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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Sheikha Hind attends first session of ‘Qatari Inspirational Women’

HE the Vice-Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani participated as Qatari inspirational figure in the first session of the Qatari Inspirational Women initiative, in the presence of HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi. During the session that was hosted by Ramla Bint Abi Sufyan Secondary School for Girls, with the participation of 42 students from the school and neighbouring schools, HE Sheikha Hind shed light on the challenges she succeeded in turning them into opportunities and enablers to become a successful and influential figure in society by presiding over the leading educational institution Qatar Foundation. She also shared her inspiring educational and professional experience with the female students. **Page 12**

Darb Lusail Flower Festival this weekend

People in Qatar can look forward to a colourful weekend as the Darb Lusail Flower Festival will take place from May 25-27. The announcement was made on Lusail City’s social media platforms on Sunday. “Darb Lusail Flower Festival brings you the charm of nature with colourful parades and floats, a local market, and exciting activities for kids and adults,” the announcement said. The public can visit the festival from 7-11pm on the given dates. The Darb Lusail Flower Festival joins an ever-growing list of entertainment activities taking place at Lusail Boulevard, with previous events turning out to be huge crowd-pullers, including the Eid al-Fitr celebrations, Qatar International Food Festival and others.

Sudan deal raises hopes for relief

Air strikes and clashes between Sudan’s warring factions could be heard in the capital Khartoum yesterday, residents said, after a Saudi and US-brokered deal for a week-long ceasefire raised hopes of a pause in the five-week conflict. The deal, signed on Saturday by the army and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), is due to come into effect today evening with an internationally-supported monitoring mechanism. It also allows for the delivery of humanitarian aid. **Page 7**

Greek PM's party wins, but no outright victory

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ conservative party scored a thumping win at yesterday’s election, first results show, but would likely call a new ballot in a month’s time as it fell short of an outright majority to rule alone. With just over 50% of the ballot counted, his New Democracy party was credited with 40.9% of the votes, a 20-point lead ahead of his nearest rival, leftist challenger Alexis Tsipras’ Syriza party, which garnered 20.1%. Mitsotakis would either enter into tough negotiations from Monday with his rivals to seek a coalition, or he could opt to head to a new election, likely in early July. **Page 11**

12 killed in soccer stadium stampede

El Salvador was in shock yesterday after 12 people died and hundreds were injured in a stampede at a soccer stadium. Authorities said initial reports pointed to a crush of fans who tried to enter the 35,000-seat Cuscatlan Stadium in the Central American country’s capital San Salvador to watch a game between two local teams, Alianza and FAS.

Qatar Economic Forum 2023 begins tomorrow

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

The third edition of the Qatar Economic Forum (QEF), Powered by Bloomberg, with the theme ‘A New Global Growth Story’, will bring together more than 1,000 global business leaders at the Katara Towers in Lusail City for three days from tomorrow (Tuesday).

QEF 2023, under the high patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, will explore the latest trends in finance, energy, healthcare and technology, and examine their potential to drive future growth, through a series of keynote interviews, panel discussions and interactive workshops.

In a statement, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Abdullah al-Thani said: “We recognise

HE Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani (centre) at yesterday’s media roundtable with Mubarak Ajlan Mubarak al-Kuwari and Nasser al-Taweel. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

●More than 1,000 global business leaders to attend three-day event ● Growing participation of global economic and political decision-makers a testament to forum’s success: Media City Qatar CEO

that the world is becoming more inter-connected and that collaboration between nations and people is essential in driving economic growth.

“It is an honour to welcome the international business community back to Doha for the third edition of the Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg, a growing platform for knowledge exchange and dialogue on key topics on the global agenda.

“Our commitment to shaping the future of economic progress remains as strong as ever, and we look forward to welcoming entrepreneurs, thought leaders and decision-makers to the forum.”

Shining a light on the rising south-to-south economy, QEF 2023 will

highlight established viewpoints and emerging voices from around the world to identify the latest economic trends.

More than 50 regional and international speakers made up of government leaders, CEOs, global investors and influential voices from the worlds of culture, sport and entertainment, will be present during the event.

M Scott Havens, CEO of Bloomberg Media, said: “In only three short years, the Qatar Economic Forum has become a unique and powerful platform to discuss the most important issues in business, cover the Gulf’s far-reaching impact, and connect influential voices across global industries and communities. **To Page 4**

National STEPwise survey from May 25

The Ministry of Public Health has announced the start of the implementation of the National STEPwise Survey, 2023 for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and their common risk factors from May 25.

STEPwise survey is a standardised survey developed by World Health Organisation and will be carried out in collaboration with the Planning & Statistics Authority (PSA), Hamad Medical Corporation, and the Primary Health Care Corporation.

The survey is a second cycle of STEPwise surveys, as a follow up for the 2012 survey, to provide a database on chronic non-communicable diseases and their related risk factors in Qatar such as tobacco use, lack of physical activity, unhealthy nutrition, obesity, hypertension, increased blood glucose and increased blood fat. It will enable MoPH to develop National Action plans, within the National Health Strategy, for controlling these diseases and their risk factors.

The survey will be carried out by visiting more than 8,500 homes of Qatari nationals and non-Qatari residents after a random sample is selected from household lists, based on population census, 2020. The participants of the

STEPwise survey to enable MoPH develop National Action plans.

survey will be in age group between 15 and 69 Years, randomly selected from these selected households.

The survey is conducted by field teams visiting the homes of the families participating in the survey during its implementation period and the visits are carried out from Sunday to Thursday between 4pm and 9pm, and on Saturdays between 9am and 2pm.

The well-trained data collection teams will conduct visits and a questionnaire will be filled out on common risk factors for chronic non-communicable diseases including tobacco use, fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity as well as physical measurements, such as height, weight, and waist circumference. **To Page 3**

CMC member candidacy open until May 25



Candidacy for 7th Session of Central Municipal Council Membership

Open in all Electoral Districts

Candidacy opens:

May 21 – May 25

4:00pm to 7:00 pm

Candidate's required conditions



The candidate shall not have been previously convicted of a crime involving dishonesty, unless he has been rehabilitated



The candidate shall be recognized for his competence and honesty, and be able to read and write



The candidate must not be working in the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Interior, or any other military entity



The candidate must have reached 30 years of age on May 25, 2023



The original nationality of the candidate must be Qatari



For the candidate who earned the Qatari nationality, the father must be born in Qatar.

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Interior announced that candidacy for the 7th Session of the Central Municipal Council (CMC) membership was opened at all electoral district headquarters yesterday (May 21) and will remain open until May 25, from 4pm to 7pm.

The measure is in accordance with provisions of Law No. 12 of 1998 on the regulation of the Central Municipal Council and the laws amending it, and in accordance with provisions of Decree No. 17 of 1998 on the election of members of the Central Municipal Council.

The Ministry of Interior called upon citizens wishing to run for the elections to comply with the required conditions. The eligibility criteria include: the original nationality of the candidate must be Qatari; for the candidate who earned the Qatari nationality, the father must be

born in Qatar. The candidate must have reached 30 years of age on May 25, 2023, and be able to read and write. The candidate shall be recognised for his competence and honesty, and shall not have been previously convicted of a crime involving dishonour or dishonesty, unless he has been rehabilitated. The candidate must be registered in the voters’ list in the electoral district in which he is running, and to have a permanent place of residence within its borders. The candidate must not be working in the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Interior, or any other military entity.

With regard to the candidacy application procedures, the applicant must present himself before the election committee at the electoral district headquarters; present the identity card; fill in the form prepared for this purpose and sign it before the election committee, submit the application, attaching two personal photos, to the election committee and receive a receipt.

QCB reduces MDR to boost e-payments

Qatar Central Bank (QCB) has decided to lower and unify the current merchant discount rate (MDR), in a move aimed at encouraging and promoting the acceptance of electronic payments using cards. MDR is the rate charged to a merchant for the payment processing of debit and credit card transactions. QCB made the announcement on Twitter yesterday. The central bank explained that for debit cards, the MDR for micro businesses and gas stations will be 0.5% with a maximum limit of QR50, and 1.1% for other businesses with a maximum limit of QR110. The above rates apply to local prepaid cards (NAPS) as well. For payments made with the first national prepaid card (Himyan), the MDR for micro businesses and gas stations will be 0.5% with a maximum limit of QR50, and 0.85% with a maximum limit of QR85 for other businesses. Regarding international credit cards, QCB said the MDR is 1.25% for micro businesses and 1% for gas stations.



Qatar condemns Israeli minister’s storming of Al Aqsa Mosque courtyards

Qatar has condemned in the strongest terms Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir’s storming of the courtyards of Al Aqsa Mosque, which is under the protection of the occupation authorities, as a flagrant violation of international law and of the custodianship of the holy sites in occupied Jerusalem.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned against the escalatory policy adopted by the Israeli government in the occupied Palestinian territories, stressing that the attempts to harm the religious and historical status of Al Aqsa Mosque are not only an attack on the Palestinians, but also on millions of Muslims around the world.

The ministry held the Israeli occupation authorities solely responsible for the cycle of violence that will result from the reoccurring violations and storming of the blessed Al Aqsa Mosque and the systematic escalatory policy against the Palestinian people, their land, and their Islamic and Christian sanctities, urging the international community to take ur-

gent measures to stop these attacks. The ministry reaffirmed Qatar’s firm position on the justice for the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, including the full right to practise their religious rites without restrictions, and to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. (QNA)

Storming, vandalism of Qatari embassy in Khartoum condemned

The Association of Secretaries-General of the Arab Parliaments has strongly condemned the storming and vandalism of the Qatari embassy in Khartoum by irregular armed forces, describing it as a disgraceful criminal act.

In a statement yesterday, the association called for the perpetrators to be prosecuted and held responsible for the consequences

of this unfortunate criminal act, which constitutes a violation of international law and conventions.

Meanwhile, Lebanon’s Foreign Ministry also condemned the attack on the Qatari embassy building, calling for respecting the immunity and inviolability of diplomatic headquarters in accordance with the rules of international law and Vienna Convention on

Diplomatic Relations. The ministry stressed the importance of all Sudanese parties’ commitment to the declaration of the recent Arab summit in Jeddah to resolve the political differences by peaceful means, and to give priority to the language of dialogue, preserve the unity, sovereignty and stability of brotherly Sudan, and to end the suffering of its people. (QNA)

Qatar delegation attends WHO’s Walk the Talk initiative in Geneva

HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari yesterday, participated in the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Walk the Talk: Health For All Challenge in Geneva, ahead of the 76th World Health Assembly.

A number of senior officials from Qatar’s health sector, many dignitaries and heads of delegations participating in the meetings of the World Health Assembly, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), FIFA, and a large number of members of the public participated in the event.

This year, the fourth edition of Walk the Talk coincides with WHO’s 75th anniversary year and provides an opportunity to promote solidarity and to get moving for physical and mental health, a statement from Qatar’s Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) said.

The event offered participants the opportunity to walk, run or use a wheelchair over a 3km or 4.2km route. The Walk the Talk initiative was held in Doha for the first time on the eve of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 as part of the Sport for Health partnership between the MoPH, SC, WHO and FIFA.



Participants in Walk the Talk, Place des Nations, Geneva, yesterday.

HE Dr al-Kuwari and the Qatar delegation are participating in the 76th World Health Assembly, being held until May 30, with the theme WHO at 75: Saving lives, driving health for all. The MoPH, in partnership with the SC, will also host an event in Geneva tomorrow (Tuesday), to highlight the aims and achievements of the Sport for Health

partnership at the World Cup 2022 which aimed to make the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 a beacon for physical and mental health promotion, and a model for ensuring future mega sport events are healthy and safe.

Qatar’s Olympic high jump gold medalist, Mutaz Barshim and Syrian swimmer, Yusra Mardini, will participate as special guests in the event, which brings together mega sports event hosts and organisers to

share their experience and to garner support and commitment towards a sustained global movement for sport and health.

Representatives from Generation Amazing, a SC initiative dedicated to achieving positive social change in communities using the transformative power of football, will be at the event to showcase their work and offer attendees the opportunity to get engaged in a football related activation.

Vibrant Consultancy opens fourth CISRS training center in Qatar



Vibrant Consultancy inaugurated their latest CISRS training facility, marking a significant milestone as they celebrated their 11th anniversary on May 14th, 2023.

With a remarkable presence in the country for over a decade, they have consistently delivered excellent training to individuals and organizations. This new facility enables them to provide high-quality Scaffold training adhering to the esteemed Overseas Scaffold Training Scheme (UK).

Distinguished entrepreneurs, community

leaders, clients, faculty, and supporters gathered to commemorate this milestone. Vibrant has experienced significant growth since 2012, catering to the educational needs of thousands of students and forming valuable partnerships.

The facility resulted from a collaboration with AIS/Survivex, a UK-based CISRS provider, to meet the demand for skilled scaffolders in the region. The center’s commitment to innovation and excellence was recognized, and attendees expressed optimism for its future.



PHCC holds annual forum to honour staff, directorates

THE Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) held its annual forum to honour its outstanding staff, directorates, health centres and a group of staff who served for more than 25 years.

PHCC also honoured committees that have achieved excellence and success in the work assigned to them, as well as staff working at its health centres and directorates for their outstanding performance in 2022, in the presence of managing director Dr Mariam Ali Abdul Malik and several leaders and staff. In her address, Dr Abdul Malik emphasised PHCC’s keenness through this annual ceremony to spread awareness of the concepts of outstanding performance, creativity and quality, and also PHCC’s aim to promote a culture of excellence.

She also announced PHCC’s preparations for holding the 5th Global Conference on Primary



PHCC honours staff.

Health Care, from November 9-12, under the theme “Primary Care Today: Lessons Learned and Future Action to Achieve Sustainability.”

Dr Abdul Malik also confirmed that work is in full swing to launch the second strategic plan for PHCC for the next four years, which will define the road-

map to promote healthcare services, improve service access, and enhance the overall well-being of our society.

This plan reflects the commitment to continuous improvement and dedication to meet the growing needs of Qatar’s population.

MDD supports Mena Insurtech Summit 2023

Msheireb Properties, the leading sustainable real estate developer, has announced that its flagship city, Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD), is the ‘Presenting Partner’ of the two-day Mena Insurtech Summit, which opened yesterday at the Park Hyatt Hotel. Themed “Mena Insurtech Rising”, the Mena Insurtech Summit 2023 is organised by the QIC Group under the umbrella of Mena Insurtech Association, and hosted by MDD. In a press statement, Msheireb Properties CEO Eng Ali al-Kuwari



Mena Insurtech Summit 2023 at MDD.

said: “We are excited to be at the forefront of driving innovation and growth in the insurance technology landscape, which is in line with our mission to offer the latest smart

solutions to corporates.” MDD, one of the smartest and most sustainable city districts in the world, plays an integral role in Qatar and the region in promoting smart

and tech solutions and services. The district is the hub of several technology giants and is changing the business ecosystem. Mena InsurTech Rising offers a unique platform for industry professionals to explore the latest trends, and investment opportunities in the InsurTech sector. With over 500 startups, more than 5,000 attendees, and 50+ international speakers, the event promises to ignite innovation and foster valuable connections within the InsurTech ecosystem.

Interior minister meets US ambassador



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, met yesterday with US ambassador to Qatar Timmy Davis. The meeting discussed several topics of mutual interest, and reviewed co-operation between the countries in the security fields and ways to support and develop them. HE the Minister of Interior also handed the ambassador a certificate of thanks and appreciation for the US authorities’ concerned participation in securing the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, among the brotherly and friendly countries participating in securing the event, and which achieved exceptional success and a historic accomplishment for Qatar. (QNA)

Hungarian PM arrives in Doha



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban arrived in Doha yesterday evening on an official visit to the country. He and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Abdullah al-Thani, Qatar’s ambassador to Hungary Abdullah bin Falah bin Abdullah al-Dosari and Hungary’s ambassador to Qatar Ferenc Korom. (QNA)

Sheikha Alya meets UN officials

Qatar’s Permanent Representative to the UN HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met separately in New York yesterday with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen Hans Grundberg. The meetings discussed the close co-operation between Qatar and the UN, especially the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and ways to meet the urgent humanitarian needs in Yemen, in addition to Qatar’s continuous humanitarian efforts in several regions around the world. (QNA)



QFFD contributes to ‘Right to Education’ project to increase skillset of Palestinian youths

Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) has signed an agreement to contribute to ‘The Right to Education’ project initiated by the Health, Development, Information, and Policy Institute (HDIP). The project aims to increase the skillset amongst the Palestinian youth in most affected areas with education at the forefront of building their community. This would increase their chances of employment. The project will invest at least 384 training hours annually over three years. The proposed activities focus on empowering and equipping the most vulnerable Palestinian youth to become active and contributing members of their communities. In addition, it will provide them with life skills that they can practise, helping them become leading members of their communities. At these times, development projects in the education sector need to be adopted in Palestine to help their communities grow and prosper. Therefore, by providing this funding



Picture for representative purpose only.

and starting new partnerships with HDIP, QFFD hopes that this contribution aids in investing in newfound skills to advance the Palestinian knowledge base. (QNA)

QNL holds mental health awareness symposium

Qatar National Library (QNL) marked Mental Health Awareness Month with a public event held in collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation’s (HMC) Mental Health Service, the main provider of specialised mental healthcare and treatment in the country. The event featured a diverse array of engaging elements including short, informative presentations and multiple breakout sessions led by experts. HMC psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, pharmacologists, and other specialists shared their perspectives and strategies for fostering positive change. The symposium welcomed the general public interested in expanding their understanding of mental health topics, equipping them with insights to respond compassionately when support is needed. It also served as a dynamic platform, fostering a safe and inclusive environment for the exchange of knowledge and personal experience with professionals from various disciplines. Throughout the event, participants



Some of the participants in the seminar.

had multiple opportunities to connect with the experts, emphasising QNL’s commitment to offering an engaging and supportive space. It also served as a step toward breaking the stigma surrounding mental health issues and promoting an open dialogue about mental health and well-being. By collaborating with local partners such as HMC’s Mental Health Service, QNL ensures that its services are tailored to meet the needs of all members of the community. This event represents a significant step forward in fostering a mentally healthy society and nurturing a culture of understanding and support.

NSCA wraps up workshops for data protection employees

The National Cyber Security Agency (NSCA) represented by the National Data Privacy Office, concluded a week-long series of introductory workshops on the Personal Data Privacy Protection Law, meant for employees of a number of government entities. The workshops aimed to familiarise employees with the law, enhance their understanding of and compliance with the law and in helping them apply it in their organisations. The workshops targeted data protection employees and privacy experts in the banking and financial, education, healthcare, hospitality, and transport sectors, besides government entities. The Director of National Cyber Governance and Assurance Affairs at NSCA Eng Dana al-Abdulla said that the workshops’ significance lies in keeping targeted parties up-to-date with technological developments in the field of data



privacy worldwide, in addition to discussing relevant challenges faced in different sectors. (QNA)

National STEPwise survey from May 25

From Page 1

Urine samples will be collected for urinary sodium and creatinine. Blood tests for blood glucose and lipids by finger prick method will be conducted on the second visit to the household. MoPH director of Public Health Department, Sheikh Dr Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani said: “Qatar recognises the impact of NCDs and reaffirms its commitment to tackling them and their related risk factors. The survey data will serve as evidence-based information for formulating action plan under the National Health Strategy for tackling NCDs and for monitoring

the prevalence of risk factors.” Nasser Saleh Almohdi, director of Census Department, PSA, stressed the importance of joint co-operation between different government institutions in the fields of health research. Almohdi added that compiling most updated and scientifically accurate data for NCDs and its risk factors is a vital national task, the findings of which will help in improving health services to the community. Dr Kholoud Ateeq al-Motawaa, head of NCD Department at MoPH and National Team lead for STEPwise survey explained that this survey is important because it provides an opportunity for

international comparisons and highlights the health needs related to NCDs in the country. The results of this study will be used to assist the MoPH develop public health programmes that target efforts to lower the risk factors that lead to NCDs. MoPH has appealed to the public for full co-operation with the fieldwork teams conducting survey, who have identification cards and to provide them with all the information required including blood and urine tests to complete the survey as fast as possible. MoPH has also affirmed the confidentiality of the information.

Step by Step Centre celebrates launch of ‘sensory-friendly hour’ at Monoprix outlet



A view from the launch of the ‘sensory-friendly hour’ programme at the Monoprix iCONIC 2022 outlet.

The ‘sensory-friendly hour’ programme has been launched at Monoprix iCONIC 2022 as part of an in-house initiative of the Step by Step Centre for Special Needs, ‘Building Bridges: A Step by Step Centre Campaign for Inclusion’. The Step by Step Centre had previously trained the Monoprix staff on how to be sensitive in their approach towards customers with sensory difficulties and how to assist them appropriately when required. Reasonable adjustments were suggested and put in place at the supermarket for the sensory-friendly hours in order to reduce the sensory overload, along with provision of a quiet corner. “Our driving force was the fact that people with special needs and the parents of special needs children find it challenging to engage in daily activities in social settings. Things that others take for granted are rather difficult for this population. Simple day-to-day activities such as grocery shopping, visiting malls, resorts, play areas, airports, going to the salon, etc. are probably so frustrating that many of the

parents avoid them completely,” the centre said in a press statement. “This mandated the launch of the sensory-friendly hour and thanks to Monoprix for being the first ever hypermarket in Qatar to have collaborated with us and taken this much-needed initiative forward,” it added. The event was deemed a success with Sebastien Farhat, regional general manager of Monoprix presenting the opening remarks. He highlighted the importance of their involvement in the sensory-friendly initiative to contribute towards creating an inclusive community in Qatar. Up next was a keynote address by Nasreen Sharif, director of Step by Step Centre for Special Needs, who provided an overview of the sensory-friendly hour programme. She explained the purpose, goals and scope of the programme. Among the panel was Dr Waqar Mohamed Waqar Azeem, chair of Psychiatry for Sidra Medicine and chair of Qatar’s National Autism Plan Working Group. He provided the audience with an overview of sensory processing challenges and their impact, and highlighted the

importance of sensory-friendly initiatives. This was followed by an open forum for the audience to ask questions to Dr Azeem and other keynote speakers. Khalid El Khatouri, Monoprix iCONIC 2022 store manager, concluded the launch event as he went over the key points discussed during the event. Team Step by Step started working on this initiative a few months ago and started getting in touch with various organisations to collaborate. “We were delighted to receive a very positive and enthusiastic response from Monoprix iCONIC 2022,” the statement pointed out. The initiative – ‘Building Bridges: A Step By Step Centre Campaign for Inclusion’ – is in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. Joining in this effort is Monoprix Qatar, iCONIC 2022 building, making it the first-ever sensory-friendly hypermarket where special needs children and their families can shop with ease and comfort. “Together, we look forward to seeing the positive change that will motivate others to join the campaign.”



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The Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys team with officials.



The Hassan Bin Thabet Secondary School for Boys team with officials.



Brigadier Mohamed Abdullah al-Malki



Captain Saleh Rashid al-Nabet



Dr Khalid Kamal Naji



Dr Shimaa Ali al-Quradaghi

Winning students of traffic safety programme honoured

The Qatar Transportation and Traffic Safety Centre (QTTSC) at Qatar University's (QU) College of Engineering organised a closing ceremony for winners of the Traffic Safety Ambassadors Programme for secondary school students (female and male).

The programme, in its sixth edition, was held in co-operation with the National Traffic Safety Committee at the Ministry of Interior, the General Directorate of Traffic and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, with the support of

Dolphin Energy, and in the presence of a number of judges from different government institutions, besides representatives of the participating schools and a number of faculty members and employees from QU.

The programme aims to build an educated and effective knowledge society in traffic safety in Qatar by involving the largest segment of youth in spreading knowledge in traffic safety.

The first place for girls went to Rawda Bint Jassim Independent Secondary School for Girls, the second to Arwa Bint Abdul

Muttalib Independent Secondary Girls School, and the third to Zubaida Independent Secondary School for Girls.

For boys, Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys won the first place, followed by Hassan Bin Thabet Secondary School for Boys in second and Al-Andalus Private Secondary School for Boys in third.

In his opening speech, Dr Khalid Kamal Naji, dean of the College of Engineering, said: "Traffic safety is of great interest in Qatar, where the State established the National Traffic Safety

Committee, and in January 2013 the National Traffic Safety Strategy was launched to reinforce Qatar's commitment to reducing road accidents and paving the way towards an ambitious long-term vision of providing a 'safe road transport system that protects all road users from death and serious injury.'

Brigadier Mohamed Abdullah al-Malki, secretary of the National Traffic Safety Committee, stressed that maintaining the safety of young drivers and passengers is one of the committee's top priorities in Qatar.

Captain Saleh Rashid al-Nabet, head of the Traffic Studies and Information Section at the General Directorate of Traffic, noted that close co-operation with the QTTSC is of great importance to enhance traffic safety.

He also said the Traffic Awareness Department at the General Directorate of Traffic spares no effort in communicating with all segments of society in order to deliver the message of traffic awareness and spread information and traffic culture, with a focus on schools and university students.

Therefore, the administration organises annual traffic awareness seminars and campaigns targeting mainly students.

Dr Shimaa Ali al-Quradaghi, director of QU's QTTSC, said: "We are proud of this programme, which helps raise students' awareness of the importance of road safety. This programme is an important platform to cultivate the concepts and behaviours of safe driving at an early age, as well as to encourage students to follow traffic safety rules consistently."

Shura participates in General Assembly of Latin American and Caribbean Parliament

A Shura Council delegation participated in the 37th General Assembly of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament, which concluded its two-day sessions in Panama City on Saturday.

The Council was represented by Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabat al-Dosari, Shura Council Member and Chairman of the Qatari Parliamentary Friendship Group with Latin American and Caribbean Countries, and group members.

The Council's participation comes in its capacity as an observer member, since Qatar became the first country in the Middle East to join this important regional forum in June 2019.

The 37th General Assembly was held under the theme of women and girls: necessary players towards the development of Latin America and the Caribbean. It consisted of several meetings including those of: the parliamentary forum for African, Latin American and Caribbean states, and the meeting of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The General Assembly also hosted a ministerial conference dealing with the impact of irregular migration in Latin America, with a focus on women and girls, as well as another conference on the issue of women and children in the development of the continent.



sue of women and children in the development of the continent.

On the sidelines of the Assembly's sessions, the Shura Council delegation held a

number of meetings, covering parliamentary co-operation relations between Qatar and a number of Latin American countries and ways to strengthen them. (QNA)

QNA
Dhaka

Qatar Charity has opened four orphanages in Bangladesh, which include several facilities to provide a suitable environment for education and care for orphan children. About 800 orphan children are expected to benefit from them.

The orphanages have been established in three different regions of Bangladesh: Gazipur, Meherpur, and Brahmanbaria, each of them includes classrooms, a residential section, a kitchen, and a dining hall, in addition to teachers' rooms and toilets.

During their participation in the inauguration activities, the Bengali local authorities praised the importance of opening these homes and the role of Qatar Charity in caring for the orphans and poor children, especially since these facilities were established in areas that need them.

Shams Alam Prodan, a local official in the Gazipur region, said: "Because of the construction of the new building, orphaned children will now have a beautiful educational environment."

He appreciated the role of Qatar Charity and the supporters of the people of Qatar.

Mohamed Arshad Ali, a local official in Mahirpur district, said: "Building and furnishing these homes is a social and educational work that deserves appreciation, given that it is dedicated to orphaned children and supports them with the aim of making their future bright."

The orphan children expressed their happiness at the opening of the new schools and their acceptance of them.

Akram Hussein, a fifth-grade student, said: "How happy and lucky we are, because we study and live in the house that embraced us."


Mohamed Suleiman said with a smile: "The environment here is comfortable," adding that it is a very nice and new building, with clean beds in the interior.

Qatar Charity provides educational services to students in crisis-affected areas and disadvantaged communities around the world.

In Bangladesh, it continues to build schools and orphanage centres and sponsors orphans as well as students, the disabled and children of poor families through its 'Rofaqa' initiative.

In the past five years, Qatar Charity has built more than 45 homes and orphanage centres in Bangladesh that include schools, boarding departments, and other facilities benefiting more than 12,000 students. It currently sponsors nearly 3,500 orphaned children there, providing them with care and seeking to secure a prosperous future for them. (QNA)





الأولى
AL-AWALIA

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/2023/23	Call-Off Agreement for Quality Assurance, Quality Control and Testing of Aggregate Products for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	1000 QAR	200,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	29 May 2023 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2023/24	Supply, Deliver and Install Vibrating Rinsing Screens for SWSP for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	1000 QAR	150,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	29 May 2023 01:00 PM

1. Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.docs@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, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submit after this date and time will not be accepted.

4. Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at: Al-Saad, Suhaim bin Hamad St., Qatar First Bank Building, 10th Floor before the closing date.

5. Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-651111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. QA 18 CRQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006). Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.

6. Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.

7. Bids must be valid for 90 days after closing date.

8. Any queries relating to the Tender Documents 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 queries in the Form of Tender Bulletin. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITI Documentation 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. Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.

13. For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa

For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa

Qatar Economic Forum begins tomorrow

From Page 1

"This year's forum remains committed to spotlighting the latest trends and technologies defining the next wave of economic development, as well as the major global challenges facing international leaders."

Addressing a media roundtable yesterday, HE Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of the Supreme Committee Organising the Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg, and CEO of Media City Qatar, affirmed that the forum is attracting an increasing number of participants.

HE Sheikh Ali considered the growing participation of global economic and political decision-makers as a testament to the forum's success in establishing its agenda as a prominent event on the global economic stage.

He emphasised the significance of Qatar's role as the host of the forum, noting that the event solidifies Qatar's position as a global platform for dialogue on various economic topics such as inflation, investment in emerging markets, energy transformation, trade and sports, among others.

He said launching the Qatar Economic Forum aimed to establish a diverse

media platform that brings together global business leaders to formulate actionable steps towards economic growth. He also noted that the forum has achieved this goal with each edition and has grown into a hub for dialogue and knowledge exchange, supported by a selection of distinguished speakers.

Further, HE Sheikh Ali said the forum has witnessed significant interest from leading political and economic decision-makers at the international level and from different countries, with more than 2,000 participants, including 1,000 from outside Qatar.

The CEO of Media City Qatar anticipates that the 2023 forum will witness the signing of multiple agreements involving both domestic and international entities, which will play a significant role in Qatar's private and public sectors.

The Executive Director to the Permanent Committee for Organising Conferences (PCOC) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and head of logistics for the Organising Committee of the Qatar Economic Forum, Mubarak Ajlan Mubarak al-Kuwari, said their aim is to ensure that all guests in Qatar receive access to excellent facilities and services. They draw upon their extensive experience

gained over the years, including the successful organisation of major international events.

Al-Kuwari also highlighted the progressive growth in the number of participants attending the QEF from year to year.

He noted that the Organising Committee has provided participants with a platform that enables them to carry out various procedures smoothly and easily, in addition to providing all forms of logistical support to guests in Qatar.

In turn, Nasser al-Taweel, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Organising Committee for the Qatar Economic Forum, and Deputy CEO, Chief Legal Officer and Board Secretary, Qatar Financial Centre, confirmed that the forum will bring together global CEOs and business leaders. They include Shou Chew, CEO, TikTok; David Calhoun, President and CEO at The Boeing Company; Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund; Steven T Mnuchin, former Secretary of the Treasury, US; as well as economics expert Nouriel Roubini; and General David H Petraeus (US Army, retired), Partner, KKR and Chairman, KKR Global Institute, among others.

Qatar Tourism promotes latest offerings at Riyadh Travel Fair

Qatar Tourism (QT) will lead a delegation of 10 hospitality partners at the 13th edition of the Riyadh Travel Fair, which begins today at the Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Centre in Riyadh.

The three-day event follows Qatar's success in welcoming more than 1mn visitors in the first quarter of this year, led by arrivals from Saudi Arabia, amounting to 892,000 visitors who predominantly visited Qatar via the Abu Samra land border.

The QT pavilion will showcase the destination's one-of-a-kind infrastructure and latest hospitality developments which uniquely blend cultural authenticity with modernity, a statement said.

The statement said that Qatar's participation at Riyadh Travel Fair strongly demonstrates the country's ongoing commitment to the Saudi market and marks the QT's second participation in a major travel exhibition in Saudi Arabia this year.

Omar al-Jaber, director of Shared Services at the QT, said: "We are pleased to take part in the Riyadh Travel Fair and showcase Qatar as a world-class tourism destination that is within close proximity to Saudi travellers."

"Saudi Arabia is a key market according to our longer-term tourism strategy, and we continue to witness significant arrival figures, particularly around festive occasions and national holidays," he said. "Throughout the event, we aim to bring industry leaders up to speed with the sheer scale of the expansion in Qatar's tourism sector as well as highlight eased travel procedures that the country extends to its neighbours."

"We invite all attendees to visit our pavilion and experience Qatar's famed warm Arabian hospitality and



Omar al-Jaber

Right: The National Museum of Qatar



Al Maha Island

explore the latest tourism offerings," al-Jaber added.

Along with showcasing Qatar's latest attractions, visitors to the QT pavilion at the Riyadh Travel Fair will receive a new summer guide on all there is to see and do in Qatar, along with highlights on offers for stays and attractions.

With the city of Doha's recently awarded title of Arab Tourism Capital for 2023, Qatar continues to invest in its tourism sector and work toward its 2030 strategy which



Katara - the Cultural Village

sees the sector's contribution to GDP grow to 12%.

Building on the country's legacy of hosting the first FIFA World Cup tournament in the region, Qatar has re-launched the Hayya Platform in a new form, unifying visa processes to the country and creating even more seamless travel opportunities for visitors who require a visa.

While GCC nationals and over 95 nationalities can already travel visa-free to Qatar, all remaining nationalities - independent of job cat-

egory - who require a visa, can apply easily for the GCC resident Visa A2 category on Hayya.

The Riyadh Travel Fair is one of the largest travel events in the region that connects global industry professionals from national, regional, and international organisations.

The event highlights tourism products, services and investments made by some of the most significant names in accommodation and hospitality, airlines, and tourism destinations.

Music brings Australian oud virtuoso to his Arab roots

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

A world-renowned Australian oud virtuoso and composer, who has his origins in Egypt, feels music has helped him bond with his Arab roots and maintain links to the heritage and culture of the region. "I left Egypt when I was two years old. My family loves music and I was brought up in an environment of music. Music helped me learn more about my heritage and traditions," Australian-Egyptian oud player Joseph Tawadros told *Gulf Times*.

He was in the town for his maiden performance in Qatar.

His solo concert was held in the atrium of the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha on Saturday.

He is on a mini tour of the region and is heading to Kuwait next before travelling to Cairo.

"Watching Arabic movies and listening to Arabic music helped me develop a passion for music, and I started focusing on the traditional music of the Arab world," Tawadros said.

"So I started practising oud. I wanted to be part of the culture, and oud was one way of doing it," he added.

"My grandfather played oud. I started practising oud at the age of 10. I had a family friend who started to teach me," he recounted. "The Internet was starting then and I started watching the performances on the Web and learned more."

"I (went on to formally) learn music at the Institute of Eastern Music in Australia," he added.

Tawadros has so far performed in various countries across the globe.

"I have performed in America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and other places," he said. "I have been a very frequent visitor to India and Vietnam, among other countries."

"I took part in the Rajasthan International Folk music festival in Jodhpur, which was attended by the King of Jodhpur. I did it four years in a row. I have also played for the Dalai Lama," he stated.

Tawadros said that Qatar impressed him a lot even though he was only here for a short time.

"My first performance was very exciting. People were very friendly and appreciative, and they were encouraging with very positive feedback," he said. "I am quite impressed by the country and the crowd at my show ... I plan to visit the country in future."

He will release his 20th album in July.

"I have collaborated with many people in releasing my albums so far. For some of the works, I collaborated with others, including my brother. My 20th album will be released in July," he revealed.

Tawadros is known for his fusion of the Arabic Maqam system with Western jazz and improvisation.

He has captivated audiences around the world with his innovative and dynamic performances.

His music is critically acclaimed.

He is a seven-time ARIA award winner, and he has performed in prestigious venues such as the Sydney Opera House, the Royal Albert Hall in London, and the Lincoln Centre in New York.

The Australian government is supporting Tawadros's tour, which will also take him to Kuwait, Amman, and Cairo.



Joseph Tawadros during his interview with *Gulf Times*. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Qatar Power Engineering & Contracting honoured with top accolade for exceptional CSR in construction sector



Qatar Power Engineering & Contracting, an "A Grade" electrical Company was proclaimed as "the best company in corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Qatar" in the construction sector, during the awards ceremony held at the conclusion of the "Qatar CSR Summit 2023".

The event was hosted by Qatar University under the aegis of H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdurrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The recognition enunciates QPEC's dedication & commitment to the highest ESG performance standards by being a part of the development of the nation and adhering to the social set-up. Since Environmental, social and governance (ESG) is a framework used to assess an organization's business practices and performance on various sustainability and ethical issues.

By declaring "QPEC" as one of the winners of the Qatar CSR Awards 2023, reverberates its dedication and commitment towards corporate social responsibility in Qatar which has been recognized and acknowledged by the esteemed panel of judges.

While receiving the award the General Manager of QPEC, Mr Irshad Ahmed Mir reiterated that our race to the development of the nation will continue & mission 2030 is on target, besides that there will be no letup in our social activities and the social responsibilities which are part of our mission. Mr Mir, Said", we will return back to the society what we owe to it, & will continue to carry out the blood donations camps, charity programs, renovation of the houses of the destitute, cleaning of public places etc.



Embassy, Katara open Malaysians in Qatar Visual Arts Exhibition

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Malaysian embassy in Qatar, in co-operation with Katara - the Cultural Village, opened an exhibition titled "Malaysians in Qatar Visual Arts Exhibition" yesterday, showcasing 34 works by nine Malaysian artists and photographers in the country.

Themed *Malaysia Memper-sona/Mesmerising Malaysia*, the show, which will run until June 1, highlights the uniqueness of Malaysia via its rich history, varied landscapes and diverse cultural backgrounds through different styles of art.

These include abstract, realism and maps, giving viewers a one-of-its-kind experience of Malaysia.

In a press statement, Malaysian ambassador Zamshari Shaharan said that the exhibition serves as a platform for many talented Malaysian artists and photographers in Qatar to showcase their talents.

"Following an extensive discussion between the embassy and Katara, this event finally materialised with the support from Katara which had gladly agreed to host the event," the envoy said. "The embassy wishes to express its appreciation to Katara general manager Prof Khalid Ibrahim al-Sulaiti for his guidance and to his team for their kind assistance in the successful organisation of the event."

The exhibition is comprised of two visual art categories: fine art (15 works in oil, acrylic, gouache, watercolour, and mixed media) and photography (19 pieces).

A minor exhibition will also feature "artworks related to Qatar from the eyes of Malaysians".

Besides showcasing the beauty of Malaysia, the artworks and photographs reflect the love and admiration of the artists and photographers for Qatar as their "home away from home", infusing their encounters and recollections.

The artists and photographers are: Juifa Hana binti Muhamad Jamal (Gollytheat on Instagram), Nurul Hanis binti Abdul Halim (nislukis), Patric Rozario (patricrozario), Shahrlul Ahmad (shahrlul_ahmad), Muhammad Shazwan Zakarya (mshazwanzakarya), Mohd Zulakbar Abdullah Omar (Zulakbar71), Edzwan Kamaruzman (jentrong7), Suresh Venkitasamy (suresh.venkitasamy), and Mohsin Mohamed (mr.studio.academy).



Juifa Hana binti Muhamad Jamal's depiction of Qatar's map.



The Night Market by Nurul Hanis binti Abdul Halim.



Nurul Hanis binti Abdul Halim's *The Rainforest*.

Mercedes-Benz model recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khaled Automobiles, has announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz GLE, 2020 model, as the drain hoses of the air conditioning system may have been installed incorrectly, causing condensation to leak into the vehicle interior and cause corrosion of the electrical components or a short circuit.

The MoCI has urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquires and suggestions through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, Twitter @MOCIQATAR, Instagram MOCIQATAR. MoCI's mobile application is available on iPhone and Android devices - MOCI_QATAR



QATAR NATIONAL CEMENT CO. (Q.P.S.C.)

PUBLISHING FOR PUBLIC AUCTION

The Tender and Procurement Committee (T&PC) announcing the following Public Auction:

AUCTION #	SUBJECT	AUCTION FEE	BID BOND/ BANK GUARANTEE	CLOSING DATE
PUBLIC AUCTION NO. (01/23)	FOR SELLING OF CEMENT PLANT NO. (1) PRODUCTION LINES, EQUIPMENT, MACHINERY, SPARE PARTS AND SCRAP MATERIALS, LOCATED AT QNCC'S SITE IN UMM BAB, THE STATE OF QATAR, FOR AN EXECUTION PERIOD OF FOUR (4) MONTHS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT.	QAR 1,000/= (QATARI RYIAL ONE THOUSAND) OR EQUIVALENT IN USD NON-REFUNDABLE	QAR 350,000/= (QATARI RYIALS THREE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND ONLY) OR EQUIVALENT IN USD AND VALID FOR 120 DAYS FROM THE CLOSING DATE.	SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2023 ON/OR BEFORE 12 NOON.

- Participation in the Auction: The interested Companies in Qatar should submit an authorization letter mentioning the nominated representative on their behalf along with Identification Card copy and copies of both Company's current Commercial Register (C.R.) and computer card (Establishment Card) and to pay the Auction fees in cash against collection of the Auction Documents from the office of the Committee (T&PC) located at Administration Building, Umm-Bab every Sunday to Thursday from 7:00am until 2:00pm. For overseas participants, they should send a letter of interest on their letterhead along with certificates of registrations in the concerned Government Authority in their respective Countries and also the certification of approved signatory on behalf of their Company through this email address tpc@qatarcement.com to provide them with details to participate and pay the Auction Fees.
- Bid/Offer should be accompanied with a Bid Bond/Bank Guarantee as stated above, in the form of bank guarantee or Manager's cheque, to be issued by one of a Bank operated in State of Qatar, and the successful Bidder is required to pay advance payment/performance guarantee, equal to 20% of the total contract price, as provision mentioned in the Auction Document.
- Bid/Offer should be valid for a period not less than ninety (90) days, from the closing date of the Auction & irrevocable during this period.
- The Company has the right to reject any Bid/Offer delivered after the closing date referred to above or not accompanied with a Bid Bond/Bank Guarantee.
- The Company has the right to cancel the Auction at any stage without giving any reason(s), and/or award it on partial basis to more than one Bidder, any Bidder is expected & deemed to have prior agreed on awarding the Auction on partial basis with no any objection at the same prices as offered in his Bid/Offer.
- Bid/Offer should be submitted in three (3) separate wax-sealed envelopes as follows: (First envelope containing only Auction Bid Bond/Bank Guarantee, the second envelope containing the technical specifications and the third envelope containing the financial & commercial prices) all shall be placed together in an outer big wax-sealed envelope, and to be addressed to the Chairman of Tender and Procurement Committee (T&PC). And should indicate on the envelopes the Auction Number, Title and Closing Date of the Auction. The Bid/Offer should be handed-over to the Tender & Procurement Committee office, Administration Building at Umm-Bab. The received Bid/Offer will be deposited in respective Auction Box.
- All enquiries in connection with the contents of Auction's Documents/Booklets referred above should be sent earlier Seven (7) days before the closing date, no clarification will be considered thereafter. All inquiries should be sent in written addressed to the Chairman of Tenders & Procurement Committee (T&PC) through this email address: tpc@qatarcement.com.

QATAR NATIONAL CEMENT COMPANY (Q.P.S.C.)
TENDERS & PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE (T&PC)
New Administration Building @ Umm-Bab,
Call Landline Tel Nos.: (00974) 4042 6042 / (00974) 4042 6049

Minister honours 4th University Poet competition winners



HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani has honoured the winners of the 4th University Poet competition, held on May 11-20.

The competition was organised by the Ministry of Culture, represented by the Qatar Poetry Centre (Diwan Al Arab) in collaboration with Qatar University along with civil and military universities and colleges.

The ceremony was held at Qatar University in the presence of university officials, academics, and students.

In the category of eloquent poetry, Mohamed Aflaj from Mauritania won the first place, then Hamad Salem al-Rashdi from Qatar (at second place), and Adel Mohamed Abdel Hameed



Snapshots from the ceremony.

from Pakistan in third place, all from Qatar University.

In the Nabati poetry category, Saeed Ali al-Afeer from the Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College won first place, followed by Hamad Jaber al-Jarhab in second place and Mohamed Saleh al-Nabit in third. The latter two are from Qatar University. All the winners in this category are Qatari.

In a speech during the ceremony, poet and Diwan Al Arab director Shabib bin Arar al-Nuaimi stressed the centre's keenness on making poetry an expression of morals and values, such as courage and chastity.

He noted that since its inception, the competition has adopted an ethical

code to disseminate these values and ethics through the cultural and social spheres.

The honoured poets thanked the support for their creative talents from the Qatar Poetry Centre, adding that the competition serves as a catalyst for them to continue on their creative and artistic paths. - QNA

Star Filipino singer to perform in Doha next month

A musical treat is in store as Regine Velasquez-Alcasid, the famous Filipino singer and actress, is set to enthrall audiences in Doha next month.

Commonly known as "Asia's songbird", she will perform at the Al Ghara-fa Sports Club indoor hall on June 30, according to event organisers Royal Sports and Events.

Ogie Alcasid, singer-songwriter and Regine's husband, will also be present at the concert along with Allan Quilantang (Allan K), comedian and one of the co-hosts of the noontime variety show, *Eat Bulaga!*

Doors will open at 2pm, while the concert will begin at 7pm.

Tickets for "The Song Bird, Live in Doha" concert are now available in all categories: VVIP (with meet and greet) - QR1,500, VIP - QR1,000, Platinum - QR500, Gold - QR300, and general admission - QR150.

Those interested should call +974 7444 9637 or check the social media pages of Royal Sports and Events for updates, including online booking details.

Regine is considered one of the most influential figures in Philippine popular culture and is known for her vocal range and belting technique.

She rose to prominence after winning the television talent show *Ang Bagong Kampeon* in 1984 and the Asia Pacific Singing Contest in 1989.

Having sold more than 7mn records domestically and 1.5mn in Asia, Regine is the best-selling Filipino music artiste of all time, according to information available online.

She has also won multiple awards and has consistently been credited with inspiring a generation of Filipino singers.



Snapshots from the science exhibition.

Annual science exhibition at HOPE Qatar

THE annual science exhibition by 109 differently abled children at HOPE Qatar Centre for Special Needs was held on Saturday under the theme *Shades of Chemistry*.

The event saw various experiments, charts and models demonstrated by the children under the guidance of their teachers.

The exhibits were listed into categories of Environmental Chemistry, Bio Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, Polymer, and Analytical Chemistry.

Students of ages 5-20 with varying range of intellectual and multiple disabilities proudly demonstrated their knowledge of the field of science through the experiments.

The exhibition was inaugurated jointly by special guests, including Qatar Museums chief executive Ahmad Musa al-Namla, Hamad Bin Khalifa University vice-president (Research) Dr Richard O'Kennedy, Fire Station Museum director Khalifa al-Obaidly, Qatar Scientific Club administrative and financial affairs director Fatima al-Mohannadi, Khalid Fakhroo from Qatar Sports Federation, and Dr Nizar



Kochery, legal adviser and social activist.

Dr Rajeev Thomas, founder and managing director of HOPE Qatar Centre, said that the annual science exhibition was one of the many events conducted each year to showcase the talents of the differently abled children and ensure they are given a near-school environment where they can push their limits to achieve their very best.

Rixos Gulf Hotel Doha Sweeps the FACT Dining Awards 2023 with Wins in Two Categories



Rixos Gulf Hotel Doha has added two prestigious accolades to its growing list of achievements, with its popular Farmhouse restaurant winning the Casual Dining category, and its stylish ZOH Lifestyle Deck taking home the prize for Poolside category at the FACT Dining Awards 2023.

"We are thrilled and humbled to have been recognized by the FACT Dining Awards in not one, but two categories during our first year of operations after the opening of the hotel," said Sherif Kasseb the General Manager of Rixos Gulf Hotel Doha. "Our team has worked tirelessly to create exceptional dining experiences for our guests, and it's an honor to see their hard work and dedication pay off with these awards."

Farmhouse, is a favorite among our guests, offering a menu of hearty, locally sourced dishes made with the freshest ingredients. The restaurant's cozy atmosphere and friendly service have made it a go-to destination for casual dining in the city.

ZOH Lifestyle Deck, on the other hand, is an oasis of luxury and relaxation, offering guests stunning views of Doha's skyline and a serene poolside setting. ZOH Lifestyle Deck delicious and Instagramable dishes, along with its attentive service and chic decor, have made it a top choice for those looking to indulge in a little rest and relaxation.

Rosette Fares, Director of Marketing and communications commented, "I am delighted that two of our exceptional restaurants have been recognized and awarded in highly

competitive categories. These wins will serve as a powerful tool for us to showcase our commitment to excellence and position Rixos Gulf Hotel Doha as a leading destination for exceptional dining experiences. We are excited to continue pushing the boundaries of what our guests expect from casual and poolside venues, and we look forward to welcoming new guests to experience our award-winning offerings."

The FACT Dining Awards are among the most prestigious culinary awards in the region, with a rigorous judging process that evaluates the quality of the dining experience at each restaurant. Rixos Gulf Hotel Doha is proud to have been recognized alongside some of the best restaurants in the city and looks forward to continuing to push the boundaries of casual dining and poolside cuisine.

WCM-Q workshop on peripartum disorders

Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) held a two-day workshop to help healthcare professionals better diagnose and manage peripartum disorders.

The workshop comes as part of the "Back to Basics for Clinicians" series.

Titled *Peripartum Depression, Anxiety and Psychosis: An Outlook on Diagnosis and Management*, the workshop was designed to help participants recognise the risks posed by untreated peripartum disorders, demonstrate an understanding of how to identify and evaluate peripartum psychiatric illnesses, formulate a treatment plan for the management of these illnesses, and describe the intersection between psychosocial factors and peripartum psychiatric illnesses.

The workshop was held both online and in-person. Co-ordinated by the Division of Continuing Professional Development at the WCM-Q, the workshop was led by associate professor of biochemistry Dr Nasrin Mesaeli and Dr Zahra Naqvi, assistant professor of psychiatry.

Other speakers included senior Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) consultant psychiatrist Dr Suhaila Ghuloum; Dr Katherine Roberts, psychiatrist and psychotherapist at Contra Costa County Emergency Room California; Dr Zainab Imarn, division chief (acting) and medical students' clerkship director at the Women's Mental Health Division of Sidra Medicine's Department of Psychiatry; Dr Bernd Reichert, attending physician neonatology at Sidra Medicine; Dr Sanabel al-Akras, WCM-Q alumna and general psychiatrist and medical director at Al Sanabel Specialised Psychiatric Centre; and Dr Aicha Hind Rifai, assistant professor of clinical psychiatry at the WCM-Q.

Dr Mesaeli said: "Peripartum disorders can vary in prevalence, expression, co-morbidity, and presentation of illness and may be due to psychosocial factors or even biological factors." "It is therefore important to equip healthcare professionals with current and up-to-date data that enables them to effectively evaluate, diagnose, and manage patients presenting symptoms of these illnesses," she said.

Deema al-Sheikhly, director of medical education and continuing professional development, and lecturer of education in medicine at the WCM-Q, said: "We are delighted to bring together a team of expert psychiatrists, psychologists, and physicians to share their valuable insight into peripartum disorders."



The workshop explored intricacies of the United Nations Convention on Contracts.

AFG College with University of Aberdeen holds LLM workshop

AFG College with the University of Aberdeen held a workshop aimed at exploring the intricacies of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG).

The workshop was held at the AFG campus in Doha, bringing together students, lawyers, academics and potential applicants, as well as those already working in the legal profession, to hear from competent legal professionals.

The focus was to examine the CISG, considered to be one of the most important international instruments governing the sale of goods.

The presentation by the University of Aberdeen's Dr Nevena Juvremovic began with an overview of the CISG and its key provisions.

She spoke of the role that the CISG plays in the facilitation of international trade and how it helps in the promotion of legal certainties.

Participants were also able to engage with LLM programme leader Gianluca Andresani on their experiences and insights on IT Law and Regulation and Online Intermediaries Liability, as well as hearing from their peers in this interactive session.

Andresani said: "We had a spectacular turnout for this event, from students and the legal community here in Qatar."

"Dr Juvremovic's presentation offered a real insight into the complexities of working across national borders, as well as how the CISG interplays with the UN sustainable development goals," he said. "I hope that we will continue to attract renowned legal scholars who are able to offer expert analysis on such important legal issues."

AFG College with the University of Aberdeen plans to organise similar events in the future, with a focus on offering stakeholders the opportunity to grasp the latest insight and analysis on pertinent legal issues and fostering greater connectivity across the legal community in Doha.

Qatar welcomes armistice between Sudan's Armed Forces, RSF

Qatar has welcomed the short-term armistice signed in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), an agreement that also allows the delivery of humanitarian relief, QNA reported from Doha.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's aspirations that the deal would pave the way for a permanent ceasefire and subsequent broad negotiations that involve all Sudanese political forces, in a bid to reach a comprehensive agreement and sustainable peace that achieves the Sudanese people's aspirations for stability, development and prosperity.

The statement reaffirmed Qatar's stance calling for an immediate end to the fighting in Sudan, the exercise of maximum restraint and prioritising the voice of reason and the public interest. The ministry also expressed Qatar's appreciation for the efforts of Saudi Arabia and the US to reach this agreement, and their good endeavours to end the conflict and achieve stability in Sudan.

GCC, OIC WELCOME CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

The Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) has welcomed the short-term ceasefire agreement

between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which was signed on Saturday in Jeddah, QNA reported from Riyadh.

In a statement issued yesterday, GCC Secretary-General Jassim Mohamed al-Budaiwi lauded the relentless diplomatic efforts of Saudi Arabia and the US, which culminated in converging views between the warring parties in Sudan in order to establish a ceasefire to open the way for peace opportunities in Sudan.

Al-Budaiwi affirmed the GCC countries' support for all diplomatic efforts to enable the Sudanese to solve problems by preferring the language of dialogue and sparing the brotherly Sudanese people the horrors of conflicts. He voiced hope that Sudan would enjoy lasting peace so that it could preserve state institutions and achieve comprehensive and sustainable development for the Sudanese people.

The Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) hoped that the ceasefire agreement would constitute an important step in paving the way towards ending the armed conflict in Sudan for good, enhancing security, peace, and stability in Sudan and the region. **(QNA)**

DISPUTE Lebanon bathing suit row triggers beach protest

Lebanese activists protested yesterday at a beach in the coastal city of Sidon after a woman said she was harassed there over her allegedly indecent bathing suit, an AFP correspondent reported from Sidon. Defying a municipality ban on their demonstration, dozens of protesters, mostly women, gathered briefly in the city, the correspondent said. "We have all come to support women's right to be in public spaces, whether in a bikini or a burkini," said Diana Moukalled, a journalist and women's rights activist. "Public spaces don't just belong to certain people as a function of their beliefs, but to everyone. It's a constitutional right," she said. In last week's incident, a group of conservatives reportedly assailed a bather and her husband at the public beach in Sidon, accusing them of not respecting local norms due to the woman's attire. The incident sparked a wave of solidarity on social media, with some women posing in bathing suits with the hashtag #Sidon. Others instead praised the conservative intervention.

Private mission carrying first Saudi astronauts to visit ISS set for launch

AFP
Cape Canaveral

A private mission to the International Space Station (ISS) organised by Axiom Space is due to blast off from Florida, carrying the first two Saudi astronauts to go to the orbiting laboratory.

Rayyanah Barnawi, a breast cancer researcher, will become the first Saudi woman to voyage into space and will be joined on the mission by fellow Saudi Ali al-Qarni, a fighter pilot.

The Axiom Mission 2 (Ax-2) crew will take off aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral in the southern state of Florida.

The team also includes Peggy Whitson, a former Nasa astronaut who will be making her fourth flight to the ISS, and John Shoffner, a businessman from Tennessee who will serve as pilot.

They are due to spend around 10 days on board the ISS, where they should arrive around 1:30 pm on Monday.

"Being the first Saudi woman astro-

naut, representing the region, it's a great pleasure and honour that I'm very happy to carry," said Barnawi at a recent press conference.

She added that, aside from excitement for the research she will carry out on board, she is looking forward to sharing her experience with kids while on the ISS.

"Being able to see their faces when they see astronauts from their own region for the first time is very thrilling," she said.

A career fighter pilot, al-Qarni said he has "always had the passion of exploring the unknown and just admiring the sky and the stars."

"It is a great opportunity for me to pursue this kind of passion that I have, and now maybe just fly among the stars." The mission is not Saudi Arabia's first foray into space.

In 1985, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, an air force pilot, took part in a US-organised space voyage.

But the space mission involving a Saudi woman is the latest move by the oil-rich Gulf kingdom, where women only gained the right to drive a few years ago, to revamp its image.

Including rooms, F&B outlets, amenities, and pool access

Refreshing summer offers from Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels and Al Najada Hotel

Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels, the five-star designer collection of boutique hotels, and Al Najada Hotel, the iconic property at the heart of Doha, welcome the summer season with a group of refreshing and distinctive offers to provide an opportunity for guests and visitors to escape the hot weather and enjoy spending the best times in luxury and elegance and experience the multiple hotel facilities, amenities and upscale level of services in addition to indulge in the most delicious culinary prepared by the elite chefs.

Through the summer offers, both properties seek to provide a unique sanctuary for all guests at competitive prices, giving them the opportunity to enjoy the authentic Arabian hospitality throughout the diverse distinctive properties, which are characterized by absolute comfort and luxury, making them the preferred place and the ideal haven for those looking to spend special getaways.

The newly introduced summer offers, include diverse packages that suits all segments of the society. Starting from QR 380, the first package includes a stay for two with breakfast buffet, while the second half board package includes a stay for two comprising of breakfast and dinner buffets for 540 Qatari riyals. As for the third package, it was designed to suit all family members, and includes accommodation for two people and two children under 12 years old, and consist of breakfast buffet, at a competitive price starting from 630 Qatari riyals.

Guests staying at any of Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels' eight collection boutique hotels, or Al Najada Hotel will have the privilege to use any of the facilities and amenities available at any of the properties. Al Jasra Boutique



Hotel offers all guests and residents the opportunity to benefit from the Gym overlooking the Souq, and The Spa with its authentic Moroccan Hammam. Al Mirqab Boutique Hotel is also the ideal location where the guests can stay in shape with the state-of-the-art gym and the outdoor swimming pool. The pool

bar restaurant at Al Najada Hotel offers its guests the chance to relax, chill and enjoy the best culinary options, while the property's 24 hours gym will be available for those looking to maintain their healthy habits and exercise after indulging themselves in a great gastronomic experience.



For external guests wishing to enjoy a day by the pool, Al Mirqab Boutique Hotel will be the perfect location with competitive rates of QR 100 for adults and QR 80 for kids from 5 to 18 years old, while kids under 5 years old will be enjoying the day for free, from 7 am till 7pm.

Furthermore, guests looking for privacy can avail themselves of the private summer offer at Al Mirqab Boutique Hotel and book the pool with a rate of QR 320 (min of 4 people) starting from 7pm, with QR80 for every additional guest.



Battle-weary Sudanese hope latest truce holds

AFP
Khartoum

Air raids, gunfire and explosions rocked Sudan's capital yesterday hours after rival generals agreed to a one-week ceasefire, the latest in a series of truces that have been systematically violated.

The truce is set to take effect at 9:45pm (1945 GMT) today, the US and Saudi Arabia said in a joint statement after talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah.

It "shall remain in effect for seven days and may be extended with the agreement of both parties", the statement added.

In a deserted neighbourhood of Khartoum North, Hussein Mohamed is hoping that, finally, the guns will silence.

The UN says fighting has driven nearly 650,000 Khartoum residents from their homes, but Mohamed has remained, sheltering in place with his sick mother.

"They have announced truces that they have not held to before," he said.

"We hope that this time mediators can monitor that the ceasefire is implemented." In a statement published yesterday by the official Saudi Press Agency, Riyadh acknowledged the multiple truce violations since fighting began on April 15.

"Unlike previous ceasefires, the agreement reached in Jeddah was signed by the parties and will be supported by a US-Saudi and international-supported ceasefire monitoring mechanism," the Saudi foreign ministry said.

The fighting pits the Sudanese army, commanded by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led



A Sudanese army armoured vehicle is stationed in southern Khartoum, yesterday, amid ongoing fighting between two rival generals.

by Burhan's former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

Battles have killed around 1,000 people and displaced more than 1mn, internally and into neighbouring countries. Millions more are trapped with sporadic access to water, electricity or medicine.

Many have been separated from their families by unrelenting gunfire.

For Sawzan Mohamed, who lives in the capital's south, the ceasefire – if implemented – "will be my first chance to see my mother and father in Omdurman", just a bridge across the Nile River, she said.

Aerial footage last week showed a hellish scene in the Omdurman Market area, a heavily built-up district where multiple fires burned and people ran on rubble strewn streets.

Again yesterday, the UN aid chief, Martin Griffiths, called for the "safe delivery of humanitarian aid" and

restoration of essential services." The warring parties had signed on May 12 in Jeddah an agreement to respect humanitarian principles and allow in badly needed aid.

But since then, a UN report yesterday said there had been "at least 11 attacks against humanitarian premises in Khartoum, and four new attacks against health facilities".

Along with the capital, the western region of Darfur has seen some of the worst violence.

"We do not trust the warring sides," said Adam Issa, a shop owner in El Geneina, West Darfur. "Every time they announce a truce and they go back to fighting. We want a permanent ceasefire, not a temporary truce." The UN has reported hundreds of people killed in West Darfur and yesterday said all 86 gathering sites for displaced people in El Geneina "have reportedly been burnt to the ground."

Palestinian presidency slams Israeli minister's visit to mosque complex

Official spokesman for the Palestinian presidency Nabil Abu Rudeima, described yesterday Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's visit this morning into the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem as a blatant attack on the holy site that will have serious consequences, QNA reported from Occupied Jerusalem.

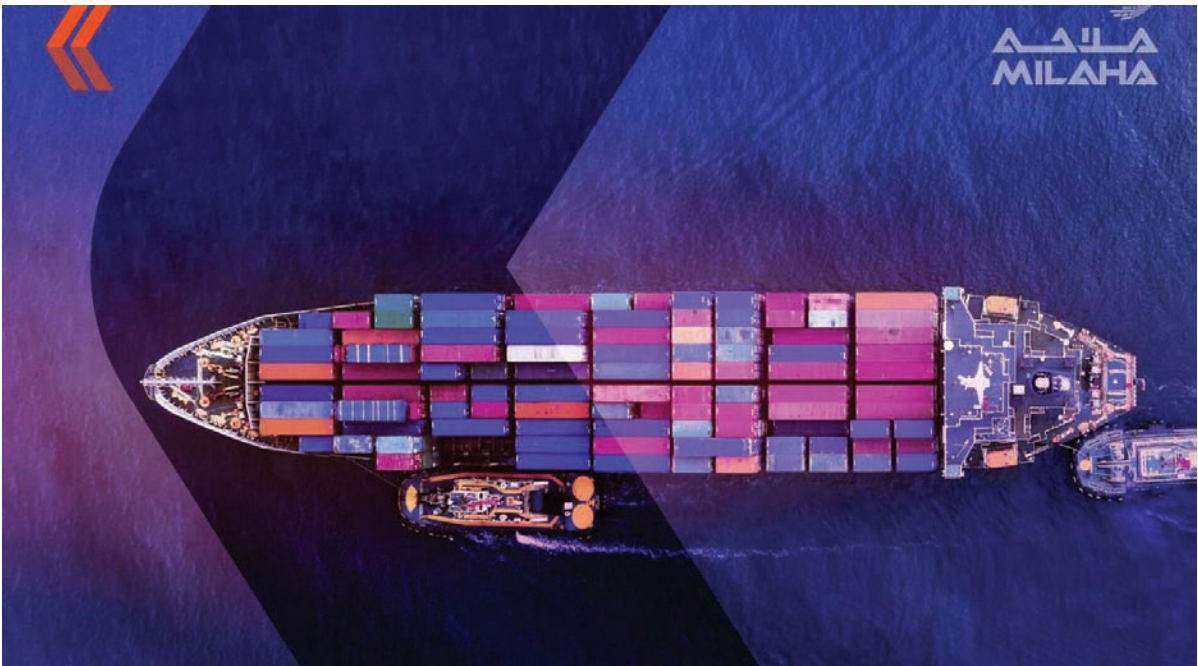
"Attempts by Itamar Ben-Gvir and

his likes of extremists to change the status quo in Al-Aqsa Mosque are condemned and rejected and will fail. Our Palestinian people will be on the lookout for them," said Abu Rudeineh in a press statement, carried by Palestine's news agency (Wafa). The presidential spokesman said "extremist Ben-Gvir's incursion at an early hour, like thieves, into the Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyards will not change the reality and will not impose

Israeli sovereignty over it." He pointed out that Ben-Gvir's incursion into the holy site necessitates immediate action from the international community, particularly the US administration, in order to preserve the status quo in Jerusalem.

"Harming Al-Aqsa Mosque is playing with fire, and will push the region into a religious war with unimaginable consequences that will affect everyone," he concluded.

Milaha collaborates with Google Cloud to accelerate digital transformation, modernize data strategy



Qatar Navigation Q.P.S.C. ("Milaha"), the industry-leading provider of maritime and logistics solutions in Qatar, announced today a collaboration with Google Cloud to accelerate Milaha's digital transformation, modernize its data platform, and maximize adoption of Google Cloud's technologies, following the launch of Google Cloud's new cloud region in Doha.

The collaboration involves exploring the future needs of emerging digital technologies, extending cooperation of digitalized solutions, and opening new horizons for Milaha's line of business.

Mr. Hamad Saeed Al-Hajri, EVP Support Services in Milaha, stated: "in line with the directives of Milaha's

executive management and the strategic plans, We have mapped out an ambitious digital transformation plan to sophisticate our maritime solutions and logistics services by adding innovative technologies to increase annual profitability rates. Collaborating with Google Cloud enables us to accelerate and update our digital transformation plan, optimize business opportunities, and use Google Cloud as a platform for our growth."

Additionally, collaborating with Google Cloud reflects Milaha's strong interest in maintaining its global status as a prestigious company that offers digitalized maritime and logistic services to broad customers across GCC and the Middle East.

Commenting on the collaboration, Ghassan Kosta, Qatar Country Manager, Google Cloud, said: "Google Cloud provides industry-tailored cloud solutions for important companies like Milaha, and we are thrilled to collaborate with them to roll out these unique solutions relevant to the maritime industry. Now that the Doha cloud region is open, we are going to be working closely with Milaha as one of the early adopters as they leverage the latest cutting-edge cloud services."

Milaha is one of the first maritime firms in Qatar to implement Google Cloud technologies in this sector and benefited from technologies and applications that help increase profit rates for the business through the modernization of digital services and data.

CRITICISM

Taiwan’s WHO exclusion ‘risks terrible impact’

Taiwan’s health minister warned that the continued exclusion of the island from the WHO amid pressure from China posed a significant threat to global health. “Excluding Taiwan from WHO not only jeopardises the right to health of the 23.5mn people of Taiwan, it also seriously undermines WHO’s efforts to achieve health for all,” Hsueh Jui-yuan told an event. He spoke shortly before the World Health Organisation’s annual assembly kicked off in Geneva yesterday. Taiwan has been blocked from attending the World Health Assembly in recent years by China, which considers the island a renegade province to be reunified with the mainland.

LAW AND ORDER

China issues guidance for basic elderly care system

China has issued guidance to all provinces to build a basic elderly care system by 2025, state-run Xinhua news agency said yesterday, in the latest step to prevent a demographic crisis. The ruling Communist Party has mobilised resources to ensure that more vulnerable age groups are cared for as society ages. In 2020, citizens aged 65 and above accounted for 13.5% of the Chinese population, compared to 8.87% registered in 2010. “Promoting the construction of the basic elderly care service system is an important task for implementing the national strategy of actively responding to population ageing and achieving equalisation of basic public services,” Xinhua said.

INSPECTION

China punishes 62 over building collapse

China has issued warnings and other punishments to 62 officials after the collapse of a housing block in Changsha city in Hunan province killed 54 people last month, state news agency Xinhua said yesterday. Several senior city officials were given serious warnings, including Zheng Jianxin, the current mayor of Changsha who was sacked, Xinhua said. Several officials were transferred to judicial authorities for serious law violations and suspected crimes related to their duties, Xinhua said. Several former Changsha officials, including Hu Henghua, currently mayor of Chongqing who was former mayor of Changsha, were also given warnings.

ACHIEVEMENT

S Korean experts to visit Fukushima nuclear plant

A team of around 30 South Korean experts will visit Japan from today to inspect facilities related to water release from the wrecked Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, Japan’s foreign ministry said. The four-day visit was agreed during Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s visit to Seoul earlier this month as his counterpart, South Korea’s President Yoon Suk-yeol, is seeking to improve relations with Japan after years of tensions. Japan plans to release the water from Tokyo Electric Power Co’s Fukushima plant, which was destroyed during the 2011 nuclear disaster, into the sea sometime “around this spring or summer, raising concerns in neighbouring countries.

Gurkha amputee scales Everest

Gurkha veteran Hari Budha Magar, who was almost killed serving with the British army in Afghanistan, has become the first double above-the-knee amputee to climb Everest, a member of his team said yesterday. “He reached the top of Sagarmatha on Friday. After successfully summiting the peak, he has now descended to the base camp, and will return to Kathmandu today,” Him Bista said, using the Nepali name for Everest. Magar, 43, lost his legs after stepping on an improvised explosive device in 2010 while on patrol in Afghanistan. Two below-the-knee amputees have reached the peak in the past – New Zealander Mark Inglis in 2006 and China’s Xia Boyu in 2018.

Biden sees shift in ties with China ‘shortly’

Reuters
Hiroshima, Japan

US President Joe Biden yesterday said the Group of Seven nations had agreed a united approach to China that called for diversifying supply chains to reduce dependence on one country, and hinted that he could speak with China’s president soon.

“We’re not looking to decouple from China. We’re looking to de-risk and diversify our relationship with China,” Biden told a press conference after a three-day summit with G7 leaders.

He said G7 nations were more unified than ever in terms of “resisting economic coercion together and countering harmful practices that hurt our workers.”

G7 leaders outlined a shared approach to “de-risk, not decouple” economic engagement with China in a Saturday communique, prompting China’s embassy in Japan to urged the G7 to stop creating confrontation and division.

Despite the reaction, Biden said he expected a thaw in frosty relations with China “very shortly” after strains caused by an incident earlier this year when the US shot down a Chinese balloon that flew over sensitive military sites.

“We should have an open hotline,” Biden said. He said he had agreed with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia last year to keep communications open, but everything changed after “this silly balloon that was carrying two freight cars worth of spying equipment.”

Biden suggested a shift in US-China relations could occur soon, echoing his comment to reporters before his departure.

“In terms of talking with them, I think you’re going to see that thaw very shortly,” Biden said.

On the issue of tensions between China and Taiwan, Biden said there was a clear understanding among most of the allies that if China were to act unilaterally against Taiwan, there would be a response.



US President Joe Biden speaks during a news conference following the Group of Seven (G-7) leaders summit in Hiroshima, Japan, yesterday.

Zelensky wins new diplomatic, military support from G7 allies

AFP
Hiroshima, Japan

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wrapped up a triumphant diplomatic offensive in Hiroshima yesterday, heading home bearing new arms, munitions and the “unwavering” diplomatic support of G7 allies.

He leveraged the powerful symbolism of Hiroshima, synonymous with the horrors of war, to press partners and sceptics alike to back his defence against Russia’s 15-month onslaught.

The need for his bold diplomatic gambit in Japan was underscored by setbacks on the ground back home, where Russia claimed to have taken control of the eastern city of Bakhmut after months of bloody battle.

Still Zelensky can claim victory on several fronts, having won US backing for the supply of advanced fighter jet, and the chance to woo powerful unaligned nations such as India that have not condemned Russia’s invasion.

He used the emotional history of Hiroshima to drive home his despair over the destruction of his country, including the frontline city of Bakhmut, which Russian troops claim to now control.

“The photos of Hiroshima remind me of Bakhmut,” he said after a visit to the city’s museum, which documents the suffering caused by the 1945 US nuclear bomb attack.

“Absolute total destruction. There is nothing. There are no people.” But he vowed that like Hiroshima, Ukraine would rebuild, and joined Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in a sombre ceremony to lay flowers at a cenotaph commemorating the 140,000 people killed by the bomb.

Zelensky denied that Russian troops now occupy Bakhmut, al-

though he acknowledged they were in the city, which has been ground into ruins in months of brutal fighting that shows little sign of slowing.

He left Japan with reassurances, however, that his allies will see out the fight, with US President Joe Biden insisting that Ukraine’s backers “will not waver.”

“Putin will not break our resolve as he thought he could,” Biden told reporters after meeting Zelensky.

The White House earlier unveiled a \$375mn package of US aid that includes ammunition for HIMARS rocket launchers, artillery shells, anti-tank guided missiles and thermal imaging systems.

It came after the US lifted a veto on Ukrainian access to advanced US-made F-16 fighter jets, a significant upgrade from Kyiv’s Cold War-era fleet of MiGs and Su-30s. Beyond the promised supplies, the trip has been a major diplomatic coup for Zelensky.

It prompted an angry Moscow to denounce the entire G7 summit as a “propaganda show” that whipped up “hateful anti-Russian and also anti-Chinese messages”.

Separately, the foreign ministry in Beijing said it had summoned G7 host Japan’s ambassador yesterday to protest against what it described as efforts to “smear and attack” China at the gathering.

Zelensky put his country and Russia’s invasion firmly at the top of the agenda and secured firm backing for key elements of his 10-point peace plan, centred on the need for a Russian withdrawal.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the message from Ukraine and its allies was clear: “Russia must withdraw troops.”

Any peace plan, he said, “can’t simply be linked to a freeze of the conflict”. “Russia should not bet that if it holds out long enough, it will end up weakening support for

Ukraine.”

The summit also afforded Zelensky a rare opportunity to make his case to a handful of nations who have pointedly offered little or no condemnation of Russia’s invasion.

Leaders from India, Brazil, Vietnam and Indonesia were among those invited to attend the summit as non-members.

After a one-to-one meeting, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Zelensky: “I understand your pain and the pain of Ukrainian citizens very well.”

“I can assure you that to resolve this India and, me personally, will do whatever we can do.”

African Union chairman, the Comoros President Azali Assoumani, said Zelensky’s meeting with G7 leaders and other invited countries had become “emotional” when the Ukrainian president recalled his country’s travails.

“We condemned the war, we supported Zelensky, and I personally and sincerely saluted his courage,” he said.

But there was one rumble in Zelensky’s diplomatic charm offensive. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has accused the West of “encouraging the war”, did not meet his Ukrainian counterpart. While Lula condemned the “violation of Ukraine’s territorial integrity” and called for “dialogue” in group discussions, he also took a swipe at nations on the United Nations Security Council, whose permanent members are Britain, China, France, Russia and the US. One official present described the exchange as “frank”.

“Permanent members continue the long tradition of waging unauthorised wars, whether in pursuit of territorial expansion or in pursuit of regime change,” Lula said, in a seeming reference to the US-led Iraq War.

US chipmaker Micron fails security review, says China

AFP
Beijing

US semiconductor giant Micron has failed a national security review, China’s cybersecurity watchdog said yesterday, telling operators of “critical information infrastructure” to stop buying its products.

It marked the latest escalation in the bitter chip war between the US and China, with Washington looking to cut off Beijing’s access to cutting-edge semiconductors.

Chinese authorities launched a review in March of products sold in the country by Micron, one of the world’s major chip manufacturers.

Micron’s products “have relatively serious potential network security issues, which pose a major security risk to China’s critical information infrastructure supply chain and affect China’s national security”, the cybersecurity administration (CAC) said in a statement. “Operators of

critical information infrastructure in China should stop purchasing Micron products,” the statement said.

China’s broad definition of critical information infrastructure includes sectors ranging from transport to healthcare.

“We have received the CAC’s notice of conclusion of its review of Micron products sold in China,” Micron said in a statement.

“We are evaluating the conclusion and assessing our next steps.”

When asked if the company will appeal the decision, a spokeswoman for Micron said: “We look forward to continuing to engage in discussions with Chinese authorities.”

About 10% of Micron’s \$30.8bn annual revenue last year came from China, according to company data.

But a large portion of Micron products sold in the country were bought by foreign manufacturers, analysts had said earlier, and it was not clear if the cybersecurity watchdog’s decision affects

sales to foreign buyers.

China in 2021 announced rules to protect critical information infrastructure with stricter data security requirements.

It has recently also strengthened the enforcement of its data security and anti-espionage laws.

The chip war between Beijing and Washington escalated last year when the US imposed restrictions on China’s access to high-end chips, chipmaking equipment and software used to design semiconductors.

Washington also blacklisted Chinese firms, including Micron rival Yangtze Memory Technologies Co.

Washington cited national security concerns, and said it wanted to prevent tech that could help develop advanced military equipment from being acquired by China’s armed forces and intelligence services.

The US imposed targeted controls on the ability of domestic industry leaders to sell their products overseas.

Cutting of trees flayed



Social activists gather to take part in a march during a demonstration against the felling of trees by the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) for the beautification of the Saat Masjid Road, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday.

S Korea, Germany to boost defence ties

Reuters
Seoul

South Korea and Germany will soon sign an agreement aimed at protecting military secrets to boost defence co-operation, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said yesterday as he met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Seoul.

The military information agreement will help “smoothly operate the defence industry supply chain”, amid global economic and political instability, Yoon told a briefing.

South Korea, which recently pursued a similar information-sharing pact with Canada, has moved to expand its defence industry amid rising demand driven by the war in Ukraine and other global tensions, but has so far refused to provide weapons to Kyiv.

Yoon said respect for freedom as a universal value was “very vital” in the face of authoritarianism challenging democracy, unstable global supply chains and the war.

“From now, I expect South Korea and Germany will further expand reciprocal and future-oriented co-operation and strengthen the solidarity for peace and prosperity of Europe and Asia,” Yoon said in opening remarks at the meeting with Scholz.

The two leaders also discussed deepening co-operation in production of semiconductors, among other areas.

Scholz, who is visiting South Korea after attending the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Hiroshima, Japan, called North Korea’s missile tests a sign of a “still dangerous situation” on the Korean peninsula.

“This is a threat to peace and security in this region,” he said at a military base after a visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the Koreas.

Germany’s history as a divided nation had been overcome, he said, but division persists on the Korean peninsula.

Both Scholz and Yoon left Japan yesterday after joining the G7 summit. South Korea was invited as an observer.

CONTROVERSY
UK interior minister under fire over speeding claims

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak yesterday faced questions over Interior Minister Suella Braverman after reports she asked civil servants to arrange for her penalty driving course for speeding to be done in private. Sunak said he did not know the “full details” of the case but a spokeswoman for his Downing Street office later said he “of course” had confidence in his controversial minister. The *Sunday Times* reported that Braverman asked Home Office officials to help set up a one-to-one driving awareness course after she was caught speeding last year. Her request was refused. The Labour party said Braverman may have breached the ministerial code, a resigning matter.

OBITUARY
British writer Amis dies aged 73

Renowned and influential British writer Martin Amis has died aged 73 at his home in Lake Worth, Florida, the Booker Prizes said. Amis was “one of the most acclaimed and discussed writers of the past 50 years and the author of 14 novels,” said the website of Booker Prizes, the leading literary awards for fiction in the United Kingdom. His wife, Isabel Fonseca, told media that the author of searing and insightful works such as *Money: A Suicide Note*, *London Fields* and *Time’s Arrow* died on Friday after a bout with oesophageal cancer. His death was announced on the same day as the Cannes festival showing of a film based on his 2014 book *The Zone of Interest*.

OFFBEAT
Hiroshima’s pancake wins new fan in UK premier

The cheap and cheerful savoury Japanese pancake that stirs both feelings of local pride and deep rivalry in the city of Hiroshima has found its newest fan in British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. During his visit for the three-day Group of Seven (G7) leaders summit in Hiroshima, Sunak sampled okonomiyaki, a heaped mound of batter, cabbage, noodles and often meat that is fried on a hot plate and then smothered with savoury sauce. Sunak, who tried okonomiyaki with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters he “particularly enjoyed” having the okonomiyaki during his visit. It was not clear if Sunak got to try the British version – which featured fish and chips – or if he even wanted to.

EVENT
Mary Quant exhibition swings into Glasgow

Just over a month after her death, a retrospective opened in Scotland of British fashion designer and miniskirt pioneer Mary Quant and how she styled the 1960s. The exhibition at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow features more than 100 garments, accessories, cosmetics and photographs of her rise to fame. Curator Rebecca Quinton said as well as exploring the miniskirt and hotpants which Quant popularised, the show – the final stop on a world tour – also focused on her innovative use of materials. “Everybody always associated her with the mini dress – she was one of the leading designers in the 1960s that was raising the hem line,” she said.

SUMMIT
High security for India’s G20 meet in Kashmir

Elite Indian commandos patrolled the streets of Srinagar ahead of a G20 tourism meeting this week. Police said security had been beefed up “at vulnerable locations to avoid any chance of terrorist attack during the G20” meeting, the first diplomatic event in the territory since New Delhi revoked its limited autonomy and took direct control in 2019. The three-day starts today at a sprawling, well-guarded venue on the shores of Dal Lake in Srinagar. Roads leading to the location have been freshly black-topped, and electricity poles lit up in the colours of India’s national flag to show what officials say is “normalcy and peace returning” to the region.

India plans action against Google after antitrust breaches

India’s antitrust body in October fined Google \$275mn in two cases, which involved abusing its dominant position in the Android operating system market

Reuters
New Delhi

India’s government plans to take action against Alphabet Inc’s Google after an anti-trust watchdog last year found the group to have abused its market position by indulging in anti-competitive practices, a top IT minister said. India’s antitrust body in October fined Google \$275mn in two cases, which involved abusing its dominant position in the Android operating system market, and pushing developers to use its in-app payment system. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the federal deputy minister for information technology, told Reuters in an interview at the IT ministry in New Delhi that such findings are “serious” and cause “deep concern” to India’s federal government, which will take its own action against Google.

“The ministry has to take action. We have thought through it. You will see it in the coming weeks. Certainly it’s not something that we will leave and push under the carpet”

“The ministry has to take action,” Chandrasekhar said. “We have thought through it. You will see it in the coming weeks. Certainly it’s not something that we will leave and push under the carpet.” The minister declined to specify what sort of policy or regulatory action the government could take. Chandrasekhar, who is one of the highest-ranking officials in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s administration, said the issue “is worrisome, not just for us, it’s worrisome for the entire digital ecosystem in India.” Google did not respond to

a request for comment on the minister’s remarks. Asked if he had held talks with Google on the issue, Chandrasekhar said “there is no need for any discussion. There is a finding of a court.” While the payments case is still under appeal, an Indian tribunal in March said in response to a legal challenge that the Competition Commission of India’s findings of Google’s anti-competitive conduct in the Android market were correct. The comments by the minister come against a backdrop of growing tension between Indian companies and Google. India’s competition watchdog has begun another inquiry into Google after Tinder owner Match Group and many start-ups alleged that a new service fee system Google uses for in-app payments breaches the competition commission’s October decision.

Google has previously said the service fee supports investments in the Google Play app store and the Android mobile operating system, ensuring it can distribute it for free. Following the Android antitrust order in India, Google was also forced make sweeping changes to how it markets its mobile operating system in the country, even though it warned “no other jurisdiction has ever asked for such far-reaching changes.” About 97% of India’s 620mn smartphones run on Android, and the company counts India as a critical growth market. Other companies such as Apple and Amazon also face cases against them for potential anti-competitive practices in India. Chandrasekhar said the government was keen to take steps to ensure India’s digital economy is protected. “We don’t want it to be growth in a way that distorts consumer choice or free competition,” he said. “We will certainly be looking into what the government needs to do to prevent anybody, including but not limited to Google, from abusing their market power or market dominance.”

Raising awareness on plastic pollution



People take pictures of an installation depicting a fish, made from plastic wastes displayed at Edward Elliot’s Beach to create awareness among locals ahead of the G20 meeting in Chennai yesterday.

India mulls policy change after cough syrup deaths

Reuters
New Delhi

India is considering a change to its pharmaceutical industry policy after cough syrups made in the country were linked to the deaths of children overseas, according to a document from Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s office, which noted that “important things” about the industry had been “overlooked.” A brainstorming session was held in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad “to find a solution to exported cough syrups that

killed children,” Modi’s office said in the document. Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and federal and state regulators attended the session in February, according to a statement from the health ministry, that did not mention cough syrups. “Tweak in policy is mooted,” the document from the prime minister’s office said, adding that “important things” had been “overlooked.” It did not elaborate. A source with knowledge of the matter said the policy change could mean increased oversight of India’s \$41bn phar-

maceutical industry, which is the world’s largest supplier of generic medicines. Increased testing of cough syrups as well as of raw materials for drugs in general is one of the steps being considered, said the source. The statement, which has not been previously reported, appears to be the first time the prime minister’s office has addressed the cough syrup controversy. Modi’s office and the health ministry did not respond to a request for comment. India’s drug regulator, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), has pro-

posed testing cough syrups in government laboratories before they are exported, media outlet News18.com reported. The World Health Organisation (WHO) found last year that cough syrups made by an Indian drugmaker contained dangerous levels of two known toxins, diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol, leading to the deaths of at least 70 children in Gambia. India denies a connection between the syrups and the deaths. The WHO says it is still seeking the culprit within the supply chain, but has been frustrated in its efforts. India has acted against

a second Indian company whose cough syrups were linked to the deaths of 19 kids in Uzbekistan, including the arrest of three of its employees. A third Indian drugmaker was found by the WHO to have sold tainted syrups to the Marshall Islands and Micronesia. Indian health officials have expressed concern that the incidents of contaminated syrups will harm its pharmaceutical industry. An Indian representative participated in a meeting of global drug regulators in Indonesia earlier this month to discuss ways to ensure the safety of the pharmaceutical supply chain.

Modi to attend summit in Papua New Guinea today

AFP
Port Moresby

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Papua New Guinea yesterday for talks with Pacific island leaders, the first visit by an Indian premier as New Delhi seeks to counter China’s growing footprint in the region. Modi landed just after 10pm local time (1200GMT) in the capital Port Moresby. He will co-host the Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Co-operation in the capital today with Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape and other Pacific island leaders. Beijing has been pouring vast sums into the Pacific, which has alarmed New Delhi officials who consider the region to be its backyard. Relations between China and India have deteriorated since

2020 after clashes along their shared border. Today’s talks are set to focus largely on climate change and development. The last such summit was hosted by India eight years ago. Modi was met by a gun salute, traditional dances and was welcomed by Marape. The visit comes after Modi joined leaders from the US, Japan and Australia on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Japan for a gathering of the Quad members, which aims to contain China’s growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. G7 leaders, along with Modi and others invited to the summit, warned China on Saturday over its “militarisation activities” in the Asia-Pacific region but said the bloc also wanted “constructive and stable relations” with Beijing. The G7 nations laid out a raft of concerns about China’s economic and military activities in

their final communique from Hiroshima. New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins arrived in Papua New Guinea for the Pacific summit earlier yesterday. Australian leader Anthony Albanese will be absent from the meeting after US President Joe Biden cut short his diplomatic tour over US debt crisis talks. New Delhi is increasing its engagement with the Pacific islands because of their strategic location and fears that China could fill voids left by other powers, experts say. “Along with India’s increasingly prominent role in the Quad, it’s coming out on the international stage as an Indo-Pacific power. It wants to be seen as such,” Mihai Sora, Pacific Islands research fellow at Australia’s Lowy Institute, said. “This trip, and I would expect more engagement over the coming years, is really about building these relationships.”

Motorcycle rally



Riders take part in a motorcycle rally to raise mental health and cancer awareness in Amritsar, India, yesterday.

Sinn Fein becomes biggest party in local government in N Ireland

Irish nationalists Sinn Fein followed up last year’s historic Northern Ireland Assembly victory by overtaking their unionist rivals by a wide margin in council elections on Saturday to become the biggest party at local level for the first time. It is the latest political milestone for the former political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who want to leave the United Kingdom and form a united Ireland. The left-wing party also comfortably leads opinion polls in the Republic of Ireland ahead of national elections due in 2025. Sinn Fein’s share of the vote jumped almost 8 points to 31% and it won 144 of the 462 seats up for grabs, up 39 on the 2019 result. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), until last year the biggest party at local and regional level, held steady on 122 seats with 23% of the vote. “Historic change is happening, and Sinn Fein is leading that change right across Ireland,” the party’s leader in Northern Ireland Michelle O’Neill said, telling the DUP that voters

wanted them to end a 15-month boycott of the regional assembly. The DUP had pitched the elections as a chance to bolster its call for further concessions from Britain on Northern Irish post-Brexit trade – the reason for its boycott – and said the results were a “strong mandate” from the unionist community. Sinn Fein’s success came at the expense of more middle ground nationalist and unionist parties. The cross-community Alliance Party made more limited gains than expected while the small, hardline Traditional Unionist Voice – which has put pressure on the DUP over the post-Brexit trade checks many unionists feel undermines their place in the UK – failed to repeat the surge in their vote at regional level. “We want the (British) government to deliver on the commitments they have given to protect Northern Ireland’s place within the United Kingdom and I hope to see progress in the next few weeks,” DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson said.

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GULF**TIMES**

The other Guerilla warfare: uptick in malware menace


Malware menace has been aggravating with advances in technology, causing concern among users of smart devices. The usual warning about not to click on suspicious links or open dubious e-mails may not be enough if the latest reveal by cybersecurity company Trend Micro is any indication. An organisation has been suspected of pre-installing a malware, named ‘Guerilla,’ on nearly 9mn TV boxes, TVs, watches, and smartphones; all Android. Guerilla is employed to carry out a range of malicious actions, including intercepting single-use passwords, hijacking the user’s WhatsApp sessions, and establishing reverse proxies. The infections are globally spread across in over 180 countries, with over 50 brands of mobile devices compromised by the malware.



According to the findings presented by researchers Fyodor Yarochkin, Zhengyu Dong, Vladimir Kropotov, and Paul Pajares at the Black Hat Asia conference held in Singapore last week, during their investigation, Trend Micro analysts discovered a connection between the suspect organisation’s infrastructure and the notorious Triada Trojan campaign since the year 2016. The Triada Trojan, a malicious software specifically designed for banking fraud, was discovered to be installed pre-sale on several Android smartphones produced by certain budget brands. The comprehensive report by Trend Micro provides further insights into the operational strategies employed by the perpetrator. Though involved in various ventures such as big data analysis, marketing, and advertising, their core objective revolves around harnessing the power of big data. They utilise this data to scrutinise shipments of the manufacturers, acquire intricate data



The accurate number of Android devices infected with Guerilla malware is suspected to be higher


for tailored promotions for software, and amass ad content sourced from diverse users. The Trend Micro report explains that by infecting millions of Android devices, the suspect organisation effectively converts them into mobile proxies, facilitating the illicit trade of stolen SMS messages, compromised social media accounts, and active participation in fraudulent advertising schemes. Though the exact methods employed to infect devices remain undisclosed, Trend Micro clarifies their analysts have confirmed that infected devices have undergone a process called re-flashing, where the original ROMs have been replaced with modified versions containing the Guerilla malware. The researchers identified over 50 distinct infected ROMs, targeting various Android device manufacturers. Guerilla functions as a plugin that integrates various added plugins to carry out specific tasks. These functionalities encompass intercepting single-use passcodes sent via SMS for widely used platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Another plugin sets up a reverse proxy, enabling cybercriminals to gain unauthorised access to the victim’s network resources. Moreover, additional plugins specialise in pilfering Facebook cookies, hijacking the users’ WhatsApp sessions to propagate unsolicited messages, showcasing intrusive advertisements while users engage with legitimate applications, and quietly installing or deleting apps as the malware directs.

The accurate number of Android devices infected with Guerilla malware is suspected to be higher since some devices have yet to establish connections with the attackers’ command and control servers. Through vigilant monitoring of the suspect organisation’s activities, cybersecurity experts from Trend Micro have identified a staggering total of more than 490K mobile numbers that are connected to requests for one-time passwords used in SMS-based services like JingDong, WhatsApp, QQ, Line, Facebook, and Tinder. This vast number of compromised devices, all linked to a single service, serves as a striking testament to the worldwide impact and scale of the cybercriminal syndicate’s malicious endeavours – worrying indeed.

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Will Europe be the world’s biggest loser?

By Joschka Fischer
Berlin

The post-1945 era of global stability is over and gone. From the bipolar world of the Cold War to the American-dominated unipolar world that replaced it, we have long benefited from a sense of strategic order. Though there were many smaller wars (and even some larger ones), from Korea and Vietnam to the Middle East and Afghanistan, the international system remained generally stable and intact.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, however, this stability has increasingly given way to a renewed rivalry between major powers, chief among them the United States and China. Moreover, it has long been clear that India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other emerging economies’ political and strategic influence will increase, as will their role within the global system.

In the context of a deepening conflict between China and the US, these rising powers will have many opportunities to play one of the twenty-first century’s two superpowers off against the other. Indeed, many of these opportunities seem too good to miss.

In Russia, meanwhile, political elites have been consumed by fantasies of restoring the territorial reach and geopolitical heft of the Soviet Union – and of the Russian Empire before it. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russian policy has increasingly been aimed at reversing the legacy of the immediate post-Cold War era. By contrast, the West – meaning the US and the European Union, following its enlargement since 2004 – has adhered to the basic post-Cold War settlement in Europe. To that end, it has remained committed to defending basic values such as countries’ right to self-determination and the inviolability of internationally recognised borders.

These diverging values and commitments made a conflict over the Soviet Union’s former republics all but inevitable, as we saw in Georgia in 2008. In Ukraine, the opening shot came when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014; but the breaking point did not come until last February, when the Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion of the country and put a decisive end to the era of peace in Europe. Once again, the continent is dividing into two camps.

Putin’s attempt to rewrite history by force is not



A European Union flag flutters outside the EU Commission headquarters, in Brussels. (Reuters)

only a tragedy for the Ukrainian people and a challenge to European security; it is also a rebuke to the entire international system of nation-states. After all, many of the new and emerging global powers have refused to side unambiguously with Ukraine, and some – following China’s lead – have explicitly sided with Russia or remained “neutral” in the interest of gaining some tactical advantage. The implication is that these countries are willing to overlook a flagrant violation of the core principles underpinning global stability.

But the broader danger for the international system stems not from the war in Ukraine (Russia is too weak to pose a truly global threat), but from the deterioration of US-China relations. True, notwithstanding China’s bellicose rhetoric over Taiwan and its aggressive naval exercises in the waters around the island, the confrontation so far is less military than economic, technological, and political. But that is cold comfort, because it is an intensifying zero-sum conflict.

Some of the biggest losers in this confrontation are likely to be Japan and Europe. Chinese firms have built massive production capacities in the automobile industry – especially in electric vehicles (EVs) – and

are now poised to outcompete the European and Japanese automakers that have long been globally dominant.

Making matters worse, America’s own response to Chinese competition is to pursue an industrial policy that will come at European and Japanese manufacturers’ expense. Recent legislation such as the Inflation Reduction Act, for example, provides large subsidies for cars produced in the US. From the US perspective, such policies kill two birds with one stone: protecting large domestic manufacturers and providing them with incentives to pursue EV development.

The eventual outcome will be a thorough reorganisation of the global auto industry, with Japan and Europe (primarily Germany) losing competitiveness and market share. And lest we forget, this major economic development represents merely the beginning of a much larger global confrontation and strategic reordering.

Not only must Europe take great pains to preserve its economic model during this reorganisation of the global economy, it also must manage high energy costs, the growing digital technology gap vis-à-vis the two superpowers, and the urgent need for increased defence spending to counter the new threat from Russia. All these priorities will grow even more urgent as the next US presidential election approaches, given the distinct possibility that Donald Trump could return to the White House.

Europe thus finds itself especially disadvantaged. It resides in an increasingly dangerous region, yet it remains a confederation of sovereign nation-states that have never mustered the will to achieve true integration – even after two world wars and the decades-long Cold War. In a world dominated by large states with growing military budgets, Europe still is not a real power.

Whether that remains the case is up to Europeans. The world will not wait for Europe to grow up. If Europe is going to confront today’s global reordering, it had better start soon – or, preferably, yesterday. – Project Syndicate

● Joschka Fischer, Germany’s foreign minister and vice chancellor from 1998 to 2005, was a leader of the German Green Party for almost 20 years.

South Africa circles back to shale gas

By Wendell Roelf
Cape Town

South Africa will auction at least 10 new onshore blocks for shale gas exploration in the environmentally sensitive Karoo region, a government official told Reuters, as the country eyes alternative energy sources to ease its worst-ever power crisis.

South Africa’s first competitive auction for oil and gas resources, expected in 2024 or 2025 once legislation making provision for the bid round is passed, includes acreage once held by Shell.

“We are potentially looking at a minimum of about 10 shale gas blocks in the Karoo that will be released through competitive bidding,” Bongani Sayidini, chief operating officer at the Petroleum Agency of South Africa (PASA) said.

PASA estimates the Karoo Basin holds around 209 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of technically recoverable shale gas resources, although a 2017 study by geologists at University of Johannesburg

said this was probably 13tcf, the lower end of estimates ranging between 13tcf to 390tcf.

Even 5tcf would be enough for a 1,000 megawatt (MW) to 2,000MW gas-fired power plant to supply electricity for up to 30 years, the Academy of Sciences of South Africa said in its Karoo shale gas action plan released last year.

It isn’t clear how the cost would compare to existing coal fire power stations or the ever-cheaper wind and solar energies that are gradually replacing them.

Fracking in the Karoo Basin, a vast area covering more than half of South Africa’s land surface, has been shelved for a decade because of resistance from environmental activists and farmers, and regulatory uncertainty.

Shell’s 90,000sq km is available after the oil major early last year withdrew an application to explore, Sayidini said.

Confirming the withdrawal, a Shell spokesperson said they are focussing upstream investment on fewer basins that align with global strategy and where Shell has competitive advantages.

New shale blocks offered will be smaller to increase participation, Sayidini said. It could take a decade or longer for the first gas output, if sufficient resources are found.

Falcon Oil & Gas and Bundu Gas and Oil Exploration, a majority-owned unit of Australia’s Challenger Exploration, retained rights to apply for exploration licenses, Sayidini said.

“We believe this is the place to be with the best potential to make it commercially viable,” Philip O’Quigley, Falcon’s CEO told Reuters of the southern part of the basin, where the company is seeking a license.

Some 2,500 soil samples from the Karoo were sent overseas for analysis, PASA officials said.

“Those confirmed gas and even oil seepages, so we now believe there might even be potential for oil in the Karoo,” Sayidini said.

Activists and farmers worried about air quality, soil degradation and water use in a parched, semi-arid region remain sceptical.

“The enormous risk it poses to the

environment cannot be understated,” said Jonathan Deal, founder of Treasure the Karoo Action Group, a non-profit organization specifically established to oppose fracking in the area.

Hydraulic fracturing or fracking, a process where chemicals and water are injected into rock fissures to free gas, requires vast quantities of water.

Oil companies have suggested trucking or piping it in, although this might prove prohibitively expensive. Others propose water used for drilling and fracking being recovered and re-used, although it is unclear how viable that is.

New fracking regulations released for public comment last year are to be finalised in August, the department of environmental affairs said.

But farmers – fearing competition over scarce water that may become depleted or polluted – think the fracking risk is too great.

Brent McNamara, chief executive of Agri-Eastern Cape, said he feared it would damage agricultural productivity. – Reuters

Greece PM's party falls short of outright win

AFP
Athens

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' conservative party scored a thumping win at yesterday's election, first results show, but would likely call a new ballot in a month's time as it fell short of an outright majority to rule alone.

With just over 50% of the ballot counted, his New Democracy party was credited with 40.9% of the votes, a 20-point lead ahead of his nearest rival, leftist challenger Alexis Tsipras' Syriza party, which garnered 20.1%.

Mitsotakis would either enter into tough negotiations from today with his rivals to seek a coalition, or he could opt to head to a new election, likely in early July.

Early reactions from his party's big-wigs suggest that a new vote is well on the cards.

"It's a huge surprise...an amazing result," former foreign minister Nikos Dendias told state TV ERT.

Takis Theodorikakos, a minister and a senior official from Mitsotakis' party, told private TV station Skai that the result suggested that the conservatives could garner enough in a second election "to continue the reforms as an

autonomous government". Another New Democracy minister Theodoros Skylakakis said the "other parties' reactions show that we will be led to a second election".

Senior Syriza official Dimitris Papadimoulis, a European Parliament vice-president, told state TV ERT that if confirmed, the result would be "significantly far" from the party's goals and would mark a failure to rally opposition to the government.

Turnout reached only 56% as many had likely sat out the ballot given the anticipated second vote.

Mitsotakis, a Harvard graduate and former McKinsey consultant, had entered into the elections as the favourite, with Greece currently enjoying fairly robust economic health.

Unemployment and inflation have fallen and growth this year is projected to reach twice that of the European Union's average — a far cry from the throes of a crippling debt crisis a decade ago.

With a post-Covid tourism revival lifting the country's growth to 5.9% in 2022, Mitsotakis has campaigned on a pledge to build on the economic gains.

Yet the fear that wages are not keeping pace with rising costs remains a key concern for voters — something his rival Tsipras sought to exploit.



Greek PM and New Democracy conservative party leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis speaks at the party's headquarters, after the general election, in Athens yesterday. Right: People wave the New Democracy's flag after the announcement of the first exit polls in front of the right-wing party New Democracy's headquarters. (Reuters, AFP)



But the result is a crushing blow to Tsipras, who has lost his fourth straight electoral battle to Mitsotakis after serving as premier in 2015 to 2019, during which he led rocky negotiations with creditors that nearly crashed Greece out of the euro.

In some areas, Tsipras trails the

third-ranked socialist party Pasok-Kinal, led by 44-year-old Nikos Androulakis.

Early results have Pasok at 12.6% nationwide. Androulakis had been seen early on as a potential coalition partner for Mitsotakis, but things went sour when he discovered he had

been under state surveillance.

The wiretap scandal, which erupted last year, forced the resignation of the head of the intelligence service and a nephew of Mitsotakis, who was a top aide in his office.

While it sparked an uproar, the wiretap saga did not seem to have had

much of an impact on the conservatives' results, which were far better than the 6-8% lead predicted by pollsters in the run-up to the election.

Anger over a train crash that claimed 57 lives in February also did not seem to have significantly impacted the vote.

The government initially blamed the accident — Greece's worst-ever rail disaster — on human error, even though the country's notoriously poor rail network has suffered from years of under-investment.

Welcoming the results, retiree Glykeria Tziama, 62, said: "Democracy won today — not only New Democracy, but democracy as a whole.

"We want to see a continuation of what was created in the last four years and leave the toxicity behind us. We, us Greeks, went through tough times and we saw that with this government and this prime minister, we have a future."

But Georgios Koulouris, 60, a miner living in Australia who returned to vote, said deep challenges and inequality plague the country.

"There is a part of the people who literally lives on small change," he said, adding that Greece was suffering from a brain drain because of stagnating salaries and exploding rents.

Biden, McCarthy to meet today as debt ceiling talks resume

US President Joe Biden and House Republican Speaker Kevin McCarthy will meet to discuss the debt ceiling, after a "productive" phone call as the president headed back to Washington, the two sides said.

McCarthy, speaking to reporters at the US Capitol following the call, said there were positive discussions on solving the crisis and that staff-level talks were set to resume.

Asked if he was more hopeful after talking to the president, McCarthy said: "Our teams are talking today and we're setting (sic) to have a meeting tomorrow. That's better than it was earlier. So, yes."

A White House official confirmed today's meeting but offered no specific time. Staff members from both sides will reconvene for talks. Biden, before leaving Japan following the G7 summit earlier yesterday, said he would be willing to cut spending together with tax adjustments to reach a deal but the latest offer from Republicans ceiling was "unacceptable." Less than two weeks remain until June 1, when the Treasury Department has warned that the federal government could be unable to pay all its debts, a deadline US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen reaffirmed yesterday. A failure to lift the debt ceiling by that date would trigger a default that would cause chaos in financial markets and spike interest rates. McCarthy's comments yesterday appeared more positive than the increasingly heated rhetoric in recent days, as both sides reverted



Climate activists hold a banner after pouring vegetable charcoal in the Trevi Fountain water during a protest against fossil fuels in Rome yesterday in this image obtained from social media. (Reuters)

Climate activists turn Rome's Trevi Fountain black

Climate activists in Italy turned Rome's famous Trevi Fountain black yesterday, saying floods that have killed 14 people in the country's northeast were "a warning". Activists from the anti-climate change organisation Last Generation climbed into the landmark fountain and poured a vegetable-based carbon liquid into it, before being pulled out and escorted away by police. The Trevi Fountain's most iconic moment saw Swedish actress Anita Ekberg go for a dip in Federico Fellini's film "La Dolce Vita". The protest came as Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni arrived in Emilia Romagna to visit areas devastated by floods described as the worst in a century after six months worth of rains fell in 36 hours. Over 36,000 people have been displaced by the disaster, with costs in the hundreds of millions of euros.

"Our country is dying!" the activists shouted, as tourists packed in around the fountain in Rome's historic centre snapped photographs, applauded or booed. Police pulling the protesters out also confiscated their banners against government-funded fossil fuels. Mattia, 19, who did not give his last name, was cited as taking part "because the horrible tragedy experienced in these days in Emilia Romagna is a forewarning of the black future that awaits mankind". Last Generation pointed to a report by the Bank of Italy earlier this month that found 23% of Italian houses were at risk of flooding, at a potential cost of three billion euros yearly. "While the climate crisis knocks at the door, breaking riverbanks and flinging fish into the streets, the Italian government cuts resources for soil protection" and fails on climate change

mitigation, it said. The environmental group said the carbon liquid used for the protest did not damage the fountain. But Rome mayor Roberto Gualtieri said the clean-up would "cost time, effort and water, because this is a fountain which uses recirculating water". "We now have to empty it, and throw away 300,000 litres of water", he said. Last Generation began carrying out peaceful but disruptive protests in Italy last year ahead of the general election, urging politicians from all parties to make climate change their priority. The protests in Italy are part of a series of actions across Europe to focus attention on climate change. Activists have thrown soup, cake, mashed potatoes or washable paint at heritage and culture sites and artworks in museums.

Ukraine aims to encircle Bakhmut as Russia claims capturing city

Reuters
Kyiv

Ukraine said yesterday that its forces were still advancing around the edges of Bakhmut, aiming to encircle the ruined city after Moscow congratulated the Wagner private army and Russian troops for capturing it. Russia said on Saturday it had completely taken the city, which, if confirmed, would mark an end to the longest and bloodiest battle of the 15-month war. Russian President Vladimir Putin praised his regular troops and the Wagner group. Yesterday, however, a top Ukrainian general said Kyiv's forces still controlled what he accepted was an "insignificant" part of Bakhmut, although that would allow them to enter the city when the situation changed.

General Oleksandr Syrskyi

said in a Telegram post that Kyiv's troops were advancing on Russian forces in the suburbs and were getting closer to a "tactical encirclement" of the city, formerly home to 70,000 people.

Syrskyi, the commander of Ukraine's ground forces, said yesterday he had visited frontline positions near Bakhmut and thanked troops defending the area.

Syrskyi's assertion that Ukrainian forces were continuing their advance along the flanks of the city was echoed by Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar.

"Our forces have taken the city in a semi-encirclement, which gives us the opportunity to destroy the enemy ... the enemy has to defend himself in the part of the city he controls," Maliar said on Telegram.

Maliar added Ukrainian troops were still defending industrial and infrastructure fa-

cilities and had claimed part of the overlooking heights.

Reuters could not verify the battlefield reports.

Over the past week, Ukrainian forces have made their most rapid gains for six months on Bakhmut's northern and southern flanks, with Russia acknowledging some setbacks for its troops.

Kyiv says its aim has been to draw Russian forces from elsewhere on the front into the city, to inflict high casualties there and weaken Moscow's defensive line elsewhere ahead of a planned major Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Putin yesterday congratulated the Wagner mercenary force and Russian troops for taking the city, while the founder of Wagner Yevgeny Prigozhin played down the role of the regular Russian army and in a voice message on Telegram, said: "practically no one from the army helped us".

3 die in Marseille shooting as gang murders surge

Three men died yesterday in an assault rifle attack in the French port city of Marseille, which has seen a surge of drug-related gang murders in recent months, police said. The three were part of a group of five men in their 20s who left a

nightclub shortly after 5:00am and were driving away when their car was attacked by unknown men with Kalashnikov rifles, they said. The two survivors of the attack were unharmed and fled the scene, as did the shooters.

DiCaprio praises Scorsese's epic 'reckoning with past' at Cannes

Leonardo DiCaprio gushed over Martin Scorsese's filmmaking "ferocity" yesterday as they basked in rave reviews at Cannes for their Native American crime epic *Killers of the Flower Moon*, while the festival prepared to bow down before Jude Law as King Henry VIII. Scorsese's latest opus, about a wave of murders among oil-rich Osage Indians in the 1920s, was hailed as "searing", a "triumph" and a "masterpiece" by critics who scored the Cannes Film Festival's hottest ticket for the premiere the previous night. Based on a non-fiction bestseller, the film sees DiCaprio as a weak-willed man who marries a wealthy Osage woman and is drawn into the deadly schemes of his kingpin uncle, played by Scorsese's other long-time muse, Robert De Niro. DiCaprio called the three-and-a-half-hour film "a reckoning with our past" and was full of praise for Scorsese, saying the 80-year-old's "perseverance and ferocity to tell the truth, no matter how ugly... is masterful". IndieWire said the star gave "his

best-ever performance", while *The Guardian* awarded five stars for a "remarkable epic about the bloody birth of America". The festival was already set for another glitzy premiere later yesterday with *Firebrand*, starring Jude Law as 16th-century English king Henry VIII alongside Alicia Vikander as his sixth and final wife, Catherine Parr. *Firebrand* is in the increasingly tight race for the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or, to be announced on May 27. Among the entries is Natalie Portman and Julianne Moore's new film *May December*, which received strong reviews after its premiere on Saturday. The tale of a woman who caused a tabloid scandal by marrying a schoolboy — and the actress who enters their lives years later to research a role — was described as "deliciously campy" by IndieWire. Portman told AFP she liked seeing women "behave in morally ambiguous ways". "It always drives me crazy when people are like, 'Oh, if only women



US director Martin Scorsese (in white jacket) and US actor Leonardo DiCaprio arrive to attend a photocall for the film *Killers of the Flower Moon* at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes yesterday. (AFP)

rule the world, it would be a kinder place". No, women are humans and come in all different complexities," she said. Arguably the current favourite for the Palme is British director Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest*, a unique and horrifying look at the private life of a Nazi officer working at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Critics were near-unanimous in their praise, *Variety* calling it "chilling and profound". It was partly inspired by a book of the same name by British novelist Martin Amis, who died on Saturday at 73. Also well received was *Four Daughters*, a heart-breaking documentary about radicalisation within a Tunisian family that is both inventive and engaging. That may go down well with jury president Ruben Ostlund, last year's winner for *Triangle of Sadness*, who likes his arthouse films with some lighter touches. A total of 21 films are in the main competition, with entries from past winners Wim Wenders, Ken Loach

and Nanni Moretti still to come. Scorsese's Apple-funded film had an out-of-competition slot at the festival and is due for general release in October. The 80-year-old director said it was not "a whodunnit — it's a who didn't do it". He chose to focus on the poisonous marriage between DiCaprio's character and his wife, played by Lily Gladstone, as "a template for that tragedy of love, trust and betrayal of the indigenous people". The book focused more on the criminal investigation into the murders, which helped give birth to the FBI, but De Niro said the world had seen enough films where "the good guy goes south or to Indian country and saves the day". "This is much more important," he said. De Niro said his character represented "systemic racism" and "the banality of evil". He couldn't help a jab at his frequent nemesis, saying: "It's like with Trump... There are people who think he could do a good job. Imagine how insane that is?"

Sheikha Hind takes part in first session of Qatari Inspirational Women initiative

QNA
Doha

Qatar Foundation (QF) Vice-Chairperson and Chief Executive HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani participated in the first session of the Qatari Inspirational Women initiative yesterday, in the presence of HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi.

During the session hosted by Ramla Bint Abi Sufyan Secondary School for Girls, with the participation of 42 students, including those from neighbouring schools, HE Sheikha Hind shed light on the challenges she could turn into opportunities that enabled her to become a successful and influential figure in society by presiding over the QF, the leading educational institution Qatar Foundation.

She also shared her inspiring educational and professional experience with the female students.

HE Sheikha Hind reviewed the most important principles and values that she believed in order to

overcome obstacles as well as the most prominent lessons learned to enrich her professional path.

She noted that self-confidence is the most important characteristic that any person who desires to succeed must have, along with the importance of maintaining modesty, avoiding indifference, and knowing that a person, no matter how much knowledge he/she acquires, will still need to learn more.

In the dialogue session, which was attended by a number of parents, university students, teachers, government school employees and officials of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), HE Sheikha Hind answered questions from the students and the audience about the reason for choosing the field of education as a job and profession.

She recalled that she got support from His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser in encouraging her to engage in the educational field owing to inclinations and passion that they perceived in her for societal and educational issues and for the great impact of education on building civilisations and people.



Snapshots from the event.



HE Sheikha Hind stressed that every student is considered gifted and that good education is what supports each student in the journey of building his/her personality, discovering his/her talent and enhancing it through the opportunities, programmes and activities that the MoEHE provides to its students.

HE Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi reiterated during the dialogue session, the important role played by the family in the journey of children's learning and success, noting that attention and moral support can make a difference in the success and excellence of the children.

Ramla Bint Abi Sufyan Secondary School principal Maryam Khalaf al-Kaabi said the selection of HE Sheikha Hind as an inspiring figure is aimed at benefiting from her experience and success story and to be a source of inspiration for students based on belief in the importance of education in building personality and its impact on the progress of societies.

She added that the "Qatari Inspirational Women" initiative reflects the MoEHE's keenness on contributing to achieving Qatar National Vision 2030 through such constructive initiatives.



The best of British food highlights LuLu-UK food fest

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

LuLu Group's "British Food Week", which will run until May 24, is an opportune time to enjoy the best food traditions from the UK this summer.

British ambassador Jonathan Wilks inaugurated the festival's launch ceremony at LuLu Mall, Giardino - The Pearl Island in the presence of LuLu Group International director Dr Mohamed Althaf, senior officials from the British embassy, members of the Qatar-British Business Forum, senior LuLu Group officials, and dignitaries from leading business groups in Qatar, among others.

The "British Food Week" offers a wide variety of food products from the UK across all LuLu stores in Qatar and its online platform, giving citizens and residents of Qatar the opportunity to enjoy high-quality food products and brands from the UK.

Throughout the festival, shoppers at LuLu can sample some of the finest British summer treats, from cheeses, freeze-packed berries, teas, organic milk, yoghurts and speciality breads.

Wilks said that the "British Food Week" helped increase the UK's food exports to Qatar, adding that the annual festival also created opportunities for consumers in Qatar to sample some new products and familiarise themselves with new brands in the market.

British ambassador Jonathan Wilks inaugurated 'British Food Week' at LuLu Mall, Giardino - The Pearl Island in the presence of LuLu Group International director Dr Mohamed Althaf, senior officials from the British embassy, members of the Qatar-British Business Forum, senior LuLu Group officials, and dignitaries from leading business groups in Qatar. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen



Ambassador Wilks and Dr Althaf showcasing one of the products.

"The festival is hosting a large number of food suppliers from UK that have travelled to Qatar to introduce their products," said the envoy, who noted that "there is a big demand for good British products in LuLu outlets, which is attracting a large number of people".

"LuLu Group in GCC countries is well established to sell more and more British products," Wilks said. "We have been getting a very positive feel from the general situation, and 'British Food Week' at LuLu is an excellent opportunity to improve our presence in the market and to export more products."

"Year-on-year consumers are opting for healthy foods, gluten-free, low sugar, and eco products, among others, to which suppliers from Great Britain are responding to this growing demand," he added.

According to Dr Althaf, the LuLu Group has been celebrating "British Food Week" for the past 18 years in Qatar.

He noted that LuLu has added many new products to this year's festival.



LuLu Mall, Giardino - The Pearl Island.

role being played by LuLu's distribution centre in Birmingham, saying that it is helping facilitate Qatar's food imports and supports the country's food security programme.

He also noted that the expected signing of a free-trade agreement between the UK and GCC countries will further boost British foods exports to Qatar.

The LuLu Group's award-winning logistics and warehousing facility in Birmingham is supporting the hypermarket chain by providing shoppers with a wide range of affordable British products, according to a press statement.

The LuLu Group has a comprehensive network of export distribution centres in 22 countries, including major facilities that have recently opened in the US, Spain, and Italy, the statement added.



Dr Althaf briefs ambassador Wilks during a tour of the hypermarket.



Dr Mohamed Althaf receiving the award from Dr Saif Ali al-Hajari in the presence of other officials.

LuLu wins Qatar CSR Award

LuLu Group International director Dr Mohamed Althaf has received an "Appreciation Award" in the "Best CSR Initiative in the Retail Sector" from Qatar CSR National Programme chief executive Dr Saif Ali al-Hajari, during the Qatar CSR Awards ceremony held recently in Doha.

The Qatar CSR National Programme is a leading academic initiative hosted by Qatar University since 2015 under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister, in partnership with ministries, governmental and non-governmental bodies, academics, multinationals and the business sector, aiming to advance corporate social responsibility awareness.

The major corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of LuLu Hypermarket include the introduction of the "Price Freeze Policy", and the partnership with Education Above All (EAA) Foundation for the "Educate a Child" programme worldwide by donating \$1mn every year from 2017 until 2024, constituting a total donation of \$8mn.

LuLu Hypermarket has also donated QR150,000 to support the Qatar Cancer Society, the "Charity for Cause" partnership with Qatar Charity, the partnership with Qatar Charity for "Kerala Flood Relief", the introduction of biodegradable shopping bags, "Bags for Life" (reusable shopping bags), paper bags and "Borrow a Bag" system.

Other CSR activities are the reduction of sugar, fat and salt in products, being named the "Green Retail Partner of Qatar Sustainability Summit 2019", supporting the "Breast Cancer Awareness Programme", participating in the "We Love Qatar" promotion campaign, and sponsoring the annual AgriTEQ event since 2018.

There is also the LuLu Group's network membership with the Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation in the UK, the LuLu Group's organisation of the annual "Made in Qatar Festival", "Qatar Dates Week", and "Festival of Qatari Farm Products", the donation of QR2mn for EAA Foundation's Assalam Schools Project in 2021, donation of food baskets to support the Lebanese people, organisation of a charity campaign in co-operation with the Qatar Red Crescent Society during Ramadan 2021, the "Shop & Donate" campaign for the Qatar Cancer Society, the co-operation with Bedaya Centre, and the organisation of workshops for budding local entrepreneurs.

LuLu Group signed a collaboration agreement with Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) to become the official sponsor of the AZF's Sports and Community events during 2021 and 2022.

LuLu Hypermarket Qatar won the CSR award in the "Best Company in the Private Sector" category at the 8th CSR Awards, organised by the CSR Committee at Dar Al Sharq in 2018 and for the second time in 2021.

The LuLu Group promoted the then-Ministry of Municipality and Environment's awareness campaign on International Plastic Bag Free Day in 2021, and observed a "No Plastic Day" during Sustainability Week 2021 at selected stores by replacing plastic bags with paper bags.

LuLu donated QR100,000 to the Qatar Society for Rehabilitation Of Special Needs in 2021,

co-operated with the then-Ministry of Municipality and Environment's Public Gardens Department and planted trees for the "World Environment Day 2021 One Million Trees" initiative.

The LuLu Group distributed free paper bags to customers during the "Qatar 2022 Sustainability Week" promoted the Ministry of Municipality's "Go Green Programme" in 2022 with reusable and paper bags.

LuLu was the winner of the Hamad Hospital Award Programme 2022, donated 100% equipment for the Social Cultural Centre for People with Special Needs gymnasium, and held CSR activities during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The LuLu Group signed an agreement with Qatar Charity during Ramadan 2023 to initiate a charity drive through the "Shop & Donate" campaign, worked with the Qatar Red Crescent Society during Ramadan 2023 for the second Khairum Sabeq charitable initiative, supported the Autism Day campaign with the "Shop & Donate" initiative and lit up all LuLu buildings in blue in honour of the World Autism Awareness Day.

LuLu also conducted Eid kit distribution in co-operation with the Ministry of Municipality, provided sponsorship to Qatar Chamber, and initiated the "Adopt a Fruit, Adopt a Vegetable" campaign for children.

LuLu Hypermarket, Al Messila branch, was the first hypermarket in the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region to be awarded with the GSAS Gold rating in Mena for sustainable operations in May 2021.

Subsequently, all LuLu hypermarkets in the Qatar region were certified by GSAS.

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) issued a certificate of appreciation for LuLu Hypermarket and Al Khor Mall for supporting the HMC's awareness campaigns.

The LuLu Hypermarket team has conducted periodical seashore cleaning and recycling activities.

LuLu Group is a recipient of the Tarsheed Award.

LuLu Group's various sustainability initiatives in Qatar in the last two decades were recognised during the 10th anniversary of the National Programme for Conservation and Energy Efficiency (Tarsheed).

All LuLu outlets observed Earth Hour on March 25 this year.

LuLu Hypermarket's Al Meshaf store was the first hypermarket in the Mena region to be awarded with the Carbon Neutral Certification by the Clean Globe Consultancy, in accordance with the UK's PAS 2060 Standard.

LuLu distributed awards to recognise children's creativity, and introduced "lactose-free yoghurt" from the UK.

The Group organised the "LuLu Book Fair" at LuLu Hypermarket, Barwa City branch, instituted the permanent removal of tobacco and tobacco-related products from LuLu stores, conducted advanced training for the workforce, and installed reverse vending machines at major LuLu hypermarkets.