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SPORT | Page 1

Qatar's Barshim and Samba to Open Diamond League season in Doha



GULF TIMES

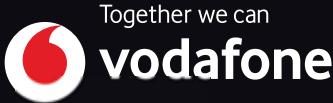
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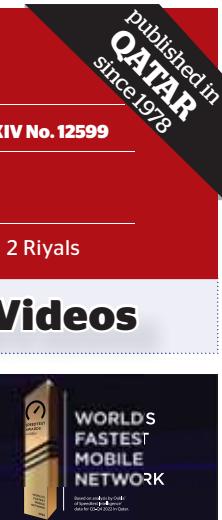


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Amir holds Iftar banquet for officers of Armed Forces, MoI and Security Apparatus

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted, at Lusail Palace yesterday, an Iftar banquet in honour of commanders and ranking officers of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Interior (MoI), and the various security apparatus of the state, on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. The banquet was attended by His Highness the Personal Representative of the Amir Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani along with a number of Sheikhs, Ministers, and senior officials. (QNA) [Page 12](#)



Amir congratulates president of UAE

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held a telephone conversation yesterday with his brother President of the sisterly United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, during which the Amir extended his congratulations on the appointment of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Court Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan as UAE Vice-President, the appointment of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan as the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, the appointment of Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed al-Nahyan and Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed al-Nahyan as Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi, wishing them all the success in performing their duties. In turn, the president of the sisterly UAE extended his thanks and appreciation to the Amir for his sincere fraternal feelings. (QNA)

Indonesia removed as host of FIFA U-20 World Cup 2023

FIFA has decided to remove Indonesia as the host of the FIFA U-20 World Cup 2023, scheduled between May 20 and June 11, following its objection to the participation of Israel's national team. FIFA said that a new host would be announced as soon as possible, with the dates of the tournament currently remaining unchanged. FIFA added that potential sanctions against the Football Association of Indonesia (PSSI) might also be decided at a later stage. The draw for the tournament, scheduled on Friday, was cancelled due to the governor of Bali's call to exclude "Israel" from the tournament. (QNA)

Saudi agrees to partner with China-led bloc

Saudi Arabia has agreed to join the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation as a "dialogue partner", state media reported yesterday, the latest indication of closer political ties with China. The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation was established in 2001 as a political, economic and security organisation to rival Western institutions. Besides China, its eight members include India, Pakistan and Russia, as well as four central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

RAMADAN THOUGHT

Be conscious of Allah wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good deed, and it will eradicate it, and treat people in a kind manner. [At-Tirmithi]

Prayer times

Fajr...4:10; Zuhra...11:38; Asr...3:07;
Maghrab...5:52; Isha...7:22

Fasting times

Iftar today 5:52pm
Imsak tomorrow 3:59am

QF's Qader Award opens doors for autistic people

Qatar Foundation's (QF) Qader Award, a free sports programme for people with disabilities, has opened doors for people with autism. Launched in 2018, the initiative has been instrumental in transforming the lives of young men - and their whole family.

Hayat Abuznadd, a mother of triplets with autism, is an excellent example of the Qader Award's success. Dedicated to providing her sons with the best possible learning opportunities, she applied in 2018 for Qader Award.

Through the programme, her sons - Abdulrahman, Yousef, and Zacharia - have been able to take part in football classes and swimming lessons. And these sporting activities have had a

profound impact on their lives - beyond just the physical benefits of exercise. According to Abuznadd, they have developed a range of physical, social, and emotional skills.

"Through team sports, like football, the triplets learned how to work with others to achieve a common goal, communicate effectively, and build relationships with their teammates. This improved their ability to understand and interpret social cues, which has helped them in their daily interactions with other people," she said.

"Swimming is also a fantastic activity for them, as it has helped to improve their co-ordination, balance, and sensory integration skills. They enjoy being in the water, it is a calming and therapeutic experience for them." [To Page 5](#)



QF's Qader Award opens doors for people with autism.

Qatar intent on combating financial crimes: Cabinet

QNA
Doha

The Cabinet yesterday reviewed the adoption of the mutual evaluation report of the anti-money laundering, combating the financing of terrorism and financing of proliferation system in Qatar during the general meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which was held in Paris from Feb. 20 to 24, 2023; and its outcome which confirms that Qatar has a very strong legal and regulatory framework in this field.

The Cabinet affirmed Qatar's commitment to combating money laundering and terrorism financing, improving and strengthening the control system, updating related plans, and enhancing participation and contribution to international efforts to combat financial crimes.

The Cabinet directed the government agencies concerned, the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, and the National Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Committee, to work on implementing the recommendations contained in the report, in order to achieve more positive results.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed

bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting held through video conferencing.

A statement issued by HE the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs said at the outset of the meeting, the Cabinet renewed Qatar's strong condemnation and denunciation of extremists in some European countries continuing their criminal and provocative practices that contradict the most basic rules of ethics, customs and civilised behaviour, pointing to burning a copy of the Holy Qur'an by an extremist group in the Danish capital, Copenhagen.

The Cabinet underlined that committing these reprehensible and irresponsible acts in this blessed month would inflame feelings of hatred, stir up strife and encourage extremism, which threatens the values of peaceful coexistence.

The Cabinet reiterated calls upon the international community to take measures to ensure respect for religions and criminalise violations of their sanctity, stop the wave of fanaticism, extremism and unjustified hatred against Islam and Muslims in some countries, and work to spread a

culture of brotherhood, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among countries and peoples.

The Cabinet took note of the Shura Council's approval of a draft law on documents and archives.

The draft law aims to regulate the handling, classification, preservation and protection of public, historical, national and other documents.

The Cabinet approved draft decisions of the Minister of Interior regarding:

A- Formation of committees to examine appeals and grievances for the Central Municipal Council elections.

B- Formation of election committees for the Central Municipal Council elections.

C- Formation of voter registration committees for the Central Municipal Council elections.

The aforementioned draft decisions come in preparation for the imminent elections of the 7th session of the Central Municipal Council 2023.

The Cabinet approved: A- A draft agreement for co-operation in the legal field between the government of Qatar and the government of the Dominican Republic. [To Page 4](#)

Musk and experts call for halt in 'giant AI experiments'

AFP

Paris

much more powerful than the previous version, which was used to power ChatGPT, a bot capable of generating tracts of text from the briefest of prompts.

"AI systems with human-competitive intelligence can pose profound risks to society and humanity," said the open letter titled "Pause Giant AI Experiments".

"Powerful AI systems should be developed only once we are confident that their effects will be positive and their risks will be manageable," it said.

Musk was an initial investor in OpenAI, spent years on its board, and his car firm Tesla develops AI systems

to help power its self-driving technology, among other applications.

The letter, hosted by the Musk-funded Future of Life Institute, was signed by prominent critics as well as competitors of OpenAI like Stability AI chief Emad Mostaque.

Canadian AI pioneer Yoshua Bengio, also a signatory, at a virtual press conference in Montreal warned "that society is not ready" for this powerful tool, and its possible misuses.

"Let's slow down. Let's make sure that we develop better guardrails," he said, calling for a thorough international discussion about AI and its im-



plications, "like we've done for nuclear power and nuclear weapons."

The letter quoted from a blog written by OpenAI founder Sam Altman, who suggested that "at some point, it may

be important to get independent review before starting to train future systems".

"We agree. That point is now," the authors of the open letter wrote.

"Therefore, we call on all AI labs to immediately pause for at least 6 months the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4."

They called for governments to step in and impose a moratorium if companies failed to agree.

The six months should be used to develop safety protocols, AI governance systems, and refocus research on ensuring AI systems are more accurate, safe, "trustworthy and loyal".

QT announces winners of Qatar 2023 final raffle draw

Ten lucky winners walked away with cash prizes starting from QR10,000 and one studio apartment in The Pearl Island during the final Shop Qatar draw held at Doha Festival City on March 18, Qatar Tourism said yesterday. During the country's biggest shopping festival, shoppers had the opportunity to enter the draw for mega prizes worth over QR2mn for every QR200 they spent. The festival featured 10 of Qatar's most popular shopping malls and a diverse range of events, including Sephora masterclasses, a fashion show at Harvey Nichols, roaming performances, and much more. The 10 winners of the third raffle draw are the following, in the order of name, nationality, voucher number: QR10,000 - Ahmad al-Sowyan, Saudi Arabia, 76260; Balamurugan Muthaia, India, 41544; Hamdan al-Tarjami, Saudi Arabia, 65127; Lorena Espinosa, Philippines, 74757; Nader Saleem, Jordan, 13927; Poojah Sabrawal, India, 46570; QR20,000 - Dananjy Sharma, India, 04333; Mohamed Alehtam, Egypt, 86317; Sundaresan Baskaran, India, 37107; Residential Apartment - Al Mojahid, Bangladesh, 46862.



QRCS provides vocational training for Gaza graduates

The representation office of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Gaza attended the graduation ceremony of 73 young women and men who received remote work training under its project 'Create a Living for Women and Youths from Poor Families in Gaza'. The QRCS-funded \$457,000 initiative was carried out by Computer Land Co. and Vision Plus Co., in co-operation with Palestine's Ministry of Labour (MoL) in Gaza. Dr Akram Nassar, head of QRCS's office in Gaza, said the interventions of QRCS to build the capacity of fresh graduates help to improve the economic conditions in Gaza, amid high unemployment and poverty rates. According to him, 73 beneficiaries gained practical experience in five specialisations: e-marketing, mobile application programming, user interface/experience design, translation, and content writing. Now, they are able to work from home. Mohamed Tubail, chairman of the National Council for Remote Work and Director-General of Employment Services at MoL, praised QRCS's role in alleviating the suffering of fresh graduates in Gaza, by securing job opportunities for them. Engineer Ashraf al-Yazouri, director of Vision Plus Co said the nine-month training resulted in 584 tasks executed by the trainees on remote work platforms, with a total revenue of over \$60,000.



Ashghal launches Ramadan Tournament

The 10th Ramadan Tournament by the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) started in co-operation with Federations of Football, Basketball and Table Tennis and Billiards and Snooker. The tournament is the largest ever with more than 660 players taking part in football, basketball, padel, table tennis, billiard and video games (play station) in Qatar Sports Club, a statement said yesterday.

The tournament has 23 football teams, 18 basketball teams, 42 table tennis players, 20 padel players, 24 competing billiard players and 20 video game players. Abdulla Saad al-Saad, Public Relations and Communications Department manager, said this edition of the tournament



Hamad Nasser al-Nuaimi



Abdulla Saad al-Saad

is different from previous one by being the largest with many participants from its employees along with various international and local companies.

Al-Saad expressed his thanks and appreciation to the federations of football, basketball, and table tennis, Qatar Sports Club and participating companies for their support

and contribution for the success of this tournament for its outcome to be in the best possible form, calling on everyone to follow the annual tournament competition.

Hamad Nasser al-Nuaimi, manager of Ashghal's Ramadan Tournament, said that the tournament this year is set to witness great momentum due to its large number of participations of more than 660 players who will compete in six games.

"This is the largest among Ramadan tournaments organised by Ashghal. 345 players participate in football matches while 216 participate in basketball matches which will certainly lead the tournament to be high level," al-Nuaimi said.



Awqaf talk show discusses role of civil society institutions

The Ramadan talk show, 'Wa Amenhum mein Khawf' (Secure them from fear), organised by the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs - represented by the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance, hosted on Tuesday hosted prominent Islamic scholars who discussed the role of civil society institutions in the creation of values. The show was attended by Sheikh Dr Kamal Kida, Sheikh Dr Mohamed Abdul Karim, Sheikh Dr Essam al-Bashir, Sheikh Dr Khaled bin Mohamed al-Thani and Sheikh Dr Kamal Akoud. The three-part Ramadan talk show is held from 10pm to 1pm with the participation of scholars and thinkers from the Islamic world. It's being held in co-operation with Al Hazm. The sessions are broadcast live on Al Jazeera as well as through Awqaf's social media accounts.



Increased demand for MoCI's initiative to subsidise meat prices for Ramadan

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) stated that demand on the joint national initiative to encourage local production and subsidise sheep meat prices for the blessed month of Ramadan increased as the initiative's volume of sales from local sheep within 12 days, since its launch on March 18, reached about 11,348 heads of sheep.

In a statement, the ministry said that the slaughterhouses of the joint national initiative to encourage local production and subsidise the sheep meat prices for the current month of Ramadan witnessed a great demand from citizens on buying sheep at reduced prices provided by the MoCI in co-ordination with the Ministry of Municipality and Widam Food Company. The initiative aims to ensure the availability of sheep meat to citizens during Ramadan at affordable prices, and to create a balance between supply and demand to ensure stable market prices.

Within the framework of the ministry's keen-

ness to diversify the purchasing options for citizens, imported sheep were provided within the initiative and the sheep weighing 35kg or more is priced at QR800.

It pointed to the sale of about 11,348 heads of sheep, of which 2,313 at the Al Wakrah slaughterhouse, 1,851 at the Umm Salal slaughterhouse, 1,780 at the Al Shahaniya slaughterhouse, 754 at the Al Khor slaughterhouse, and 494 at the North slaughterhouse, in addition to selling 4,156 heads of sheep through the electronic application of Widam Company. MoCI continues to intensify its inspection campaigns on sales outlets to ensure the availability of live sheep and other food-stuffs in the markets. All necessary measures are being taken to combat commercial fraud, protect competition, and prevent monopolistic practices to safeguard consumer rights. The ministry urged consumers to report any violations or infringements through call centre 16001, and to send complaints and suggestions through its communication or social media channels.

QF's Qader Award opens doors for autistic people

From Page 1

According to Abuzannad, her sons have also become more independent and better equipped to manage their emotions. They have learned how to better handle frustration, disappointment, and stress, which in turn has helped them develop resilience and adaptability.

The young men face many autism-specific challenges while participating in sports, like sensory overload, which encompasses loud noises, bright lights, and physical contact.

However, Abuzannad has been able to help her children by finding activities that are suitable for their needs - like the Qader Award. She has worked with the coaches and therapists to create an environment that is comfortable and safe for the triplets.

She has also helped them develop coping strategies to manage sensory overload, regulate their emotions, and manage stress.

Abuzannad praised the effort made by the trainers and coaches in the Ability Friendly Programme, saying: "They are patient, understanding, and willing to adapt their teaching methods to suit the individual needs of each one of them. Their dedication to each member's well-being and development is truly remarkable and it has played a significant role in fostering their growth, both personally and athletically."

Applicants are eligible for consideration to receive 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 foot-ball. Applications close on April 5.

Why You Should Consider NEW INDIA ATTESTATION for Your Document Attestation Needs in Qatar

Qatar has experienced rapid growth by expanding its economy through the production of petroleum and natural gas. As a result, Qatar's GDP per capita is one of the highest in the world, and the country welcomes people from all over the globe. To obtain work permits, visas, and other legal documents, it is necessary for individuals and organizations to go through certificate attestation, which is a crucial requirement.

Since 2014, NEW INDIA ATTESTATION has been the leading attestation and apostille-related service provider in Qatar and Oman. By utilizing its extensive network of connections and industry expertise, the company has brought a revolution in the attestation process. Its unwavering commitment to efficiency, accuracy, and reliability has streamlined the attestation process, enabling clients to obtain their attested certificates quickly and conveniently, which are delivered directly to their doorstep.

Certifying a document, whether for personal or commercial purposes, can be a daunting task, especially for those who require foreign documents to be recognized in Qatar. According to Mr. Kasinathan, the Managing Director of NEW INDIA ATTESTATION, the company is dedicated to simplifying the entire process and ensuring clients have peace of mind that their documents are being handled by professionals.

End-to-End Attestation Solutions at Your Service

The firm offers a range of certificate attestation services, including educational, marriage, birth, commercial, and more. In addition, they provide end-to-end attestation solutions, such as document translation and PRO services. With years of experience in the attestation industry, the firm collaborates with various government agencies, embassies, and consultates, ensuring accurate and efficient certification processes that adhere to strict timelines.

To ensure convenience



Invitation to Tender

In accordance with the following conditions:

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2023/14	CyberARK Privilege Access Management and Least Privilege Access Implementation and Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) Support for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	20,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	06 April 2023 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2023/15	Call-Off Agreement for the Supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Supplies")	500 QAR	10,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	06 April 2023 01:00 PM

1. Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.doc@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
2. Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID. Copy of Commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
3. Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes.
4. Tenderers shall specify that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date will not be accepted.
5. Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Al-Saad, Sohaim bin Hamad St., Qatar First Bank Building, 10th Floor before the closing date.
6. Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-65111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 65111 006). Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
7. Bids must be valid for 90 days after closing date and are to be submitted in two copies (Original & Duplicate).
8. Any queries relating to the Tender Document must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the query in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Document at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such date will be ignored.
9. The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
10. The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week from the closing date.
11. Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
12. Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-65111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 65111 006). Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
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36. Tender



Green Tent discusses challenges of climate change in Arab region

The Green Tent affiliated with 'A Flower Each Spring' discussed the environmental challenges resulting from climate change and global warming in the Middle East and the Arab region, in the presence of a group of experts and those interested in environmental affairs from Qatar and a number of Arab countries.

Environmental experts said during the symposium, which was held under the title "Climate Summits and Confronting Climate Change", that rising temperatures is the biggest risk in climate change, attributing the reason for this to human activities and the increasing pace of industrial operations.

They pointed out that this industrial activity was reflected in the increase in emissions of greenhouse gases, which has resulted in floods, droughts, heat and loss of biological balance.

They indicated that there is no time for disagreement between the leaders of countries, and everyone must unite to find radical solutions to the issue of climate change, which causes disasters, and for which people and fragile societal groups pay the price, especially women, children and people with disabilities.

They pointed out that the solution lies in the science, modern technologies and the expansion of green industries, stressing the need for Arab countries to unite in developing radical solutions to climate change.

At the same time, they hailed the Middle East Green Initiative launched by Saudi Arabia, which aims to plant 50bn trees, including 10bn trees within the kingdom.

Regarding response plans to face the challenges of climate change, the experts said that plans to respond to climate change vary according to the economic, scientific and technological conditions of each country. They stressed that Qatar is one of the first countries to develop a plan to confront climate change, which is based on a set of points, namely setting air quality-monitoring plans, creating a national biodiversity database, strengthening national, regional and international strategic partnerships, monitoring marine water quality, promoting sustainability of environmental awareness, rehabilitating polluted sites, and handling hazardous waste technically.

In this context, head of 'A Flower Each Spring Programme' Dr Saif bin Ali al-Hajari stressed that climate summits play an

important role in confronting climate change, and they provide an opportunity to build a world that relies on renewable sources and green economic systems, in addition to producing clean energy and promoting

roads and facilities, as well as the flooding of some cities and villages, and the loss of life and property. Dr al-Kuwari said the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) had indicated in a report that climate projections estimate that the Near East and North Africa (Nena) region will witness a record rise in temperatures, and that they would become more vulnerable to extreme events.

Higher temperatures and lower rainfall will lead to an increase in drought, he added.

He recommended that the Arab countries should seek innovations that help overcome the water scarcity crisis in the framework of their efforts to confront climate change, and that the Arab countries should adopt modern and advanced methods such as alternate humidification and drying system for agricultural fields, which provides the required water, as well as the use of advanced systems and technologies for assessing available quantities of waters, including soil moisture sensors, satellite evaporation measurements, and the encouragement of scientific research in the areas of food security in conditions of climate changes. (QNA)

QU reveals schedule of Class of 2023 female students' college graduation ceremonies

As part of its preparations to organise the graduation ceremony for the Class of 2023, Qatar University (QU) has announced in a statement that it will organise separate graduation ceremonies for its Class of 2023 female students, which will take place in the morning and evening from May 9-13 in the QU Sports and Events Complex.

The graduation ceremonies will be streamed live on the QU YouTube channel. The graduates will be received on stage by the dean of their respective college as well as the ceremony organisers.

The graduation ceremony of the Class of 2023 will include graduates of the following semesters: Summer 2022, Fall 2022 and

Winter 2023, in addition to those who are expected to graduate by the end of Spring 2023, noting that the graduates of Summer 2023 will celebrate their graduation with the Class of 2024.

Following is the schedule:

- May 9, 4pm: College of Education.
- May 10, 9am: College of Health Sciences, College of Pharmacy and College of Medicine.
- May 10, 4pm: College of Shariah, College of Engineering and College of Law.
- May 11, 9am: College of Arts and Sciences (Majors of Mass Communication, History, Sociology, Social Work and Psychology).
- May 11, 4pm: College of Arts and Sci-

ences (Graduate Studies plus Majors of Biology, Statistics, Chemistry, Sport Science, Mathematics, Arabic, English Literature, Linguistics, International Affairs, and Policy, Planning & Development).

■ May 13, 9am: College of Business and Economics.

The university had earlier announced that the two main graduation ceremonies for the 46th batch (Batch of 2023) will be held on May 8, for male students and on May 9 for outstanding female students.

This batch's number of graduates will reach 3,231 male and female students, including 2,652 female graduates and 579 male graduates, QNA added.

More than 50 falcons to be released into nature

Al Qannas Qatari Society has concluded its campaign accepting falcons donated by their owners in preparation for releasing the birds back into nature.

The sixth campaign was held from March 10-25 at the headquarters of the society at Katara - the Cultural Village. After receiving the donated falcons, the society takes them to the Souq Waqif Falcon Hospital in batches for veterinary examination by specialists to ensure the birds are free from infectious diseases and fit to be released into nature. The campaign witnessed a good turnout by Qatari falconers, who donated some of their best falcons.

Ali bin Khamer al-Mehshadi, chairman of the society, pointed out that after the end of the hunting season and the related festivals and championships, Qatari falconers have donated more than



The campaign witnessed a good turnout by Qatari falconers, who donated some of their best falcons.

50 falcons and they are to be released in Azerbaijan as it is considered one of the most important routes of falcon migration. This will be done in co-operation with the

environmental authorities there. Al Qannas Qatari Society has already released more than 218 falcons into the wild during the previous five editions of the campaign.

Unimoni Qatar Launches 'Send Money Online and Win Big' Promotion

Unimoni Exchange Qatar, a preferred worldwide money transfer and foreign currency exchange company, has launched a special promotion for its customers providing great opportunities to win exciting prizes, when they transfer money online. The electronic raffle draw promotion will be exclusively targeted at their existing and newly onboarded online customers for money transfer services through their mobile apps and website www.unimoni.qa. During the promotion, customers will have an opportunity to win a total of 10 iPhone 14 Pro, 5 Samsung Galaxy S22 Ultra and 100 grams of gold

for 45 lucky winners. The promotion will run until 15 May, 2023. There will be two draws, both to be held at Unimoni headquarters in Doha on 17 April and 17 May, 2023.



Mr. Floyd Johny, General Manager at Unimoni Qatar, said: "We are excited to announce our new promotion, designed to reward our loyal and prospective digital customers

for their trust and confidence in us. We offer most convenient and secure online services for all customers while sending money directly to their Bank Account, Digital Wallets or as Cash Pickup. On behalf of Unimoni Exchange Qatar, I wish our customers the very best of luck."

The best exchange rates and faster credits make Unimoni Qatar a unique and preferred choice when it comes to money transfer services from Qatar. Unimoni Qatar mobile app is available on the Android Play Store and Apple Store for easy and hassle-free money transfer experience. (QNA)

Old Doha Port inaugurates new maritime facility, Fishermen Slipway



The Old Doha Port management announced yesterday the inauguration of a new maritime facility, which will enable visitors and owners of maritime vessels to access the sea from the Doha area and Corniche Street easily and smoothly, round the clock. Located within the borders of the port, behind Halul Cafe, the new maritime facility - named the Fishermen Slipway - constitutes an addition to the recently inaugurated port facilities. It is considered one of the largest maritime facilities in the State and has two levels to suit maritime vessels of different sizes.

The Old Doha Port management announced that the management and operation of the maritime facility would be carried out by a specialised company that was commissioned by the Old Doha Port, and would be supervised by the operations and projects department at the

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils 'Golden Gift' offers



the offers. "As Malabar Gold & Diamonds celebrates 30 years of providing an exemplary jewellery shopping experience to its customers all over the world, the Golden Gift offer that we have unveiled is yet another example of our ardent commitment towards adding joy to their celebrations", commented Shamal Ahmed, managing director-international operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also introduced gold rate protection offers, wherein customers can protect themselves from fluctuating gold rates by paying a 10% advance. If the gold rate goes up during this period, customers can purchase at the blocked rate and if the rate happens to go down, customers can draw mileage from the low rates. Customers can also block gold rates by paying a 50% or 100% advance, which will be valid for a period of three months and six months, respectively.

QU organises IAESTE event to aid students in training opportunities



The event was organised by QU's College of Engineering.

Qatar University (QU) organised an event for the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE) 2023, to present programme details for the students.

The event was organised by QU's College of Engineering (QU-CENG) and sponsored by Dolphin Energy Limited.

IAESTE is concerned with the exchange of students for technical work experience abroad, as students gain through this organisation appropriate technical training.

The event at QU aims to encourage students to join the programme and help them find prominent training opportunities. In his speech, QU-CENG dean Dr Khaled Kamal Naji said: "We are honoured at QU-

CENG to be Qatar representatives of the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE)," adding "we will facilitate the enrolment procedures for various training opportunities in the participating country, to develop solutions to the challenges facing the organisation's work plans, and to enhance exchange between member states."

Dr Naji pointed out that Qatar joined IAESTE in 2011 to prepare qualified graduates who are able to contribute effectively to areas they join and make a difference, noting that QU-CENG seeks to cultivate the talents of its students with international experiences through this exchange.

"We seek to meet the challenges of student exchange in

the countries of the region, and to enhance student exchange between these countries," Dr Naji added.

IAESTE includes committees representing more than 80 countries, and the organisation seeks to connect students with employers in foreign countries, provide university students with technical expertise, and to culturally enrich students and their host societies.

The organisation serves nearly 4,000 students, 3,000 employers and 1,000 academic institutions annually through professional training programmes focusing on professional life abroad, social and cultural reception programmes, international networks and other professional activities and brands. (QNA)



Devji Aurum invites exquisite gold jewellery lovers to its 'Ruhi Week'

Devji Aurum, the renowned jewellery design brand from Bahrain, is poised to dazzle its customers in Qatar with an exquisite display of its timeless 'Ruhi' jewellery collection as part of its Ruhi Week. Ruhi Week, organised in co-operation with Alfardan Boutique, kicked off at Doha Festival City and will run until March 31, and from April 1 to 5 at the Alfardan Boutique in Mall of Qatar. Ruhi is derived from the Arabic word "Ruh" meaning "soul" and throughout the period of the exhibition, Devji Aurum customers will witness the soul-stirring creations of the Ruhi collection in 21-karat gold. This stunning collection is inspired by an innate passion for artisanship and is crafted using only the highest grade of gold, diamonds, and precious gems. The Ruhi collection embodies a unique blend of innovation and heritage as it merges the past and the present, celebrating heritage and also revealing its rich

essence through a renewed perspective. From exclusive limited-edition designs to statement pieces, Ruhi's jewellery pieces will mesmerise with a distinctive flair. One can expect to see the legacy of timeless pieces through colours, tones, and textures that appeal to the tastes of the young at heart. During the show, Devji Aurum will also be showcasing its latest collection of the magnificent and limited-edition Ruhi Pearl - Pyramids collection. Crafted in its signature 21-karat gold, these delicate pieces are studded with the finest and most valued natural Bahraini pearls creating a unique pyramid design that highlights the skill and craftsmanship of its designers. Mahesh Devji, managing director of Devji Aurum, said: "We are delighted to collaborate with Alfardan Jewellery in Qatar to showcase the Ruhi collection. We believe that as a brand we have been inspiring our customers generation after genera-



tion. We are proud to innovate and keep pace with the latest trends and continue to draw inspiration from our customers' aspirations and desires."

Devji Aurum's followers and customers have always been fascinated by the charm of this mesmerising collection, which elevates the heritage theme by celebrating it as a poetic, sensory experience



through certain concepts: the sound of bells - whereby jewellery is associated with auditory pleasure; the sounds made by the ringing of dangling ashrafis or gold coins enhance its beauty; the sense of touch - an exploration of the tactile beauty of jewellery, be it the beadwork, lace patterns, weave patterns or other textured details that bring out the beauty of



Ruhi Week will run until March 31 at Alfardan Boutique in Doha Festival City and from April 1 to 5 at Alfardan Boutique in Mall of Qatar. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

the piece; and the overall sense of its aura, which revolves around being dazzled by the sheen and lustre of precious metal or stones that reflect the radiance of every Ruhi piece and making each one a treat for the senses.

TedinArabic speakers highlight richness of Arabic language

"The Arabic language is a sea," panelist, Meg Grieve told a full room at the recent TEDinArabic Doha Summit at a Discovery Session hosted by Qatar Foundation International (QFI).

The session, "Knowledge of Languages is the Doorway to Wisdom," was a standing-room only event featuring six non-native speakers from Brazil, Germany, and the US.

"After seven years of study, I'm just skimming its surface," Grieve said. A student from the US, Grieve described how learning Arabic, first in high school and now in university and abroad, has been a life-changing experience, but "there's always more to learn."

For the past 14 years, QFI, a member of Qatar Foundation, has been supporting educators, administrators, students, researchers, and other experts across the Arabic language ecosystem to advance the value of teaching and learning Arabic as a global language.

Because of QFI's work, students and educators like the Dis-



Participants at the QFI session at TedinArabic.

covery Session panellists have access to lifechanging opportunities, networks, and support.

All six panellists in the Discovery Session, both students and educators, learned Arabic as non-native speakers. "Even as I teach my students, I learn from them," said panelist Paula Caffaro, an Arabic lecturer at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Caffaro, Paula Roetscher and Caroline Sibley all began their language studies in school and now teach Arabic at the second-

I've gotten to know some of the best people in my life."

"I don't have words to describe how the Arabic language has changed me," said Caffaro. "Honestly, I am a better person because I learned Arabic."

Primary and secondary level education faces a critical, global gap in Arabic language learning.

QFI is the only organisation that addresses this gap by supporting Arabic educators at the primary and secondary levels, as well as of social studies, math, science, and the arts who intend to explore Arabic and the Arab world as part of their curriculum.

The six non-native speakers at QFI's Discovery Session all started learning Arabic at an early age, demonstrating the impact of introducing the language in primary and secondary schools.

"On my first day of Arabic class," panel moderator, Sibley said, "The teacher wrote, 'The Arabic language is a sea. We're going to swim in it! I'm so glad that I did."

ary schools and universities in the Brazil, Germany, and the US, respectively. All shared how the language continues to change their lives.

QFFD, USAID co-operate to support White Helmets in Northwest Syria

Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) yesterday signed a funding agreement to support the White Helmets' core operations to ensure the continuation of life-saving services in Northwest Syria.

This support will enable the White Helmets to cover the essential costs for the deployment of volunteer field teams, maintenance and operation of search and rescue equipment, and provision of medical consumables to meet urgent humanitarian needs.

The co-operation between QFFD and USAID ensures facilitating the White Helmets' operations, and dealing proactively with any kind of disaster or crisis, in the absence of a shortage of the necessary equipment and capabilities after their occurrence.

The series of earthquakes that struck Turkiye and Syria, have resulted in thousands of injuries and deaths and devastated infrastructure in the region.

As soon as the earthquake hit, The White Helmets declared a state of emergency in Northwest Syria and responded immediately following the earthquake. **(QNA)**



New PhD programme at HBKU's College of Health and Life Sciences

The College of Health and Life Sciences (CHLS) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) is launching a new PhD programme in Biopsychology and Neuroscience (BNS) from Fall 2023.

BNS will provide students with key skills and knowledge to tackle complex problems related to mental health and behaviour, a statement said yesterday.

Training covering the biological foundations of cognition, development and ageing of the nervous system, and more, will equip students with a deep understanding of neural mechanisms, as well as the study of brain disorders.

"This multidisciplinary graduate programme emphasises the application of innovative technologies and artificial intelligence to tackle brain development, functions and disorders," said Dr Georges Nemer, interim dean, CHLS.

"We will complement this with rigorous training in critical thinking, experimental design, and statistical analysis. Upon completion, candidates will be fluent in complex topics that define the field of neuroscience



and equipped to study brain disorders, behaviour, and relationships to mental health."

Applications to the CHLS' Fall 2023 PhD in Biopsychology and Neuroscience programme are now open. Prospective applicants should have a strong academic record in biological, biomedical, or medical sciences from a recognised university. Applicants who hold a Master's degree in neuroscience and can demonstrate prior research experience are preferred. The deadline for applications is May 15.

"We're not only looking forward to the launch of our newest PhD programme, but also welcoming successful applicants to the CHLS and wider HBKU network," added Dr Nemer.

Ashghal wins Silver Stevie Award

The Middle East and North Africa Stevie Awards programme is considered the only one in the region specialised in honouring business sector innovations that is available for organisations and individuals from 18 nations.

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) announced winning the Silver Stevie Award for 'Innovative Achievement in Thought Leadership' in the 2023 Middle East and North Africa Stevie Awards for Ashghal's Strategic and Contractual Enhancements applied to the projects of the Local Areas Infrastructure Programme.

The Silver Stevie Awards are among the prestigious awards in the business world, as they honour outstanding achievements in the workplace through several programmes such as 'the International Business Awards' launched 20 years ago.

The Middle East and North Africa Stevie Awards programme is considered the only one in the region specialised in honouring business sector innovations that is available for organisations and individuals from 18 nations.

Ashghal Roads Projects Department Manager, Eng. Saoud al-Tamimi, stressed the authority spares no effort to instil and support a culture of continuous development of work processes on site, and to disseminate best practices in line with its strategy that aims to achieve multiple key themes, which include timely delivery of projects, cost



management, and improvement of the quality, health, and safety management performance.

Assistant Roads Projects Department Manager, Eng. Ali Ashkanani, said Ashghal in 2018 launched a package of contractual enhancements in infrastructure projects of citizens' subdivisions and existing areas, increasing the percentage of enhanced contracts from 40% in 2018 to 95% in 2021.

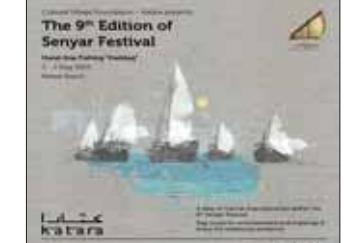
These improvements aim to facilitate implementation of project works and reduce their impact on the residents' daily life, while achieving fast response to their requests and suggestions, Ashghal added, stressing Ashghal's winning of the Middle East and North Africa Ste-

vie Award in 'Innovative Achievement in Thought Leadership' category is another confirmation of its success in creating new methods to implement best practices and achieve tangible results.

It is noteworthy that this year, more than 800 nominations were submitted by organisations in the Middle East and North Africa region in various categories such as Innovation in Product and Service, Innovative Management, Innovation in Corporate Websites and other categories.

The Gold, Silver and Bronze award winners were determined by the average scores given by six judging panels consisting of more than 150 professionals from around the world. **(QNA)**

Katara announces registration opening for 9th Senyar Festival



The Cultural Village Foundation — Katara announced the opening of registration for the 9th edition of the Senyar Festival's pearl diving and fishing contests. Registration will remain open until April 13, with the festival to be held from May 2-5.

The Senyar Festival organising committee set out the conditions for registration including: having a wooden boat (traditional or modern dhow) equipped with navigation systems and safety facilities with a valid licence, while every team should consist of 8-12 participants.

Participants must be Qatari nationals with four participants per team permitted to be from different nationalities: two participants from other Gulf Co-operation Council countries, whilst the other two being residents of Qatar. Team name registration will be on a first-come first-serve basis, and all participants must submit a medical examination certificate.

Organising the Senyar Festival is part of Katara's efforts to revive and preserve the Qatari cultural maritime heritage. **(QNA)**

HDC inaugurates TONO by Akira Back restaurant at The Pearl Island



Hospitality Development Company (HDC), in partnership with Akira Back, which is synonymous with cutting cuisine and exquisite taste in the restaurant industry, has announced the brand's debut in Doha at The Pearl Island.

The Akira Back brand is a diverse portfolio of restaurants and lounges around the globe that pride themselves on creating innovative culinary experiences combined with a social atmosphere and elegant ambiance.

The mission statement is to revolutionise the dining experience through one-

of-a-kind dishes and gracious service, a statement said.

Born in South Korea and raised in Aspen, Colorado, world-renowned chef Akira Back brings a sense of adventure and boundless creativity to his culinary creations. Before embarking on his career in the kitchen, Back spent his early years as a professional snowboarder, appearing in extreme sports movies and garnering praise from the sport's top trade publications. Back eventually retired from snowboarding and took his need for speed and

desire for adventure to culinary school.

Back has since brought his culinary expertise and artistry across the globe. He currently operates 25 locations under his banner in cities, such as Paris, Las Vegas, Dubai, Beverly Hills, San Diego, Toronto, Singapore, Seoul, and now Doha. He plans to open 10 more over the next two years in cities, including London, San Francisco, Riyadh, and Florence for an unmatched global footprint.

TONO, a Peruvian slang for "party," is located at 6 La Croisette, Level 2, Porto Arabia.

It will offer a festive sharing food concept with a lively service crew, modern salsa music, and chilled vibes all surrounded by panoramic stunning views of Marina Bay. With a unique Peruvian architectural avant-garde design and festive Latin vibe, TONO will bring an Innovative Nikkei Cuisine destination to The Pearl Island.

HDC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of United Development Company, a leading Qatari shareholding company and master developer of The Pearl and Gwani islands.



The superiority of fasting

1. Ar-Rayyan Gate is for those who observe Saum (sincerely). Narrated Sahl ibn Sa'd, radiallah 'anhu, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "There is a gate in Paradise called Ar-Rayyan, and those who observe Saum (fast) will enter through it on the Day of Resurrection and none except them will enter through it. It will be said: 'Where are those who observed Saum.' They will get up, and none except them will enter through it. After they have entered, the gate will be closed and nobody will enter it." (Bukhari and Muslim) Narrated Abu Hurairah, radiallah 'anhu, Allah's Messenger, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Whoever gives two kinds of (things or properties) in charity for Allah's Cause, and whoever was amongst those who used to observe Saum will be called from the gate of Ar-Rayyan." (Bukhari)

2. Observing Saum restricts sexual desire. Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas'ood, radiallah 'anhu, the Prophet, (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam), said: "O young men! He who can afford marriage expenses should get married, and he who cannot afford to marry is advised to observe Saum, as As-Saum will diminish his sexual power." (Bukhari and others)

3. There are two pleasures for the person observing Saum; when he breaks the fast and when he meets his Rabb.

4. The doubling for many times the rewards of the one who observes Saum to an extent not known except by Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala.

5. The smell coming out from the mouth of the person observing Saum is better in the sight of Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala, than the smell of musk. Narrated Abu Hurairah, radiallah 'anhu, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "All the deeds of Adam's sons (people) are for them; the reward (of their good deeds) will be multiplied ten times to seven hundred times. Allah said: 'Except As-Saum which is for Me and I will reward for it. He [i.e. the one who observes Saum] leaves his [sexual] desire and food for Me [i.e. My Pleasure]'. There are two pleasures for the person observing Saum; one at the time of Iftar (breaking his Saum) and the other at the time when he will meet his Rabb. Verily, the smell coming out from the mouth of the person observing Saum is better in Allah's sight than the smell of musk." (Bukhari, Muslim and others).

6. As-Saum is a shield. Narrated Abu Hurairah, radiallah 'anhu, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "As-Saum is a shield (or a screen or a shelter from the Hell-fire). So, the person observing Saum should avoid sexual relation with his wife and should not behave foolishly and impudently. And if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should say to him twice, 'I am observing Saum'. By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, the smell coming out from the mouth of the person



observing Saum is better in Allah's sight than the smell of musk. [Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala, says about the person observing Saum] 'He has left his food, drink and desires for My Sake. The Saum is for his food, drink and desires for My Sake. The Saum is for Me. So, I will reward (the person observing Saum) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.' (Bukhari)

Narrated Abu Sa'id, radiallah 'anhu, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "No Muslim fasts one day for the sake of Allah but Allah will take his face far away from Hell-fire the distance of 70 autumns." (Bukhari and Muslim).

7. Saum expiates sins. Narrated Huthaifah, radiallah 'anhu, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "...sins one commits concerning his household (family), or wealth are expiated by performing Salat - prayers, observing Saum and giving charities." (Bukhari, Muslim and others. This is a part of a long hadith).

(Taken from Aqil ibn Zaid al-Maqtiri's book Fasting Rules)

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/ermainpage/>

750 fasting members of Bangladeshi community attend Qatar Charity's Iftar programme

Qatar Charity (QC) continues to implement an Iftar programme for various Asian, Arab, and African expatriate communities in Qatar. The Iftar table for the Bangladeshi community, benefited 750 fasting people, under the supervision of QC's Social Development Centre - Communities.

The Iftar programme included Holy Qur'an recitation, lectures, and Islamic Nasheed (songs).

The community leaders and members thanked the benefactors of Qatar for supporting such Iftar programmes and Ramadan activities, praising QC's efforts in organising events for expatriate communities, especially in Ramadan.

In a lecture, Anwar ul Islam, president of the Bangladeshi community, emphasised the importance of fasting and how a Muslim should spend Ramadan, indicating this month is a season for Muslims around the world to multiply their rewards.

He also highlighted the need to abide by the laws of Qatar.

Jubair Ahmed Chowdhury, advisor to the president of the Bangladeshi community, thanked QC for

organising the collective Iftar for his community. He hoped that QC will

continue to hold it in every Ramadan as usual, because it allows the community members to get to know each other and supports interaction and solidarity between them.

Mueenuddin, a Bangladeshi community member, said: "I have been attending the Iftar programme every Ramadan for five years, and I



of QC in holding a collective Iftar programme for the community. The Iftar for Expatriate Communities' programme is expected to benefit 22,000 persons from various communities, including the Sri Lankan, Filipino, Indonesian, Bangladeshi, Nepali, Pakistani, Indian, Arab and African communities throughout the holy month.

HIA and QDF host Ramadan festivities

Hamad International Airport (HIA), voted the World's Best Airport Shopping and nine-time winner of the Best Airport in the Middle East at the 2023 Skytrax World Airport Awards and Qatar Duty Free (QDF), are hosting a series of Ramadan festivities and experiences.

"Hamad International Airport strives to showcase the rich culture and traditions of Qatar and the Middle East," chief operating officer engineer Badr Mohamed al-Meer, said.

"Our commitment to creating memorable experiences for our passengers is reflected in bringing the spirit and essence of Ramadan to passengers. As the gateway to Qatar and the region, Hamad International Airport remains dedicated to create unique and innovative experiences for all visitors."

HIA and QDF deliver a traditional ambiance with Ramadan tents near the Fendi and Ralph's cafés adorning the Orchard. Arabic coffee and dates are served to passengers during Iftar at booths located throughout HIA.

A special occasion in the Gulf region, the Garangao, falling on the 14th day of Ramadan, is celebrated by children dressing in traditional clothing, singing the Garangao song, and receiving sweets and nuts. Passengers travelling from HIA will experience this festivity near the Lamp Bear with a traditional children's performance and giveaways

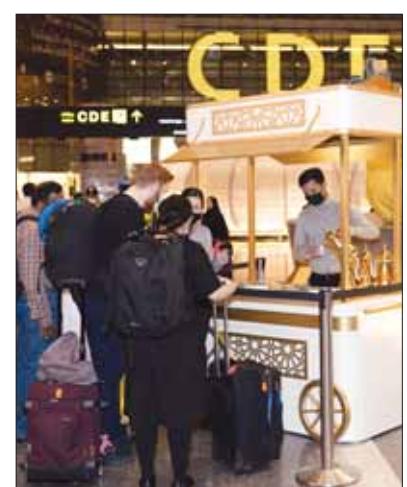


distributed to young ones.

Orhadr is embracing the holy month with decorative Ramadan lanterns, a 360 photo booth, and Arabic seating areas for passengers, who are introduced to a selection of Ramadan specials by QDF, including oud fragrances from world-renowned beauty brands and premium Arabic sweets, chocolates, and dates.

In addition, multiple F&B options by QDF will provide dine-in and grab-and-go options suitable for the diverse passengers at HIA. The Harrods Tea Room has a special Ramadan menu with bespoke flavours.

QDF has returned as the main sponsor of Qatar's W Hotel Sultan's Tent, where guests can enjoy rich Iftar and Suhoor buffet menus.



QNL organises several cultural activities to celebrate Ramadan

Qatar National Library (QNL) is celebrating the holy month of Ramadan with a lineup of cultural activities and learning opportunities during April.

On April 1 and 8, QNL invites young adults to join in preparing and tasting healthy snacks as well as debunking some misconceptions about habits associated with Ramadan.

Throughout the holy month, QNL invites children to enjoy "Ramadan Storytime".

Held in collaboration with Dar Ktaeb, children can listen on QNL's Instagram account to a narration of the most beautiful stories every Monday and Wednesday.

On April 4, QNL invites visitors to a lecture held by Sheikh Dr Ahmed al-

Farjabi, family and educational adviser, and Shariah expert at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, about the importance of family values and how to live and renew them during Ramadan.

In addition, QNL invites young adults to attend sessions to learn about the earliest prophets of Allah and their amazing missions and voyages. The sessions will take place on April 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, and 19.

On April 5, QNL will host a book discussion that presents the most important themes covered in the book 'Beautiful Names of God: Journey to the Seventh Heaven', by Ali bin Jaber al-Fifi. Participants will reflect on the meanings of the different names of God and their relevance to our lives.

To celebrate the joy of the holy month, QNL invites families to create fun crafts that can be used at home.

The first session, on April 6, will have Ramadan-themed decorations and the second session will feature crafts for Eid.



Cadillac and Mannai Auto Group will elevate the ownership experience with exclusive offers this Ramadan in Qatar

To celebrate the holy month of Ramadan, Cadillac and Mannai Auto Group are launching unmissable financing offers and services to the Qatari community, bringing customers closer than ever to Cadillac's luxurious line-up of sedans and SUVs*.

Rajesh Krishnan - Group General Manager said: "One of the many reasons we anticipate the arrival of the blessed month every year, is the chance to bring our beloved Qatari community exclusive offers that will get them closer to driving back home in their new Cadillac. Nothing makes us happier than seeing our customers pick one of Cadillac's luxurious models to be their road companion."

Cadillac customers in Qatar will benefit from Cadillac's premium care package, offering five years warranty, maintenance and roadside assistance along with up to three years comprehensive insurance upon purchasing the CT4, CT5 or an SUV from the luxurious line-up, including the XT4, XT5 or XT6 and the iconic Escalade.

Cadillac and Mannai Auto Group are also offering attractive in-house finance and flexible payment plans this Ramadan further facilitating the ownership experience.

With features designed to turn heads, the CT4 and CT5 are packed with safety and drive assist technologies and are equipped with Cadillac's award-winning rear-wheel-drive architecture.



Demanding attention, the exquisite, bold and iconic Escalade spearheads Cadillac's diverse SUV line-up.

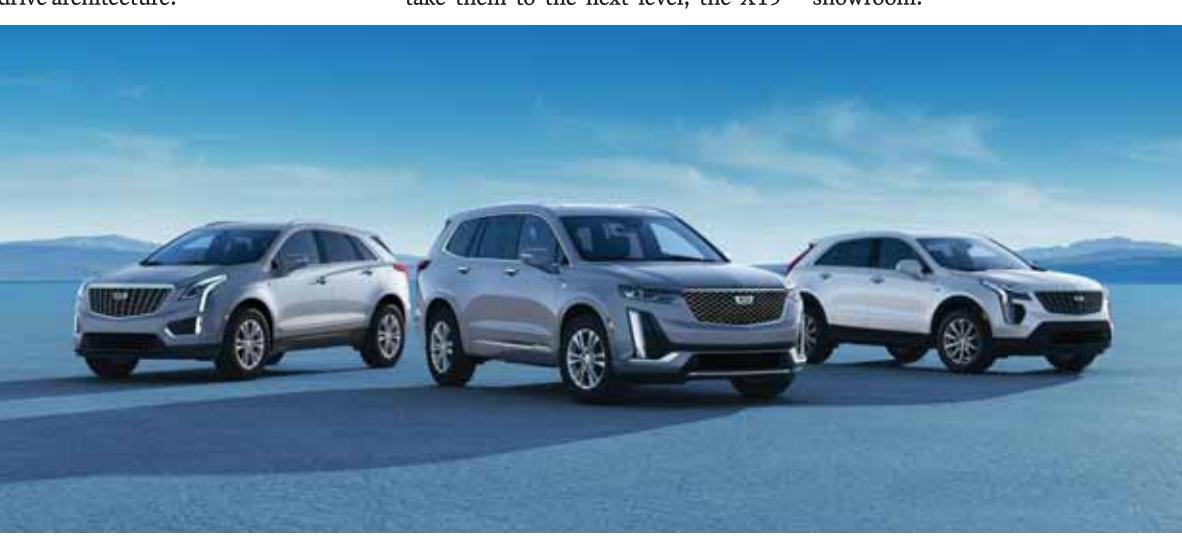
The XT4, a compact SUV that packs a powerful punch, offers agility and practicality with indulgent luxury, makes the perfect road companion for those who want freedom to live their best lives.

For those seeking luxury that will take them to the next level, the XT5

is effortlessly spacious and offers comfort and versatility.

Lastly, with up to seven seats and three rows of seating, plus speed, power and handling, the XT6 has room for the entire family and is designed for a life defined by accomplishments.

Customers can avail these offers when visiting Mannai Cadillac showroom.



LEGAL

Reprise for Google in India antitrust case

An Indian tribunal yesterday gave partial relief to Google by setting aside four of 10 antitrust directives in a case related to the dominant market position of its Android operating system. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) said in October that Google had exploited its dominant position in Android and told it to remove restrictions imposed on device makers. It also fined Google \$161mn. An Indian appeals tribunal yesterday said CCI's findings of anti-competitive conduct were correct and the company was also liable to pay the fine, but it quashed four of the 10 antitrust remedies that had been imposed on Google to change its business model.

DECISION

Syria port authority shuts ports due to bad weather

Syria's port authority has shut down all the country's sea ports including Tartous due to poor weather and high winds, state media reported yesterday. The port of Tartous had initially been exempt from the closure but the country's ports authority later said it was shutting down as conditions worsened. "There are winds and high waves in bursts and we cannot risk opening the ports at this time," Brigadier General Samer Kobrosi, the director general of the authority, told Reuters. The war-ravaged country operates seven sea ports through which it brings in basic needs including food and petroleum products.

LAW AND ORDER

Dhaka journalist charged over high food cost article

Bangladesh police yesterday charged a reporter from a leading newspaper for producing "false news" after an article on high food prices went viral, stoking fears about media freedom. The draconian Digital Security Act under which Shamsuzzaman Shams was charged has been widely used by the government to muzzle journalists and critics, rights groups say. Shams's newspaper *Prothom Alo* said he was picked up from his home in the industrial town of Savar just outside Dhaka by plainclothes police. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan confirmed that the reporter was questioned by police for a "false story" published at the weekend.

INQUIRY

Duterte defiant as ICC forges ahead with probe

Former Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte defended the bloody crackdown on drugs that defined his presidency and said he was ready to "face the music", as the International Criminal Court investigates thousands of killings on his watch. Duterte told a gathering of prosecutors: "I did what I had to do. If it turns out to be awful later, we can't do anything about it." But he later said: "I will face the music. I will rot in prison and I will die in prison." A video of Duterte's speech was shared by an ABS-CBN news journalist on Twitter. Duterte, who campaigned on promises to kill drug dealers, is being investigated by the ICC for possible crimes against humanity.

UTILITIES

UK's British Gas to cut prepayment meter prices

Centrica-owned British Gas will introduce new lower prices for prepayment meter customers from April 1 to make that the cheapest way to buy energy in Britain, it said yesterday. Prepayment meters are a type of domestic energy meter which require users to pay for energy upfront by topping up a token or card. They are known to have above average costs for gas and electricity. British Gas has come under fire for forcibly installing prepayment meters in people's homes, prompting an investigation by the energy markets regulator Ofgem. From July, prepayment customers will see prices lowered to match the costs for payments via direct debit.

UK plans to house refugees in military bases

AFP
London

The UK plans to temporarily house asylum seekers in disused military bases and could use ferries and barges in the future in a bid to reduce hotel bills, Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick announced yesterday.

He told MPs that the government planned to house "several thousand" asylum seekers at repurposed barracks buildings and portable buildings at two former Royal Air Force bases in southeast and eastern England.

A separate site on private land in East Sussex in southeast England will also be used, Jenrick added.

The government is also exploring the "possibility of accommodating migrants in vessels" such as ferries and barges as it looks to reduce a £2.3bn (\$2.8bn) annual bill for hotel accommodation.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has made stopping illegal crossings of the Channel one of his priorities, and Jenrick said the prospect of hotel accommodation was a draw for those making the dangerous journeys.

"These hotels take valuable assets from communities and place pressures on local public services," he told MPs, adding "we must not elevate the well-being of illegal migrants above those of the British people".

"Accommodation for migrants should meet their essential living needs and nothing more, because we cannot risk becoming a magnet for the millions of people who are displaced and seeking better economic prospects," the minister said.

But the plans face opposition from charities, who branded the accommodation "grossly inadequate", and the Labour Party, whose shadow interior minister Yvette Cooper called the proposals an "admission of failure".

The government also appears set to encounter legal challenges on using the airfields from local councils run by their own Conservative party.

King Charles visits Germany



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, his wife Elke Buedenbender and Britain's King Charles and Camilla, the Queen Consort attend a welcome ceremony with military honours at Pariser Platz square in front of Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany, yesterday. King Charles' Germany trip is being billed as "an important European gesture" to maintain strong ties after Brexit. "Today, on the day six years ago when Britain began its exit from the European Union, we are opening a new chapter in our relations," said German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in a speech welcoming the UK royals.

Russia's Rosneft signs deal to boost oil supplies to India

Reuters
New Delhi

Russia's largest oil producer Rosneft and India's top refiner Indian Oil Corporation have signed a term agreement to substantially increase oil supplies and diversify oil grades delivered to India, Rosneft said yesterday.

The deal was signed during a working trip to India by Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin, the company said. It did not reveal the details of the agreement.

"The parties also discussed ways of expanding co-operation between Rosneft Oil Company and Indian companies in the entire value chain of the energy sector, including possibilities of making payments in national currencies," it added.

Russia has been rerouting its energy supplies from traditional markets in Europe, which imposed wide-ranging sanctions against Moscow following the start of what the Kremlin calls

a special military operation in Ukraine last year.

India has been the biggest buyer of Russia's benchmark Urals grade crude in March.

Deliveries to India are set to account for more than 50% of all sea-borne Urals exports this month, with China in second place.

Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Tuesday that Russian oil sales to India jumped 22-fold last year, but he did not specify the volume sold.

Rosneft said that Russia for the first time has become one of the five largest trading partners of India as the volume of trade between the countries reached \$38.4bn in 2022.

"Thus, the goal set by the leaders of our countries to increase turnover to \$30bn by 2025 has been achieved in advance," Rosneft cited Sechin, a long-standing ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, in the statement.

Meanwhile, Russia and India are looking at expanding the use of the Northern Sea shipping route that passes through the Ar-

ctic and which could include the building of processing facilities, Russia's Interfax agency reported yesterday.

Alexei Chekunkov, Russia's minister for the development of the Far East and the Arctic, is visiting India and a key issue in his talks with Indian officials was the "reliable and safe" transportation of goods through the Northern Sea Route using Russian and Indian ports, Interfax reported.

"It was especially noted that the cost of delivering a container from Vladivostok to India is a third lower than the cost of shipping a container from Moscow," the news agency quoted a Chekunkov statement as saying.

Russia wants the Northern Sea Route — which runs along Russia's northern coastline and is the shortest shipping route between East Asia and Europe — to become a major shipping lane and has invested heavily in infrastructure there.

It is not currently used in winter due to thick ice.

Humza Yousaf sworn in as Scotland's leader



Leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Humza Yousaf, is sworn in as Scotland's First Minister at the Court of Session in Edinburgh yesterday. Humza Yousaf became the first Muslim leader of a government in western Europe yesterday but is already facing unrest in his party. At 37, Yousaf is also the youngest leader yet of the Scottish National Party (SNP), and is vowing to reinvigorate its flagging campaign for independence.

Taiwan president heads to US as China warns against meetings

Reuters
Taoyuan, Taiwan/Beijing

Taiwan will not let external pressure prevent it engaging with the world, President Tsai Ing-wen said yesterday as she headed for New York after China threatened retaliation if she met US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, has repeatedly warned US officials not to meet Tsai, seeing it as showing support for the island's desire to be seen as a separate country.

China staged major war games around Taiwan in August when US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taipei.

Taiwan's armed forces say they are watching for any Chinese moves when Tsai is abroad.

Tsai is travelling to Guatemala and Belize, stopping in New York on Wednesday and Los Angeles on her return. She is expected to meet McCarthy in California, although this is not officially confirmed.

"External pressure will not hinder our determination to go to the world," Tsai said at Taiwan's main international airport at Taoyuan, ahead of her New York stop. "We are calm and confident, will neither yield nor provoke. Taiwan will firmly walk on the road of freedom and democracy and go into the world. Although this road is rough, Taiwan is not alone," Tsai said.

Taiwan has gradually lost official recognition from more countries as they switch to Beijing.

Honduras shifted its loyalty on Sunday, leaving just 13 with formal ties with Taiwan.

Beijing says Taiwan belongs to "one China" and, as a Chinese province, has no right to state-to-state ties. Taiwan disputes

this. China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian said Tsai's US transit stops would include meeting US officials and lawmakers.

"If she has contact with US House Speaker McCarthy, it will be another provocation that seriously violates the one-China principle, harms China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and destroys peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," she said in Beijing before Tsai left.

"We firmly oppose this and will definitely take measures to resolutely fight back," Zhu added, without giving details.

The US transit will be Tsai's first since 2019 and her seventh since taking office in 2016.

A meeting with McCarthy would be the first between a Taiwanese leader and a US House Speaker on US soil, although it is seen as a potentially less provocative alternative to McCarthy visiting Taiwan, something he said he hopes to do.

Two sources said that as many as 20 or more US lawmakers planned to accompany McCarthy for his meeting with Tsai, originally set for the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library near Los Angeles. The library has yet to confirm the meeting.

Two other sources said Tsai would attend a banquet with Taiwanese Americans and overseas Taiwanese in New York, as well as an event today with the Hudson Institute think tank.

US officials said Tsai would meet Laura Rosenberger, chair at the Washington headquarters of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), a US government-run, non-profit organisation that carries out unofficial relations with Taiwan.

Rosenberger, who took up the post last week, was previously a senior official for China and Tai-

wan on President Joe Biden's National Security Council.

Tsai's transit comes when US relations with China are at what some analysts see as their worst level since Washington normalised ties with Beijing in 1979 and switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei.

Taiwan is China's most sensitive territorial issue and a major bone of contention with Washington, which, like most countries, maintains only unofficial ties with Taipei.

But the US government is required by US law to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

The US says transits by Taiwanese presidents are routine and China should not use Tsai's trip as an excuse to further pressure Taiwan.

"So there's absolutely no reason for Beijing to use this upcoming transit as an excuse or a pretext to carry out aggressive or coercive activities aimed at Taiwan," a senior US official said before Tsai began her trip.

Beijing had stepped up military, economic and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan, the official said, but Washington would not alter its "long-standing practice to facilitate transits through the US."

Tsai's trip has unnerved security agencies in Taiwan, who worry China could launch influence campaigns including spreading misinformation on social media platforms to sway public perceptions of Tsai's US transit, according to an internal memo by a Taiwan security agency.

The note said China had used large-scale influence campaigns including cyber attacks against Taiwan during Pelosi's visit last year, and Taiwan authorities expected Beijing to deepen its "cognitive operations" in the coming days.

India pitches 'affordable' military hardware to Africa

India yesterday showed off domestically made helicopters, drones and artillery at a gathering of army chiefs and officials from 31 African nations, as the world's largest arms importer seeks to become a major exporter too. India has pumped billions into its defence sector in an effort to become less reliant on imports, including from Russia, as it faces off against China on their disputed border. At the same time it has been trying to sell more of its domestically produced hardware to other countries, particularly poorer nations unable to afford more expensive Western-made kit. "We are making equipment which is affordable and reliable," retired Indian army general VG Patankar told AFP at the event. The Indian military yesterday showed off the goods on offer with a simulated operation featuring commandos abseiling from helicopters, armoured vehicles and bomb disposal robots. Also on display in Pune in western India — the country's key defence manufacturing hub — were assault rifles, artillery shells and models of missiles. The gathering, which followed nine days of joint military drills with soldiers from 23 African countries, included delegates from Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa. India opened its largest helicopter manufacturing plant in February, months after it unveiled its first locally made aircraft carrier and test-fired a ballistic missile from its maiden domestic nuclear-powered submarine. The country aims to more than double its annual arms exports to \$5bn in the coming years, from about \$1.7bn currently. Less than 20% of its arms exports currently go to Africa, with customers including Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mauritius and the Seychelles, officials said on condition of anonymity. S P Shukla, head of the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers, said the focus of the Africa sales pitch was "defensive" in nature, including armoured vehicles, radars, telecommunication equipment.

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GULF TIMES

An insolvency iceberg?

The sudden collapse of Silicon Valley Bank on March 10 was met by an equally swift response from US regulators, who announced plans to make whole all depositors, including the uninsured. But the SVB failure was immediately followed by the collapse of New York's Signature Bank on March 12, and then by Credit Suisse's troubles a week later. The latter, once one of the world's biggest investment banks, is now being taken over by UBS at a massive discount.

Assuming the media's reporting tells the whole story, these sudden failures have a straightforward cause. SVB took in many large deposits (above the \$250,000 threshold insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) from tech startups and then used those funds to buy long-term bonds. But after the US Federal Reserve started raising interest rates at a rapid clip last March, these bonds' mark-to-market value declined, and the unrealised losses on SVB's balance sheet rose.

Although SVB had declared that its bonds would be held to maturity, it had to sell some of them at a loss to free up liquidity. When those losses were announced, depositors – egged on by warnings circulating on social media – feared the worst and rushed to withdraw their deposits, triggering a classic bank run. Once the run was underway, additional bond "fire sales" to free up liquidity became inevitable, and SVB's liquidity crisis became an insolvency crisis.

Rescuing all SVB depositors – including those with deposits above the FDIC ceiling – is not without controversy. Critics of an ex post blanket guarantee argue that the state is making up the rules as it goes and inviting moral hazard (irresponsible behaviour in the future). While proponents of the guarantee, including Secretary of the Treasury Janet L Yellen and Fed Chair Jerome Powell, acknowledge these issues, they are much more worried about systemic risk.

It is reasonable to assume that as interest rates in the US and Europe continue to rise, more banks will experience greater unrealised losses

breaking their own rule, regulators jeopardise their own credibility.

This is where moral hazard comes in. Now that US authorities have issued an ex post blanket guarantee, all depositors will expect that any and all deposits will be protected. They will duly pour deposits into institutions offering higher interest rates; but such competitive rates tend to be offered on large deposits by weak banks with tight liquidity constraints. These weak institutions' depositors can now anticipate being made whole if the institution fails. Accordingly, they will cease to play any monitoring role within the financial system.

And make no mistake: bank executives will be motivated to take on a lot more risk. On one hand, if their risky loans do not become non-performing, their institutions will reap large profits, and they will be compensated handsomely. On the other hand, if their loans go south, they will just leave the bank and move on to the next thing (recall that SVB paid out bonuses on the very day that it was failing).

There are ways to mitigate moral hazard. First, depositors should be guaranteed for their principal, but not for interest payments (or at least for above-average payments). Second, bank executives' salaries for the period leading up to the crisis – say, the previous three years – should be clawed back, and any pending bonuses should be denied. One reason why the 2008 bank bailouts were so unpopular was that executives still received bonuses. This must not be repeated in the current crisis.

What will happen next? It is reasonable to assume that as interest rates in the United States and Europe continue to rise, more banks will experience greater unrealised losses from their long-term bond holdings. As with SVB, all it will take is a rumour or a whiff of fear about the bank's solvency to trigger another run, especially if there is still uncertainty about how far regulators are willing to go in responding. – Project Syndicate


REYNOLDS
GULFTIMES
30-03-2023

"It's time to paws and rethink our snack strategy."



Who should be bailed out next?

By Simon Zadek

Geneva

The shotgun wedding of UBS and Credit Suisse was hastily arranged in the spirit of ensuring our collective safety. As Swiss National Bank Chair Thomas Jordan noted, Credit Suisse's size and global network makes it "a global systemically important bank," and having UBS take it over – thereby forestalling a bankruptcy – "ensures that the systemically important function remains secure." Might we dare to hope that a similar sense of urgency and ambitious deployment of resources be brought to bear on the compounding crises confronting more than half of the world's low-income countries?

The government-brokered UBS-Credit Suisse merger was uncharacteristic for the Swiss, and not only because it was concluded on a Sunday, normally Switzerland's enforced day of rest. The government invoked emergency laws to override shareholders' right to vote on mergers, and wrote down all of Credit Suisse's additional tier-one (AT1) bonds – some \$17bn worth – running the risk of years of litigation.

Some fear that these actions will tarnish Switzerland's reputation with investors. Maybe they will. But if the merger succeeds in stabilising the financial system, it will be more than worthwhile for us all. The reality is that this outcome is not guaranteed, but not because of any flaw in the authorities' decision-making or, indeed, any factor that the authorities can control. The bottom line is that complex systems are unpredictable, and even well-crafted interventions can fall short.

Such uncertainties did not deter the Swiss government from showing extraordinary leadership at a moment when it was needed. And comparable uncertainties did not stop major economies' from mobilising more than \$15tn in short-term stimulus

funding to protect themselves from systemic risks during the pandemic.

The same goes for protecting the economy from longer-term shortfalls. For example, the European Union deployed nearly \$900bn for post-pandemic economic development, and the United States and China mobilised trillions of dollars for investment in infrastructure and green technologies. Such interventions may not guarantee a secure future, but they are crucial nonetheless.

Similarly bold leadership is now needed to tackle the challenges facing increasingly vulnerable low-income countries, notably those facing the multifaceted crisis in sovereign debt, high and rising poverty, food insecurity, and social and political instability – all of which are being exacerbated by the Ukraine war – together with the mounting effects of climate change. But, so far, such leadership is nowhere to be found.

Instead, rich-country governments have offered an agonisingly slow, fragmented, and unambitious response to these mutually reinforcing crises, with other G20 countries that could make a difference – including China, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia – also slow to act. Advanced-economy leaders offer well-rehearsed justifications for their inaction, pointing out, for starters, that they have their own problems, not least high inflation and tightening fiscal constraints, which are fuelling popular frustration and political turmoil.

The same leaders voice concerns about "moral hazard." They argue that the governments of countries in need have themselves to blame for their current mess. These governments have taken on too much debt, according to this view, and have failed to serve their populations properly, which suggests that they are likely to squander whatever relief they receive.

But it is the third reason for slow, incremental action in addressing the challenges facing low-

income countries that is the most absurd. Behind closed doors, rich-country governments have in effect concluded that the debt distress faced by more than 60% of these countries (and more than 25% of emerging economies) does not pose a systemic threat. So, while they are willing to act quickly in bailing out domestic banks – even midsize institutions – they have concluded that offering significant debt relief to dozens of debt-distressed countries with hundreds of millions of vulnerable citizens is not worth the cost.

It is entirely possible that many actors do not fully understand the systemic implications of simmering crises – particularly debt distress – in low-income countries. The crises are happening "over there" – in places whose physical remoteness and apparent economic and financial unimportance makes them seem irrelevant.

"Over there-ism" will be our downfall. If short-term political and business interests trump longer-term imperatives like preventing continuous waves of debt crises, it will become harder to act collectively to mitigate climate change, ensure food security and political stability, and devise meaningful approaches for dealing with the rising number of refugees. Of course, poorer populations are already feeling the effects of these problems. But for those who could make a difference, they remain far away.

The UBS-Credit Suisse deal offers yet more evidence that, when the will is there, authorities can act quickly and ambitiously to mitigate systemic risks, even if the cost is considerable and the outcome is unpredictable. Rich-country governments might not recognise – or want to acknowledge – the systemic implications of the risks gathering at the nexus of sovereign debt, climate change, poverty, and political instability. But this will not stop those implications from materialising. Systemic does as systemic does. – Project Syndicate

• Simon Zadek is Executive Director of NatureFinance.



The logo of Swiss bank Credit Suisse is seen at a branch office in Basel, Switzerland. (Reuters)

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IAEA chief visits Ukraine amid N-plant safety concern



Rafael Grossi, head of the IAEA, visits the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine yesterday.

Reuters
Kyiv

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog visited the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station in southeastern Ukraine yesterday as part of efforts to avert the risk of an atomic accident.

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, arrived by car at Europe's largest nuclear power plant to review the situation there, an IAEA spokesperson said.

Grossi wants to assess first-hand the "nuclear safety and security situation" and press on with efforts to broker a deal to protect the plant.

"I am not giving up in any way. I think on the contrary we need to multiply our efforts, we need to continue," Grossi told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday.

In Moscow-held territory, he told Russian news agencies that the situation at the plant had not improved, that fighting nearby had intensified and that he wanted to come up with realistic ways to reduce the threat of a catastrophe.

Moscow and Kyiv have repeatedly accused each other of shelling the site of the power station over the last year. Grossi has been pushing for a safety agreement between Ukraine and Russia to protect the facility.

A Reuters reporter at the Russian-held plant saw a motorcade transporting the IAEA expert mission arriving at the facility, escorted by the Russian military.

Grossi told Reuters in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro on Tuesday that the situation at the plant remained "very dangerous" and "very unstable", noting that military activity in the region had increased in recent weeks.

Russia, which invaded Ukraine in February last year, has been pressing a winter offensive in the east, while Ukraine is expected to launch a counteroffensive using Western-supplied battle tanks and fighting vehicles.

The sprawling Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant was a prized part of Ukraine's energy network and accounted for around 20% of national power generation before the Russian invasion.

It has not produced any electricity since September, when the last of its six reactors was taken offline.

Ukraine's Energoatom nuclear agency said Grossi would assess how the situation had changed at the plant, speak to workers and also act as a "guarantor" for the rotation of a group of IAEA monitors at the facility.

The IAEA has had monitors stationed at the plant since September, when Grossi travelled to the facility as fears were mounting of the possibility for a nuclear accident.

It is Grossi's second visit to the Zaporizhzhia plant since it was captured by Russian troops.

Biden announces more funds despite effectiveness of democracy summit

Reuters
Washington

US President Joe Biden yesterday announced new funding to bolster democracies around the world amid criticism his administration has made little progress in advancing human rights and democracy as a focus of its foreign policy.

Biden announced he planned \$690mn in funding to help fight corruption, support free and fair elections and advance technologies that support democratic governments at a second White House-led Summit for Democracy. He announced over \$400mn for similar programmes in 2021 when he last held such an event.

"We're turning the tide here. As we often say, we're at an inflection point in history here, when the decisions we make today are going to affect the course of our world for the next several decades for certain," Biden said.

Rights advocates say there is little evidence the countries joining the summit have made

progress on improving their democracies, and that there is no formal mechanism to hold participants to the modest commitments made at the first meeting even as Biden and South Korea announced plans to host a future third summit.

Freedom House said this month that global freedom had declined for the 17th consecutive year, but there are signs the tide is turning, said Katie LaRoque, the monitoring group's deputy director for policy and advocacy, explaining that while 35 countries' scores declined in Freedom House's annual rankings, 34 countries improved.

Out of the countries that participated in the first Summit for Democracy, 77 countries' scores remained the same in 2022, 17 declined and only 16 improved.

The world has seen big changes since the first summit, with countries emerging from the global pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the summit pleaded for more weapons to help defeat Russia. Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February



US President Joe Biden delivers remarks as Slovakia's President Zuzana Caputova, Malawi President Lazarus Chakwera, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen are seen on the screen during a virtual Summit for Democracy hosted by Biden from an auditorium on the White House campus in Washington yesterday. (Reuters)

2022 has killed tens of thousands and reduced cities to rubble.

"The enemies of democracy must lose," Zelensky said.

More recently, a move by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government to weaken the power of Israel's judiciary; Mexico's move to gut its election oversight body; and India's decision to disqualify a top opposition political leader have all cast a pall over Biden's repeated claims that democracies have become stronger.

In addressing the summit yesterday, Netanyahu voiced confidence that a political compromise could be reached on the judicial reforms, which he argued could be reconciled with civil liberties even as his opponents have accused him of seeking to curb judicial independence.

The summit is co-hosted by the governments of Costa Rica, The Netherlands, South Korea and Zambia. The event involves 120 countries including Taiwan, civil society groups and technology companies.



A lawyer for the association Senior Women for Climate Protection Jessica Simor prepares to address the court at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg yesterday. (Reuters)

France hikes age limit, fines for e-scooters

AFP
Paris

France increased the minimum age for using an electric scooter from 12 to 14 yesterday ahead of a weekend vote in Paris on whether to ban rental of the devices.

The government unveiled a new regulatory plan for e-scooters yesterday increasing the age limit as well as hiking fines for riding on them with another person from €35-135 (\$150).

"The explosion in use (of scooters) has come with an increase in the number of accidents. It's a cause for worry," Transport Minister Clement Beaune told a press conference, adding that one in five accidents in Paris involved two people sharing an e-scooter.

The new rules will cover all scooters – privately owned and free-floating ones for rent via apps such as Lime, Dott or Tier which are now available in more than 200 towns across France, Beaune said. Parisians are to be asked on Sunday to vote in a referendum organised by city authorities on whether to ban free-floating e-scooters.

Fans view them as a fun, affordable and emissions-free mode of transport, while critics say they are dangerous, often driven badly, and clutter up the capital's already crowded streets.

Lower speed limits and dedicated parking zones have already been introduced in a bid to address complaints by other road users and pedestrians.

Beaune, an ally of centrist President Emmanuel Macron and an outspoken critic of Socialist Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo, favours tighter regulation for scooters rather than an outright ban.

"It's an important consultation (on Sunday) that will be watched by a lot of other towns in France and overseas," Beaune told the Europe 1 radio station. "I find it a shame that we have caricatured and dumbed down the debate."

Spain ministers slam TV star's surrogacy in US

Spain's leftist government yesterday slammed the practice of surrogacy after a 68-year-old Spanish actor had a baby girl through surrogacy in the United States. Celebrity magazine *Hola!* published what it said was an "exclusive" photo of Ana Obregon leaving a Miami hospital cradling a baby. The magazine said Obregon had become a "mother of a baby girl born through surrogate pregnancy." The actor – who has starred in several top-rated sitcoms – later confirmed the report in an Instagram post, writing "a light full of love came into my darkness". "I will never be alone again. I AM ALIVE AGAIN," added Obregon, whose son died of cancer in 2020 at the age of 27. Like several other European Union nations, Spain bans all forms of surrogacy and Obregon's news sparked strong criticism from top government officials. Equality Minister Irene Montero called surrogacy "a form of violence against women", before adding that women who bear a child for someone else are often poor and need the money.

Europe rights court hears climate cases against govts

AFP
Strasbourg

Cases opened yesterday before the European Court of Human Rights against France and Switzerland over alleged failings to protect the environment, marking the first time governments are in the court's dock for alleged climate change inaction.

The case against Switzerland is based on a complaint by an association of elderly people – who call themselves the "Club of Climate Seniors" – concerned with the consequences of global warming on their living conditions and health, the ECHR said.

They accuse the Swiss authorities of various climate change failings which they say amount to a violation of the government's obligation to protect life and citizens' homes and families.

"We've been fighting for years," said Bruna Molinari, 81, who lives in the southern Tessin canton "where the pollution is the worst."

"I hope the court will find in our favour so that Switzerland does better than it has done so far," he added ahead of the hearing. The average age is 73 in the Swiss club, which is backed by Greenpeace Switzerland.

Around 50 of its 2,000 members were expected in Strasbourg for the hearing. Alain Chabialis, representing the Swiss govern-

ment, told the court that it was "baseless to claim or suggest that Switzerland is doing nothing". The ECHR "has no business becoming the place where national climate protection policy is decided," he added.

But the plaintiffs' lawyer Jessica Simor said her clients were "already suffering the effects of climate change" that Switzerland was not doing enough to stop. Temperatures were rising "twice as quickly" in the Alpine nation as the global average, she said.

"Heat kills... increasing the risks of kidney problems, asthma attacks, cardiovascular difficulties... and causes particularly acute symptoms in elderly people, more especially elderly women."

The case against France was brought by Damien Careme, a former mayor of Grande-Synthe, a suburb of Dunkirk in northern France, who also argues that the central government has failed to meet its obligation to protect life and citizens' homes and families.

"We've been fighting for years," said Bruna Molinari, 81, who lives in the southern Tessin canton "where the pollution is the worst."

"I hope the court will find in our favour so that Switzerland does better than it has done so far," he added ahead of the hearing. The average age is 73 in the Swiss club, which is backed by Greenpeace Switzerland.

Around 50 of its 2,000 members were expected in Strasbourg for the hearing. Alain Chabialis, representing the Swiss govern-

ment, which he then took to the ECHR.

"The stakes are extremely high," said Corinne Lepage, a former French ecology minister and one of Careme's lawyers in the case.

"If the European court recognises that climate failings violate the rights of individuals to life and a normal family life, then that becomes precedent in all of the council's member states and potentially in the whole world," she told AFP.

The European Court of Human Rights – whose members are the 46 states belonging to the Council of Europe – acknowledged in a statement ahead of the hearings that the European Convention on Human Rights, on which it must base its judgments, does not actually include a right to a healthy environment.

But its decision to take yesterday's cases was based on the fact that the exercise of the convention's existing rights could be undermined by harm to the environment or exposure to environmental risks.

A third pending case, without a date for a hearing so far, was brought by young Portuguese applicants claiming that climate inaction by dozens of states had contributed to heatwaves in Portugal which they said was affecting their rights.

Although the cases are a first for the ECHR, governments have in the past been taken to court in their national jurisdictions.

World's usable nuclear arsenal rose in 2022: study

AFP
Oslo

The global number of operational atomic warheads increased in 2022, driven largely by Russia and China, a new report out yesterday said as nuclear tensions have risen since the war in Ukraine.

The nine official and unofficial nuclear powers held 9,576 ready-to-use warheads in 2023 – up from 9,440 the previous year, according to the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor published by the NGO Norwegian People's Aid.

Those weapons have a "collective

destructive power" equal to "more than 135,000 Hiroshima bombs," the report said.

Conducted in collaboration with the Federation of American Scientists, the study is published as Moscow has repeatedly raised the nuclear threat in connection to its invasion of Ukraine and Western military aid for the Eastern European country.

On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that he had agreed with Minsk to deploy "tactical" nuclear weapons in Belarus, a country on the EU's doorstep.

The United States has been doing this for decades. They have long placed

their tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of their allies," Putin said in a televised interview.

According to estimates by various independent observers, the United States has deployed about 100 so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons – referring to their shorter range or lesser power – in Belgium, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Turkey over the years.

Russia's announcement was roundly criticised by Ukraine and its Western allies, with Nato denouncing it as "dangerous and irresponsible" and the EU threatening Minsk with further sanctions if the deployment went

ahead. The additional 136 warheads on the ready-to-use global nuclear stockpile last year were attributed to Russia, which has the world's largest arsenal with 5,889 operational warheads, as well as China, Pakistan, India and North Korea.

"This increase is worrying, and continues a trend that started in 2017," said Grethe Lauglo Ostern, editor of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor.

Away from the spotlight of the conflict in Ukraine, North Korea has been conducting tests with ballistic missiles, which could increase its capacity to carry out nuclear strikes.

In the highly tense geopolitical situ-

ation, fears that these devastating weapons will be used are now at their highest levels since the end of the Cold War, according to opinion polls in several countries.

At the same time, the total stockpile of nuclear weapons, which also includes those removed from service, continues to decline.

In 2022, the overall number of nuclear weapons fell from 12,705 to 12,512.

"This is only still true because Rus-

sia and the United States each year dismantle a small number of their older nuclear warheads that have been retired from service," said Hans M. Kristensen, director of the Nuclear In-

formation Project at the Federation of American Scientists.

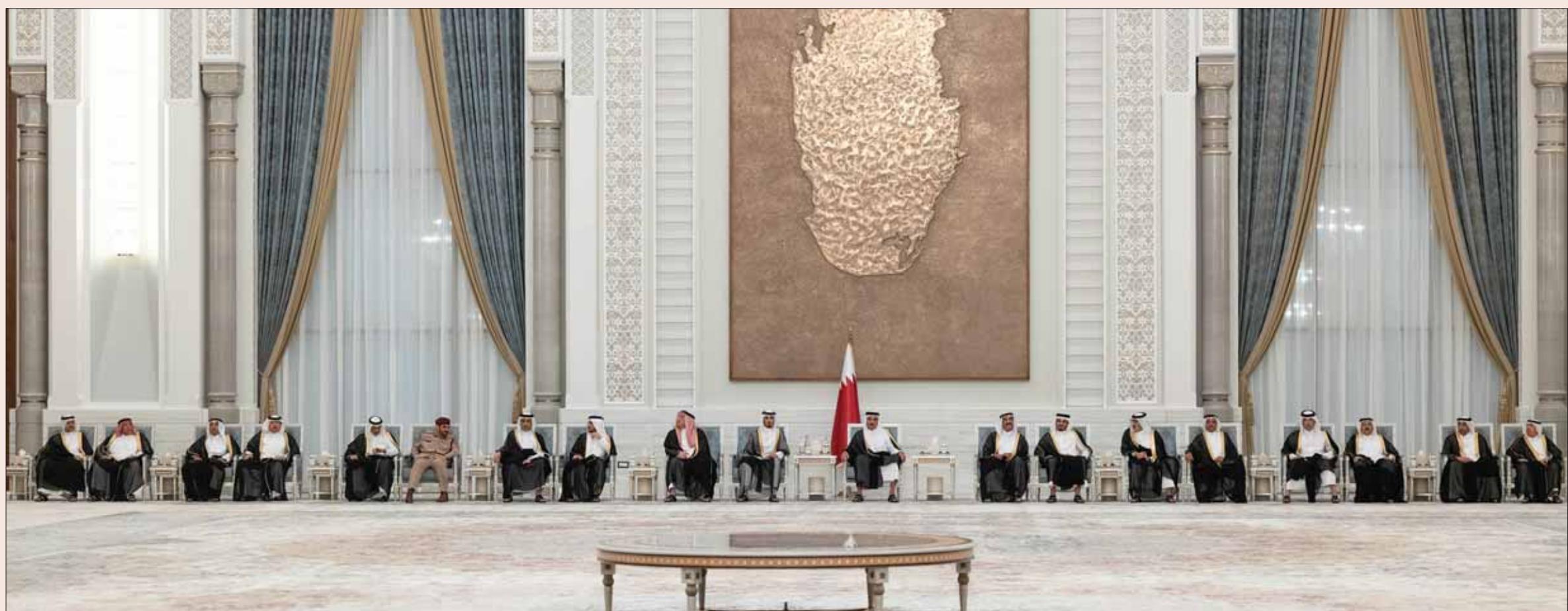
Ostern warned that if the trend of new warheads being added does not stop, "the total number of nuclear weapons in the world will also soon increase again for the first time since the Cold War."

At the peak in 1986, there were over 70,000 nuclear weapons in the world, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

The eight official nuclear powers are the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, France, Pakistan, India and North Korea, while Israel is known to have nuclear weapons unofficially.



Amir holds Iftar banquet for officers of Armed Forces, Ministry of Interior



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted at Lusail Palace yesterday an Iftar banquet in honour of commanders and ranking officers of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Interior, and the various security apparatus of the State, on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. The banquet was attended by the Personal Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, along with a number of Sheikhs, ministers, and senior officials. (QNA)



M7 and Printemps Doha launch 'The Collective'

Seven designers involved in this years' 'The Collective' Retail Incubation Programme designed by M7 have launched their exclusive capsule collection in a dedicated M7 x Printemps Doha concept space at the newly opened luxury department store. The unique collection spotlights a mix of abaya, ready-to-wear, and jewellery designs.

Commenting on the launch, Thierry Prevost, general manager of Printemps Doha, said: "In their innovative designs, the seven finalists have highlighted the rich culture and craftsmanship of their native country. Their capsule collections have now found a home in Printemps Doha, which is providing them with a dedicated commercial platform and retail visibility where revenues will be reinvested in the promotion of The Collective, helping to foster this unique and special programme."

"The collective retail incubation programme was designed to answer the current demand and challenges designers face today. We are particularly proud of the commitment and progress made by the seven designers throughout the five-month incubation period. To finally see their collection in store at Printemps Doha is a testament of our commitment to empowering the next generation of designers in Qatar," said M7 director Maha al-Sulaiti.

These collections which are available exclusively at Printemps Doha include: Dana Riad's namesake brand, Kaltham's Pavilion by Kaltham al-Majid, Poze by Zulfa al-Thani, SDN (Sadan) by Rawan al-Nassiri, Shirotsu by Japanese fashion designer Sayuri Kurotsu and Italian designer Giovanni Inellaaref, TRZI by Amna al-Misned and The // Project with Abdul Rahman al-Ahmad as co-founder.

Participants in 'The Collective' programme were mentored by a series of renowned designers, including: Laetitia Lumbroso, co-founder of label 'Destree', Cutting Studio founder and 1309 designer Ghada



'The Collective' is a retail incubation programme, which aims to empower and equip Qatar-based established and up-and-coming designers through their creative process.

Katara Ramadan activities a big draw

Ramadan activities and festivities at Katara - Cultural Village Foundation continues to draw more visitors of all ages and categories, especially immediately before Iftar hours and during the Suhoor hours, to enjoy the ambience and folkloric performances that revive the spirit of the holy month. The chess championship will be launched today (Thursday), in addition to the Arab Postal Stamp Museum contest after Taraweeh prayers at Katara Building 22. The participants will be briefed about a certain stamp and they have to find the same within the collection on display. The prize is QR1,000 for a winner each week. On Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, Katara will organise the storyteller event for children from 9pm to 11pm at the creativity arena between Buildings 15 and 18.



Msheireb Downtown Doha lit up with Ramadan decorations

Ramadan light decorations are being installed across Msheireb Downtown Doha, especially in and around Barahat Msheireb, the open square. An image of the moon, corresponding to the Ramadan day count, is also projected onto the facade of M7 Qatar Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

