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9:00 AM - 1:00 PM & 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM  
8<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023  
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM & 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM  
9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023  
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM & 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

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## US shoots down Chinese balloon

The United States shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon as it floated off the country's southeastern coast yesterday, US officials said, drawing to a close a dramatic spying saga that drew a spotlight on worsening Sino-US relations. President Joe Biden approved a military plan to shoot down the suspected Chinese spy balloon, US officials said, as the government ordered a halt to flights around the South Carolina coast due to what it called an undisclosed "national security effort." [Page 11](#)

## Brazil sinks rusting old carrier in the Atlantic

Brazil sank a decommissioned aircraft carrier in the Atlantic Ocean off its northeast coast, the Brazilian Navy said, despite warnings from environmentalists that the rusting 1960s French-built ship would pollute the sea and the marine food chain. The 32,000-tonne carrier had been floating offshore for three months since Turkey refused it entry to be scrapped there because it was an environmental hazard. [Page 11](#)

## Kite World Cup 2023 winners crowned



The Visit Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup 2023 has ended with three male and three female participants crowned as the winners. The Qatar Airways GKA Freestyle Kite World Tour staged its maiden Qatar event from January 31 until yesterday, and thrilled hundreds of spectators at Fuwairit Kite Beach. In the men's final, the winners were Giannaria Cocolotto from Italy in first place, Carlos Mario from Brazil in second place, and Louka Pitot from France in third. In the women's final, the winners were Bruna Kajiyu from Brazil in first place, Mikaili Sol from the US in second and Nathalie Lambrecht from Sweden in third place. Pictured are the winners with officials. [Page 12](#)

## 'Qatar's economy can withstand any recession'

The Qatari economy can withstand any expected recession in the West, whose impact would extend to other parts of the world, President of the US-Qatari Business Council (USQBC) Scott Taylor has affirmed. Taylor said that with suitable energy prices and a dynamic economy, Qatar is strong enough to withstand the recession that may occur, which also provides a huge opportunity to invest in companies, real estate, or other investments.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said Qatari investors will be able to invest capital and reap profits through low-cost deals that will bring them a lot of returns when the world gets out of the potential recess.

Taylor pointed out: "Clearly the LNG expansion is not only a massive driver of the economy for this country, but also for business between the United States and Qatar as well."

The president of USQBC said that there are a lot

of lessons learned in this World Cup that benefit Mexico, Canada, and the United States – the host countries of the 2026 World Cup.

Taylor said: "I think one of the biggest things that we can learn from Qatar is the fact that you illustrated and showcased your culture so well surrounding the World Cup and we could certainly learn from you and learn from that and those conversations are ongoing."

[Business Page 12](#)

## HMC warns against e-cigarette smoking

Dr Ahmad al-Mulla, Senior Consultant, Disease Control and Director of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)'s Tobacco Control Centre, a World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre, has warned against 'electronic smoking' such as e-cigarettes and e-hookahs.

These items are illegal to market and sell in Qatar under Law No 10 issued in 2016. Dr al-Mulla said smoke coming out of electronic cigarette smoking contains toxic and chemical substances that may cause harm to users.

"Electronic cigarette smoking is not an alternative way to quit smoking, has no scientific references and is not approved as a smoking cessation aid by the US Food and Drug Administration," Dr al-Mulla said. "Allowing electronic cigarette smoking in some countries resulted in negative consequences such as an increased prevalence of smoking in the community especially among younger age groups."

HMC's Tobacco Control Centre continues to monitor global studies and research on this type of smoking as well as experiences in other countries. According to Dr al-Mulla, studies conducted by the Tobacco Control Centre at HMC, the prevalence of electronic cigarette use among tobacco users in Qatar is around 11%.

Dr Jamal Ba Suhai, tobacco cessation specialist said that users thought electronic cigarette smoking is either a safe alternative to traditional smoking or an easier way to quit smoking.

"However in our experience, users suffered from many problems, including increased consumption. This is because electronic cigarettes

● e-cigarettes and e-hookahs are harmful to health and are illegal to sell in Qatar under Law No 10 issued in 2016 ● Electronic cigarette smokers also complained of many problems such as infections in the mouth, gum, teeth, respiratory tract and pains in the heart and chest'

are easier to use and enable a higher intake of toxic nicotine and other chemical substances," Dr Ba Suhai said.

Electronic cigarette smokers also complained of many problems such as infections in the mouth, gum, teeth, respiratory tract and pains in the heart and chest.

"The possibility of severe lung infection associated with this kind of smoking is high as well as nicotine acute poisoning in children and lithium battery explosions," he said. "Some used electronic smoking to add other addictive substances which led to deaths in some younger smokers according to the United States Centers for Disease Control."

Dr Ba Suhai advised people who wish to quit smoking to seek help at HMC's Tobacco Control Centre to receive medications that are proven to be safe as well as counselling and support from the highly trained team.

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## Ministry holds meeting of 'Care and Education' programme for nurseries

The Private Education Sector of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) hosted the first meeting of the 'Care and Education' programme for private nurseries, with the participation of representatives from private nurseries, parents, ministry staff, and the local community.

The programme aims to strengthen the partnership between the ministry and private nurseries, as well as provide an opportunity for creativity and innovation in the nursery stage, highlighting applied practices and exchanging experiences related to the implementation of the programme.

Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs Omar Abdulaziz al-Nama emphasised the importance of the meeting, which aims to shed light on

nursery as the first stage in children's lives, and represents the first years of forming children's personalities and understanding of the environment around them. He also highlighted that the impact of this stage is clear in preparing children and developing their life skills.

He also praised the role played by private nurseries in Qatar in supporting parents during the upbringing of their children, developing their skills, and building their social relations, language, and communication skills.

According to Dr Rania Mohamed, Director of the Nursery Department, the purpose of the meeting of the programme, one of the nursery management initiatives for this year and the following years, is to review the practices currently being used in



the nursery stage. She continued by saying that Qatar places a high priority on the advancement of education to realise one of the pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030 regarding human development, beginning with the kindergarten stage, which is particularly significant as it serves as the foundation for developing the child's personality, giving him the fundamental skills he needs, and preparing him for school as well as socially, psychologically, and cognitively. (QNA)

## Qatari publishing houses book their place in industry

Qatari public and private publishing houses have made their mark in the publishing industry and the world of culture, and contributed to the promotion of the continuous cultural movement in the country, a number of officials said.

In statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the officials stressed that the Qatari publishing houses have assumed a prominent position in this field, as a result of the selection of purposeful contents, quality printing, as well as the diversity of intellectual, scientific and literary content, leading to children's literature and other books to register a strong presence in Arab and international book fairs.

The Director of Katara Publishing House, Sheikha Shaiha bint Hamad al-Thani, said that the establishment of Katara Publishing House in 2018 embodied a pioneering step within the framework of the Katara - the Cultural Village Foundation's strategy to disseminate distinguished Qatari

creations in culture, heritage and arts. She explained that the publications of the house received attention and demand due to its adoption of the highest quality standards, including production, printing and distribution.

It was also characterised by diversity in cultural production, as it included documentary and heritage works, fictional works and critical studies, especially the winner of the Katara Prize for Arabic Fiction.

She noted that the house, through its continuous participation in the Doha International Book Fair and Gulf and Arab book fairs, has strengthened its position in the Qatari and Arab cultural scene through its publications in Arabic, English and French. The Director of Research Projects at Qatar University Press, Reem Mohsen al-Athba, said that the publishing house represents one of the most important strategic initiatives of the university, embodies its mission, and is a scientific tributary for various national institutions,

and a qualitative step in building a knowledge society, explaining that the publishing house since its establishment in 2018 adopts a policy based on the latest performance indicators and quality standards in the world of academic publishing.

He pointed out that the Qatar University Press highlighted, through a package of publications, the national identity and the country's tourist and environmental attractions, and was distinguished by its diversity and richness as it included Islamic studies, law, history, culture, heritage, politics, literature and linguistics, medicine and engineering, translation works, encyclopaedic works, forum and conference proceedings, a series of textbooks, a series of country studies, and a series of scientific theses.

The Executive Director of Hamad Bin Khalifa University Publishing House, Bashir Shabaro, spoke about the house's interest in publishing novels and biographies for adults, stories for adolescents and children, in addition to educational books for schools, academic books for universities and researchers, and information books.

He noted that the work of the house is not limited to the fields of literature and scientific research, but rather manages an electronic platform for content in an open access manner, as the house has proven its presence in the field of collaborative electronic publishing, to allow easy access to advanced global research in medicine, biosciences, healthcare, social sciences, Islamic and engineering and others.

The CEO of Rosa Publishing House, Dr Aisha Jassim al-Kuwari, said that the house, since its establishment in 2017, has worked to achieve a set of goals, the most important of which is encouraging

Qatari authors, as new names have emerged in the world of writing and creativity with the establishment of the house, such as the writer Omar Al-Mir, whose publication at the Kuwait Fair won the best-selling book in 2019, the writer Mohamed al-Marri, the

## Amir congratulates Sri Lankan president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena. (QNA)

## Awareness programmes, events organised for World Cancer Day

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) is observing World Cancer Day, which is marked on February 4 annually, with several programmes to raise awareness of cancer and minimise the global impact of the disease.

Cancer has a devastating effect on lives and a serious impact on healthcare economics. World Cancer Day is set to give momentum to the campaign that will inspire change and mobilise action long after the day itself. This is the second year of a three-year campaign. A multi-year campaign means more exposure and engagement, more opportunities to build global awareness and ultimately more impact. The first year of the 'Close the Care Gap' campaign was 2022. It was

all about understanding and recognising the inequities in cancer care around the globe. It was about having an open mind, challenging assumptions and looking at the hard facts about the care gap.

This was the year to question the status quo and help reduce the stigma; to listen to various perspectives of the people living with cancer and their communities and let those lived experiences guide the thoughts and actions.

The MoPH is asking the public and healthcare professionals to think about the theme for World Cancer Day this year which is 'Bridge the care gap: Uniting our voices and taking action and what they can do to embody these! Everyone can play a part in bridge the care gap - all the

partners with the MoPH such as Hamad Medical Corporation, Primary Health Care Corporation, Qatar Cancer Society, Sidra Medicine and others who are developing processes and services to facilitate prevention, early detection and diagnosis, treatment, and long-term transitions, to the general public who make a decision every day about utilising these services.

Other than educating ourselves and people around the communities on signs and symptoms of cancer, people can seek care early actions that can take countless forms: motivating others to go for screening services, mobilising the friends, family, co-workers, and communities because together we can achieve almost anything.



The establishment of Katara Publishing House in 2018 embodied a pioneering step within the framework of the Katara - the Cultural Village Foundation's strategy to disseminate distinguished Qatari creations in culture, heritage and arts.



writer Maitha Sultan, and others, and this is a success for the writer, publisher, and cultural scene in Qatar, in addition to introducing the world to the Qatari cultural product through participation in various Arab and international book fairs, and presenting community initiatives that contribute to the cultural movement in the country, such as the cultural salon, the narrators house, and others.

Ibrahim al-Buhashim al-Sayed, founder and director of Dar Al-Watad for Books and Publications and Vice-President of the Arab Publishers Associations, said that

the house, which was established in 2017, sets its sights on serving writers and readers in Qatar, in addition to encouraging young authors.

It aspires to present everything that interests the reader in terms of useful material and appropriate output. The house is also interested in building various relationships with regional and international publishing houses to benefit from copyrights or specifications for books and their quality.

He pointed out that the house, since its inception, has attracted many Qatari writers and au-

## Registration begins for Ramadan lamb meat national production and price initiative

QNA  
Doha

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced, in co-operation with the Ministry of Municipality, the opening of registration in the national initiative for the encouragement of local production and subsidizing of lamb meat during the blessed month of Ramadan of this year, starting from tomorrow until February 16.

This step comes within the framework of MoCI's keenness on encouraging livestock breeders and farm-owners, as well as supporting local sheep production in a manner that enhances Qatar's self-sufficiency and supports balancing supply and demand, thus contributing to the market's price stability and guaranteeing the citizen's access to red meat at reasonable prices.

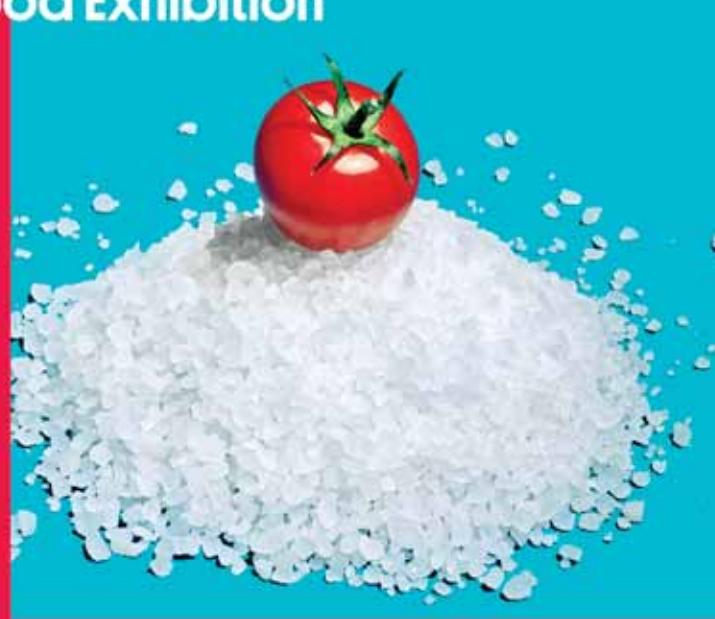
MoCI stated in a statement yesterday that sheep breeders and farm-owners who possess male sheep of the breeds (awasi - najdi - arab - and hariri) who wish to register must do so at the Livestock Department of the Ministry of Municipality, on the 11th floor of Al Mansour Tower, with attendance being in person or by an authorised official representative, in accordance with the applicable controls and provisions in this regard. The ministry added that the initiative's registration conditions are: presenting a valid license and a livestock breeder certificate.



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# MSC Cruises designates United Tours and Cruise as exclusive GSA in Qatar

MSC Cruises, the world's third largest cruise brand and the leader in Europe, South America, the Middle East and Southern Africa, has announced the appointment of United Tours and Cruise, a subsidiary of Qatari Investors Group Marine Services (QIG Marine Services), the marine arm of Qatari Investors Group (QIG), as its exclusive General Sales Agent (GSA) in Qatar.

Details of the new agreement were given onboard 'MSC World Europa' during an event hosted by MSC Cruises at Old Doha Port on Thursday, which was attended by the QIG CEO and stakeholders from the travel sector in the country. United Tours and Cruise, the newly appointed GSA, will facilitate the cruise booking process for citizens and residents of Qatar, providing guests and the travel agency community with information and assistance during the pre- and post-booking process.

**This winter season, guests from Qatar can enjoy an unforgettable cruise aboard 'MSC World Europa'**

QIG CEO Joseph Abdo said: "We are delighted to announce this appointment as exclusive GSA for MSC Cruises in Qatar which further strengthens our strategic partnership with MSC Group. United Shipping



This winter season, guests from Qatar can enjoy an unforgettable cruise aboard 'MSC World Europa'.

Agency, the port agency division of QIG Marine Services, is the appointed vessel agent of MSC Cruises in Qatar and adding the GSA to the scope of our services complements our cruise-related service portfolio.

"This appointment will also accelerate further growth of the cruise industry in Qatar as the country places great importance in the tourism sector as part of its strategy to position Qatar as a leading tourism destination and raising the tourism sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) to 12% by 2030.

"We are very pleased to be working with MSC Cruises and we are looking forward to a close and successful collaboration."

MSC Cruises executive director Angelo Capurro said, "Win-

ter cruises in the Middle East are growing in popularity with our guests coming from all over the world, and the region is a very important aspect of our growing business. Such significance was recently reflected at the end of

2022 when Doha was chosen as the city to host the official naming ceremony of our largest ship to join our fleet, 'MSC World Europa'! We are looking forward to develop further in Qatar and I am confident that United Tours and Cruises as our local agents will be the right partners for us to succeed with our ambition."

This winter season, guests from Qatar can enjoy an unforgettable cruise aboard 'MSC World Europa'. This new ship, which came into service in November 2022 to serve as a floating hotel berthed at Doha Port for an entire month, has groundbreaking design and breakthrough technology which sets new standards in the cruise industry.

It is MSC Cruises' most sustainable and futuristic cruise ship, powered by cleaner fuel, and with green technology integrated throughout the ship. This next-generation vessel reduces emissions and marks a milestone in MSC Cruises' journey to zero emission operations.

This unique cruise ship features a ground-breaking design, where every detail is conceived to offer a taste of the future of cruising. Offering the extraordinary sea view from the striking futuristic 'Y' shape aft structure and even more balcony cabins



Details of the new agreement were given onboard 'MSC World Europa' at an event hosted by MSC Cruises at Old Doha Port on Thursday and attended by QIG CEO and stakeholders from the travel sector in the country.

than ever. It is a future class of emotions, for a ship never seen before.

The ship features six stunning pools and 14 whirlpool baths and an extensive range of accommodation with 19 different cabin categories.

'MSC World Europa' has sailed

since December 2022 from Doha and will operate in the Arabian Gulf until April 2023 with four-night and seven-night itineraries to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sir Bani Yas Island and Dammam. Guests looking for an awe-inspiring five-star hospitality experience, elegant accommodation, sightseeing discoveries and exploration adventures can contact our customer service team at [cruisebooking@unitedtoursandcruise.com](mailto:cruisebooking@unitedtoursandcruise.com)



Angelo Capurro (left) and Joseph Abdo at the signing ceremony, held onboard the 'MSC World Europa' on Thursday.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

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# Schools plan big for National Sport Day

Schools across the country are making big preparations for this year's National Sport Day celebrations. Accordingly, the schools have lined up various events, activities, programmes and tournaments in preparation for the occasion. National Sport Day will be observed around the country on February 14.

Local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reports that awareness lectures are being conducted by schools highlighting the importance of preserving public health as well as promoting physical fitness and following correct dietary patterns.

School principals told the daily that a number of tournaments will be organised in the coming period covering various group sports in addition to individual games for students. Also, extra-curricular activities will be intensified during the breaks. Apart from students, parents will also take part in school programmes across the country.

The morning school assembly



speeches are now focusing on the importance of daily exercise and its impact on the health of students, as well as the need to get rid of unhealthy food habits. Also, schools are sending text messages to parents on the importance of maintaining public health and exercising and involving their children. The schools have joined hands with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to organise diabetes check-ups and complete height and weight measurements for all students along with the staff.

Othman al-Suwaian, director of Ahmed Bin Rashid Primary School

for Boys, said the school is planning a 'telematch' tournament for primary schools. This will be held with the participation of more than 10 schools over three days. Also, the schools are sending text messages to parents to participate in the Sport Day activities while requesting them to gather on the Doha Corniche and engage in different outdoor activities such as walking and running. Ismail Abdel-Baqi Shams, principal of Omar Bin Al-Khattab Secondary School for Boys, said an awareness lecture will be delivered at the school on the importance of exercising and maintaining public health. The lecture will also focus on adhering to healthy food practices.

Fahd al-Derham, principal of Muhammad bin Abdulaziz Al-Mana Secondary School for Boys, said the school conducts a periodic examination of students and staff to detect obesity and diabetes. The school, according to him, will participate in all the activities by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

## ICON Medical Center signs co-operation agreement with Fame Sports Academy

ICON Medical Center, the International Center for Orthopaedics and Neuroscience specialising in the treatment of orthopaedic, nerves and sports injuries, has signed a co-operation and support agreement with Fame Sports Academy.

The agreement comes in the interest of ICON Medical Center to support sports and provide a safe environment for athletes through medical examinations and awareness sessions.

The agreement includes providing medical examinations for athletes affiliated with the academy as well as conducting workshops and periodic awareness seminars for the members. ICON Center will also work to support the sports competitions held by Fame Academy.

This agreement also comes as part of ICON Center's social responsibility towards the community, especially that Fame Sports Academy is considered as one of the best academies for providing youth and children with quality health and fitness training through the game of basketball, a press statement notes. Ahmed Hamouda, director-general of Fame Bas-

ketball Academy, expressed gratitude at signing the agreement, adding that ICON Center is one of the best and most prestigious facilities specialised in the treatment of bones, nerves and sports injuries, and that signing this agreement will constitute an added value enabling the academy to raise awareness of sports injuries and raise safety levels for players.

He added that many contests and competitions will be held this year in co-operation with ICON Center and other partners.

It is worth mentioning that ICON Medical Center is one of the subsidiaries of Mohamed bin Hamad Holding Group, established nearly 10 years ago as the first centre specialised in orthopaedic, neurological, spine and sports medicine in Qatar.

Fame Sports Academy was established seven years ago, and it encompasses a dedicated group of professionals passionate about raising healthy, successful children and playing the game of basketball.



ICON Medical Center is one of the subsidiaries of Mohamed bin Hamad Holding Group.

### QATARGAS OPERATING COMPANY LTD Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/FMD/5978/22 PROVISION OF VEGETATION REMOVAL AND OPEN DITCHES CLEANING ON CALL-OFF BASIS	05/02/2023 to 20/02/2023	0	50,000	20/02/2023

#### Scope of Work:

To provide Qatargas with Vegetation Removal & Cleaning on ground level and Storm Water Open Ditch Cleaning as detailed in this Scope of Work in compliance with COMPANY requirements. The Scope of SERVICES will cover but not limited to Vegetation Removal & Cleaning on ground level, Storm Water Open Ditch Cleaning for COMPANY's facilities and any future facilities added to the existing facilities. The Services shall be provided on a call-off basis. The Services provided shall include the required manpower tools, equipment, and relevant logistics.

**Bid Validity:** Bid should be valid for 180 calendar 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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### MARRIOTT MARQUIS CITY CENTER DOHA

Marriott Marquis City Center Doha announces the following

Sr. No.	Tender Ref. No	General Description of Commodity	Non-Refundable Documents Fee	Bid Closing Date
1	MH/TRANS/ 01-23/01	Staff Transportation for Various Location which includes 8 Marriott Hotels	QAR 5,000	26 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2023 at 3:00 Noon

#### RFP Announcement CONDITIONS

- A payment of non-refundable document fees should be deposited to QNB Qatar National Bank Account Number 0013035603002.
- Bank receipt together with valid Company Commercial Registration, Computer Card, and Authorization Letter must be presented for documents.
- Tender documents to be collected from Marriott Marquis purchasing office between 9.00 am to 5.00 pm (Sun to Thurs).
- Proposal to be submitted in sealed envelopes as per the Tender Documents requirements in HARD COPY & SOFT COPY on USB.
- Offers should be valid for 60 days commencing from the closing date (as stated above).
- Marriott Marquis City Center Doha has the right to increase or decrease the scope of services with the same terms and conditions.
- Marriott Marquis City Center Doha is not bound to accept the lowest vendor or any other participant and is under no obligation to show reasons thereof.
- Proposal should be submitted not later than 3:00 noon of the closing date. Sealed envelopes are to be dropped in the tender box located at Marriott Marquis security area quoting the Tender Number and Subject.
- Offers arriving thereafter may not be considered.

**Location:** Marriott Marquis City Center Doha  
Omar Al Mukhtar Street, West Bay | P.O. Box 25500, Doha, Qatar

### Qatar's representative presents credentials



Dean of the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) Thomas Stelzer received in Vienna the credentials of Sultan bin Salmeen al-Mansoori, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the International Anti-Corruption Academy. On the sidelines of receiving the credentials, they discussed bilateral co-operation relations between Qatar and IACA and ways to support and develop them. Stelzer expressed his thanks and appreciation to Qatar for its continuous support to IACA and its contribution to international efforts to combat the scourge of corruption. Ambassador al-Mansoori affirmed Qatar's keenness to support the IACA various work and activities in line with its keenness to strengthen international co-operation and shared responsibility in combating corruption. (QNA)

### Mol directorate assists owners find their lost falcons in industrial cities

The General Directorate of Industrial Security at the Ministry of Interior (Mol) said assists in retrieving lost falcons in the industrial cities of Ras Laffan, Mesaieed and Dukhan. Informing this on social media, the Mol said the directorate will assist the owners of lost falcons by allowing them to enter the industrial cities with security patrol escort to retrieve the falcons. For enquiries and assistance in this regard, people should contact the following numbers: 40138645 and 40138644 for Mesaieed; 40141000 and 40142400 for Dukhan; and 40146555 and 40146444 for Ras Laffan. "The competent authorities urge everyone to co-operate with the authorities and contact the hotline numbers for assistance to avoid legal accountability," the Mol advised.



### QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY INVITATION TO TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-369391	FIELD INSTRUMENT LUMPSUM JOBS DURING QAFCO 5 SHUTDOWN – OCTOBER 2023	500/- (Non-refundable)	176,530/- (One Hundred Seventy Six Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Only)	05.02.2023 06.02.2023 07.02.2023 08.02.2023 09.02.2023 12.02.2023 13.02.2023	09.03.2023

#### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
  - Account Name : QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)
  - Account Number : 0013-025828-058
  - IBAN : QA51QNBA00000000013025828058
  - Bank Name : QATAR NATIONAL BANK
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to [purchase@qafco.com.qa](mailto:purchase@qafco.com.qa) on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date, you may contact at [purchase@qafco.com.qa](mailto:purchase@qafco.com.qa) or on 44227797
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Tender Office, between 0930 – 1100 hours during the Holy month of Ramadan and 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".

# Doha Learning Days focuses on sustainability and inclusivity

The World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) Doha Learning Days Festival has wrapped up its successful fourth edition.

Hosted by WISE, the festival curated a wealth of meaningful informal learning opportunities, welcoming thousands of school students, youth, and families at Msheireb Museums.

A rich programme focused on youth empowerment through activities such as entrepreneurship and financial literacy masterclasses, interactions with emerging technologies such as robotics, and sessions to enrich personal growth. WISE, Qatar Foundation's (QF) global education initiative, developed the festival programme with more

than 20 local content partners, including ministries, higher education institutions, private sector entities, non-governmental organisations, and several QF entities.

Stavros N Yiannouka, CEO of WISE, said: "Doha Learning Days was everything it promised to be: an extraordinary opportunity for informal learning with a strong sense of community. It was incredible to host the festival at Msheireb Museums and to work alongside our strategic partners, our content collaborators, and the 2022 WISE Awards winners. We extend our deepest appreciation to each of them for their strong commitment to WISE's vision. Bringing experiential learning to enhance the

local education ecosystem will benefit educators and learners in the future. We look forward to taking forward these discussions with our global network at the WISE Summit in November."

Ali Mohamed al-Kuvari, CEO of Msheireb Properties, said: "Msheireb Museums is proud to have collaborated with WISE to host this valuable learning festival for our students and the community to expand their education and creativity. We are committed to strengthening community partnerships and promoting educational programs to continue cultivating human capital development in Qatar."

The 2023 edition of WISE Doha Learning Days (DLD) was held in partnership with Visa and with the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. ExxonMobil was the event Platinum Partner, and this year's Strategic Partners were Msheireb Museums and Swiss wealth manager Julius Baer.

Salah al-Mana, vice-president and director of Public and Government Affairs for ExxonMobil Qatar, said: "At ExxonMobil Qatar, we support education programmes that help young people develop a broad range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are critical for navigating through life, and not



The lively community celebration of informal learning was the forerunner to QF's global WISE summit, to be held in November.



participants' tech skills while Kabuni took students on an exhilarating journey to grow and explore in a safe metaverse, guiding them to build a 3D virtual drone.

DLD also ensured that students explored their roles in making the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a reality. Several sessions combined innovative educational approaches to discuss sustainability, such as Lego Serious Play sessions with Maker Majlis (Hamad Bin Khalifa University).

Offshoot activities expanded the learning space and included a visit to Qatar's mangroves with QF's Earthqa Center for a Sustainable Future. Tarsheed was on hand to present a range of sustainability-themed activities that fostered an understanding of the responsible consumption of water and electricity while allowing students to express themselves creatively.

With a broad focus on social inclusion and awareness of diversity, sessions by Insaniyatna and Best Buddies used interactive, game-based activities to build social awareness of inclusion. For their part, Generation Amazing used on the pitch football-for-good fun to highlight peer-peer positive competition and respect for diversity.

just through the labour market. WISE Doha Learning Days 2023 has been a wonderful opportunity to connect with Qatar's youth, share our experiences, and promote the transferable skill sets that will help them participate fully in society and contribute to future prosperity. We're delighted to have been the event's platinum partner."

Carl Manlan, Visa's head of Inclusive Impact and Sustainability for Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, added: "Visa is pleased to have been part of Doha Learning Days and to have supported WISE in bringing together different knowledge partners to create this initiative. It's been a valuable opportunity to help Qatar's young people gain the skills and knowledge to be able to benefit from the opportunities in the digital economy."

The participation of the six 2022 WISE Awards winners at DLD, through an exclusive masterclass, blended perspectives on education, innovations worldwide with the festival's local community focus. In a different session, social entrepreneur Zubair Junjuria, founder of ZNotes, shared his experience building an online learning platform that now reaches millions of learners globally.

While DLD has come to a close, visitors to Msheireb Museums can continue engaging with the student art installation, 'Football and the World Cup in Qatar', developed through a workshop led by QF International. The school students were guided to creatively use the Arabic language to demonstrate the impact of the FIFA World Cup on their lives and facilitate a cross-cultural understanding of the impact at a global level.

The festival brought hands-on interactive activities to the whole community. For school students, sessions ranged from hands-on master classes on entrepreneurship with Injaz Qatar, and investment management with Julius Baer, to a student-led financial literacy session with Visa and Qatar Academy Al Wakrah students. Studio 5/6 presented an exceptional programme of coding labs, robotics, and soft circuits workshops to hone young



## Condolences

The Chairman, Board of Directors and all employees at  
**Doha Bank**



offer their heartfelt condolences to the family of

**Khalid Panjwani**  
(Deputy Head - Human Resources)

on his sad demise

May Allah rest the departed soul in peace and give fortitude to the bereaved family to bear this great loss.

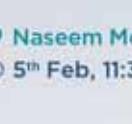
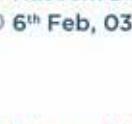
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	<b>Dr. Pankaj C</b> Pathologist Topic: Cancer Early Detection & Prevention		<b>Naseem Medical Centre, Al Rayyan</b> ⌚ 5 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 11:30 AM
	<b>Dr. Alia K Zaidi</b> Gynecologist Topic: Cancer in Women Early Detection & Prevention		<b>Naseem Medical Centre, C Ring</b> ⌚ 5 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 03:00 PM
	<b>Dr. Mahia Afreen</b> Microbiologist Topic: Cancer Awareness Early Detection & Prevention		<b>Naseem Medical Centre, Al Wakrah</b> ⌚ 6 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 1:00 PM
	<b>Dr. Al Sheik Ziauddin</b> General Dentist Topic: Oral Cancer Early Detection & Prevention		<b>Naseem Dental Centre, Azeezia</b> ⌚ 6 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 02:30 PM
	<b>Dr. Shabeer Abdulla</b> Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon Topic: Oral Cancer Early Detection & Prevention		<b>Naseem Dental Centre, Muntazah</b> ⌚ 6 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 03:00 PM
	<b>Dr. Shadi FS Khalifa</b> Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon Topic: Oral Cancer Early Detection & Prevention		<b>Naseem Medical Centre, D Ring</b> ⌚ 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 10:00 AM
	<b>Dr. Mohamed Samer Jamil Aldardary</b> Urologist Topic: Prostate Cancer Early Detection & Prevention		<b>Premium Naseem, Abu Hamour</b> ⌚ 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 12:30 PM
	<b>Dr. Naima Ouhrani</b> Gynecologist Topic: Breast Cancer Early Detection & Prevention		

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## Qatar Charity's 'Sounds and Colours' exhibition concludes

At the end of the "Sounds and Colours" exhibition organised by Qatar Charity (QC), many artists – both citizens and residents – emphasised the importance of fine arts in supporting humanitarian causes and the role of an artists in educating the community.

They also highlighted the role of art and the responsibility of the artist towards the community and humanitarian work.

The virtual version of the exhibition will continue until the end of February.

Held at Doha Festival City, the "Sounds and Colours" exhibition was organised in co-operation with the Qatar Fine Arts Association, Dar Hessa, and Doha Festival City.

The proceeds of artworks were allocated to humanitarian causes to support the "Warm Hearts" campaign launched by Qatar Charity to contribute to meeting the winter needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and the vulnerable across the globe.

The exhibition saw a great response from the public, who were keen to acquire the artworks on display, given that the proceeds were allocated to humanitarian causes, a press statement noted.

Fine arts exponent Khaled al-



Snapshots from the exhibition.

Rashed thanked the QC for paying significant attention to the fine arts.

Another artist, Saeeda al-Badr, who is also a journalist, said that a person should do what he or she can for the sake of goodness.

The artist displayed many of her artworks, including a painting on be-

ing kind and dutiful to parents.

Artist Haifa al-Khuzai said participation in the exhibition was an opportunity to contribute to alleviating the suffering of the vulnerable and the needy.

The mother of a child artist, Amer al-Mansoori, who suffers from au-

tism, said: "Amer has participated in several exhibitions, and the presence of his artworks at Qatar Charity's exhibition is a great honour, because there is nothing more important than doing good."

She also thanked all those who contributed to this charitable initiative.



## Georgetown initiative wins two Telly Awards



Dr Christine Schiwietz and Robert Laws with the Telly Awards.

An innovative teaching tool using virtual reality that was developed by instructors at Qatar Foundation (QF) partner Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) for a course titled *The Sociological Imagination in the 21st Century* has been recognised with two prestigious awards from the international television and video industry.

Garnering Telly Awards in both the immersive and mixed reality categories, an educational 360° virtual reality (VR) documentary produced by course instructor Dr Christine

Schiwietz and academic librarian Robert Laws transported students to the university's Washington, DC, campus to explore social justice.

"Our vision aspired to leverage the capabilities of VR to create an immersive teaching and learning experience for students at Georgetown's Qatar campus," said Dr Schiwietz. "We wanted them to feel more connected to this important initiative despite the geographical distance to the DC campus."

"Virtual reality takes 'global' experiential learning to a whole new level," she added.

The innovative educational approach of VR storytelling required capturing original footage using a 360° camera, mixed with interviews with scholars, historical artefacts from the Georgetown University archives in DC, music from famous African-American composers, video footage of Washington, DC, and narration.

The resulting footage was viewed through virtual reality headsets.

Students were then able to explore the narrative scenes, to feel like they were actually there in person and connect

their virtual experience to the traditional reading materials assigned in class.

Technical support for the project was provided by Laws, who said: "We embraced the emerging technologies of virtual and mixed reality and produced a final film that immersed students into the locations and debates surrounding the important issue of social justice."

"Students gained important digital literacy skills through this experience and for many it was the first time they used a VR headset for an educational purpose," he added.

Dr Schiwietz and Laws say they hope to explore and expand on the use of virtual reality in future projects and immersive storytelling as part of the university's commitment to promoting social justice through education.

Established in 1979, the Telly Awards are judged by the Telly Awards Judging Council, an industry body of more than 200 leading experts, including personnel from advertising agencies, production companies, and major television networks, reflective of the multiscreen industry.

## TUTTOFOOD will be back in May 2023 with an edition under the banner of sustainability

TUTTOFOOD 2023 will return at fieramilano from May 8 to 11, 2023 – with a focus on sustainability. It will be the first edition after the pandemic and it is already promising many great events such as the more than 1,000 brands present to date, representing at least 35 countries: not only an international platform for meeting supply and demand, but also an occasion for training, sharing and reflection thanks to quality content, embodied by a rich schedule of events and authoritative partnerships.

### Hub for sharing, training and reflection

Of particular note among the events is the return of the Retail Plaza by TUTTOFOOD, a unique format in which major Italian and global retail brands interact with companies and other stakeholders in a dialog that is difficult to achieve in other contexts. Confirmed also for this year is the collaboration with the Retail Institute, which supported Fiera Milano in identifying the trendiest topics of the moment, which will also be discussed from a sustainability perspective: among these stand out innovation in supply chains, the opportunities of digital transformation – such as the metaverse – and the Green Retail approach.

Also returning will be the Better Future Award, the award sponsored by TUTTOFOOD in collaboration with the publications Gdoweek and MarkUp that awards sustainable innovation in agribusiness, including ethical socio-environmental initiatives. For example, in 2021 the Award went, among others, to a project for the sustainable cultivation of teff in Ethiopia, the local traditional cereal; an initiative to support cocoa farmers in Uganda; and an urban gardens project, which reduces waste by promoting proximity to the consumer.

Produced in collaboration with Associazione Italiana Ambasciatori del Gusto, the Taste Arena will be a place to

meet the great protagonists of our cuisine, but also the beginning of an international journey that mixes the flavors of the world with Italian authenticity in search of a more conscious, responsible and sustainable food style. Guides for this exploration will be VIP chefs Gianfranco Pascucci, owner of Pascucci al Porticciolo (Fiumicino, Italy); Giancarlo Perbellini, owner of Casa Perbellini (Verona, Italy); Marco Sacco, owner of Il Piccolo Lago (Verbania, Italy); and Andrea Scarpati, owner of Sapori Restaurant (Leicester, UK).

In turn, Evolution Plaza will be the stage where the latest innovations in digital technologies regarding e-commerce, food delivery, apps, supporting technologies and blockchain will be shared. Experts on technology, new applications, and the latest solutions in agribusiness will discuss these topics. The Start Up Area, instead, will be a showcase where younger and more dynamic companies will present implementations of new, or significantly improved, products.

Finally, the Winery managed by Unione Italiana Vini will be an event area dedicated to good wine in which it will be possible to participate in tastings, conferences and seminars to learn about, recognize and appreciate wine and viticulture to the fullest with a new approach marked by networking, as part of the TUTTOWINE sector.

### An international lineup under the banner of quality

Also on the subject of exhibition layout, particularly large representations will come from, in order, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Denmark, Turkey and the USA. Numerous countries will also bring their first-time exhibitors, such as Ecuador, Faroe Islands, New Zealand, Romania, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and Hungary. Among professional visitors, high-profile buyers from around the world, such as large international

retail chains, are expected. This year's event is aiming for pre-Covid numbers and, in particular, with four months to go before the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the TUTTOGROCERY, TUTTOSEAFOOD and TUTTOFROZEN sectors are already with waiting lists with the participation of all the big names in the industry. Top player and strong foreign presence also in the TUTTOMEAT and TUTTODAIRY sectors.

Flanking the big names is also an important presence of Italian PDO and PGI consortiums and foreign collectives, which will enable an even more incisive collaborative supply chain approach. Italian consortia include, among others: Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, Finocchiona, Gorgonzola Cheese, Montasio Cheese, Mozzarella di Bufala Campana, Parmigiano Reggiano, Pecorino Romano, Pasta di Gragnano, Pecorino Toscano, and Prosciutto Toscano.

Also in the exhibition layout, new this year will be the GreenTrail: a transversal pathway identified by a specific visual identity and dedicated signage, which will help people discover green, plant-based, km zero, as well as healthy, rich-in-free-from products through all areas of the event and at the stands of all exhibitors, with a view to encouraging the fight against waste by facilitating healthier, sustainable and responsible food choices. The most active countries in the event in these segments include Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands.

Also on the topic of sustainability, this time focused on the fight against food waste, TUTTOFOOD 2023 will offer once again the TUTTOGOOD initiative in collaboration with several Italian Non-Profit organizations that over the years have made it possible to recover tons of food still usable at the end of the events.

TUTTOFOOD 2023 will take place at fieramilano from 8 to 11 May 2023.

For updated info: [www.tuttofood.it](http://www.tuttofood.it), [@TuttoFoodMilan](http://@TuttoFoodMilan).

## Youths learn game coding at workshop held by Studio 5/6

Young learners from Qatar have learned the foundations of coding during an experiential tech workshop held by Studio 5/6 – a Fab Lab established by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology – as part of the Doha Learning Days festival organised by Qatar Foundation (QF)'s global education think tank WISE.

During the interactive workshop, Grade 5 students from SEK International School programmed and created their own arcade games using written codes, which they then installed – with the help of Studio 5/6 tech instructors – in physical game consoles to practically test and try all their features.

Highlighting the importance of learning coding skills, Sabine El Kahi, a project manager at Studio 5/6, which is participating in Doha Learning Days for the second time, said: "At the beginning of the tech revolution, we were bombarded with final products that were so cool to have and play with. And we ended up becoming a community where technology is sold to us to consume."

"By teaching youth how to code and build the products they wish to have, we are introducing technology in that case as a tool to develop their own solutions," she said. "In this way, we move from consumer behaviour to being more productive societies."

"Coding also teaches analytical skills, troubleshooting and critical thinking while students collaborate, support each other and communicate," El Kahi added. "All these skills are important for us to live as humans together to solve the daily challenges we have, either in technology or not."



Speaking about on how the informal learning setting benefits students, Zaid Abusini, an ed-tech engineer at Studio 5/6 and the instructor of the workshop, said: "When children are engaged in a learning activity outside the classroom, it takes them out of their routine and comfort zone."

"It offers them a challenge that makes them start to ask questions, investigate, and even compete, which all gives dopamine to the mind," he added.

At the end of the workshop, students competed against each other using the games they had created.

"I'm so happy I had the chance to attend the coding workshop, as it allowed me to understand more about coding and using new tools, which will help me develop the Lego exhibition I'm currently working on at school," said student Zaid Hossam Samara.

Another participant, Khaled Badr, was mostly inspired by the fun and interactive setup of the workshop, saying: "In a classroom, we usually do research and tasks by ourselves. What I liked in this workshop is how we got to learn something new, while communicating with each other."

This year's edition of Doha Learning Days centred around youth empowerment and featured interactive workshops and practice-based informal learning activities focusing on career development, financial literacy, tech skills, well-being and the arts.

## MoECC stresses importance of preserving local environment

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has stressed the need to preserve the local environment by keeping it clean and protected, in line with the civilised conduct that characterises the Qatari people.

The MoECC urged desert-goers to clean after themselves and dispose of litter in its dedicated places, which are in abundance and placed in proximity.



The ministry added that its competent departments intensified the presence of indicative boards to aid visitors protect the environment, as well as to inform them of litter collection sites and vehicle tracks, to allow for the growth and flourishing of plants and shrubs.

The ministry noted that it has carried out extensive cleaning campaigns in numerous desert meadows across the country, cleaning litter left by desert-goers, in addition to rehabilitating those sites and returning them to their natural state. The ministry warned desert-goers against dumping waste in desert meadows and natural reserves, calling for good conduct, in compliance with Islamic teachings



which urge Muslims to maintain public cleanliness, and to protect the environment and places of public benefit. The MoECC indicated that it conducts several patrols throughout the day to record any violations. - QNA



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation



ITALIAN TRADE AGENCY



THE EXTRAORDINARY  
ITALIAN TASTE

# Qatar horses win in five Arabian Peninsula championship categories

◆ D Memzer, Maisa Al Nasser emerge champion Arabian Peninsula stallion and mare, respectively, at KIAHF 2023

**D** Memzer of Dubai Arabian Horse Stud, and Maisa Al Nasser, owned by Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser al-Thani, yesterday emerged as the champion stallion and mare, respectively, at the Arabian Peninsula Horse Show Championship held as part of the third Katara International Arabian Horse Festival (KIAHF 2023).

It was the final day of the championship and it was held at the Katara Beach arena.

GJ Faheem, owned by Glenn Jacobs, and Al Reeh Stud's Asayel Rashiq were the silver and bronze winners, respectively, of KIAHF 2023 Senior Stallions Championship (Class SSC).

Doha Stud's Zawahir Fila claimed silver in the Senior Mares Championship (Class SMC), while D Omnia of Dubai Arabian Horse Stud took bronze.

Qatar horses topped five of the six Arabian Peninsula categories with Ghazal Al Waab of Al Waab Farm winning the Junior Colts Championship (Class JCC); Alalalia Al Waab of Doha Stud being best in the Junior Fillies Championship (Class JFC); Maleeh Al Nasser, owned by Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser al-Thani, winning the Yearling Colts Championship (Class YCC); and Zaina Al Wajba of Al Wajba Stud claiming top honours in the Yearling Fillies Championship (Class YFC).

Abdulaziz al-Marzouqi, executive director of Dubai Arabian Horse Stud, expressed delight at D Memzer winning the stallions' championship, describing the competition as strong in the presence of the best breeds of horses in the world. Dubai Arabian Horse Stud participated with seven heads in the Arabian Peninsula Show of KIAHF 2023.

They won first place in the qualifiers, and all of them qualified for the final competitions with the horses achieving a number of medals.

Al-Marzouqi expected that the

32nd Qatar Championship for Purebred Arabian Horse Beauty, the Title Show to be held at KIAHF 2023 from February 8-11, to be equally strong and exciting.

Abdul Rahman al-Nassar, director of Doha Stud, expressed happiness that their horses won two golds and other medals in the championship. He also admired the high level of organisation of the festival.

The champion horses wowed all with their strength, elegance, grace and overall beauty. The contenders were called out by their owners and breeders to show elegance and poise as the horses lined up in the spectacular arena for the international jury to judge them.

From the beautiful eyes, to neck, their legs and tails, the mares and fillies were simply beautiful and it took some time before the jury could arrive at decisions in the various categories.

The stallions and colts displayed impressive body structure, muscular strength and movement.

Earlier, the competition entered higher levels with the Jr Fillies Championship Class, as brilliant fillies vied for the top honours. In the end, Alalalia Al Waab of Doha Stud won gold.

The silver was won by Kamar EGA of Althamer Stud while the bronze went to Leena Al Nasser of Al Nasser Stud.

Maleeh Al Nasser, of Al Nasser Stud and owned by Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser al-Thani, won gold in the Yearling Colts Championship (Class YCC).

The silver in the YCC class was claimed by Jalmoud Al Hilaliya of Barrak Yaqoud al-Hajri, while Rayyan Al Hazm of Al Hazm Stud won the bronze.

Zaina Al Wajba of Al Wajba Stud was adjudged as the gold winner in the Yearling Fillies Championship (Class YFC). Zaina Al Wajba had earlier stood first in the Yearling



Snapshots from the championships.



## THE RESULTS

### ■ Senior Stallions Championship (Class SSC)

Gold: D Memzer (Dubai Arabian Horse Stud); Silver: GJ Faheem (owned by Glenn Jacobs); and Bronze: Asayel Rashiq (Al Reeh Stud)

### ■ Senior Mares Championship (Class SMC)

Gold: Maisa Al Nasser (owned by Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser al-Thani); Silver: Zawahir Fila (Doha Stud); and Bronze: D Omnia (Dubai Arabian Horse Stud)

### ■ Junior Colts Championship (Class JCC)

Gold: Ghazal Al Waab of Al Waab Farm; Silver: D Khaillan (Dubai Arabian Horse Stud); and Bronze: Yazeed Al Rayyan (Al Rayyan Farm)

### ■ Junior Fillies Championship (Class JFC)

Gold: Alalalia Al Waab (Doha Stud); Silver: Kamar EGA (owned by Althamer Stud); and Bronze: Leena Al Nasser (Al Nasser Stud)

### ■ Yearling Colts Championship (Class YCC)

Gold: Maleeh Al Nasser (owned by Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser al-Thani); Silver: Jalmoud Al Hilaliya (owned by Barrak Yaqoud al-Hajri); and Bronze: Rayyan Al Hazm (Al Hazm Stud)

### ■ Yearling Fillies Championship (Class YFC)

Gold: Zaina Al Wajba (Al Wajba Stud); Silver: Lateen Al Danat (Al Danat Stud); and Bronze: Namaria El Aliya (Al Aliya Stud)

## QIC is platinum sponsor of Katara International Horse Festival 2023



Salem al-Mannai



The QIC tent at KIAHF 2023.



Commenting on the sponsorship, Salem al-Mannai, Group CEO, said: "Given QIC's position as a leading Qatari company, we recognise the crucial role we must play in elevating cultural platforms

horses and Qatar's rich equestrian heritage. That's why we are delighted to continue our support for the festival and, in turn, the country's place in the international cultural and sporting landscapes."

The third edition of the festival is taking place on the Katara Beach and includes three segments: the Arabian Peninsula Horse Show, the Auction and the Title Show.

The festival also includes a number of competitions and events such as the horse parade, equine stamps and photography exhibition, light show and other activities at the Katara esplanade and amphitheatre.

## Milaha Signs MoU with Oracle to Accelerate Digital Transformation Strategy, Holding Joint Innovative Activities on Cloud Services

**Q**atar Navigation Q.P.S.C ("Milaha"), the industry-leading provider of maritime and logistics solutions in Qatar, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oracle company to accelerate Milaha's digital transformation strategy and maximize cloud services adoption to optimize investment return.

The two parties also have agreed to explore future solutions for digital requirements, reactivate collaboration on emerging technologies, hold innovative joint activities on Cloud services, and extend the scope of cooperation and issues of common concerns.

Mr. Hamad Saeed Al-Hajri, EVP of Support Services at Milaha said: "In the framework of accelerating digital transformation strategy, we have



signed a smart technological and digital MoU with Oracle. The MoU will extend the cooperation between Milaha and Oracle to open new horizons in digital collaboration and enable both parties to exchange expertise in digital and emerging technologies."

To professionally realize the MoU's ends, both parties agreed to collaborate on reactivating innovative activities,

exchanging ideas on cloud services and emerging technologies to increase staff awareness and accelerate the technology adoption in Milaha.

Milaha and Oracle have also agreed to organize awareness workshops and educational seminars to highlight the importance and benefits of cloud services and their positive impacts in automating the business.

"Oracle's collaboration with Milaha is one of continued support across multiple avenues to support the company emerge as a true digital maritime and logistics leader in the region and globally", said Leopoldo Boado Lama, Senior Vice President - Business Applications, ECEMEA, Oracle. "As Oracle Fusion Cloud Applications help Milaha optimise business operations, make faster and better decisions, and outpace change, we are excited to kickstart this new initiative to support boost innovation at Milaha."

Meanwhile, Ms. Lalla Hanane Drissi Belgami, Oracle Country Leader at Qatar said: "Milaha is a vital economic catalyst for Qatar, and the global maritime and logistics industry. At Oracle we are committed to support the company achieve the most with Oracle Cloud, and this MoU further strengthens our collaboration while also paving the way for a long-term successful relationship."

Oracle offers integrated suites of applications plus secure, autonomous infrastructure in the Oracle Cloud.

The MoU's signature with Oracle reflects Milaha's keenness to strengthen technological cooperation and update its systems with future digital requirements.



## Troop raid damages Palestinian home



Palestinians inspect a damaged house following an Israeli morning raid at the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp in Jericho city in the occupied West Bank, yesterday. The Palestinian governor of Jericho accused Israel of putting the town under "siege" after last week's shooting at a restaurant, which had no casualties.

## Iran criticises N-watchdog chief after centrifuge report

AFP

Tehran

Iran slammed UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi after the agency raised concerns over covert changes to equipment at its Fordo uranium enrichment plant, state media said yesterday.

The criticism of Grossi comes after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director-general said he plans to visit Tehran in February for talks on getting it to increase co-operation over its activities, amid stalled negotiations to revive a landmark deal over Iran's nuclear programme.

The IAEA said in a confidential report seen by AFP on Wednesday that Iran had substantially modified an interconnection between two centrifuge clusters enriching uranium to up to 60% at Fordo Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP), without giving prior notice.

Iran said later an inspector had "inadvertently" reported the changes, and that Grossi had issued the report despite the matter being resolved – a response that the United States and its allies criticised as "inadequate".

"We gave a letter to the agency that an inspector...made a mistake and gave an incorrect report," Mohamed Eslami, the

head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA.

"But yet again the director-general of the agency released this issue to the media," he said, labelling it "unprofessional and unacceptable" behaviour.

"We hope that this practice will not be continued...because this is not acceptable for his reputation and the agency."

The IAEA had said that during an unannounced Fordo inspection on January 21 it found "two IR-6 centrifuge cascades...were interconnected in a way that was substantially different from the mode of operation declared by Iran to the

agency". Since late last year, the two cascades had been used to produce uranium enriched to up to 60%, the report to member states added.

In the report, Grossi expressed concern that Iran had "implemented a substantial change in the design information of FFEP in relation to the production of high enriched uranium without informing the agency in advance". In a statement on Friday, the United States, Britain, France and Germany said Iran's response to the report was "inadequate".

"Iranian claims that this action was carried out in error are inadequate," they said.

"We judge Iran's actions

## Nigeria tests voter accreditation ahead of this month's elections

AFP  
Lagos

Nigeria's electoral commission yesterday staged mock biometric accreditation for voters ahead of this month's presidential and parliamentary elections.

Nigerians go to the polls on February 25 to elect a successor to President Muhammadu Buhari who steps down after the maximum constitutionally-permissible two terms in office.

State governors and lawmakers will be elected two weeks later. Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and biggest economy, has a long history of electoral malpractice, fraud and violence.

Buhari, a 79-year-old former general, has promised free and fair elections. To promote fairness, credibility and transparency of the electoral process, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced a voter accreditation system at 2015 and



A voter points to his name on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) verification list during a mock accreditation exercise organised by the INEC at Enitan Primary School at Surulere in Lagos, Nigeria, yesterday.

2019 polls. But the system was plagued with shortcomings.

Yesterday, INEC held a mock voter accreditation process in selected polling stations nationwide to test the system's operation.

In Lagos, the commercial

capital and Nigeria's largest city, the exercise was staged in a handful of polling stations. Excited voters presented their poll cards and had their bio-

metrics taken by INEC officials who said they hoped the test would improve preparations for the general elections.

Former Lagos governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the ruling All Progressives Congress, vice president Atiku Abubakar of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party and ex-governor of southeastern Anambra state Peter Obi of Labour Party are the frontrunners.

## Pope meets victims of war on South Sudan peace pilgrimage

AFP  
Juba

Pope Francis yesterday urged South Sudan's leaders to restore "dignity" to the millions of their countrymen affected by conflict, renewing a forceful appeal for peace in the strife-torn nation.

On the second day of his visit to South Sudan, a nation that has been at war for around half its existence, Francis heard from children who have spent much of their lives on the run from violence.

The 86-year-old pontiff has been pushing South Sudan's leaders to heal divisions for the sake of a nation traumatised by the legacy of a five-year civil war that left 380,000 people dead.

A ceasefire was struck, but peace has eluded the world's newest nation, and Francis, who tried to broker peace between the rival parties, finds South Sudan beset with violence and despair.

Yesterday, Francis told a gathering in Juba of hundreds of people displaced by conflict that they deserved a better future. "Sadly, in this war-torn country, being a displaced person or a refugee has become a common and collective experience," he said.

"I want to renew my forceful and heartfelt appeal to end all conflict and to resume the peace process in a serious way, so that violence can end and people can return to living in dignity." There are 2.2mn internally displaced people (IDPs) living in South Sudan, and another 2mn outside the country.

It is the worst refugee cri-

sis in Africa. Those displaced in South Sudan live in overcrowded, squalid and underfunded camps under the protection of the United Nations, too fearful to venture out, or with nowhere left to return.

Francis said there was "no room for further delay" in achieving peace for all in South Sudan, with children being born every day in these camps.

"They have no memory of what it means to have a home; they are losing their connection with their native land, their roots and their traditions," he said, describing them as "the seed of a new South Sudan". "The future cannot lie in refugee camps," he said to applause.

John Wiyual, who has lived at a sprawling IDP camp outside Juba since 2014, said he did not trust government assurances that the country was safe. "They say there is peace – but there is killing in all states," the 42-year-old said.

"The Pope can listen to us. We are citizens, and we need peace."

Around 50,000 people turned up for a joint prayer yesterday evening by Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, who are also on the trip. The Pope will wrap up his trip today with a mass expected to be joined by thousands of people at the John Garang mausoleum – built in honour of South Sudan's rebel hero who died in 2005.

At his first event yesterday, the wheelchair-bound Pope met South Sudan's religious leaders, who work with the poor and marginalised and are deeply respected in the devout country.

## Ethiopia govt says sending funds to cash-strapped Tigray

AFP

Nairobi

The Ethiopian government said yesterday it is sending the equivalent of more than \$90mn to Tigray's capital as it starts to restore banking services to the war-battered region.

The announcement by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's national security adviser Redwan Hussein came a day after a landmark meeting between government and Tigrayan officials to discuss the status of the peace process.

"As per the decision passed by PM Abiy, National Bank has begun sending \$5bn Birr to Mekelle to be dispensed starting Monday," Redwan said on Twitter.

Redwan also said that as of yesterday, the national carrier Ethiopian Airlines was increasing its flights to the region to five a day from three.

On Friday, Abiy held his first face-to-face meeting with leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) since a peace deal was agreed in November to end two years of devastating conflict in northern Ethiopia.

Under the terms of the pact,

the TPLF agreed to disarm and re-establish the authority of the federal government in return for the restoration of access to Tigray, which was largely cut off from the outside world during the war.

Since the deal, there has been some resumption of aid deliveries to Tigray, which has long faced dire shortages of food, fuel, cash and medicines.

The war that erupted in November 2020 has displaced more than 2mn people and left millions more in need of humanitarian aid, while the US has put the number of dead at as many as 500,000.

## Two killed in attack on Ethiopian church

AFP

Nairobi

Two young Orthodox Christians were killed in an attack on a church in southern Ethiopia yesterday, according to a report by a religious media outlet.

It was not possible to independently verify the report.

Abune Henok called on the authorities in Oromia, also the largest geographic region in Ethiopia, to stop the "persecution" of Orthodox Christians, according to the TMC.

Heartwrenching", according to the Church-affiliated Tewahedo Media Center (TMC). It said two people had been killed, and another four had sustained heavy injuries, accusing security forces of carrying out the assault in the Oromia city that lies about 250 kilometres south of Addis Ababa.

It was not possible to independently verify the report.

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The unity of the Church is under threat after the move by the rebel clergy last month.

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Under the terms of the pact,

## East African leaders hold summit on DR Congo unrest

AFP

Nairobi

East African leaders were holding a regional summit in Burundi yesterday to discuss ways of calming the raging conflict in eastern DR Congo.

The talks are hosted by the seven-nation East Africa Community, which is leading mediation efforts to end the fighting in the restive east of the giant central African nation.

A resurgent rebel group known as the M23 has taken swathes of land in the mineral-rich region and is still advancing despite a peace roadmap reached in the Angolan capital in July last year.

Among those at the meeting in the lakeside economic hub of Bujumbura are Congo-

ese President Felix Tshisekedi and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, which is accused of backing M23 in a conflict that has exacerbated regional tensions.

EAC chair and Burundi President Evariste Ndayishimiye said on Twitter the meeting would evaluate the situation with "a view of coming up with decisions that will ameliorate the security situation & facilitate the restoration of peace and security in eastern DR Congo". The Congolese presidency said the Luanda roadmap demanded the "effective and definitive withdrawal" of M23 and Rwanda Defence Force troops from occupied zones before January 15.

"The terrorist troops from M23 have never left these zones, on the contrary the M23 and its allies have expanded their areas of occupation," it

said on Facebook. Kagame is on his first visit to Burundi since 2013, with relations long frayed between the Great Lakes neighbours.

The EAC meeting is taking place shortly after a visit by Pope Francis to Kinshasa, where he met victims of the conflict and condemned the "inhumane violence" and "brutal atrocities" taking place.

Militias have plagued the mineral-rich region for decades, many of them a legacy of regional wars that flared during the 1990s and the early 2000s.

Since November 2021, the M23 has seized chunks of territory in the east and come within kilometres of its main commercial hub Goma.

The EAC decided to create a military force to pacify eastern Congo last year, with the first

troops arriving in Goma in November.

The DRC's accusations that

Rwanda is backing the M23 has been supported by UN experts, the United States and other Western countries but Kigali denies the charge.

Tensions between the two countries were inflamed last week when Rwandan forces opened fire at a Congolese fighter jet they said had violated Rwandan airspace.

Kinshasa described it as an act of war."The summit also signals a possible rapprochement between Burundi and Rwanda, with their two leaders greeting each other warmly in Bujumbura.

In 2020, Kagame urged the then newly-elected Ndayishimiye to reset diplomatic ties but his overture was rejected as "hypocritical".

In a statement ahead of the

EAC

summit, Kenya's President William Ruto said the international community needed to act to protect Congo's resources, a key source of the myriad conflicts.

"The moment is long over-

due for the international com-

munity to most vigilantly audit

industrial supply chains and

make sure that global produc-

tion and consumption honour

Congolese resource sover-

ignty and do not profit out of

conflict and human suffering," he said.

The DRC is awash with min-

erals and precious stones, from

gold, diamonds and coltan to

tin, copper and cobalt.

But the decades of war

and chronic mismanagement

means that little of the enor-

mous wealth trickles down to

the population of some 100mn

people.

President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Felix Tshisekedi is greeted by Burundi's President Evariste Ndayishimiye (right) as he arrives for the extraordinary Summit of East African Community Heads of State at the state house in Bujumbura, Burundi, yesterday.



## Asean chair Indonesia to intensify talks on code for South China Sea

Reuters  
Jakarta

Indonesia plans to intensify talks with China and other Southeast Asian countries to finalise a code of conduct (COC) for the disputed South China Sea, its foreign minister said yesterday, amid escalating tensions in the strategic waterway.

Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi was speaking in Jakarta at the close of a meeting between foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), the 10-member regional bloc chaired by Indonesia this year.

"Asean's outlook on the Indo-Pacific was central to the discussion," she said. "We also discussed about the COC, the commitment of members to conclude the negotiation of the COC as soon as possible."

Negotiations on the COC – a proposed framework to help tackle territorial and maritime disputes in the waterway – have stalled for years as some members' states prioritised bilateral ties with China over a regional consensus.

Indonesia is preparing to host a round of negotiations on the COC this year, the first taking place in March, the foreign minister said.

China claims jurisdiction over almost the entire South China Sea based on its U-shaped "nine-dash line", a boundary found to have no legal basis by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague in 2016.

Earlier this week, the Philippines granted the United States greater access to its military bases, in part due to Beijing's extensive claims in the resource-rich maritime area.

Asean members – the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei – all have overlapping claims with China in the strategic waterway.

Indonesia is not an official claimant but has faced pushback from China over its exploration of oil and gas reserves in the North Natuna Sea.

Last month the country sent a warship to the area to monitor a lingering Chinese coast guard vessel.

"New approaches" would be explored by all Asean member states and Chinese counterparts to make progress on the COC, Sidharto R Suryodipuro, director of Asean co-operation at Indonesia's foreign ministry, said on the sidelines of the event.

"What's important is that all agree that this should be an outlook that is implementable and in accordance with international law," he said.

## Asean urges Myanmar junta to implement peace plan

Southeast Asian ministers at the end of two-day talks in Indonesia yesterday urged Myanmar's junta to implement a five-point peace plan agreed two years ago to create a path towards ending the country's political crisis.

Indonesia – Southeast Asia's biggest economy – is the chair of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) for 2023 and will host the bloc's annual leaders' meetings later this year.

However, the ministerial meeting in Jakarta has been overshadowed by the situation in Myanmar, which has been in turmoil since the army seized power in February 2021.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said Jakarta proposed an implementation plan to Asean members for the "five-point consensus" (5PC) agreed with the junta in April 2021 that called for an end to violence and dialogue between the military and rebels.

"Broad support was received from all member states to this plan," she told reporters at the end of talks, without providing details of when and how they hoped the agreement would be implemented.

"This plan is very important for Asean, in particular the chair, as a guidance to address the situation in Myanmar in a united manner," Marsudi said. "It shows a strong unity of Asean members to implement the 5PC." -AFP

# US media, politicians using balloon incident 'as pretext to smear China'

## US says second Chinese balloon detected over Latin America

Reuters/AFP  
Washington/Beijing

important, "especially in dealing with some unexpected situations in a calm and reliable manner."

The statement further added with regards to Blinken's trip, which was to have begun today and had been widely publicised in the United States: "As a matter of fact, neither China nor the United States has announced any visit. It is the United States' own decision to release the relevant information and we respect that."

The Chinese balloon was tracked flying across the United States in what Washington called a "clear violation" of US sovereignty.

Military leaders considered shooting down the high-altitude balloon on Wednesday but eventually recommended against this to President Joe Biden because of the safety risk from debris, officials said.

The Pentagon said on Friday that another Chinese balloon was observed over Latin America, without saying where exactly.

"We are seeing reports of a balloon transiting Latin America. We now assess (that) it is another surveillance balloon," Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Patrick Ryder said.

White House spokesperson Karine

Jean-Pierre said Biden was briefed on Tuesday about the balloon flight over the United States and there was an administration "consensus that it was not appropriate to travel to the People's Republic of China at this time."

China expressed regret that an "airship" used for civilian meteorological and other scientific purposes had strayed into US airspace.

Jean-Pierre said the US administration was aware of China's statement "but the presence of this balloon in our airspace, it is a clear violation of our sovereignty as well as international law. It is unacceptable this occurred!"

On Friday, Ryder, the Pentagon spokesman, said the balloon had changed course and was floating eastward about 60,000' (18,300m) above the central United States and demonstrating a capability to manoeuvre.

He said that it would likely be over the country for a few more days.

Commercial forecaster AccuWeather said the balloon would potentially leave the United States and move over the Atlantic this weekend.

The Pentagon's disclosure about the balloon's manoeuvrability directly challenges China's assertion about it being blown off course.

At a news conference with South Korea's visiting foreign minister on Friday, Blinken said he had told Wang Yi, director of China's Central Commission for

Foreign Affairs, that the incident on the eve of his trip was an "irresponsible act" by China, but Washington remained committed to engagement and he would visit when conditions allowed.

Blinken said he would not put a date on when he might go to China and the focus was on resolving the current incident.

"The first step is ... getting the surveillance asset out of our air space," he said, adding that Washington would maintain open lines of communication with China.

According to Chinese state news agency Xinhua, Wang said yesterday that he and Blinken discussed the incident "in a calm and professional manner".

"China is a responsible country and has always strictly abided by international law," Xinhua quoted Wang as telling Blinken.

"We do not accept any groundless speculation and hype," he said, calling both sides to "avoid misjudgments and manage divergence".

The Republican chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, Michael McCaul, meanwhile said that the balloon should never have been allowed in US airspace and could have been shot down over water.

The postponing of Blinken's trip, which had been agreed to in November

by Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, is a blow to those who saw it as an overdue opportunity to stabilise an increasingly fractious relationship.

The last visit by a US secretary of state was in 2017.

China is keen for a stable US relationship so it can focus on its economy, battered by the now-abandoned zero-Covid-19 policy and neglected by foreign investors alarmed by what they see as a return of state intervention in the market.

In recent months Chinese leader Xi has met world leaders, seeking to re-establish ties and settle disagreements.

The Pentagon's Ryder told reporters on Thursday that the balloon was at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and did not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground.

One US official added that it was assessed to have "limited additive value from an intelligence collection perspective".

Another official said on Thursday the flight path would carry the balloon over a number of sensitive sites, but did not give details.

Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana is home to 150 intercontinental ballistic missile silos.

China has often complained about surveillance by the United States, including its deployment of ships or planes near Chinese military exercises.

## Shark kills teenager in Western Australia

AFP  
Sydney

A shark killed a 16-year-old girl apparently jumped into a river in Western Australia to swim near a pod of dolphins, officials said.

The girl was bitten by an unknown species of shark during an outing with friends on the Swan River in the Perth suburb of North Fremantle, state government and police officials said.

She was pulled from the water but died from her injuries at the scene after efforts to revive her failed, said Paul Robinson, acting police inspector for the Fremantle district.

"It's very early on, what we're being advised is that she was with friends on the river," he told a news conference. "They were on jet skis. Possibly a pod of dolphins were being seen nearby and the young female jumped in to swim nearby the dolphins."

Describing it as a "very, very traumatic incident", Robinson said the family of the girl, who was from Perth, was "absolutely devastated by the news".

Experts had advised that it was unusual for sharks to be found in that part of the river, he said.

The state government warned people to take "additional caution" in the Swan River in North Fremantle and to abide by any beach closures.

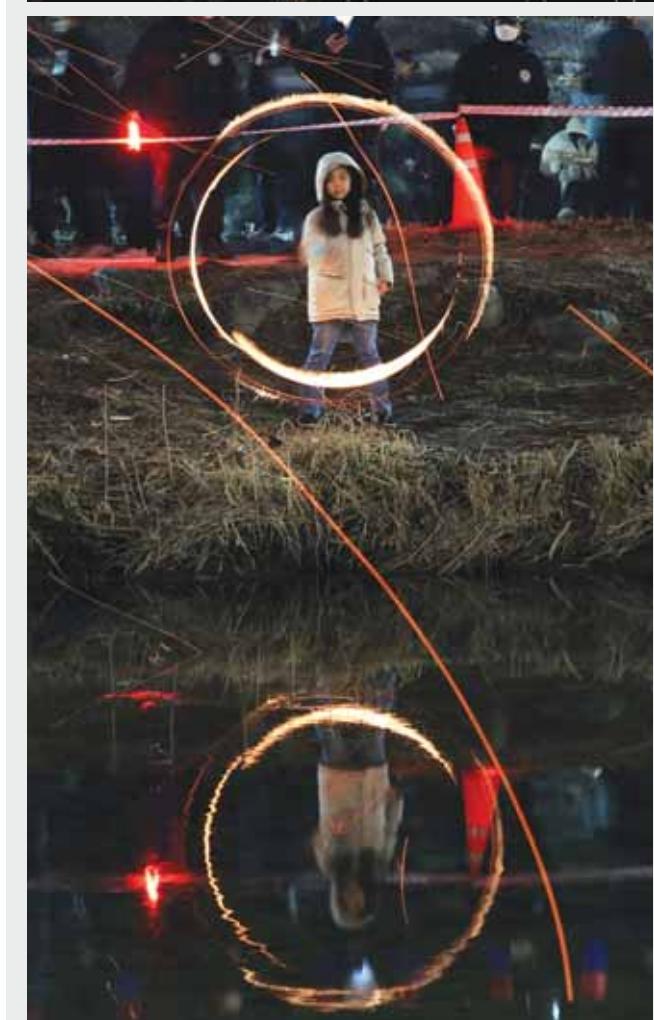
It was the first fatal shark attack in the Swan River since a 13-year-old boy was killed in January 1923 in the Perth suburb of Claremont, according to reports at the time and a database run by Taronga Conservation Society.



### Active Asia

Three base jumpers (above) join hands after leaping off the Kuala Lumpur Tower at night during the annual KL Tower International Jump Malaysia 2023, in Kuala Lumpur.

Right: A man from Vietnam's ethnic Pa Then group jumps on burning coal during a fire dance ritual in Tuyen Quang province.



A girl whirs a can filled with burning wood chips ahead of the 'Jeongwol Daebooreum' holiday at a park in Seoul.



A man performs during a Lunar New Year parade, held for the first time following a three-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, in the Chinatown area of Yokohama.

# Sri Lanka weighs 'failures' on independence milestone

AFP  
Colombo

Sri Lanka marked 75 years since independence with a sombre military parade yesterday, as its president urged reflection on past "errors and failures" at a time of national crisis.

Since the 1948 end of British rule, the island nation has spent much of its history at war with itself, including a decades-long Tamil separatist rebellion that claimed up to 100,000 lives and two deadly communist insurrections.

Its 22mn people are also still reeling from the hardships triggered by an unprecedented economic collapse last year that brought months of food and fuel shortages.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took office last July at the peak of the resulting political unrest, said that yesterday's anniversary came at "an extremely critical and challenging time".

"It presents an opportunity for all to review our strengths and gains as a nation but also to rectify our errors and failures," he said in a statement.

Wickremesinghe, flanked by top military brass, watched the hour-long procession of soldiers and army vehicles along a seafront promenade in the capital Colombo, inaugurated by ceremonial artillery fire but boycotted by opposition parties.

For several months last year the boulevard was the site of a protest encampment erected by Sri Lankans outraged over the island's economic calamity and

mismanagement by its leaders.

The protest movement peaked in July when a massive crowd stormed the residence of Wickremesinghe's predecessor and chased him into temporary exile, from where he issued his resignation.

Wickremesinghe ordered security forces to dismantle the camp hours after he was sworn into office and has since set about repairing Sri Lanka's ruined finances.

His government has hiked taxes and is negotiating with international creditors including India and China to clear the way for an urgently needed International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout.

"I am confident that even at this juncture we will pool our energies ... to rise up from the current economic abyss

and build back stronger," Wickremesinghe's statement said.

However, the impact of the crisis is still being acutely felt, with Wickremesinghe saying last week that the economy had contracted by up to 11%

"Sri Lanka is a bankrupt nation, so we have to start from zero now," political analyst Ranga Kalansooriya told AFP ahead of the independence anniversary.

The economic collapse is the latest of several calamities that have pockmarked Sri Lanka's history since independence.

Nearly 31,000 people were killed when the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami struck the tropical nation's coastline.

A series of co-ordinated religious extremist attacks on hotels and churches

during Easter Sunday services in 2019 killed 270 people.

Rights groups say that up to 40,000 civilians were killed in the final weeks of the decades-long civil war during an army assault that crushed the remnants of the Tamil Tigers leadership.

Sri Lanka has resisted international calls for a probe into war crimes allegations and later governments have been accused of abetting continued discrimination against the island's Tamil minority.

Kalansooriya said Sri Lanka had yet to heal the wounds from the long conflict and its political leaders had failed to bring reconciliation.

"We needed a Mandela in Sri Lanka," he said, "but what happened in the aftermath was entirely different."



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## Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- editor@gulf-times.com
- 44350478 (News),
- 44466404 (Sport),
- 44466636 (Home delivery)
- 44350474
- facebook.com/gulf-times
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## GULF TIMES

## Fed may resort to few more hikes before interest rate hold

The US central bank Federal Reserve delivered a 25bps or 0.25% expected interest rate hike on February 1, but the debate has now turned to when Fed will stop rate hikes.

Many economists say the global financial system is closer to see the end of the tightening cycle, but there will likely be an extended pause in policy before rates are cut next year.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell, however noted more evidence of ebbing inflation was needed before the tightening cycle could see an end.

The rate hikes imposed by the Fed since March last year have now totalled 4.5 percentage points, with the policy rate now in a range between 4.50% and 4.75%, the highest since 2007.

That is reflected in an array of consumer borrowing costs from home mortgages to car loans around the world.

In announcing its latest policy decision, the US central bank scaled back to a quarter-percentage-point increase after a year of larger hikes and swept aside in its statement the long list of reasons, from war to the pandemic, that were driving prices

higher to say simply that "inflation has eased."

Yet, policymakers also projected "ongoing increases" in borrowing costs would be needed, a still open-ended commitment that did not yet pinpoint when the rate hikes might stop, and pushed back against an expectation in financial markets that the Fed would pause soon and, indeed, cut rates later this year.

Powell said policymakers foresee a "couple" more rate increases from the new target range of 4.5% to 4.75%, already up from near zero levels last March.

But he also suggested officials are open to adjusting their plans if price pressures cool as fast as investors expect.

And when asked about the easing in conditions in financial markets – which could make it hard for the central bank to curb high inflation – he didn't sound particularly alarmed.

Fed officials have been undertaking the most aggressive tightening campaign since the 1980s to quell the strongest inflation in a generation.

The 25 basis-point move they delivered on February 1 was moderation from a half-point hike in December and four jumbo-sized 75 basis point increases prior to that.

Bloomberg Economics said: "Soft inflation data in recent months haven't been convincing enough for the Fed to consider pausing its rate-hike campaign just yet."

By continuing to refer to "ongoing" rate hikes, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) is hinting that they expect at least another two 25-basis point hikes, affirming their view of a terminal rate at 5.25.

The Fed's favourite gauge slowed to a year-on-year rate of 5% in December from 7% in June. Bloomberg says policymakers will have at least two more months of inflation data and two more updates on the labour market before they meet again in March, and at least one more month of reports before they meet in May.

In the GCC region, the central banks of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE matched the 25bps interest rate hike delivered by the US Fed, but Qatar Central Bank did not follow the Fed's move.

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# Preempting a generative Artificial Intel monopoly

**Originally a nonprofit, OpenAI is now a for-profit corporation valued at \$29bn. While it has pledged to cap its profits, its loose-fitting structure limits investors' returns to 10,000%**

By Diane Coyle  
Cambridge

**C**hatGPT, the new artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot developed by the San Francisco-based research laboratory OpenAI, has taken the world by storm. Already hailed as a milestone in the evolution of so-called large language models (LLMs), the world's most famous generative AI raises important questions about who controls this nascent market and whether these powerful technologies serve the public interest.

OpenAI's release of ChatGPT last November quickly became a global sensation, attracting millions of users and allegedly killing the student essay. It is able to answer questions in conversational English (along with some other languages) and perform other tasks, such as writing computer code.

The answers that ChatGPT provides are fluent and compelling. Despite its facility for language, however, it can sometimes make mistakes or generate factual falsehoods, a phenomenon known among AI researchers as "hallucination."

The fear of fabricated references has recently led several scientific journals to ban or restrict the use of ChatGPT and similar tools in academic papers. But while the chatbot might struggle with fact-checking, it is seemingly less prone to error when it comes to programming and can easily write efficient and elegant code.

But the massive, immensely costly, and rapidly increasing computing power

needed to train and maintain generative AI tools represents a substantial barrier to entry that could lead to market concentration. The potential for monopolisation, together with the risk of abuse, underscores the urgent need for policymakers to consider the implications of this technological breakthrough.

Fortunately, competition authorities in the United States and elsewhere seem to be aware of these risks. The United Kingdom's communications regulator, Ofcom, launched an investigation of the cloud computing market, on which all large AI models rely, late last year, while the US Federal Trade Commission is currently investigating Amazon Web Services (AWS), which, along with Google and Microsoft Azure, dominates the market. These investigations could have far-reaching implications for AI-powered services, which rely on enormous economies of scale.

To be sure, bad actors could abuse these tools for various illicit schemes, such as sophisticated online scams or writing malware. But the technology's prospective applications, from coding to protein discovery, offer cause for optimism. McKinsey, for example, estimates that 50-60% of companies have already incorporated AI-powered tools like chatbots into their operations. By expanding the use of LLMs, companies could improve efficiency and productivity.

Even if for-profit models become dominant, however, open-source competitors could chip away at their market share, just as Mozilla's Firefox did to Google's Chrome browser and Android did to Apple's mobile

operating system, iOS. Then again, cloud computing giants like AWS and Microsoft Azure could also leverage generative AI products to increase their market power.

As was debated at the recent World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, generative AI is too powerful and potentially transformative to leave its fate in the hands of a few dominant companies. But while there is a clear demand for regulatory intervention, the accelerated pace of technological advance leaves governments at a huge disadvantage.

To ensure that the public interest is represented at the technological frontier, the world needs a public alternative to for-profit LLMs. Democratic governments could form a multilateral body that would develop means to prevent fakeery, trolling, and other online harms, like a CERN for generative AI. Alternatively, they could establish a publicly-funded competitor with a different business model and incentives to foster competition between the two models.

Whichever path global policymakers choose, standing in place is not an option. It is abundantly clear that leaving it to the market to decide how these powerful technologies are used, and by whom, is a very risky proposition. — Project Syndicate

• Diane Coyle, Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, is the author, most recently, of *Cogs and Monsters: What Economics Is, and What It Should Be*.



# From presidential palace to KFC: Bolsonaro's peculiar exile in the US

By Gerard Martinez, AFP  
Doral (United States)

**H**e used to preside over Latin America's largest country and its 214mn people. Now Brazil's former far-right leader lives in a small Florida town and eats alone in a fast-food restaurant.

Bolsonaro, 67, has found an unusual refuge in the United States, where he arrived in late December, several days before his supporters stormed government buildings in Brasilia in an attempt to overturn the election victory of his rival, leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

At home, Bolsonaro is being investigated over his alleged in-

volvement in the unrest, which he denies.

From the lavish presidential palace, Bolsonaro, a political soulmate of former US president Donald Trump, went on to live in a small community of nearly identical houses near the Disney World resort.

In his first six weeks in the United States, Bolsonaro has kept a low profile, staying at the Orlando home of Brazilian former martial arts champion Jose Aldo, making a trip to a local supermarket and being photographed eating fried chicken alone at a KFC fast-food restaurant.

On Friday, the man who until recently commanded huge crowds in his home country, spoke to some 400 supporters

during an event organised by the American conservative organisation Turning Point USA at the Trump National hotel in the city of Doral, near Miami.

It was unclear if Trump himself played any part in organising the event.

#### More popular than ever'

The meeting had the vibe of an election rally. Bolsonaro spoke passionately about fulfilling his duties to his country – except that the man dubbed the 'Trump of the Tropics' was in Florida, several thousand miles away from his homeland.

"There is no greater satisfaction than that of having fulfilled a duty," Bolsonaro said of his presidency. He spoke before an

audience dressed in elegant suits and dresses as well as the yellow-and-green shirts of the Brazilian soccer team.

Three days earlier, Bolsonaro spoke in the ballroom of a shopping mall restaurant in Orlando at an event put together by the Brazilian expatriate community in Florida.

Bolsonaro, who had repeatedly cast doubt on Lula's narrow victory in an October 30 runoff, again questioned his election loss, calling himself "more popular than ever."

"Many people are still shaken by what happened in the elections.... But we will face this moment and, God willing, we will win together," he said.

But Bolsonaro added that he



Jair Bolsonaro speaks during the Turning Point USA event at the Trump National Doral Miami resort on Friday in Doral, Florida. (AFP)

regretted "what some inconsistent people did" during the unrest.

The crowd was welcoming at both Florida events, with supporters hugging and taking selfies with him and cheering him on.

#### What next?

Bolsonaro faces an uncertain future.

After publicly declaring his intention to return to Brazil at the

end of January, Bolsonaro earlier this week applied for a new visa to be able to stay in the United States for six more months.

And one of his sons, Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, suggested last week that the former president had no return date.

"It may be tomorrow, or six months from now, or he may never come back," he told reporters. On Tuesday, at the Orlando restaurant, Bolsonaro neverthe-

less promised to "remain active in Brazilian politics." He didn't elaborate.

Now it remains to be seen whether Bolsonaro maintains a low profile or whether he tries to boost his standing in the United States.

"I've always been a huge admirer of the American people – their liberties, their patriotism and their love of the flag," he told the gathering on Friday.

## Brazil sinks rusting old French aircraft carrier in Atlantic

By Anthony Boadle, Reuters  
Brasilia

**B**razil sank a decommissioned aircraft carrier in the Atlantic Ocean off its northeast coast, the Brazilian Navy said, despite warnings from environmentalists that the rusting 1960s French-built ship would pollute the sea and the marine food chain.

The 32,000-tonne carrier had been floating offshore for three months since Turkey refused its entry to be scrapped there because it was an environmental hazard and the ship was towed back to Brazil.

The carrier was scuttled in a "planned and controlled sinking" late on Friday, the Navy said in a statement, that would "avoid logistical, operational, environmental and economic losses to the Brazilian state," it said.

The hull of the São Paulo was sunk in Brazilian jurisdictional waters 350km off the coast where the sea is 5,000m deep, a location chosen to mitigate the impact on fishing and ecosystems, the Navy said.

Federal public prosecutors and Greenpeace had asked the Brazilian government to stop the sinking, saying it was "toxic" due to dangerous materials, including 9 tonnes of asbestos used in paneling.

"The sinking of the aircraft carrier São Paulo throws tons of asbestos, mercury, lead and other highly toxic substances into the seabed," Greenpeace said in a statement. It accused Brazil's Navy of neglecting the protection

of the oceans. The Clemenceau-class aircraft carrier served the French Navy for four decades as the Foch, capable of carrying 40 war planes.

Defence expert and former foreign policy congressional staffer Pepe Rezende said the carrier was bought by the Brazilian Navy for just \$12mn in 1998 but needed an \$80mn refit that was never done.

After the carrier was decommissioned, Turkish Marine recycling company Sök Denizcilik Tic Sti bought the hull for \$10.5mn, but had to tow it back across the Atlantic when Turkey barred entry to its shipyard.

Brazil's Navy said it asked the company to repair the carrier at a Brazilian shipyard, but after an inspection showed it to be taking on water and was at risk of sinking, the Navy banned the ship from entering Brazilian ports. It then decided to sink the São Paulo at high sea.

The company's legal representative in Brazil, Zilan Costa e Silva, said that disposal of the carrier was the Brazilian state's responsibility under the 1989 Basel Convention on the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes.

Greenpeace said the sinking violated the Basel Convention, the London Convention on the prevention of Marine pollution, and the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants.

"The Brazilian Navy chose to harm the environment and lose millions of dollars rather than allow public inspection of the ship," Greenpeace said, calling the sinking the "biggest breach of chemical and waste agreements ever committed by a country."



This file photo taken on February 10, 1994 shows an aerial view of the then French aircraft carrier "Foch", accompanied by the boat cistern "Meuse" at the Adriatic Sea. The Brazilian Navy sank an old French aircraft carrier that was out of service on Friday in the Atlantic Ocean. (AFP)

## Pakistan blocks Wikipedia over 'blasphemous content'

AFP  
Islamabad

**W**ikipedia was blocked in Pakistan yesterday after authorities censored the website for hosting "blasphemous content" in the latest blow to digital rights in the deeply conservative nation.

Blasphemy is a sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, and social media giants Facebook and YouTube have previously been banned for publishing content deemed sacrilegious. The online encyclopedia had been blocked across the country on Friday "after it failed to respond to our repeated correspondence over removal of the blasphemous content and meet the deadline", Malahat Obaid, a spokesman for the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority, told AFP yesterday.

The PTA had earlier in the week given Wikipedia a 48-hour ultimatum to remove material,

without publicly specifying its exact objections. "They did remove some of the material but not all," Obaid said. "It will remain blocked until they remove all the objectionable material." An AFP reporter in Pakistan was not able to access the site from a mobile phone yesterday. The Wikimedia Foundation – the non-profit fund managing Wikipedia – said the block "denies the fifth most populous nation in the world access to the largest free knowledge repository". "If it continues, it will also deprive everyone access to Pakistan's knowledge, history, and culture," a statement said.

Free speech campaigners have highlighted what they say is a pattern of rising government censorship of Pakistan's printed and electronic media.

"There's just been a concerted effort to exert greater control over content on the internet," said digital rights activist Usama Khilji.

"The main purpose is to silence any dissent," he told AFP.

A fire broke out at an overloaded electrical substation in the Ukrainian port city of Odesa yesterday, leaving nearly 500,000 people without power in a new blow to the country's ailing energy grid that has been hammered by Russian strikes for months. Officials warned that repairs could take weeks. The government said it would appeal to Turkey for help and ordered the energy ministry's stocks of high-power generators to be sent to the city. The CEO of the state grid operator, Volodymyr Kudrytsky, said critical equipment that had already been damaged several times by Russian missile strikes burst into flames when it could no longer "withstand the load". "(The equipment) has been struck so many times that its state leaves much to be desired," Kudrytsky told a briefing in Odesa, a city on the Black Sea. He any further Russian missile or drone attacks could make the situation even worse. "We will do everything we can for the improvement of the power supply situation to take days rather than weeks," he said. Since October, Moscow has waged a campaign of massive missile attacks on energy infrastructure. Moscow says the strikes aim to reduce Ukraine's ability to fight; Kyiv says they have no military purpose and are intended to hurt civilians.

"The situation is difficult, the scale of the accident is significant, it is impossible to quickly restore power supply," Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal wrote on Telegram.

Odesa regional governor Maksym Marchenko said practically all of the city had lost power after the incident, and that as of Saturday afternoon about 500,000 people faced outages.

That figure represents about half of Odesa's pre-war population of one million, when it was Ukraine's third largest city.

"Today's power supply (availability) allows to supply the city and the district about 40 or 45%, but if we factor in critical infrastructure, then of course very little is left for ordinary citizens," Kudrytsky said.

## 5 die in Austria, Switzerland avalanches

Avalanches in Austria and Switzerland have left five people dead, leading officials to warn on Saturday of the risks posed by particularly unstable snow cover. Three of those killed were visiting Austria's Alpine regions. "One winter sports enthusiast was killed in an avalanche in Kaltenbach," a police spokesman told AFP, without giving further details of the accident in the small Alpine village. Austrian news agency APA reported that the victim was a 17-year-old New Zealander who was skiing off-piste. On Friday, a 32-year-old Chinese man, who was also said to be skiing away from the designated routes, died in an avalanche in the resort of Soelden. A third victim was found dead yesterday after being reported missing the previous day. APA reported that the man, in his 50s, had died in the Kleinwalsertal valley on Austria's border with Germany. In Switzerland, two off-piste skiers were killed by an avalanche yesterday morning in the southeastern canton of Graubuenden, the cantonal police said. A third member of the group was caught up in the flow of snow but managed to escape unharmed, local police said in a statement.

## Endangered Monarch butterflies face perilous storm

By Julie Jammot, AFP  
Santa Cruz

**A**s devastating storms pounded California, nature lovers feared for endangered Monarch butterflies that winter there as part of a seemingly magical migration pattern. The colourfully winged insects that travel vast distances over the course of generations have been closely watched in the US state since they neared extinction just three years ago.

As the sun rose one January morning, volunteers began counting Monarch butterflies, finding them clustered atop cypress and eucalyptus trees in various sites along the California coast.

The butterflies huddled in clusters of gray colonies until one spread its wings to reveal the orange spots for which they are known. The sight provided a bit of reassurance for Stephanie Turcotte Edenholm, who counted more than a thousand Monarchs at a sanctuary in the California coastal town of Pacific Grove.

The educator spent much of the morning explaining the lives of the butterflies to young school students. They got to watch as dozens of butterflies took flight, believing – mistakenly – that the mild temperature signaled the end of winter.

"It's too early for them to get so agitated, they're using up their fat reserves," Edenholm fretted.

She worried, too, that they would mate and the females would fly off in search of milkweed plants to lay eggs on. Milkweed is all that baby caterpillars eat once the eggs hatch, but it was too early in winter for the plants to be growing. Volunteers counted more than 330,000 "western Monarch" butterflies at the end of November, according to the Xerces Society conservation group.

#### Pesticides and climate change

That number came as a relief compared to the 2,000 butterflies counted at the end of 2020, and an encouraging step up from the 250,000 or so butterflies tallied in 2021.

But the ranks of butterflies were far from the millions observed in the 1980s, due to threats including habitat loss, pesticides and climate change, according to Xerces.

The Monarch was added last year to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of threatened species and Xerces has asked the US Fish and Wildlife Service to place Monarchs on its endangered list.

Such a designation would help Monarch defenders fight real estate developers out to raze trees or build on terrain needed by migrating butterflies.

The question of whether to protect Monarchs is a philosophical one, since the insects are known more for incredible migrations than being crucial for pollinating crops or flowers,



Monarch butterflies are seen in the trees as they overwinter in and around the Pacific Grove Monarch Sanctuary in Pacific Grove, California. (AFP)

according to Xerces biologist Emma Pelton. "We wouldn't lose human crops or wild plants in particular if the Monarchs disappeared," Pelton said.

But the world would lose butterflies "that perform a really incredible migration, and that people are very attached to, emotionally and culturally, throughout North America."

Some species of Monarchs travel thousands of miles, from Canada to Mexico, while the lifespan of any single butterfly is typically measured in weeks.

#### 'Magical'

Bill Henry remembers a childhood here filled with butterflies.

"It was kind of a magical thing to be immersed in the abundance of the natural world," said Henry, now director of Groundswell Coastal Ecology group in Santa Cruz, not far from Pacific Grove.

"It paints a picture, it's something that dreams are made out of."

Flourishing Monarchs are also a sign of enough milkweed and habitat along the long migration corridor, Henry said.

"Milkweed is linked to healthy landscapes, and it's linked to healthy floodplains, which means that our rivers are doing well," he told AFP.

"It also means that there aren't a lot of impediments to their migration, such as swaths where the pesticides that kill them are being used."

In 2020, the near absence of Monarchs on the west Coast was a rallying cry for nature lovers, from gardeners who planted milkweed to hobbyists who raised butterflies in their homes despite the practice being illegal due.

But finding the right balance to protect nature has challenges. For example, Monarchs love water-guzzling eucalyptus trees that are not native to drought-prone California.

Clearing vegetation or trees to reduce the risk of wildfires can eliminate butterfly habitats. Monarchs being gone from our world would "suck too much," said Santa Cruz teenager Brody Robbins, who skipped school to photograph butterflies "way cooler than Civil War classes."



Snapshots of the action from the Visit Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup 2023.

## Visit Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup 2023 champions crowned

The Visit Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup 2023 has concluded with three men and three women crowned as winners.

The Qatar Airways GKA Freestyle Kite Beach staged its maiden Qatar event from January 31 until yesterday, and thrilled hundreds of spectators at Fuwairit Kite Beach (FKB).

In the men's final, the winners were Italy's Gianmario Coccuzzo in first place, Brazil's Carlos Mario in second place, and Louka Pitot from France in third.

In the women's final, the winners were Bruna Kajiyama from Brazil in first place, Mikaili Sol from the US in second, and Nathalie Lambrecht from Sweden in third place.

Qatar Tourism Chairman and Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive HE Akbar al-Baker said: "We congratulate and celebrate the winners on their well-deserved win and monumental

### Fuwairit Kite Beach staged first event of this season's Qatar Airways GKA Kite World Tour

showing at the Visit Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup 2023."

"We look forward to welcoming all the riders back to Qatar and Fuwairit Kite Beach later this year for the Visit Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup Finals 2023," HE al-Baker said.

"The GKA Freestyle tournament is a prime example of the legacy our country is building in the global sports community, highlighting our thriving international sports calendar," he added. "We are delighted to continue cementing our mark on this riveting sport in 2023."

The tournament was free to watch for visitors, who were treated to an exhilarating display of freestyle kiting on Doha's northern shores.

Fuwairit Kite Beach opened in October 2022

and sits on white sands beside a shallow enclosed lagoon that enjoys consistent winds and warm, flat water – perfect conditions for kitesurfing.

GKA Kite World Tour chief executive Dr Jorgen Vogt said: "I am extremely grateful for the hospitality and passion shown to us by the people of Qatar as well as the entire FKB team."

"It's exciting to see Fuwairit Kite Beach resort now proudly on the map of the world's best premium watersports destinations and I can't wait to crown the world champions at this amazing location when we return at the end of the year," he added.

In May 2022, Qatar Airways announced their new long-term partnership with the Global Kitesports Association (GKA) Kite World Tour,

becoming the Title Partner and Official Airline of the World Tour through 2024, and Qatar Tourism became the tour's Official Tourism Partner.

Together the two organisations will host the GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup in 2024.

Qatar Airways, as a brand, is committed to supporting sports across the globe.

Along with its partnership with Global Kitesports Association, the airline is a leading global football supporter, with partnerships including CONCACAF, FC Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, and FIFA.

Additionally, Qatar Airways is the official airline of The Ironman and Ironman 70.3 Triathlon Series, Official Airline Partner of the United Rugby Championship, and the Official

South African Airline Partner for European Professional Club Rugby, and multiple equestrian, padel, squash and tennis events, a press statement notes.

FKB offers kitesurfing lessons by professional instructors, starting from QR692 per person, available seven days a week throughout the season.

Day passes starting from QR110 per person are also available to anyone who wants access to the beach and kite school facilities, with equipment hire available for an additional cost.

Rooms at FKB can also be booked from QR614 per person (based on two people sharing a room), which includes a QR250 activity voucher that can be redeemed at the FKB Activity Centre.

For more information and to book a session, visit [discoverqatar.qa/fkb](http://discoverqatar.qa/fkb)



Dignitaries and guests participate in the cake-cutting ceremony.



Many fruits from Sri Lanka are on display and available at affordable prices throughout the festival.

## 'Taste of Sri Lanka' fest at LuLu stores

Annual event showcases culinary gems and cultural values of Sri Lanka

By Peter Alagos  
Business Reporter

Culinary delights and cultural values, among other highlights, are taking the spotlight during this year's edition of the "Taste of Sri Lanka" festival, which was inaugurated yesterday at LuLu Hypermarket, Ain Khaled branch.

The annual event has been organised by LuLu Group in co-operation with the embassy of Sri Lanka in Qatar to mark the country's 75th Independence Day.

Sri Lankan ambassador Mohamed Mafaz Mohideen led the ribbon-cutting ceremony in the presence of Dr Mohamed Althaf, director of LuLu Group International.

Other VIPs and dignitaries present during the opening rites included Naser Doha International Consulting (DIC) chair-

man Mohamed J al-Marri, DIC chief executive and general manager Ishan Final, Al Harib Security Systems chief operating officer Charith Jayasena, Stafford Sri Lankan School Doha board of trustees chairman Kumudu Fonseka, and Kashayapa Ukwatte, minister counsellor at the Sri Lankan embassy.

LuLu Group is celebrating the "Taste of Sri Lanka" to promote the South Asian nation's culinary heritage, culture and values, and colonial influences, which were handed down for generations.

The festival, which is being held at all LuLu stores across Qatar until February 10, showcases the best-quality Sri Lankan ethnic products, a wide range of grocery items, and other agricultural and organic produce.

The celebrations will also promote traditional Sri Lankan dances performed by students from Stafford Sri Lankan School

Mohamed Mafaz Mohideen and Dr Mohamed Althaf at the ribbon-cutting ceremony along with other dignitaries and officials.

PICTURES: Thajudheen



Dr Althaf leading the tour of LuLu Hypermarket, Ain Khaled branch, at the launch of the festival.

and Dinu Dance Academy, along with other cultural programmes, thereby creating an ambience that is reminiscent of the country's rich culture and tradition.

Aside from culture, heritage and cuisine, the festival is also highlighting longstanding Qatar-Sri Lanka business ties and Sri Lanka's top export-quality products targeting both Qatari citizens and expatriate communities.

Ambassador Mohideen emphasised that the festival is offering a wide range of authentic Sri Lankan products, including organic and superfoods imported by LuLu Group.

"I am grateful to LuLu Group for all the support it is extending in promoting Sri Lankan products not only in Qatar but also across the GCC," he said. "They are one of our strongest supporters."



Ambassador Mafaz Mohideen viewing some of the items on display.

## LuLu's Colombo facility pushing growth in Sri Lanka exports to Qatar

By Peter Alagos  
Business Reporter

LuLu Group's world-class sourcing, food processing, and export unit in Sri Lanka has been playing a significant role in increasing Sri Lanka's exports to Qatar, a top official has said.

Speaking on the sidelines of the "Taste of Sri Lanka" festival inaugurated yesterday, LuLu Group International director Dr Mohamed Althaf emphasised that the South Asian nation has been developing a wide range of organic lines, which LuLu Group brings to Qatar "in large quantities".

The group's state-of-the-art facility, located at the Katanayake Export Processing Zone near Colombo International Airport, focuses on sourcing, processing, storing, packaging and exporting fruits, vegetables and commodities from Sri Lanka to various LuLu operations across the globe.

"Sri Lanka has unique items that are in high demand in the local and international markets, such as organic products and superfoods," Dr Althaf said. "Many Sri Lankan products are well-known for their high quality, such as tea and spices, among others."

Sri Lanka's ambassador to Qatar Mohamed Mafaz Mohideen emphasised that

business between LuLu Group and Sri Lanka has been growing steadily year-on-year, not only in a wide range of export products but also in manpower, thus providing more job opportunities for Sri Lankan nationals in Qatar.

"Trade between Sri Lanka and Qatar is about \$90mn. Our country is known for its wide range of high-quality products that are exported to Qatar, including apparel, vegetables, and fruits, with a special focus on bananas and superfoods like moringa leaf and coconut," he said.

Dr Althaf also said that the 2023 edition of the "Taste of Sri Lanka" festival, which is organised annually by LuLu Group in co-operation with the Sri Lankan embas-

sy in Qatar, commemorates the country's 75th Independence Day.

"The festival is part of a series of events organised by LuLu Group to celebrate the culinary heritage and culture of different countries," he said. "The Sri Lankan community in Qatar is one of the largest expatriate populations, which played an important part in the development of Qatar."

A wide range of Sri Lankan commodities and agricultural produce are offered on display at discounted prices.

Special counters have been set up, allowing customers to taste and sample different Sri Lankan food products, Dr Althaf added.



Mohamed Mafaz Mohideen



Dr Mohamed Althaf