childhood. That's our long time tradition and there is no surprise when they do the same thing after football games."

"But I'm so happy to see that many people praised their activity and as we have seen later on, many other fans from different countries were inspired by the Japanese fans and started to do the same after each game. So I'm happy that this started a good tradition in football games," Maeda said.

The envoy lauded the Japanese team's performance, saying it was impressive and surprised their fans after winning the top spot in Group E, which was also known as "Group of Death".

The Japanese team played with high spirits, shrewd tactics and staged a stunning win over Germany and Spain – both



Japanese ambassador Satoshi Maeda.

World Cup champions – and advanced to the round of 16, Maeda recalled.

"The defeat against Croatia was heartbreaking indeed but we found our solace in the fact that the team gave 110% of their effort and gave us one of their best performances ever, relentlessly fighting to the end but luck was not on our side this time."

"I'm very proud of them for their great performance in the four matches they have played and would like them to return home with pride and a smile on their faces. In fact, at this rate, I'm confident that Japan will advance much further in the upcoming World Cup to the semi-finals or perhaps even further," he added.

Maeda lauded the organising of the World Cup in Qatar, saying "the tournament has definitely exceeded all my expectations."

"The world cup of firsts" as they say, it's

the first FIFA World Cup with teams from all continents in the round of 16, at the same time, Japan, Australia and Korea Republic have also made Asian football confederation record for reaching knockout stages, Japan winning over two World Cup Champions Germany and Spain...it has certainly been a wonderful journey so far," he said.

The Japanese ambassador cited the state-of-the-art stadiums, excellent transport network, and various cultural experiences, which captured the attention and hearts of the fans who have come to support their teams.

He said throughout the tournament, everything proved to be functional and the compact nature of the tournament has turned it into an exceptional experience that is difficult to be repeated again, especially in light of FIFA's decision to increase the number of participating teams in the upcoming tournaments.

"I sincerely believe that Qatar should be proud of this achievement as should be all the Arab countries. This is the true legacy that Qatar will leave on for the future generations," Maeda said.

About plans by the Japanese government to host the FIFA World Cup in the future, he said it won't be a surprise if Japan looks forward to hosting the event due to the rising popularity of football in Japan – boosted by the FIFA World Cup (hosted jointly with the Republic of Korea in 2002).

"Although, I honestly don't have any information on the subject so far. On the other side, should Japan ever be awarded the right to host the FIFA World Cup, I'm certain that we have a lot to learn from Qatar in terms of the compact and sustainable nature of the World Cup Qatar 2022," Maeda added.

David Beckham explores Education City's accessibility initiatives

On a tour to explore the most prominent art landmarks in Qatar Foundation (QF) and the accessibility services provided on the fans' journey to the Education City stadium, David Beckham, former captain of England's football team, was impressed by the accessibility services offered at QF, especially the sensory rooms.

On his visit to different venues in Education City, as well as the route leading to the Education City stadium, Beckham tested some of the services that are available to fans with different needs and abilities, a statement said yesterday.

"The interactive features inside the sensory mobile trailer caters to different sensory needs for children," said Beckham. "And because each of us responds differently to stimulations, the sensory mobile trailer provides a variety of elements to help fans take a break from the loud atmosphere of a game."

The ace footballer commented on the accessibility that Education City stadium offers for fans during this World Cup. He said: "This is an example of the power of sport and the power of this tournament. It's great that there are all of these offerings for children with different needs, where they have the chance to attend games in football stadiums in comfort, and also have somewhere to get away from the hectic side of a



football match with their families."

Beckham's tour at Education City included a stop at the art installation titled "Come Together" by the South Korean artist Choi Jeong Hwa, which symbolises the joy of the people of Qatar, and of the fans, realising their dream of Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Another stop took him to the GOALS exhibition at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, a QF partner where he saw photos and videos capturing stories from the lives of people in Qatar during the build-up to the World Cup.

Beckham – who is involved in grassroots football nurturing future talent through Academy systems – shared a message to young people who dream of

playing football in their futures: "You need to be dedicated to work hard, and you will have to make sacrifices sometimes. But the most important thing that I always tell every child I talk to about the game – boys and girls – is to have fun. It's the most important part of sports and football. If they're not enjoying doing what they do, then they're doing the wrong thing."

Zimbabwean mother and son proud of World Cup role

A mother and son from Zimbabwe are part of the 20,000-strong volunteer team at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Rufaro Makambira-Chindalo is supporting operations at the Main Media Centre, while her son Kundai is a spectator services volunteer at Khalifa International Stadium, one of eight state-of-the-art venues hosting Qatar 2022 matches.

Rufaro has become a seasoned volunteer since moving to Doha in 2019 to work as a support teacher for disabled children at Cardiff International School. She has previously volunteered at numerous football tournaments in Qatar, including the CAF Super Cup, AFC Champions League, Amir Cup and FIFA Arab Cup.

"Volunteering has increased my confidence and helped me become comfortable approaching people and striking up conversations. Immersing myself in volunteering also helped me understand and appreciate the local culture here in Qatar. I was struck by how lovely and welcoming everyone is," said Rufaro, whose role is based at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

Rufaro's experiences encouraged Kundai, an undergraduate who lives in Harare, Zimbabwe, to volunteer at last year's FIFA Arab Cup, with an eye on being a part of the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world.

Rufaro added: "The skills, experience and social interactions



are priceless. I wanted Kundai to have all these experiences. I know volunteering would help him grow and develop, and feel a sense of pride and fulfillment."

Kundai is enjoying his stint at Khalifa International Stadium, which will host the third-place play-off on December 17, after staging seven matches up to the Round of 16 stage.

"I love helping people and my role at Khalifa International Stadium is all about assisting fans in the stadium. Volunteering has helped improve my communication and networking skills, and given me so much confidence – I am really enjoying meeting people from all over the world," said Kundai, a student at Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University.

"I want fans to have a great experience and for my interactions to have a positive impact on them. I am also a big football fan so to be part of this tourna-

ment is a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Kundai went on to say volunteering will support his education and career prospects.

"I am a sports co-ordinator at my university in Zimbabwe and when I go back I intend to share the knowledge I have gained in Qatar – skills like teamwork, organising and strategies," said Kundai, who is studying to obtain a humanity and social sciences degree. "My goal is to become a social entrepreneur – someone who positively impacts society – and all these skills will be priceless."

Speaking about the opportunity to be part of a global mega-event alongside her son, Rufaro said: "It is amazing – so very special. The World Cup will not just leave a lasting legacy for Qatar and the Arab region, it will also leave a lasting legacy for our family."

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GULF TIMES

What the COP15 biodiversity conference must do

In Montreal this fortnight, governments lock heads at the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP15 summit in the hope for a global deal to put the world's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. We cannot afford for this conference to be treated as a sideshow or afterthought to COP27. The biodiversity crisis is no less important than the climate crisis, and it is escalating quickly. It must be a top political priority for all countries.

Given the current rates of biodiversity loss, some scientists estimate that we are on track to lose three-quarters of the world's species within only a few centuries. This mass extinction and the ongoing threat to ecosystems and habitats is inextricably linked to climate change. That is why world leaders must come to COP15 with high ambitions and set a mandate for successful negotiations.

To succeed, COP15 must not only deliver an agreement on the overall mission. It also must set clearly defined goals and establish concrete plans to protect 30% of all land and ocean areas by 2030. Hopefully, leaders have come to Montreal with both the national plans and the financing needed to advance these objectives.

We understand both the value of nature and what we stand to lose when it is eroded. We also have come to appreciate what we can learn from those with the closest relationship to the land. Many indigenous communities had been warning of an ecological crisis for decades, only to have their voices and rights dismissed.

Nature loss hurts people everywhere. It is already harming human health, reducing air quality, undermining our ability to grow food or obtain water, exacerbating extreme weather events, and weakening our ability to mitigate or adapt to climate change. These problems make biodiversity loss a security issue. Continued damage to our ecosystems is one of the biggest long-term risks to our societies.

With time running out, world leaders must nurture the spirit of co-operation in Montreal

As an economic matter, the collapse of certain essential ecosystems is all it would take to push countries like mine into bankruptcy. Consider, for example, that around 75% of food crops rely on animal pollinators such as bees, birds, and butterflies. The loss of all animal pollinators seems unthinkable, yet it is a real threat. And if food becomes scarcer, the poorest will suffer first.

Moreover, the destruction of habitats is a serious public-health threat, not least because it is bringing humans and animals into closer and more frequent contact. The World Health Organisation warns that this is both causing existing infectious diseases to spread more quickly and accelerating the emergence of novel zoonotic pathogens.

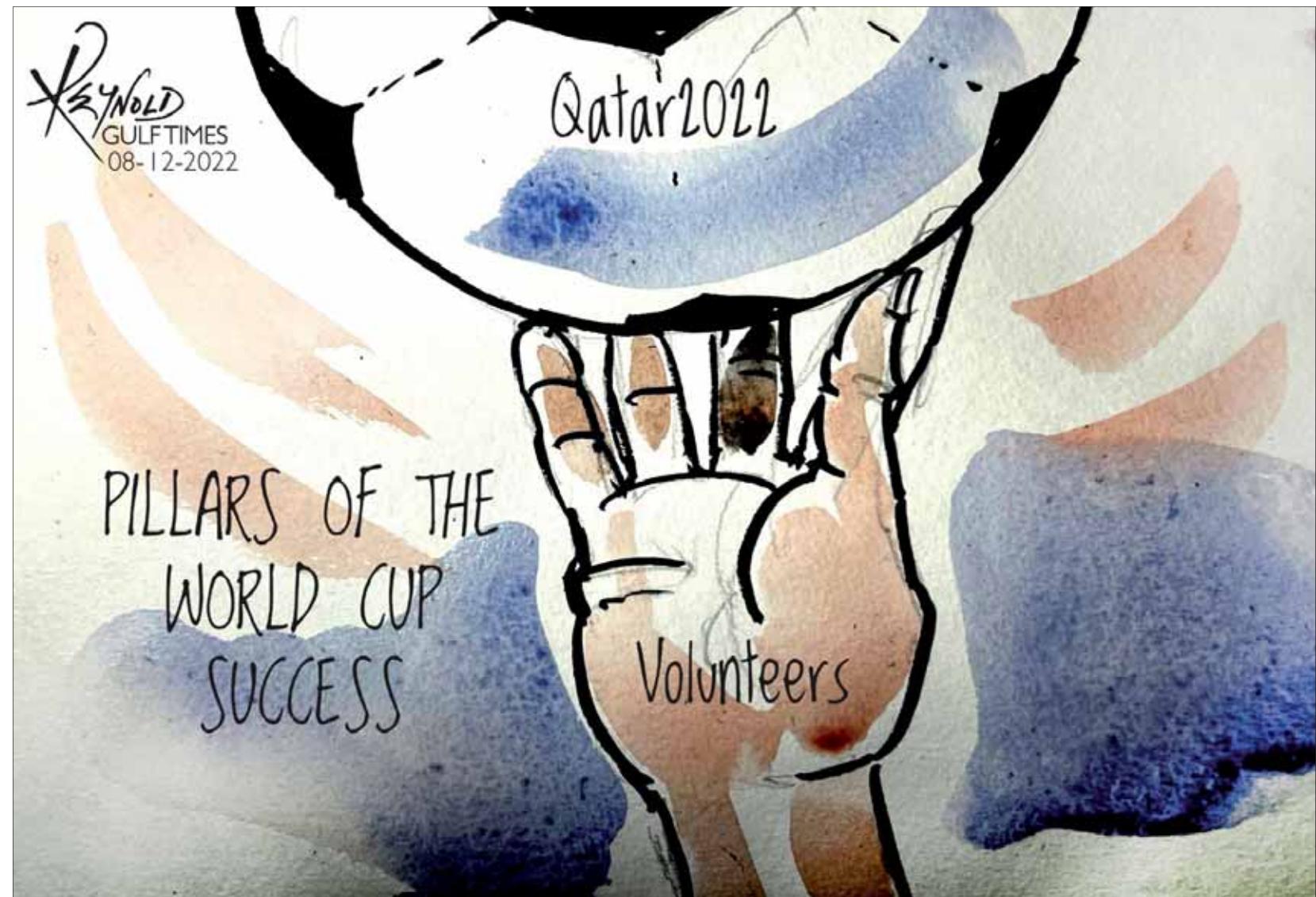
Finally, not only is climate change one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss; the destruction of ecosystems is undermining the planet's ability to neutralise the effects of greenhouse-gas emissions. South America's Andean forests, for example, act as critical carbon sinks, absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide that would otherwise be hastening the pace of global warming.

Forests, wetlands, underwater kelp forests, mangroves, and other natural systems also provide protection from extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, and storms, by acting as natural buffers or reservoirs. Biodiversity loss not only makes climate change worse, but also eliminates our best line of defence against it.

COP15 offers a major opportunity for governments to achieve a breakthrough – equivalent to the 2015 Paris climate agreement – that unites the world behind one mission: to halt, and ideally reverse, biodiversity loss by the end of this decade.

To be sure, the current effort suffers from a lack of high-level political engagement, leading many to question why we have two separate convention processes for issues that go hand in hand. They are right to wonder. Looking ahead, both conventions should come together, in recognition of the fact that climate change and biodiversity loss must be addressed in tandem.

In the meantime, though, we cannot afford further delay on setting ambitious targets to protect and restore biodiversity this decade. The recent "loss and damage" agreement at COP27 demonstrated that, with sufficient resolve, countries can work together on seemingly intractable issues. With time running out, world leaders must nurture this spirit of co-operation in Montreal. – Project Syndicate



The silent progressive majority

By Joseph E Stiglitz
New York

The world heaved a sigh of relief when the feared "red wave" of Republican victories in the US midterms failed to materialise. While the Republicans took the House of Representatives by a narrow margin, the Democrats held on to the Senate. American voters seemed to reject Republican extremism and hypocrisy, denying victories to the many Donald Trump-backed candidates who had lied about the outcome of the 2020 election and called into question fundamental democratic principles.

To be sure, there is always a danger of misreading an election outcome, given the complexity of factors motivating individuals' votes. But from my perspective, the average rational voter will have recognised the Democrats' historic successes from the past two years. Thanks to US President Joe Biden's recovery bill (the American Rescue Plan), the United States had the strongest recovery of any of the world's advanced economies, reducing childhood poverty by almost half in the space of a year.

Biden also oversaw the passage of the first major infrastructure bill in decades; America's first major legislative response to climate change, the Inflation Reduction Act; and a major industrial-policy bill, the CHIPS and Science Act, which explicitly recognises the government's key role in shaping the economy. And these landmark bills all passed despite a historically unwieldy Congress.

Nor were Biden's accomplishments limited to legislation. He appointed the

first black woman to the US Supreme Court, and he issued executive orders to alleviate student-loan debt, to improve antitrust enforcement, and to update financial regulations for the era of climate change. He brought America back into the Paris climate agreement and made notable gains in restoring American leadership on the world stage. Though he has gotten very little credit for it, history will likely show that his management of the Russia-Ukraine issue has been masterful.

Now that the American electorate appears to have rejected Republican extremism, some will argue that Biden should tack right to capture the elusive middle. But that is the wrong way to read the 2022 midterm result.

Centrism is the wrong approach to most other big issues facing voters. It is not left-wing extremism to note that the American economy has not been serving most Americans. And the sense of injustice is compounded by the fact that we should be doing much better than we are. The US is an extraordinarily wealthy country, and far wealthier than many other countries that are providing better living conditions for their citizens. America's failures are a matter of choice. Or, more accurately, they are the result of decisions made by a political system that does not reflect the interests of the majority of its citizens, because it has been captured to serve special interests.

Hence, while an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that the federal minimum wage should be increased sharply – at least doubled – it has not been raised since 2009. Likewise, most Americans believe that everyone should have access to

healthcare as a basic human right, even if they differ over the best way to deliver it. It is also generally agreed that everyone who is able to benefit from a college education should be able to pursue one, regardless of their parents' income, and without being burdened with tens of thousands of dollars of debt. And all Americans want a secure retirement and access to decent affordable housing.

It is not left-wing extremism to demand policy solutions to these problems, or to protect our environment, enhance our economic security, strengthen competition, and ensure that everyone's voice is heard in our political system. While those on the right try to paint this progressive agenda as radical overreach, most voters aren't buying it. If anything, the progressive agenda has become a centrist agenda.

One basic principle underpinning the progressive agenda is that most big problems – especially in the twenty-first century – are best tackled collectively, rather than individually. Another principle is that successful collective action must be arrived at democratically and inclusively.

The isolated farmers of the past may have been rugged individualists, but even they needed collective action to protect themselves from theft and violence, and government regulations to ensure the proper functioning of the markets in which they traded. Today, we face natural disasters, pandemics, and climate change – all threats that transcend individuals and borders.

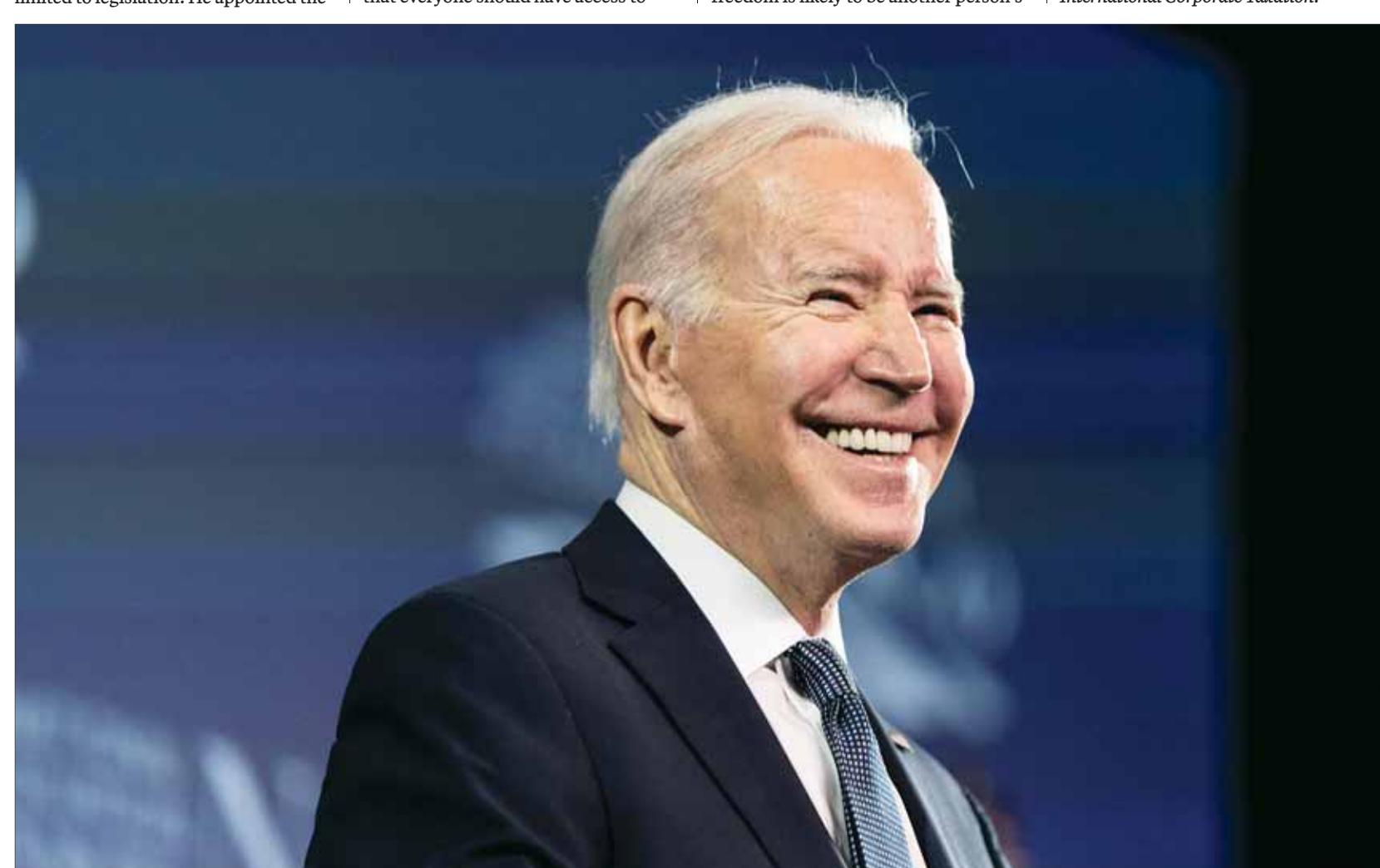
Today's techno-libertarians ignore all this, because they fail to see – or refuse to accept – that one person's freedom is likely to be another person's

unfreedom. One person's right not to wear a mask or not to be vaccinated impinges on another's right to safety from a contagious virus. An individual's right to carry an AR-15 has all too often impinged on many other individuals' right to live. When asked to weigh these rights, most reasonable people will come down clearly on one side.

Innovative, well-designed public policy can enhance everyone's scope of action, radically expanding the realm of freedom. There is a subtle irony here: by forcing people to pay taxes, we can expand the opportunities available to them. Everyone can – and mostly does – benefit. Of course, everyone naturally would prefer that others' bear the burden of taxes – what economists call the free-rider problem – but even in our divided society, I think there is widespread agreement that those who are more able to pay taxes, by dint of having more, should bear a greater proportion of the burden.

The 2022 election shows, at a minimum, that a large share of the electorate wants to move on from Trumpian politics. They sense the challenges ahead, and that we can do a better job of addressing them together through civil, informed debate. Americans are tired of the name-calling and the scare tactics. Whether they realise it or not, most Americans support a progressive agenda and its promise to deliver higher living standards for all. – Project Syndicate

• Joseph E Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, is University Professor at Columbia University and a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.



IN Hindsight: Though he has gotten very little credit for it, history will likely show that President Joe Biden's management of the Russia-Ukraine issue has been masterful, according to the author.

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**Mozambique
ex-president's
son, ex-spy bosses
jailed for 12 years
for corruption**

A Mozambican court yesterday sentenced two ex-spy bosses and the son of a former president to 12 years each for their part in a corruption scandal in which the government sought to conceal huge debts, triggering financial havoc. The former head of security and intelligence, Gregorio Leao; the head of the economic intelligence division, Antonio do Rosario; and ex-president Armando Guebuza's son, Ndambo Guebuza, were among 19 defendants accused in the country's biggest graft scandal. Eight defendants were acquitted while the rest were handed terms ranging between 10 and 12 years in a verdict that took the judge a week to read out.

"The crimes committed have brought consequences whose effects will last for generations," said Judge Efigenio Baptista, addressing a packed courtroom located in the grounds of a high-security jail in the capital Maputo.

The scandal arose after state-owned companies in the impoverished country illicitly borrowed \$2bn (€1.9bn) in 2013 and 2014 from international banks to buy a tuna-fishing fleet and surveillance vessels.

The government masked the loans from parliament and the public. When the "hidden debt" finally surfaced in 2016, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other donors cut off financial support, triggering a sovereign debt default and currency collapse.

Taliban publicly execute murder accused

The Taliban administration yesterday put to death a man accused of murder in western Afghanistan, its spokesperson said, the first officially confirmed public execution since the hardline group seized power last year.

The execution in Farah province was of a man accused of stabbing another man to death in 2017, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said, and was attended by senior Taliban officials.

The execution was carried out by the father of the victim, who shot the man three times, Mujahid added in a subsequent statement.

The case was investigated by three courts and authorised by the Taliban's supreme spiritual leader, who is based in the southern province of Kandahar, said Mujahid.

More than a dozen senior Taliban officials attended the execution, Mujahid said, including acting interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani and acting deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghani Baradar, as well as Afghanistan's chief justice, acting foreign minister and acting education minister.

Lightning killed 907 people in India this year

India saw a big jump in extreme weather events such as heatwaves and lightning strikes this year and related deaths rose to their highest in three years, government data showed yesterday, with scientists blaming climate change for the heavy toll. There were nearly eight times as many heatwaves, 27 in all, and lightning strikes rose more than 111 times, killing 907 people, the Ministry of Earth Sciences said in a report to parliament. Thunderstorms increased more than five times to 240. This year's 2,183 deaths due to such events until last month were the highest since 2019's 3,017. Lightning and floods and heavy rains accounted for 78% of the deaths this year, the data showed. Temperatures during India's monsoon season have risen this century and the country could see more frequent heatwaves in future, the government said in August. India is the world's third-largest carbon polluter, though its per-capita emissions are much lower than many developed countries.

The country of nearly 1.4bn suffered its hottest March in more than a century and temperatures were unusually high in April and May, blamed mainly on climate change.

Germany foils bizarre coup plot by far-right group

AFP
Frankfurt

A prince, an ex-MP and former soldiers were arrested yesterday in raids led by the German police against members of a far-right "terror group" that allegedly planned to attack parliament and overthrow the government.

The group had organised a "council" to take charge after the putsch, as well as a "military arm that would build a new German army", chief federal prosecutor Peter Frank said at a press conference.

"Some members of the terrorist organisation also considered using force to enter the German Bundestag (parliament)," Frank said.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier told public radio MDR he was "deeply concerned" by the alleged plot, describing it as a "new level".

Around 3,000 officers including elite anti-terror units took part in the early morning raids and searched more than 130 properties, in what German media described as one of the country's largest ever police actions against extremists.

The raids targeted alleged members of the "Citizens of the Reich" (Reichsbuerger) movement, federal prosecutors said in a statement.

The prosecutors in Karlsruhe, southern Germany, said they had arrested 25 people, including one in Austria and another in Italy, and identified a further 27 people as suspected members or supporters of the network.

Those arrested are accused of having formed a group that "had set itself the goal of overcoming the existing state order in Germany and replacing it with their own kind of state", they said.

"The accused are united by a deep rejection of state institutions and the free, democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany" they said.

The suspects were aware that their plan "could only be realised by using military means and violence against state representatives", prosecutors said.

They allegedly planned to appoint one of the arrested suspects, identified by local media as aristocrat and businessman Prince Heinrich XIII Reuss, as Germany's new leader after the coup.

Heinrich XIII had already sought to make contact with Russian officials to discuss Germany's "new state order" after the coup, prosecutors said.

There was however "no indication that the contact persons responded positively to his request", they said.

A Russian woman named only as Vitalia B., who was among those arrested yesterday, is suspected of having facilitated those contacts, prosecutors added.



Police escort a person after 25 suspects were detained during raids across Germany, in Karlsruhe yesterday. (Reuters)

Birgit Malsack-Winkemann, a former member of parliament for the far-right AfD party and Berlin judge, was also among those arrested.

The ex-MP had been tapped by the group to take over as justice minister after the planned coup, chief prosecutor Frank said.

Other suspected members include current and former members of the German army in the "low single digits",

a spokesman for the defence ministry said at a regular press conference.

One of those arrested was an active soldier in the KSK special forces, who worked in a "support" role, the spokesman said.

"A former officer of the special units of the German army" was likewise held near Perugia, Italy, the local police said in a statement.

The Reichsbuerger movement in-

cludes far-right extremists, conspiracy theorists and gun enthusiasts who reject the legitimacy of the modern German republic.

Its followers generally believe in the continued existence of the pre-World War I German Reich, or empire, under a monarchy and several groups have declared their own states.

Long dismissed as malcontents and oddballs, the Reichsbuerger have become increasingly radicalised in recent years and are seen as a growing security threat.

The investigation gave "a look into the abyss" of far-right terror from the movement, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said in a statement.

According to prosecutors, the terror cell suspects believe in Reichsbuerger and QAnon conspiracy theories and are "strongly convinced" that Germany is run by a "deep state" that needs to be toppled.

As part of the preparations for the coup, members of the alleged terror cell acquired weapons, organised shooting practice and tried to recruit new followers, particularly among the military and police, according to prosecutors.

Germany considers far-right terrorism the biggest threat to its security following a spate of attacks in recent years. In April, police foiled a plot by a far-right group to kidnap the health minister.

China loosens Covid restrictions

China announced yesterday a nationwide loosening of its hardline Covid restrictions that had bruised the world's second biggest economy and ignited rare protests against the ruling Communist Party.

The new rules are a major relaxation of President Xi Jinping's signature zero-Covid policy, three years into the pandemic and long after the rest of the world had largely learnt to live with the virus.

Xi will hold bilateral talks with Saudi Arabia and Riyadh will later host a wider meeting with Gulf Arab states and a summit with Arab leaders which will be "an epoch-making milestone in the history of the development of China-Arab relations", foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

Beijing hopes it will make a strong statement on strengthening "unity and co-operation", Mao added.

For Riyadh, frustrated by what it sees as Washington's gradual disengagement from the Middle East and a slow erosion of its security guarantees, China offers an opportunity for economic gains without the tensions which have come to cloud the US relationship.

"Beijing does not burden its partners with demands or political expectations and refrains from interfering in their internal affairs," Saudi columnist Abdulrahman al-Rashed wrote in the Saudi-owned *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (right) being received by the Governor of Riyadh province Prince Faisal bin Bandar al-Saud at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh yesterday. (AFP)

ture in the Gulf. Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said yesterday that Riyadh would remain a "trusted and reliable" energy partner for Beijing and that the two countries would boost co-operation in energy supply chains by establishing a regional centre in the kingdom for Chinese factories.

Saudi Arabia is China's top oil supplier and Xi's visit takes place while

uncertainty hangs over energy markets after Western powers imposed a price cap on sales of oil from Russia, which has been increasing volumes to China with discounted oil.

The Chinese delegation is expected to sign deals worth \$30bn with Riyadh, Saudi state media had said.

Xi was met on arrival by the governor of Riyadh, the kingdom's foreign

minister and the governor of sovereign wealth fund PIF. The Saudi cabinet was meeting yesterday to approve the 2023 state budget of the world's top oil exporter.

Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman is expected to offer Xi a lavish welcome, in contrast with the low-key reception for US President Joe Biden whose centrist policies formed the backdrop for a strained meeting in July.

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Montreal 'last chance' biodiversity talks open



High-stakes UN biodiversity talks opened in Montreal yesterday, in what is being billed as the "last best chance" to save the planet's species and ecosystems from irreversible human destruction. Delegates from across the world gathered for the December 7-19 meeting to try to hammer out a new deal for nature: a 10-year framework aimed at saving the planet's forests, oceans and species before it's too late. "This meeting is our chance to move from disharmony to harmony – to stop this orgy of destruction, and to conclude a peace pact with nature," said Huang Runqiu, minister of ecology and environment of China, which is chairing the talks.

The head of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) urged negotiators to land a strong framework for nature.

"We have now been negotiating for a long, long time. Everyone speaks of compromise, but we are not moving fast enough," Inger Andersen said at the opening.

"Nature and biodiversity are dying the death of a billion cuts and humanity is paying the price for betraying our closest friend." The official opening of the COP15 meeting follows several days of pre-negotiations that saw little progress on key issues, sparking fears parties may walk away without a good deal.

Observers called for negotiators to urgently unblock sticking points on difficult items like finance and

implementation, with only five out of more than 20 targets agreed so far. The summit "is probably the last best chance for governments to turn things around for nature, and to rescue our precious life support system," Bernadette Fischler Hooper, head of international advocacy at WWF, told reporters Tuesday. Draft targets for the 10-year framework include a cornerstone pledge to protect 30 percent of the world's land and seas by 2030, eliminating harmful fishing and

agriculture subsidies and tackling invasive species and reducing pesticides. Finance is among the most divisive issues, as developing nations are demanding increased funding for conservation. Earlier this year, a coalition of nations

called for wealthy countries to provide at least \$100bn annually – rising to \$700bn a year by 2030 – for biodiversity. Some countries want to set up a separate funding mechanism for biodiversity, which wealthy nations have largely resisted.

The sticky issue of biopiracy is also causing roadblocks, as many mainly African countries demand that wealthy nations share the benefits of ingredients and formulas used in cosmetics and medicines derived from the Global South.

Implementation has emerged as another sticking point in recent days, with disagreements over how to ensure any final deal is put into practice – unlike its predecessor agreed in 2010.

"There is significant resistance to having the robust monitoring and review mechanisms that we feel is necessary," said a European source close to negotiations.

The meeting, delayed two years because of the Covid-19 pandemic, follows crucial climate change talks in Egypt last month that ended with little headway on reducing emissions and scaling down the use of planet-warming fossil fuels.

China is chair, though it is being hosted in Canada because of Beijing's long-standing zero-Covid policy. But China's President Xi Jinping will be a no-show – along with all other world leaders apart from Canada's Trudeau – opting to visit Saudi Arabia this week instead.



Kahramaa, SC launch 'Sustainability Zone' initiative for World Cup fans



The Qatar General Electricity & Water Corp (Kahramaa), in co-operation with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), launched the 'Sustainability Zone' initiative in the Kahramaa Awareness Park, to introduce the FIFA World Cup fans to the environmental sustainability efforts associated with the tournament.

The initiative will help brief fans on the various projects, initiatives and operations led by Kahramaa and the SC in sustainability and combating climate change over the past 10 years.

The opening saw the display of a mural telling the history of electricity and water in Qatar and the launch of Carbon Zone and climate change in the park's inner building, which includes a dome that displays the climate change impacts and the danger of carbon emissions to life, along

with a number of devices to educate visitors on how to calculate their carbon footprint, and explain the elements of a healthy, balanced and sustainable lifestyle, in an interactive, entertaining and educational manner.

The activities and sections of the Sustainability Zone are designed to raise the level of environmental awareness among attendees, by introducing them to the latest methods, practices and technologies used to increase energy efficiency, rationalise consumption, and reduce carbon emissions, and inform them of various initiatives aimed at protecting the environment and contributing to the achievement of sustainability goals in a bid to reach carbon neutrality.

The initiative also includes a section dedicated to recycling, in co-operation with the Seashore Company, where it presents

modern recycling mechanisms, arts and other related initiatives.

A variety of sustainability products are also available in the Sustainability Bazaar.

Kahramaa President Issa bin Hilal al-Kuwari said in his opening speech that this initiative represents an opportunity to inform the world of the great efforts made by Qatar to achieve environmental sustainability, within the framework of the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and Qatar National Strategy for Environment and Climate Change 2021-2026.

He added that the World Cup 2022 hosting represented a great opportunity to push sustainability efforts forward, and accelerate the transition to renewable energy sources and less harmful carbon emissions, as sustainability and carbon neutrality were among the main axes in the World Cup bid.

For his part, HE Hassan al-Thawadi, Secretary-General of the SC, said Kahramaa "contributed to the success of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 by providing us with the electricity and water needs of the tournament".

He expressed pleasure at at-

tending the inauguration ceremony of the Sustainability Zone, which he believes will contribute to informing all visitors and residents of Qatar about the achievements of the SC in this context.

This includes displaying 3D models of World Cup stadiums, all their sustainability aspects, and initiatives with a number of sustainability partners in Qatar, such as the Seashore Group's plastic recycling initiative, and other initiatives related to energy efficiency, renewable energy and electric vehicles.

In this regard, he highlighted the presence of a giant screen showing the tournament matches so that the attendees could enjoy it in an enthusiastic atmosphere, after which he would continue his journey with sustainability in Kahramaa Awareness Park.

Bodour al-Meer, SC Sustainability executive director, said: "The Tarsheed 22 programme for renewable energy for schools, which was launched in 2017, was the beginning of the co-operation with Kahramaa. Since then, many joint projects have been presented between the committee."

Supreme Projects & Legacy and Kahramaa, as an example of which Kahramaa contributes to reducing the use of temporary

diesel power generators in all World Cup stadiums, by expanding the network, and providing us with the necessary energy during the tournament. In addition, the Qatar General Electricity & Water Corp installed stations Charging electric cars at all stadium sites.

The Kahramaa Awareness Park is open for visitors until Dec 18, from 8am to 12noon, and from 4-8pm.



Puppet show teaches kids how to pull strings

The performances of the play "Tournament Journey" presented by the team of "Puppet Space" are ongoing within the events of the Theatre Affairs Centre at Darb Al Saai amid a festive atmosphere with a huge turnout of children.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), director of the puppet show Mohamed Ali bin Hamouda said that the show has a major significance in developing the language and listening skills, where playing with puppets helps develop the language for children and assists them to overcome their shyness to engage in conversations with the others, in addition to upgrading the listening skills of children, because puppets in theatre narrate stories and incidents with an attractive style and promote confidence in children, as well as

trigger imagination and innovation for them.

The show was intended to present an artist's work that combines the actor and the puppet to be ingrained in the children's memory, and it is inspired by the incidents we live and the dream of hosting the World Cup, as the "Tournament Journey" play narrates a child's journey with his friends from puppets that seek to attain the opening match in the World Cup and watch the national football team, where they travel in a journey with the children spectators to another stadium of the eight stadiums dedicated to the world cup, and indirect information is offered on the aesthetics of these stadiums, designs, stadium's history and the number of fans it accommodates, he said.

He indicated that the play

presents a cultural, educational and recreational message to the children through which they get familiarised with the use of puppets, pointing out that the blend in the play show between the human actor and puppet is a catalyst to expand the imagination for children, adding that the centre also presents another play titled "Realise Your Dream" which shows how family can back the ambitions of sons and daughters, in addition to presenting a myriad of workshops that target children aged 3 to 14, and are considered a combination of various hand and finger puppets, as per age category to educate them on the mechanisms of moving the puppets through selection of appropriate things from the environment. (QNA)

A number of visitors stressed that the celebration is an incentive to achieve Qatar's vision, renew loyalty to the wise leadership, work hard, and continue the path of achievements that placed Qatar in the ranks of developed countries. Also, they said that the country is experiencing a state of joy and pride in its achievements, and that the activities held at Darb Al Saai reflect those achievements. This is in addition to the heritage activi-

ties that celebrate the country's glorious history. Visitors are keen to purchase heritage holdings that have historical significance related to the Qatari house in the auction that is held in the main courtyard of Darb Al Saai, near Gate 2.

The auction supervisor, Hisham Naanous, said that the



Big turnout for Darb Al Saai activities

Darb Al Saai activities have emerged as a major attraction for a large number of visitors for the various cultural and heritage events held by the Organising Committee for the National Day 2022 celebrations, under the slogan "Our Unity Source of Our Strength" in Umm Salal.

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The auction supervisor, Hisham Naanous, said that the

idea of the auction in Darb Al Saai reminds of the Qatari heritage, where ancient heritage holdings related to the Qatari house are displayed, with the auction being presented in the old auction method.

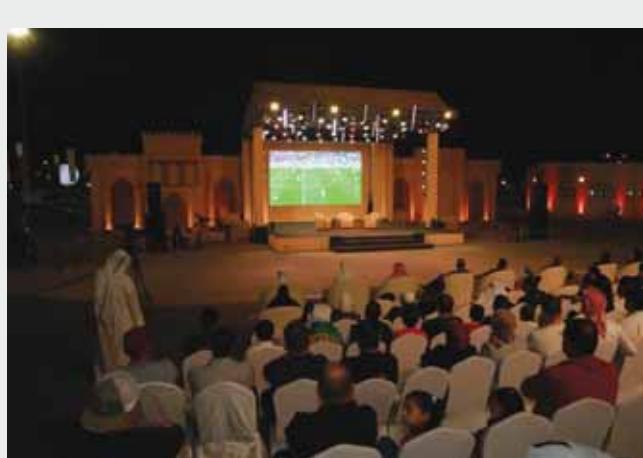
Visitors, especially children, also learn about the different types of trees and plants, as well as about local trees and other related matters. (QNA)

Poetry evening at Darb Al Saai



The Qatar Poetry Centre "Diwan Al Arab" held on Tuesday evening a poetry evening at Darb Al Saai before large audience as part of the programme of cultural seminars with the activities and celebrations of the Qatar National Day. Poets Badr al-Otaibi, Askar al-Karbi, and Ibrahim al-Fazari participated in the evening, which was moderated by the journalist Atta Mohamed, with a variety of poems. (QNA)

Celebrations at Darb Al Saai



Various kinds of activities and events continue to draw crowds at the Darb Al Saai celebrations being held in Umm Salal.