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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Amir, Iraqi PM discuss ties

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, in a telephone conversation yesterday discussed with Prime Minister of the sisterly Republic of Iraq Mohamed Shia al-Sudani, bilateral relations and ways of enhancing and developing them in various fields. The Amir congratulated Iraq on the occasion of its success in organising the Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament (Gulf 25), wishing Iraq, its leadership and its brotherly people continued progress and prosperity. **(QNA)**

Baldwin, armourer to be tried for *Rust* shooting

A New Mexico prosecutor yesterday said she would charge actor Alec Baldwin and others in the fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during the filming of Western *Rust*. The attorney announced involuntary manslaughter charges against the *30 Rock* actor and the film's armourer Hannah Gutierrez Reed after more than a year of investigation into the October 2021 shooting on a film set outside Santa Fe.

Americans can sponsor refugees

Groups of Americans will be able to directly sponsor refugees for resettlement in the United States under a new programme announced yesterday. Under the US State Department programme, which will be called the Welcome Corps, groups of at least five people will be expected to raise a minimum of \$2,275 per sponsored refugee. The sponsor groups, open to US citizens or permanent residents, will also be required to pass background checks and create a support plan. **Page 8**

French workers strike; say no to pension plan

French workers went on strike and joined marches across the country yesterday, halting trains and cutting electricity production in protest against government plans to raise the retirement age by two years to 64. The stoppages are a major test for President Emmanuel Macron, who said his pension reform plan, which opinion polls show is hugely unpopular, was "just and responsible" and had to be carried out. Protesters disagreed. **Page 9**

Allies pledge fresh weapons for Ukraine

A trio of European allies pledged missiles and artillery for Ukraine yesterday as Kyiv urged partners to step up support "considerably" ahead of a major donor meeting. The new promises flew in the face of a Kremlin warning against a "extremely dangerous" escalation if the West — long fearful of provoking direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia — sent longer-range weapons to Kyiv. Britain announced it would send 600 Brimstone missiles and Denmark said it would donate 19 French-made Caesar howitzers while Sweden promised its Archer artillery system. **Page 9**

NZ PM Ardern to step down

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern shocked the country yesterday by announcing she would resign from office in a matter of weeks. "I am human. We give as much as we can for as long as we can and then it's time. And for me, it's time," she said at a meeting of members of her Labour Party. Ardern said she would step down no later than February 7, less than three years after winning a landslide election to secure her second term. **Page 7**

COMMUNITY

See Page: 5

‘Feel Winter in Qatar’ features festivals, events

● **Renowned rally driver Nasser al-Attiyah is Qatar Tourism's new brand ambassador**



Sheikha Hessa al-Thani, HE Akbar al-Baker, Nasser al-Attiyah, and Omar al-Jaber at the press conference. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Schedule includes Balloon Festival, concerts, live performances, Kite World Cup 2023, tennis tournaments, equestrian events, Jewellery and Watches Exhibition, food festival and many more

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar Tourism (QT), together with Qatar Airways, launched yesterday (January 19) the ‘Feel Winter in Qatar’ campaign, the third edition of the Qatar Balloon Festival and revealed a series of events and festivals.

“This (Feel Winter in Qatar) is a seasonal extension of our central ‘Feel More in Qatar’ brand platform, which seeks

to solidify the country's position as the Middle East's top destination for families,” Qatar Tourism chairman and Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer HE Akbar al-Baker told a press conference.

“Our cool weather, abundant natural beauty, and unrivalled leisure and entertainment offerings make us the perfect choice for an extended holiday, a short getaway, and, of course, a winter break,” he stated.

Joined by QT's Shared Services Department director Omar al-Jaber and marketing head Sheikha Hessa al-Thani on the stage, al-Baker announced QT's new ambassador – renowned Qatari rally driver Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah – who later joined the panel.

With the conclusion of the ‘greatest FIFA World Cup tournament’, al-Baker said QT and Qatar Airways look forward “to maintaining the same rhythm of excitement for 2023 to continue working towards our 2030 goal!” **To Page 4**

PM attends launch of ‘Tanshia’ programme



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al-Thani attended yesterday the launching ceremony of the Uprising programme ‘Tanshia’, organised by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in co-operation with the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) affiliated with Qatar Foundation. During the ceremony, HE Sheikh Khalid listened to presentations on the most prominent plans and programmes designed to build the child's personality and provide an integrated social upbringing for the early stages of life and protect children from behaviour deviations by strengthening protection factors and identifying and neutralising risk factors. The ceremony, held at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's building, was attended by a number of ministers and senior state officials. **(QNA)**

Katara launches seventh edition of Mahaseel Festival

The seventh edition of Mahaseel Festival began yesterday in the southern area of Katara, offering various agricultural, horticultural, poultry and dairy products. The festival has been organised by Katara – the Cultural Village Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Municipality and the Qatari farmers' forum, the official Qatar News Agency reports. The festival will run daily until January 28, followed by the Mahaseel Market that will be held on weekends until mid-April. Katara Human Resources Department director Saif Saad al-Dosari inaugurated the festival and hailed it as an important annual shopping occasion for Katara visitors. Yousef Khaled al-Khulaifi, director of the Agricultural Affairs Department at the Ministry of Municipality, Salman al-Nuaimi, chairman of the organising committee of the festival, and a number of Qatari farm owners and representatives of participating national companies attended the inaugural ceremony. **To Page 12**

Sheikh Mohamed meets ministers, officials in Davos



HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani met ministers and senior officials from the participating countries and international organisations on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, now being held in Davos, Switzerland. The World Economic Forum that concludes today is held under the theme “Co-operation in a Fragmented World”. HE Sheikh Mohamed also held bilateral meetings with a number of officials of international companies participating in the annual meeting in Davos. During the meetings, they discussed ways to enhance international co-operation in the sectors of trade, investment and industry, and exchanged views on the topics on the agenda of the forum. He also highlighted the leading position of Qatar as a “major destination” for global investments. **Business Page 1**

Some roads closed to traffic until noon for marathon: MoI

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has said some roads will remain closed to traffic until 12noon today to facilitate the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo, organised by the Qatar Athletics Federation.

In an advisory on social media, the MoI said motorists are advised to pay

attention to the closure of some roads – Corniche, Katara, The Pearl Island and Lusail – due to the marathon. The closure runs from 3am until 12noon.

“We advise those who use these routes to use alternative roads during the closure period. Traffic patrols will be placed to regulate traffic movement surrounding the

marathon tracks,” the ministry said.

The starting gun for the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo – one of the most hotly anticipated events of Doha's sporting calendar – goes off at 6.15am today with local running enthusiasts lining up alongside elite international athletes at the start line.

All categories of the event sold out well in advance, with 8,000 runners participating across the range of distances from the 1km kids' race to the full 42.2km marathon. The event kicks off at Parade Pavilion, The Amir's Grandstand, Al Corniche, with runners then heading towards Katara, Lusail

and back to Al Corniche.

The full marathon starts at 6.15am, followed by the half marathon at 6.30am. The 10km category kicks off at 8.50am, with the starter's gun going off for the 5km category at 9.40am. Finally, the 1km category for kids begins at 10.30am. **Page 4**

PSG clinch Riyadh Season Cup



Paris Saint-Germain captain Marquinhos receives the trophy from Turki al-Sheikh, head of the General Entertainment Authority (GEA), after winning the Riyadh Season Cup match against All-Stars XI at the King Fahd University Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, yesterday. PSG won the exhibition match 5-4. **Sport Page 1**

Iraq beat Oman to win Gulf Cup



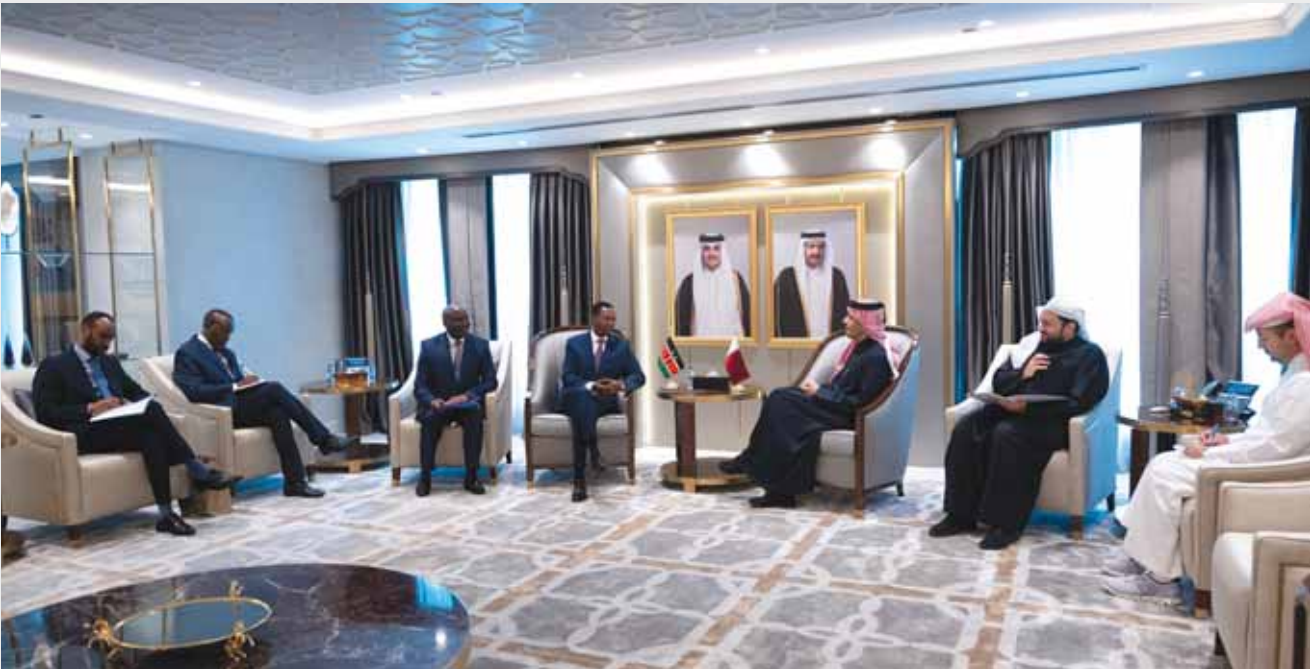
Iraq players celebrate with the trophy after winning the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup at the Basra International Stadium in Iraq's southern city of Basra yesterday. The hosts beat Oman 3-2 in a thrilling final which went to extra time. **Sport Page 1**

Qatar participates in OIC meet in Brussels



Qatar participated yesterday in the meeting of ambassadors of the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), held at the headquarters of the OIC Permanent Observer Mission to the European Union (EU) in Brussels. Ambassador of Qatar to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) Abdulaziz bin Ahmed al-Maiki represented Qatar in the meeting. Addressing the meeting, he said that the Palestinian issue is still unresolved, highlighting the fait accompli policy imposed by the settlement occupation amid failure to implement the decisions of international legitimacy, which may change the rules of conflict and the form of global solidarity in the future. He asserted Qatar's full solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people in their aspiration for justice, and the need to compel Israel to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories and establish a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. He also asserted the need to meet regularly and enhance co-operation within the OIC Mission to the EU in a bid to exchange views on matters of importance and activate the organisation's role with the EU. **(QNA)**

FM meets Kenyan cabinet secretary



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani met yesterday with Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of Kenya Dr Alfred Mutua, who is currently visiting the country. Bilateral relations and means of strengthening them were reviewed during the meeting, in addition to discussing a number of issues of joint interest. **(QNA)**

QF's role in promoting Qatar's global image highlighted in KPDC lecture

QNA
Doha

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), in co-operation with Katara Public Diplomacy Center (KPDC), organised a lecture entitled 'Community Diplomacy', which dealt with the most important efforts of the foundation in promoting Qatar's image in global diplomacy.

The lecture was attended by CEO of the Katara Public Diplomacy Center engineer Darwish Ahmed al-Shaibani, a number of Qatar Foundation officials, ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps, as well as media professionals.

The lecture, presented by head of External Relations at Qatar Foundation's CEO Office Habes Howail, emphasised on the importance of the endeavours undertaken by the foundation to unleash human capabilities, and how this contributes to the development of society. Howail dealt in the lecture with the role of Qatar Foundation in enhancing Qatar's image in global diplomacy, pointing out to the most

important global initiatives of the foundation which have made an impact globally, such as the Qatar Genome Program (QGP), the first of its kind in the region, and efforts in the field of autism as Qatar contributed to the launch of the International Autism Day and the establishment of the Renad Academy.

Director of External Relations, in the office of the CEO of Qatar Foundation, also spoke about the role of the policy centres of Qatar Foundation in strengthening the position of Qatar globally, adding that Qatar Foundation has contributed to strengthening Qatar's position globally through policy centres, the most important of which is the Doha International Family Institute, our legacy initiative, the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), which made Doha a destination for world leaders and policy makers to launch their initiatives in the field of global education, as well as the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH), which attracted a number of heads of states. It is also considered the largest gathering of health ministers outside the United Nations, which Doha hosts them every two years to

discuss the health challenges facing the world.

He referred to the social impact created by the partnership and co-operation between Qatar Foundation and international organisations, especially during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, where Qatar Foundation provided easy access to people with disabilities and autism, and gave them the opportunity to watch the World Cup matches by designing sensory rooms and providing a suitable environment for them, in addition to designing a comprehensive guide for all abilities, which will serve as a reference for the countries organising the FIFA World Cup in the upcoming editions.

He added that the Education City Stadium will be transformed into a special centre for national committees, initiatives and activities related to women's sports, with the aim of supporting national efforts to enhance women's involvement in the field of sports. Howail indicated that Qatar Foundation has identified a number of areas on which it will focus its efforts over the next 10 years in order to strengthen Qatar's position on the global map. The most important of which



The lecture, presented by head of External Relations at Qatar Foundation's CEO Office Habes Howail, emphasised on the importance of the endeavours undertaken by the foundation to unleash human capabilities, and how this contributes to the development of society.

is progressive education, which aims to encourage creativity and unleash the potential of teachers and students, sustainability, artificial intelligence to improve

the quality of human life, and promoting precision healthcare and disease prevention based on emerging research and clinical approaches, in addition to social

progress, in order to build a prosperous society that derives its roots from the heritage and cultural identity of Qatar.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA) following the lecture, Habes Howail said that Qatar Foundation managed over 28 years to create a unique developmental model through its various centres: pre-university education (PUE); higher education; research, development, and innovation centres; policy centres; and community development, as every sector sought to make community development the bedrock of all integrated work and make a unique feature for the Qatari society in various fields.

He noted QF's interest - through policy centres - in organising public and specialised conferences, such as the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) 2022 and World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), stressing that these conferences managed to create a global society within Doha as elite international experts participate in these conferences to offer innovative solutions for building the future of healthcare, education, sustainability, or protecting the family from challenges, even

international prestigious and public figures launch their initiatives from Doha. All these efforts contributed to promoting public diplomacy in Qatar in co-operation and partnership with public authorities and the private sector.

He stressed that all these efforts and initiatives resonated well with the community as they addressed its main interests in the first place and had their reflection on Qatar's foreign image.

He stressed that the community is an integrated part and essential partner in the foundation's efforts as all the community's efforts contribute to promoting public diplomacy. The lecturer highlighted QF's efforts - through its schools and universities - in building a flourishing and active local community.

He also talked about the importance of QF's developing of research, development, and innovation centres to build an integrated system to provide the needed fund for researches, pointing out the importance of building global research partnerships with leading universities, such as the agreement signed between Qatar Biomedical Research Institute and Harvard Stem Cell Institute. **(QNA)**

MoECC keen to spread green awareness

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has expressed its interest in raising awareness among members of the society to protect Qatar's environment from all types of pollution.

In this regard, the ministry noted its close co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to raise the awareness of the school community and provide it with knowledge regarding the role and importance of marine organisms in the natural environment.

This, it said, will reflect positively on students' behaviour toward the environment, educating them at the same time of

the dangers that harm Qatar's environment.

In a related context, the environmental laboratory of the Environmental Monitoring Department at MoECC received a group of Al Shahaniya Preparatory/Secondary Independent School For Girls students to educate them on the importance of protecting the marine environment and its sustainability. Head of the Environmental Laboratory Department Dr Marwa al-Ghanim said that the 28 students were introduced to the methods of conducting laboratory tests and the importance of maintaining the marine life in the Qatari environment, which is rich in many living organisms.

During their visit to the biological analysis laboratories, the students were introduced to

many samples of marine organisms and methods of preserving biodiversity in the Qatari environment. The students also visited the fine chemical analysis laboratories that monitor and measure the organic chemicals resulting from burning waste or petroleum derivatives and the heavy metals concentration ratios.

The Head of the Environmental Laboratory Department explained that the visit also included laboratories for measuring physiochemical variables, which measure the quality of seawater, especially the levels of oxygen and significant nutrients for marine organisms. In this regard, she pointed out that Qatar is a marine state and has large coasts on the Arabian gulf, which is why this visit comes within

the framework of educating the young adults about methods and importance of protecting marine life, as well as the importance of microorganisms in the marine food chain.

This student visit came within the framework of the MoECC's efforts to raise awareness among members of the community regarding the importance of maintaining marine life in Qatar. It includes educating the school community and young adults about the dangers that threaten marine organisms through field visits to the ministry's labs, which are characterised by their accuracy in all their researches, especially that the ministry owns the latest advanced equipment, in addition to the scientific researches carried out by the ministry's scientists and researchers.



HBKU's college hosts UNEP official

Hamad Bin Khalifa University's (HBKU) College of Law held a special conversation yesterday (January 19), with Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, the newly appointed deputy executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Mrema, who previously served as executive secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Director of the Law Division at UNEP, held a wide-ranging discussion spanning issues including environmental law, climate change, biological diversity, and sustainability.

She also delved into the impact of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) held in December

2022 under the leadership of the CBD, through the Chinese Presidency and hosted by Canada, which resulted in path-breaking agreements on the adoption of a new global biodiversity framework and its components.

In his capacity as HBKU United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) Chair on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development, Dr Damilola Olawuyi invited the members of the HBKU community to attend the conversation and hear from Mrema first-hand.

"This session allowed our HBKU colleagues, faculty and students to meet with and learn from one of the world's luminaries in international envi-

ronmental law. Her dedication to addressing some of the most pressing problems that threaten the future of the planet is an inspiration to us all," said Dr Olawuyi. Established in 2022, the HBKU Unesco Chair plays a pivotal role in fostering research, training, and cooperation on environmental law as a tool for advancing sustainable development in Qatar and the Mena region.

It collaborates with both HBKU and Unesco to strengthen partnerships with academic institutions across the world to organise conferences, fellowships and lecture series aimed at developing a new generation of sustainability minded policymakers.

Women's Circle organises January event

Women's Circle - an experience by Sheraton Grand Doha X Anahi continues to bring women together to create a safe platform with unique events, a statement said.

Over 65 women across Doha attended the Women's Circle event at the Sheraton Grand Doha, Al Rayyan, for the January edition: Women in Yoga powered by L'Occitane en Provence - partnering with Yoga and Pilates instructor Claudia Guerra. The participants of the yoga session were also able to avail the complimentary services provided by L'Occitane en Provence for a hand massage and pampering session held by professional beauty advisors. L'Occitane en Provence believes in gender equality and em-powering women to achieve their goals, it was explained. Through their work in Burkina Faso, they had enabled the women who make their Shea Butter to gain more independence. The Foundation has helped them to have access to microcredits, literacy programs and education for their children. Every year, fund-raising products are being sold to promote women's leadership, the statement added.





Alfardan Premier Motors opens Jaguar Land Rover's latest home at Lusail Boulevard

Alfardan Premier Motors Co, the official retailer of Jaguar Land Rover in Qatar, has continued its expansion with the opening of a new Jaguar Land Rover Sales, Service, and Spare Parts facility at Lusail Boulevard, a statement said.

A dynamic, diverse and unique shopping, commercial and residential destination, Lusail Boulevard is where Downtown Lusail's iconic experience comes to life. The new facility will replace the now shuttered Quick Service Centre facility in Al Markhiya.

The modern facility has been built to the new Jaguar Land Rover global ARCH standard, designed to provide a bright and welcoming atmosphere to customers. It can accommodate the expanded line-up from both brands, as well as future additions to their extensive range.

The facility caters to the complete needs of customers, with Servicing and Parts divisions all contained under one roof. Customers can expect striking architecture and a stunning interior design concept from the Lusail Boulevard Jaguar Land Rover facility – a reflection of the supreme design applied to every vehicle under the facility's roof. Those looking for car customisation services will find a high-end Personalisation Studio within

the sales area. Completing the experience for Jaguar Land Rover's discerning customers, the facility provides drop-off services and online service booking.

A team of certified experts from Alfardan Premier Motors will be available to receive customer vehicles for inspection and repairs. The state-of-the-art facility provides customers with the latest in car repairing technologies and services allowing our team of specialists to better support the brands' loyal customer base.

Omar Hussain Alfardan, President & CEO of Alfardan Group said: "This state-of-the-art facility underlines our commitment to leading forward the Jaguar and Land Rover brands in Qatar.

Here, with access to exceptional facilities and the support of Alfardan Premier Motors' passionate team, customers can enjoy an unparalleled opportunity to experience the brands.

The customers' trust and satisfaction are the key and cornerstone to unlocking future-proof growth avenues and prosperity. This facility is a built around our customers' needs and expectations, which have long pivoted Alfardan Premier Motors drive for expansion and progress".

"The growth of our iconic

brands is at an outstanding pace in Qatar with the help of our local partner, Alfardan Premier Motors. Today is yet another monumental occasion as we together launch this superb new Jaguar Land Rover brand facility in the country," added Bruce Robertson, Managing Director at Jaguar Land Rover Mena. "This latest opening is further proof of our partner's relentless drive for excellence in service standards for both our brands, which are undoubtedly a match for the uncompromising brilliance of our vehicles."

The showroom itself will house the all-new and flagship Jaguar Land Rover product line-up, which includes Jaguar XF, XE, F-PACE, E-PACE, F-TYPE and I-PACE. Under the Land Rover line-up will be featured the Range Rover, Range Rover Sport, Range Rover Velar, Range Rover Evoque, Land Rover Defender, Land Rover Discovery and Land Rover Discovery Sport. The facility also includes Approved pre-owned vehicles from Jaguar and Land Rover that meet the rigorous quality standards in servicing and maintenance expected from the two brands.

Complementing the facility's core features, customers will enjoy a shaded parking area including parking and entrance assist-



ance for people with disabilities. Along with dedicated spaces for a wide collection of accessories, the facility also houses a relaxing lounge area for customers that



premium lifestyle branded goods and merchandise that have been carefully designed with the same meticulous attention to detail that goes into designing and de-

veloping Jaguar Land Rover range of vehicles. When the time comes to receive the vehicle, the facility has dedicated private bays for the vehicles' handover to customers.

Expo 2023 Doha: A platform for high-level talks

The Expo 2023 Doha, the first International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH)-approved Al World Horticultural Expo in the Middle East, will be a distinguished platform for high-level discussions and public and private partnerships in horticulture, agriculture and sustainability, a top official has said.

HE Sheikh Suhaim al-Thani, representative of Expo 2023 Doha, told Qatar Radio that 49 countries have agreed to participate in

the exhibition in addition to four intergovernmental organisations. He invited all segments of society to follow updates on the exhibition's social media platforms.

Works are ongoing at Al Bidda Park which will be the home of Expo 2023 Doha for six months from October 2, 2023, until March 28, 2024. The 1.7mn sq m venue will be divided into three zones – International Zone, Family Zone and Cultural Zone. Preparations are on by the Ministry of Municipality while working on the

first-ever tour of Expo House, Expo 2023 Doha's unique legacy building.

Covered in greenery, the Expo House in the form of a hill, is integrated into the landscape of Al Bidda Park. It is shaped like a semicircle, with a vast open space in front and a fountain as a centrepiece. The benches along the sides of the pavilion form a natural amphitheatre, offering stunning views and a perfect spot for the Expo's events and gatherings, a statement added.



Six falconers qualify at Marmi 2023

Three falconers each qualified from the International Al Da'aw Championship for the free categories (Qarnas + young falcon) and Qarnas Shaheen, held yesterday afternoon, at the ongoing 14th edition of Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2023).

The races witnessed strong competitions between international falconers, who came in large numbers from friendly and brotherly countries. The winners along with the fourth and fifth place finishers in both categories, qualified for the Elite Championship, being held tomorrow (Saturday). Ali bin Khatim al-Mahshadi, chairman of the Supreme Committee, Marmi 2023, said this edition of the festival is witnessing a large presence from the other Gulf countries. Marmi 2023, organised by Al Qannas Qatari Society at Sabkhat Marmi in the Sealine area under the patronage of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, will continue until January 28.



Comedian Mo Amer to host next season of QF's Doha Debates series

Aclaimed comedian and actor Mo Amer will serve as the host of the next season of Doha Debates' flagship televised debate series, 'Doha Debates', its new production partner Film 45 have announced. Filmed in Qatar's Education City in front of a live studio audience, each episode of Doha Debates' marquee programme will feature a monologue, followed by solutions-focused discussions of timely events and global issues with celebrities and expert guests.

Amer continues to build off a stellar 2022 that saw the debut of his hit Netflix comedy, 'Mo', based on Amer's own story as a Palestinian refugee in Houston – which has gained accolades for its portrayal of Arab-American life in America.

The show was recently picked up for its second season. 'Mo' was named one of The American Film Institute's (AFI) top 10 television programmes of 2022 and won a 2022 Gotham Award, while Amer is nominated for a 2023

Independent Spirit Award for Best Actor. He can also be seen alongside Dwayne Johnson in the DC superhero film Black Adam and his two stand-up specials on Netflix: 'Mo Amer: The Vagabond' and 'Mo Amer: Mohammed in Texas'.

Amer said: "Doha Debates is proof that people with different points of view can have intelligent debates and work toward finding a consensus on the biggest problems we face today. I'm honoured to serve as host for such an impactful show and hope to bring some humour to topics of change."

To produce the new season of its marquee debate series, Doha Debates joins forces with Endeavor's Film 45, the award-winning production company renowned for its non-scripted entertainment for film, TV, and digital platforms.

Emmy Award winner Katy Davis will serve as showrunner and executive producer. Davis is a veteran television executive with 20 years of experience creating



Mo Amer

and producing 'The Oprah Winfrey Show', the most successful show in the history of daytime television.

Davis also created Oprah's Angel Network, a charity that raised and distributed over \$80mn. Most recently, she served as executive producer of 'Nick Cannon' and, prior to that, as co-executive producer of 'Red Table Talk' on Facebook Watch.

"Doha Debates is honoured to work with Mo and an exceptional production team as we contin-

ue to address the world's most pressing challenges through engaging content and lively debates," said Amjad Atallah, managing director of Doha Debates. "Mo's unique ability to authentically and honestly connect with people from all walks of life will enable us to reach new audiences around the globe. We're especially pleased to host the series in Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Education City, a global centre of learning and solutions-focused dialogue."

Amjad Atallah, Jigar Mehta and Cornelis Jacobs will executive produce for Doha Debates. Through live debates and town halls, podcasts, films, and educational content, QF's Doha Debates empowers a new generation of leaders to bridge divides, find common ground, and work together to address the world's biggest challenges.

The organisation's programming and content is inspired by Majlis-style debates, which create a welcoming space for discussion of diverse views.



Pleasant days ahead



Clouds hover over the West Bay skyline yesterday, with Doha and other places in Qatar experiencing another pleasant winter day. Today's forecast shows while there are no warnings for inshore areas, strong winds and high seas are expected in the early hours of the day offshore. The wind speed may go up to 22 knots, with the sea level rising to 7' at first. The forecast for inshore areas says it will be hazy in some places and scattered clouds are also expected, with cold conditions prevailing by night. The temperature is expected to range from 14-20° Celsius in Doha today. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam



Georgia embassy, Katara hosting ‘The Divine Horses’ exhibition

The embassy of Georgia in Qatar, in co-operation with Katara – the Cultural Village, is organising “The Divine Horses” exhibition by Georgian artist Mikheil Eristavi from January 22 as part of the upcoming Katara International Arabian Horse Festival. The exhibition features 15 paintings and graphic artworks, including rare pieces from private collections and some specially created for the exhibition. The power and beauty of the Arabian horses, one of the core symbols of the Arabian Peninsula – represents the main leading theme of paintings and graphic works of Qatar resident Eristavi. The official opening of the exhibition will take place on January 22 at 7pm at the Katara Exhibition Gallery (Building 47 - Gallery 1). The exhibition will last until January 28.

‘Feel Winter in Qatar’ features festivals, events

From page 1

HE al-Baker noted that January alone has a packed schedule in store for visitors, including the Qatar Balloon Festival, which will witness more than 50 hot air balloons from 17 different countries soaring across the skies of Doha, from morning to evening, until January 28.

The 10-day festival will feature sunrise balloon launches, the “Night Glow”, “Tethered Lights”, live entertainment and an array of mouth-watering cuisines at various kiosks and food trucks.

All hot air balloon rides will launch during sunrise, giving the riders a spectacular view of Doha.

Visitors attending in the evenings will get to experience the fascinating “Night Glow”, where all 50 balloons lighting up the night sky with their vibrant designs.

The festival also includes a variety of performances from DJs, singers and music bands, dancers, magic shows, violinists and much more.

However, due to windy weather, the balloons could not be launched yesterday.

It has been announced that the balloons will be launched when weather allows.

Following the successful programme during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, QT’s “Feel Winter in Qatar” campaign will see a dynamic line-up of live performances from local, regional, and international artists through the flagship activation, “Qatar Live”, starting on January 26 and lasting through the season.

“From January 26-28, the Katara Amphitheatre will come alive with a production of *Disney Princess – The Concert*,” HE al-Baker said. “For the first time, the performance will be supported by a live score from our very own Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO).”

Some of Broadway and the West End’s most celebrated artists will perform this tribute to Disney Princesses, alongside a live orchestral performance by the QPO.

The QT and Qatar Airways are bringing an exciting production in partnership with Disney Concerts and Broadway Entertainment Group.

The QT and Qatar Airways are also bringing a watersport world cup to



The Qatar Balloon Festival, which will witness more than 50 hot air balloons from 17 different countries soaring across the skies of Doha from morning to evening until January 28. **(Supplied picture)**

Doha: the Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup 2023.

Fuwairit Kite Beach will house the competition from January 31 to February 4.

The professional women’s tennis tournament, Qatar TotalEnergies Open, is back for its 21st edition which will take place in the outdoor hard courts of the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex from February 13-18.

The Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition will take place from February 20-25 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

This year’s edition will feature luxury watches, necklaces, rings, earrings, diamonds, gold and silverware.

It will host 500 brands and 30,000 visitors from more than 175 countries.

The Qatar ExxonMobil Open will take place from February 20-25 at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex.

The first edition was held in 1993, and has since become an event regularly attended by some of the sport’s top-ranking players.

Al Shaqab is starting Qatar’s 2023 calendar with breathtaking equestrian events, which started with the “Hayaa-

kum at Shaqab” event and will continue with the Commercial Bank CHI AL SHAQAB, presented by Longines 2023.

This will take place from February 23-25 at the Longines Outdoor Arena and Longines Indoor Arena at Al Shaqab, with Commercial Bank as the title sponsor, Longines the presenting partner and ExxonMobil the main sponsor.

The 12th edition of the Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) is set to take place from March 1-11 at the Hotel Park.

Previous editions of the QIFF featured special culinary experiences at

scenic outdoor locations, a host of globally renowned chefs, live cooking shows, cooking competitions, masterclasses and other activities for both families and friends.

Shop Qatar, which celebrates the country’s wide range of retail, beauty and entertainment options and unfolds around popular Doha shopping malls, will be held from February 23 to March 18.

Residents and visitors can celebrate the most important time of the year with the QT’s Ramadan Bazaar, which features family-friendly activities around Qatar.

Tourists will have the chance to learn about the wonderful traditions and festivities this period brings to the country and its people.

“Lastly, this year in October, we will be inviting car lovers from across the world to witness the latest innovations in the automotive industry as the Geneva International Motor Show comes to Qatar for the very first time in its history,” HE al-Baker said.

“As you can see, we have an exciting and varied calendar of events, for both residents and tourists, that makes Qatar one of the best places to live and visit,” he added.



Roads closed for event

Some roads will be closed to traffic until 12 noon today to facilitate the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo, organised by the Qatar Athletics Federation. In an advisory from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) on social media, motorists are advised to pay attention to the closure of some roads - Corniche, Katara, The Pearl Island and Lusail - due to the marathon.

Contraband found in passenger’s stomach



Staff of the Hamad International Airport Customs foiled the smuggling of a banned substance into Qatar, the General Authority of Customs (GAC) said in a tweet. According to the GAC, 1.12kg of methamphetamine was found inside a passenger’s stomach after he was transferred to a hospital. Accordingly, a seizure report was issued and the seized items were handed over to the competent authorities.





The Indian Silverbill may be one of the smallest birds seen in Qatar, but a group of them can be quite noisy, waking up neighbourhoods with their incessant chatter. Two of a group are seen on a Sidra tree in a Doha backyard.
PICTURE: Gulf Times news editor Bonnie James

Bazme Sadaf International awards announced



Shahida Hassan



Ambareen Salahuddin



Ibrahim Kamal Khan



Zahoorul Islam Jawaid



Sheeraz Ali

Bazme Sadaf International (BSI) award is to be given to famous Urdu poet Shahida Hassan while Ambareen Salahuddin was selected for the new generation writer award, according to a statement received in Doha. Ibrahim Kamal Khan (Qatar), Zahoorul Islam Javed (Abu Dhabi) and Sheraz Ali (UK) were selected for Urdu Movement awards.

The awards will be presented in Doha at a grand ceremony on January 26-27, followed by an international literary festival and poetry symposium. Delegates and eminent literary personalities from 12 countries are expected to attend the gala event. Speaking at a press conference in Patna, India, BSI director Prof Safdar Imam Quadri announced the names

of awardees of 6th BSI awards and enumerated their literary achievements. Shahida Hassan is a Canada-based Urdu poet who has published three acclaimed anthologies of poems and also translated select pieces from contemporary literature of other languages into Urdu.

The new generation award, given to a promising writer below 50 every year, has been bagged by Pakistani academic and poet Ambareen Salahuddin. Both the awardees will be arriving in Doha to receive their awards and participate in the literary festival too. BSI also gives awards to individuals who have served the cause of promotion of Urdu language and literature. For 2020, this award has been given to Ibrahim Kamal Khan who, as the

founder president of Anjuman Mohabbat e Urdu in Doha, has provided significant service to the cause of Urdu language in Doha.

Abu-Dhabi-based poet Zahoorul Islam Javed would be given this award for 2021 and UK-based academic Sheraz Ali for 2022. In the last two years, this award has been renamed after the late Sabih Bukhari, who was the chief patron of BSI until his death. BSI chairman Shahabuddin Ahmad, in a message sent from Doha, congratulated all the winners and informed that eminent Urdu poets and literary figures from 12 countries have confirmed their participation in the event. They include Shahida Hassan (Canada), Khalid Irfan (US), Zahoorul Islam Javed (Abu Dhabi), Hassan Kazmi, Safdar

Imam Quadri, Azm Skakiri, Shadab Azmi and Dr Shakil (India), Ambareen Salahuddin and Ali Zariyun (Pakistan), Sadaf Mirza (Denmark), Ateeq Anzar, Ahmad Ashfaq, Nadeem Jilani Danish and Wasiul Haq Wasi (Qatar), Masood Hassas (Kuwait), Ayesha Shaikh Aashi (Dubai), Jamil Ahsan (Sweden), A M Tahir (Germany) and renowned journalist Dr Mohamed Gauhar.

BSI chief patron Hassan Chougule congratulated the awardees and requested all Urdu lovers to attend the poetry symposium in DPS-Modern Indian School auditorium, Al Wakra, on January 27. BSI Doha chapter president Dr Nadeem Zafar Jilani also expressed his happiness at the announcement of the awards and congratulated the winners.

Name the youngest and oldest winner of men's single title at Australian Open

N11. Eleanor Roosevelt said it was 'the product of a life well-lived'. Walt Disney called it 'a state of mind' and Charles M Schulz said it was 'a warm puppy'. Mark Twain said it's 'only a contrast with something that ain't pleasant'. What is it?
N12. Name the youngest and the oldest winner of the men's single title at the Australian Open.
N13. When this fast food giant moved to expand its operations into Australia, it found that its business name was already trademarked by a takeaway food shop in Adelaide, South Australia. Hence, all its Australian locations are called Hungry Jack's. Name this brand.
N14. What did Mike Tyson do in 1992 that Cassius Clay, his hero, did in 1964?
N15. Which famous personality was named after Thomas Alva Edison, as electricity had just been introduced to his hometown when he was born? For his parents he was born in the morning, and the light arrived in the same moment he was born.



that publishes it, commented that the purpose of the Cal is 'to mark the passing of time' by recording the zeitgeist. What is being discussed here?
N19. For over 30 years, an ex-BBC employee Ella Slack performed a 'service' which she described as a 'pleasure and an honour'. Broadcasters used her due to the similar size and stature she had as Queen Elizabeth. Due to this, she was often called into service before any official event. Ella never accepted any payment for the service she provided. What nickname did she acquire because of this service she was called out for?
N10. Below is the image of Vinicunca, or Winikunka, also called Montana de Siete Colores, Montana de Colores or Rainbow Mountain. In which country is it located?



Answers

- N11.** Happiness.
N12. Ken Rosewall and Ken Rosewall. Yes, you read that right. It is the same person! He won in 1953 at the age of 18 and again in 1972 at the age of 37.
N13. Burger King.
N14. Convert to Islam.
N15. Pele, born Edson Arantes do Nascimento. His parents decided to remove the 'i' and call him 'Edson', but there was a typo on his birth certificate, leading many documents to show his name as 'Edison', not 'Edson', as he was called.
N16. Ripley's Believe It or Not!
N17. Xbox, a video gaming brand created and owned by Microsoft.
N18. The Pirelli Calendar, an annual trade calendar published by the UK subsidiary of the Italian tyre manufacturing company Pirelli since 1964.
N19. Rehearsal Queen.
N10. Peru.

Tribe N1yays

The critical path method (CPM) is a technique where you identify tasks that are necessary for project completion and determine scheduling flexibilities. This project modelling technique was developed in the late 1950s by Morgan R Walker. Which company gave this to the world?

Ans. Du Pont.

(Roger Zaidan, The Lebanese School of Qatar)

Do you have some interesting bytes to share? And, does your vibe attract you to the 'Tribe N1yays'? Every week one question from readers will be featured here. Please do send it to us at infotainment.factree@gmail.com. And, please do mention the school/college/company (or just 'home-sweet-home').

Golf family day

Doha Golf Club along with ladies captain Cherehzade hosted the first couple's tournament 'Family Day' with 24 participants, on the Academy Course. This inaugural event crowned Julia Deeley and Stephen Targett as the winning couple and, Jenny and Andrew McSeveney as the runner-up couple. The event also awarded Kati and Petri Leppan as the best dressed couple.



Senegal institute wins \$50mn investment in boost to Africa’s vaccine capacity

Reuters
Johannesburg

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI) will invest up to \$50mn over 10 years to help Senegal’s Institut Pasteur expand Africa’s ability to produce vaccines at scale, it said yesterday.

The deal – which will also reserve capacity to produce vaccines specifically for Global South countries during future outbreaks of disease – will help Africa take charge of its own health se-

curity, said CEPI chief executive Richard Hatchett.

The funds, which will initially include up to \$15mn over three years, will support development of the institute’s manufacturing facilities for routine and outbreak vaccinations.

The CEPI, a global initiative headquartered in Norway, is creating a network of vaccine manufacturers in developing countries to help boost capacity and reserves for future outbreaks and pandemics.

“The facility will ensure regional outbreaks are not neglected by deploy-

ing the latest technology for the greatest need,” said Amadou Alpha Sall, chief executive of Institut Pasteur de Dakar, a non-profit foundation in Senegal’s capital.

At the outset of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Africa, like other poorer regions, was left without adequate supplies of vaccine, highlighting the need for it to develop its own production.

However, by the time the shots became more widely available, the take-up on the continent was slow, as many people were less afraid of the virus and

misinformation about vaccines had spread.

Africa’s efforts to expand its own vaccine production capacity were led by South Africa’s Aspen Pharmacare.

The firm was initially contracted by Johnson & Johnson to package the American firm’s Covid-19 vaccine drug substance into final doses and supply it back to J&J.

Last March that deal was extended to sell the J&J shot under Aspen’s own brand in Africa.

However, the South African company’s expectations of high demand in

Africa did not materialise.

By August, it had not received a single order for the Covid-19 vaccine and its J&J orders under its previous contract were also “dwindling”, putting at risk its 450mn-dose vaccine production line.

In August, however, a deal was reached to put Aspen’s near-idle Covid-19 vaccine production lines to use: a pact was signed with the Serum Institute of India to make and sell four Aspen-branded vaccines for Africa.

Last month, the CEPI and the Gates Foundation invested \$30mn in Aspen

to support the agreement between the African vaccine maker and the Serum Institute.

“I think the system that we had in 2020 produced the only outcome that it could produce,” Hatchett said, referring to the unequal distribution of Covid-19 vaccines to the detriment of much of the developing world.

“And if we want to change outcomes in the future, we need to change the system,” he added. “And one of the most important changes ... is to support efforts in Africa and elsewhere to increase their vaccine self-sufficiency.”

Iran raps EU parliament for bid to push ‘terror’ label on Revolutionary Guards

AFP/Reuters
Tehran

Iran has condemned a European Parliament call to blacklist the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist group, which would pave the way for sanctions against the powerful military force.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian “strongly criticised the emotional approach of the European Parliament and labelled the move inappropriate and incorrect”, in a phone call with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

Amir-Abdollahian called the resolution from Wednesday “harsh and unprofessional” and warned the EU must “think about the negative consequences of this emotional behaviour”.

“Steps taken by the European Parliament to list the organisation as terrorist

are in a way a shot in the foot of Europe itself,” he warned.

“It is necessary to respect mutual security in the world of diplomacy and increase mutual trust instead of following the language of threats and unfriendly actions,” Amir-Abdollahian said. “In any case of a terrorist listing, Iran will take reciprocal measures.”

The General Staff of the Armed Forces, Iran’s most senior military body which oversees both the Guards and regular army, warned that the move “will affect regional and global security, tranquillity and peace, and the European Parliament should be careful about its consequences”.

Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi also weighed in, calling the European Parliament’s move an act of “desperation”.

The parliament had on Wednesday urged “the EU and its member states to include the IRGC on the EU’s terrorist list in the light of its “activities”, which

include its alleged supply of drones to Russia.

The vote is non-binding but comes with EU foreign ministers already due to discuss tightening sanctions on Tehran at a meeting in Brussels next week.

The Guards oversee the volunteer Basij paramilitary force, which has been deployed against protests since mid-September triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, after her arrest for allegedly violating Iran’s dress code for women.

Authorities say hundreds of people, including members of the Iranian security forces, have been killed and thousands arrested during the more than four months of civil unrest.

Iran’s judiciary has confirmed 18 death sentences in connection with the “riots”, according to an AFP tally.

Four of those convicted have been executed.

The Guards, formed shortly after

the 1979 Islamic revolution, answer to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and boast their own ground, naval and air forces.

The United States has already placed both the IRGC and its Quds Force, in charge of activities abroad, on its list of “foreign terrorist organisations”.

Then-US president Donald Trump ordered a January 2020 drone strike in Iraq that killed Quds Force commander General Qasem Soleimani.

Iran’s top diplomat stressed in the phone call with Borrell that the IRGC is a “sovereign institution that plays an important and vital role in providing Iran’s national security and the security of the region”.

Kyiv and its Western allies accuse Iran of delivering combat drones to Russia specifically for use in the Ukraine war, an allegation Tehran denies.

Another major issue between Tehran and the West is the detention of a

number of European nationals in recent years on charges including espionage.

Western powers argue they are held as bargaining chips.

Iran said on Saturday that it had executed British-Iranian dual national Ali-reza Akbari, a former defence minister convicted of spying for the UK.

On Tuesday, Iran arrested a German national for allegedly photographing oil facilities in the country’s southwest, an Iranian newspaper reported.

Iran and Western powers have also been engaged in on-and-off talks since April 2021 to revive the landmark 2015 nuclear deal that gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

The deal has been hanging by a thread since 2018 when Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States and reimposed biting economic sanctions, prompting Iran to begin rolling back on its own commitments.

UN troops find mass graves in eastern DR Congo

Reuters/AFP
Johannesburg/United Nations

Mass graves containing 49 bodies have been discovered in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), the United Nations said yesterday, attributing the killings to an ethnic militia group.

Forty-two bodies, including 12 women and six children, were found buried in the village of Nyamamba, in Ituri province.

The bodies of seven men were found in the village of Mbogi, about 30km (19 miles) east of the provincial capital Bunia, the UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, said on Twitter.

“MONUSCO strongly condemns these barbaric and cowardly killings attributed to CODECO,” it said, adding that peacekeepers had launched a patrol in the area over the weekend after hearing about attacks.

CODECO is one of dozens of militias operating in eastern DR Congo.

Its ranks are drawn mainly from the ethnic Lendu farming community, which carries out regular attacks on Hema herders in Ituri province.

CODECO, which is split into factions and operates in remote areas, does not have a spokesperson and could not be reached for comment.

At least 195 civilians were killed and 84 kidnapped in attacks attributed to CODECO and a rival militia called Zaire since the start of December, increasing the number of displaced people in Ituri province to more than 1.5mn, the UN mission said.

The DR Congo’s government spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ituri, a restive province bordering Uganda, has seen a spate of violence in recent weeks, after the killing of a teacher belonging to the Lendu community triggered reprisal attacks from the CODECO militia.

The Lendu and Hema communities have a longstanding feud that led to thousands of deaths between 1999 and 2003 before an intervention by a European peacekeeping force.

Violence resumed in 2017, blamed on the emergence of the CODECO.

S Africa unveils joint naval drills with Russia, China

AFP
Johannesburg

South Africa, which has resisted taking sides following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, has announced that it will stage 10-day joint maritime drills with Russia and China next month.

“As (a) means to strengthen the already flourishing relations between South Africa, Russia and China, a multinational maritime exercise between these three countries ... will take place,” the army said.

The exercises dubbed “Mosi”, which translates to “smoke” in the local Tswana language, are scheduled for February 17-27, off the port city of Durban and Richards Bay.

It will be the second such exercise involving the three naval forces, the South African National Defence Force said.

The first was held in November 2019 off Cape Town.

More than 350 South African army personnel will take part “alongside the Russian and Chinese counterparts, with an aim of sharing operational skills and knowledge”, the army said.

South Africa recently assumed the chairmanship of the Brics, a grouping that also includes Brazil, Russia, India and China, to challenge the dominant US- and European-led global governance structures.

South Africa has refused to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The main opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) party blasted the “silly” exercises being held at “an awkward time in global geopolitical history due to the Russian war in Ukraine”.

The joint manoeuvres prove that the government is “biased”, said DA shadow defence minister Kobus Marais.

He added that “it is obvious that the value for Russia is to showcase its geopolitical influence in southern Africa as part of their global war games” against the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) and the US.



Culturally fashionable

Models present creations by Niger fashion designer Alphadi Seini during the third edition of the Conference on Tourism and Hotel Investment in Francophone Africa (CITHA) this week in Abidjan.



Nigeria forces rescue last two hostages of train station attack

AFP
Lagos

Nigeria security forces have rescued the last two hostages from a high-profile train station kidnapping and arrested seven people, including two village chiefs, officials said this week.

In the latest mass kidnapping in Nigeria, gunmen attacked the rural train station in southern Edo State earlier this month, abducting dozens of passengers.

The train station abduction highlighted the spread of insecurity in Nigeria, which will be a major issue for voters in next month’s election to replace President Muhammadu Buhari.

Edo State communication commissioner Chris Nehikhare said in a statement on Wednesday that the last two hostages had been rescued and seven people detained.

Two of those were local traditional chiefs.

Originally, 32 hostages were reported captured

but that figure was later adjusted to 20 victims.

Several were rescued earlier this month.

Kidnapping for ransom is a major problem in Nigeria.

It is most prevalent in the northwest states, where heavily armed bandit militias operate, but violence has spilled over to other regions.

In one of the country’s most high-profile attacks, in March last year, gunmen with explosives blew up the tracks and raided a train travelling from the capital Abuja to the northwestern city of Kaduna.

Eight people were killed and dozens more kidnapped and held for months.

The train service only resumed in December 2022 after the final hostages were released.

Religious militants fighting a 13-year-old war in the country’s northeast have been pushed back from the towns and territory they once controlled.

However, they are still battling the armed forces and attacks have spread, including in the northwest.

Rwanda accuses DR Congo of abandoning peace deal

Rwanda has accused Kinshasa of abandoning a deal aimed at bringing peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo)’s volatile east as tensions spiral between the neighbours.

Fighting persists in eastern DR Congo between Congolese troops and rebels from the M23 group, despite declarations of a ceasefire and troop withdrawals.

The DR Congo – along with the United States and several European countries – has repeatedly accused Rwanda of backing the Tutsi-led rebels, although Kigali denies the charge.

Talks between the DR Congo and Rwanda in the Angolan capital Luanda unlocked a truce agreement in November.

However, citing ongoing violence, Congo Foreign Minister Christophe Lutundula on Wednesday accused the M23 and the Rwandan government of

“once more failing to uphold their commitments”.

He vowed that the DR Congo would “safeguard its territorial integrity” and warned “all means” would be deployed to that end.

Rwanda said that the statement was a threat and accused the DR Congo of seeking “to exit” the agreements made in Luanda and also Nairobi.

“Attempts by the DR Congo to sabotage or abandon these regional agreements can only be seen as a choice to perpetuate conflict and insecurity,” Kigali said in a statement.

Kigali has repeatedly accused Kinshasa of colluding with the FDLR – a former Rwandan Hutu rebel group based in the DR Congo.

Scores of armed groups roam the east of the mineral-rich DR Congo, many of them a legacy of two regional wars at the end of the 20th century that claimed millions of lives. -AFP

Egypt’s lawyers strike after attorneys jailed for brawl

The Egyptian Bar Association has announced an “unlimited” strike to condemn the imprisonment of six colleagues for a court brawl with three clerks earlier this month.

“We are immediately suspending all of our activities, we will stop appearing before the courts and participating in public prosecution investigations from January 19 and for an

unlimited period,” it said in a statement.

The six lawyers were sentenced on Wednesday to two years in jail for their part in a fight with three clerks during a court session in Marsa Matrouh on northern Egypt’s Mediterranean coast on January 5, according to state-run daily *Al-Ahram*.

The convicted lawyers have appealed their sentences, with a hearing set for Sunday. -AFP

New Zealand PM Ardern's resignation resonates for women in power

Reuters
Wellington

The shock resignation yesterday of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who altered the face of global politics when she was elected the world's youngest female head of state, throws a spotlight on the punishing demands faced by women in power.

Holding back tears as she made her declaration, the 42-year-old politician said she had next to nothing left "in the tank" and it was time to step aside after a challenging 5-1/2 years in office. "Politicians are human," she said. "We give all that we can, for as long as we can, and then it's time. And for me, it's time."

But the remarks that followed

were more revealing, said Anne-Marie Brady, a professor of politics at New Zealand's University of Canterbury. Directly addressing her family in her speech, Ardern said she was looking forward to being around when her young daughter Neve started school soon, and finally marrying her partner Clarke.

"She was just very upfront and relatable," added Brady. "I think any young woman that has grown up in this era where we can have it all, yes, but actually we still have our heart connections to our loved ones."

Women have been liberated but "patriarchal institutions" have not evolved enough to support family life, she said. "We need people like Jacinda Ardern in politics. So, her situation is cause for reflection about what we can do more



Jacinda Ardern

to support women in politics, and men and their family life too," Brady added. In Davos, in an interview with Reuters, the president of Moldova, Maia Sandu, said: "I have all the respect for Jacinda and

I admire her. I'm sorry she made such a decision, but this might be a temporary decision. It's not easy." During her time in office, Ardern has not been afraid to break the mould, becoming the first prime

minister since Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto to have a baby in the job and then take maternity leave.

A politician who campaigned on making tertiary education partially free and tackling child poverty, Ardern has also called out blatant sexism in politics. After meeting Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin last November, she dismissed a suggestion by reporters that their similar age and gender was the reason for the meeting. "She shifted the face of politics globally just by being her," said Marian Baird, a professor of gender and employment relations at the University of Sydney.

"I think she has been a bit of a model for younger female politicians and perhaps even younger male politicians who want to present in a different way," she said. "Certainly she really chal-

lenges the male stereotype of being a prime minister."

Despite her high profile globally, Ardern's popularity had waned domestically, hurt by rising living costs, growing crime and concern about social issues. In the wake of her resignation she has been lauded as a leader who bought grace and generosity of spirit to the job, particularly amid challenging political times.

Former Prime Minister Helen Clark said Ardern had done an "extraordinary job" in leading New Zealand through major crises. She delivered on a key social and economic agenda, and positioned the nation as one that "stood for co-operation and decent values".

"The pressures on prime ministers are always great, but in this era of social media, clickbait, and 24/7 media cycles, Jacinda has faced a

level of hatred and vitriol which in my experience is unprecedented in our country," Clark said in a statement.

"Our society could now usefully reflect on whether it wants to continue to tolerate the excessive polarisation which is making politics an increasingly unattractive calling."

Cambodian opposition figure Mu Sochua said the world had lost a leader who commanded trust and respect, and "always led with her heart". Yenny Wahid, a prominent Indonesian activist for women's rights and director of the Wahid Institute, said Ardern's decision carried an important message for the next generation of leaders. "She chose the timing of her own exit, she has different priorities at this point in her life. It shows the young generation that it's OK."

Millions head home for holidays in China amid Covid concerns

AFP
Shanghai

Tens of millions in China headed to their rural hometowns for Lunar New Year celebrations yesterday, though President Xi Jinping said he was "concerned" about the countryside's ability to weather a Covid surge. China's transport authorities have predicted that more than 2bn trips will be made this month into February in one of the world's largest mass movements of people.

But the exodus from big cities hit hard by Covid is widely expected to cause a spike in cases in under-resourced rural areas. Officials have said that as of Wednesday, 480mn people have travelled across the country since January 7, a huge increase compared with the same period last year. There were huge crowds on Thursday at central train stations in Beijing and Shanghai, where many travellers told AFP they were elated to be heading home - some for the first time in years.

"I don't care anymore, that's how I feel," a Shanghai-based worker called Chen, heading home to the southeastern city of Wenzhou, told AFP. "Last year I was so careful, and this year I feel



An ethnic Blang Wengji village in Jingmai mountain, in Pu'er City in southwest China's Yunnan Province. Covid-19 swept swiftly through remote villages in the rugged mountains of southern China last month, but the wave now appears to have subsided - supporting expert theories the disease was spreading even while hardline restrictions were in place.

much braver," she said. "I haven't been home for three years," said Ren, an agent representing social media influencers.

"Because of Covid, my salary hasn't been that high, and sometimes I don't even get to go to work," he explained. "I wanted to be with my family. It doesn't matter if I have money or not, I want to go see them," Ren added. "Something that I'll definitely do when I go home is give my mum and dad a hug." Others ap-

peared more concerned about the coronavirus, with two young women in their 20s wearing hazmat suits. "We're a bit worried the virus will be more transmissible during the Chinese New Year travel rush," one said. "Since we're going home, we're worried it'll affect our families, that's why we bought (hazmat suits)."

China's leader has expressed similar concern about the impact of the outbreak on rural areas during the holidays. "Xi said he

was primarily concerned about rural areas and rural residents after the country adjusted its Covid-19 response measures," state news agency Xinhua reported on Wednesday - a reference to the relaxing of China's strict virus curbs last month.

He "stressed efforts to improve medical care for those most vulnerable to the virus in rural areas", Xinhua said.

"Epidemic prevention and control has entered a new stage, and we are still in a period that requires great efforts," Xi was reported as saying, stressing the need to "address the shortcomings in epidemic prevention and control in rural areas".

After a gruelling month in which cases surged nationwide, the government said it would step up efforts to quell "gloomy emotions" online about the outbreak. China's internet watchdog launched a campaign Wednesday to sponge out "fabricated patient experiences" online and "increase the rectification of epidemic-related online rumours". The goal of the campaign, the Cyberspace Administration of China said, was to weed out items that "mislead the public and cause social panic".

Before they were relaxed, China's hardline zero-Covid policies



Passengers prepare to check in at Daxing International airport in Beijing yesterday.



Passengers take a subway train with their luggages in Beijing yesterday.

including long lockdowns hampered its economy and sent hundreds onto the streets in protest.

Xi defended that strategy on Wednesday, insisting zero-Covid had been "the right choice" and had allowed the country to fight several outbreaks. China on Saturday reported almost 60,000 Covid-related deaths in just over

a month, the first major toll released by authorities since the restrictions were eased. But with mandatory testing scrapped last month, official statistics are no longer believed to accurately reflect the scale of the outbreak.

Airfinity estimated that more than 600,000 people have died from the disease since China

abandoned the zero-Covid policy. The Britain-based research firm has said its model is based on data from China's regional provinces before changes to reporting infections were implemented, combined with case growth rates from other former zero-Covid countries when they lifted restrictions.

N Korea calls for normalising economy after Covid 'upheaval'

Reuters
Seoul

North Korea's parliament has outlined plans to normalise industrial production and meet its economic goals this year, despite the "worst-ever upheaval" amid the coronavirus pandemic in 2022, state media said yesterday.

The reclusive country's rubber-stamp parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, held a two-day meeting from Tuesday to discuss government budget, economic policy and personnel changes, the official KCNA news agency said.

South Korea's central bank has said the North's economy shrank in 2021 for a second straight year after suffering its biggest contraction in more than two decades the year before, hit by Covid-19 lockdowns and international sanctions over its weapons programmes.

Leader Kim Jong-un did not join the meeting, but Kim Tok-hun, premier of the cabinet, reviewed last year's work and

The cabinet aims to expedite the production of overall sectors and make 2023 "a year of great turn and change in the course of development" marking the 75th anniversary of the country's foundation

laid out tasks this year for key industries.

The premier lauded the country for "successfully tackling the worst-ever upheaval since the founding of the country" amid the Covid-19 outbreak, despite "shortcomings" in implementing last year's plans.

The cabinet aims to expedite the production of overall sectors and make 2023 "a year of great turn and change in the course of development" marking the 75th anniversary of the country's foundation, Kim said.

"It will make sure that the economic indices and 12 major goals to be attained by all the sectors of the national economy are carried out without fail," Kim said, according to KCNA.

He called for normalising the

production of metal factories and reinforcing iron mines and steel plants, and for operating chemical plants "at full capacity" to accelerate construction projects. The country will also take "strong measures" to supply equipment, materials and funds to boost coal production, Kim said. In another KCNA dispatch on budget deliberations, Finance Minister Ko Jong Bom said this year's overall spending is expected to rise by 101.7% from last year, without specifying numbers.

Some 45% of the total expenditure will be allotted to promote the economy and the people's livelihoods, while defence spending would take up 15.9%, about the same as last year, Ko said.



A man dressed in traditional Chinese clothing to pose for photos in Chinatown in Bangkok ahead of the Lunar New Year.

Japan divers capture rare footage of live giant squid

A pair of scuba divers has captured rare video and photos of a 2.5m giant squid swimming in the waters off Japan's west coast. Earlier this month, Yosuke Tanaka and his wife Miki, who operate a diving business in Toyooka city in the Hyogo region, were alerted to the squid by a fishing equipment vendor who had spotted it in a bay. The couple took their boat out to reach the creature as it floated near a rocky shoreline. "There it was. It was

an enormous squid," Yosuke Tanaka told AFP on Thursday.

"We didn't see the kinds of agile movements that many fish and marine creatures normally show," he said. "Its tentacles and fins were moving very slowly." The sheer size of the animal and its enormous eyes were striking, and Tanaka said he was imagining the power squid use to tackle whales, which are among their main predators. (AFP)

Taiwan premier, cabinet submit resignations ahead of reshuffle

Taiwan Premier Su Tseng-chang submitted his resignation along with that of his cabinet to President Tsai Ing-wen yesterday ahead of a widely expected government reshuffle, but there was no immediate word about his successor. Su's move follows the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) trouncing at local polls in November, and comes as Taiwan gears up for presidential and parliamentary elections in early 2024. In a Facebook post, Su said he had asked Tsai to appoint a new cabinet so she could bring in new people. Cabinet spokesman Lo Ping-cheng said in a separate statement that Su and his cabinet would formally step down once Tsai had confirmed their replacements. The presidential office said the process of choosing a new cabinet will take place during the 10-day Lunar New Year holiday beginning on Friday so the new team will be ready once the break is over.

Su, 75, had originally submitted his resignation after the November poll losses, but Tsai asked him to stay on. Taiwan media has swirled with speculation about who will replace him. (Reuters)

Americans can sponsor refugees directly under new programme

Reuters
Washington

Groups of Americans will be able to directly sponsor refugees for resettlement in the United States under a new programme announced yesterday, a major shift that could bolster admissions and reduce government costs.

Under the US State Department programme, which will be called the Welcome Corps, groups of at least five people will be expected to raise a minimum of \$2,275 per sponsored refugee.

The sponsor groups, open to US citizens or permanent residents, will also be required to pass background checks and create a support plan, according to a related website.

The programme will aim to find 10,000 US sponsors for 5,000 refugees in fiscal year 2023, which ends on September 30, the State Department said.

Reuters first reported the launch of the

programme on Wednesday.

The individual sponsorship programme for refugees – similar to a model used in Canada – is part of a broader effort by US President Joe Biden, a Democrat, to provide opportunities for Americans to support foreigners seeking protection.

The new sponsorship programme is unlikely to have any near-term effect on the record number of migrants attempting to cross the US-Mexico border illegally as refugees enter through a long application process from abroad, often from conflict zones.

Earlier this month, Biden rolled out a humanitarian entry programme that allows up to 30,000 migrants per month from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela to enter via “parole” if they have US sponsors and travel by air.

The administration also used parole to admit Afghans and Ukrainians and piloted sponsor programmes to support them in the United States.

The Welcome Corps programme will

bring in refugees through the US Refugee Resettlement Programme, which takes referrals from the United Nations and US embassies.

Refugees currently entering the United States are assisted by nine US resettlement agencies dependent on government funding.

Biden set a cap of 125,000 refugee admissions this fiscal year, which began on October 1, 2022, but only 6,750 arrived from October-December, according to programme data.

The United States greatly curtailed refugee entries under Republican former president Donald Trump, who portrayed them as a security threat.

Admissions have yet to rebound to pre-Trump levels.

In a statement tied to the Welcome Corps launch, Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the sponsorship programme “the boldest innovation in refugee resettlement” since the start of the US programme in 1980.

Blinken said the sponsorship opportunities could inspire support from a range of Americans, including “members of faith and civic groups, veterans, diaspora communities, businesses, colleges and universities, and more”.

During the first six months of the new initiative, the State Department will connect sponsors with refugees whose cases are already approved, the department said.

At some point in mid-2023, US sponsors will be able to refer refugee cases to the department for possible resettlement.

Robert Law, a former Trump immigration official now with the Trump-aligned America First Policy Institute, said that Congress should ensure refugees are adequately vetted and that sponsors are actually covering costs.

“Privatisation of refugee resettlement in theory takes US taxpayers off the hook,” he said. “But proper guardrails are needed to ensure sponsors are thoroughly vetted and have sufficient means to financially support the refugee.”

Biden’s approval at 40%, near the lowest of his presidency

Reuters
Washington

US President Joe Biden’s public approval rating was close to the lowest level of his presidency this week amid criticism from Republicans over classified documents found in his home in recent months, according to a new Reuters/Ipsos poll.

The three-day national poll, which closed on Sunday, showed 40% of Americans approved of Biden’s performance as president, versus 39% in a Reuters/Ipsos poll a month earlier.

Biden began 2023 buoyed by unexpectedly strong midterm election results for Democrats.

US inflation was also falling and the Republican Party appeared in disarray after taking days to elect a speaker of the US House of Representatives.

However, the latest poll numbers suggest those factors may not have significantly changed the public view of the president as he prepares for an expected re-election bid in 2024.

Biden, 80, is expected to launch another run for the White House, perhaps as soon as next month, after the State of the Union address on February 7, sources have told Reuters.

Republicans in Congress in recent days have slammed the president after the White House said this month that Biden’s lawyers found classified documents at his home in Wilmington, Delaware at the start of November – ahead of the midterms.

Republicans have said Biden’s team was not forthcoming about the discoveries, and called out the delay as significant when the administration was already probing former Republican president Donald Trump’s handling of highly sensitive classified documents that he retained at his Florida resort after leaving the White House in January 2021.

The Justice Department has appointed special counsels, meant to be independent of political influence, to probe both Trump’s and Biden’s handling of documents. Legal experts note there are significant differences between the two cases, notably that the White House says it began turning over documents found in Biden’s home as soon as they were located, while Trump refused to do so until the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) searched his property.

Taking office in the middle of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Biden’s term has been marked by the economic scars of the global health crisis, including soaring inflation. Last year, his approval rating drifted as low as 36% in May and June.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll also showed that there is general dissatisfaction with Washington’s leadership. Only 20% of respondents said they approved of US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the country’s top elected Republican official.

Just 35% of respondents said that they had a favourable view of the House of Representatives, and 38% said they had a positive view of the US Senate. The Reuters/Ipsos poll, conducted throughout the United States, gathered responses from 1,035 adults, using a nationally representative sample.

The poll has a margin of error of three percentage points either way.

Protesters, fired up by deaths, march on Lima demanding change

AFP/Reuters
Lima

A second protester who was seriously injured in clashes with police in southern Peru on Wednesday has died, the country’s rights ombudsman’s office said yesterday.

After a 35-year-old woman was killed on Wednesday, a man identified as Salomon Valenzuela “died this morning after (suffering) serious injuries”, a source from the ombudsman’s office told AFP.

Both victims had suffered bullet wounds.

Lima was meanwhile on edge yesterday as thousands of protesters were expected in Peru’s capital for an anti-government rally following weeks of unrest that have left 44 people dead, including the latest death.

Demonstrators are demanding the resignation of President Dina Boluarte, the dissolution of parliament and immediate fresh elections.

Police said that they are on “maximum alert” and have deployed 11,800 officers in Lima ahead of expected trouble.

The South American country has been rocked by more than a month of protests, mostly in the southern and eastern areas, since the ouster and arrest of Boluarte’s predecessor Pedro Castillo in December.

Thousands of protesters from rural areas are trying to keep up pressure on the government, defying a state of emergency declared to maintain order.

“We have 11,800 police officers in the streets to control unrest, we have more than 120 vans and 49 military vehicles, and also the armed forces are participating,” said Lima police chief Victor Zanabria.

Protesters are undeterred, though.

“We are coming to make our voices heard. We are tremendously forgotten,” villager Edwin Condori, 43, from the Cusco region, told AFP.

One of Peru’s biggest labour unions, the General Confederation of Workers, has called for a strike, though there were no visible signs of such a strike in Lima by late morning yesterday.

On Tuesday, many poor and Indigenous demonstrators made their presence felt in Lima, where police used smoke canisters against marchers who had gathered.

Dozens marched through the capital’s streets to Plaza San Martin, the historic epicentre of demonstrations.

“In Lima the struggle has

more weight. When they repress us in our regions, no-one mentions it,” said Abdon Felix Flores, a 30-year-old villager from Andahuaylas in the Cusco region.

Flores said he was ready “to give my life” to ensure change. Boluarte urged protesters flooding into Lima to gather “peacefully and calmly”.

“We have come in an organised way to take over Lima, to paralyse Lima, to be heard,” said Jesus Gomez, an agricultural engineer from Chumbivilcas in the Cusco region.

However, the president warned protesters that “the rule of law cannot be hostage to the whims” of a single group of people.

“The Peruvian people’s struggle will not end tomorrow,” Geronimo Lopez, the general secretary of the General Confederation of Workers, said in a press conference late on Wednesday night.

“It will continue as long as Mrs Dina Boluarte doesn’t listen to the people,” he added. “This is a fair, democratic mobilisation”.

A rival “march for peace” also took place in Lima on Tuesday, with dozens of members from community groups and political parties wearing white T-shirts in rejection of the protests against Boluarte.

“We do not want violence in our country. I know that now there is a group that disagrees with the current government, but nevertheless it is not the way to carry out a protest,” 56-year-old merchant Cesar Noa told AFP.

Protesters have maintained almost 100 roadblocks across Peru.

Castillo was removed from office and arrested on December 7 after attempting to dissolve the country’s legislature and rule by decree, amid multiple corruption investigations.

Boluarte, who was Castillo’s vice-president, succeeded him.

However, despite Boluarte belonging to the same left-wing party, Castillo supporters have rejected her, even accusing her of being a “traitor”.

The government last week extended a state of emergency in Lima and the southern regions of Puno and Cusco, curtailing some civil rights.

“We do not want more deaths, we do not want more injuries, enough blood, enough mourning for the families of Peru,” Interior Minister Vicente Romero told reporters.

Boluarte has asked for “forgiveness” for the protest deaths but remained firm that she is not going to resign.



View of a monument in Lima wrapped in plastic to prevent paint damage during the upcoming protest against the government of President Dina Boluarte.

Lula’s government fires 13 from his security team

AFP/Reuters
Brasilia

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s government has fired 13 soldiers from his security detail following violent anti-government riots, for which he pointed the finger again at his predecessor Jair Bolsonaro.

A notice in the official gazette said the 13 troops were dismissed from the institutional security office attached to the presidency.

This followed the removal of another 40 soldiers earlier in the week from the presidential detail at Alvorada palace, where Brazil’s presidents live.

Just days after the attack on the presidential palace, Supreme Court and Congress by backers of far-right former president Bolsonaro, Lula said the rioters likely had inside help and hinted at security force involvement.

He ordered a thorough staffing review, saying that he is “convinced that the door of the Planalto (presidential) palace was opened for people to enter because there are no broken doors”.

Leftist Lula, 77, beat Bolsonaro by a razor-thin margin in October elections that followed a vitriolic and divisive campaign.

As he marked a week in office, thousands broke into the seats of power on January 8, smashing furniture, damaging priceless works of art and leaving behind graffiti messages calling for a military coup against Lula.

“I don’t know if the former president ordered (the riots). What I know is that he carries the blame because he spent four years instigating people to hate,” Lula said at a meeting with unions at the ransacked Planalto palace on Wednesday.

Last week, the president said that any “radical bolsonarista” still in government would be dealt with, and cited media reports of alleged threats made by staffers inherited from the previous administration.

“How can I have a person outside my office who might shoot me?” asked Lula.

Bolsonaro, who left Brazil for the United States on December 30, two days before Lula’s inauguration, is currently being investigated on suspicion of instigating the uprising.

He has denied any involvement.

Speaking on GloboNews television later on Wednesday, Lula suggested that Bolsonaro may have wanted to capitalise on the uprising.

“Possibly, Bolsonaro was hoping to return to Brazil in glory in one coup,” Lula

said in his first television interview since coming to power.

Lula added that if Bolsonaro’s involvement in the coup is proven, “has to be punished”.

The president also said that his intelligence services had failed on January 8.

“We made an elementary mistake: my intelligence did not exist (that day),” Lula told GloboNews. “We have Army intelligence, Air Force intelligence, ABIN (Brazil’s Intelligence Agency); none of them warned me”.

Lula had previously said he suspected there was collusion by “people in the armed forces” in the insurrection.

“I had the impression it was the beginning of a coup d’état,” Lula said about the riot.

The president stressed he would like to maintain civilised relations with Brazil’s armed forces but noted they must not be politicised.

He is set to meet with the Army, Navy and Air Force commanders later this week. “I don’t want to have problems with the forces, nor they with me. But those who want to be involved in politics should take off the uniform, resign from office and then enter politics,” Lula said.

Some 1,400 alleged rioters remained in custody as investigators track down the

masterminds and financiers of the January 8 revolt.

So far, 39 people have been officially charged.

Anderson Torres, a former Bolsonaro justice minister who was in charge of Brasilia security but abroad when the riots happened, has been arrested on suspicion of collusion.

Like his former boss, Torres has denied any link to the revolt.

He appeared before investigators for a first deposition on Wednesday, and opted to remain silent according to the G1 news portal.

The riots in Brazil were reminiscent of the violence at the US Capitol carried out by Donald Trump supporters two years earlier, and Lula said on Wednesday that he would consult with US President Joe Biden on dealing with the extreme right.

“Democracy is the only possibility by which we build a strong nation,” the newly installed leftist leader wrote on Twitter. “That’s why I’m going to talk to Biden to see how he’s dealing”.

Biden, who expressed the “unwavering support of the United States for Brazil’s democracy” in a phone call with Lula following the attacks, has invited the Brazilian leader to visit the White House in early February.

Statue fetches \$100,000 as Musk auctions Twitter HQ items

AFP
San Francisco



A Twitter bird statue, part of Elon Musk’s online auction of ‘surplus corporate office assets’.

A winning bid of \$40,000, Heritage Global Partners auction service confirmed.

Among the 631 lots were espresso machines, ergonomically correct desks, televisions, bicycle-powered charging stations, pizza ovens and a decorative planter shaped like an “@” sign.

Musk in December said that severe cost cuts at Twitter had repaired the company’s dire finances as he set out to find a new chief executive for his troubled social media platform.

The mercurial billionaire told a live chat forum at the time that without the changes, including firing more than half of Twitter’s employees, the company would

have bled \$3bn a year.

Musk said he had been “cutting costs like crazy” at the platform he bought for \$44bn.

Just weeks into his ownership of Twitter, Musk fired about half of its 7,500-strong workforce, sparking concern that the company was insufficiently staffed to carry out content moderation and spooking governments and advertisers.

Musk said his strategy is to massively reduce costs while building up revenue, and that a new subscription service called Twitter Blue, which grants users

a sought-after blue tick for a fee, would help reach that goal.

The service costs \$11 a month in the United States and is available on Apple’s iOS and Google’s Android mobile operating systems, according to a page on the company’s website.

Web subscriptions are also available for \$8 per month or, at a discount, \$84 per year.

Musk-led Twitter has been riven by chaos, with mass layoffs, the return of banned accounts and the suspension of journalists critical of the South African-born billionaire.

Mexican boy shoots another child dead over video game

A 10-year-old Mexican boy shot another child dead because he beat him playing a video game in the violent eastern state of Veracruz, authorities said. The boy took a gun from the family home and shot the 11-year-old victim in the head on Sunday after becoming upset at a video game rental store. The child and his family later fled. “All I ask is that you help me to achieve justice,” the victim’s mother told reporters at his funeral.

“My son died because the parents of the child who killed my son were irresponsible leaving a gun on the table,” she added. Veracruz is one of Mexico’s most violent states due to turf wars between drug traffickers. More than 340,000 people have been murdered across the Latin American country since the government deployed the military in the war on drugs in 2006. - AFP

Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne secures third term

Antigua and Barbuda’s ruling party held on to power in the Caribbean nation’s general elections, according to results released yesterday, securing a third term for Prime Minister Gaston Browne. The Antigua and Barbuda Labor Party (ABLP) won nine of the legislature’s 17 seats in Wednesday’s vote, according to the electoral commission’s Facebook page.

“I will continue to serve you faithfully, I’ll continue to honour the confidence and trust that you’ve imposed in me,” Browne said in a victory speech broadcast on YouTube. The opposition United Progressive Party won six seats, with one seat going to the Barbuda People’s Movement and one to an independent candidate, according to the Antigua Observer newspaper.

Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September, Brown said Antigua and Barbuda will hold a referendum within three years on becoming a republic, which could lead to the removal of Britain’s King Charles as head of state. Barbados removed Queen Elizabeth as the nation’s sovereign and became a republic in 2021. - Reuters

German anti-war film *All Quiet on the Western Front* tops Bafta nominations

AFF/Reuters
London

All *Quiet on the Western Front* tied yesterday as the most-nominated foreign language film in British cinema history, receiving 14 nods for glory at the upcoming Bafta awards next month.

German director Edward Berger's anti-war movie ties with Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, which won the same number of nominations in 2001.

"It's really exciting because it shows that cinema viewers and our voting

members are watching a broader range of films," Anna Higgs, chair of the Bafta Film Committee, told Reuters.

"We're really getting to a stage where subtitles aren't considered scary anymore and actually the power of cinema can communicate across borders and cultures"

The last non-English language movie that won the Bafta best film prize was Netflix's *Roma* in 2019.

Dark comedy *The Banshees of Inisherin* and science-fiction comedy-drama *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, both received 10 nominations, as voted for by Bafta members.

Elvis, Baz Luhrmann's biopic of the

king of rock 'n' roll, received nine nominations, with classical music psychological drama *Tar* in line for five awards.

Known as the Baftas (British Academy of Film and Television Arts), Britain's top movie honours will be awarded on February 19 in London.

Bafta chairman Krishnendu Majumdar said the shortlist demonstrated "what an amazing range of work is being made at the moment, we've rewarded big blockbuster movies like *Elvis* to intense kind of auteur-driven movies like *Tar*".

He hopes that the success of *Top Gun 2* and *Elvis* heralds a revival of cinema following lockdown.

"It's crucial that people go to the cinema, it's part of our culture," he told AFP.

"It's amazing to go to the cinema or sit in a darkened room, the lights go down and it's a communal experience to see film projected on a screen. "It really fires the imagination and hopes and dreams."

Avengers: Endgame actress Hayley Atwell, who co-announced the shortlist, praised the "variety in genre ... and size of film that we're seeing in the nominations this year".

"It shows that there is the audience, and they're diverse in what they want. And so there is room for lots of different kinds of storytelling," she told AFP.

All Quiet on the Western Front, about the experiences of a teenage German soldier during World War I, is based on the 1929 book by Erich Maria Remarque.

It is one of the most influential examples of anti-militaristic literature ever written, translated into over 60 languages and selling more than 50mn copies worldwide.

Just one year after it came out, a US film adaptation by Lewis Milestone was released, going on to win best picture and best director Oscars.

However, its subversive message saw the work banned in Germany and targeted in the 1933 book burnings by the

Nazis, who accused it of "betraying soldiers".

Bafta chief executive Jane Millichip said the central message of the film still resonated today: "It's a really interesting choice to make now, but I think that anti-war perspective is relevant in all times."

Filmmaker Berger told AFP last September: "My film stands out from American or British (war) films made from the point of view of the victors."

"In Germany, there is always this feeling of shame, mourning and guilt (surrounding war)," he said. "It was important for me to present this perspective."

Retired London officers charged with child abuse crimes

AFP
London

London's police force, reeling this week from the exposure of a serial rapist in its ranks, said yesterday that two retired officers had been charged with child sex offences.

The charges came after another Metropolitan Police officer, still serving as a chief inspector, was found dead a week ago before he could also be charged in the same case.

Jack Addis, 63, and Jeremy Laxton, 62, will appear before magistrates in central London on February 9, the Met said.

Addis was charged with conspiracy to distribute or show indecent images of children.

Laxton faces the same charge, as well as others including making indecent photos of a child.

They both left the Met over a decade ago but came under suspicion during the investigation into serving officer Richard Watkinson, 49, whose body was found the same day he was due to answer bail in the case.

"Chief Inspector Watkinson was facing extremely serious and concerning charges, as the result of a painstaking and thorough police investigation," Met Commander Jon Savell said in a statement.

However, he stressed that Watkinson, who was suspended from the force after his arrest in July 2021, had not faced any other criminal or conduct

matters during his Met career.

Britain's biggest police service has faced criticism after David Carrick pleaded guilty to 24 counts of rape against 12 women and a string of other sex offences over two decades.

The Met had failed to act on prior allegations levelled against Carrick, who served in an armed unit protecting MPs and foreign diplomats.

Public trust had already suffered from the conviction of Wayne Couzens, who served in the same Met unit as Carrick, for killing Sarah Everard as she walked home in south London in March 2021.

The Conservative government has ordered all of Britain's police forces to redouble their efforts to root out any officers accused of corruption, sex crimes or other offences.

However, opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer – a lawyer and former chief prosecutor in England and Wales – demanded radical reform of the Met, including possibly changing its name.

Changes would have to be comparable to the total makeover of Northern Ireland's police force after a 1998 peace settlement in the troubled territory, he told "The News Agents" podcast.

"It needs a root-and-branch review, cultural change, because this is not just the perpetrators, it's those that have allowed this to happen, move them around, not taken action when they should have done," Starmer said.

Despite Russian caution, Western allies pledge weapons for Ukraine

Reuters/AFP
Tapa Military Base, Estonia

A group of 11 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) countries, including Britain and Poland, pledged a raft of new military aid to support Ukraine's war with Russia yesterday, ahead of a crunch meeting on arms for Kyiv scheduled to take place in Germany today.

"The West must stay united and continue to support Ukraine with military aid," Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur told a news conference in his home country, held jointly with his British counterpart and other officials.

"What Ukraine needs most is heavy weaponry ... the hardest battles are still ahead," he said.

Gathering at a military base, the officials pledged missiles, Stinger air defence systems, anti-aircraft guns, machine guns, training, and other equipment and services.

Britain, which has already announced

plans to send tanks to Ukraine, will also send 600 Brimstone missiles, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said as he outlined details.

Poland was sending S-60 anti-aircraft guns with 70,000 rounds of ammunition and is ready to donate a company of German-made Leopard 2 tanks, "pending (a) wider coalition" of Leopard donors, according to a joint statement from the meeting.

The potential supply of Leopard tanks is expected to be high on the agenda when a broader group of nation, including the United States, meets today at Germany's Ramstein Air Base.

The US and Germany tried yesterday to resolve a stand-off over the Leopard, which the German government has so far resisted supplying to Ukraine, but no conclusion has so far been communicated.

Kyiv has pleaded for the tank, which it believes would help it to turn the tide against Russian forces.

Hours after the meeting the Danish government announced that it would donate 19 French-made Caesar howitzer artillery

systems to Ukraine, fulfilling the wish of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky but stunting the Nordic country's military build-up.

The new promises flew in the face of a Kremlin warning against a "extremely dangerous" escalation if the West – long fearful of provoking direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia – sent longer range weapons to Kyiv.

Western partners fear that Ukraine could use long-range weapons to hit deep inside Russian territory or Crimea – a peninsula Moscow annexed in 2014 – despite Kyiv promising that it would not do so.

The Kremlin warned of escalating the conflict to a "whole new level" if the West meets Ukraine's latest calls for longer-range weapons.

"Potentially, this is extremely dangerous," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "It will mean bringing the conflict to a whole new level, which, of course, will not bode well from the point of view of global and pan-European security."

Weapons already provided by the West

have been credited with helping Ukraine win back territory in recent months, including in the eastern Donetsk region.

On the ground in a recaptured part of Donetsk, volunteers tread carefully in collecting abandoned bodies.

"There is no time to waste – animals and nature are destroying them and if we don't hurry, we won't manage to bring all of our soldiers home," said Oleksiy Yukov, who last September lost an eye and sustained leg injuries when a mine exploded as he was trying to recover a body.

Air raid sirens wailed yesterday in Kyiv and nationwide, a day after a helicopter crash outside the capital killed the interior minister and 13 others near a kindergarten.

The crash killed interior minister Denys Monastyrsky, 42, one of Zelensky's key aides who was involved in exchange of prisoners of war and other key tasks.

He was the highest-ranking Ukrainian official to die since Russia sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Zelensky said the investigation into the accident was ongoing, with several theories being examined.

Pakistani Taliban targets northern police outpost, killing three officers

The Pakistani Taliban has claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack on a police post in northern Pakistan that killed three officers. Attackers threw grenades at a police outpost near the Afghan border in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and entered the premises where a suicide bomber detonated explosives, according to police.

They said the number of wounded was not yet known.

In November, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a militant group also known as the Pakistani Taliban, said it would no longer abide by a months-long ceasefire with the Pakistani government. - **Reuters**

Eyewear



A model presents a creation from the Menswear Ready-to-wear Fall/Winter 2023-2024 collection for Louis Vuitton at Paris Fashion Week.

Armenian military barracks fire kills 15

AFP
Yerevan

A fire killed 15 servicemen and seriously injured three others in Armenia yesterday after ripping through a military barracks overnight, the defence ministry said.

The blaze "broke out in the barracks of an engineer and sniper company of a military unit", the ministry said. "Fifteen servicemen were killed as a result ... the condition of three (other) servicemen is assessed as serious."

It said the fire started around 1.30am yesterday (2130 GMT on Wednesday) in the barracks in Azat, a village in the eastern region of Gegharkunik, near the border with Azerbaijan.

The incident was "a result of the violation of fire safety rules, during which prohibited substances were used", Defence Minister Suren Papikyan told a cabinet meeting, citing preliminary information.

"We are talking about gasoline," he said.

Papikyan dismissed an army

corps commander and several senior officers over the incident.

Investigators said that a criminal probe is underway into the violation of safety standards.

In August 2022, more than a dozen people were killed in an explosion and subsequent fire at a busy market in Armenia's capital Yerevan.

The Caucasian nation of around 3mn people is still recovering from a 2020 war with Azerbaijan, which ended in a heavy defeat and sparked a political crisis.

Despite the end of the large-scale fighting, tensions persist between the former Soviet rivals over their borders.

Armenia's defence ministry said yesterday that one of its servicemen was wounded by Azerbaijani fire and is in "serious" condition in a comment to local media, Azerbaijan's defence ministry denied that its soldiers opened fire.

Both sides accuse each other of violating a fragile truce that was struck under Russian mediation to end fighting in 2020.

India editors warn against govt's 'fake news' proposal

A major Indian journalist group has urged the government to reject a proposal to police fake news on social media, saying such a change to the country's information-technology rules would be akin to censorship.

The proposal would bar social media platforms from hosting any information that the authorities identify as false, the latest in a slew of measures by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government that are being seen as efforts to rein in big technology companies.

Information deemed "fake or false" by the Press Information Bureau or by any other agency authorised for fact-checking by the government would be prohibited under the draft amendment issued on Tuesday.

The government will hold a consultation with stakeholders to discuss the amendment on January 24, and has also invited "comments from stakeholders and general public" until January 25.

The Editors Guild of India, in a statement on Wednesday evening, urged the government to scrap the proposal and begin "meaningful consultations" with stakeholders on the regulatory framework for digital media.

Saying that the "determination of fake news cannot be in the sole hands of the government", the guild warned that the amendment would "make it easier to muzzle the free press" and "force online intermediaries to take down content that the government may find problematic".

"This will stifle legitimate criticism of the government and will have an adverse impact on the ability of the press to hold governments to account, which is a vital role it plays in a democracy," it said. - **Reuters**

French workers strike nationwide against pension reform

Reuters/AFP
Paris

French workers went on strike and joined marches across the country yesterday, halting trains and cutting electricity production in protest against government plans to raise the retirement age by two years to 64.

The stoppages are a major test for President Emmanuel Macron, who said yesterday that his pension reform plan, which opinion polls show is hugely unpopular, is "just and responsible" and had to be carried out.

Protesters disagreed.

"It's salaries and pensions that must be increased, not the retirement age," read one large banner carried by workers that opened the protest march in Tours, in western France.

"I'll have to prepare my walking frame if the reform goes through," said Isabelle, 53, a social worker, saying that her job is too tough to add two more years.

Hundreds of thousands took part in rallies across the country, according to police estimates combined by *Le Monde* newspaper.

In Nice, in southern France, protesters held a large banner that read: "No to the reform."

Police fired tear gas on the fringes of the Paris protest when black-clad, masked individuals in hoodies hurled projectiles at their lines.

About 20 people were arrested, BFM TV said, quoting police.

The government says the pension reform is vital to ensure the system does not go bust.

Pushing back the retirement age by two years and extending the pay-in period would bring an additional €17.7bn (€19.1bn) in annual pension contributions, allowing the system to break even by 2027, according to labour ministry estimates.

Unions argue that there are other ways to ensure the viability of the pension system, such as taxing the super-rich or increasing employers' contributions or those of well-off pensioners.

"This problem can be solved in a different way, through taxation. Workers should not have to pay for the public sector deficit," said Laurent Berger, the leader of CFDT, France's biggest labour union.

The challenge for the unions is to transform opposition to the reform – and anger over a cost-of-living crisis – into a mass social protest which could eventually force the government to change tack.

Union leaders, expected to announce more strikes and protests in the evening, said yesterday was just the beginning.

The pension reform still needs to go through parliament, where Macron has lost his absolute majority but is hoping to get it passed with the support of conservatives.

Train drivers, teachers and refinery workers were among those who walked off their jobs, as well as nearly 45% of staff at

utility giant EDF, the company said.

France Inter radio played music instead of its usual programming and bus drivers and civil servants also stopped work.

Only between one-in-three and one-in-five high-speed TGV lines were operating, with barely any local or regional trains running, the SNCF rail operator said.

In Paris, some metro stations were closed and traffic was seriously disrupted, with few trains running.

In the busy Gare du Nord station, people rushed to catch the few trains still operating while employees in yellow vests were assisting frazzled commuters.

Restaurant worker Beverly Gahinet, who missed work because her train was cancelled, said she agreed with the strike even if she was not taking part.

However, not all were so understanding.

"It's always the same (people) who are on strike ... and we have to endure it," said real estate worker Virginie Pinto, as she struggled to find a metro to go to work.

A 2007 ban on wildcat walkouts and restrictions on strikes to guarantee minimum public services have limited unions' ability to wear down governments' reform ambitions.

The fact that working from home is much more common now since the pandemic could also have an impact.

The strike halted ferry crossings between Dover and Calais, a major sea route for trade between Britain and the continent.

Some

Seven out of 10 primary school

teachers stopped work, and nearly as many in high schools, their unions said, though the education ministry gave much lower figures.

In Paris, students blockaded at least one high school in support of the strike action.

EDF and grid operator RTE data showed electricity production was down by roughly 10% of total power supply, prompting France to raise imports.

Shipments were blocked at TotalEnergies' refineries in France, union and company officials said, but the company said one strike day would not disrupt refinery operations.

The impact on air traffic was largely limited to a reduction of about 20% of flights in Orly, Paris's second-biggest airport.

Opinion polls show that around two-thirds of French people oppose raising the retirement age, a move that comes amid high inflation and with the country still recovering from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic's economic impact.

Macron's last attempt at pension reform in 2019, aborted a year later when Covid-19 hit Europe, prompted the longest strike on the Paris transport network in three decades.

The 45-year-old centrist vowed to press ahead with plans to push back the retirement age during his successful re-election campaign last year, pointing to forecasts that the system could fall into deep deficits at the end of the decade.

France's current retirement age is one of the lowest in the European Union.

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GULF  **TIMES**

Germany’s new defence minister faces pressure on tanks, army upgrade

There will be no grace period for Germany’s new defence minister who takes office as pressure is piling on Berlin to send battle tanks to Ukraine and to upgrade its dilapidated armed forces in the face of Europe’s biggest conflict since World War II.

Boris Pistorius, 62, took over yesterday, just a day before a major arms pledging conference at the US military base of Ramstein in western Germany, succeeding Christine Lambrecht, who quit on Monday following a series of blunders. It will befall the outgoing Lower Saxony interior minister to explain to partners whether Berlin will deliver German-made Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine or at least allow others to do so, a decision seen as key to Kyiv’s efforts to repel Russian troops. This week, Britain raised the pressure on Berlin by becoming the first Western country to send Western tanks, pledging a squadron of its Challengers, but the Leopards are seen as the best choice to supply Ukraine with a large-scale tank force.

Germany’s reticence has raised questions about how serious it is about the “Zeitenwende”, or new era of more assertive foreign policy backed by more military spending, that Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced on February 27, just days after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Many Germans viewed the end of the Cold War as the end of major conflict for the West. That optimism, combined with a pacifism rooted in its guilt over its role in two World Wars, meant Germany long neglected defence, effectively outsourcing its security to its US ally, analysts say.

Germany has since become one of Ukraine’s top military supporters, having spent €2.2bn on weapons deliveries.

Yet Berlin continued to “move at the speed of shame, dragged by others”, deciding weapons deliveries only after others acted first, said Ulrike Franke, a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) think-tank.

A new minister gives Germany an opportunity to change that narrative, but whether it will seize it will depend less on Pistorius and more how Scholz will play it, said ECFR’s Rafael Loss.

“Ultimately it’s the chancellor’s decision and I’m not sure how likely a revolutionary new approach will be.”

Still, Pistorius, like Lambrecht a member of Scholz’s Social Democrats, is perceived to belong to the more centrist faction of the party than the outgoing minister, who was closer to the more pacifist wing, and could choose to become more involved in decisions. He has also worked closely with security forces as interior minister.

Beyond the immediate decision on tanks, Pistorius faces the mammoth task of upgrading Germany’s military, the Bundeswehr, which army chief Alfons Mais, on the day of Russia’s invasion, described as “more or less empty handed”.

Already worn down by decades of underinvestment since the end of the Cold War, the Bundeswehr is in an even worse shape than a year ago given weapons and munitions donated to Ukraine have mostly not yet been replaced, say experts.

“There is still no sense of urgency,” a defence industry source said on condition of anonymity.

Even before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Germany was €20bn short of reaching Nato’s target for armmunitions stockpiling, a defence source said.

“The readiness of the Bundeswehr was a disaster even before the war, and the situation has deteriorated due to the arms supplies to Kyiv since,” that person said, noting that an order for new howitzers to replace the 14 sent to Ukraine was expected to be presented to parliament for approval in mid-2023 only. “The backfilling needs to go much more quickly.”


The Deutscher Bundeswehrverband, an association that acts as soldiers’ union, said the gap between the military’s stated tasks and its resources had never been as great as today.



“Judging by the pledges Germany has made to Nato for 2025, the situation is precarious,” its head Andre Wuestner told Reuters. Germany is expected to put a complete division of some 20,000 troops and 6,000 vehicles at Nato’s disposal by then.



“At the moment, we don’t have a single brigade that is ready with their own equipment,” Wuestner said, referring to an army unit that usually has some 5,000 troops.


While Lambrecht did pass some significant orders for new military gear during her brief tenure, critics say she was slow in doing so and did not even attempt a major overhaul of the procurement system.

“Germany has lost a decisive year to modernise the Bundeswehr,” said Christian Moelling at the German Council on Foreign Relations. — Reuters

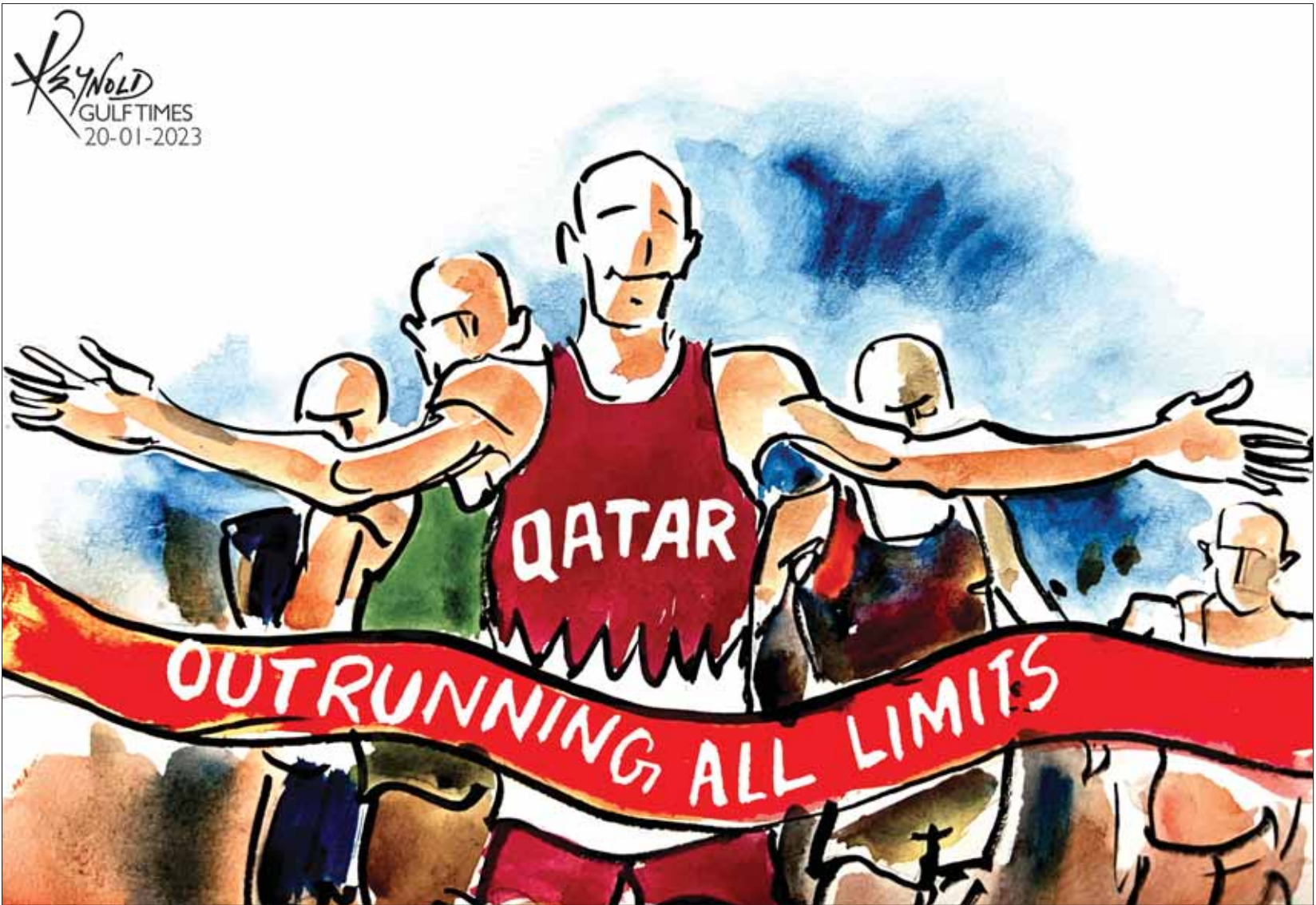
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How can drought-parched Somalia break out of crisis?

By Laurie Goering

Development cash and humanitarian aid have poured into crisis-mired Somalia in recent years, but Hassan Mowlid Yasin — the head of a climate change non-profit — has seen little spending he thinks would build lasting resilience to worsening drought.

Emergency food supplies have arrived, he said, but not enough cash to fund the changes drought-hit pastoralists say they want, such as better rainwater harvesting systems and deep wells with solar panels to help pull up scarce water.

“It’s better to be resilient than in an emergency,” said Yasin, executive director of the Somali Greenpeace Association, a non-profit that since 2019 has supported communities to better understand climate threats — and work out their own solutions.

Local people “often know much better how to adapt,” the 30-year-old said in an interview.

“When we ask a farmer (what to do), he says a well needs to be constructed for him so he doesn’t have to leave.”

Over the last half-decade, Somalia has received roughly \$2bn a year in development aid and humanitarian assistance from abroad, United Nations figures show.

But after four consecutive failed rainy seasons, more than 7mn people — or 44% of the population — face acute food insecurity, with more than 200,000 on the brink of starvation,

according to the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

The dry Horn of Africa nation — populated mainly by nomadic pastoralists and riven by decades of civil war, worsening drought and economic woe — has long struggled to exact itself from seemingly perpetual crisis.

But Yasin said he has a pretty clear idea why things are not changing, after working with about 2,000 young people in the country on efforts to build climate change resilience.

“It’s about the money,” he said.

“When you ask donors for help there are a lot of demands and conditions: ‘Have you worked for 10 years on this?’”

The constraints, designed to ensure money is well used, effectively exclude local organisations from accessing the funds they need to make local priorities a reality, Yasin explained.

To build a more resilient Somalia, “we have to change the narrative that local people do not have the capacity to manage finance,” he said.

One way to funnel more money toward local priorities is to offer direct cash transfers to those at risk during droughts, to help them avoid losing key assets — like their last animals — and falling into an unrecoverable downward spiral.

Such “anticipatory action” — or providing assistance when a crisis is still on the horizon — can help avoid heavy spending later on food aid and other support for those flattened by disasters including drought, according

to resilience experts.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has estimated that every dollar it has spent on anticipatory action has produced \$7 in benefits, and avoided losses for families.

Such savings are crucial as climate disasters become more frequent and severe, with humanitarian aid falling increasingly short of meeting demand, and a new UN-backed fund to cover “loss and damage” from climate change still being established.

But funders are often reluctant to hand over cash in places such as Somalia out of fear it could be misused, said Clare Shakya, director of climate change research at the London-based International Institute for Environment Development (IIED).

“As soon as you get into conditions where it’s considered to be fragile in any way, there’s a sense you have to control it so no funding is lost or misused for things like terrorist activity,” said Shakya, whose work focuses on making climate finance more inclusive and equitable.

“Donors ask: ‘What will this funding buy?’ They don’t want to provide a cash transfer and trust communities know what they need,” she said in an interview.

The result, as early cash to help families weather worsening drought falls short, is that humanitarian aid spending on those flattened by disaster is surging and budgets for resilience-building are disappearing.

“The prevention agenda, the resilience agenda, is going to be left

behind. There’s no budget space to experiment,” Gernot Laganda, WFP’s climate and disaster risk reduction chief, warned in an interview.

Ahmed Amdihun, who coordinates disaster risk management efforts for a climate prediction centre under the East African Intergovernmental Authority on Development, said he also saw development and resilience efforts faltering amid unrelenting drought.

“We are dealing with the crises, the emergency response rather than (anticipating),” he said during an online event. “That has a consequence, always.”

Some efforts in the region to build greater resilience to climate threats might provide a model for action in Somalia, said Shakya of IIED.

Since 2005, Ethiopia has operated a Productive Safety Net Programme, which pays food-insecure rural communities to plant trees, restore degraded land and water channels and help build public infrastructure.

The initiative — designed to replace food aid handouts — has helped cut hunger, restore water supplies, build greater resilience to drought and shore up farming and local economies.

Kenya’s government, in turn, has made a decision to drive much more climate and development cash to local authorities, leaving them to decide how best to use it.

That has led to some innovative efforts to, among other things, reduce conflict among water-short communities in arid northern Kenya, according to Shakya.

A range of aid donor countries — from the United States and The Netherlands to Norway and Finland — are similarly thinking about how to deliver more cash directly to local communities, she said.

In Somalia, finding ways to channel cash donations and remittances sent by a large overseas Somali population into a more effective social protection system could also be one approach to boosting resilience, Shakya added.

“Even in fragile contexts, you can still do things in a different way,” she noted.

Yasin, of the Somali Greenpeace Association, said that with losses growing in Somalia, change could not come fast enough.

As livestock deaths, displacement and hunger surge, with the drought showing little sign of letting up, the country’s basic livestock-based economy is at risk, he said.

“If we don’t protect the livestock, most of the people will be jobless, many of the people will die of hunger,” he warned.

“Our president says if we don’t stop the climate crisis in Somalia it will not only affect Somalia, it will cross borders,” he added — including as more families migrate and the need for internationally funded humanitarian relief soars.

Building greater resilience now, by focusing on what drought-hit local people think will best help them adapt, is crucial, Yasin said.

“If we don’t put plans in place, we end up always in the same point: Needing international support,” he said. — Thomson Reuters Foundation



Somali displaced mother Binti Moalim Hassan lays beside her malnourished 3-year-old daughter Faduma in a hospital in Mogadishu last October. (Reuters)



Who are these people?

By Dr Umar Sulaymaan al-Ashqar

Those who will enter the Hellfire and then come out of it are the people of tawheed. They are the ones who do not associate anything with Allah. However, they have accumulated many sins. Their evil deeds have exceeded the limit and their good deeds have become light on the scale. These individuals will enter the Hellfire because of their sins. Afterwards, they will come out of it due to the intercession of the interceders. By the mercy of Allah, groups of people who never produced any good deeds will be extracted from the Hellfire.

Sins Punishable in the Hellfire

I will mention here some of the sins, which there is evidence for, informing us that those who commit them will be punished by means of the Hellfire.

Splitting Up Into Groups That Oppose The Sunnah

Abu Sufyaan narrated: “The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) stood among us one day and said: “Indeed those before you from the People of the Book divided into 72 groups. And this group (Muslims) will divide into 73. Seventy-two groups will be in the Fire and one of them will be in Paradise. And it is the *Jamaa’ah*.” This is an authentic *hadith*. Al-Haakim, after checking its chains of narration, said about it.

“These chains present evidence in favour of the authenticity of the *hadith*.”

Imaam ath-Thahabee agreed with this. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: “It is a well known authentic *hadith*.” It has also been authenticated by ash-Shaatibee in his book *Al-Itisaam*. Shaykh Muhammad Naasiruddeen al-Albaanee gathered its routes of narration, discussed their chains, and clarified that it is an authentic *hadith*, there being no doubt concerning its authenticity.

Those Who Hold Back From Hijrah (Migration)

It is not permissible for the Muslims to reside in the lands of the disbelievers when there are Muslim lands that exist. This is especially so if his residence in the lands of disbelief will involve him in *fitnah* (trouble for his religion). Allah does not accept the excuse of those refrain from making *Hijrah* (migration). Thus, Allah informs us that the angels will reproach this group of people at the time of death and they will not accept their excuses when they plead to them saying that they were oppressed in the land.

Allah says (which means): “Verily, as for those who the angels take in death while they are wronging themselves, they say to them: ‘In what state were you?’ They reply: ‘We were weak and oppressed in the land.’ They (angels) say: ‘Was not Allah’s Earth spacious enough for you to migrate?’ Such men will find their abode in Hell – what an evil destination! Except the weak among men, women and children who cannot devise a plan nor are they able to make their way.”

Allah does not accept the excuses from such individuals, except for those who are weak and cannot find the method to leave, and they are not able to make a way by which they will be directed to the land of Islam. [Note: this is a general rule that has been under-explained here. One is encouraged to see what the great wise scholar Ibn ‘Uthaymeen explained about related guidelines in the book *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islam*]

Injustice In Passing Judgment

Allah has revealed His *Shari’ah* (Divine Law) for passing judgment between mankind with equity. And He has commanded His servants with justice and fairness.

Allah says (which means): “Verily, Allah enjoins *al-‘adl* (justice) and *al-ihsaan* (beneficence).”

Thus He has made it obligatory upon the rulers and the judges that they rule with justice and avoid injustice.

Allah says (which means): “Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those who they are due, and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. How excellent is the teaching that He (Allah) gives you! Truly, Allah is the Hearer of all, the Seer of all.”

Allah threatens those who do not judge in truth with the Hellfire. Buraidah bin Haseeb has narrated that the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “The judges are of three types: One in Paradise and two in the Hellfire. As for the one in Paradise, he is the one who knows the truth and judges by it. For the one who knows the truth and does not do justice in his ruling, then he is in the Fire. And as for the one who passes judgment between people out of ignorance, then he also is in the Fire.”

Lying Upon The Messenger of Allah

Ibn al-Atheer has compiled a chapter in his book *Jaami’* al-Usool in which he lists many *hadiths* which warn against lying upon the Messenger of Allah. Among them, is that which has been recorded by Imams al-Bukhari, Muslim and at-Tirmithi, on the authority of ‘Alee who said that the Messenger of Allah said:

“Do not lie upon me. For indeed, the one who lies upon me will be tormented by the Hellfire.”

In another *hadith* the Prophet said: “Whoever attributes a statement to me of which I did not say, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.”

Also, the Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever lies upon me intentionally, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.”

Among the other *hadiths* is the one where Allah’s Messenger said:

“Indeed a lie upon me is not like a lie upon anyone else. So whoever lies upon me intentionally, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.”

PRIDE

Among the major sins is pride. Abu Hurairah, *radhiallah ‘anh*u, narrated that the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “Allah said: ‘Pride is my cloak and greatness is my lower garment. Whoever disputes with me regarding any of these will be cast into the Fire.’”

And he (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) also said: “The one who has a speck of pride in his heart will not enter Paradise.”

So a man said to him: “Indeed a man likes to have nice clothes and nice sandals.” He (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty. Pride is disregarding the truth and belittling the people.”

KILLING AN INDIVIDUAL WITHOUT DUE RIGHT

Allah says (which means): “And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein, and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and the great punishment is prepared for him.”

The killing of an individual Muslim is not permissible in Islam except for one of three cases as has been stated in the following *hadith*, in which the Messenger of Allah said: “The blood of an individual who testifies that there is nothing worthy of worship besides Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah, is not lawful, except for one of three cases. They are: A life for a life, a married person who commits adultery, and the one who abandons his religion and breaks away from the *Jamaa’ah*.”

The Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) also said: “The believer will remain within the margins of his religion, as long as he does not

spill blood illegally.”

Ibn ‘Umar, *radhiallah ‘anhuma*, said: “Of those dilemmas which there is no way out for the one who fails, is the shedding of blood without a due reason.”

The Messenger (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) has warned the Muslims from killing one another. And he has informed us that the killer and the one killed are both in the Fire.

Abu Bakr, *radhiallah ‘anh*u, reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “When two Muslims face each other with their swords, then the killer and the one killed are (both) in the Fire.”

I said: “I understand the killer, but what of the one who is killed?”

He said: “Indeed, he was intent upon killing his companion.”

Due to this, the righteous servant refrains from killing his brother, fearing that he might be of the dwellers of the Fire. And so the killer will attain his sin and the sin of the one he is killing.

Allah says (which means): “And recite to them (the Jews) the story of the two sons of Aadam in truth; when each offered a sacrifice to Allah. It was accepted from one but not from the other. The latter said to the former: ‘I will surely kill you.’ The former

The Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: “Do not lie upon me. For indeed, the one who lies upon me will be tormented by the Hellfire”

said: ‘Allah accepts only from those who give Him due reverence. If you stretch your hand against me to kill me, I shall never stretch my hand against you to kill you: for I fear Allah the Lord of the worlds. I intend to let you draw my sin on yourself as well as yours, then you will be one of the dwellers of the Fire. And that is the recompense of the wrong doers.’”

CONSUMING (RIBAA) INTEREST OR USURY

Among the sins that destroy the individual performing it, is usury. Concerning those who take interest after knowledge has reached them of its prohibition, Allah says (which means), “But whoever returns to *riba*, such are the dwellers of the Fire – they will abide therein.”

And He says, (which means): “O you who believe! Do not consume *riba*, doubled and multiplied, but fear Allah that you may be successful. And fear the Fire which is prepared for the disbelievers.”

The Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) has counted *riba* as one of the seven sins that destroy the one performing it. It is recorded in the *Two Saheeh* collections that the Messenger of Allah said: “Avoid the seven destructive sins.”

They said: “And what are they, O Messenger of Allah?” So he (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “To associate partners with Allah (shirk), magic, killing an individual which Allah has forbidden except with due right, consuming interest, taking the wealth of the orphan, running away from the battlefield, and slandering chaste believing women.”

TAKING THE WEALTH OF THE PEOPLE UNJUSTLY

Among the greatest forms of oppression bringing a guarantee of the Hellfire is the consumption of people’s wealth unjustly. This is as Allah says (which means): “O you who believe! Do not consume property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade among you by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you. And whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into the Fire, and that is easy for Allah.”

One who unjustly consumes the wealth of people also takes the wealth of the orphan unjustly. Allah has specifically mentioned

their wealth, due to their frailty, the ease at which their wealth can be consumed, and the detestableness of such a crime.

“Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, they eat only fire into their bellies, and they will be burnt in the Blazing Fire!”

THE PICTURE-MAKERS

The people who will receive the worst punishment on the Day of Judgment are the picture-makers. [Note: There are a number of crimes in addition to this one, for which the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) mentioned they would warrant the worst punishment.] They are the ones who compete with Allah’s ability to create. Ibn Mas’ood, *radhiallah ‘anh*u, reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah say:

“The people with the worst punishment according to Allah are the picture-makers.”

Ibn ‘Abbas, *radhiallah ‘anhuma*, said that he heard the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) say: “Every picture-maker is in the Hellfire. A soul will be placed for him into every picture that he fabricated, and Allah will punish him (by it) in the Hellfire.”

‘A’ishah, *radhiallah ‘anha*, reported that the Messenger of Allah said concerning a cushion that had pictures on it, “Indeed the makers of

these pictures will be tormented on the Day of Judgment. It will be said to them: Bring life to that which you have created.”

He (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) also said: “The people who will receive the worst torment are those who try to imitate the creation of Allah.”

Abu Hurairah reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah say: “Allah says: And who is worse than he who tries to create the likes of My creation. Then let them create a seed, or let them create a kernel or grain.”

THOSE WHO RELY ON EVIL-DOERS (DHALMOON)

From among the means that cause the entrance into the Hellfire, is the reliance on evildoers, the enemies of Allah, and befriending them.

Allah says (which means): “And incline not towards those who do wrong, lest the Fire should touch you and you have no protectors other than Allah, nor will you then be helped.”

THE WOMEN WHO WILL BE CLOTHED YET NAKED AND THE ONES WHO WILL WHIP THE BACKS OF PEOPLE

Among the types of people that will enter the Hellfire, are the evil women who display their beauty indecently. They put the servants of Allah to trial and do not themselves abide in the obedience of Allah. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “There are two types of people from the dwellers of the Fire that I have never seen before. A people who have whips like the tails of cows by which they will be beating the people. And women who will be clothed yet naked, swaggering and bent over, their heads will be like the slanted humps of the *bukht* camel. They will not enter Paradise, nor will they sense its odour, even though its odour can be sensed from such and such distance.”

Commenting on the words of al-Qurtubee, Sideeq Hasan Khan said: “Rather, they are present in every time, at every place, increasing day by day among the leaders and the notables. Thus, we seek refuge from all that Allah hates.”

I say, we can still see this type of people in many of the lands, whipping the backs of people. May they and their likes perish!

And the women who appear naked in spite of their being clothed are many in our time.

Perhaps their evil has not grown so wide-spread before as it has these days. They are just as the Messenger of Allah has described them, clothed yet naked, bent-over and swaggering, and upon their heads is the hump of the *bukht* camel.

THOSE WHO TORTURE ANIMALS

The Messenger of Allah said: “The Hellfire was presented to me and I saw in it a woman from the Tribe of Israa’eel who was being punished for a cat she had. She tied it up and did not feed it, nor did she let it go so that it may eat the rodents of the earth, until it died of starvation.”

If this is the condition of the one who tortures a cat, then how is it for the one who is tested by torturing the servants of Allah? And how much more is it, if the torture is for the righteous ones among them because of their *emaan* and their Islam?

THE LACK OF SINCERITY IN SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

Al-Haafiz al-Munthiree cited many *hadiths* which warn against seeking knowledge for other than Allah’s sake. I have chosen only some of them. The Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever acquires knowledge, by which the Face of Allah is sought, and he does not learn it except to attain honour by it in this world, he will not perceive the odour of Paradise on the Day of Judgment.”

Jaabir, *radhiallah ‘anh*u, reported that the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “Do not acquire knowledge in order to compete with the scholars, nor to argue with the ignorant, nor to gain mastery over the gatherings. So whoever does that, then: The Fire, the Fire!”

Ibn ‘Abbaas, *radhiallah ‘anhuma*, reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever acquires a knowledge for other than Allah’s sake, or desiring other than that, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.”

THOSE WHO DRINK FROM GOLD, SILVER VESSELS

Umm Salamah, *radhiallah ‘anha*, narrated that the Messenger of Allah said: “One who drinks from a gold or silver vessel is only gulping the fire of *Jahannam* into his stomach.”

In another similar narration, he (sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “The one who eats and drinks from a gold and silver vessel, is only...”

Huthayfah, *radhiallah ‘anh*u, reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah say: “Do not wear silk garments nor silk brocade. And do not drink from gold and silver vessels, nor eat from such bowls. For, indeed, they are for them (disbelievers) in this world, and they are for you in the next.”

THE ONE WHO CUTS DOWN THE LOTE-TREE WHICH SHADES THE PEOPLE

The Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever cuts down a lote-tree, Allah will pour Fire on his head.”

‘A’ishah, *radhiallah ‘anha*, reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “Indeed, the ones who cut down the lote-tree, a molten Fire will be poured on their heads.”

THE RECOMPENSE OF SUICIDE

It has been confirmed in the *Two Saheehs* that the Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever kills himself with a weapon, then that weapon will be in his hand, stabbing him in the stomach in the Hellfire eternally. And whoever kills himself with poison, then the poison will be in his hand, he will be sipping it in the Hellfire eternally. And whoever throws himself from a mountain and kills himself, then he will be falling down in the Hellfire eternally.”

Abu Hurairah said that he heard the Messenger of Allah say: “The one who strangles himself will be strangling himself in the Hellfire. And the one who stabs himself will be stabbing himself in the Hellfire.”

Zitouna Great Mosque one of the oldest, most famous in Islamic world

The Zitouna Great Mosque is one of the oldest and most famous mosques throughout the Islamic world. It was founded in 116 AH (734 CE) by Obeid Allah Ibn Al-Habhab. The mosque is renowned as a place of worship and, more particularly, for the leading and long-standing scientific and cultural role it has assumed since the early second century of Hegira.

Dispensing teaching of Islamic sciences since the year 120 AH (737 CE), the Zitouna Mosque is the oldest Arab-Islamic university and has continuously performed its educational role for 13 centuries. This original fact was pointed up by the historian Has-

san Hosni AbdulWahab who asserted: “The Zitouna Mosque is historically the earliest and the oldest teaching establishment in the Arab world.”

In its double capacity as a university and a place of worship, the Zitouna Mosque experienced times of prosperity until the end of the reign of the Hafsids (634-981 AH/1237-1573 CE). According to the scholar Abdulrahman Ibn Khaldun – an alumnus of the Zitouna – the latter ranked above any other teaching establishment in the Islamic Maghrib in the 14th and 15th centuries (CE). The teaching at the Zitouna encompassed different syllabuses, including Islamic religious and literary subjects, philosophy, intel-

lectual sciences, mathematics, medicine, and astronomy.

Per the general purposes fixed for higher education and scientific research, and in consideration of the competence vested in universities concerning the national identity and consciousness of being rooted in the Arab-Islamic civilisation and in order to honor the obligation of contributing to further developing human civilisation, the Zitouna University seeks to reach the following targets.

Secure an academic training which enables the learner to seek in the values of Islam – the latter being a faith, a thought, and a civilisation – what constitutes a means to upgrade the individual to the status of a free and responsible person capable of reconciling his commitments to the noble purposes of religion with the need to meet the requirements of existence appropriately. Strengthen the belief that the Islamic thought in its various aspects results from the action performed by generations of creative and innovative scholars.

Thus, belonging to the Arab and Islamic civilisation urges the individual to acquire the necessary elements for developing his genius and work, at best, for boosting the progress of knowledge, practise *Ijtihad*, and consequently perpetuate the accomplishments of the prominent figures of this civilisation.

It also reinforces the awareness



that the Zitouna University is a symbol that epitomises a whole school of thought and faith-based on everlasting tolerance, on the principle of renewal of religion and history and a yearning for implanting an inventive spiritual life and an untiring work

for the good of humankind. Thus, providing the learner with an opportunity to acquire the capacity for interacting with other cultures and empower him to enrich the Islamic and human thought and reconcile the innovative genius with the glorious

heritage, by enabling him to control the various branches of modern knowledge and have direct access to the achievements of universal thought.

<https://educativ.net/universities/tunisia/university-ez-zitouna/>



Elite athletes, local runners take part in Doha Marathon by Ooredoo 2023 today

■ 8,000 runners at start line ■ QR1mn total prize pool across categories ■ SUV on offer as raffle draw grand prize for 5K+ category finishers

The starting gun for the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo – one of the most hotly anticipated events of Doha's sporting calendar – goes off at 6.15am today with local running enthusiasts lining up alongside elite international athletes at the start line. All categories of the event sold out well in advance, with 8,000 runners participating across the range of distances

from the 1km kids' race to the full 42.2km marathon. The event kicks off at Parade Pavilion, The Amir's Grandstand, Al Corniche, with runners then heading towards Katara, Lusail and back to Al Corniche. The full marathon starts at 6.15am, followed by the half marathon at 6.30am. The 10km category kicks off at 8.50am, with the starter's

gun going off for the 5km category at 9.40am. Finally, the 1km category for kids begins at 10.30am. The total prize pool this year is around QR1mn for all categories, while all participants who finish their category will get a medal. All participants crossing the finish line in all categories from 5km upwards will be entered into a prize draw,



with the grand prize a Volkswagen T-Roc courtesy of event sponsor Q-Auto. This year's race village will feature a number of food vendors – Oakberry, Charger, Graze, GoHome, CHIA Nation, Flat-White and Green Cola – while Angry Birds characters will be in attendance to distribute vouchers to the top runners in the 1km and 5km kids' races.

Ooredoo hosts the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo in partnership with Qatar Athletics Federation. Platinum sponsors for this year's event are confirmed as Qatar Tourism, Q-Auto and Holding Group, with Qatar Airways and Seashore as Gold sponsors. Silver Sponsors are Al Rayyan Water, Aspetar, QIC and Qommunication.

7th edition of Mahaseel Festival launched

'Radiance of Faith from Ottoman Era' exhibition inaugurated in Katara

From Page 1

Al-Dosari said the hosting of the seventh edition of the festival proves the initiative's success in achieving the goals for which it was established, particularly spreading the culture of consuming local agricultural and poultry products. These sectors have witnessed great development over the years, he said, noting that the festival's high-quality products and multiple choices have helped it attract shoppers.

On his part, al-Khulaifi said the festival is being held through co-operation between Katara and the ministry, which is keen on the participation of and co-ordination between the two sides, and because of the importance that Katara enjoys as a tourist and entertainment destination that attracts visitors from different nationalities.

He noted that all of this contributed to enhancing the role of the festival as a unique destination for displaying national products of different types.

The festival showcases the development of the local agricultural product in terms of both quantity and quality, in addition to being an opportunity for citizens and residents to learn about the diversity of the local product, al-Khulaifi added.

Al-Nuaimi said this edition brings together 28 local farms and eight nurseries, in addition



to six companies specialised in poultry, meat and dairy production.

The festival will be open from 9am-9pm until January 28, while the Mahaseel Market will continue after that on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays every week until mid-April, he added.

The official said this year's Mahaseel includes a number of accompanying attractions, such as art workshops and different activities, providing a beautiful opportunity for the family to shop and spend some enjoyable times.



General Manager of Katara the Cultural Village Foundation Prof Khalid Ibrahim al-Sulaiti has inaugurated the "Radiance of Faith from the Ottoman Era" exhibition by photographer Khaled al-Musilmani. The event was held at the hall of building No 18 in Katara in the presence of the ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Qatar Mehmet Mustafa Goksu along with several officials from the Ministry of Culture.

Organised by Qatar Photography Center of the Ministry of Culture, the exhibition includes 50 artistic pictures on which the photographer Khaled al-Musilmani portrayed the aesthetics of Islamic architecture in Türkiye's mosques through a collection of selected models for its decorations, interior scene, and the distinctive elements in its exterior appearance.

On this occasion, Dr al-Sulaiti noted the high artistic skills of the artist that were showcased in the distinguished photographic paintings that conveyed the beauty of mosques during the Ottoman era, lauding the efforts made by the Qatar Photography Center in sponsoring artists and talents with photography. He pointed out that Katara is com-



mitted to supporting everything that enriches the Qatari artistic and cultural scene.

In an exclusive statement to Qatar News Agency, Director of the Department of Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture Maryam Yassin al-Hammadi underlined that the organisation of such an exhibition came within the framework of supporting artists in pursuit of achieving the strategic objectives of the Ministry of Culture, specially those related to Islamic history, civilisation and identity as depicted by the artist through mosques.

This is, in addition, to the artistic and engineering designs highlighted by the artist

which represent an inspired cultural and creative dimension, al-Hammadi said, pointing out that the exhibition is an opportunity to have a glimpse of other cultures abroad, specially in a country with authentic culture like Türkiye, she said.

Director of Qatar Photography Center Abdullah Abdul Hamid al-Musleh noted the exhibition culminates the incredible effort made by Khaled al-Musilmani in terms of selective models from the outcome of five years of photographing the architecture and aesthetics of mosques from five different Turkish cities. (QNA)



Cruise ship 'MSC World Europa' returns to Doha



By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Cruise ship 'MSC World Europa', which served as a floating hotel during the FIFA World Cup in Qatar last year, returned for its fourth visit to the country during the 2022/23 cruise season. In a post on its social media pages, Mwani Qatar noted that the mega cruise ship – which had its naming ceremony in Doha last year – was

carrying 5,310 tourists and 2,070 crew members.

Managed by the Swiss-based MSC Cruises, 'MSC World Europa' sails under the flag of Malta and is the most innovative and environmentally sustainable vessel in the company's fleet, featuring the latest technologies that reduce emissions and rationalise energy use.

Built in Saint-Nazaire, France, the 22-deck ship has a length of 333m, width of 47m, public space of more

than 40,000sq m, as well as 2,633 state-rooms, accommodating 6,700 passengers, in addition to 13 restaurants and six swimming pools. The 'MSC World Europa' is an ultramodern urban metropolis at sea offering a veritable world of different experiences, while setting a new standard for the cruise industry.

MSC Cruises' newest flagship and the most innovative vessel is dubbed as the world's largest environmentally focused cruise passenger ship. Along with 'MSC Poesia' and 'MSC Opera', 'MSC World

Europa' provided football fans with a unique hospitality experience during the prestigious tournament in Qatar.

The three vessels have a total passenger capacity of more than 12,000 combined, according to MSC Cruises.

On top of groundbreaking advances in terms of reduction of emissions and energy efficiency, the LNG-powered ship paves the way towards the uptake of carbon-neutral synthetic and other alternative fuels as soon as they are available at scale.

