





Dr Abdullah al-Wahaibi



Tareq al-Nabulsi



Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Kuwari at the meeting. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

# Qatar to preside over meeting of Arab social affairs ministers' council

By Shafeeq Alingal  
Staff Reporters

Qatar yesterday assumed the presidency of the 42nd meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, which will be held in Doha on January 25-26, preceded by a preparatory meeting for senior officials.

The session marked the handing over of the presidency to Qatar from Saudi Arabia.

Senior officials from the member states attended the preparatory meeting, discussing issues ranging that include social welfare, family, childhood, rights of persons with disabilities and the elderly, eradication of multidimensional poverty and others.

In his opening remarks, Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Kuwari, Assistant Undersecretary for Social Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development, and Chairman of the 42nd meeting, said the meeting is the continuation of the co-ordination and co-operation to transfer expertise and knowledge between the relevant ministry in Qatar and its counterparts in the Arab countries to further capitalise on the experience in protection and social care aspects.

The agenda of the meeting includes numerous topics that will be formulated into effective policies, recommendations, draft resolutions and decisions to be further submitted to the Arab ministers of social affairs at their meeting, al-Kuwari pointed out.

He noted that the meeting will discuss topics in the areas of family, childhood, rights of persons with disabilities, eradication of multidimensional poverty in Arab states, in addition to the topics relevant to elderly and aspects of protection, social care, standards of social action and social workers, the programme of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, as well as the action plan of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, and a plethora of activities and proposed studies.

Dr Abdullah al-Wahaibi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development for Rehabilitation and Social Guidance, Saudi Arabia, said the



A section of the attendees.

current session complements the previous efforts and meetings, exploring the best means of promoting social development in the Arab region in order to attain the highest level of evolution in various fields of social development.

"The efforts of the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, in co-operation and co-ordination with the ministers and officials concerned in the member states, have been straightforward to implement the outcomes of the 11th session of the meeting," al-Wahaibi said, adding that such efforts have achieved and implemented the social dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development in Saudi Arabia, and stemming from the Vision of Saudi Arabia 2030, has launched numerous initiatives to serve persons with disabilities, including a partnership initiative with the non-state sector and the Purple Saturday initiative, he informed.

Al-Wahaibi said the ministry is currently working to conduct a holistic evaluation process for persons with disabilities, which includes health, social, economic and functional aspects. He outlined that the current agenda of the meeting abounds with social topics that require further scrutinisation and discussion to take the appropriate decisions accordingly, for the

sake of achieving and implementing the social dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Tareq al-Nabulsi, Technical Secretariat of the Arab Social Ministerial Council, emphasised that the current session of the meeting comes within a new trend in the world, which represents recovery from Covid-19, pointing out that such a trend started in the previous session in Saudi Arabia, within the framework of recovery and moving forward to implement the sustainable development plan for 2030.

"This event comes after the Arab countries have made significant and numerous strides with respect to promoting the rights of weak and vulnerable segments in the community, with the rights of persons with disabilities and elderly coming at the forefront," al-Nabulsi said.

He stressed the importance of taking into account all unprecedented challenges facing the Arab region, which precipitate synergistic efforts and capitalise on the available technology and potential.

In the light of those challenges, the Arab Social Ministerial Council has been keen to co-ordinate with Qatar and the presidency of the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs to crystallise all challenges in the draft agenda to consider all these developments," he added. (With inputs from QNA)

## PM opens Umm Al Seneem Health Centre



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al-Thani inaugurated yesterday Umm Al Seneem Health Centre in Ain Khalid. The Prime Minister toured the health centre where he was briefed on its facilities, sections and medical units, and listened to an explanation about the medical services and healthcare provided to patients and visitors.



## Call to denounce Israeli practices against Palestinians

A Shura Council delegation participated in the third plenary meeting of the third session of the third legislative term of the Arab Parliament, which was held yesterday at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo.

The session discussed issues related to the promotion of joint Arab action in various political, economic, cultural and social fields, and the overall developments in the Arab arena, in addition to discussing a proposal regarding the sponsorship of the Arab Parliament for an annual award to support the Arabic language.

During the session, the Arab Parliament also reviewed the results of the meetings of its four permanent committees, including the report of the Palestine Committee, which included its recommendations regarding developments in the Palestinian cause.

In this regard, the Shura Council member and the Arab Parliament member Essa bin Ahmad al-Nassr, stressed that the Palestinian issue is present in the conscience of every Arab, calling on all Arab councils and parliaments to denounce all Israeli practices against the Palestinians, to adopt positions condemning and exposing these practices to world public opinion. (QNA)



# Marmi 2023: Falcons home in on qualifying rounds



Mohamed Abdulatif al-Misnad



Falcons put up an exceptional performance yesterday at Haddad Al Tahadi (where the falcon has to hunt a homing pigeon within certain standards) as part of the ongoing Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2023).

Accordingly, the number of falcons qualifying for the next round were able to surpass the levels achieved last year in the same competition. The number stood at 67 last year, while this year it touched 69 yesterday with six new falcons qualifying in the morning and afternoon rounds.

Mohamed Abdulatif al-Misnad, deputy chairman of the Supreme Committee of Marmi 2023, congratulated the winner in the finals of other categories of the festival, including young falconers, aspiring falconers, Al Da'aw (falcon speeding) - both local and international rounds, Premier Al Da'aw and the Saluki dog race.

He noted that the final of Al Da'aw that was held on Friday lived up to the expectations of the organising committee and contestants. He said the festival's overall outcomes have also been up to the expectations of participating falconers, especially regarding the diversity of competitions and valuable prizes.



He pointed out that peregrine falcons surpassing the number registered during Marmi 2022 at Haddad Al Tahadi indicates the experience gained by falconers over the year in preparing and training their falcons in a professional way and giving them the best veterinary care and nutrition. He added that Marmi 2023 provides falconers with easy access to such services, with the Souq Waqif Falcon Hospital offering its services at the site of the festival.

Al-Misnad thanked the wise government of the country for its continuous support of falconry and maintaining the related folk heritage. He stressed the keenness of the festival's man-

agement to further enhance it as more categories have been introduced in this edition for falcon beauty contests, including a new category for falcons that were hatched in farms, to encourage their production efforts.

Meanwhile, Ali Sultan al-Kuwari, head of the Haddad Al Tahadi Committee, said the results achieved yesterday by peregrine falcons affirm that the falconers have exerted great efforts in training and caring about them.

Marmi 2023 has been organised by Al Qannas Qatari Society at Sbkhath Marmi in the Sealine area, under the patronage of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, and will continue until January 28.

## QNB first in Qatar to launch facial payments solution

**Q**NB Group has launched a new biometric payment acceptance solution for its merchants in Qatar.

QNB, together with its key partners, will be helping merchants with outlets in Qatar to offer customers the simplicity, convenience and security of facial biometric payments.

This solution is based on proprietary facial verification technology developed by PopID, provisioned through QNB's acceptance network, and supported by Visa via tokenisation.

The technology enables customers to authenticate payments for goods and services through facial verification, without a physical card or mobile phone after initial enrolment. As a one-time sign-up, users will create their profile by taking a selfie of their face using their smartphone, before entering their phone number and card details.

The technology then tokenises the card number and securely links it to the facial biometric template. It only takes a minute or two to set this up and then only a few seconds to make the payment. The merchants will offer the in-store sign-up using a QR capability.

These developments "highlight the driving forces behind facial biometric technology and the wide range of oppor-



QNB, together with its key partners, will be helping merchants with outlets in Qatar to offer customers the simplicity, convenience and security of facial biometric payments.

tunities it is opening up for the future of payment solutions and much more", the bank said in a statement.

Adel al-Malki, senior executive vice-president (Group Retail Banking), said: "As the payment landscape evolves, QNB is always at the forefront of this evolution, and constantly willing to be an early adopter of innovative technologies that drive frictionless and enhanced payment experience - putting our customers and merchants experience at the centre of everything we do. Being the 'first in Qatar' in another innovation that augments the already rich range of payment options that includes

functionality such as contactless payments, QNB 'MyPOS' (Tap on Phone payment acceptance) and Samsung/Google/Apple pay, to mention a few." "In America and Japan, we have demonstrated that allowing consumers to link PopPay to loyalty accounts and payment methods substantially increases speed of ordering and check out, drives loyalty engagement, and reduces fraud," said John Miller, CEO, PopID and its parent company, Cali Group.

"We are excited to work with Visa and QNB to bring this loyalty and payment platform to businesses and consumers in Qatar," Miller added.

## Qatar Charity-sponsored orphans achieve outstanding academic results

**S**ome 100 sponsored students from Qatar Charity (QC) were able to excel at the general secondary certificate level in the various student care and education centres established by QC in Bangladesh, thanks to the sponsorship of the people in Qatar for orphans in Bangladesh.

The students expressed happiness at achieving these results and thanked philanthropists in Qatar and QC, and stressed their commitment to continuous excellence.

Janna Akhtar, one of the outstanding students, said: "I am very happy with the distinguished results that I have achieved, and I extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the honourable donors who were the reason for providing the means of success and excellence for us and our arrival to this stage of educational attainment."

For her part, student Amina Anamika said: "It was very difficult for an orphan student to continue her studies, but thanks to the kind sponsor from Qatar, I was able to complete my studies and prove myself. He was a model for me, and I will continue on his approach, and I will help orphans and the poor so that they can complete their education in the future."

Mahmoud al-Hassan, one of the outstanding students, added: "Thank you to the people of Qatar and Qatar Charity for supporting us and providing an appropriate educational environment that led us to success and distinction in the science ladder."

Parents and teachers expressed joy at the outstanding results achieved by the children.

Muzida Begum, a mother of an orphan student, said: "I cannot express how



The students expressed happiness at achieving these results and thanked philanthropists in Qatar and QC, stressing their commitment to continuous excellence.



Mizan al-Rahman, a teacher at Bhairab Centre affiliated with Qatar Charity, said: "Our students have achieved wonderful results that have pleased us as an educational framework. We are always working to provide the best for them so that they complete the path of success and excellence. We always encourage them by saying that the honourable sponsors from among the people of Qatar expect from them distinguished academic results. This is what motivates them to do more and give to get the best results."

Qatar Charity has built 38 schools with residential facilities in all parts of Bangladesh in the past five years, and is currently working on building 15 schools under construction. Once these facilities are completed, 3,000 additional students will have opportunities. This comes at a time when QC is sponsoring 3,312 orphans to ensure a better future for them.

# Qatar Foundation beautifies Oxygen Park with works of local and emerging artists

**Q**atar Foundation (QF) recently held a Utility Boxes Art contest where artists residing in Qatar were given the chance to transform boxes in Oxygen Park into canvases.

According to an article on the QF website, the initiative aimed at an art intervention in public spaces to enhance the beauty and vibrancy of the park using an existing platform. The six winners of the competition had their artworks refined, produced and installed by QF. They will be on display for the next three years at various locations of the park.

Maha al-Kuwari, one of the six winners, appreciated the support of QF for established

and emerging artists. The Qatari artist, who works for the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, is especially grateful that her artwork was showcased during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 as public art enhances a tourist's experience.

"The World Cup provided an opportunity for artists to inspire millions of people through artistic expression especially since the art scene in Qatar continues to emerge and thrive," she said.

"During my brainstorming process, I considered what could enhance the beauty of the park even more. The idea of drawing animals that inhabit Qatar's ecosystem came

to mind. I wanted the visitors to get a glimpse of the wildlife in Qatar."

Shaikha al-Thani, a sophomore at QF partner Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts Qatar, says nature and flora are the sources of her inspiration. She specifies Qatraf, which is Qatar's national flower, as her muse.

"As a Qatari artist, I wanted to draw something that reflected my country's identity. I was surprised to know that a lot of people weren't aware of Qatraf's significance to Qatar's history and culture," she said.

Eugene Espinosa, a visual and senior graphic artist, ex-

plained how the inspiration behind his artwork is Qatar's unique selection of wildlife.

"My artwork, Flamingos Series, was inspired by a newspaper article I read one morning. I was amazed that there is so much more you could see in Qatar beyond the Arabian oryx and gazelles. You can see flamingos in Purple Island, which they consider as their resting spot during their travels from Europe to Siberia and Africa."

Nada Khozestani finds her artistic inspiration from her unique experience as a woman.

"I find inspiration for my artworks from culture but mostly from women in my so-

ciety. Giving us, new female artists, an opportunity to flourish is one of the key steps to enhancing art and society in Qatar."

The competition saw many entries from both Qatari and expatriate artists across different age groups. For Nidheesh Anand, a 3D visualiser, the belief that art connects future generations with the stories of other, is his inspiration to share his own tale.

"Art is connected with emotions. It can tell many stories with no words. That's what I think is the power of an artist is. We could be the next Picasso, Da Vinci, or Michelangelo.



Eugene Espinosa, a visual and senior graphic artist.

Who knows?" Ben Gaskell finds his inspiration from the culture and religion of the Qatari people who he takes great pride in living amongst, after four years in the country. He considers the opportunity to have his art highlighted in such a once-in-a-lifetime chance.

"As an artist it is very difficult to display your work to a large audience. Even with the availability of social media, unless you have a large following, your work will often go unnoticed. Investing in having your work displayed at a gallery can be daunting and expensive."

## Al Khor Workers' Sports Complex expansion project 'sees 99% occupancy'

**W**aseef, a leading real estate management and marketing company, has said the Al Khor Workers' Sports Complex expansion project has achieved a high occupancy rate.

A statement from the company said the occupancy rate in the expansion project has crossed 99% with the housing units being leased to national companies operating in various economic and service sectors, in line with Waseef's business strategy that aims to manage and operate real estate projects that improve the quality of life for all categories of expatriate workers. This is achieved by providing housing units with high specifications and suitable rents and in areas close to their work while meeting all their requirements, the statement noted.

The project, which has a capacity of 3,000 workers, is located in the Al Khor Industrial Area and extends over an area of 69,757sq m. It includes 516 one- and two-room apartments, in addition to a hypermarket with an area of 7,962sq m, and a multipurpose hall with an area of 300sq m.

The project also includes the necessary infrastructure such as a sub-electricity station and internal roads, as well as services such as water, electricity, sewage, irrigation, communications, surveillance cameras,



Sections of the project.

parking lots and pump rooms.

The project, which aims to raise the standard of living for workers by providing integrated recreational and sports facilities, includes four cricket pitches, four football grounds, three volleyball courts, four basketball courts and four kabaddi courts. These are in addition to two outdoor cinemas and a mosque along with various public services. The project's sports facilities are also used on several occasions by several government agencies and private companies.

The commercial facilities of the project include 22 commercial stores with small areas with an occupancy rate of about 32% in addition to 13 commercial stores with large areas with an occupancy rate of approximately 31%. Also, there is a supermarket rented to a retail entity. Waseef manages the

multi-use hall, as it is rented to companies whose workers and employees live amidst the project and have a desire to provide a variety of activities.

In addition, security guard service is available while security and emergency systems are monitored on an ongoing basis. Maintenance services for all facilities, systems and buildings are available while cleaning services are also provided. All of these services aim to ensure the provision of the best possible environment for workers benefiting from the project.

Waseef added that the continuous work by the relevant government agencies to provide international quality roads in the city of Al Khor, and link them to the main highways in their neighbourhood, have helped the project get connected to many important facilities and vital main roads.

## Qatar's successful cultural diplomacy during World Cup Qatar 2022 hailed

**D**r Fatima Hassan al-Sulaiti, director of International Co-operation and Governmental Affairs at Qatar Museums (QM), has stressed that Qatar's experience in cultural diplomacy during the hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 "constituted an unprecedented pattern in the size of the direct impact on audiences from all over the world, and the dimensions of its success exceeded the period in which it was held, noting that this experience is one of the most prominent models of successful cultural diplomacy".

She made the observations during a lecture at Darwish Al-Far Theatre at the National Museum of Qatar, held under the title 'Cultural Diplomacy: The Role of Qatar Museums'. It was organised by the Katara Public Diplomacy Centre (KPDC) in co-operation with QM in the presence of Darwish Ahmed al-Shaibani, CEO of KPDC, ambassadors and representatives from the culture, education and media sectors.

Dr al-Sulaiti spoke about the role of Qatar Museums in consolidating the concepts of cultural diplomacy, as she highlighted the importance of a



Glimpses from the lecture.

growing network of museums, archaeological sites and festivals in promoting an authentic and inspiring national cultural identity. She explained Qatar's successful experience in protecting its heritage and culture through its ability to preserve museums, cultural properties and heritage sites, as well as restoring them and expanding their scope of work and influence, as they contributed to strengthening interdependence among countries of the world by establishing art and culture centres, language centres and architectural projects. QM, since its establishment in 2005, has supervised the development of a large number of museums, she added.

During her analysis of the essence of the Qatari experience, she stressed that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani adopted cultural diplomacy in the style of his work and



directives with distinction, noting that "we have witnessed its impact in the previous period."

Dr al-Sulaiti said important files fell under the umbrella of Qatar Museums and constituted distinguished stations in her career, which contributed to highlighting Qatar's role in the international diplomatic arena, including her management of Qatar's participation in the Unesco meetings in 2021, granting Qatar membership of the World Heritage Committee for 1972, and membership of the Second Protocol Committee for the year 1999, after which she assumed the position of General Rapporteur of the 1999 Second Protocol Agreement. She emphasised during the lecture that diplomatic work is not limited to attending meetings or preparing the necessary documents only, but also managing files with sophisticated strategic plans that ensure

the consolidation of the role of Qatar with its experiences standing out globally.

For his part, al-Shaibani said cultural diplomacy is the essence and foundation of public diplomacy, adding that the success achieved by Qatar in public diplomacy depends on the existence of an advanced infrastructure and prestigious cultural and sports institutions, in addition to the availability of an informed audience and the environment.

He pointed out that the 2022 World Cup contributed to changing the stereotypical image and correcting the misconceptions about the Arab people that prevailed abroad, stressing that the Qatari dress, such as the 'ghutra' and the headband, has become one of the bright cultural symbols that reflect the authenticity of the Qatari and Arab culture.

He appreciated the role of cultural diplomacy in changing negative indicators into constructive positive results, and praised the vital role of Ministry of Culture, Qatar Museums and Qatar Foundation, in connecting people and launching innovative and advanced projects in public diplomacy, which enhance the status of the State and brings it closer to nations and societies.

# Qatar stresses need for joint Arab work

**QNA**  
Tripoli

Qatar took part in the consultative meeting of the Arab foreign ministers in Tripoli yesterday.

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi represented Qatar at the meeting.

Speaking at the meeting, HE al-Muraikhi emphasised the necessity of the joint work to realise the Arab nations' interests and to support their security and stability, pointing to the dire need for consultation, collaboration, exchange of visions, and co-ordination amid the delicate circumstance in which regional and international political scene is affected by wars, conflicts, and economic changes.

He said that Qatar has always been keen on Arab consensus and on timely holding of meetings and consultations, so that the issues raised keep expressing the Arab reality and interacting with the aspirations of the Arab peoples.



HE al-Muraikhi extended thanks and appreciation to Libya for hosting the meeting, pointing out that it thus confirms its keenness to play its active role and to consult with member states with the aim of mobilising collective efforts to serve the common causes, upholding the Arab values and civilisation among nations.

In this regard, Qatar calls on all Libyan parties to pursue dialogue and prudence as means to overcome differences and create an environment for holding presidential and legislative elections, he said.

Qatar also renews its full support for the Libyan political process, he added.

## Workers' support fund promotes labour environment

The Board of Directors of Workers' Support and Insurance Fund convened its first meeting of 2023, under the presidency of HE the Minister of Labour, Chairman of the Board of Directors Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri. The meeting discussed a number of files, and took several decisions and recommendations accordingly, to ensure upgrading the fund's performance and efficiency to promote the labour environment. Established under the Law No 17 of 2018, the board aims to support and care for workers, and ensure their rights, as well as provide a healthy and secure labour environment. **(QNA)**



# Sustainable date palm production project being carried out in 3 phases

The annual meetings of the technical and steering committees for the project development of sustainable date palms in the GCC countries began in Doha yesterday.

The meetings, which will run until Jan 25, are organised by the Ministry of Municipality's Agricultural Research Department, in co-operation with the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the GCC General Secretariat, with the participation of national co-ordinators, technicians and researchers from the Gulf countries, and experts and specialists of the centre.

The Director of the Agricultural Research Department, Hamad Saket al-Shammari, stressed the need for exchange of experiences to achieve food security for the peoples of the region, and to confront all the difficulties facing the agricultural sector, most notably the scarcity of water.

He said, in his opening speech, that the focus will be on important aspects, most notably the scarcity of water, and the best ways to reach good production in limited water conditions, and work to limit and eliminate the spread of the red palm weevil, as well as reduce lost dates.

For his part, the representative of the Secretary-General of GCC states Othman al-Jamea, in his speech at the opening session, thanked Qatar for hosting the meetings and for the good organisation, and also commended ICARDA's efforts in this regard.



In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the regional co-ordinator of the ICARDA programme in the Arabian Peninsula, Dr Abdul Aziz Niane, praised the great interest that Qatar attaches to agriculture and the environment, stressing that Qatar is one of the founding countries for the project to support date palm production systems in the GCC countries, and has been strongly supporting it since its inception 15 years ago, and actively participating in all research and studies related to it.

He praised the existing co-operation between the GCC countries and the centre regarding this project, especially in managing date palm production systems in the Arabian Peninsula. He pointed out that the project is being implemented in three phases, each of which will last five years, with a focus on date palms, in terms of research, technology transfer and capacity building.


He explained that one of the objectives of these meetings is to study the possibility of expanding the project to cover other areas, such as: glass heating, natural pastures, and irrigated fodder, stressing that the project is very important, and represents a leap towards the future in its field of competence.

He said that the centre is one of 16 distributed in different parts of the world, each of which specialises in a specific crop and topic, and therefore ICARDA specialises in agricultural research in dry areas that suffer from water scarcity, as is the case in the Arabian Gulf region.

Al-Shammari said that the project to support date palm production systems in the GCC countries deals with three main axes: applied research, technology transfer, and capacity building.

He added that Qatar's role in this project also covers several axes, one of which is related to the issue of wet drying houses and how to develop them, and this axis has achieved great success.

For his part, the Director-General of Agricultural and Livestock Research in Oman Dr Hamdan Salim al-Wahaibi, noted the project's importance to the GCC countries, especially since dates are considered their historical and economic heritage. **(QNA)**



### Tender - Waseef

Waseef Asset Management (Waseef) would like to invite competent Service Providers for the below Open Tenders:

Tender Number	Subject	Bid Bond (QAR)	Non-refundable Tender Fee (QAR)	Bid Submission Closing Date
GTC/WSF/IAKC/STP102/2023	TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF THREE (3) YEARS OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT AT AL KHOR COMMUNITY PROJECT	140,000	1,500	23 February 2023
GTC/WSF/SEC/03/2023	TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF SECURITY SERVICES FOR VARIOUS PROJECTS MANAGED BY WASEEF	650,000	5,000	27 February 2023
GTC/WSF/CLN/04/2023	TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF CLEANING SERVICES FOR VARIOUS PROJECTS MANAGED BY WASEEF	650,000	5,000	27 February 2023



The Tender Document will be available from 23 January up to 5 February 2023 upon submission of the below documentation to [tender@waseef.qa](mailto:tender@waseef.qa)

**To collect please provide the following:**

- Authorization Letter on Company letterhead, copy of Commercial Registration and valid Identification of the representative.
- Bank deposit slip carrying tender number and subject details. Tender fee shall be deposited to Account Name - Waseef Asset Management Co., Account Number 0002-105222-200 with Masraf Al Rayan Bank.

**Please note the following:**

- Bidders should submit a bid bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar and valid for 120days from the closing date.
- Technical and Commercial offers must be submitted in sealed envelopes and delivered to the below mentioned address: Waseef Head Office, Al Owaina Tower, Old Salata, Museum Park Street, Doha, Qatar.

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### QATARGAS OPERATING COMPANY LTD


#### Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/FDE/5880/22 CABLE FAILURE ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS	22/01/2023 to 05/02/2023	0	60,000	13/02/2023

**Scope of Work:**  
Cable failure root cause analysis is required for different types of cable (Electrical, Instrument, Cathodic Protection) covering all ranges from Low voltage to High Voltage (up to 230 KV). AC & DC. Failure analysis to be carried out using approved international standards and calibrated laboratory equipment. Soil and water testing will also be required for underground environment of the cables upon request

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

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



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## Qatar produces more 'vegetables' than it needs

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He noted the high demand for local vegetables, especially during the winter season, during which shops completely depend on local products.

Al-Sahouti referred to a noticeable decline in imports during this period, due to the abundance of local production which is characterised by high quality and freshness.

He explained that the establishment of Mahaseel was in line with the investment strategy of Hassad, which aims to contribute to achieving food security and increasing the agricultural crop in co-operation with the Ministry of Municipality, based on actual studies of the needs of the local market. Its establishment contributed to determining the mechanism for providing appropriate support to the private agricultural sector, thus contributing to achieving self-sufficiency by supplying local vegetables, such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplants, and zucchini.

Al-Sahouti said Mahaseel received about 5,000 tonnes of local vegetables a month at peak times.

In terms of supporting Qatari farmers, he noted that Mahaseel purchased local products at incentive prices set by the Ministry of Municipality in support of the local product, which is classified into grades according to its quality.

Regarding the selling price of outlets, he indicated that they are subject to the compulsory pricing of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in accordance with its price policies. Mahaseel deals with all farmers after submitting the required data and completing the registration procedures in accordance with the conditions of the Ministry of Municipality. Then, the products are supplied to the company's headquarters in Al Sailiya.

With regard to the Pre-contracting Programme (Daman) for Purchasing Local Vegetables, Al-Sahouti revealed that the number of farms registered in the programme has gone up to 120. Through this programme, a pre-contract is made with local producers to purchase their products, along with setting guaranteed prices and developing a production plan according to the needs of the local market based on an agricultural calendar, which encourages farmers and ensures the sale of products at prices that achieve good income for them.

Established in 2018, Mahaseel supports registered farmers and enables them to market their produce at good prices.

Mahaseel, in co-operation with the Ministry of Municipality, also provides training, logistical and technical services to about 400 local farmers.


## MoCI announces recall of Ford, Lincoln, Mercury models and 2019 Indian FTR bike

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Almana Motors Company, Qatar's Ford, Lincoln and Mercury dealership, has announced a recall of Ford Fusion and Edge 2007-2012 models, Lincoln MKZ and MKX 2007-2009 models, and Mercury Milan 2007 model, due to a possible defect in the driver's airbag that leads to its failure to operate with the required efficiency.

The ministry has also announced a recall of Indian FTR bike, 2019 model, due to a possible defect in the coolant junction that may result in coolant loss.

In a statement, the MoCI said the recall campaigns come within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs. The ministry will co-ordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works, and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out.

The MoCI has urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, enquiries and responses through the call centre: 16001; e-mail: [info@moqi.gov.qa](mailto:info@moqi.gov.qa); Twitter: @MOCIQATAR; Instagram: MOCIQATAR; and the ministry's mobile application available on iPhone and Android devices: MOCI QATAR



### The General, Limited Tenders Committees and Supply Chain Department announces the following Tenders:

**Important Notice:**  
Suppliers and Contractors who are already registered with QatarEnergy via e-Registration system and are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QatarEnergy can "Buy Tender Online and download Tender Document" from QatarEnergy website.Effective 1st February 2016,payment of Tender Fee by Cash and Manual collection of Tender Document is discontinued.

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Tender Sale Period Start Date End Date	Tender Closing Date	Tender Bond	Bond Curr.	Tender Fee	Fee Curr.
1.	LT22MT0118	23.01.2023 29.01.2023	13.02.2023	2,000.00	QAR	N/A	

Title of Tender: **SALE & REMOVAL OF OPERATIONS MATERIALS**

Mid-Tender Meeting Location : To be advised if required

Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : To be advised if required








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# Second Clinton W Francis lecture in legal professionalism held at HBKU

The College of Law at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) recently hosted the second Clinton W Francis Lecture in Legal Professionalism. Qatari lawyer Sultan al-Abdulla, founding partner of Sultan Al-Abdulla & Partners and the former general counsel to QatarEnergy, presented the lecture. Prof Clinton W Francis of Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law, HBKU Law's founding dean, for whom the lecture is named, provided the response to al-Abdulla's presentation. HBKU College of Law's dean Susan L Karamanian moderated the session. Al-Abdulla focused on three critical aspects of the legal profession in Qatar: legal education, the judiciary, and the practice of law. Commenting about the lecture, he recognised "one defining characteristic of a just society is its commitment to upholding the rule of law."

"This requires a strong legal foundation



built on the three underlying pillars of legal education, a capable judiciary, and the professionalism and ethical behaviour of legal practitioners," al-Abdulla said. Recognising that without education, the other two pillars of a legal system suffer, he further noted that the "HBKU College of Law has been a key proponent of effective legal education, and of teaching

legal professionalism and ethics to future practitioners." "As our legal system continues to develop, I look to the future with optimism, knowing that the standards of legal education have been set so high," al-Abdulla said. "It was my pleasure to speak about the current challenges facing the legal profession, and to honour HBKU College of

Law's founding dean Dr Clinton W Francis, under whose guidance and leadership this essential institution was established." According to dean Karamanian, "al-Abdulla's extensive and wide-ranging experience as a lawyer in Qatar, in which he has worked with Qatari and foreign clients in domestic and international tribunals, enabled him to provide unique insights, both from an historical perspective as well as from a comparative one." "For our students, the lessons he conveyed will guide them in their legal studies and their professional endeavours," she added. Launched in honour of Dr Francis's integral contribution as founding dean, the Clinton W Francis Lecture in Legal Professionalism gives the HBKU community an opportunity to hear insights into the legal profession on the rules and practices that guide the practice of law, both in terms of their substance as well as their application.

# NU-Q awarded grant for Arab information and media studies

The Carnegie Corporation of New York has awarded Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) a \$350,000 grant to expand the field of Arab Information and Media Studies (AIMS) over the next two years.



The grant will also support a collaboration between AIMS and the Security in Context (SIC) network, a global initiative promoting critical research and policy analysis on peace and conflict. Each year, the Carnegie Corporation of New York awards grants to organisations around the world to develop projects that promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. Projects awarded grants by the Carnegie Corporation of New York are selected based on their capacity to create measurable impact and drive meaningful and transformative change. Directed by Marwan M Kraidy, dean and chief executive of NU-Q, the AIMS project will expand the field of critical media and information studies in the Arab region and transform it into a more interdisciplinary, multilingual, collaborative, research-oriented, and policy-relevant field through the Institute for Advanced Study in the Global South at the NU-Q. The AIMS project will connect Arabophone, Anglophone and Francophone Arab media scholarly communities through networking, translation of scholarly works, publications, and multilingual events. The project will also integrate the study of media and information in the Arab world into transnational networks of ideas and knowledge based in the Global South. The grant will also support a collaborative research initiative between AIMS and the Security in Context network titled Global South Insecurity in an era of Great Power Competition. Researchers from around the world will join scholars at the NU-Q to examine the contours of the emerging world order on the Arab world and other regions of the Global South. This research initiative will be led by Sami Hermez, who serves as co-ordinator of the Qatar hub of the Critical Security Studies network. Omar Dahi, founding director of SIC and interim vice-president for academic affairs and dean of faculty and professor of economics at Hampshire College, said: "Security in Context is thrilled to be partnering with the Northwestern University Qatar's Institute for Advanced Study in the Global South." "Our collaboration will allow us to jointly explore some of the most pressing challenges facing societies today, with particular focus on how great power competition is increasingly shaping and being shaped by Global South dynamics," he said. "We plan to leverage the expertise in both of our expanding networks to advance cutting-edge, justice-oriented, policy-relevant work." "We are deeply grateful to the Carnegie Corporation of New York," Kraidy said. "Their support is catalysing capacity building collaborations that will yield vital insight into our increasingly media-suffused societies."

## Rain expected today, says Met department

Thundery rain and strong winds are expected in the country today, the Qatar Met department has said. Offshore areas, too, are likely to see thundershowers today, along with windy conditions and high seas. The wind speed may go up to 25 knots both inshore and offshore during thundery rain, with the sea level rising to 8'. The detailed forecast says cloudy conditions are expected today and there is a chance of rain, which may become thundery in some places at times, while it will be cold by night. The temperature is expected to range from 17-21° Celsius in Doha today. Pictured is the Doha Port area on a pleasant winter Sunday.

PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam



## Qatar Cool's new international arm United District Energy International 'UDEI' Signs Joint Venture Agreement to Establish New Company to Engage in Energy Sector, 'Diarona District Energy Limited'



United District Energy International 'UDEI' the international arm of Qatar Cool, Marubeni Corporation and Ajlan & Bros Holding announce the signing of an agreement for the creation of a joint venture company called Diarona District Energy Limited, positioned in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Today's announcement is the furtherance and result of discussions of a strategic alliance in the district energy sector in the Kingdom. The Company's objective is to become the reference in delivering sustainable cooling solutions through the application of District Cooling. The new company will aim to bring together UDEI's cutting-edge district cooling technologies and expertise, with Marubeni Corporation's knowledge and experience in the development and operation of infrastructure projects and the energy sector, and Ajlan & Bros Holding's diverse portfolio in real estate and technology. Diarona District Energy Limited will have its headquarters located in Riyadh. Under the agreement, all parties will share their expertise and resources with the intent to leverage the three companies' proficiency and provide best-in-class services to the Kingdom to establish itself as a leading district cooling provider in a fast-growing market. Yasser Al-Jaidah, UDEI Director

and Qatar Cool CEO, comments on the occasion, "With our experience and successes from Qatar Cool we are eager to expand upon this, and to be the driving force of sustainable cooling technology in Saudi Arabia. We are incredibly pleased to have entered a joint venture with Marubeni Corporation and Ajlan & Bros Holding, who share our desire to take on new challenges and expand the green energy sector. We will endeavor to create new value through the fusion brought by the blend of our different industries and look forward to Diarona District Energy Limited's growth and success." Marubeni's Satoru Harada, Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Power Business Division commented, "We are very excited to start this new venture with our partners in an increasingly growing sector in the Kingdom. The entry into this joint venture and business is in line with Marubeni's mid-term management strategy to become a forerunner in Green Business. Marubeni is looking forward to bringing its expertise and experience in developing major infrastructure projects in the Kingdom and the wider region to contribute to the growth of the joint venture and to deliver value to our customers." His Excellency Ali AlHazmi, Group Chief Executive Officer of Ajlan & Bros Holding added, "The creation of Diarona District Energy with such well-respected

and internationally recognised partners as UDEI and Marubeni, is a demonstration of our commitment to building world-class business to support Vision 2030 and the prosperity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, we, at Ajlan & Bros Holding, believe in the strategic importance of the increased demand for water, power and district cooling requirements driven by the rapid growth of expanding industrial-based demand. Therefore, entering this strategic collaboration with our partners is a pivotal step towards enhancing all local measures to be in place and make sure that we are satisfying the major and critical requirements for such industry in the region and in the coming era driven by all strategic projects both in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and worldwide. H.E Mr. Turki Al Khater, Chairman of Qatar Cool added "the synergy of these three prominent companies creates a strong foothold in the market and industry alike. UDEI is well-appointed and proficient in expanding into the KSA market, and together with Marubeni Corporation and Ajlan & Bros Holding will become a force of change. We are confident that this joint venture will see the success of Diarona District Energy Limited and we look forward to celebrating the achievements and milestones of the company and the new partnership."

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Palestinian Scouts in solidarity march



Palestinian Scouts wave national flags as they march in support of fellow Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank, in Gaza City, yesterday.

At least five killed in blast, attack near Mogadishu mayor’s office

Reuters  
Mogadishu

Fighters set off a bomb then stormed a government building in Somalia’s capital yesterday, killing at least five civilians, the ministry of information said.

Attackers from the Al Shabaab group charged into the block that houses the office of Mogadishu’s mayor around noon and got caught in a firefight with security forces, the ministry and witnesses said.

Security killed six of the militants and cleared the area by about 6pm, the ministry said on its Facebook page.

Al Shabaab has stepped up attacks in a show of resilience since President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud’s government launched an offensive against the Al Qaeda-linked group in August.

“We were in the office and we were deafened by a blast. We ran out. Gunfire followed,” Farah Abdullahi, who works in the mayor’s office, told Reuters.

Abdikadir Abdirahman, di-

rector of Aamin Ambulance Services, gave a higher estimate of the death count, saying it had transported the bodies of eight civilian victims.

At least another 16 people were injured in the attack, he added.

The mayor’s office is in the local government headquarters building in a well-guarded area of Mogadishu. Roads in the area have concrete barriers and multiple roadblocks. The building is about 1.5km away from Villa Somalia, the president’s office.

Iran vows ‘reciprocal’ response to EU over Guards controversial vote

Iran yesterday warned the European Union it would take “reciprocal” measures after the European Parliament voted to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terror group, AFP reported from Tehran. “The parliament is working to place elements of European countries’ armies on the terrorist list” of the Islamic republic, Foreign Minister Hossein

Amir-Abdollahian said on Twitter. Members of the European Parliament voted on Wednesday to include the Guards on the 27-nation bloc’s controversial list in “light of its activity, the repression of protesters and its supplying of drones to Russia”. The vote is non-binding but comes with EU foreign ministers already due to discuss tightening sanctions on Iran.

Shakespeare in Yemen: tragedy offers respite from war

AFP  
Aden

“To be, or not to be”: on a stage in Yemen, William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* rings out in Arabic, a tragedy that resonates with an audience suffering from years of civil war.

In the government-controlled city of Aden, battered by the conflict, the first performance of a Shakespeare play in many years has resurrected hopes of a cultural revival.

“We are hungry for these kinds of events,” said Heba al-Bakri, watching one of a sold-out run of 10 shows. “Our people are always distressed and exhausted, so we need this kind of entertainment.”

As the actors took their bows, applause roared out and the audience rose for a standing ovation. The savage bloodshed, murder, revenge, power struggles and moral dilemmas told in the famous tragedy by the English playwright were written over 400 years ago – but on stage in Yemen today, the play holds power.

Yemen, has been at war since 2014 when Houthi rebels seized the capital Sanaa, prompting a coalition to intervene the following year. The country has been left in ruins, hundreds of thousands of people have died, and many more have been pushed to the brink of famine.

Director Amr Gamal, founder of the Khaleej Aden Theatre Troupe, feared there might have been only “limited interest”, but is now planning a second round of shows after its success.

The three-hour performance has gripped the audience.

“They do not leave the room before the play ends”, said Gamal, who also directed the feature film *Ten Days Before the Wedding*, a love story which Yemen named as their official submission to the 2018 Oscars.

Yemen, renowned for its rich cultural heritage, has a long history of performing Shakespeare in Arabic dating back over a century. In this version, *Hamlet* was translated first into classical Arabic and then into Aden’s dialect to provide it with a unique Yemeni twist.

Including characters wearing



Actors perform in a production of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, in the Yemeni government-controlled southern city of Aden.

traditional Yemeni dress, it has turned a centuries-old tale into a platform to reflect on the troubled times in the country today.

“It is an old dream realised after years of work”, said assistant director Marwan Mafraq, noting the “lack of resources” in Yemen had led to a “very tight space”

for artistic production.

Backed by the British Council, a cultural and educational organisation, the play is being performed in a former government building dating to when the southern port city was a British colony.

For the past two years, the cast

in Aden received support via video-link from Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London and the Volcano Theatre in Wales.

The British Council said the *Hamlet* production showed its commitment to “building the capacity of young Yemenis to creatively express themselves”

But putting on the play posed not only logistical challenges.

Nour Zaker, who plays the tragic character of Ophelia, said she had to both learn a challenging role on stage and overcome social taboos against female actors in the country.

“I faced many difficulties as a woman in Aden,” she said.

“My family did not object, but it was difficult because...society does not easily accept these things.”

But her audience – which included women wearing the face-covering niqab veil, common in Yemen – were receptive. For those watching and those on stage, the hope is *Hamlet* may help start a wider revival.

“As artists, we always have the hope that there will be great cultural productions, theatrical or cinematographic, which highlight Yemeni culture,” said actor Omar Majalad, who plays Hamlet’s friend Guildenstern.

“We hope that there will be more attention given to art and music,” said university student Fadi Abdulmalik, after watching a performance. “This will sow love and peace in Yemen.”

CRIME  
Missing Cameroon journalist found dead: police

A popular Cameroon radio journalist who had been missing following what a media rights group called an abduction has been found dead, his employer and police said yesterday, AFP reported from Yaounde.

Martinez Zogo was managing director of Yaounde-based private radio station Amplitude FM and the star host of a popular daily programme, Embouteillage (Gridlock). On the air, the 51-year-old regularly tackled cases of corruption, not hesitating to question important personalities by name.

He had been missing since Tuesday. “I went to Ebogo (15 kilometres north of Yaounde) early this morning where I saw and recognised the body of Martinez Zogo. The prosecutor’s deputy was present and his wife was there to identify him,” Amplitude FM radio editor in chief Charly Tchouemou said. The death of Zogo was confirmed to AFP by a police source who spoke on condition of anonymity. A large crowd gathered as Zogo’s body was taken to the morgue of Yaounde central hospital for an autopsy.

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# Canada to pay Indigenous abuse survivors more than \$2bn

AFP  
Ottawa

Canada will pay hundreds of Indigenous communities more than \$2bn in compensation for nearly a century of abuse suffered by children in residential schools, its government has announced.

The C\$2.8bn (\$2.1bn) settlement, the result of a class action lawsuit by 325 Indigenous groups, will be placed in a not-for-profit trust independent of the government.

It will be used to “revitalise Indigenous education, culture, and language – to support survivors in healing and reconnecting with their heritage”, according to a press release.

“It has taken Canada far too long to own up to its history, own up to the genocide it committed and recognise the collective harm caused to our nations by residential schools,” said Garry Feschuk, an Indigenous leader who is one of the plaintiffs in the suit.

“It is time that Canada not only recognise this harm, but help undo it by walking with us. This settlement is a

good first step,” he said in the statement released on Saturday.

From the late 1800s to the 1990s, Canada’s government sent about 150,000 children into 139 residential schools mostly run by the Catholic church, where they were cut off from their families, language and culture.

Many were physically and sexually abused, and thousands are believed to have died of disease, malnutrition or neglect.

The discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves at the sites of the former schools over the past two years has

dragged the legacy of those institutions back into the spotlight as Canada reckons with its dark colonial past.

More than 1,300 graves have been identified, the most recent earlier this month.

In Lebreton, Saskatchewan, ground-penetrating radar has uncovered nearly “2,000 areas of interest” that need to be thoroughly investigated, the Star Blanket Cree community said.

A fragment of a child’s jawbone dating to some 125 years ago has already been identified on the grounds of a former residential school in the west-

ern Canadian community.

The search areas were selected near the Catholic-run residential school – which was open until 1998 – on the advice of former students.

“The residential school system decimated our languages, profoundly damaged our cultures, and left a legacy of social harms. The effects go beyond my generation. It will take many generations for us to heal,” said Shane Gottfriedson, another Indigenous leader and plaintiff.

“We believe that all survivors deserve justice and the compensation to

which they are owed,” said Marc Miller, federal minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations in the press release.

The precise terms for disbursing the \$2.8bn will be determined by the federal court on February 27.

A national commission of inquiry in 2015 called the residential school system a “cultural genocide”.

Last year, Pope Francis visited Canada on a penitential trip to apologise for the “evil” perpetrated in the schools – a gesture seen by many survivors as overwhelming, but only the beginning of a process of healing and reconciliation.

# Police hunt gunman who slew 10 in Lunar New Year shooting

Reuters/AFP  
Monterey Park, US

A man fatally shot 10 people and injured at least 10 others at a ballroom dance hall near Los Angeles during a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration late on Saturday before fleeing the scene, police said.

The shooter, still at large 12 hours after the attack in the city of Monterey Park, was believed to be an Asian man between 30 and 50 years old based on descriptions from eyewitnesses, law enforcement officials said.

“We need to get this person off the street as soon as possible,” Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna told reporters at a news conference yesterday in Monterey Park, home to one of the largest Asian American communities in the United States.

In the US the term “Asian” usually refers to those of east Asian descent.

Earlier, the sheriff’s department said it did not know whether the attack was racially motivated.

“We don’t know if this is specifically a hate crime defined by law,” Luna said, “but who walks into a dance hall and guns down 20 people?”

He said five of the victims were male and five were female.

Their identities have not been made public.

Officials were investigating whether an incident at another dance venue in the neighbouring city of Alhambra about 20 minutes later on Saturday night was connected with the massacre in Monterey Park.

Alhambra is about two miles north of Monterey Park.

At the second venue, witnesses said an Asian man walked in holding a gun that patrons were asked to grab.

No one was shot and the man fled, Luna said.

When police arrived at the Monterey Park ballroom, people were “pouring out of the location screaming”, department captain Andrew Meyer told reporters at a news briefing.

City firefighters treated the injured before sending them to area hospitals, where



Police officers are seen near the scene of a mass shooting in Monterey Park, California. The suspect remains at large.

Luna said their conditions ranged from stable to critical.

“Unfortunately,” Luna said, “they did pronounce 10 of the victims deceased at the scene.”

Five of the dead were women and five men, officials said, without providing ages or names.

Luna said he did not believe the shooter used an assault rifle, but did not elaborate.

The shooting took place after 10pm PST (0600 GMT yesterday) around the location of a two-day Chinese Lunar New Year celebration where many downtown streets are closed for festivities that draw thousands of people from across Southern California.

Residents stood gazing at the many blocks sealed off yesterday with police tape in Monterey Park.

Chester Chong, chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles, described the city of about 60,000 people as a quiet, peaceful, beautiful place where everybody knows each other and helps each other.

About seven miles (11km) from downtown Los Angeles, the city has for decades

been a destination for immigrants from China.

Around 65% of its residents are Asian, according to US Census data, and the city is known for its many Chinese restaurants and groceries.

“People were calling me last night, they were scared this was a hate crime,” Chong said at the scene.

Police have not publicly named the dance club, but were seen going in and out of the Star Ballroom Dance Studio, access to which was blocked off by police tape.

The club opened in 1990, and its website features many photographs of past Lunar New Year celebrations showing patrons smiling and dancing in party clothes in its large, brightly lit ballroom.

A flyer posted on the website advertised Saturday night’s new year party, running from 7.30pm to 12.30am.

The gunshots were mistaken by some for new year fireworks, according to Tiffany Chiu, 30, who was celebrating at her parents’ home near the ballroom.

“Many older people live here, it’s usually really quiet,” she said. “This is not something you expect here.”

“It’s a really sad thing,” Ken Nim, out walking his dog, told AFP. “Usually you don’t see much happening here.”

Seung Won Choi, who owns a seafood barbecue restaurant near the site of the attack, told the *Los Angeles Times* that three people rushed into his restaurant and told him to lock the door because a man was unloading multiple rounds of ammunition at the dance club across the street.

Video taken by local news media showed injured people, many of them appearing to be middle aged, being loaded into ambulances on stretchers.

The White House said President Joe Biden had been briefed on the attack and had directed the Federal Bureau of Investigation to assist local police.

Mass shootings are recurrent in the United States, and the attack in Monterey Park was the deadliest since May last year, when a gunman shot and killed 19 students and two teachers at a school in Uvalde, Texas.

The deadliest shooting in California history was in 1984 when a gunman killed 21 people at a McDonald’s restaurant in San Ysidro, near San Diego.

# Lula ‘sacks’ army commander over January 8 riots

Reuters/AFP  
Brasilia

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has fired the army commander, General Julio Cesar de Arruda, a source with knowledge of the matter said.

The firing of Arruda, who had been commander since December 28, was reported on Saturday by Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* and TV network GloboNews.

His replacement will be General Tomas Miguel Ribeiro Paiva, army commander of the southeast, the source said.

Brazil’s army and the ministry of defence did not immediately comment on the matter.

Lula said this week that intelligence services failed on January 8, when government buildings in Brasilia were stormed by supporters of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro.

Previously, Lula said he suspected collusion by “people in the armed forces” in the insurrection, during which several thousand Bolsonaro supporters invaded and ransacked the Congress building, the presidential palace and the Supreme Court.

Arruda had attended a meeting with Lula on Friday, accompanied by the com-

manders of the navy, Marcos Sampaio Olsen, and air force, Marcelo Kanitz Damasceno.

Defence Minister José Mucio told reporters after the meeting that the January 8 riots were not the main discussion topic, but added that any involvement of military personnel in the riots would be punished.

Lula has said recently that his government would purge hardcore Bolsonaro loyalists from the security forces.

Many of the demonstrators who rioted in Brasilia called for a military coup to restore Bolsonaro to power.

The dismissal of Arruda came a day before Lula was to make his first trip abroad – to Argentina – as he moves to put the South American powerhouse back on the international stage.

Defence Minister Mucio said that Arruda was out as head of the army because of “a break in the level of confidence”.

“We thought we needed to stop this in order to get over this episode,” he said, alluding to the attack in Brasilia.

On Wednesday, the man named to be the new army chief, General Paiva, vowed that the military “will continue to guarantee democracy”.

And he suggested that the results of the October election in which Lula defeated Bolsonaro should be accepted.

# Venezuela frees jailed ex-interior minister

Reuters/AFP  
Caracas

A Venezuelan court has released former interior minister Miguel Rodriguez Torres from jail after he was imprisoned for nearly five years, allowing him to travel to Spain, relatives of the former official said.

The retired army general served as interior minister in 2014 but later broke with President Nicolas Maduro.

He was arrested in 2018 on accusations he was involved in a plot to “attack the unity” of the armed forces.

“Early on Saturday morning, January 21, he was released, after spending four years and 10 months unjustly imprisoned,” his daughters and relatives said in a statement.

A relative said Torres would move to Spain, without providing further details.

The Venezuelan prosecutor’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In 2019, Torres went on hunger strike in protest over being held incommunicado.

That increased scrutiny over the situation of Venezuelan detainees after the death in captivity of navy Captain Rafael Acosta, who his family says was tortured to death while being held by military intelligence agency DGCIM.

Rodriguez himself faced sharp criticism for treatment of detainees while he was interior minister during a wave of opposition protests in 2014, which human rights groups say included arbitrary detentions and beatings during imprisonment.

Torres’s release was widely seen as stemming from recent reconciliation talks in Mexico between the leftist Maduro government and the Venezuelan opposition.

The talks are aimed at ending a long-running political and economic crisis.

In a video posted on social media, Torres said he was torn between joy over being released after five years in what he called “the gray box” and sadness over leaving.

“I am now going to travel away from my country, leave my beloved Venezuela,” he said, adding that former Spanish premier Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero had worked behind the scenes for three years to secure his freedom.

Torres held several senior posts under Chavez during his rule from 1999 to 2013.

He had joined Chavez in a failed coup in 1992.

After Chavez died of cancer in 2013 and Maduro, his hand-picked successor, took power, Torres stayed on to serve as interior and justice minister.

# Gang attack in Haiti leaves four dead

Gang members attacked a police patrol in Haiti’s capital, killing three officers and another person, the National Police said.

Another officer is now missing after the ambush on Friday and another was seriously wounded, the National Police said in a statement carried on social media.

The attack came as officers were trying to aid a person in distress in Petionville, an affluent area that overlooks the capital of the poorest country in the Americas. -AFP

# More than 200 anti-govt protesters arrested in Lima

AFP/Reuters  
Lima

Peru has closed the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu amid steady anti-government protests, stranding hundreds of tourists for hours, as authorities expelled protesters from a Lima university where they have been holed up as part of the crisis engulfing this divided country.

Protests demanding the resignation of Peruvian President Dina Boluarte have been ongoing since early December, leaving 46 people dead and prompting the government to impose a state of emergency in violence-hit areas.

This crisis triggered by the ouster of leftist Indigenous president Pedro Castillo last month stems largely from a gaping inequity between Peru’s urban elite and poor rural Indigenous people in the Andean region who saw him as one of their own and working to make their lives better.

Authorities announced on Saturday yet another protester had died following demonstrations on Friday in the town of Ilave in that Andean region in the south.

Video footage from Ilave that went viral on social media shows police shooting right at a crowd of Indigenous demonstrators in the town square.

Enraged protesters responded by setting fire to a police station, local media reported.

Clashes between police and the crowd in that town near Lake



Tourists queue to sign a petition to the railroad company requesting to be evacuated on a 'humanitarian train' in Machu Picchu.

Titicaca and the border with Bolivia left 10 people injured, hospital officials said.

Prior to the closing of Machu Picchu, rail services to the site had already been suspended due to damage to the track by demonstrators.

The only way to get up to the popular tourist site is by train.

At least 400 people, including 300 foreigners, were stranded at the foot of the site, in the town of Aguas Calientes, and pleading to be evacuated.

Rescue teams later evacuated 418 tourists, the tourism ministry said in a Twitter post accompanied by pictures of a train and seated travellers.

“The closure of the Inca trails network and the Machu Picchu citadel has been ordered due to the social situation and to pre-

serve the safety of visitors,” the ministry of culture said in a statement.

Tourism is vital for Peru’s economy, representing between 3-4% of the country’s GDP.

In Lima, where two days of mass mobilisation by demonstrators from the country’s poor Andean region had seemingly concluded, the situation remained tense.

As night fell hundreds more protesters gathered in the city, mainly around the Congress building.

During the day security forces used an armoured vehicle to breach the gate of the University of San Marcos in the city’s downtown, in an attempt to expel protesters who have been sleeping there.

A large contingent of police



A demonstrator holds a sign reading 'Urgent! The closure of the Congress' in front of riot police officers in Lima.

searched occupants, sometimes forcing them to lie on the ground, AFP journalists observed.

Interior Minister Vicente Romero Canal N television that police intervened after university authorities said some of the squatters were committing crimes.

He did not specify what these were.

Alfonso Barrenechea, with the crime prevention division of the prosecutor’s office, told local radio station RPP that 205 people were arrested at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos for illegally trespassing on the university’s premises and for allegedly stealing electronic goods.

A group of masked protesters stormed the campus late on Friday and removed security personnel from the campus after

taking vests and other equipment from them, the university said in a statement.

Protesters are trying to keep up pressure on the Peruvian government, defying a state of emergency that now covers almost one-third of the country.

The European Union has condemned the chaos and the “very large number of casualties”, calling for a peaceful political solution in Peru.

The protests were sparked when former president Castillo, a rural schoolteacher, 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.

Of the 46 dead since the protests began, 45 were protesters and one was a police officer.

Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations



People light incense sticks on the first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year at Sin Sze Si Ya temple in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, yesterday.



Members of Chinese dragon and lion dance groups perform during Lunar New Year celebrations in the Chinatown area of Manila, Philippines, yesterday.



People visit the Chinatown area of Yokohama, Japan yesterday, on the first day of the Lunar New Year.

China logs nearly 13,000 Covid deaths in a week

AFP  
Beijing

China reported nearly 13,000 Covid-related deaths in hospitals between January 13 and 19, after a top health official said the vast majority of the population had already been infected.

The death toll came a week after China said nearly 60,000 people had died with Covid in hospitals in just over a month – but there has been widespread scepticism over official data since Beijing abruptly axed anti-virus controls last month.

China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a statement on Saturday that 681 hospitalised patients had died of respiratory failure caused by coronavirus infection, and 11,977 had died of other diseases combined with an infection over the period.

The figures do not include anyone who died at home.

Airfinity, an independent forecasting firm, has estimated daily Covid deaths in China will peak at about 36,000 over the Lunar New Year holiday.

The firm also estimated that more than 600,000 people have died from the disease since China abandoned the zero-Covid policy in December.

China has passed the peak period of Covid patients in fe-



People ride a scooter next to the closed Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, where the Covid-19 coronavirus was first detected, in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province, yesterday.

ver clinics, emergency rooms and with critical conditions, Guo Yanhong, an official from the National Health Commission told a news conference on Thursday. Tens of millions of people have travelled across the country in recent days for long-awaited reunions with families to mark yesterday's Lunar New Year, raising fears of fresh out-

breaks. 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.

President Xi Jinping Wednesday expressed concerns over the spread of the virus in rural China, much of which lacks medical resources. But a top health

official said China would not experience a second wave of infections in the months after the festive migration, because nearly 80% of the population had already been infected by the virus.

"Although a large number of people travelling during the Spring Festival may promote the spread of the epidemic to a certain extent...the current wave

of epidemic has already infected about 80% of the people in the country," Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist at the CDC, said in a post on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform on Saturday.

"In the short term, for example, in the next two to three months, the possibility of...a second wave of the epidemic across the country is very small."

Indonesian President Jokowi's approval rating at all-time high: poll

Reuters  
Jakarta

Indonesian President Joko Widodo's approval rating has hit an all-time high after the government eased Covid-19 restrictions last month, a poll showed yesterday.

Figures released by pollster Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI) showed satisfaction with the president, widely known as Jokowi, had risen consistently over recent months to reach 76.2% at the start of 2023.

"In the last three months, the president's performance has increased in (terms of) positive public perception from 62.6% in September 2022 to 76.2%. If we look at the last three months, the increase is quite significant," LSI executive director Djaya-di Hanan said.

The more than 10-point jump put Jokowi on his highest approval rating recorded by LSI during his current term which began in 2014.

"I think this was mostly because of the lifting of (Covid-19) social restrictions and a decrease in fuel prices," Hanan told Reuters.

"The narrative that the economy will be very difficult, particularly in 2023, has been there since the beginning of last year."

Jokowi's announcement in December of the end of pandemic restrictions was well

received, the pollster said, as the restrictions had been seen as hurting the economy.

The LSI poll, conducted between Jan 7-11 and covering more than 1,200 respondents, also comes months after the start of a high-profile trial against a former Indonesian police general.

The case sparked public uproar about alleged corruption and impunity within the police, but the fact that the case was made so public was taken as a sign that the government was at least trying to tackle the issues.

LSI cited improvements in perceptions of the economy and law enforcement as reasons for the ratings jump. Jokowi's poll rating appears to have been unaffected by both the passing last month of a controversial new criminal code, and his issuing of an emergency regulation to replace the laws.

Jokowi is serving his second and final term in office with the next election scheduled for February 2024.

Yesterday's poll found Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo was the favoured candidate to succeed Jokowi, although his candidacy is yet to be announced.

The other top candidates were Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto and former Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan, both of whom have announced their intentions to run.

Japan wins World Pastry Cup

Japan scored their third win on Saturday in the World Pastry Cup, seeing off France and Italy at Sirha, the plum event for catering and hotel professionals, AFP reported from Chassieu, France.

The Japanese added to triumphs in 1989 and 2007 in coming through a two-day contest near Lyon against 17 teams from around the globe all comprising a chocolate maker, a sugar expert and a master ice cream maker.

Feted French pastry chef and chocolatier Pierre Hermé saluted the winning entrants for their "attention to detail, perseverance, commitment" in producing a dessert on the International de la Restauration, de l'Hotellerie et de l'Alimentation in theme of wind and lightness Chassieu Eurexpo hall near Lyon, France.

at Chassieu, outside Lyon in eastern France. "The level of competition rises with every edition, as witnessed by such very close results," said Hermé.

Yann Brys, for the French runners-up, said he was disappointed.

"It's not the result we wanted – placing second is always tough but it's a good showing nonetheless," he said. Canada won a special eco-friendly prize. All entrants had to produce desserts without any colouring or additives on a theme of climate change.



Members of team Japan hold the trophy as they celebrate winning the 2023 Bocuse d'Or pastry competition at the Sirha (Salon International de la Restauration, de l'Hotellerie et de l'Alimentation) in Chassieu Eurexpo hall near Lyon, France.

Next New Zealand PM slams 'abhorrent' treatment of Ardern

AFP  
Wellington

New Zealand's incoming prime minister Chris Hipkins criticised the "abhorrent" treatment endured by Jacinda Ardern and vowed yesterday to shield his own family, three days after her shock resignation.

Hours after being unanimously endorsed by Labour Party MPs as the party's leader and the nation's next prime minister, Hipkins attacked the personal abuse suffered by Ardern during her more than five years in the top job.

Ardern sparked a national debate about the pressures she faced when she revealed Thursday that she was stepping down just nine months before October 14 general elections, saying she no longer had "enough in the tank". Politicians and other public figures have lined up to criticise the "vitriol" Ardern was subjected to as prime minister, notably on social media, although she did not mention it herself.

"The way Jacinda has been treated, particularly by some segments of our society – and they are a small minority – has been utterly abhorrent," Hipkins said.

"It does not represent who we are as a country," said the 44-year-old education and po-



Chris Hipkins and Carmel Sepuloni attend a news conference after being confirmed as the new Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in Wellington, yesterday.

lice minister. Men have a responsibility to call out such treatment and say "it's not ok", he said.

The future prime minister, best known for leading a national crackdown on Covid-19 for nearly two years, said he understood that putting himself forward as leader meant he was "public property".

"But my family aren't," he told reporters.

Hipkins said he wanted his six-year-old son and four-year-old daughter to grow up with a "typical Kiwi kid life", adding that his amicable separation from his wife was his own business.

"I have seen the enormous scrutiny and pressure placed on Jacinda and her family and so my response will be to keep my fam-

ily completely out of the spotlight," he said.

Ardern said she had been exhausted after leading New Zealand through the Covid-19 pandemic, its deadliest terror attack and a volcanic eruption.

"I am human. We give as much as we can for as long as we can and then it's time," the 42-year-old leader said.

Hipkins said he would be sworn in as the nation's 41st prime minister by the governor-general on Wednesday after Ardern formally steps down.

New Zealand under his leadership will switch its focus from Covid-19 to bolstering the economy, Hipkins said.

The cost of living, rising inflation and workforce shortages have been blamed in part

for Labour's decline in the polls since 2020, now surpassed by the centre-right National Party opposition. "Covid-19 and the global pandemic created a health crisis. Now it's created an economic one and that's where my government's focus will be," Hipkins said.

The incoming New Zealand leader promised to tackle rising crime levels, too.

"We know we've got more work to do when it comes to re-engaging young people, to tackle the underlying causes of criminal offending."

Hipkins also announced the country will have its first deputy prime minister of Pacific island descent, Carmel Sepuloni. The 46-year-old Sepuloni entered parliament in 2008 and has been the minister for social development since 2017.

Sepuloni said her father, of Samoan and Tongan heritage, arrived in New Zealand in 1964 to work on the railways. That his daughter would become deputy prime minister of New Zealand "is very hard to comprehend," she said.

"I want to acknowledge the significance of this for our Pacific community."

About 8% of New Zealand's 5.1mn population identifies as Pasifika – a New Zealander of Pacific island descent. Grant Robertson, deputy prime minister under Ardern, is expected to remain as finance minister.

Four killed in Japan apartment fire

AFP  
Tokyo

A fire at an apartment building in Kobe in western Japan killed four men and left four in critical condition yesterday, an official said.

The fire department was

alerted to the blaze in the three-storey building by an emergency call at around 1:30am (1630 GMT Saturday). Four bodies were found after it was extinguished.

Four other men, aged between their 40s and 70s, "were taken to hospital unconscious", Masatoshi Sumitani at the Kobe fire department said. Most of

the occupants of the building were believed to be elderly men, Japanese media reports said, citing other residents of the building. Black smoke could be seen coming out of a window on the first floor when the fire broke out, Kyodo News reported. Police will begin investigating the cause of the fire later, Sumitani said.

# India blocks ‘hostile’ BBC documentary

**AFP/Reuters**  
New Delhi

India’s government said it has blocked videos and tweets sharing links to a BBC documentary about Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s role during deadly 2002 sectarian riots, calling it “hostile propaganda and anti-India garbage”.

The British broadcaster’s programme alleges that the Hindu nationalist Modi, chief minister of Gujarat state at the time, ordered police to turn a blind eye to the orgy of violence there that left at least 1,000 people dead, most of them minority Muslims.

Human rights activists estimate at least double that number died in the rioting.

Kanchan Gupta, an adviser to the government, tweeted on Saturday that the Indian government used emergency powers under IT rules to block the documentary and its clips from being shared on social media.

“Videos sharing @BBC-World hostile propaganda and anti-India garbage, disguised as ‘documentary’, on @YouTube and tweets sharing links to the BBC documentary have been blocked under India’s sovereign laws and rules,” he said.

While the BBC has not aired the documentary in India, the video was uploaded on some YouTube channels, Gupta said.

Orders were also issued to Twitter to block over 50 tweets with links to YouTube videos.

Both YouTube and Twitter have complied with the instructions, Gupta said.

Neither firm was available for comment yesterday.

Several tweets with clips of the documentary, *India: The Modi Question*, which has not been aired in the world’s largest democracy, were still available yesterday.

The 2002 riots in Gujarat began after 59 Hindu pilgrims were killed in a fire on a train.

Thirty-one Muslims were convicted of criminal con-

spiracy and murder over that incident.

The BBC documentary cited a previously classified British foreign ministry report quoting unnamed sources saying that Modi met senior police officers and “ordered them not to intervene” in the anti-Muslim violence by right-wing Hindu groups that followed.

The violence was “politically motivated” and the aim “was to purge Muslims from Hindu areas”, the foreign ministry report said.

The “systematic campaign of violence has all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing” and was impossible “without the climate of impunity created by the state government ... Narendra Modi is directly responsible”, it concluded.

Modi, who ran Gujarat from 2001 until his election as prime minister in 2014, was briefly subject to a travel ban by the United States over the violence.

A special investigative team appointed by the Indian Supreme Court to probe the role of Modi and others in the violence said in 2012 that it did not find any evidence to prosecute the then chief minister.

Gupta said multiple ministries had examined the documentary and “found it casting aspersions on the authority and credibility of Supreme Court of India, sowing divisions among various Indian communities, and making unsubstantiated allegations”.

“Accordingly, @BBCWorld’s vile propaganda was found to be undermining the sovereignty and integrity of India, and having the potential to adversely impact India’s friendly relations with foreign countries as also public order within the country,” he said.

Modi denied accusations that he failed to stop the rioting.

He was named the candidate for prime minister of his party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, in 2013 and led it to power in general elections in 2014 and then in 2019.

# Six more classified papers found in DOJ search of Biden residence

**AFP/Reuters**  
Washington

Officials from the US Department of Justice (DOJ) found six more classified documents during a search of Joe Biden’s family home in Delaware this week, the president’s personal lawyer said in a statement.

The new disclosure served up another embarrassing twist for Biden in an affair dogging him just as he gets ready to declare whether he will run for another term in 2024.

Biden insists that he has done nothing wrong and has downplayed the situation as an innocent mistake.

Documents from his time as vice-president and marked as classified first turned up in an office at a Biden-affiliated think tank in Washington last year, and then again at his home in Delaware.

Altogether they are about a dozen documents.

After the second find, the White House offered to let the Department of Justice search the Delaware home – the search was carried out on Friday and is now concluded, Biden attorney Bob Bauer said.

“DOJ took possession of materials it

deemed within the scope of its inquiry, including six items consisting of documents with classification markings and surrounding materials,” he said.

The search lasted more than 12 hours and covered “all working, living and storage spaces in the home”, Bauer said.

“DOJ had full access to the president’s home, including personally handwritten notes, files, papers, binders, memorabilia, to-do lists, schedules, and reminders going back decades,” he said.

Some of the new papers seized were from Biden’s time in the Senate and some were from his tenure as vice-president, according to Bauer.

Bauer said Biden’s personal lawyers and White House counsel previously arranged with the Justice Department to be present during the inspection, and they agreed to not publicise news of the search in advance “in accordance with its standard procedures”.

Neither Biden nor his wife were present during the search, the attorney said.

Biden is in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, for the weekend.

The White House has said that the earlier batches of documents were turned over to the Justice Department and National Archives, which handles presidential

records, as soon as they were found.

On Thursday, Biden dismissed the furor over the discovery of the old classified documents.

Asked by reporters during a trip to California about the issue, the president said: “I think you’re going to find there’s nothing there.”

“I have no regrets. I’m following what the lawyers have told me they want me to do. It’s exactly what we’re doing. There’s no there, there,” Biden added. “We found a handful of documents ... were filed in the wrong place.”

“We immediately turned them over to the Archives and the Justice Department. We’re fully co-operating and looking forward to getting this resolved quickly,” he said.

Attorney-General Merrick Garland earlier this month appointed a special counsel, former government lawyer Robert Hur, to act as special counsel for the investigation.

Garland explained that the “extraordinary circumstances” of investigating a sitting president required him to take the extra step of bringing in an outside prosecutor.

The discovery, which first came to light earlier this month, has dented Bi-

den’s brand as a return to competency and honesty after the scandal-filled years of Donald Trump’s presidency and brought intense scrutiny from the media and Republicans in Congress.

Indeed, the scandal comes as a different special prosecutor investigates the potentially far more serious case of Trump hauling off hundreds of documents from the White House to his Florida residence and his alleged obstruction of government efforts to get them back.

Republicans have compared the investigation to the ongoing probe into how Trump handled classified documents after his presidency.

The White House has noted that Biden’s team has co-operated with authorities in their probe and had turned over those documents.

Trump resisted doing so until a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) search in August at his Florida resort.

Since the discovery of Biden’s documents, Trump has complained that Justice Department investigators were treating his successor differently.

“When is the FBI going to raid the many homes of Joe Biden, perhaps even the White House?” Trump said in a social media post earlier this month.

# Processions, lunches and concert to crown King Charles

**AFP/Reuters**  
London



This photo taken on September 13, 2022 shows King Charles III and Camilla, Queen Consort, greeting well-wishers as they arrive at Hillsborough Castle in Belfast, during his visit to Northern Ireland.

The coronation weekend for King Charles III will feature a star-studded concert, nationwide “big lunch” and volunteering initiative as well as the traditional ceremony and royal processions, Buckingham Palace announced late on Saturday.

The three days of ceremonial, celebratory and community events in early May will be a chance for “people to come together in celebration of the historic occasion”, the palace said in an update on its much-anticipated plans.

The landmark long weekend looms with the monarchy still grappling with the fallout from the publication earlier this month of Prince Harry’s scorching tell-all memoir *Spare*, in which he made a series of incendiary claims against the family.

It is unclear whether US-based Harry – Charles’s younger son – and his American wife Meghan will attend the coronation, with a recent *Sunday Times* report claiming a reconciliation could still take place prior.

Charles, 74, immediately became king when Queen Elizabeth died aged 96 on September 8 last year, ending her record-breaking 70-year reign after a year of declining health.

He also took over as head of state of 14 Commonwealth countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

The coronation traditionally takes place some months after a new sovereign has ascended to the throne, following a period of national and royal mourning as well as intense preparation.

The country’s first coronation since 1953, set to be watched worldwide and feature various global dignitaries, will begin with Charles’s formal crowning at London’s Westminster Abbey on Saturday, May 6, in a tradition dating back more than 900 years.

Buckingham Palace has previously said the service, to be conducted by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, will reflect the monarchy’s historic traditions alongside its modern role.

“The Coronation is a solemn religious service, as well as an occasion for celebration and pageantry,” it noted.

Charles’s wife, Queen Consort Camilla, 75, will also be crowned.

The pair will arrive from the palace without other royals in “The King’s Procession”, before returning in a larger ceremonial entourage known as “The Coronation Procession” featuring other family members.

Once back at the palace, the opening day will conclude with the royals appearing on the balcony overlooking The Mall where thousands of people are expected to gather.

The next day will then see a “special coronation concert” staged at Windsor Castle, west of London, to be produced and broadcast live by the BBC and featuring “global music icons and contemporary stars”.

Several thousand pairs of tickets will be made available

through a public ballot, while volunteers from charities supported by Charles and Camilla will also be able to attend.

The concert will feature a “world-class orchestra” playing interpretations of musical favourites “fronted by some of the world’s biggest entertainers, alongside performers from the world of dance”.

A “coronation choir”, drawn from diverse community choirs and amateur singers nationwide – such as refugee choirs, NHS (National Health Service) choirs, singing groups and deaf signing choirs – will also make an exclusive appearance.

A “virtual choir” made up of singers from across the Commonwealth will also perform, while the castle’s East Lawn will host a selection of spoken word sequences delivered by stars of stage and screen.

However, the centrepiece of the evening event will be a “lighting up the nation” segment which will see iconic locations across the UK lit up using projections, lasers, drone displays and illuminations.

Also on May 7, neighbours and communities will be invited to host thousands of “coronation big lunches”, billed as a “nation-wide act of celebration and friendship”.

“From a cup of tea with a neighbour to a street party, a coronation big lunch brings the celebrations to your neighbourhood,” said the palace, which expects events in streets, gardens, parks and community spaces.

The scheme will be overseen and organised by a team from the Eden Project, the eco-friendly visitor attraction in Cornwall, southwest England.

Camilla has been patron of its annual “big lunch” initiative – which aims to boost community spirit, reduce loneliness and support charities and good causes – since 2013.

The final part of coronation weekend, dubbed “the big help out”, will be held on Monday, May 8, designated a public holiday in the UK this year.

Organised by community forum The Together Coalition and partners including The Scouts, the Royal Voluntary Service and various faith groups, it will “highlight the positive impact volunteering has on communities across the nation”.

Meanwhile, British anti-monarchists said yesterday that they planned to protest during the coronation, saying that the ceremony is “a slap in the face” for most people struggling with high inflation.

Campaign group Republic said it had been in contact with London’s police force about its plans to hold a peaceful demonstration in Parliament Square, which is overlooked by Westminster Abbey.

“The coronation is a celebration of hereditary power and privilege, it has no place in a modern society,” Graham Smith, Republic’s chief executive, said. “At a cost of tens of millions of pounds, this pointless piece of theatre is a slap in the face for millions of people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis”

# UK wild camping advocates rally in Dartmoor

**By Valentine Graveleau, AFP**  
Cornwood, United Kingdom

“Nature is a human right!” declares 21-year-old Anya Wilding as she dons hiking boots and prepares to join the fight to “get it back” on Dartmoor in southwest England.

The photography student and thousands of others spent Saturday afternoon demonstrating for the right to camp in the open on a common within Dartmoor National Park.

The protest was sparked by a recent UK court order that any such wild camping within parts of the park owned by wealthy local landowners requires their consent.

The January 13 ruling has infuriated campaigners for better public access in rural areas.

They say Dartmoor – where over half of the land is private – is the only remaining place in England where wild camping without landowner consent is permitted.

Around 3,000 of them braved frigid temperatures to gather in the small village of Cornwood for a march to Stall Moor, a vast common owned by Alexander Darwall, who is now seeking to outlaw the pastime there.

“Everyone deserves the same access, it’s a fundamental right and they’re taking that away from us and I’m here today to get it back,” explains Wilding.

“It was the only place it was legal so (the ruling) is like a kick in the teeth,” she adds of wild camping on Dartmoor, which

has also long been popular with walkers for its rugged beauty. “You wake up and there’s this golden light that lights up all the hills and it’s the most amazing feeling.”

Across England, where half of the land is owned by less than 1% of its population, the ability of people to explore freely is severely limited.

The so-called “right to roam” – an ancient custom that allows anyone to wander in open countryside, whether the land is privately or publicly owned – has only legally guaranteed access to certain areas since 2000.

However, venturing off the beaten track is still only possible on a tiny fraction of land: 8% of the countryside and 3% of the nation’s waterways, according to official figures.

And that does not permit other activities such as wild camping – earning private land on Dartmoor, which was previously seen as unrestricted, a special place in outdoor enthusiasts’ hearts.

“It’s been a wonderful anomaly on Dartmoor but now it’s gone,” said Guy Shrubsole, author of the 2019 book *Who Owns England?*, which revealed aristocrats, corporations and other rich landowners control half of the nation’s land.

The row centres on the interpretation of a 1985 law which gives people the right to access Dartmoor’s commons “on foot and on horseback for the purpose of open-air recreation”.

This was seen as permitting wild camping, in contrast to the rest of England where ac-



‘Right to Roam’ protesters hold placards and flags as they gather in the village of Cornwood on the edge of Dartmoor in southwest England.

cess is governed by the 2000 law known as the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

However, Darwall, who lives in nearby Blatchford Manor, sued in London’s High Court that people have no right to wild camp on Stall Moor, arguing that campers were leaving litter behind.

Those at Saturday’s rally dispute that, and the basis for his broader claim. “Everyone needs to be responsible, landlords too,” says local resident Harriet White.

She adds that overgrazing moorlands and rearing pheasants for shoots – which Darwall does – are “infinitely more damaging to our ecosystem than wild camping”.

White, 44, known locally for

wearing bird feathers in her hair, also objects to the agreement between the national park and some landowners that only allows paid-for regulated camping.

“We deserve a right of access, not permission,” she says, describing Dartmoor as “magical” and rich in myths and legends.

Arriving at Stall Moor after an hour-long hike, the thousands of protesters young and old – wielding signs including “the stars are for everyone” – tried to tap into some of that spirituality.

Some summoned the help of “Old Crockern”, a fabled spirit – named after a nearby tor – who, according to local legend, once bankrupted a greedy landlord.

Saturday’s march was organised by the Right to Roam col-

lective, a growing alliance of ramblers, wild swimmers, paddle-boarders, kayakers, authors, artists and activists.

It campaigns for greater access to nature in England, which compares badly with neighbouring Scotland and elsewhere in Europe.

“We all need nature and to be honest it’s good for nature that we’re out in nature,” argues Shrubsole, who co-founded Right to Roam, as he helped lead the hikers along the narrow road up to the moor.

“We’re in the midst of a sixth mass extinction and we need to badly reconnect with nature to better know it, better understand it, so we all can be custodians of nature, not just the landowners.”

# Suspect in murder of Paraguayan prosecutor handed over to Colombia

A woman suspected in the murder of a Paraguayan anti-mafia prosecutor was expelled from El Salvador on Saturday and handed over to Colombian authorities, the Colombian prosecutor’s office said.

Margareth L Chacon Zuniga is accused of being involved in the “planning, financing and logistics of the murder of prosecutor Marcelo Pecci” and will appear before a supervisory judge, the investigative body said on Twitter.

Her capture brings to seven the number of people detained over Pecci’s murder in May last year.

The prosecutor was killed in front of his pregnant wife while they were on their honeymoon on the Colombian island of Barú, near the tourist port of Cartagena on the Caribbean coast.

El Salvador’s Justice Minister Gustavo Villatoro earlier announced Chacon’s expulsion on Twitter, accompanied by photographs showing the 42-year-old

Colombian woman being escorted by Interpol agents as she boarded a plane.

Chacon was arrested on Wednesday together with Salvadoran Wilber Huezio, 47, who is accused of having hidden her in the Central American country.

Salvadoran authorities raided two houses where the suspect was hiding and seized Colombian passports, cellphones, laptops, and about €15,000.

Colombian, Paraguayan and US authorities are searching for the master-

minds of the assassination, who they say are linked to drug trafficking networks.

Pecci investigated crime gangs based in Brazil and money launderers in an area where the borders of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina converge.

The United States has offered a \$5mn reward for information on his killing.

Four of the people arrested so far, including the hitman, pleaded guilty and were sentenced to 23 years in prison in June. – **AFP**



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GULF TIMES

## The EU must spare young Hungarians

The European Commission has decided to suspend funding to 21 Hungarian universities from its Horizon Europe initiative, which supports cross-border collaboration on research and development, and its Erasmus+ study-abroad programme. The aim is to defend the rule of law: the universities in question are run by “public trust foundations,” which are not subject to EU public-procurement rules and include individuals with close ties to the government. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a more misguided and counterproductive decision.

To be sure, in the face of possible corruption and conflicts of interest, the European Union has the legal authority and obligation to take appropriate action, including freezing or withdrawing some funds. But cutting Hungarian universities off from Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe funding will do far more harm than good.

Erasmus+ funding enables students to spend time at foreign universities. Over the last three decades, more than 10mn young people – equivalent to the entire population of Hungary – have benefited from Erasmus+ (and its predecessor programmes), making it one of Europe’s most powerful instruments for supporting integration. In 2020, more than 22,000 Hungarians participated in Erasmus+ exchanges.

The benefits of Erasmus+ extend far beyond the curricula. The programme enables young people to establish connections and form friendships with their European classmates at a time in their lives when they are developing their worldviews and planning their futures. There is abundant evidence that exposure to foreign cultures makes people – especially the young – more open and tolerant. How does preventing Hungarian students from gaining such exposure support European values like democracy and the rule of law? What good will it do Europe if its young people lack connections to their Hungarian peers?

**They should be given every opportunity to learn, grow, and connect, not cut them off from their own future**

The Horizon Europe programme – which enables researchers from across the EU to work together to drive innovation that serves the public interest – is no different. Its predecessor, Horizon 2020, allocated some €80bn (\$87bn) to research efforts involving not only EU countries, but also over a dozen non-EU partners, such as Israel and Türkiye. Horizon Europe’s budget is even

bigger: €95.5bn. Mandatory open access to research results amplifies the programme’s impact.

Both Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe foster co-operation and bolster integration – the pillars of Europe’s strength and influence. Their beneficiaries are primarily open-minded, pro-European people who generally lack political influence, though some – particularly the young people – may go on to challenge governments that are defying European values.

Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe do not benefit power political players, in Hungary or elsewhere. Erasmus+ offers no major endowments, only individual grants for students. While Horizon Europe provides somewhat higher sums – about €1mn, on average – those grants are issued to teams of about five researchers and disbursed over several years. Billion-euro infrastructure projects may raise significant risks of corruption or conflicts of interest that must be tackled; Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe do not.

Moreover, some Hungarian institutions, such as Corvinus University of Budapest (of which one of the authors is rector), have instituted competitive procurement rules to ensure good governance. From 2014 to 2020, Corvinus won €3.6mn in Horizon 2020 research funding for 11 projects. Before the suspension decision, Corvinus had won €4mn in Horizon Europe funding in 2022 alone. Blocking further contributions from the university is clearly counterproductive.

After the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU, it was excluded from Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020. But that decision was made by the British – and lamented by EU leaders. And the decision was soon partly reversed. Recognising the folly of cutting research ties to the EU, the UK negotiated access to Horizon Europe in late 2020.

Now, it is the EU that is taking the lead in excluding partners from these critical programmes, which support not only learning and innovation, but also the sharing of values and culture – the building blocks of a successful, unified Europe. In its bid to look like it is strengthening the EU, the European Commission is doing the opposite.

The EU should stand up to those who are destabilising it, but Erasmus+ students and Horizon Europe researchers are not those people. To punish them for the actions of their country’s leaders is to punish Europe itself. That is why the European Commission must urgently reverse its decision to halt funding to Hungarian institutions and reinstate all Hungarian students and researchers in EU programmes.

Young people should be given every opportunity to learn, grow, and connect, not cut them off from their own future. — Project Syndicate

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## Uganda cracks down on anti-oil protests

● Ugandan climate activists rally against planned pipeline ● They accuse government of ‘silencing’ them with arrests ● Authorities reject criticism and say ‘the law is clear’

By John Okot

Buliisa

Ugandan environmental campaigner Judith Bero-Irwoth has spent years warning of the risks of a planned crude oil pipeline and its impact on communities in the west of the country.

Protests by activists like Bero-Irwoth have ramped up in the Albertine Graben region and the capital, Kampala, in recent years since France’s TotalEnergies and China National Offshore Oil Corporation struck deals to develop Uganda’s oil fields.

The agreements include the proposed \$3.5bn East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), which would ship crude from Lake Albert in Uganda to global markets through a port on Tanzania’s Indian Ocean coast.

Development groups have raised alarm about the impacts on the climate – saying the pipeline will generate 34mn tonnes of carbon emissions annually – and on communities, as an estimated 14,000 households are at risk of losing their land. But climate campaigners are increasingly being targeted and stifled under the Public Management Order Act and legislation governing NGOs, said Dickens Kamugisha, chief executive of the Kampala-based Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO).

Bero-Irwoth said she had become more cautious since police stormed her home in Buliisa district in September 2021 during a community meeting about the oil development plans.

While she and some others managed to flee, Bero-Irwoth said police seized documents including attendance sheets and used them to track down and arrest her and several locals for holding an “unlawful assembly” and “sabotaging government projects”.

“The government will do anything to make sure that no one talks to communities about the dangers of this oil pipeline,” said Bero-Irwoth, who heads Tufanye Pamoja, a community green group whose name means “Let’s Work Together” in Swahili.

“They want to silence us,” she said, noting that 26 of the group’s 500-odd members had been arrested since the meeting.

Albertine police spokesman Julius Hakiza said the members had “failed to seek permission from a district police officer ... (and) were arrested for holding an illegal assembly”. He could not provide the exact number of arrests.

Under a tightly-controlled system led by President Yoweri Museveni since 1986, Uganda has faced criticism from rights advocates for using restrictive laws to stoff political dissent.

Internal affairs ministry spokesman

Simon Peter Mundeyi denied that the government wanted to “stifle climate activists”.

“The law is clear and if activists don’t follow the procedures, we will have no option but to arrest them,” he said.

More than a dozen people in Kampala have been arrested at two separate protests against the oil pipeline since October alone, according to the city’s police and protesters involved.

Biology teacher Bob Barigye said he and three other protesters were charged in December with “inciting violence” and being “a public nuisance”, and spent a week in police custody where they were accused of spreading Western propaganda.

“All we want is to have a peaceful dialogue with the government so that they can stop the oil pipeline,” the 34-year-old said, adding that the four demonstrators had been released on police bond and were due to appear in court later this month.

Justice ministry spokesman Simon Peter Jamba said he could not comment on any such arrests until the courts had delivered judgments. No climate activists have been convicted to date.

It’s not just individuals who have faced sanctions.

The Ugandan government in August 2021 suspended the operations of 54 NGOs, some of which had campaigned against the oil production plans and advocated for the affected communities.

Kamugisha of AFIEGO said he was arrested in 2021 because his organisation – which has advocated against the EACOP – was found to be operating without a valid permit under the NGO Act, despite being registered as a not-for-profit company.

“The government does all (of this) to instil fear in you so that you don’t hold them accountable. Many climate activists and critical organisations are suffering because of that,” he said.

Beatrice Rukanyanga, founder of another NGO that was also affected – the Kwataniza Women Farmers Group – said they were seen as “anti-government and anti-development”. Her organisation was suspended for four months but is now active again, she said.

“The civic space is shrinking every day in Uganda, and as climate activists we work in fear, yet we have to fight for ourselves too,” said Rukanyanga, whose NGO is based in Hoima district, from where the EACOP would transport oil to Tanzania.

Hakiza of the Albertine police said the authorities sometimes suspended NGOs for “spreading Western propaganda (about the oil pipeline) to influence the locals into activism”.

Hoima Resident City Commissioner Badru Mugabi accused local anti-oil activists of being “deceitful”, and said they were “mobilising people to begin protesting against the oil project that is

meant to benefit all Ugandans”.

The pipeline plans have faced opposition outside Uganda, too. The European Parliament in September passed a resolution urging Total to delay development by a year to consider alternatives.

At the UN COP27 climate change talks in Egypt in November, Africa’s chief negotiator Ephraim Shitima, of Zambia, criticised Uganda for its response to the anti-EACOP protests, which he referred to as “forms of expressions from helpless communities”.

In the Albertine region, those protesting against oil production must also contend with worsening climate change.

Residents of Kasenyi village, where Total is building an oil treatment plant, said farmland was increasingly being flooded since large swathes of trees that acted as a buffer during the rainy season had been felled to make way for the facility.

Charles Onen, chairperson of the Resettlement Planning Committee for the surrounding Ngwedo sub-county, said he was threatened by the police after holding a protest with locals to raise concerns about several issues including the flooding.

Onen said “they warned me that if I didn’t find a way to control my people, I will find myself in jail”. Police spokesman Hakiza denied Onen’s version of events, calling it “baseless”.

Total’s head office did not reply to requests for comment, but one of its Uganda-based employees – who spoke on condition of anonymity – said the company had held meetings with local community leaders to “ensure smooth operations”.

The oil giant has previously promised to ensure “sustainable development including the environment and respect for human rights”, and said that adequate compensation, housing and livelihood projects would be provided for impacted households.

At a meeting last month, Bero-Irwoth urged community members not to rush into agreements with Total.

She said the company had asked residents whose land abuts the treatment plant to sign documents agreeing to give up part of their land in order to establish a clear demarcation between local homes and the facility.

Bero-Irwoth said it was a bid to avoid land conflicts in the future, adding that Total should clarify how it would compensate people for damage if an environmental disaster occurs.

“Right now our communities are battling with floods but Total is yet to address the problem,” Bero-Irwoth said.

“If it takes them long to address a problem like this, what will happen if a major disaster strikes, especially when the oil pipeline begins to operate?”

– Thomson Reuters Foundation



Workers seen at an oil exploration site in Buliisa district approximately 244km north-west of Kampala on Friday. (Reuters)

# France, Germany firm up ties as European ‘driving force’

AFP  
Paris

Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz and France's President Emmanuel Macron yesterday pledged to drive Europe forward together, as the German leader visited Paris to celebrate 60 years of post-war co-operation despite recent strains.

The historic partnership has been under pressure from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and broader tectonic shifts.

But in a speech at the capital's Sorbonne University, Scholz said upholding strong ties was key for the continent.

"The future, like the past, rests on co-operation between both our countries as the driving force of a united Europe," he said.

Macron said that "Germany and France, because they cleared the path to reconciliation, must become pioneers to relaunch Europe".

He cited the need to "build a new energy model", encourage "innovation and the technologies of tomorrow", and ensure the European Union is "a geopolitical power in its own right, in defence, space and diplomacy".

The two leaders were then to take part in a joint cabinet meet-

ing. The personal relationship between both men has been less than warm since Scholz assumed office in late 2021.

But "there are structural problems that go further than the personal relationship", said Jacob Ross, a researcher at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Berlin.

The frictions are even felt by the public, with 36% of French respondents and 39% of Germans telling pollster Ipsos this week that relations were suffering.

The 1963 Elysee Treaty signed between post-World War II leaders Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle provided for everything from military cooperation to youth exchanges.

Since then, France and Germany have often built the foundation for joint crisis response in Europe, and other nations are looking to them again now.

Top issues to address include the Ukraine conflict, climate and energy, and European competitiveness faced with a new wave of "buy-American" subsidies in the United States.

Scholz yesterday pledged continued support to Kyiv after Russia invaded its pro-Western neighbour almost 11 months ago.

"We will continue to provide Ukraine with all the support it needs for as long as neces-



French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz leave after a news conference following a Franco-German joint cabinet meeting as part of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Elysee Treaty, at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

sary. Together, as Europeans, to defend our European peace project," he said.

But Germany is still undecided on whether to deliver – or allow allies to deliver – its Leopard 2 battle tanks to Kyiv.

The impression that "there is a united coalition, and that Ger-

many is standing in the way is wrong", newly installed Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said Friday.

Macron said yesterday he does not rule out the possibility of sending Leclerc tanks to Ukraine, speaking at a summit with Scholz.

Macron told a news conference that sending tanks must not escalate the situation, must take into account the time to train Ukrainians to be effective, and must not endanger France's own security.

"Regarding the Leclercs, I asked the Army minister to

## Ukraine govt official sacked as corruption scandal rages

AFP  
Kyiv

A senior Ukrainian government official was sacked yesterday amid fraud allegations as the Ministry of Defence launched an internal audit about an alleged contract signed at grossly inflated prices.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal announced the dismissal of Vasyl Lozynkiy, Deputy Minister of Development of Communities, Territories and Infrastructure, in a statement on the Telegram social messaging platform.

Lozynkiy, in office since May 2020, had been arrested on Saturday by the Ukrainian National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) on suspicion of embezzlement.

The NABU said that Lozynkiy had "received" (\$400,000) to facilitate the conclusion of contracts for the purchase of equipment and generators at inflated prices.

Ukraine is facing electricity shortages following Russian strikes on energy infrastructure.

Yesterday, Ukraine's defence ministry denied reports it had grossly inflated food prices for

a recent contract, in the worst corruption scandal to engulf the armed forces since the war broke out a year ago.

Local media reports on Saturday accused the ministry of having signed a deal at prices "two to three times higher" than current rates for basic foodstuffs.

Eggs, which cost around \$0.19 in a shop, were contracted for \$0.46, while the ministry also signed for potatoes at more than double the retail price, according to the news website ZN.UA.

It said the signed contract for 2023 would be worth 13bn, more than \$350mn at the current rate.

The defence ministry called the reports "false" and said it "purchases the relevant products in accordance with the procedure established by the law".

Bit it added that an investigation would take place into how the information was shared, saying it "harms the interests of defence during a sensitive period".

The ministry said "controls are carried out" on signed contracts, and announced it would launch an internal audit and hold an emergency meeting with Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov today.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky attends a meeting with former British prime minister Boris Johnson in Kyiv yesterday. (Reuters)

## Johnson stands by Ukraine on surprise visit

Former British prime minister Boris Johnson visited Kyiv on a surprise trip yesterday, meeting President Volodymyr Zelensky and pledging that Britain would "stick by Ukraine as long as it takes".

Johnson, who left office in September in the wake of a series of scandals, was prime minister when Russia invaded Ukraine last February and he sought to position London as Kyiv's top ally in the West.

During his trip, Johnson visited Borodyanka and Bucha, the suburbs of the Ukrainian capital that became a byword for atrocities in the West when Russian forces drove towards Kyiv in the first phase of the invasion before being repelled. "I can tell you that the UK will be sticking by Ukraine for as long as it takes," Johnson told the mayor of Bucha.

"You're going to win and you're going to get all the Russians out of your country, but we will be there for the long-term. And we will also want to be helping you to reconstruct," he said speaking through an interpreter. Johnson has dismissed suggestions that his activity in Ukraine could be seen as undermining British Prime Minister Rusni Sunak. While in office, Johnson visited Kyiv

several times and called Zelensky frequently. As he became embroiled in scandals in Britain, he gained widespread popularity in Ukraine where he became known affectionately as "Borys Johnsoniuk". Cafes named cakes after him in Kyiv and street art was produced using his image. In Bucha, Johnson took selfies with residents and laid flowers in tribute to victims of the war. He visited a church to see an exhibition and signed the Ukrainian edition of his book about Winston Churchill for a priest. In Borodyanka, he walked the streets by ruined residential blocks. Kyiv regional governor Oleksiy Kuleba, who accompanied him, said that 162 residents were killed during the month-long Russian occupation of the town last year. Kuleba said about 60% of residents have since returned. In Kyiv, Johnson was personally welcomed by Zelensky and a row of top officials including the foreign minister and the head of the president's office who lined up in a yard near the presidential administration in the heart of the city. Last week Britain said it would supply Ukraine with 14 Challenger 2 tanks and other heavy weaponry.

work on it, but nothing has been ruled out," Macron said, adding that the move would have to be coordinated with allies such as Germany in the coming days and weeks.

France has been pressing Germany to move faster, dashing ahead on mobile artillery in April and light tanks this month.

Elsewhere, moves to jointly develop next-generation fighter jets and tanks are dragging, while France is absent from a 14-nation Sky Shield anti-missile initiative led by Germany.

Ross suggested that part of the problem lies in France's clinging to a historic self-image as a sovereign, nuclear-armed power with a seat on the UN Security Council – in contrast to a Germany happy to leave defence questions primarily to the US in recent decades.

There are early signs of change on both sides, with France re-energising its Nato role since the Ukraine invasion and Germany's €100bn (\$108bn) revamp of its armed forces.

Away from defence, inter-linked trade and energy conundrums are hitting both France and Germany.

For Berlin, "things have got very complicated because Germany's economic and political model is being put to the test,"

said Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, a former French ambassador to Berlin.

Without cheap Russian gas or nuclear power, Berlin has been forced to turn back in part to coal as renewables still cannot yet make up the difference.

France, by contrast, is scrambling to repair and replace its ageing nuclear reactor fleet.

Some in Berlin now fear China will follow Russia's invasion of Ukraine by making a grab for Taiwan – which it sees as a breakaway province – potentially severing Germany from a vital market.

And leaders across Europe fear distortions in transatlantic trade from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which will pour billions of dollars into American-made, climate-friendly technologies.

Macron is expected to push Scholz yesterday to join a joint response, after securing backing from Spanish leader Pedro Sanchez this week.

For France and Germany in particular, there are also fundamentals that must be tended to preserve the relationship into the future.

"The relationship has become less real" for ordinary French and Germans, said Gourdault-Montagne, and "lost some of its emotion".

## Western arms to Kyiv will lead to catastrophe, warns Putin ally

Reuters  
Moscow

A close ally of President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that deliveries of offensive weapons to Kyiv that threaten Russia's territories will lead to a global catastrophe and make arguments against using weapons of mass destruction untenable.

Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the Duma – Russia's lower house of parliament – warned that the United States and Nato's support of Ukraine is leading the world to a "terrible war".

"If Washington and Nato countries supply weapons that will be used to strike civilian cities and attempt to seize our territories, as they threaten, this will lead to retaliatory measures using more powerful weapons," Volodin said on the Telegram messaging app.

"Arguments that the nuclear powers have not previously used weapons of mass destruction in local conflicts are untenable. Because these states did not face a situation where there was a threat to the security of their citizens and the ter-

ritorial integrity of the country." Western allies pledged billions of dollars in weapons for Ukraine last week, although they failed to persuade Germany to lift a veto on providing German-made Leopard battle tanks, which are held by an array of Nato nations but whose transfer to Ukraine requires Berlin's approval.

Since its invasion on February 24, which it has cast as defending itself from an aggressive West, Russia has taken control of parts of Ukraine and has said it will never return them. Kyiv has said that restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity is not open for negotiation.

Volodin's comments followed a similar threat last week by Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former prime minister and president.

Volodin, 58, has been speaker of the lower house, the State Duma, since 2016, having previously held a senior role in the presidential administration. As a member of Putin's Security Council, he has regular access to the president.

"Deliveries of offensive weapons to the Kyiv regime will lead to a global catastrophe," he said.

## Ukraine directors bring horrors of Russia invasion to Sundance

Two new documentaries from Ukrainian filmmakers highlighting the carnage wrought on their country by Russian aggression – and the insidious effects of Kremlin propaganda – premiere at the Sundance film festival this week. *20 Days In Mariupol*, which screened Friday night, portrays in harrowing detail the arrival of war last year to a city that became one of the invasion's bloodiest battle sites, all captured by video journalists under siege. And *Iron Butterflies*, which premiered yesterday, chronicles the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 by Russian-armed separatists in eastern Ukraine, and its foreshadowing of today's larger conflict. Director Mstyslav Chernov, a

journalist who filmed the key port city of Mariupol as Russian troops advanced in February and March 2021, said he hopes releasing his footage as a documentary "hits deeper" and "harder" with audiences than brief newsreel clips can. "It really gives an insight to not only fuller stories of people who are there, but also to how big scale the story is," he told AFP. *20 Days In Mariupol* offers a behind-the-scenes look at how Chernov risked his life to chronicle a Russian direct hit on a maternity hospital, which provoked outrage around the world. The film recounts how Chernov and his team desperately tried to escape the city in order to transmit their shocking footage, even as Russian officials tried to dismiss the horrific

incident as a hoax assembled using Ukrainian "actors." Mariupol "was the first insight of how different Russia's narrative about this war is to reality," said Chernov. Russian officials "were saying that they're not targeting civilians." "You will see in the film me keep asking people, 'Russian Federation is not targeting civilians?' And you will see people reply, 'Well, they are.'" Moscow's weaponisation of misinformation is also central to *Iron Butterflies*, which takes its name from the shrapnel within the Russian-made BUK missile that struck passenger plane MH17 in 2014, killing 298 people. The movie combines newsreel and social media footage with intercepted military audio, to show

how the Russian response went from claiming separatists had downed a Ukrainian military aircraft, to blaming Kyiv for the civilian deaths. It also contrasts the findings of an exhaustive international probe into the incident, with Russia's claim of another hoax. Director Roman Liubiy said he tried to remain "scientific" and avoid becoming angry while editing the film, because Russian propaganda is "built around emotional impact, emotional engagement." The film underlines how those convicted of murder in absentia by a Dutch tribunal at The Hague are highly unlikely to ever serve time in prison. "If the downing of a passenger plane doesn't have consequences for the murderers, then it's hard to imagine

what's going to happen (in the future) – if the invasion will not have consequences," he said. A third film *Klondike*, about a family living on the Russia-Ukraine border at the outbreak of violence in 2014, will receive a special encore at the high-profile festival in Utah, after winning Sundance's world cinema directing award last year. Liubiy said the strong Ukrainian showing can only boost the profile of his country's film industry overseas, but warned "the much, much harder question is how to achieve something right here and right now for the country, for defense." The director hopes to use the publicity from Sundance to crowdfund a reconnaissance drone for filmmaker friends currently

serving in the Ukrainian army. "I would like to use this moment to say as a Ukrainian citizen that we are really thankful for all the international community for helping us to defend (our country)," he said. "But if you are asking 'Is it enough weapons?' Probably, unfortunately, it is still not enough." He spoke to AFP as top Ukrainian officials on Saturday slammed allies' "indecision," after Germany refused to supply tanks to bolster Kyiv in the nearly year-long war. Liubiy takes his film to the Berlin film festival next month. "For sure, international audiences get more and more tired from this topic," he said. "It's hard to keep this fire, this interest... (but) this fight is about our existence."

# Qatar’s tourism sector makes a splash with cruise ship arrivals

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Qatar’s tourism sector is witnessing a further boost from the busy 2022/23 cruise season as mega cruise ships and cruise liners make maiden and return visits to Doha Port, it is learnt.

The arrival of cruise ships and luxury yachts has been bringing thousands of international visitors to the country, significantly contributing to domestic tourism and other sectors.

Italian cruise ship ‘Costa Toscana’ – one of Costa Cruises’ most innovative and environmentally advanced ships – made its second voyage to the country yesterday, carrying 3,798 passengers and 1,441 crew members, Mwani Qatar said.

The 337m-long and 42m-wide cruise ship can accommodate around 6,500 passengers and hosts a waterpark, 13 swimming pools and hot tubs, 13 restaurants and 19 entertainment lounges.

The 2022/23 cruise season also saw German cruise ship ‘AIDAcosma’ make its maiden call to Qatar and is expected to visit Doha again today, in addition to 11 scheduled voyages.

‘MSC World Europa’, which served as a floating hotel during the FIFA World Cup in Qatar last year; and French cruise ship ‘Le Bougainville’ will return to Doha Port on January 26, according to Qatar Tourism.

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,



Italian cruise ship ‘Costa Toscana’ docked at Doha Port yesterday.

featuring the latest technologies that reduce emissions and rationalise energy use.

The 131m-long and 18m-wide ‘Le Bougainville’, which was launched in 2019 and is operated by French cruise line Ponant Cruises, features innovative and environmentally-friendly equipment, elegantly designed cabins, and spacious suites spread over five guest decks, according to Mwani Qatar.

‘Costa Toscana’ and ‘Aida-Cosma’ will return to Qatar on January 29 and 30, respectively. Mega cruise ship ‘Mein Schiff 6’ and luxury ship ‘Ocean Odyssey’ are also scheduled to make calls to Doha Port this season, which will conclude in April.

Doha Port also welcomed the maiden voyage of the superyacht ‘Emerald Azzurra’, which sails under the flag of the Bahamas, as well as cruise ship ‘Artania’, this month.

Apart from the colourful buildings and green scenery at Doha Port’s Mina District, cruise ships have also become one of the main attractions at Qatar’s latest tourism destination.

The area near Doha Port’s Grand Cruise Terminal is also hosting an array of activities as part of the third Qatar Balloon Festival, including the much-anticipated Night Glow.

Some of the festival’s side activities include entertainment shows such as live stage and dance performances, roving mascots, kite-flying and children’s games, among others.



An illuminated ‘Costa Toscana’ after sunset. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam and Mwani Qatar



The ship arriving at the port.



## Unlimited fun at balloon festival

The Qatar Balloon Festival continued to draw big crowds yesterday with attractions such as Night Glow featuring a large number of hot-air balloons, kite-flying, tethered balloons that come in various designs, shapes and sizes, as well as live stage performances, roving mascots, children’s games and entertainment, and different food items. The Doha Port’s external green area (behind the Grand Cruise Terminal) is hosting an array of activities as part of the third Qatar Balloon Festival. Besides, several hot-air balloons take to the skies early morning. While yesterday’s starting point for the sunrise balloon launch was the Aspire Zone area, the organisers said the starting point on Monday will be Sealine. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam and Noushad Thekkayil

