





# Shura discusses measures to deal with rising cost of living

The Shura Council held its weekly meeting yesterday at Tamim bin Hamad Hall under the chairmanship of its Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem.

During the session, the Council reviewed the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee's report on the request for general discussion submitted by the council members during the past legislative term regarding inflation, high cost of living, and increased financial burdens on citizens.

After extensive discussions on the report's conclusion and exchanging points of view on finding solutions to that issue, the Council decided to submit a proposal to the government on it. The proposal included several axes and recommendations that should lead to reducing the impacts of inflation, as well as views that seek to address the issue of high consumer prices, providing

realistic scenarios to deal with the high operational cost of goods and services, which will reflect on consumers.

Within the context of discussing the report, HE the Speaker referred to the social and economic negative impacts of inflation and the high cost of living, which requires the concerted efforts of all concerned parties to address that issue. HE al-Ghanem added that it was raised during the Council's first legislative term, when the committee, since the previous term under the chairmanship of HE Mohamed bin Yousef al-Mana, made efforts to study all the aspects of it. During the current term, the committee completed those efforts to prepare the report.

HE the Speaker indicated that the legislations enacted by the State to overcome the issues included within the request for discussion were tangible. He reviewed the major laws in this re-

gard, such as the law on protecting competition and preventing monopolistic practices and what the law stipulated in terms of establishing a special committee to protect competitiveness, along with other relevant legislations and laws. HE al-Ghanem said that given the rising local and international economic changes and the issues that the world faces, it has become necessary to raise that issue, follow it up, and discuss ways to address it and limit its effects.

During his review of the report, the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee, Ahmad bin Hitmi al-Hitmi, pointed to the meetings held by the committee to discuss the issue by inviting a number of officials from concerned authorities, as well as seeking the opinions and analysis of specialised academics, analysts, businessperson, and citizens.

Al-Hitmi said that the rise in prices included all sectors, with

a noticeable increase in certain basic sectors, pointing out that other sectors were also affected by that issue.

He noted that these sectors are not considered basic or necessary in daily life, which calls for a change in the community's consumption pattern and culture.

Al-Hitmi explained the reasons behind the inflation and high prices in Qatar, which he attributed to internal and external factors. He also reviewed a number of solutions and recommendations proposed by the committee to address the inflation and high prices, including those related to anti-monopoly policies, increasing allocated places for commercial activities, subsidising basic commodities and materials, supporting the national product to increase its production in the local market, reviewing fees and taxes policies, and raising awareness of the important role of trader and consumer in that regard.

In turn, the Shura Council members praised the government's plans and policies to address inflation by implementing a package of measures that contributed to reducing the impact of inflation. They stressed the need to carry out periodic reviews of the monetary policies and legislations along with measures of subsidy and work on raising awareness among businesspersons and consumers, given their responsibility in contributing to addressing that issue.

The members called on the authorities concerned to protect consumers and monitor the prices by intensifying their campaigns on the market, encouraging free competition and working to prevent monopoly, providing all means of support for the local product and providing it in a bigger scale in the local market, as well as encouraging its export and support it to compete abroad. The council members pointed to



The Shura Council in session.

the need to increase street and commercial areas in various parts of the country, allowing wide options for merchants, lowering rental and real estate prices, and reducing the cost of production which leads to lower prices.

They noted the need to support entrepreneurs, to strengthen small and medium-sized companies, to direct them to increase investment in the services and basic commodities sector, and to avoid focusing on specific sectors with a consumption and entertainment pattern only.

The members drew attention to the role of civil society organisations in confronting the phenomenon of excessive consumption by increasing consumer awareness and alerting them not to be led by advertising campaigns.

They also asked for more attention to the sectors of basic commodities and food production, to support national factories,

companies and farms, and to enhance their capabilities for external competition, noting that the competitiveness of the national product and increasing its sales in foreign markets contributes to promoting its distribution abroad and reducing its prices internally.

The members attributed inflation to other external factors such as high transport and freight costs to record levels, high energy prices, and interruption of supply chains, praising the state's good management of this file by taking a number of measures that contributed to maintaining the prices of basic goods needed by the consumer on a daily basis.

The council also approved a draft law on documents and archives, after reviewing the report of the Information and Cultural Affairs Committee on it, and after the members of the Council discussed the provisions of the draft law. (QNA)

## Official

### Amir sends cables of congratulations to Tunisian president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Tunisian President Kais Saied on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Najla Bouden Romdhane. (QNA)

### Turkmenistan president leaves Doha



President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov left Doha yesterday evening following a state visit to Qatar. He and the accompanying delegation were seen off at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of Municipality Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, Qatar's ambassador to Turkmenistan Hamad bin Rashid al-Athba, and Acting Charge d'Affaires of Turkmenistan in Doha M T Elyasov. (QNA)

## Civic minister: Food security plan focuses on sustainability, innovation

HE the Minister of Municipality Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie said that the ministry's strategic plan for food security (2024-2030) focuses on achieving sustainability and relying on modern technologies and innovation in the agricultural sector.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the sidelines of his participation in the 10th Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition (AgriteQ) and the accompanying scientific conference organised by the ministry at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, HE Dr al-Subaie added that the new plan also deals with issues of improving distribution mechanisms, expanding sales outlets and increasing them while maintaining prices, improving market mechanisms, rationalising imports, and enhancing trade exchange with other countries.

He noted that the ministry's current strategic plan 2016-2023 is nearing conclusion, and it is about to launch new food security plan 2024-2030 which its new initiatives are being considered in co-operation with a consultancy firm specialised in this field, and that the next few months will highlight the features of this plan that



HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie

is consistent with the third strategic development plan.

Highlighting the great achievements in the past few years, including the significant growth in cultivated areas, quantity and production, and the initiatives launched by the ministry to support all sectors of food security such as the distinguished product programme, the export of Qatari vegetables in order to support farms, and the facilitation of access to foreign markets, he pointed out that the ministry implemented the Agricultural Census project, the first of its kind in Qatar, which gave a clear picture and

provided great information and accurate statistics on the situation in the agricultural sector, contributing to making decisions and steps on scientific basis that its results will be seen very soon.

HE Dr al-Subaie underlined the ministry's inauguration of the Aquatic Research Centre which succeeded in cultivating well-known fish species in the Qatari environment in accordance with production protocols, pointing out that new varieties are being cultivated to expand production.

He said that the ministry has opened four fish markets in the ports of Al Wakra, Al Khor, Doha and Al Ruwais to sell fish and support producers, noting at the same time the great progress made by Qatar in order to achieve self-sufficiency in meat, milk and poultry at a high quality level.

He noted the great turnout on the AgriteQ exhibition from exhibitors, companies, institutions and business owners from Qatar and abroad, and that all visitors and participants praised this exhibition as they were able to highlight their business, conclude major deals, and exchange experiences, reflecting the success of this international event. (QNA)

## Qatar gets approval for issuing information security certificates

Qatar has obtained the internationally recognised approval for issuing information security certificates for electronic devices and programmes. According to a statement from the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA), Qatar is the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to issue these internationally recognised certificates from the committee of the Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA).

Qatar joined the Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA) during the CCRA's first conference for 2023 in Malaysia.

After applying to become an authorising member, Qatar's Common Criteria Scheme (QCCS) under NCSA underwent a conformity assessment by Malaysia's and India's certification authorities to ensure its compliance. After the assessment, the Malaysia's and India's authorities reported to the president of CCRA that the QCCS met all requirements.



Qatar joined the Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement during the CCRA's first conference for 2023 in Malaysia.

In its efforts to improve security and preparedness for cybersecurity threats in all critical sectors, Qatar joined CCRA in 2015 as a Consuming Member of Certificates. Since becoming a Consuming Member, Qatar has ensured that all stipulated

requirements by the CCRA were fulfilled to be recognised as an authorising member. The Common Criteria (CC) is an international set of guidelines and specifications that define frameworks for IT security evaluation and certification.

## Int'l Francophonie Day celebrated

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

This year the International Francophonie Day was marked under the theme '321 million French speakers, billions of cultural contents'. Each year on March 20, the Francophonie International Day is celebrated worldwide in French-speaking countries but also in those where the French language is less widespread.

This date refers to the birth on March 20, 1970 in Niamey, Niger of the Cultural and Technical Co-operation

Agency that became later the Organisation International of the Francophonie (OIF).

The Francophonie is first of all men and women who share a common language, French. The latest report from the French language observatory published in 2022 estimated that 321mn speakers are spread across five continents.

The French language remains the fifth language spoken in the world after English, Chinese, Hindi and Spanish. The Francophonie is also an institution dedicated to implementing political, educational, economic and

cultural co-operation within 88 states and governments of the OIF. Qatar joined this institution in as associate member in 2012.

The latest figures show there are 127,000 French speakers in Qatar, or about 4% of the country's population, according to Oryx FM Radio. There are 30 schools or universities which provide French courses, an association of teachers of the French language was created in 2018, 670 Qatari students attend the Bonaparte and Voltaire high schools. Oryx FM Radio broadcasts exclusively programmes in French since January 2011.

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# Qatar takes part in int'l donors' conference to support Turkiye, Syria

**QNA**  
Brussels

**Q**atar participated in the international donors' conference to support Turkiye and Syria following the earthquake, which was held in Brussels.

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi represented Qatar at the meeting. In a speech before the conference, HE al-Muraikhi thanked the European Commission and Sweden for their tireless and fruitful efforts in organising the conference to support the quake victims, expressing Qatar's appreciation for the efforts made by members of the international community, UN agencies, and other humanitarian relief and rescue efforts that they have undertaken since the first day of the disaster and their endeavour to address its effects in the long term.

He reviewed Qatar's efforts from the first moment of the disaster, as it provided all support and harnessed all capabilities



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

ties to assist in rescue and relief in Turkiye and northern Syria.

HE al-Muraikhi added that the Qatari authorities participated in rescue efforts, operating flights and medical staff, and launching social campaigns to alleviate the suffering of those affected, which included the

provision of hundreds of tonnes of food, medicine and thousands of mobile homes.

He said Qatar's humanitarian and political role under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani represented in supporting international initiatives

and efforts aimed at achieving development, alleviating the suffering of victims of crises and disasters, and facing the global challenges, in the framework of Qatar's belief in the importance of international partnership and co-operation to achieve this.

HE al-Muraikhi expressed hope that the conference would constitute an important opportunity to support relief and reconstruction efforts in the quake-affected areas in Turkiye and Syria.

He stressed Qatar's commitment to support the needs of those affected by the earthquake, and pointed out that Qatar provided \$93mn as an urgent response and continues to support projects in the process of implementation for the needy groups in Turkiye and Syria, worth about \$59mn, taking the total aid to more than \$150mn.

He reaffirmed the position of Qatar to work together to mitigate the effects of crises, achieve sustainable development goals and ensure international peace and security.



Officials mark the partnership.

## Vodafone Qatar transforms Msheireb into first Gigacity in Middle East

**V**odafone Qatar has announced that, in collaboration with Nokia, it has powered Msheireb Smart City with cutting-edge fibre technology that delivers hyper speeds of up to 25Gbps and will extend the collaboration to demonstrate speeds of up to 100Gbps, using a Nokia Bell Labs prototype in the near future.

With the rollout of Vodafone's fibre technology, Msheireb Downtown's Smart City district is now the first Gigacity in the Middle East to deliver superfast network speeds to its users on the 25Gb/s fibre network. Vodafone Qatar GigaHome Fibre customers at Msheireb Downtown will receive an upgrade to 1GB on their existing plans.

This announcement comes in line with Vodafone Qatar's recent World's Fastest Mobile Network award, according to results from consumer-initiated tests taken with Speedtest by Ookla, and reflects Vodafone's continued investment with the goal of delivering the best in class

experiences to its customers, a press statement noted.

Msheireb Smart City District stands as a reference for the urban projects of the future, especially in its adherence to the highest standards of green building and smart services, with the aim to enrich people's lives, and improve the overall quality of how they live, work and thrive.

Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah al-Thani, CEO at Vodafone Qatar, said: "We are proud to provide cutting-edge fibre technology delivering super fast speeds and a seamless experience for users, and continue to support Msheireb Smart City by providing connectivity services to the area via our world-class GigaNet network and high-speed 5G coverage. This demonstrates our commitment to accelerating Qatar's journey towards becoming one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world."

Ali Mohamed al-Kuwari, CEO of Msheireb Properties, said: "We are proud that our Smart City Msheireb Downtown Doha will be at the forefront of technological innovations in Qatar and the Middle East, and adopt Vodafone's latest data technology that offers unprecedented Internet speed of up to 25Gbps to the users, hence enhancing customer experience within Msheireb Downtown Doha. We appreciate Vodafone's effort to offer seamless connectivity for individuals and corporates, which is in line with our vision and mission to create a more connected future."

Toni Pellegrino, head of the Customer Business Team for Vodafone at Nokia MEA, said: "We at Nokia are proud to deploy the country's first 25G PON network for Vodafone Qatar to support the Msheireb smart city services with our innovative technology. We are looking forward to support our long-term partner, Vodafone Qatar, to demonstrate the power of next-generation fibre networks to enable pioneering services for residential consumers and enterprises."

## QU's College of Education celebrates 50th anniversary

**Q**atar University's College of Education has celebrated its 50th anniversary since its founding.

Marking this milestone, the college organised a ceremony, highlighting its most important achievements and developments over the last five decades, and celebrating the college as the first institution of higher education in Qatar. The ceremony was attended by Dr Hassan al-Derham, QU president; Sheikhha Dr Hessa bint Hamad al-Thani, dean of the College of Education; a number of university officials and university affiliates, including professors and students, in addition to a number of departments and high school students.

During the ceremony, an introductory video about the College of Education, was presented, with an overview of its programmes and centres, and a video entitled



Dignitaries at the event.

'From Past to Present' highlighting the Early Childhood Center, as well as an inspiring story segment with Mohamed Saadon al-Kuwari, sports journalist and presenter with beIN – a graduate of the College of Education about

his memories at the university.

Dr Hessa said during her speech on the occasion: "Fifty years ago, the foundation stone of the College of Education was laid, to be the starting point in building the human being, a human being enlightened by the principles of science and knowledge...so every graduate in our college was a beacon and a teacher for the emerging generations, and a key actor in developing the reality of education in our societies" (QNA)

ened by the principles of science and knowledge...so every graduate in our college was a beacon and a teacher for the emerging generations, and a key actor in developing the reality of education in our societies" (QNA)

## WHO official briefed on Tobacco Control Centre's services

**H**amad Medical Corporation's Tobacco Control Centre has received Dr Ahmed al-Mandhari, World Health Organisation regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, who was accompanied by Dr Rayana Bou Haka, WHO representative to Qatar.

During the visit, Dr al-Mandhari met with all staff members at the centre, where he was briefed on services provided.

Dr Ahmad al-Mulla, head of Tobacco Control Centre, said: "During the meeting, we presented an overview of the activities, services, plans and future



Officials during the visit.

programmes of the Tobacco Control Centre. The discussion

touched on ways of co-operation with the World Health Or-

ganisation to support these programmes and plans, especially when taking into consideration that our centre offers its services to all countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region."

Dr al-Mandhari confirmed that necessary measures will be taken to provide technical support to the centre to facilitate its work and maximise the benefits from the services it provides. In 2017, Tobacco Control Centre became the first centre in Qatar and the GCC region to be designated by WHO as a collaborating centre for treating tobacco dependence.

## QRCS in pact with Seashore Group

**Q**atar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) and Seashore Group signed yesterday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to build partnership, capitalise on their expertise and resources towards a sustainable and effective response to their respective humanitarian activities, and to launch awareness programmes for expatriate workers on safety, security, and protection outside Doha.

The agreement was signed by Faisal Mohamed al-Emadi, acting secretary-general of QRCS, and Salem Saeed al-Mohannadi, CEO of Seashore Group. The signing ceremony was attended by Hussein Aman al-Ali, director of Volunteering and Local Development Division at QRCS, Mohamed Rashid al-Mari, director of Communication and Public Relations, and Manal Issa al-Fahaid, partner relations consultant.

Praising the strategic role of Seashore Group locally, al-Emadi said: "This agreement reflects the importance attached by the two parties to



Officials pose for a group photo.

community awareness-raising and carrying out programmes to promote human rights in Qatar something that serves the humanitarian goals and mission of QRCS."

He added that partnership is a cornerstone of QRCS' strategy to achieve its long-term humanitarian, development goals and to mobilise support from various sectors/organisations to improve the living standard of vulnerable people, especially in community awareness and education, and inspired by its slogan "Saving Lives and Preserving Dignity". Al-Mohannadi said the

agreement aimed to strengthen partnership with QRCS, launch safety and security awareness programmes for workers, and to develop innovative programmes to serve many beneficiaries.

The agreement establishes the legal framework for co-ordination mechanisms between the two parties, in pursuit of human development goals of Qatar National Vision 2030, and by enforcing the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to address humanitarian causes and awareness initiatives executed by QRCS. (QNA)

## Qatar Charity organises two programmes for girls



The two programmes included educational, recreational visits and training workshops with the participation of specialised trainers.

**Q**atar Charity (QC), through its community development centres in Al Rayyan and Al Khor, organised two programmes for girls in the spring break to allow them to learn artistic and manual skills in an entertaining form.

The two programmes included educational and recreational visits and training workshops with the participation of specialised trainers.

The five-day 'Spring Joy' programme was organised by the Qatar Charity Centre for Community Development, Al Rayyan, for 10-16 year age groups.

The programme included various competitions and events, practical and theoretical training workshops, such as drawing on glass, printing on clothes, flower-arranging and

manual skills development, in addition to a visit to the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA).

Besides, the Qatar Charity Centre for Community Development, Al Khor, in co-operation with the Al Khor Girls Centre, organised the 'Lavender' programme for 10-15 year age groups. It focused on raising the aesthetic sense of the participants in choosing colours, designs and handicrafts, in addition to preparing them for the blessed month of Ramadan through various activities.

The programme contained several interesting and entertaining training workshops such as drawing on cups, making bags for Garangao, and the basics of choosing colours and designs.







QATAR

## Air traffic movements rise 15.6% in February



### Air Transport Statistics for February 2023

#### Aircraft Movements



2023 17,479  
2022 15,121

#### Passengers



2023 3,240,117  
2022 2,168,266

#### Cargo & Mail (Tons)



2023 172,085  
2022 181,557

Qatar's Civil Aviation Authority has said provisional air traffic movements in February rose by 15.6% on an annual basis to a total of 17,479, compared with 15,121 in the same period last year. Data from the Air Navigation Department at the authority showed that the number of passengers increased 49.4% in February to reach 3,240,117 compared to 2,168,266 in February 2022. Data also showed that cargo and mail shipments declined 5.2% to 172,085 tonnes in February, compared to 181,557 in the same month of last year. (QNA)

# Retailers get ready to meet Ramadan demand for products



Shopkeepers at Souq Waqif are a busy lot these days.



Decorative items are in high demand. PICTURE: Thajudheen

Shopping centres and retailers around the country have made extensive preparations to meet the demand for food and other items during the holy month of Ramadan, stocking enough quantities and giving good offers on many products.

Local Arabic daily **Arrayah** reported that the coming period is also expected to see more inspection cam-

paigns by the authorities concerned, which are aimed at monitoring the local markets and exercising tighter control on retail prices.

Meanwhile, a number of retailers have said there is a growing turnout of customers looking for vegetables and fruits. In spite of this big demand, the prices of vegetables have remained stable and low due to the abundance

of locally produced vegetables in the market.

Further, stores selling spices are also seeing a good turnout of customers who are keen to add special flavours to dishes during the holy month, in particular the local traditional cuisine, which often uses a lot of spices. The spices, nuts and sweet shops at Souq Waqif are a favoured

destination for shoppers, who are eager to buy items in good quantities ahead of Ramadan.

In addition, the demand for varieties of dates, honey and incense has also increased considerably. Retailers at Souq Waqif are also witnessing a high demand for accessories and decorative items in the run-up to Ramadan.

## Labour ministry holds seminar on work permits services

The Ministry of Labour organised yesterday an introductory seminar under the title "New Services of the Work Permits Department."

It comes as part of efforts to educate establishment owners about the updates made by the ministry's departments on the services provided within the strategy of developing smart electronic services, upgrading it in the work sector and contributing to facilitating and speeding up the delivery of services provided for those dealing with the ministry.

During the seminar the representatives of the Work Permits Department reviewed the most prominent new services for six new different



Some of the participants in the seminar.

requests including: a request for a work permit, a request for renewing a work permit, a request for

cancelling a work permit, a request for issuing a labour recruitment approval, a request for renewing the

validity of a labour recruitment approval and a request for amending a labour recruitment approval. At the end of the seminar, the representatives of the department answered the inquiries and questions of the establishment owners about the new services related to the management of work permits.

The organisation of this seminar comes as part of a series organised by the ministry with the aim of enhancing the awareness of the establishment owners of its electronic services and without the need to visit the external offices of the ministry as part of its endeavour to accelerate the completion of transactions and to simplify procedures for the public. (QNA)



### Public Announcement

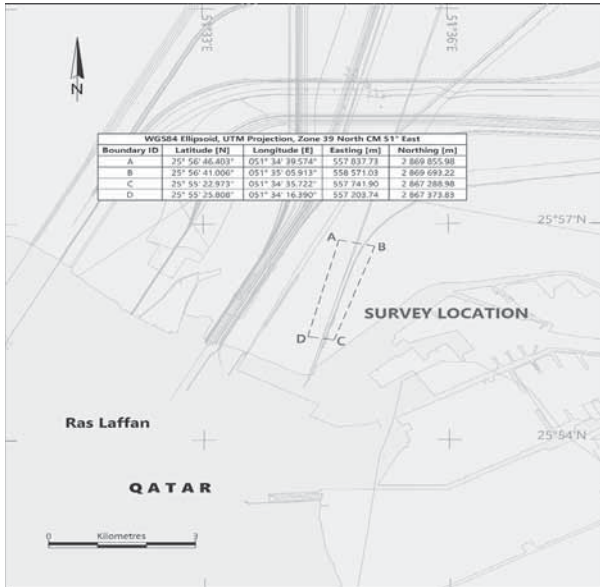
To all Ships, Fisherman and Mariners  
Subsea Survey Works in Ras Laffan  
By the Small Boat "LADY BEATRICE"

Subsea Survey Works from 21-March-2023 to 05-April-2023

In pursuant and under directives from the Department of Marine Regulations, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners and Fisherman that QatarGas intends to undertake subsea survey works by the small boat "LADY BEATRICE" in Ras Laffan, bound by the coordinates and location map shown below.

Coordinates:-

WGS 84, UTM Projection, Zone 39 CM 51° E				
Boundary ID	Eastings	Northing	Latitude	Longitude
A	557837.73	2869855.98	25° 56' 46.403" N	51° 34' 39.574" E
B	558571.03	2869693.22	25° 56' 41.006" N	51° 35' 05.913" E
C	557741.90	2867288.98	25° 55' 22.973" N	51° 34' 35.722" E
D	557203.74	2867373.83	25° 55' 25.808" N	51° 34' 16.390" E



All Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations. QatarGas takes no responsibilities for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operations following publication of this notice.

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Registration Dates	From 21st March 2023 to 27th March 2023 8:00 am to 1:00 pm
Registration Process and Requirements:	Write an e-mail to <a href="mailto:oryxgtltenders@oryxgtl.com.qa">oryxgtltenders@oryxgtl.com.qa</a> with the following attachments: 1. Copy of Commercial Registration (CR) 2. Copy of bank deposit slip of the Tender Registration Fee.

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### Qatar hosts talks on future of education in Afghanistan

Qatar has hosted talks on the future of education in Afghanistan and the challenges and obstacles facing it.

HE the Assistant Foreign Minister Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater with the participation of the CEO of Education Above All Foundation Fahad al-Sulaiti represented Qatar during the talks held in Doha. A delegation from the Afghan Ministry of Education headed by Education Minister Mawlawi Sayyid Habeeb, a delegation of the Unicef headed by its Regional Director for South Asia George Laria, and the Chief of Strategic Partnerships at Education Cannot Wait Organisation Nasser Fakih also participated in the talks.

During the talks, the participants discussed the economic challenges, poor infrastructure, the limited human resources and qualifications in Afghanistan, in addition to ensuring equal access to education for all, especially girls. The participants also agreed on the need to ensure the right to education for all, develop a common vision that deals with challenges, and provide high-quality education opportunities for all Afghan students in all regions.

HE the Assistant Foreign Minister commended the efforts of the Education Above All Foundation to facilitate the holding of these talks. She also extended her appreciation to the delegations of the Afghan Ministry of Education, Unicef and the Education Cannot Wait organisation for their participation. HE AlKhater also stressed the importance of continuing the talks to reach radical solutions to develop the sectors of education and health in Afghanistan, affirming the keenness and commitment of Qatar to support the fraternal people of Afghanistan and help them overcome the difficulties. (QNA)



## INVITATION OF AUCTION

### Public Auction for the sales of Alijarah Equipment – as mentioned below.

تعلن لجنة المناقصات الرئيسية لشركة الإجارة القابضة ش.م.ع.ق نيابة عن الإجارة للمعدات المملوكة بالكامل لشركة الإجارة القابضة بطلب تقديم عطاءات للمزايدات الآتية

AUCTION NO.	AUCTION DESCRIPTION	AUCTION DOCUMENT Available online under Platinum Mzadat Application	SUBMISSION DATE
رقم المزايادة	وصف المزايادة	مستندات المزاد متوفرة على تطبيق بلاتينيوم للمزايدات	تاريخ التسليم
AEQ/DF-7/ 2023	1) Sale of new spare parts for Nissan Altima, Toyota Camry / Camry Hybrid/ Innova, Hyundai Sonata, Man & Mercedes-Benz Truck spare parts, etc. 2) Generators and 3) Tower lights. 4) Used Workshop & Garage Equipment. 5) Used engine and gearbox for Nissan Altima & Hyundai Sonata vehicles 6) Vehicles (TATA Bus, Mitsubishi Canter, Mitsubishi Recovery vehicle, Nissan Pick-up.)		21 <sup>ST</sup> March 2023 8:00 AM to 6pm

Auction documents with full details are available online under Platinum Mzadat Application

يمكن الحصول على مستندات المزايادة مع التفاصيل الكاملة على تطبيق بلاتينيوم للمزايدات

- After awarding and confirmation, the bidder must arrange to pay the full amount to Alijarah Head office – Accounts Dept., within 2-3 days from the date of awarding.
- The awarded bidder must remove the awarded items from the site with 5-7 days Otherwise, he is required to pay a storage fee of 5% of the sold price for each day of delay.
- Dismantling, Packaging, labelling, loading and transportation charges will be on bidder's account.
- Bidders would be allowed for physical inspection of spare parts during working days including Saturday from 8am to 4pm.

- بعد الترسية والتأكيد، يجب على المزايد دفع كامل المبلغ إلى مكتب الإجارة الرئيسي - إدارة الحسابات، في غضون 2-3 أيام من تاريخ الترسية.
- يجب على المزايد الذي رعى عليه المزاد إزالة العناصر الممنوحة من الموقع خلال 5-7 أيام وإلا، فإنه يتعين عليه دفع رسوم تخزين بنسبة 5% من السعر المباع لكل يوم تأخير.
- ستكون رسوم التفكيك والتعبئة والتغليف والنقل والتحميل والنقل على حساب المزايد.
- سيسمح للمزايدين بإجراء فحص مادي لقطع الغيار خلال أيام العمل بما في ذلك يوم السبت من الساعة 8 صباحاً حتى 4 مساءً.

[www.alijarah.com](http://www.alijarah.com)



## National Defence Course participants visit QatarEnergy



Participants in the third National Defence Course, organised by the Joaan bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies of the Qatar Armed Forces, visited the headquarters of QatarEnergy for an introduction to its pivotal role in supporting the national economy. The 32 participants were from the armed forces, security agencies, and senior government and state institutions officials, representing a select group of civil and military leaders. The participants listened to two briefings by Ahmed Saeed al-Amoodi, executive vice-president (Surface Development & Sustainability) in the presence of Abdulaziz Mohamed al-Mannai, executive vice-president (Human Capital). The topics and points of discussion centred on the nature and diversity of QatarEnergy's business, its vision, and the role it plays in supporting and developing the national economy and in drawing up strategic policies for its sustainability. Discussions also highlighted the unprecedented growth of Qatar's energy sector, led by QatarEnergy, including the upstream and downstream sectors, and the various energy products that fuel growth and progress around the world. The Joaan bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies organises the National Defence Course to help qualify national leadership elements by studying and analysing the basic elements affecting the national security of Qatar.

## UDST hosts annual 'Skills Day'

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) hosted the annual 'Skills Day', the largest co-curricular event of the academic year.

The event offered more than 50 competitions and activities around campus in engineering technology, computing and information technology, health sciences, business management, and academics - simulating a variety of real-world challenges that students will tackle in the workplace once they graduate.

More than 750 students competed against their peers to test the technical skills they are learning through their studies.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president of UDST said: "Skills Day is all about the approach that UDST undertakes to reveal the importance of applied education and an opportunity to demonstrate what our students are capable of and how they use their skills and hands-on com-



petencies to innovate and harness technology to better serve the community."

There were activities and competitions such as: gear train designing challenge, welding, leak testing in the pipeline, network design and cabling, renewable energy and sustain-

ability activities, testing technician safety, engaging in health scenarios and skills stations, cyber security challenges, internet of things, programming and problem-solving, robots' races, green screen digital communication, egg drop stem challenge and much more.

UDST also partnered with local schools to offer hundreds of secondary students the chance to witness the competitions and try a skill themselves, giving more young people the opportunity to be involved in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Some competitions are completed individually, while others are group competitions where students in teams solve real-life scenarios and participate in business simulations in addition to challenges in the fields of electrical and mechanical engineering, energy and sustainability, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, programming, problem-solving challenges, and healthcare as well as communication contests and debates.

The 'Skills Competition' winners will be announced at a special ceremony today and will be awarded medals and recognition certificates.

## WCM-Q, Alfardan Medical sign clinical training, education agreement

A clinical training and education agreement has been signed between leading healthcare facility Alfardan Medical with Northwestern Medicine (AMNM) and Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q).

The agreement will provide clinical training sites and experience of the private healthcare sector for a number of WCM-Q students each year, at an early stage in their medical education, while also advancing AMNM's ongoing mission to promote academic and clinical excellence.

The agreement was signed by Omar Hussain Alfardan, president and CEO of Alfardan Group, and Dr Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, at AMNM in Lusail. Under the agreement, AMNM and WCM-Q will work together to leverage their joint expertise and state-of-the-art healthcare and training facilities to reach new levels of excellence in patient care in Qatar.

AMNM is a premium healthcare facility with unique partnership with Northwestern Medicine Chicago, one of the most highly ranked healthcare institutions in the US, to provide elite levels of care for patients in Qatar. WCM-Q, a member of Qatar Foundation and a part of the US-based Cornell University, is at the forefront of medical education and biomedical research in the Middle East.



Omar Hussain Alfardan and Dr Javaid Sheikh at the agreement signing.

Alfardan said: "It is with great pleasure that we announce the signing of this new Clinical Training and Education Agreement between AMNM and WCM-Q. As two leading healthcare institutions with a strong commitment to delivering the very highest standards of care to patients, we believe this agreement will bring significant benefits to all parties. Our belief is that patients deserve the very best care possible, and we know that WCM-Q shares this conviction. Working together, we will be able to make great contributions to the ongoing pursuit of excel-

lence in healthcare for patients in Qatar and the Middle East."

Dr Sheikh added: "WCM-Q is an institution with a tremendous record of providing excellence in medical education and patient care, so we are very happy that our students will have the opportunity to gain clinical experience in the world-class facilities of AMNM. We have great faith that this agreement will not only be a huge success but will also provide a tremendous boost to our mutually held goal to continually advance and improve healthcare outcomes for patients in Qatar and the wider region."



Representatives of AMNM and WCM-Q at the signing ceremony.

## Rambo Fitness & Games opens its first branch in Qatar



Rambo Fitness and Games has opened their first branch at the Regency Shopping Complex in Umm Al Seneem, Ain Khaled, promising to help residents achieve their fitness goals.

The gym boasts state-of-the-art equipment and amenities, including weight machines, free weights, and cardio equipment, as well as a variety of sports and games like billiards and table tennis. In addition, the facility features a spacious area for both trainees and visitors, along with a juice bar for post-workout refreshments.

The opening ceremony was

attended by several prominent individuals including Ali bin Mohamed bin Ali Al-Kuwari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Regency Shopping Complex, Amir El Din, Executive Director of the Group, Fadel Amir El Din, Deputy Executive Director, Mohamed Kamel, Director of the Legal Affairs Department of the Group, as well as department and branch managers. Also present were Abdul Rahman, the head of Sports Activity at the Indian Embassy, and a number of important sports figures.

Ali bin Mohamed bin Ali Al-Kuwari expressed his happi-

ness with the opening of the new fitness facility, which contributes to building a healthy and active society. He expressed his wishes for success in opening more branches in line with the State's interest and support for sports.

Amir El-Din, the Executive Director, stated that their vision for the center is to follow the same path of success as the Regency Shopping Complex.

"We strive with every effort and energy to provide all services and means of comfort to the clients of the Rambo Center & Gyms," Fadel Amir El-Din said.









# Are you ready to fast?

## Ramadan Nutrition tips for a Healthy and Rewarding Experience

Ramadan is the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, and it is a time of spiritual reflection, self-discipline, and fasting. Ramadan is also a time of celebration and community. Fasting during Ramadan teaches self-discipline, self-restraint, and compassion for the less fortunate.



**Dr. Shakir Thurempurath**  
Associate Specialist – Family Medicine  
Aster Medical Centre, Al Rayyan.

Muslims gather for nightly prayers at the mosque, and many mosques offer special programs and events during Ramadan. The last ten days of Ramadan are extraordinary, as they are believed to be the most blessed and the most likely to contain the Night of Power, a night of intense spiritual significance that involves abstaining from food, drink, and other physical needs from sunrise until sunset.

Fasting during Ramadan is difficult, especially for those who live in hot and dry climates or have physically demanding jobs. However, it is seen as a test of faith and an opportunity for spiritual growth. Muslims believe that fasting during Ramadan means they are earning God's blessings and forgiveness and that their good deeds during this month will be rewarded in the afterlife.

However, fasting during Ramadan can be challenging, especially for those new to the practice or with health conditions that may make it difficult to fast. To help you have a safe and fulfilling fasting experience throughout Ramadan, we'll review some healthy Ramadan fasting recommendations in this article.

### Stay Hydrated

Since you are not allowed to drink water or any other fluids during the day, it is important to have lots of fluids before sunrise and after sunset. This will help stay hydrated and prevent dehydration,



leading to headaches, fatigue, and other health problems.

You can also include foods with high water content in your meals, such as fruits and vegetables, to help keep you hydrated throughout the day.

### Eat Nutritious Meals

Another important tip for healthy Ramadan fasting is to eat nutritious meals during non-fasting hours. This means avoiding foods high in sugar, salt, and fat and focusing on foods rich in nutrients, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.



Eating a balanced diet during Ramadan will help you maintain your energy levels, prevent hunger pangs, and avoid overeating during non-fasting hours.

### Take Naps

Fasting during Ramadan can be exhausting, especially during the first few days when the body adjusts to the new routine. Taking short naps during the day can help the body to rest and recharge, and it can also help to stay alert and focused during non-fasting hours.

### Exercise in Moderation

During Ramadan, it is important to exercise in moderation. However, since the body is already under stress from fasting, it is best to avoid high-intensity workouts that can cause dehydration or exhaustion.

Instead, focus on gentle exercises, such as yoga or walking, during non-fasting hours. This will help you stay active and maintain your fitness level without putting too much stress on your body.

### Seek Medical Advice

You must get medical assistance before fasting during Ramadan if you have any health issues or concerns. Your doctor can advise you on how to fast safely if you have a health condition requiring special consideration during a fast, such as diabetes, heart disease, or pregnancy.

It is also important to listen to your body during Ramadan and take a break from fasting if you are feeling unwell or experiencing health problems. In conclusion, fasting during Ramadan is an important spiritual practice for Muslims worldwide, but it is important to do it safely and healthily. By following these tips for healthy Ramadan fasting, you can ensure a safe and rewarding experience during this holy month.



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# Preventive Cardiology – Staying ahead of heart disease



Dr. Bishnu Kiran Rajendran,  
MBBS, MD (Internal Medicine),  
DM (Cardiology), Specialist - Cardiology  
Reyada Medical Centre, C-Ring Road (Doha)

Heart disease is the leading cause of death globally, accounting for 17.9 million deaths annually, and most of these deaths can be prevented through lifestyle changes and proper medical management. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a group of disorders that affect the heart and blood vessels, including coronary artery disease, heart failure, stroke, and peripheral artery disease.



Preventive cardiology is a sub-specialty of cardiovascular medicine that focuses on identifying and reducing risk factors to prevent the development of heart disease. It aims to address the major risk factors for heart disease, including hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, smoking, and lack of physical activity.

### Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease

The major risk factors for CVD include hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, smoking, and a sedentary lifestyle.

Hypertension, defined as a systolic blood pressure greater than 130 mmHg or a diastolic blood pressure greater

er than 80 mmHg, affects approximately one-third of adults worldwide and is a major contributor to CVD.

High levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, often referred to as "bad cholesterol," are another significant risk factor for CVD, as they can lead to the accumulation of plaque in the arterial walls.

Diabetes also increases the risk of CVD, as high blood sugar levels can damage the blood vessels and increase inflammation.

Obesity, defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, is a risk factor for hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidemia, among other conditions.

Smoking, whether active or passive, is a well-known risk factor for CVD, as it causes damage to the blood vessels and promotes the formation of blood clots.

Finally, a sedentary lifestyle, characterized by lack of physical activity, is also a risk factor for CVD, as it can lead to weight gain, insulin resistance, and other metabolic abnormalities.

### Preventive Strategies for Cardiovascular Disease

Preventive cardiology employs various strategies to reduce the risk of CVD and promote overall cardiovascular health. These strategies range from lifestyle modifications to pharmacological interventions and surgery.

#### Lifestyle Modifications

Healthy lifestyle practices are critical in preventing CVD. At the individual level, there are several steps that a person can take to reduce their risk of developing CVD.

One such step is adopting a healthy diet, which should be low in saturated and trans fats, sodium, and added sugars, and high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. An ideal diet is the Mediterranean diet, which emphasizes whole foods, healthy fats, and low to moderate amounts of red meat.



MEDICAL CENTRE

Intermittent fasting has shown benefits in controlling metabolic parameters, lipids and abnormal sugars.

Another important lifestyle change is regular exercise. Physical activity helps to reduce blood pressure



and cholesterol levels, lowers blood sugar, and improves insulin sensitivity. The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week for adults, such as brisk walking, cycling, or swimming.

Quitting smoking is another way to reduce CVD risk, as it reduces the chances of developing lung cancer and many other cancers, in addition to CVD. Reducing stress through meditation, yoga and other activities and getting sufficient good quality sleep can improve the quality of life and reduce the risk of CVD.

#### Pharmacologic Interventions

Pharmacological interventions can also play a role in preventing CVD. For example, statins (medicine used to lower cholesterol levels) are commonly prescribed to pa-

tients with high LDL cholesterol levels.

Patients with hypertension may benefit from medications such as ACE inhibitors or calcium channel blockers, which help to lower blood pressure.

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# Applications open for fifth cycle of QF’s Qader Award

Applications for the fifth edition of the Qader Award will run until April 5, it was announced yesterday. Launched in 2018 by Qatar Foundation (QF), the initiative provides free access to sports programmes for people with disabilities through its Ability Friendly Programme.

Mark Hughes, director of Awsaj Academy, said: “We have seen the positive impact that the Qader Award has had on people’s lives. Over the past four years, the Qader Award has supported many individuals and families in Qatar. In the previous cycles, 126 people benefited, and we



are looking forward to that number increasing this year.” The Ability Friendly Programme supports people of all abilities to engage in sporting and developmental activities.

The winners of the Qader Award can enrol in football or swimming for a full academic year at no cost.

Applicants are eligible to apply for the Qader Award for the 2023-24 academic year if they or a family member have a special need or disability, are living in Qatar, and are aged four years or older for swimming and five years or older for football and have not been previously removed from the award.

All applications must be submitted online at [www.educationcity.qa/en/qader-award](http://www.educationcity.qa/en/qader-award) and include all the necessary supporting documents.

# Hakkasan Doha announces special Iftar menu

Award-winning Cantonese restaurant, Hakkasan Doha has announced a special Iftar menu with a distinctive Cantonese flair.

The menu will be served daily from sunset to midnight at Hakkasan’s indoor and outdoor restaurant area, starting tomorrow (March 22), until April 20.

The pre-dinner fruit blend Rising Rose will be followed by wild mushroom soup, dim sum trio and fried soft shell crab.

The main course includes a selection of dishes such as stir-fry prawn with orange butter, barbeque char siu rib-eye beef, French bean and



black sesame fried rice. The main course is served with a dinner blend, Bay Orange. The Ramadan special dessert titled The Date is



served with an after-dinner fruit blend, Mintea. Hakkasan Doha’s special Iftar menu is available for QR308/person including fruit blend

# New dates for women sports activities announced

QNA  
Doha

Qatar Sports for All Federation yesterday announced the new dates for sports activities for women as part of the ‘365 Days of Activity’ programme which include Al Luqta and Oxygen Parks and the Qatar Women’s sport committee.

This comes within the calendar of tour-

naments and events organised by the federation during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

The sports activities for women will be held at the Qatar Women’s sport committee hall from 8.30pm-9.30pm on Saturday-Thursdays.

Events will also be held at Al Luqta Park from 8.30pm until 9.30pm, on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays while on Mondays and Wednesdays events will be from 8.30pm until 10.30pm.

The Sports for All Federation will organise some events at the Oxygen Park, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8.30pm-10pm.

Men’s fitness and exercise classes to continue daily in the Aspire, Al Rayyan and Al Gharrafa Gardens, starting at 4.15pm.

Adjusting the dates of sports activities at the parks for women will contribute to increasing the turnout for all to participate in the activities of the programme, the federation said.

# HBKU hosts joint book launch with Oxford Business and Human Rights Network, Bonavero Institute of Human Rights

The Unesco Chair on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) partnered with the Oxford Business and Human Rights Network and Bonavero Institute of Human Rights to host the launch of the book, *Business and Human Rights Law and Practice in Africa*.

The event opened with remarks from Dr Susan L Karamanian, Dean, HBKU College of Law, and keynote speeches from ambassador Bakole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and Diana Asonaba Dapaah, Deputy Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Ghana.

The online event featured a panel discussion that highlighted the book’s analysis of approaches for advancing the implementation of business and human rights norms across Africa and its exploration of the latest developments in law, regulations, policies and governance structures across the African continent.

The editors of *Business and Human Rights Law and Practice in Africa*, Dr Damilola Olawuyi, Professor at HBKU’s College of Law and Unesco Chairholder on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development, and Dr Oyeniya Abe, Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Huddersfield, chaired the panel.

The panellists included John



Dr Damilola Olawuyi

Ikubaje, Senior Political Officer, Department of Political Affairs, African Union Commission, Florence Shako, Senior Partner, Mit-

ullah, Shako & Associates Advocates, Dr Lyla Latif, Teaching Fellow, University of Warwick, and Hassan M Ahmad, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia.

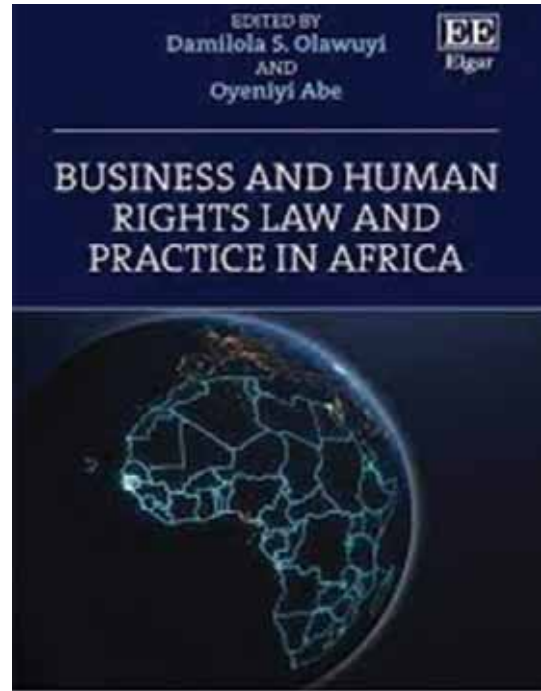
“We were proud to collaborate with the Oxford Business and Human Rights Network and the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights to host an insightful discussion on the status quo of business and human rights law and practice across the African continent.

“The College of Law’s internationally recognised faculty brings substantial expertise to contemporary legal issues of profound relevance to Qatar, the region and

beyond,” said Karamanian.

Dr Olawuyi added: “With increasing emphasis across the world on the responsibility of businesses to advance sustainability in all aspects of their operations, there is a growing need for collaborative research, training and capacity development on the practical steps for implementation.

“The strategic Africa focus of our Unesco Chair on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development at HBKU provides the needed platform for further knowledge exchange and co-operation in this area, and this book is just another important next step in the many more innovative programmes and resources that are to come.”



The cover of the book.

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# Katara Towers to launch inaugural Ramadan festivities

Nestled in the Arabian Gulf, Doha’s most iconic architectural masterpiece, Katara Towers, will launch its inaugural Ramadan festivities, a statement said.

Home to both Raffles Doha and Fairmont Doha, the property hosts some of the city’s most luxurious hotels, dining, and entertainment venues.

Designed with the emblematic Qatari heritage of the crossing swords, Katara Towers, in the picturesque Lusail Marina, represent the timelessness of heritage combined with the country’s forward-thinking ethos of progress.

Fairmont Doha and Raffles Doha are offering Ramadan Staycations which include a complimentary upgrade to the next room category, as well as Iftar or Suhoor for two.

Fairmont Doha’s Ramadan Staycation starts from QR1,200 and Raffles Doha’s starts from QR3,000.

Ramadan will be enjoyed across the expansive Raffles and Fairmont Garden, stretching from one side of the property to the other between both of the luxury hotels’ pools. There will be live stations from both Raffles and Fairmont with light oud entertainment during Suhoor. For exclusive gatherings, the Fairmont Ballroom offers a bespoke experience.

With regional cuisine at the heart of the offerings, there are a wide array of ‘Arabesque’ stations. Among them are the hot mezze and saj stations while the carving station will have the seasonal ouzi, the popular lamb dish. Live stations will showcase the unique cuisine offered at both hotels from each restaurant, with Indian from Masala Library, Italian from Alba by Enrico Crippa, Latin American from Vaya, Asian from Provok, and international dishes from L’Artisan.

Traditional Arabic desserts will feature Umm Ali and Kunafa among the favourites. There are special Ramadan activities for children. A daily



Suhoor will be available from 9.30pm-2am.

A ready-made Iftar or Suhoor is available for take away, as well as a selection of sweet treats. The Ramadan Delight Box is priced at QR950 for four people.

Iftar and Suhoor are both priced at QR300 per person and QR150 for children aged 6-12, with Iftar available from sunset to 8.30pm and Suhoor from 9.30pm-2am.

More information or reservation is available from [dining.doha@raffles.com](mailto:dining.doha@raffles.com) or by calling 4030 7200.

# Yallamomz app, online store launched

Yallamomz.com, described as Qatar’s first and largest exclusive mom and baby e-commerce application and webstore, has been launched, a statement said.

Yallamomz caters specifically to new moms and babies, offering a wide range of products, including diapers, formula, baby clothes, toys, feeding essentials, strollers, car seats, breast pumps, nursing bras, and maternity wear.

“We know how overwhelming it can be to shop for a baby, especially for new moms who are already dealing with a lot of changes and emotions,” said Yallamomz founder Thomas Jacob. “We wanted to create a one-stop-shop where moms can find everything they need for their little ones, without having to leave their homes.”

Yallamomz offers a two-hour ‘super-fast delivery’ on all orders and a hassle-free return policy. “We want to make the shopping experience as stress-free as possible for new moms,” said Swathi Purnima, head of operations. “Our goal is to provide high-quality products at affordable prices and make sure that moms have all that they need to take care of their babies.”



Yallamomz comes from the family of Yallatoys.com, the largest and leading online toy store operating in Qatar for five years. “It’s so convenient to have everything I need in one place, and the express delivery and hassle-free returns make it even better,” said Fatima a new mom.

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**GULF TIMES**

## Asset concerns weigh on US regional bank deal talks

Some US regional banks' efforts to raise capital and allay fears about their health are running up against concerns from potential buyers and investors about looming losses in their assets, five sources with knowledge of the discussions said.

First Republic Bank and PacWest Bancorp are among the banks that have been speaking to peers and investment firms about potential deals in the wake of US regulators taking over Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank this month amid a flight of depositors, sources have said.

First Republic's shares have fallen 80% since March 8, when the crisis started, while PacWest shares are down 65%.

First Republic declined comment. PacWest did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The five sources, who work at or with major banks and private equity firms and examined such deals, told Reuters that they have decided not to participate for now for fear they could be hit with losses in the investment portfolios and loan books.

They requested anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the confidential deliberations publicly.

The investment portfolios where the regional banks have parked the deposits of their clients comprise mainly Treasuries and other securities, such as mortgage bonds.

They are worth less than what the banks value them on their books because of a steep rise in interest rates. Some of the loan books of these banks are also underwater, due to high rates and concerns about an economic slowdown.

The sources said they were reluctant to participate in these deals without a government backstop on the losses or a more favourable outlook on interest rates.

Reuters could not determine whether any banking regulators had been asked by suitors to backstop the portfolio losses and whether they would do so.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which insures deposits and manages receiverships, told banks mulling offers in the auctions for Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank on Friday that it was considering retaining some of the assets that are underwater at the failed lenders. Such a backstop, however, is typically reserved for banks taken over by the FDIC.

An FDIC spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Credit ratings agency Moody's Investors Service Inc estimated on Friday that unrealised losses on First Republic's investment portfolio represented 37.7% of the cash and stock it set aside to absorb losses and warned it would also be difficult to sell some of its residential mortgage loans without a loss.

"Such a crystallisation of losses, if it were to happen, would very materially weigh on the bank's profitability and capital," Moody's said.

One banking executive who studied a deal with First Republic estimated that marking-to-market the California-based bank's mortgage book in an acquisition would spell a large hit for the acquirer.

The government would have to facilitate such a deal, the executive said. It could do so by providing some leeway to the acquirer's leverage ratios that determine the bank's debt levels, or backstop it in other ways, the executive added. The executive was not aware of any such discussions.

Another complication in cutting a deal with regional banks is the uncertainty over the interest rate outlook, said a lawyer who works on transactions involving banks.

The Federal Reserve will decide tomorrow whether it will raise rates further in its battle against inflation. Those studying deals and trying to assess the future value of regional banks are hoping for clarity on how aggressively the central bank will move to raise rates further, the lawyer said.

It is unclear how long some regional banks can muddle through without a deal.

While new liquidity backstops created by the US Treasury and regulators last Sunday are keeping the regional banks afloat, the crisis has eviscerated their profitability and made it difficult to continue with business as usual, banking analysts say.

Bank of America analysts wrote in a research note on Friday that the \$30 billion in deposits that First Republic's major peers moved in solidarity to the troubled bank helped stabilised its funding base but did little for its earnings given the flight of some of its customers.

"Beyond the accounting mark, the ultimate value that a potential buyer will be willing to pay will also be influenced by their assessment of the potential impairment to the First Republic client franchise," the analysts wrote. — Reuters

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# Sudan paramilitary leader eyes post-transition role

By Khalid Abdelaziz  
Khartoum

The leader of a powerful paramilitary force in Sudan has put himself at the forefront of a planned transition toward democracy, unsettling fellow military rulers and triggering a mobilisation of troops in the capital Khartoum last week.

General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo commands tens of thousands of fighters in the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and has amassed considerable mineral wealth. He is also deputy leader of Sudan's ruling council, which took power in a coup more than a year ago.

Recently however, Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti, has pulled away from military colleagues and found common ground with a civilian political alliance, in moves that could establish him as a major figure even after the democratic transition.

Central to Hemedti's disagreement with the military is his reluctance to set a clear deadline to integrate the RSF into the army, two military sources said, referring to a stipulation within the outline deal signed in December that paves the way for a two year civilian-led transition to elections.

The sources said the standoff led Hemedti to bring additional RSF forces in recent weeks to bases in Khartoum from Darfur, the western region where the group emerged from the so-called Janjaweed militias accused of atrocities during the early 2000s.

Concerned about his intentions, the army under ruling council leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan stationed more soldiers in the capital on a state of alert, the sources said.

Speaking to RSF troops earlier this month, Hemedti said his forces would

- Sudan on cusp of new transition from military rule
- Deal has brought rivalry between generals to surface
- Rival factions moved troops to Khartoum: sources
- Military takeover led to protests, economic stagnation

never fight the army, but "our problem is with these people who are clinging to power" — an apparent reference to Islamist-leaning elements of the former regime that retain influence in the army and civil service.

The reasons for the troop movements have not been previously reported. Spokespeople for the military and RSF did not respond to requests for comment.

While tensions have since cooled, Hemedti's underlying differences with the army have not been resolved, and the risk remains of a confrontation that could tip Sudan, which sits in a volatile region between the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, into deepening instability.

Hemedti and other military men are unlikely to be able to stand for election in the short term. But in a country where power has long been held by the Khartoum elite, Hemedti, from a nomadic camel-herding background, is trying to become "a force to be reckoned with in the national power structure," said Suliman Baldo, head of the Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, an independent think-tank.

In a BBC interview last year, Hemedti said he would not stand by and watch the country fall apart, but denied having leadership ambitions. His office did not respond to questions submitted by Reuters.

A handover of power to civilians under the outline deal could restore billions in Western aid and restart an

economic and democratic opening that was halted when, in October 2021, army and RSF officers deposed the fledgling civilian government that had followed the overthrow of former president Omar al-Bashir.

The main signatories to the outline agreement are Burhan's military and Hemedti's RSF on one side and the civilian Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) coalition on the other. The two sides had shared power in the aborted transition between Bashir's overthrow and the coup.

Hemedti has increasingly aligned himself with the pro-democracy civilian movement in speeches. On the other hand, Burhan has delayed a final signing of the transition agreement by pushing to broaden it and bring in former rebel groups and pro-military civilian factions.

On March 11, the army said accusations it was reluctant to hand over power were "open attempts to gain political sympathy, and obstruct the process of transition". Later that day, Hemedti and Burhan met, according to a statement by the ruling council.

Under pressure from Western and Gulf powers, the process of finalising a framework for forming a new transitional government before elections has since shown renewed signs of momentum.

The sides are due to meet this month to hash out details of military restructuring, but there has so far been no indication of when the RSF will be

merged with the army, and what role Hemedti would play in the enlarged armed forces.

The army wants to see the RSF, which by some estimates has up to 100,000 fighters spread across one of Africa's largest countries, integrated under their control by the end of the new transitional period, the two military sources said.

Many in Sudan's pro-democracy movement are uneasy about Hemedti's prominence in the new transition push.

Resistance committees that have led anti-coup demonstrations blame the RSF for leading the killings of dozens of protesters in June 2019, a charge Hemedti denies.

They also point to Hemedti's role in the war that escalated in Darfur after 2003, during which he rose as a leader in the Janjaweed militias.

When protests raged against Bashir in 2019, however, Hemedti joined the putsch against him, setting himself against Bashir's Islamist base.

At the signing of the outline deal in December, Hemedti apologised for violence by the state towards communities throughout the country, without elaborating.

Four FFC leaders told Reuters that Hemedti currently appears to share their goal of ushering in a civilian government and their opposition to Bashir loyalists including in the military. They requested anonymity as they were not authorised to speak for the coalition.

Their willingness to work with Hemedti or Burhan is conditional on progress, one said, adding that they would return to their opposition roles if either reneged on the agreement.

Since the 2019 uprising, Hemedti has used his place on the ruling council to take the lead on economic issues, steer a peace deal with many of the rebels he fought in Darfur, and nurture foreign ties with countries including the United Arab Emirates and Russia.

His domestic influence is apparent in Darfur, where violence has escalated despite the signing of a peace deal in 2020.

A UN panel of experts report published in February said elements from the RSF, as well as rebel groups, were involved in recent violence.

Hemedti has visited often, gathering tribal leaders to sign ceasefire agreements, donating cars to government agencies, and sponsoring sports championships.

Any final transition agreement would likely bar Hemedti and Burhan from standing in the first post-deal elections, one international diplomat said. But Hemedti, still in his late 40s, has time on his side.

"He wants to reinvent himself as not a militia leader, but a statesman," said the diplomat. — Reuters



Deputy head of Sudan's sovereign council General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo speaks during a press conference at Rapid Support Forces head quarter in Khartoum in February. (Reuters)



# Thailand dissolves parliament ahead of election in May

Reuters  
Bangkok

Thailand dissolved its parliament yesterday to clear the way for an election in May, a vote set to reignite a power struggle between a military-backed establishment and a political movement that has dominated elections for two decades.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn endorsed a decree to dissolve parliament, according to an announcement in the Royal Gazette yesterday, ahead of an election that must be held within 45-60 days.

No date has been announced, but two sources with knowledge of the matter earlier told Reuters that the vote would be on May 14.

“This is a return of political decision-making power to the people swiftly to continue democratic government with the King as head of state,” said the decree published yesterday.

The election broadly pits the billionaire Shinawatra family and its business allies against parties and politicians close to their rivals among the royalist military and old money conservatives.

With populist policies aimed at Thailand's working classes, parties controlled by the Shinawatras have won every election since 2001, including twice in landslides, but three of its governments were removed in military coups or by court rulings.

The May election will choose members of parliament, which together with an appointed Senate will choose a prime minister by the end of July, according to a timeline provided by the government.

The main opposition Pheu Thai party's Paetongtarn Shinawatra is the frontrunner to be prime minister in opinion surveys, with her support jumping 10 points to 38.2% in a poll released at the weekend, more than twice the backing of her nearest contender.

Incumbent Prayut Chan-o-cha, who has been in power since his coup in 2014 against Paetongtarn's aunt, Yingluck Shinawatra, has been trailing in polls and was third in the latest survey by the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA).

Prayut, 68, will continue to lead as head of a caretaker government and is expected to run again.

## Yemen warring factions agree to meet again in May, release 887 detainees

The two sides in Yemen's conflict agreed to free 887 detainees and to meet again in May after 10 days of negotiations in Switzerland, the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said yesterday.

The deal which comes ahead of Ramadan adds to optimism for further releases and a final resolution to the conflict following the resumption of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia this month.

“It's an expression of hope. It's an expression of humanity and it indicates the way ahead for all parties to the conflict,” said Fabrizio Carboni, ICRC regional director for the Middle East, who was seated between the two delegations.

UN special envoy Hans Grundberg said the deal was one of several developments that gave reason to believe things were moving “in the right direction” and towards a resolution of the eight-year conflict.

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group said it would release 181 detainees, including 15 Saudis and three Sudanese, in exchange for 706 prisoners to be freed by the government, according to earlier statements on Twitter by the head of the Houthis' prisoner affairs committee, Abdul Qader al-Murtada, and the group's chief negotiator, Mohammed Abdulsalam.

Murtada said the exchange would happen in three weeks' time. The United Nations and ICRC declined to give a breakdown nor give the timing. **- Reuters**

# French govt survives no-confidence votes in pension fight

AFP  
Paris

The French government under President Emmanuel Macron survived two no-confidence motions in parliament yesterday, but still faces intense pressure over its handling of a controversial pensions reform.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne incensed the opposition last week by announcing that the government would impose a controversial pension reform without a vote in parliament, sparking accusations of anti-democratic behaviour.

Its use of an article in the constitution allowing such a move also gave the opposition the right to call motions of no confidence in the government and two such demands were filed.

The 577-seat National Assembly lower rejected a motion brought by the centrist

LIOT coalition – also supported by the left – by a margin of just nine votes, much narrower than expected.

It then overwhelmingly rejected a motion brought by the far-right National Rally (RN) with just 94 votes in favour.

The rejection of the motions means the reform to raise the pensions age from 62 to 64 has been adopted by the legislature.

It still needs to be signed into law by Macron and may also face legal challenges.

It far from represents the end of the biggest domestic crisis of the second mandate in office of Macron, who has yet to make any public comment on the controversy.

“We never went so far in building a compromise as we did with this reform,” Borne told parliament ahead of the vote, saying her use of the article to bypass a vote was “profoundly democratic” under France's constitution set up by post-war leader Charles de Gaulle.

A new round of strikes and protests have

been called on Thursday and are expected to again bring public transport to a standstill in several areas.

There has been a rolling strike by rubbish collectors in Paris, leading to unsightly and unhygienic piles of trash accumulating in the French capital.

The future of Borne, appointed as France's second woman premier by Macron after his election victory over the far-right for a second mandate, remains in doubt after she failed to secure a parliamentary majority for the reform.

Meanwhile, it remains unclear when Macron will finally make public comments over the events, amid reports he is considering an address to the nation.

Since Borne invoked article 49.3 of the constitution, there have also been daily protests in Paris and other cities that have on occasion turned violent.

A total of 169 people were arrested nationwide on Saturday during spontaneous

protests, including one that assembled 4,000 in the capital.

Government insiders and observers have raised fears that France is again heading for another bout of violent anti-government protests, only a few years after the “Yellow Vest” movement shook the country from 2018-2019.

A survey on Sunday showed Macron's personal rating at its lowest level since the height of the “Yellow Vest” crisis in 2019, with only 28% of respondents having a positive view of him.

Macron has argued that the pension changes are needed to avoid crippling deficits in the coming decades linked to France's ageing population.

Opponents of the reform say it places an unfair burden on low earners, women and people doing physically wearing jobs.

Opinion polls have consistently shown that two-thirds of French people oppose the changes.

# Putin ‘ready’ to discuss China’s Ukraine plan at Xi talks

President Vladimir Putin told his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping yesterday that Russia was open to discussing China's proposals to end the fighting in Ukraine at the start of high-stakes talks in the Kremlin.

The summit comes as China seeks to portray itself as a neutral party in the Ukraine conflict, but Washington warned the world should not be fooled by Beijing's moves.

Xi's three-day trip also serves as a show of support for internationally isolated Putin, just days after a war crimes tribunal issued a warrant for his arrest over accusation of unlawfully deporting Ukrainian children.

“We are always open to negotiations,” Putin told the Chinese leader, who was on his first visit to Moscow since the start of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine last year.

The US has accused Beijing of mulling arms exports to

Moscow – claims that China has vociferously denied.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken voiced scepticism over Xi's Ukraine proposals, warning that they could be a “stalling tactic” to help Russia.

“The world should not be fooled by any tactical move by Russia, supported by China or any other country, to freeze the war on its own terms,” Blinken told reporters.

Xi and Putin are due to discuss China's 12-point position paper on the Ukraine conflict, which includes a call for dialogue and respect for all countries' territorial sovereignty.

During his initial meeting with Putin, Xi hailed “close ties” with Russia and the Russian leader said the two countries had “plenty of common objectives and tasks”.

The two will continue talks today.

Putin has welcomed Beijing's statements on Ukraine as

being indicative of a willingness to play a “constructive role” in ending the conflict.

However, Kyiv reiterated calls yesterday for Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine.

“We expect Beijing to use its influence on Moscow to make it put an end to the aggressive war against Ukraine,” Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said in comments sent to AFP.

A day before Xi's arrival, a defiant Putin went to the Russian-held Ukrainian city of Mariupol – his first visit to territory captured from Kyiv since Moscow's forces pushed across the border in February 2022.

Xi's visit also comes just days after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Putin on the accusation of unlawfully deporting Ukrainian children. **- AFP**

## Four Oath Keepers associates convicted

Four associates of the far-right Oath Keepers group were found guilty yesterday for their roles in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol. Oath Keeper associates Sandra Ruth Parker, Laura Steele, Connie Meggs and William Isaacs were found guilty of obstructing an official proceeding, as well as several other felony and misdemeanour charges. Michael Greene and Bennie Parker were found guilty on lesser misdemeanour charges of entering a restricted building or grounds. **- Reuters**

## Nine Chinese nationals killed in CAR attack

Nine Chinese mine workers were killed in an attack in the Central African Republic (CAR), sparking a rare call yesterday from China's President Xi Jinping for the perpetrators to be “severely” punished. The attack near Bambari town left “nine dead and two wounded”. The victims were Chinese workers at a site run by the Gold Coast Group. China's foreign ministry confirmed the toll, and Xi called on authorities in the Central African Republic to “severely punish” those behind the killings. **- AFP**

# IPCC climate report appeals to everyone to salvage 1.5°C goal

Reuters  
Paris

Climate scientists appealed directly yesterday to everyone on the planet to seize a dwindling chance to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius (2.7° Fahrenheit) or risk harming people living today and their descendants for thousands of years.

With graphics showing individuals – from babies to pensioners – set to suffer ever more from rising heat, the report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) gives a more personal twist to findings about looming threats than its past studies directed at governments.

“There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all,” the report said.

“The choices and actions implemented in this decade will have impacts now and for thousands of years,” it added, pointing to long-term risks like desertification and rising sea levels.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the report as a guide for defusing what he called a ticking “climate time bomb”.

“Our world needs climate action on all fronts – everything, everywhere, all at once,” he said at the report's launch.

Governments have fallen far short of

pledges in the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit heating of the climate by shifting off fossil fuels, amid crises including the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, food shortages and strained ties between China and the United States, the top two greenhouse gas emitters.

The IPCC summary for policymakers, condensing thousands of pages of climate science in six mammoth reports published since 2014, is sprinkled with references to healthier lifestyles, such as cycling, walking and diets rich in fruits and vegetables with less high-carbon meat.

It also outlines the surging risks to mental health from a warming climate.

“We brought in the human side” of climate change, Hoesung Lee, chair of the IPCC, told a news conference, saying that it is a major shift since the last IPCC policy document in 2014 which had few references to individuals and their behaviour.

Peter Thorn, one of the IPCC authors, said it is time for everyone to accept a share of responsibility.

“We at all levels – governments, communities, individuals – have made climate change somebody else's problem,” he added.

The report was approved after a week-long meeting of scientists and governments in Interlaken, Switzerland, to negotiate the text.

It reiterates previous IPCC findings that

it is “unequivocal” that humanity is to blame for climate change.

However, notably, in a difference from earlier reports, it shows “high” or “very high” confidence from scientists about the scale of coming risks and the shrinking opportunities to address them.

The IPCC also appeals to people's self-interest, saying that action to combat climate change by shifting to clean energy makes sense for health and well-being, in what delegates said was partly an attempt to win over those who doubt the science or economics.

“Access to clean energy and technologies improves health, especially for women and children; low-carbon electrification, walking, cycling and public transport enhance air quality, improve health, employment opportunities and deliver equity,” the report said. “The economic benefits for people's health from air quality improvements alone would be roughly the same, or possibly even larger than the costs of reducing or avoiding emissions.”

It said the planet has warmed by 1.1C above pre-industrial times and is on track to breach 1.5C – a threshold for ever more disastrous impacts – between 2030 and 2035 on current trends.

The Paris Agreement seeks to limit warming to “well below” 2C while “pursuing efforts” for 1.5C.

“Limiting warming to 1.5C and 2C involves rapid, deep and in most cases im-

mediate greenhouse gas emission reductions,” the report said, warning that overshooting 1.5C could trigger impacts such as an irreversible thaw of ice sheets that would push up sea levels.

The report will guide the next annual UN climate summit in Dubai, known as COP28, in December.

The conference is due to give a first “stocktake” of climate action under the Paris pact.

Oliver Geden, an IPCC author at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, said the IPCC report, for the first time, includes an estimate that global greenhouse gas emissions will have to fall 60% from 2019 levels by 2035 to safeguard the 1.5C goal.

The year 2035 is the next horizon for national climate action plans, which mostly now stretch to 2030.

A previous IPCC report already set a benchmark for cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, of 43% below 2019 levels, to have a 50% chance of keeping warming to 1.5C.

Such cuts are, so far, theoretical.

Global energy-related carbon emissions rose almost 1% in 2022 to a new record high, according to the International Energy Agency.

And temperatures are currently on track to reach 2.7C by 2100 with current policies, according to a Climate Action Tracker compiled by scientists.

## Former premier Khan asks top judge to let him appear in court virtually

Former prime minister Imran Khan has asked the chief justice of Pakistan to allow him to appear for court proceedings virtually to reduce the risk of any threat to his life, he said in a video message yesterday as his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party prepared for a rally in Lahore tomorrow.

Supporters of Khan's party clashed with police in the city of Lahore last week as they attempted to arrest him at his home, and later with police in Islamabad as he arrived to appear before a court on Saturday.

“My life is in danger, why must I appear in court,” said Khan in a live video stream, asking to appear by video conference for court proceedings and vowing: “I will appear for all cases.”

Police in Pakistan have arrested dozens of supporters and aides of Khan in raids in two cities as part of a crackdown on those involved in recent clashes with the security forces. Khan's party and police said yesterday.

Khan, a former cricket star, was prime minister from 2018 until 2022, when he was ousted from office in a parliamentary vote. He is facing several legal cases, including one that prompted a failed attempt to arrest him last Tuesday after a court issued warrants for his arrest for not appearing before it. **- Reuters**

## Indian state extends mobile Internet blackout in hunt for Sikh separatist

Indian authorities extended a mobile Internet blackout across a state of about 30mn people yesterday as police hunted a radical Sikh preacher.

The blackout extension came after supporters of Amritpal Singh were filmed vandalising India's consulate in San Francisco. A similar disturbance also took place in London.

Authorities in the northern state of Punjab launched a major search on Saturday for Singh, who has risen to prominence in recent months demanding the creation of Khalistan, a separate Sikh homeland.

Police said yesterday that they had arrested 114 people so far but Singh's whereabouts were unknown.

The Internet outage, originally in place until noon (0630 GMT) yesterday, was extended for another 24 hours. **- AFP**

## Venezuelan police arrest mayor, judges, officials in corruption sweep

Venezuelan anti-graft police have arrested a mayor, two judges and three government officials in connection with unusual operations in the ruling party and cargoes of oil, state television and sources familiar with the matter said yesterday.

According to three sources familiar with the case, authorities arrested Colonel Antonio Perez, a former vice-president in charge of commerce and supply at state oil firm Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA).

Two of the sources said authorities also arrested Colonel Samuel Testamarck, general manager of PDVSA's maritime arm PDV Marina. Earlier yesterday state TV had announced the arrest of Joselit Ramirez, the former head of the country's crypto-asset watchdog, and Mayor Pedro Hernandez of Las Tejerias, an area hit by floods that killed dozens late last year.

Judges Cristobal Corneiles and Jose Marquez Garcia were also detained, the broadcast said, without disclosing the charges nor the specific cases of corruption. **- Reuters**

## French, US hostages released after years of captivity in West Africa

French journalist Olivier Dubois was hugged by emotional reporters at a briefing in Niger yesterday announcing the release of him and US aid worker Jeffery Woodke who had been held hostage in West Africa for years by Islamist militants.

Dubois was kidnapped in Mali in 2021, while Woodke was kidnapped in neighbouring Niger in 2016.

Some journalists embraced him upon arrival at the briefing at the airport in the capital Niamey, moved by the sight of their peer.

Woodke, a Christian humanitarian worker, thanked God as well as the Nigerian, US and French authorities for helping with his rescue. The circumstances of the release were not immediately clear. **- Reuters**

## IMF approves Sri Lanka’s \$2.9bn bailout

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that its executive board approved a nearly \$3bn bailout for Sri Lanka, and the country's presidency said the programme will enable it to access up to \$7bn in overall funding.

The decision will allow an immediate disbursement of about \$333mn, the IMF said. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said Sri Lanka also needs to undertake various reforms. **- AFP**



## Turkmenistan leader visits National Museum of Qatar



Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedov and the accompanying delegation visited the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) yesterday. During the tour of the museum, the president was accompanied by HE the Minister of Municipality Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie. HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Hamad al-Thani, head of partnerships and sponsorships at Qatar Museums, provided additional demonstrations on the precious collections at the NMoQ. They also toured various galleries that include the beginnings of the geological development of the Qatar peninsula, its natural environments, monuments and rock inscriptions in archaeological sites, the lives of the people of Qatar on land and coasts, and the digital exhibition. Berdimuhamedov was also briefed on the most prominent pieces and collections related to pearls and jewellery designs, in addition to the galleries of modern Qatar history since the discovery of oil and gas. He also visited the Majlis exhibition *A Meeting Place*. - **QNA**



## Amir, President of Turkmenistan witness signing of agreements

**From Page 1**

His Highness the Amir and President Berdimuhamedov also witnessed the signing of an agreement to encourage and protect mutual investments between the governments of the two countries, and an MoU between Qatar's Ministry of Labour and Turkmenistan's Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, in addition to an

agreement on exemption from visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and special passports and service between the two governments.

A number of ministers and ranking officials attended the signing ceremonies.

On the Turkmen side, members of the official delegation accompanying the president attended the ceremonies.

Berdimuhamedov left Doha in the evening.

## Turkmenistan's embassy opens in Doha

Turkmenistan inaugurated its embassy in Doha yesterday. Cutting the ribbon to announce the opening were Turkmenistan Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov and HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi. - **QNA**



## Berdimuhamedov and his delegation visit QF

Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedov visited the headquarters of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) yesterday. He and his accompanying delegation listened to a demonstration on the objectives, activities, and work mechanism of the QF within its future vision. During the visit, a summary presentation was displayed, showing the history of the QF, highlighting its general mission and showcasing its achievements and accomplished goals, as well as its educational, developmental, and social role. Berdimuhamedov and his delegation also watched a documentary on the most prominent achievements of the QF in a number of fields related to the system of education, research, and development. - **QNA**



Snapshots from the 15th edition of the Schools' Robotics Championship. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam



# 1,600 students join Schools' Robotics Championship

More than 1,600 students representing 160 government and private schools across the country are taking part in the 15th edition of the Schools' Robotics Championship, which began yesterday at Lusail Multipurpose Arena.

The three-day event is organised by the Qatar Scientific Club (QSC), under the Ministry of Sports and Youth, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

The opening ceremony was attended by HE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Abdulrahman Musallam al-Dosari, adviser to HE

the Minister of Sports and Youth, and a number of officials from both ministries.

In his introduction message for the championship booklet, HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Salah bin Ghanem bin Nasser al-Ali stressed that the ministry recognises the young people's effective role in society and their keenness to assume responsibilities.

In her remarks for the championship booklet, HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi stressed that the event carries an extensive educational heritage that enhances its competitive status.

She said that the championship plays a key

role in encouraging the innovation and creativity of students, driving them to go beyond the usual ways of exploration.

QSC executive director engineer Rashid al-Rahimi, head of the supreme organising committee of the championship, said that such events prepare a generation capable of competition and ready for the future jobs that mostly depend on advanced modern technology, robots and artificial intelligence (AI).

The number of participating teams in this edition is 50% higher than in the previous edition, and the number of participating students increased by 30%, he added.

