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SPORT | Page 1

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Qatar's expanding LNG production lauded

Qatar's increasing production capabilities of liquefied natural gas will enhance the stability of the Qatari economy, especially as it is one of the largest exporters of natural gas in the world, and provided a fifth of its supplies in 2021, Head of UBS investment office for the EMEA region Themis Themistocleous said. Speaking exclusively to Qatar News Agency (QNA) Themistocleous said that the Qatari economy has benefited from the financial returns secured by long-term LNG sales contracts away from price fluctuations in global markets.

Doha hosts Gulf food standards meeting

The 34th meeting of the Gulf Technical Committee for Food and Agricultural Standards, which lasted for two days, wrapped up yesterday. It was hosted by Qatar General Organisation for Standards and Metrology (QS), in co-operation with the Standardisation Organisation for the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Director of Standards and Metrology Department at QS and Chairman of the Committee Eng. Jabr Mohamed al-Nuaimi indicated that the meeting discussed over the course of four sessions important issues related to the food and agricultural specifications of the countries of the GCC, pointing out that the meeting represented a valuable opportunity to discuss the challenges facing this important and vital sector in the GCC countries.

Fighting threatens Sudan's ceasefire

Sporadic clashes between Sudan's army and a paramilitary force continued yesterday, puncturing the relative calm in the capital Khartoum and raising the risk of a week-long truce deal crumbling as concerns grew over a humanitarian crisis. The US State Department said the ceasefire monitoring mechanism on Sudan had detected possible breaches of the agreement on Wednesday, including observed use of artillery, military aircraft and drones. **Page 9**

Biden, McCarthy near US debt deal

US President Joe Biden and top congressional Republican Kevin McCarthy yesterday appeared to be nearing a deal to cut spending and raise the government's \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling, with little time to spare to head off the risk of default. The deal would specify the total amount the government could spend on discretionary programmes like housing and education, according to a person familiar with the talks, but not break that down into individual categories. The two sides are just \$70 billion apart on a total figure that would be well over \$1 trillion, according to another source.

Russia 'deploys' N-weapons in Belarus

Russia moved ahead yesterday with a plan to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, whose leader said the warheads were already on the move, in the Kremlin's first deployment of such bombs outside Russia since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union. The US State Department denounced the deployment plan, but said Washington had no intention of altering its position on strategic nuclear weapons or seen any signs Russia was preparing to use a nuclear weapon. **Page 9**

COMMUNITY

See Pages 6 & 7

Darb Lusail Flower Festival opens



Hundreds of visitors witnessed yesterday the opening of the three-day Darb Lusail Flower Festival. Al Sa'ad Plaza, towards one end of Lusail Boulevard, has become an ocean of flowers. The event, organised by the Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company and open from 7pm to 11pm, concludes tomorrow (Saturday).

PICTURE: Thajudheen. **Page 12**

Qatar Economic Forum ends successfully

The Qatar Economic Forum 2023, powered by Bloomberg, concluded yesterday, after 3 days of in-depth and serious discussions dealing with how to put the global economy back on the path of growth and looking forward to its future in a dynamic and rapidly changing world.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani patronised the opening of the forum, which was attended by several presidents and prime ministers of friendly countries.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani at the opening session said that Qatar Economic Forum is an important platform for discussing the most important economic issues and challenges facing the world today, and for discussing ways to address them in a spirit of co-operation and innovation.

Qatar Airways resumes service to Bahrain; thrice daily from June 15

Qatar Airways resumed services to Bahrain yesterday with a daily flight to the kingdom. A second and third daily service will commence on June 15, the national carrier said. The resumption of services will enable passengers flying to and from Bahrain to benefit from the airline's extensive international network across Asia, Africa and Europe. Qatar Airways flight QR1108, will



tant platform for discussing the most important economic issues and chal-

enges facing the world today, and for discussing ways to address them in a spirit of co-operation and innovation.

During seven main sessions and over 50 dialogue and sub-discussion sessions, the forum discussed strengthening international economic partnerships and enhancing communication and dialogue between different peoples.

HE the Chairperson of the Supreme Committee Organising the Qatar Economic Forum and CEO of Media City Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, said that the forum recorded a success that exceeded expectations with the participation of more than 130 countries and strong attendance compared to the previous edition. **(QNA)**

Cultivated meat, AI to revolutionise international food security solutions

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Innovative approaches such as producing cultivated meat, backed by new technology and artificial intelligence (AI), play a crucial role in addressing food security across the world, according to Eat Just co-founder and CEO Josh Tetrick.

Speaking at a conversation with Bloomberg Live Experiences deputy global editor Mallika Kapur at the Qatar Economic Forum yesterday, Tetrick puts a spotlight on the advancements and implications of cultivated meat technology. He also underlined the importance of building an infrastructure that produces healthier and more affordable meat.

Tetrick pointed out that such advancements would largely help in feeding a growing global population that is expected to reach nine billion by 2040.

He said countries like Qatar can spearhead the establishment of a robust meat facility that caters not only to domestic demands but also enable exports to other regions. This, he stressed, will contribute substantially in alleviating food security challenges faced by those living in extreme poverty.

"Ultimately we need the cost of chicken, beef, lamb, etc, made through cultivating, to get significantly below the cost of conventional meat," Tetrick said, adding that such a move would revolutionise the meat industry and provide a vital solution to those lacking access to high-quality protein sources.

About health risks associated with cultivated meat, he noted that cultivated chicken shares similar risks with their conventional counterparts such as cholesterol and saturated fat, which are correlated with heart disease.

However, Tetrick outlined the company's vision to develop cultivated meat that is inherently healthier, with minimal risk of diseases.

"Other safety benefits of cultivated meat are: there's little to no risk of diseases such as avian flu, and microbiological elements like salmonella, e-coli (and other contamination) are absent or levels that are not relevant."

"The very first product that we sold in Singapore is the simplest meat product that you make, a chicken nugget. Now we move to chicken strips, we're working on a chicken breast, and we'll keep advancing it," he said.

Noting that the cultivated meat industry is still in its early stages, Tetrick said Eat Just is currently the only company selling cultivated meat though in limited quantities.

About the role of AI in solving food security, he said: "I think in the future, it'll be pretty significant whether it's the design and the engineering that we make the meat, whether it is optimising the kinds of components that are part of the feed."

"You are dealing with a lot of data, and to the extent that machine learning techniques and AI can help us more effectively sort thru data to make smarter, quicker decisions, it's gonna be relevant."



Josh Tetrick with Mallika Kapur at the Qatar Economic Forum yesterday. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Qatar attractive market to test technologies: talabat CEO

Chief Executive Officer of talabat Tomaso Rodriguez asserted that Qatari market is one of the most important markets for his company and the most attractive one owing to the promising growth opportunities.

The talabat company operates via Internet to deliver meals, foodstuff, and other things to customers through counting on the cutting-edge technology, and today there are over 5,000 drivers, along with many job opportunities that have never been available before, he said.

Thousands of restaurants are currently working through delivery process, and the idea is somehow modern, but talabat has succeeded in offering many job opportunities to skilled workers, he said, pointing out that such a success is consistent with the title of the panel discussion: "Future-Proofing the Workforce for Industry",

including new work models that can be provided.

The CEO of talabat noted the qualitative opportunities offered by Qatari markets to test many new technologies, as talabat tested the idea of operating robots in 2021 to deliver Qatari shipments and tested drones as well, pointing to the availability of the state-of-the-art technology tailored for that purpose.

He refuted the concerns of some people about the potential deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI), adding that early in 20th century when agricultural machines debuted, 50% of manpower were focused on agricultural field, and then all people thought that they would lose their jobs. Also, in the 1930s when industrial machines rolled out, they said that the machines would take their places.

In 2012, studies reported that nu-



Chief Executive Officer of talabat Tomaso Rodriguez

merous jobs would be exposed to risks due to automation, and currently people need to realise that they live in a community where jobs can be constantly replaced and many of these technologies are entering the mar-

ket because markets require many of them, Rodriguez outlined.

However, he said there is much optimism about these technologies that have been manufactured to secure a better life and provide new opportunities that have never been available before.

For her part, Managing Partner of 500 Global Amal Amman said she largely focuses on certain capabilities and behaviours instead of seeking skills, pointing out that the ability to adapt and keep pace with the global changes are the holy grail of her company, while in skills she focuses on digitisation only.

Commenting on the methods of employing innovation to give impetus to the development, she said the digital gap is one of the most prominent issues her company is currently focusing on, especially that technology offers an enormous opportunity to develop ed-

ucation and make it more influential, and what is needed is investment in the technological infrastructure, including eradication of illiteracy and encouraging innovation culture.

Director of Education and Adolescent Development at Unicef Robert Jenkins briefly talked about the most important challenges facing education, despite the massive technological evolution, especially that there are still millions of children who lost their primary education.

Answering a question about what should be done to qualify marginalised children to be able to have modern skills, Jenkins said that it is highly important to have a belief in the necessity of modernising educational curricula to be interconnected with modern skills, adding that transformation is imperative to make education available for all. **(QNA)**



Chief of staff meets Turkish Armed Forces deputy chief of staff



The Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces HE Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad al-Nabit met with Deputy Chief of the Turkish Armed Forces General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, and his accompanying delegation, who is currently visiting the country. They discussed issues of common interest and bilateral co-operation, as well as ways to enhance and develop them. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officers from the Qatari and Turkish sides. **(QNA)**

Civic minister meets US city mayors



HE the Minister of Municipality Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met with a number of US city mayors, on the sidelines of their participation in the Qatar Economic Forum, which concluded yesterday in Doha. They discussed aspects of co-operation between the Ministry of Municipality and US cities in areas of common interest and ways to enhance and develop them, especially those related to smart cities, developing infrastructure, and municipal services, in light of the success that Qatar achieved while hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022 in all fields. The meeting included the city mayors of: Dallas and Fort Worth, the State of Texas; Tampa, the State of Florida; Rochester Hills, the State of Michigan; and Mountain Home, the State of Idaho. **(QNA)**

Official

Amir greets Jordan king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to Prime Minister of Jordan Dr Bishr Hany al-Khasawneh on the occasion. **(QNA)**

Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Argentina

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Argentine Republic Alberto Fernandez on the occasion of his country's National Day. **(QNA)**

Korean embassy thanks Qatar for marine rescue operation

The Korean embassy has expressed 'its deepest gratitude to Qatar for its full and expeditious assistance to search and rescue a Korean national who had fallen from a merchant vessel on Qatari waters,' a statement said yesterday.

"Ambassador Lee Joon-ho conveyed his sincerest gratitude to the authorities concerned for taking swift and intensive action to search and rescue the Korean national upon receiving the distress call from the commercial vessel's crew on May 23.

"In the joint operation, Air and Maritime Search and Rescue teams of the General Directorate of Coasts and Borders Security, the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), the Amiri Naval Forces, the Amiri Air Force, along with the commercial vessel had worked feverishly in a race against time throughout the night to find the missing Korean alive and successfully rescued him early morning on May 24, which was in 25 hours after he had fallen on waters. He was



promptly transported to Hamad Hospital for necessary medical aid," it was explained.

Ambassador Lee visited the Korean national at Hamad Hospital yesterday (May 25) and wished him a speedy and full recovery, assuring that the embassy will provide all necessary support until he goes back to Korea safely.

The envoy also delivered his heartfelt appreciation for the

medical team's effort and assistance.

"The prompt and full support of the government of Qatar resulting in successful rescue of the Korean national showed the depth of the longstanding friendly relations which Korea and Qatar have forged over the past 50 years, and our strong friendship will deepen and strengthen to a greater level in the years ahead," the statement added.

Al-Khater, US city mayors discuss Qatar's successful hosting of FIFA World Cup 2022

Two US mayors have congratulated FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 CEO Nasser Fahad al-Khater on the success of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson and al-Khater discussed the importance of sharing lessons learned from the event, as Dallas will host games during the North America FIFA World Cup in 2026.

Tampa Mayor Jane Castor emphasised the benefits of major sporting events for a city's economy, and the economic development that hosting Super Bowls and other mega-sport events had helped bring to the city of Tampa.

Al-Khater explained how Qatar had worked to maximise the value of the World Cup for Qatar's economic development beginning immediately after being named to host the event, and how Qatar's tourism industry has benefited as a result.

Mayor Johnson discussed the broader social benefits of sports, including as a means of bringing communities together, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the extent to which it has increased social isolation globally. He also talked about how the city of Dallas had already begun to see benefits



through the city's preparation for the World Cup, including not only economic development but also improvements in critical city services. Al-Khater shared how the World Cup had helped to accelerate the realisation of Qatar's National Vision 2030 and how

the process of preparing for the games had improved the quality of life in Qatar and helped achieve development objectives.

The discussions were held at a session of the Qatar Economic Forum, powered by Bloomberg, on Wednesday.

QFFD sends aid to victims of Malawi Cyclone Freddy

Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), in collaboration with Qatar Red Crescent, has sent urgent humanitarian aid to support the victims of Cyclone Freddy that struck the Republic of Malawi.

In a statement, QFFD indicated that the response aimed to assist 2,000 affected families by distributing humanitarian aid, including food baskets, cooking utensils, household hygiene kits, non-food items, and other humanitarian needs.

This assistance is intended to address the needs of the families and individuals who were affected by the cyclone. Approximately 180 people lost their lives because of the heavy rains and floods that accompanied the cyclone, while more than 140 individuals were injured. **(QNA)**

Sidra announces new accredited fellowship programmes

Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, has achieved accreditation for five new paediatric programmes by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education International (ACGME-I).

The new programmes include urology; critical care; emergency medicine; gastroenterology and infectious diseases. This brings the total of ACGME-I accredited residency and clinical fellowship programmes at the healthcare organisation to 13.

Prof Ibrahim al-Janahi, chair of Medical Education at Sidra Medicine, said: "This is a fantastic achievement for Sidra Medicine, as it demonstrates the high calibre of our residency and fellowship programmes. The programmes, which are based on a globally recognised international standard such as the ACGME-I, are part of our strategy to offer trainees top quality



medical education. We currently have 96 residents as part of our paediatric residency programme and 63 fellows in our clinical fellowship programmes. We remain committed to expanding our academic credibility as a premier teaching hospital in the region."

The ACGME-I is a body directly aligned with ACGME, the international best practice standard that accredits the majority of graduate medical training programmes for doctors in the US. The accreditation dem-

onstrates that Sidra Medicine's graduate medical education programmes have met ACGME-I's established standards for institutional, foundational and advanced specialty education.

The 13 accredited ACGME-I paediatric programmes currently available at Sidra Medicine are cardiology; nephrology; neurology; pulmonology; general surgery; emergency medicine; infectious diseases, gastroenterology; critical care; neonatology; child and adolescent psychiatry; urology; and radiology.

Minister of State for International Co-operation in Paris meetings



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met during her visit to France, with Chief Executive Officer of the French Development Agency (AFD) Remy Rioux. They discussed the bilateral co-operation, especially ways to develop co-operation in the international development field and exchange experiences in the development field. French ambassador to Qatar Jean-Baptiste Faivre attended the meeting. **(QNA)**



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met, during her current visit to France, with members of the Qatari-French Friendship Committee in the French Parliament. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral co-operation relations between the two countries, and ways to develop partnerships in various fields, especially international development. They also discussed regional developments, especially in Syria, Afghanistan and Sudan, in addition to a number of issues of joint interest. The two sides affirmed the continuation of joint efforts to support and enhance the distinguished relations between the two countries. **(QNA)**



HE the Minister of State for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday, during her current visit to France, with members of the GCC-French Friendship Committee at the French Senate. They discussed bilateral co-operation, especially the French-Qatari partnerships in the fields of energy, sports, investment, and development. The two sides praised the successful co-operation between Qatar and France in securing the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2023. **(QNA)**





The agreement, which was signed in the presence of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Sheikh Dr Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Thani and President of QU, Dr Hassan al-Derham.



MoECC, QU enhance co-operation in environmental research, projects

QNA
Doha

Qatar University (QU) and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) signed agreement of co-operation in the field of environmental research and projects, within the framework of their efforts to enhance co-operation between them to serve the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030, especially with regard to environmental sustainability.

The agreement, which was signed in the presence of HE the

Minister of Environment and Climate Change Sheikh Dr Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Thani and President of QU, Dr Hassan al-Derham, aims to support co-operation and strengthen partnership between the two parties, in addition to exchanging scientific and research opportunities and benefiting from all available capabilities to support efforts in the field of climate change and other fields related to the environment in order to achieve common goals.

In his statement, following the signing of the agreement, Assistant Undersecretary for Protec-

tion and Natural Reserves Affairs at the MoECC Dr Ibrahim Abdullatif al-Maslamani and QU's Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies, Prof Mariam al-Maadeed stated that this agreement is an extension of co-operation between the two sides in common fields, especially with regard to environmental sustainability.

Al-Maslamani noted that the ministry is working to benefit from the scientific expertise of the university, which will enable MoECC decision-makers to take appropriate evidence-based decisions. This co-operation is

one way of implementing the national strategy where it concerns environmental sustainability, he explained.

He says, "I am confident that the work that Qatar University carries out will cover the three areas of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, which includes protection of natural reserves, protecting the environment, and the field of climate change and sustainability, which includes ensuring capacity building through training."

Dr al-Maslamani stressed that this co-operation is a continuation of the previous co-operation

between the university and the ministry, as this co-operation was preceded by research in various areas, the most important of which is studying the impact of the camping season socially and environmentally in the country.

In turn, Dr Mariam al-Maadeed noted that QU looks forward to co-operation with various institutions and bodies in the country to achieve the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of tackling various environmental challenges. She added that the co-operation with the Ministry of Environment is

not the first between both parties, but rather a continued alliance to enhance joint work in many fields for the exchange of information and experience. In the field of environmental issues, she says, QU is an incubator for expertise, programs and disciplines.

The agreement covers areas of common interest such as: Biodiversity and wildlife and their environmental status; management, development and rehabilitation of natural reserves; the impact of hunting operations on the environment and fungal organisms inside and outside natu-

ral reserves; the state of the environment, air quality, soil quality, water quality, noise, chemicals and hazardous waste; social and economic impacts resulting from human activity; studies in the field of climate change, and others.

The agreement includes co-operation in the field of exchanging experiences in various fields, including statistics and data, as well as holding meetings and trainings between experts and specialists, forming working committees to develop joint plans, and holding consultative meetings.

Kahramaa, DI sign agreement

QNA
Doha

The Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Centre of Excellence for Training and Consulting at Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI) to extend co-operation and co-ordination bridges in pursuit of investing in the available opportunities and the joint action in various research, scientific and training fields.

The three-year agreement is renewable and ensures mutual benefit for the two institutions.

The first training programme designed under this co-operation, titled 'Kahramaa Excel', will be launched during the current week with the aim of preparing

a group of managers and heads of departments to fulfil the job competencies specified for the leadership track in alignment with its vision and objectives and the programme will last for three months in various phases.

This agreement represents a starting point for a constructive relationship that will support training programmes to qualify employees. The memorandum intends to benefit from the training and development courses offered by the DI at the institute, which will design and implement training courses according to the needs of the institution.

In addition, there will be seminars, conferences, and workshops on topics of common interest. The centre will also carry out studies and provide advice to Kahramaa within the contexts related to its work. For its part,

Kahramaa will provide practical and summer training for the institute's students according to the requirements of their study programmes and specialisations in addition to arranging field trips to its facilities and project sites.

Director of Shared Services Affairs at Kahramaa, Dr Abdullah Mohsen al-Wahidi underscored the importance prioritised by Kahramaa to co-ordinate with academic entities working in knowledge production and scientific research based on the strategy pursued by the corporation in alignment with Qatar National Vision through which Kahramaa intends to excel in its corporate performance through refining the talents and potential of its manpower to be able to lead the future with competence and excellence.

Kahramaa is constantly working to support innovation and creative thinking and encourage research and creative work. There is compatibility between the institution and the institute in the vision and values aimed at consolidating the importance of innovation and working to support the human element, he said.

Executive Director of the Administrative and Financial Sector at the DI Iman al-Sulaiti said the MoU constitutes an opportunity to have a productive and constructive co-operation in research and training fields, especially at the level of supporting tracks of training, consultancy, and knowledge exchange, in addition to capitalising on the DI's programmes and training courses and exploring the opportunities in administrative and corporate development.

Qatar's envoy launches tripartite response initiative to tackle drought crisis in Somalia



Ambassador of Qatar to Somalia Dr Abdullah bin Salem al-Nuaimi, on behalf of Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), launched the tripartite humanitarian response initiative with US and UK with the aim of strengthening the ability to tackle drought crisis in Somalia. **(QNA)**

Qatari artist creates sculpture in celebration of QF anniversary

QNA
Doha

HE the Adviser of Cultural Affairs at Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali al-Thani created an artwork under the title 'Azm' (determination), on the occasion of the celebration of the silver jubilee (25th anniversary) of the establishment of QF.

The artwork consists of three sculptural pieces of three women, wearing the traditional abaya and battoulah - reflecting traditional women's clothing in the Qatari culture.

HE Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali al-Thani said that artwork 'Azm' symbolises the homeland, and expresses the connotation of the artistic content of the artwork, explaining that the sculpture was created from granite located in Aswan in southern Egypt, which the pharaohs had anciently used to make their pieces and sculptures.

He stressed his keenness to exaggerate the design of the shape of the sculpture to show the influence of strength and determination during the national march, pointing out that he was inspired by the strength of the nation amid all the challenges that it had faced during its journey towards renaissance and achievements.

HE al-Thani concluded his statements by noting that this artwork was chosen by QF, as the work symbolises the foundation's logo (three branches of the Sidra tree), indicating that the creating this piece of art took him about two-and-a-half years. It is noteworthy that Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development was established in 1995 as a non-profit organisation.



The sculpture was created from granite located in Aswan in southern Egypt.



HE Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali al-Thani



Discover Qatar unveils F1 Fan Experience Package

Discover Qatar has unveiled its Formula 1 Ultimate Fan Experience Package, offering motorsport enthusiasts a unique opportunity to be in the midst of the most prestigious racing event, the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2023, taking place in Doha between October 6-8, 2023.

“Adding allure to this premium package, car enthusiasts will enjoy complimentary entry into the first Geneva International Motor Show in Qatar,” a statement said yesterday.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, HE Akbar al-Baker said: “At Discover Qatar, we are dedicated to continuing our legacy in providing world-class packages to our travellers and ensuring exceptional experiences in Doha. The latest F1 Ultimate Fan Expe-



rience Package offers motorsport enthusiasts three days of thrills and luxury with meet-and-greet opportunities, Paddock Club access, and entry into the prestigious Geneva International Motor Show 2023. We have curated this spectacle to be one fans will never forget, maintaining our ex-

cellence when it comes to large-scale global events.”

Discover Qatar’s F1 Ultimate Fan Experience Package grants fans exclusive privileges to the most sought-after areas of the race circuit to witness the intense action from prime viewing locations, in addition to access

to the team garages, pit lane, and the start and finish line. Fans will also receive an invite to a meet-and-greet lunch with F1 Drivers or Legends.

With access to the Formula 1 Paddock Club, enthusiasts can enjoy pit lane walks, fan zones, guided track tours, and dedicated Paddock Club parking. For those eager to immerse themselves in the electric atmosphere of the grandstand, complementary seating will be provided.

“Automotive enthusiasts looking to be a part of the exhilarating and luxurious weekend can secure their F1 Ultimate Fan Experience Package with a starting price of QR26,795. With limited ticket availability, bookings can be completed on www.discoverqatar.qa/F1/,” the statement added.

National STEPwise Survey on NCD to cover more than 8,500 households

QNA
Doha

The field teams participating in the National STEPwise Survey 2023 for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and their common risk factors will start visiting the homes of citizens and residents targeted in the survey starting this week.

The survey is carried out in co-operation between the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA), Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Primary Healthcare Corporation (PHCC).

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 the Population Census, 2020. The participants of the survey will be in the age group between 15 and 69 Years, randomly selected from these selected households.

Director of the Public Health Department at MoPH Sheikh Dr Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani, stressed the great importance of the national STEPwise survey,

explaining that data will serve as evidence-based information for formulating action plans under the National Health strategy for tackling NCDs and for monitoring the prevalence of risk factors, to enhance the health of the community.

In turn, Director of the Department of Censuses, Surveys and Statistical Methods at the Planning and Statistics Authority Nasser Saleh al-Mahdi pointed to the importance of joint co-operation from all concerned for the success of the survey, and stressed the importance of data collectors learning the skills required to ensure accurate data collection.

WHO Representative in Qatar Dr Kayana Buhaga, noted the increasing rates of morbidity and mortality from non-communicable diseases and associated risk factors globally and in Qatar, stressing that the STEPwise survey requires the active participation of all sectors and an integrated government approach to its success.

Conducting STEPwise surveys in line with the validated protocol and data collection tools is an integral part that ensures the quality of the data

collected as well as the global comparison of country data with other countries. Head of the NCD Department at MoPH and National Team lead for the STEPwise survey Dr Kholoud Ateeq al-Motawaa, 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 Ministry of Public Health develop public health programs that target efforts to lower the risk factors that lead to NCDs. She stressed that all obtained data would be treated with strict confidentiality and would only be used for survey and statistical study purposes. In preparation for the start of the survey, the MoPH, in collaboration with the PSA, organized intensive 5-day training for census staff and nurses participating in the survey.

The survey is a second cycle of STEPwise surveys 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 the MoPH to develop National Action plans, within the National Health Strategy, for controlling these diseases and their risk factors.

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. Urine Samples will be collected for urinary sodium and creatinine.

The blood tests for Blood glucose and lipids by Finger prick method will be conducted on the second visit to the household.

The Ministry of Public Health calls on citizens and residents to fully co-operate with the fieldwork teams conducting the survey, who have identification cards for the survey, and provide them with all the information required including blood and urine tests to complete the survey as fast as possible to successfully complete the survey within the prescribed period.

Attorney-general meets Kuwaiti counterpart



HE the Attorney-General Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafari al-Nuaimi met with Kuwaiti Attorney-General Saad Abdul-Karim al-Safran during his visit to Kuwait. They exchanged views on several issues of common interest, and ways to enhance them, especially in the field of legal and judicial co-operation between the Public Prosecution of the State of Qatar and the Public Prosecution of the State of Kuwait. (QNA)

QNA strengthens co-operation with Malaysian News Agency

QNA
Kuala Lumpur

The Director-General of Qatar News Agency (QNA) Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi met with CEO of the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) Roslan Ariffin. During the meeting, al-Rumaihi said that the relationship with the Malaysian News Agency goes back in time, and an agreement of co-operation and news exchange culminated in the signing of an advanced news system.

Al-Rumaihi stressed that this visit comes to discuss broader

horizons for partnership between the two sides, in a way that contributes to strengthening relations and means of co-operation between Qatar News Agency and its Malaysian counterpart.

The Director-General of Qatar News Agency also underlined the gains that will result from this media co-operation, especially in the field of news and information exchange and in benefiting both sides with media and technical experiences.

For his part, the Bernama CEO said that the visit from the Qatari media delegation aims at strengthening the ongoing media co-operation between the

two agencies. Ariffin said that the media played an important role in establishing and maintaining diplomatic relations between the two countries, in addition to promoting business relations and economic co-operation between the two countries. Bernama and QNA can play a role in further strengthening community-related activities, knowledge development, and fostering ties between the two countries by exchanging news and photos, he added.

UXERA, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bernama, has been supplying the news production system that uses the latest technologies to QNA in 2019.

QFFD, AFAD lay foundation stone for integrated city project in Northern Syria

QNA
Doha

In a collaborative effort to support Syrian refugees and displaced individuals, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) laid the foundation stone for a project to establish an integrated city in northern Syria.

The foundation stone laying ceremony was attended by Director-General of QFFD Khalifa

bin Jassim al-Kuwari and Turkish Minister of Interior Suleyman Soylu.

This integrated city will provide comprehensive services and target 50,000 individuals. It will consist of 5,000 apartments and public facilities, including a mosque, a shopping centre, 3 schools, and a health centre.

The infrastructure of the city will also be developed, including the construction of roads, public parks, an electricity network, and water tanks, aiming to provide a decent living for Syrian refugees and support their

resilience. The co-operation between QFFD and AFAD is part of the QFFD’s efforts to support the Syrian people. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Qatar has been committed to responding and providing humanitarian and relief assistance to the Syrian people, based on its steadfast belief in their right to a decent life.

These essential aids have encompassed various projects covering key sectors such as health, education, economic empowerment, as well as relief and winter assistance.

Qatari airplane carrying food assistance arrives in Sudan, evacuation of new group

A Qatari airplane carrying 30 tonnes of food assistance, provided by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and Qatar Charity (QC), arrived at Port Sudan airport in Sudan. This assistance comes within the framework of the support offered by Qatar to the fraternal people of Sudan and its full support for their steadfastness in facing the difficult conditions they live in due to the ongoing fighting. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the evacuation of 180 persons, holders of Qatari residency, from the Sudan by a Qatari airplane that took off from the Port Sudan Airport, bringing the total number of evacuated persons to 1,421 residents. Earlier, Qatar evacuated Qatari citizens, who were in Sudan, and 1,241 persons, holders of Qatari residency. The ministry reiterated Qatar’s keenness on security and stability in Sudan. (QNA)



Minister meets deputy premier of Georgia, industry captains



HE al-Mannai with Bagda.



HE al-Mannai with al-Yahya.



HE al-Mannai with Davitashvili.



HE al-Mannai with Web Summit chief executive Paddy Cosgrave.

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mo-hamed bin Ali al-Mannai has met Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturian, Georgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia Levan Davitashvili, Digital Co-operation Organisation secretary-general Deemah al-Yahya, and director of Public Sector, Middle East and Africa at Amazon Web Services Wojciech Bagda.

These meetings were held on the side-

lines of the ongoing Qatar Economic Forum (QEF) in Doha under the slogan *A New Global Growth Story*.

The meetings focused on joint co-operation with the aim of strengthening ties in the information and communication technology sector, smart cities, digital economy, investments and digital innovation, the possibility of expanding the use of digital technologies, the importance of building a secure and flexible digital infrastructure, and protecting personal data and privacy.

They discussed the importance of the Google Cloud region that was inaugurated in Doha and its role in supporting the digital economy, along with Qatar's readiness to host the Web Summit and the promotion of innovation and technological progress in the digital sector, in addition to discussing mechanisms to support the Qatari public and private sectors in cloud computing solutions and how to develop Qatari skills to enhance the localisation of the digital transformation industry. – **QNA**

Future of sports full of heated competition: Qatar 2022 CEO

FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 (Qatar 2022) chief executive Nasser al-Khater has stated that the future of sports is full of challenges in light of strong competition among different sports for global prominence and accessibility.

During the Qatar Economic Forum (QEF)'s second day, in response to a question by Bloomberg (Middle East and North Africa) head Stuart Livingstone-Wallace, al-Khater said that Qatar 2022 was a platform for dialogue and discussion on many global issues, with Middle Eastern issues at the forefront.

The official cited FIFA World Cup 2026, which is to be hosted by the US, where the fastest growing sport at the moment is football and is competing with padel.

Al-Khater added that Qatar 2022 was the first global sporting event to be organised after the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which was good for Qatar as everyone was eager to watch the tournament.

He added that the number of national teams competing in the FIFA World Cup has risen from 32 teams to 48, something that poses a challenge to major international tournaments' host countries.

Al-Khater said that the United States can host 48 teams, holding the tournament in several of its cities.

However, for smaller countries, this will make things more difficult, which is one of the most important challenges.

Regarding the future of sports, al-Khater drew attention to the growing interest in other sports in different parts of the world, such as the American Basketball Championship and the American Football League,



Snapshots from the session.

which are examples of how a sport which is not popular or played except in a single country can get globalised and popularised.

With regard to the concept of soft power, the official explained that a host country would be able to use a global event in service of its political, social, and/or economic agendas depending on the host country's objectives, its size, and its historical location.

He elaborated that back in 2009, Qatar was in a strong position, having a lot to offer, with so many parties surprised at Qatar's winning of the World Cup bid.

He added that as a result, Qatar started to put in place plans to accelerate the process of progress in order to host it successfully, which means a lot of work to be done both in terms of building infrastructure, diversifying the economy, and working on a sustainable future in regards to the

climate and society, focusing on how to make the World Cup hosting serve Qatar's vision.

Al-Khater said despite the attacks that Qatar was subjected to over the course of 10 years under the pretext of the migrant workers' welfare and the like, Qatar 2022 in fact accelerated social change and economic diversification not only in Qatar, but in regional countries as well, given how the tournament shed light on the region's issues and reflecting the region's true image.

Regarding his advice to the 2026 FIFA World Cup hosts, al-Khater stressed the importance of identifying the purpose behind the hosting, explaining that for Qatar the purpose was to become a centre for tourism, adding that the tournament ended up being a wonderful promotional opportunity for the country.

He said that Qatar's goals were clear

from the onset, with the most prominent goal being developing infrastructure.

The official added that now, 10 years later, Qatar has a new airport, an expanded sea port, hundreds of kilometres of highways, a metro system, and more to offer tourists.

Al-Khater said that because Qatar wanted to create an environmentally sustainable tournament, along with meeting the country's commitments, Qatar now successfully generates 800MW of solar energy.

On the challenges faced by Qatar, the Qatar 2022 chief executive mentioned Qatar's small size, especially that it was expected to receive anywhere between 1.2mn-1.5mn fans, with the other challenge being the suitable hosting dates of the tournament.

Even so, al-Khater pointed out, Qatar succeeded in hosting 1.28mn fans.

The official added that it was known that there was a need for 98,000 rooms to be able to accommodate this number, with Qatar only having 36,000 when it won the bid.

Therefore, al-Khater said, Qatar worked on finding a balance between hotel rooms, residential apartments, and other forms of accommodation that were built to serve the tourism sector, which now can be used for tourism purposes.

The session also discussed the impact of integrating technologies with sports industries and its impact on fan engagement, in addition to future revenue methods, electronic games, among others. – **QNA**

National institutions at heart of systems to promote human rights: GANHRI chairperson

Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) chairperson Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah, who is also chairperson of the Qatar's National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), has affirmed that national institutions form the central nucleus of strong national systems to protect and promote human rights.

She said national human rights institutions (NHRIs) need strong capabilities to protect their independence and their ability to withstand changes in the governance infrastructure or political changes in order to effectively carry out their arduous and demanding roles.

Al-Attiyah said this during a speech delivered at the 2023 Annual Review meeting of the TriPartite Partnership to support National Human Rights Institutions in New York, which includes the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the United Nations Development Programme.

She stressed the essential role played by human rights institutions in supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, noting that the presence of national human rights institutions that comply with the Paris Principles is one of the indicators of progress in the 2030 Agenda.

The official also called on United Nations member states to accelerate the pace of progress in establishing NHRIs that comply with the Paris Principles in order to deliver on the promises made in the 2030 Agenda.

Al-Attiyah said that the UN Secretary-General's call to action for human rights and national human rights institutions, issued in February 2020, is the guiding framework for accelerating human rights efforts across the United Nations system.

She noted that this call highlights the role of national human rights institutions in contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in crisis contexts and in supporting the rights of future generations, including climate justice, with emphasis on the need to strengthen the support provided to national human rights institutions.

Al-Attiyah added that supporting the implementation of the call to action for human rights would help provide sustained support to NHRIs and increase recognition of their role as a strategic priority.

Over the past 30 years, the official said, countless examples of the strong influence of national human rights institutions in promoting justice and accountability for victims of rights violations as well as their venerable contributions to laws and policies have been seen, along with practices that support human rights and effective involvement in the international human rights system.

Despite the harsh challenges of endless wars and conflicts, continuous violence and discrimination, poverty, economic crises and the effects of digital technology that cast a shadow on the enjoyment of rights, al-Attiyah said, this is the time for hope, as the year 2023 marks the



The meeting in New York.

30th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of Paris Principles, which established the framework for independent and effective national human rights institutions around the world.

In the same year, she said that we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the GANHRI, which was formed with the mission of establishing, supporting and strengthening NHRIs.

As proof of the impressive success, al-Attiyah said that the nucleus of the global alliance expanded from 12 members in 1993 to 120 NHRIs today.

As the year 2030 approaches and with the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to be held in September this year, there is still a lot for the tripartite partnership to do to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in efforts to accelerate implementation of the GANHRI plan during the current decade, al-Attiyah said in her speech.

The GANHRI chairperson noted the GANHRI's approval of its new five-year strategic plan at its annual meeting last March, adding that the strategic plan focuses on the basic objectives of the Alliance in supporting and strengthening national human rights institutions, in accordance with the Paris Principles in order to be as effective as possible in its vital work. – **QNA**

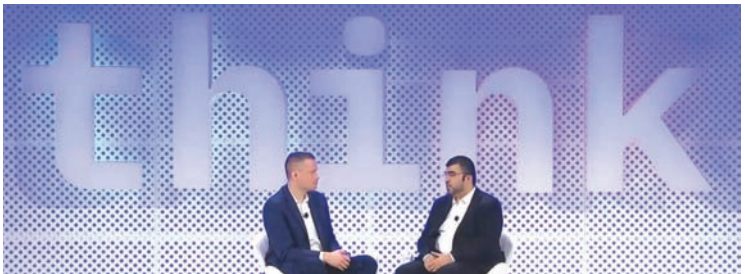
National Cyber Security Agency takes part in IBM Think 2023 conference

The National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) participated in the IBM Think 2023 conference held by the IBM Technology in Florida, which is attended by about 25,000 from around the world.

Cyber Empowerment and Excellence Affairs director Khalid al-Hashmi gave a demo

presentation on the successful and productive co-operation between the NCSA and IBM during FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, noting the critical and pivotal role played by the NCSA during the organisation of the sporting event.

The conference is poised to be held in 11 cities around the world in the future. – **QNA**



The IBM Think 2023 conference is taking place in Florida.

Qatar 'the best place to hold next edition of Web Summit'

Paddy Cosgrave, founder and chief executive of the Web Summit, which is set to be held in Qatar in March next year, said that the summit will address several significant topics, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and tax evasion, as well as other technological issues, in addition to cryptocurrency, cybersecurity, and international tax justice for multinational corporations, which were the main focus of the previous summits.

In remarks to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), Cosgrave anticipated that Web Summit Qatar, the first of its kind in the Middle East, would attract a large number of participants in the various fields and topics it would address, unlike other previous summits, especially after the end of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, as International conferences used to be held through videoconferencing.

"I think many people will be quite excited about coming to the Web Summit in the Middle East because this is one of the most important markets in the world," he said. "You can't ignore it if you think about growth over the coming decades. There are lots of growing businesses in the region and participants want to find customers elsewhere in the world and the Middle East is going to be a really important market."

"We know that events take time to grow like the Qatar Economic Forum (QEF), which somebody told me had 400 people, maybe 600 people in the first year," he said. "So I would say low expectations, hopefully, there will be maybe 5,000 people from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and from all over the world."

"It's not easy to persuade people that the Web Summit can take place in the Middle East, and I think the first year is probably the demonstration year ... things get easier in the second year. It's a 5-year commitment and these things take time to build," he said.

The Web Summit chief executive pointed out that the Web Summit started out with 150 attendees, which grew steadily over time.

Cosgrave noted that a host of stakeholders and specialists would participate in the 3-day Web Summit Qatar, representing sectors and other levels in the technology industry.

He referred to the close co-operation between the Web Summit and Qatar regarding organisation and partnership regarding hosting such vibrant events.

The official said that they chose Qatar to hold the summit for its record of hosting and holding various significant international conferences and summits in all fields.

He also noted that the Qatar Development Bank (QDB) attended the 2016 Web Summit as a partner.

On the third edition of the QEF, Cosgrave said that this was his first time attending the forum, and he thinks it is very impressive and successful in terms of participation, key speakers, and economic topics and files that the forum discussed.

He noted the mega international events and conferences that Qatar hosts from time to time, citing in particular Qatar's central location, geographically.

Cosgrave added that Qatar has a massive market and has emerged as a global hub. Qatar also has a distinguished international airport and a world-class pioneer airline – Qatar Airways – which means easy accessibility to Qatar.

Qatar also has a track record of hosting some of the largest and most complex global events, Cosgrave said, including its hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, making it always ready to host any future global event.

He said he looks forward to 2024's Web Summit in Qatar.

In April this year the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) announced that Qatar will host the Web Summit, the world's largest technology conference, in March 2024.

Web Summit Qatar will be the first of its kind in the region, bringing together thousands of international entrepreneurs, investors, and the next generation of leaders who are reshaping the world.

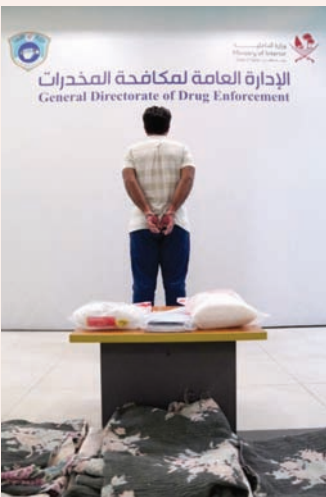
Over the next five years, Web Summit Qatar will provide new opportunities to connect the tech world in growing ecosystems across the Middle East, Africa, and India, in addition to its established presence in Europe, North America, South America, and Asia.

According to the World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report 2021*, Qatar ranks 28th globally for its capacity for innovation, outpacing other countries in the region. – **QNA**

Individual arrested with 4kg of meth

The General Directorate of Drug Enforcement has apprehended an individual from an Asian country with about 4kg of methamphetamine, commonly known as "shabu", the Ministry of Interior (MoI) tweeted yesterday.

The suspect had distributed the illicit substance in various containers in his residence. When confronted with the seized items, he admitted to obtaining the narcotics through curtain fabrics saturated with the drug and received through a mail parcel. The suspect also showed the tools and methods used to extract and handle the banned material. He, along with the seized items, has been handed over to the Public Prosecution for further legal proceedings, the MoI tweet added.





RPS achieves milestones in AISSE, AISSCE



Arpita Anand



Ruth S Thomas



Archana Soman



Dhruv Prashanth



Hannah A Faizy



Huda A Samad



Janisa P Malaviya



Lamis Quisar



Mawin Firdous



Shariq A Vengasserri

Rajagiri Public School (RPS) has achieved 100% pass percentage in AISSE and AISSCE.

RPS had its first set of students appearing in AISSCE this year. Of the 26 students, eight scored above 90%. Arpita Anand (96.6%) from the Science stream and Ruth Sunil Thomas (94.4%) from the commerce stream are the school toppers. Arpita scored an exceptional 99 marks in English.

Mawin Firdous, Ruth Sunil Thomas, and Shariq Ahmed Vengasserri scored 99 marks in Artificial Intelligence.

As many as 92% of the students scored distinction.

Of the 55 students who appeared in AISSE, five scored A1 in all the subjects, 19 scored above 90% and 33 secured distinction (above 75%).

Janisa Pradeep Malaviya and Hannah Ashehad Faizy are the toppers with 97.2% and Archana Soman and Lamis Quisar with 96.2% and 96%, respectively, secured the second and the third place.

Shreya Rajesh, Maria Manfred and Tanush Manohar with 100 marks in Information Technology, Hannah Ashehad Faizy and Lamis Quisar with 99 marks each in Mathematics and Arabic respectively, and Hannah Ashehad Faizy, Maria Manfred and

Archana Soman with 99 marks in Malayalam emerged the best of the bunch.

Principal in-charge, S Radhakrishnan, congratulated the students and teachers. Academic director, Dr Prasant Palikkapillil, said that the students came out preeminent in academics by their exceptional performance in both AISSE and AISSCE. He wished them success in future endeavours.

The managing director, George Jacob, congratulated the students and said: "It is indeed a matter of pride that all the students have come out with flying colours and have kept up the name of the institution".

11-year-old Indian chess wiz reigns supreme in FCPL blitz tourney

Arena International Master Syed Abdul Khader continues his dominance as he bagged the championship again in the Filipino Chess Players League (FCPL) Blitz Chess Tournament (May 2023 edition), held at Uno Café recently. Khader has been formidable throughout the tournament with a perfect score of 9/9. Other winners are, from the second place: Aldrin Troy Tenorio, Louie Delcoro, Albin Sajan, Ryan Mendoza, Richard Nepacena, Enrique Naperi, Pranav Pradeep Nair, Abel Sajan and Rolly Patricio with each receiving trophies and cash prizes. Category prizes were awarded to top performers in each category: Best U8 - Jeanna Jobsy, Best U10 - Annliya Sajan, Best U12 - Johan Jobsy, Best U14 - Taksh Sharma and Best Women - Nishita Karthick.



The tournament was spearheaded by FCPL president Elmer Espiritu, tournament director John Tia and chief arbiter

Rolenson Loyola, in co-operation and sponsored by Uno Café owned by Jeanette Gotangogan.

ICC invites members to attend Wednesday Fiesta



The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, continues to host the 'ICC Wednesday Fiesta', featuring thematic performances by different groups. Mohit Pant, president of Uttarakhand Association and Zameel Abdul Wahid, president of Chaliyar Doha, were felicitated by ICC president A P Manikantan for their valuable contributions to the community. ICC has invited Indian community members to attend the event held every Wednesday.

MESIS hosts inter-school robotics contest

MES Indian School, Abu Hamour Branch (MESIS) hosted Genos 2023, an Interschool Robotics Competition, with participation from over 17 Indian schools and organised by Scholasy.

DPS Monarch International School, Oasis Campus, lifted the trophy as the overall winner.

In the junior category, MESIS was the second runner-up, MES Indian School the first runner-up, and DPS Monarch Inter-

national School, Oasis Campus, the first position holder.

In the senior category, the second runner-up was Al Khor International School, Galileo International School the first runner-up, and Olive International School, Thumama the first position holder.

Indian embassy first secretary Sachin Dinkar Shankpal, MES officials K Abdul Karim, Khaleel A P, Abdul Fathah, Kahramaa's Shared Service director Dr engineer Abdullah Mohsin al-Wahedi, Qatar University's

Education Research Centre director Dr Abdel Latif Sellami, College of Engineering's Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Department professor Dr John John Cabibihan, LYRYM Opto Technology Inc US executive director Dr Ma'an Nassar Raja al-Ani, Oryx Liverpool University president and founder Azmin Amir, MES Indian School principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, MESIS principal Pramila Kannan, MES Indian School Off-Campus administrator Manmadhan Mampally and Scholasy adviser Tony Louis were present.



MES overall champion in CBSE Qatar Cluster Carroms Tournament

MES Indian School emerged overall champion in the CBSE Qatar Cluster Carroms Tournament held at Loyola International School on May 17 and 18 for under 14 and under 17 categories of boys and girls. The participants were from 10 CBSE schools.

The hosts, making their maiden appearance in the tournament, won the overall championship.

In the under-14 boys' individual champion Abdul Aziz bagged gold, and in the under-17 boys' category, Rizal Haneef secured a silver. The MES team comprising Rizal Haneef Saad, Ahmed Patel, Fahad Inayath Sheriff and Rishi M Anand won silver medals in the under-17 and subsequently secured team championship.

In the girls' under 17, Jesrin Shan Joy, Ri-



tika Sujil, Zainab Samir and Analin Jacob bagged gold medals for their team, and in under 14, the team comprising Jaza Mariyam, Asvika Rajendran, Adiya K Shib and Anugraha Harikumar won silver.

School principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the winners. They were honoured in the school assembly. Gigi P Abraham, Mariam Sameer, Salim Nadaf and Afsal S were the coaches who trained the students.

Mother's Day at BPS

Mother's Day was celebrated on a grand scale by the Kindergartners of Birla Public School. The mothers were invited to the respective classes of their ward and presented a beautiful card of gratitude. The mothers participated in the interclass Rangoli competition. 'Grab a Treat', the highlight of the day, saw students sit with their mothers and have snacks. Later, headmistress Josephine Fernandes welcomed the mothers to a function. The



students presented music and dance performances dedicated to their mothers. Academic director - principal Harish Sanduja addressed the gathering on the importance of mothers in the life of a child. Vice-principal

Edna Fernandez dedicated a song on motherhood on behalf of the BPS Staff to mark the occasion. 'Souvenirs of Love' by the Kindergarten Family, were also distributed.

SSC exam at BMHM School & College



Bangladesh MHM School & College, Doha, is holding the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examination, 2023. There are 75 candidates, comprising 56 in Science Group and 19 in Business Studies. The exam is under the direct supervision of Bangladesh ambassador Md Nazrul Islam. Bangladesh embassy's deputy chief of mission Md Waliur Rahman is the centre in-charge and principal Md Zulfiker Azad the centre secretary. Ambassador Nazrul Islam visited the centre and expressed his satisfaction about the preparations. He was accompanied by Rahman and the institution's director retired Lt Cdr Md Anwar Khurshid.

Division A concludes Toastmaster Annual Conference-2023



Division A, District 116, Qatar recently organised its Toastmasters Annual Conference, 'Aspire to Achieve'. The in-person conference happening after four years was opened by director Atul Hardas. Banner parade, presented by Poonam Jenapareddy, Samar Monim and team, saw 14 clubs participating. International speech contest was conducted by Priya Bhedi. The winners, in the order of first, second and third places are Singaraju K S, Sunil Kumar Menon and Addalin Rajan, respectively.

The table topic speech contest was conducted by Sandhya Menon. The winners are Addalin Rajan, Sunil Kumar Menon and Smitha Abraham. The evaluation speech contest was conducted by Rishida Mohamed. The winners are Singaraju K, Sunil Kumar Menon and Addalin Rajan. Humorous speech contest was conducted by Joahna Escoba. The winners are Sheikh Kader, Milton Elaykumar and Singaraju K S. The chief judges were Thayalan K, Shyam Sundar, Sivakumar Raju and Chandrashekhar

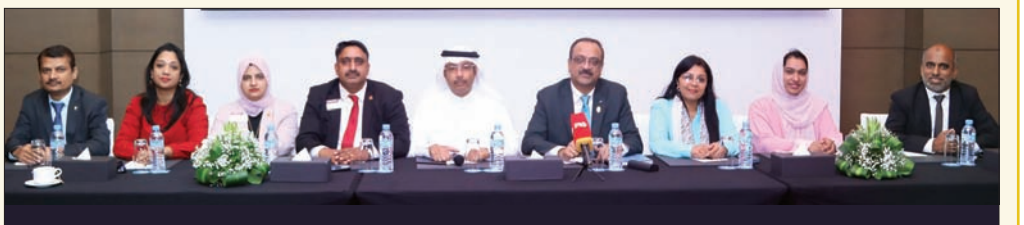
Dudhe. Kesavraj Sampathkumar was the contest manager. Champion speakers of Division A will now compete for District 116, Qatar Championship today and tomorrow. Region 11 adviser Sundaresan Rajeswar gave an inspirational keynote speech on 'Aspire to Achieve' and explained importance of discipline & dedication in our lives. District director Rajesh V C, programme quality director Ravishankar and club growth director Sabeena M K also spoke.

DTAC 2023 begins today

Toastmasters in Qatar will be organising their District Toastmasters Annual Conference (DTAC 2023) today and tomorrow. Over 500 participants representing nearly 20 nationalities will take part in the event. The World Champion of Public Speaking, Cyril Jr Dim, will be delivering the keynote speech and training sessions on effective communication at the event. Toastmasters International presi-

dent (2019-20) Deepak Menon will be delivering keynote speech on leadership. There will be speech contests in four categories to select the best speakers in Qatar. The winner of the international speech category will advance his/her prospects to represent Qatar at the World Champion of Public Speaking in August 2023 to be held at Toastmasters International Convention.

The details were announced by DTAC 2023 chairman Khalid al-Ahmad Hamdan; district director Rajesh V C, programme quality director Ravishankar, club growth director Sabeena M K, education and training manager Bindu Pillai, sponsorship manager Dewakinandan, district administration manager Aparna Rahnish, DTAC secretary Najla Azad and project manager, Mashood V C at a press conference recently.





The lunar saga



The fifth largest moon in the solar system, earth's moon is the only place beyond Earth where humans have set foot. The brightest and largest object in the night sky, the moon makes earth a more liveable planet by moderating our home planet's wobble on its axis, leading to a relatively stable climate. It also causes tides, creating a rhythm that has guided humans for thousands of years. The earth and moon are tidally locked and their rotations are so in sync we only see one side of the Moon. Humans didn't see the lunar far side until a Soviet spacecraft flew past in 1959. The moon, located at an average distance of 384,400km from earth, continues to be a never-ending fascination for humans. Nasa currently has three robotic spacecraft exploring the Moon - Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter and the twin Artemis spacecraft. There is a new Artemis programme to send astronauts back to the moon. A recent view of the waning moon, as seen from Doha. **PICTURE:** Gulf Times news editor Bonnie James

Karwan-e-Urdu Qatar hosts poetry symposium, Mushaira

Karwan-e-Urdu Qatar (KUQ), a local social-cultural Urdu organisation, is hosting its annual International Poetry Symposium, Mushaira, after a gap of three years at the DPS School Auditorium today at 7pm in which famous poets from India, Pakistan and Qatar will participate.

KUQ aims to promote the Urdu language and appreciate Urdu literary services. Each year, it presents a Life Time Achievement Award and a cash prize to a senior Urdu poet for his selfless contribution to the language and literature.

In past KUQ honoured famous poet Munawwar Rana, Rahat Indori, Shehpar Rasool, Azhar Inayati and others. This year it is honouring one of the great Indian writers and poets Shiv Kishan Bissa, known as Sheen Kaaf Nizam, hailing from Jodhpur, Rajasthan. KUQ will celebrate Jashan E Sheen Kaaf Nizam and International Mushaira 2023.



Sheen Kaaf Nizam



Rahman Faris



Aqeel Nomani



Iqbal Ashhar

Doha-based well-known businessman N A Nasser will also be bestowed with a lifetime achievement award for his selfless services and continuous efforts for the promotion of Urdu.

Meraj Haidar, a successful businessman and philanthropist from Lucknow, will be the chief guest. Famous poet and announcer Abrar Kashif will conduct the Mushaira and the poets from India and Pakistan attending the Mushaira include Sheen Kaaf Nizam

(awardee), Aqeel Nomani, Nusrat Ateeq, Rahman Faris, Iqbal Ashhar, Tariq Qamar, Nausha Asrar and Abrar Kashif.

Poets representing Doha's literary circle are Ateeq Anzar, Ejaz Haidar, Rashid Alam and Maqsood Anwar.

The chairperson of Karwan-e-Urdu Qatar, Azeem Abbas, its founder president Ateeq Anzar and general secretary Shahid Khan are the driving forces behind the poetic evening of eminence and enlightenment.

BCCI's green initiative

By Shafqat Nabi

Simon Keeling, members of the Oxford University Dangerous Sports Club, and Geoff Tabin?

N11. When a dot ball is bowled in the ongoing IPL 2023 playoffs, the broadcasters displays a distinctive symbol of a tree, instead of '0'. What does this symbol mean and why was it used for?

N12. In 1926, Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel published its picture in *American Vogue*. It was calf-length, straight and decorated only by a few diagonal lines. *Vogue* called it "Chanel's Ford". Its ubiquity is such that it is often simply referred to as the "LBD". What is being discussed here?

N13. As per statista.com, having been the 32nd most popular name for girls born in US in 2015, its rank dropped to 442nd in 2021. This was after the release of a particular product by Amazon in 2014. Which first name is it?

N14. Born on August 15, 1947, at the moment in time when India and Pakistan emerged from British rule and lives during the new tumultuous struggles, Salim Sinai is the protagonist of which award-winning novel?

N15. The stainless-steel plaque of Apollo 11, the American spaceflight that first landed humans on the Moon, reads: "Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon July 1969, A.D. We came in peace for all mankind". The plaque has signatures of Neil A. Armstrong, Michael Collins, Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. and another person. Name him.

N16. As per the recently released Steve Hanke's Annual Misery Index (HAMI), which judges nations on mainly economic conditions, which is the world's most miserable country?

N17. Which modern day adventure activity was first made on April 1, 1979, from Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol, England, by David Kirke and



Answers

N11. It is incorporated as part of the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) green initiative to encourage environmental sustainability. For each dot ball bowled in the IPL 2023 playoffs, the Indian cricket board has decided to plant 500 trees.

N12. Little Black Dress. It is a black evening or cocktail dress, cut simply and often quite short. It is intended to be long-lasting, versatile, affordable, and widely accessible.

N13. Alexa.

N14. *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie.

N15. Richard Nixon, president, United States of America.

N16. Zimbabwe.

N17. Bungee jumping, also spelled bungy jumping.

N18. A New Global Growth Story.

N19. Lucky Ali.

N110. These images are of the musicians on RMS Titanic which sank in the Atlantic Ocean on April 15, 1912. The Band on board was famous - though posthumously (Brailley, Bricoux, Hartley, Hume, Krins, Taylor and Woodward). They were seen as heroes because they played to keep the passengers calm as the ship sank.



Tribe NI.yays

Who has recently become the youngest man to top the singles rankings at 19 years, four months, and six days old, and the first teenager in the Open Era to top the men's rankings?

Carlos Alcaraz of Spain.

(Kiran Kaveripatnam, Cochín)

Do you have some interesting bytes to share? And, does your vibe attract you to the 'Tribe NI.yays'? Every week one question from readers will be featured here. Please do send it to us at infotainment.factree@gmail.com. And, please do mention the school/college/company (or just 'home-sweet-home').

AMUHQ gets new office bearers



Hassan Chougule



Nadeem Mahir



Osama Shamsi



Ibraheem Khan



Aziz Nabeel



Niyaz Azmi

Anjuman Muhibban-e-Urdu Hind Qatar (AMUHQ) has chosen its new office bearers, under the patronage of founder Ibraheem Khan Kamal and chairman Hasan Chougule. With the consensus of all members, it was decided that the new officials are Nadeem Mahir (president), Aziz Nabeel (general secretary), Osama Shamsi (joint secretary), Niyaz Azmi (media secretary). AMUHQ was established in 2005 with an objective to promote Urdu language.

Badminton winners



Faiz Ahmed Anas, title winner of Engineers Forum Qatar badminton championship, is seen with first runner up Hareesh Poliyath and second runner up Dhaneesh M R.

CONTROVERSY

China rejects Western spying allegations

The Chinese government has rejected claims that its spies are penetrating Western infrastructure, calling the joint warning issued by the US and its allies a “collective disinformation campaign.” Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters that alerts issued by the US, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were intended to promote their intelligence alliance, known as the Five Eyes – and that it was Washington that was guilty of hacking. “The US is the empire of hacking,” Mao said. The reaction follows a series of warnings issued by Five Eyes countries – and major US tech firm Microsoft – about the activities of a Chinese hacking group known as Volt Typhoon.

COMMENT

‘Separatists’ must not harm India-Australia ties: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned that “separatist elements” should not be allowed to hurt India-Australia relations. Lured by the world’s most populous market and the promise of a counterweight to China, Australia has batted away questions about India’s treatment of opponents and minorities, suggesting they are domestic issues. Modi appeared to have no such qualms. He hit out at “attacks” on Hindu temples in Australia – vandalism allegedly committed by Sikh separatists – after his summit with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. “We will not accept any elements that harm the friendly and warm ties between India and Australia by their actions or thoughts,” Modi said.

DECISION

Opposition parties to shun India parliament opening

Indian opposition parties said they would boycott the inauguration ceremony for the new parliament building to be conducted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sidelining the country’s president. In a statement, 19 parties said Modi’s decision to dedicate the building on Sunday without President Droupadi Murmu taking part was not just a insult but a direct assault on democracy. India’s president is an appointed, non-party executive with only ceremonial powers, but is considered the country’s first citizen and is the highest constitutional authority. “When the soul of democracy has been sucked out from the Parliament, we find no value in a new building,” the letter stated.

TECHNOLOGY

TikTok tests AI chatbot ‘Tako’ in the Philippines

Social media platform TikTok said yesterday it is in the early stages of exploring a chatbot called “Tako” that can converse with users about short videos and help them discover content, and is conducting tests with select users in the Philippines. OpenAI, backed by Microsoft Corporation, last year launched chatbot ChatGPT, offering arguably the most natural interaction to date. That triggered a race to develop features based on game-changing generative artificial intelligence (AI), including TikTok rival Snap Inc whose “My AI” is powered by ChatGPT technology. TikTok said Tako is designed to help users discover “entertaining and inspiring content” on the app.

VIOLENCE

Three dead, one hurt in Japan shooting

Three people were killed and one injured in a shooting and stabbing incident in a city in rural Japan yesterday, with the perpetrator having barricaded himself inside a building, media reported. Few details were immediately available about the incident, in which a man dressed in camouflage stabbed a woman with a knife and shot what appeared to be a hunting rifle in the city of Nakano in Nagano prefecture, central Japan, NHK national television said. Two police officers also died, and one person was injured, NHK added. The injured person is still believed to be lying nearby the scene of the incident, the public broadcaster reported.

Energy bills for most Britons set to fall as price cap cut

Despite Ofgem’s price cap cut, National Energy Action said some 6.6mn British households would remain in fuel poverty, a measure of how much income is spent on energy

Reuters
London

Most British households, many feeling a cost-of-living squeeze, can expect cheaper energy bills from July after regulator Ofgem slashed its price cap to reflect a slump in wholesale costs. Britain has the joint-highest rate of inflation among the Group of Seven nations along with Italy and official data this week showed consumer prices rose 8.7% in annual terms in April, slowing from March, but still at elevated levels.

“After a difficult winter for consumers it is encouraging to see signs that the market is stabilising and prices are moving in the right direction”

Despite Ofgem’s price cap cut, National Energy Action said some 6.6mn British households would remain in fuel poverty, a measure of how much income is spent on energy. Ofgem’s new cap of £2,074 (\$2,618) a year for average use of electricity and gas, known as dual-fuel, marks a near 40% fall compared with the previous level. However, the price drop for most British households will be around 17% as since October a government guarantee has kept the average annual cost of energy at £2,500 a year. Some 29mn customers are on standard rate tariffs protected by the price cap, Ofgem said in a statement yesterday. “After a difficult winter for consumers it is encouraging to see signs that the market is sta-

bilising and prices are moving in the right direction,” Ofgem CEO Jonathan Brearley said. Government ministers welcomed the drop and said it would help reduce Britain’s stubbornly high inflation. Energy costs could still be difficult to manage for some customers, with prices historically high and likely to remain elevated, Brearley added.

“In the medium term, we’re unlikely to see prices return to the levels we saw before the energy crisis,” he said.

Cornwall Insight forecast the cap will fall again slightly in October, to an average of £1,976 a year, before edging up to £2,045 a year in January 2024.

Energy prices hit record highs in Britain and Europe last year after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine cut gas supply.

The price cap in October 2020 was set at £1,042 a year.

The government price guarantee will rise to £3,000 from July and remain until the end of March 2024, but current price cap forecasts for the next year mean the government subsidy is unlikely to be needed.

However, campaigners said the high energy prices show the country needs to invest in energy efficiency measures to help drive down use and overall costs.

“The government needs to use the summer to fix Britain’s broken energy system... This means ramping up energy efficiency programmes, helping the public with energy debt and reforming energy pricing arrangements,” said Simon Francis, co-ordinator of campaign group the End Fuel Poverty Coalition.

As part of reforms to the market, Ofgem also said yesterday it would seek to slightly increase the profit energy suppliers are allowed to make under the price cap. This change, which will add around £10 to a typical annual bill, was needed to ensure companies are able to raise more capital and remain profitable and help to reduce failures which have added £83 a year to average bills, Ofgem said.

Catherine visits Foundling Museum



Britain’s Catherine, Princess of Wales, chats with Kinship Carers and kids during her visit to the Foundling Museum, in London, Britain, yesterday. The Foundling Museum in Brunswick Square, London tells the story of the Foundling Hospital, Britain’s first home for children at risk of abandonment.

UK premier vows to cut record high immigration

AFP
London

Net migration in the UK hit a record 606,000 in 2022, official figures showed yesterday, heaping pressure on the government, which has pledged to cut dependency on foreign labour.

Responding to the figures, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak described legal immigration levels as “too high”.

“It’s as simple as that and I want to bring them down,” he told ITV in an interview.

Measures announced earlier this week to tighten the number of international students allowed to bring their families with them would have a significant impact, he added.

Immigration has long been a key political issue in the UK and was one of the main battlegrounds of the Brexit referendum in 2016, which saw the country leave the European Union.

In 2021, net migration – the difference between the number of people leaving the UK and those arriving – was 488,000.

Jay Lindop, director of the

centre for international migration at the Office for National Statistics (ONS), said world events such as the end of the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine played a part in the increase.

China’s squeeze on civil rights in Hong Kong, which led to the UK relaxing entry rules for holders of British overseas passports, also had an impact.

“A series of unprecedented world events throughout 2022 and the lifting of restrictions following the coronavirus pandemic led to record levels of international immigration to the

UK,” said Lindop.

Brexit brought an end to the policy of free movement of people from EU member states, which many businesses have since blamed for a shortage of workers.

Among those hardest hit have been agriculture, and the health and social care sector, prompting the government to relax immigration rules to try to plug the gap.

The main opposition Labour party’s home affairs spokeswoman, Yvette Cooper, called the latest figures “extraordinary” and said it showed the

government had “no plan and no grip” on the issue.

“Ministers have completely failed to tackle skills shortages or help people back into work after Covid,” she added.

Sunak is under pressure from within his own Conservative ranks to restrict immigration, with right-wingers arguing that the current numbers are unsustainable.

Adding to his woes is a growing backlog in the Home Office’s processing of asylum claims, particularly of migrants crossing the Channel from northern Europe in small boats.

Debt-recast talks to end by November: Lanka president

Reuters
Tokyo

Debt-laden Sri Lanka should be able to conclude a new round of restructuring talks by September or November at the latest, its president said yesterday, adding that the negotiations had made “remarkable” progress.

The island nation defaulted on its foreign debt for the first time in its history in April last year, as the worst financial crisis since its independence from Britain in 1948 crushed its economy.

Sri Lanka secured a \$2.9bn bailout from the International Monetary Fund in March and has previously said it aims to complete talks on restructuring debt owed to bilateral creditors and overseas bondholders by September.

It was not clear whether President Ranil Wickremesinghe’s comment signalled a possible delay in the process. He was speak-

ing as he began a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the latter’s office in Tokyo. The two leaders affirmed the importance of transparent and fair debt restructuring, according to a summary of their discussions issued by Japan.

“We have made remarkable headway as far as the debt restructuring talks are concerned,” Wickremesinghe said.

“(We) should be able to conclude by September, or November the latest,” which he said would mark an end to Sri Lanka’s economic crisis.

A Japanese finance ministry official said they did not believe the president was signalling a delay.

Kishida, speaking after his first meeting with the Sri Lankan leader since last September, told a forum: “Sri Lanka is a hub of the Indian Ocean. Japan has led the debate among its creditor countries, and we will continue to contribute and strive to help Sri Lanka get back on a track for growth.”

Last month, France, India and Japan unveiled a common platform for talks among bilateral creditors to co-ordinate restructuring of the debt.

“We have now started a creditors’ meeting and started a successful conclusion before the end of 2023,” Wickremesinghe said. “Sri Lanka is dedicated to ensure equal treatment for all creditors. We want this exercise to succeed because our experience will enable more middle-income countries to utilise the IMF in ensuring multi-lateral co-ordination for debt relief.” Analysts remain sceptical about whether the September deadline can be met.

“I don’t think creditors’ meetings will be concluded by this year-end,” said Toru Nishihamma, emerging market analyst at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. “China, as the largest creditor, holds the key to creditors’ meetings. It must first make it clear on what conditions it lent to Sri Lanka though.”

S Korea rocket launch



South Korea’s homegrown space rocket Nuri blasts off from the Naro Space Centre in the southern coastal village of Goheung. South Korea yesterday said it had successfully launched its homegrown Nuri rocket and placed working satellites into orbit, hailing a key step forward for the country’s burgeoning space programme.

One dead in fresh Manipur violence

AFP
Guwahati, India

One person was shot dead and houses were set on fire as fresh ethnic violence erupted in India’s restive northeastern state of Manipur, officials said yesterday.

Manipur has been on the boil after an explosion of inter-ethnic violence this month killed at least 70 people and left tens of thousands displaced.

Some 2,000 houses were also burned down across the state that borders Myanmar.

The violence was sparked by anger among the Kuki tribal group at the prospect of the majority Meitei community being given guaranteed quotas of government jobs and other perks in a form of affirmative action.

This also stoked long-held fears among the Kuki that the Meitei might also be allowed to acquire land in areas currently reserved for them and other tribal groups.

The military has deployed

thousands of troops to the state, where curfews have been imposed and the Internet cut for several weeks.

An indefinite curfew was re-imposed on Wednesday in the flashpoint Bishnupur district after suspected militants fired at a group of people, fatally wounding one person.

“Two persons, who had been living in a relief camp, were injured during the firing by the militants and one of them later died in a hospital,” a local police officer, who did not want to be identified, said. Before the shooting, suspected militants torched some abandoned houses close to a relief camp set up for those displaced during the violence, the officer said. The house of local minister Govindas Konthoujam was also attacked and ransacked when the family was away.

India’s northeast has seen decades of unrest among ethnic and separatist groups seeking more autonomy or even secession from India, with at least 50,000 people killed in Manipur since the 1950s.

Africa must not become ‘geostrategic battleground’ for global powers: AU

AFP
Addis Ababa

Africa must not become a “geostrategic battleground” for global powers, as it grapples with several threats to its own peace and security, African Union (AU) leaders warned yesterday.

The continent of 1.3bn people has found itself at the centre of a tussle for influence among the major powers, which has redoubled since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine 15 months ago.

And just as the AU marked the anniversary of the creation of its forerunner, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), on this day in 1963, Ukraine itself announced it wanted to boost ties with Africa.

“In this international context of confrontation of divergent political interests, the will of

each side threatens to transform Africa into a geostrategic battleground, thereby creating a new Cold War,” AU Commission chair Moussa Faki Mahamat said.

“In this zero-sum game, where the gains of others would translate into losses for Africa, we must resist all forms of instrumentalisation of our member states,” he added in an address at AU headquarters in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

Moscow is seeking deeper political, economic and military ties in Africa as well as Asia as Russia becomes increasingly isolated on the international stage over the conflict in Ukraine.

Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who is currently on a tour of Africa, on Wednesday urged certain African nations to end their “neutrality” over the war.

In February, 22 AU member states abstained or did not vote on a UN General Assembly res-

olution that called for Russia withdraw from Ukraine.

Two of them – Eritrea and Mali – voted against the resolution.

And in a statement to mark the pan-African body’s anniversary, Kuleba also announced a Ukrainian diplomatic push on the continent.

“We want to develop a new quality of partnership based on three mutual principles: mutual respect, mutual interests, and mutual benefits,” he said, announcing plans to establish new embassies in Africa and hold a Ukraine-Africa summit.

Moscow itself has scheduled a Russia-Africa summit in July, following a trip to several African countries at the start of the year by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

China and the United States too have also dispatched their foreign ministers to the continent in rival diplomatic offensives this year.

Beijing has funded major infrastructure development in Africa but denies Western charges it is practising “debt-trap diplomacy”, while Russia is a key arms exporter and is making forays through mining projects, analysts say.

Faki meanwhile also hailed the successes of the 54-nation AU which succeeded the OAU in 2002: “Independence and victory against apartheid, that of significant economic and scientific progress, sports, arts, the growing international role of Africa and so on.”

However, the official also acknowledged “negative factors such as democratic decline through unconstitutional changes of government, with their litany of oppression and gagging of freedoms, insecurity, the spread of terrorism, violent extremism, the uncontrolled circulation of arms, the harmful effects of climate change”.

Despite the difficulties, Faki said, Africa re-

mains “characterised by its greater capacity for resilience”, pointing for example to its response to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The current head of the African Union, Comoros President Azali Assoumani also denounced “the unconstitutional changes of power” which have multiplied in Africa in recent years.

“Inter and intra-African conflicts but also terrorism persist and consequently the peace, security, democracy and development of our continent are threatened in several of our countries,” he said.

Assoumani spoke of the conflict between rival generals in Sudan which erupted in mid-April and has persisted despite several truce agreements.

“We must convince our brothers in Sudan to favour dialogue so that the fratricidal war raging in this country ends,” he said.

Iran tests ballistic missile

Reuters
Dubai

Iran successfully test-launched a ballistic missile with a potential 2,000km range yesterday, state media said, two days after the chief of Israel’s armed forces raised the prospect of “action” against Tehran over its nuclear programme.

Iran, which has one of the biggest missile programmes in the Middle East, says its weapons are capable of reaching the bases of arch-foes Israel and the United States in the region.

Despite US and European opposition, the Islamic Republic has said it will further develop its “defensive” missile programme.

“Our message to Iran’s enemies is that we will defend the country and its achievements. Our message to our friends is that we want to help regional stability,” Iranian Defence Minister Mohammadreza Ashtiani said.

State TV broadcast a few seconds of footage of what it said was the launch of an upgraded version of Iran’s Khoramshahr 4 ballistic missile with a range of 2,000km and able to carry a 1,500kg warhead.

The state news agency IRNA said the liquid-fuel missile had been named the “Kheibar”, a reference to a Jewish castle overrun by Muslim warriors in the early days of Islam.

“The domestically build Kheibar missile’s outstanding features include quick preparation and launch time, which makes it a tactical weapon in addition to a strategic one,” it said.

Israel, which the Islamic Republic does not recognise, sees Iran as an existential threat.

Iran says its ballistic missiles are an important deterrent and retaliatory force against the United States, Israel and other potential regional adversaries.

Russia starts moving nukes to Belarus

AFP/Reuters
Moscow

Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko said yesterday that Russia had begun moving nuclear weapons to its western neighbour and ally, after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced plans to transfer them in March.

Putin has repeatedly warned that Russia, which has more nuclear weapons than any other country, will use all means to defend itself, and he has cast the Ukraine war as a battle for the survival of Russia against an aggressive West.

The United States and its allies say they want Ukraine to defeat Russian forces on the battlefield but deny that they want to destroy Russia – and deny that the Ukraine war is in any way linked to post-Soviet enlargement of Nato.

There were no new comments from Russia on delivery of the nuclear weapons to Belarus.

“The transfer of nuclear munitions has begun,” Lukashenko told reporters during a visit to Moscow.

Lukashenko has allowed his territory – which borders Ukraine as well as EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) members Poland and Lithuania – to serve as a launching pad for Russia’s Ukraine offensive.

The US said it will “monitor” the movements, calling them “irresponsible and provocative”.

“We have not seen any reason to adjust our own nuclear posture ... nor any indication that Russia is prepared to use nuclear weapons from Belarus,” White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

In March, Putin announced that he would station tactical – or short-range – nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, drawing condemnation from the West.

Lukashenko said Putin had informed him on Wednesday that he had signed a decree on the transfer.

Belarusian opposition leader Svet-

lana Tikhonovskaya said yesterday that the move would “not only endanger the lives of Belarusians but also create a new threat against Ukraine and all of Europe”.

“It will make Belarusians hostages to Russian imperial ambitions,” she added.

Tactical nuclear arms are battlefield weapons that, while devastating, have a smaller yield compared to long-range strategic weapons.

Putin’s announcement had spurred fears of nuclear conflict, but experts and governments said that it is unlikely it would change the course of the conflict.

Belarusian troops began training on nuclear-capable Russian missile systems in April.

Tactical nuclear weapons are nuclear weapons used for specific tactical gains on the battlefield, and so are usually smaller in yield than the strategic nuclear weapons designed to destroy the biggest cities of the United States or Russia.

Russia has a huge numerical superiority over the United States and the Nato military alliance when it comes to tactical nuclear weapons: the United States believes that Russia has around 2,000 of such working tactical warheads.

In comparison, the United States has around 200 such tactical nuclear weapons, half of which are located at bases in Europe.

Sierra Leone’s symbolic ‘Cotton Tree’ destroyed in storm

AFP
Freetown

A centuries-old, towering tree that served as a historic symbol in Sierra Leone has been felled during a wind and rain storm in the capital Freetown, the government said yesterday.

The 70m (230’) *Ceiba pentandra* – lovingly known by Sierra Leoneans as “Cotton Tree” – lost all of its branches late on Wednesday, with only the base of its enormous trunk still standing, a government statement said, citing “torrential rains and high winds”.

It estimated the tree to be around 400 years old.

“All Sierra Leoneans will pause for thought at the loss of such a prestigious national symbol as Cotton Tree,” President Julius Maada Bio said. “For centuries it has been a proud emblem of our nation, a symbol of a nation that has grown to provide shelter for many.”

According to legend, slaves who won their freedom fighting on the British side of the American War of Independence prayed under the tree when



An iconic giant tropical tree – the Cotton Tree – is seen after it was felled following a heavy rainstorm in Freetown.

they arrived in West Africa.

It adorned bank notes and stamps, was visited by Queen Elizabeth II in 1961, and had remained a landmark ever since.

Freetown residents continued to pray beneath the tree, which in recent decades towered over a busy roundabout

near the national museum, the central post office and the country’s highest court.

Yesterday about a hundred residents gathered around the site in mourning.

“I’m shocked and heartbroken to see our beloved Freetown Cotton Tree destroyed this morning on my way to work,” Gibrilla Sesay, a 34-year-old finance worker, told AFP.

There were no reports of injuries, the government said.

The police and military were deployed around the area yesterday, an AFP reporter said, and the government has announced a clean-up effort.

Sierra Leone has suffered several climate-related disasters in recent years.

In 2017, more than 1,100 people were killed in a mudslide in the capital when part of a mountain collapsed onto informal settlements.

Another eight people were killed in a landslide last August.

At least 15 people died in flooding earlier in May, according to the National Disaster Management Agency.

Sierra Leone’s rainy season typically lasts from May to October.

Fresh fighting between factions threatens Sudan’s week-long ceasefire

Reuters
Dubai

Sporadic clashes between Sudan’s army and a paramilitary force continued yesterday, puncturing the relative calm in the capital Khartoum and raising the risk of a week-long truce deal crumbling as concerns grew over a humanitarian crisis.

The ceasefire, monitored by Sa-

udi Arabia and the United States, was reached after five weeks of warfare in Khartoum and outbursts of fighting in other parts of Sudan, including the long-volatile western region of Darfur.

The fighting – centred on a power struggle between Sudan’s army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – has worsened a humanitarian crisis, forced more than 1.3mn people to flee and threatened to destabilise a fragile region.

The army relies on air power while the RSF has spread out and taken cover in Khartoum’s streets.

It is unclear whether either side has gained an edge in recent weeks.

Clashes between the rival factions broke out again yesterday in Khartoum and neighbouring Omdurman, eyewitnesses said, as well as the strategic city of El Obeid to the southwest.

The health ministry said some 730 people had been killed and 5,454 in-

jured, though the real number is likely much higher.

Militia were also besieging Zalingei, capital of Central Darfur State, UN Darfur co-ordinator Toby Harward said.

Telecommunications have been cut off and gangs roaming the city on motorcycles have attacked hospitals, government and aid offices, banks and homes, he added.

The same has happened in the West Darfur State capital El Geneina, where

residents have been out of touch for days after as many as 510 people were killed.

The ceasefire was agreed on Saturday following talks in Jeddah.

Previous truces have failed to stop the fighting.

In statements late on Wednesday, the army and RSF accused each other of violating the agreement.

Reuters could not confirm the battlefield accounts.

16 to face Pakistan military trial for violence after ex-PM Khan’s arrest

A court in the eastern city of Lahore has handed 16 civilians over to the military for trial over their suspected involvement in violent protests following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan this month.

The military said after the violence that the suspects would be tried in military courts, used primarily to try enemies of the state.

Khan was arrested on May 9. Two days later, the Supreme Court ruled that the arrest was unlawful.

The protests following Khan’s arrest by the anti-graft agency included people storming military installations.

Thousands of people, mostly supporters of former cricket hero Khan, have been rounded up since.

One of the 16 suspects is a member of Khan’s political party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and had been chosen by Khan to run in the next provincial elections, a senior member of Khan’s legal team, Azhar Siddique, told Reuters.

“The 16 will be investigated by the military and tried in military courts,” he said.

Military courts operate under a separate system from the civilian legal system. Trials are closed to outsiders, and no media is allowed. - **Reuters**

One of last four Rwanda genocide fugitives arrested

Reuters/AFP
Amsterdam/Cape Town/The Hague

A Rwandan man accused of ordering the killing of some 2,000 Tutsis who were seeking refuge in a church during the 1994 genocide has been arrested in South Africa, a UN war crimes tribunal and South African police said yesterday.

Former police officer Fulgence Kayishema had been on the run since 2001, when the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) indicted him for genocide over his role in the destruction of the Nyange Catholic Church in Kibuye Prefecture.

“Yesterday afternoon, Fulgence Kayishema – one of the world’s most wanted genocide fugitives – was arrested in Paarl, South Africa in a joint operation,” the International

Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) said in a statement.

“Kayishema directly participated in the planning and execution of this massacre, including by procuring and distributing petrol to burn down the church with the refugees inside,” the statement said. “When this failed, Kayishema and others used a bulldozer to collapse the church, burying and killing the refugees inside.”

“Kayishema and others then supervised the transfer of corpses from the church grounds into mass graves,” it added.

“His arrest ensures that he will finally face justice for his alleged crimes,” said Serge Brammertz, prosecutor at the IRMCT, which has replaced the ICTR since it wound up in 2008.

In her first comment on Kayishema’s arrest, Rwandan government spokesperson

Yolande Makolo tweeted: “Finally”

An estimated 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were killed during Rwanda’s genocide, orchestrated by an extremist Hutu regime and meticulously executed by local officials and ordinary citizens in the rigidly hierarchical society.

“Seeing these people arrested brings healing to the survivors,” said Naphtal Ahishakiye, executive secretary of Ibuka, an umbrella group representing survivors.

Kayishema has been on the US State Department’s wanted list under the Rewards for Justice Programme, with a \$5mn reward offered for his arrest.

Brammertz said the investigation that led to his arrest spanned multiple countries in Africa and beyond, and was made possible through the support of South African authorities.

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GULF TIMES

Keeping small islands afloat financially

It is too early to tell whether all the talk about reforming development finance at this year's International Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings will translate into meaningful policy action for the Global South. But multilateral financial institutions increasingly recognise the need to evolve to remain relevant in light of new global challenges, and world leaders are paying attention to innovative approaches, such as Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley's Bridgetown Initiative to address the immediate financial needs of debt-distressed countries or Secretary-General António Guterres's stimulus to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Better late than never. The current international financial architecture is outdated and ill-equipped to handle the massive disruptions caused by climate change, a global economic downturn, the Covid-19 pandemic, and changes in income distribution fuelled by technological developments and globalised competition. The unique geographic and demographic characteristics of small island developing states (SIDS) like ours make it even harder to cope with these disruptions.

The remoteness of SIDS, coupled with limited usable land and small populations, all but guarantee significant barriers to integration in a fast-paced global economy. Our countries are overdependent on imports, especially of food and energy, and often rely heavily on a single economic sector (usually tourism), making us prone to supply-chain disruptions and other external shocks.

The United Nations has long recognised our special circumstances, but the international community has done little to help us manage them. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the global financial system, where we are often left to fend for ourselves – small fish at the mercy of predators that profit handsomely from the repackaging of our debt.

The current international financial architecture is outdated and ill-equipped to handle the massive disruptions

The problem is that concessional financing is primarily tied to traditional measures of development, namely a country's gross national income (GNI). But the relatively high income of SIDS – more than half qualify as upper middle-income countries – prevents many from accessing the cheap finance offered to the lowest-income countries. Using income as the sole determinant for financial assistance means more debt for SIDS, which disproportionately suffer the effects of global warming and other external shocks. There is no way to escape this Catch-22 without a credible framework that takes these vulnerabilities into account.

The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, currently under consideration at the UN General Assembly could be a lifesaver. The MVI, a universal ranking based on developing countries' susceptibility to external shocks, provides the basis for international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank to allocate the concessional financing needed to prepare and recover from unforeseen crises. While the Bridgetown Initiative addresses the immediacy of the climate-change threat, SIDS measure highly across all three dimensions of vulnerability: economic and social, as well as environmental.

For example, the gas crisis in Europe and high inflation in the United States, both fuelled by the war in Ukraine, have dominated headlines over the past year. Yet the war's economic ramifications have been especially painful for remote island states like the Seychelles, where the energy shortage is compounded by higher transport costs. High inflation and soaring airfares have deterred European visitors, undermining the post-Covid recovery of the country's tourism industry, a crucial source of budget revenue.

As for the social dimension, the pandemic has had a profound effect on Samoa and other Pacific island states. Some may argue that they were spared the worst health outcomes of Covid-19, owing to their isolation. But one must also consider their capacity constraints, including their limited ability to provide health services. Without the workers and facilities needed to weather the waves of infection experienced by larger countries, these states were forced to implement stricter lockdown measures for far longer than the rest of the world. The social, psychological, and economic effects of these policies will be felt for a generation or more.

Finally, while higher temperatures and rising sea levels pose a grave threat to SIDS, they are not the only environmental concerns. The population of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is at the mercy of an active volcano – a ticking time bomb that last went off in 2021. Moreover, the island chain sits in the Atlantic hurricane belt; these storms will become stronger and more frequent as the climate crisis deepens. When a country's GDP could be wiped out in an instant, how relevant is income as a measure of vulnerability? – Project Syndicate

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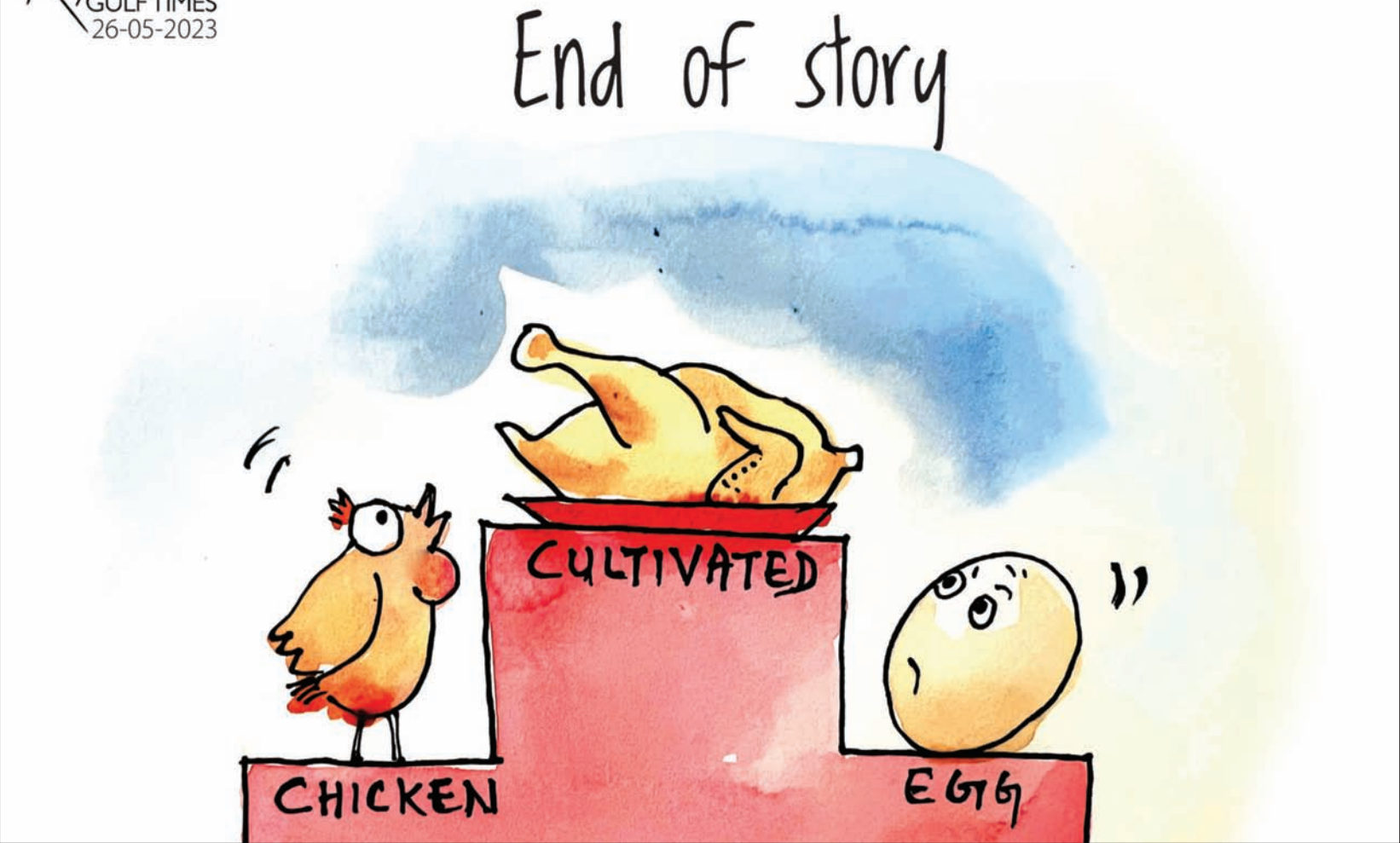
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EU's protection of Ukrainians offers future asylum lessons

By Joanna Gill, Sadiya Ansari and Jade Wilson
Brussels/Berlin/Dublin

Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year sparked the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two, but also a wave of solidarity as thousands opened their homes to Ukrainians and EU states gave them rights and benefits akin to their own citizens.

The European Union swiftly granted temporary protection to millions of fleeing Ukrainians, giving them immediate rights to work and access to education, healthcare, welfare and housing, almost the same as local nationals.

Their treatment is in stark contrast to that received by refugees from other war zones, but could provide lessons in how to deal with the contentious issue.

"Temporary protection has been the sleeping beauty of the European asylum legislation," Sara Consolato, an immigration expert with non-governmental organisation Refugees Welcome Italy, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The decision to activate, for the first time since its adoption, has been ground-breaking," she said.

The EU's never-before-used 2001 Temporary Protection Directive aims to fast-track residency rights by waiving the need to examine applications individually and so avoid major bottlenecks and the possible collapse of asylum systems under the pressure of a mass movement of refugees.

But the measure, while largely hailed as a success, has created a two-tier system, refugee advocates say, in which non-Ukrainian refugees undergo a lengthy asylum application process and endure conditions that often appear designed to deter them from coming to the EU.

Asylum is provided to those not just fleeing war, but also to those experiencing persecution, but that is harder to prove and often leads to lengthy scrutiny.

While asylum regimes differ greatly across the EU, what they have in common is curtailing the rights of applicants for months and sometimes years while their claims are assessed.

The EU had considered triggering the directive

before. Italy and Malta called for it in 2011 when almost 2mn people were displaced as a result of the Arab Spring uprisings.

In 2021, EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell suggested temporary protection be applied to Afghans fleeing the Taliban takeover of their country.

But some EU countries argued activating temporary protection in these cases might attract more migrants to Europe. It was also hard for EU leaders to agree to trigger the directive when the influx affected some countries and not the bloc as a whole.

When it comes to EU asylum and migration policy, geography weighs heavily on debates. Frontline states such as Italy, Greece and Malta, which see the majority of arrivals, have a different perspective from destination countries, where most asylum seekers want to live, like Austria, Germany or France.

In the case of Ukraine, geography also played a part and its proximity to Europe led to unusual unity within the bloc.

Just six days after the first Russian tanks rolled across the Ukrainian border, the EU triggered the Temporary Protection Directive and it came into force on March 4, 2022.

"It was a bit of a surprise," said EU lawmaker Birgit Sippel, who works on asylum policy. "This time the war started in our direct neighbourhood, and we saw the need to support the country that was being attacked."

Ukraine shares a border with four EU countries – Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania. As well as a shared history and culture, Ukraine's neighbours feared that if Kyiv fell, they would have a new neighbour – Russia.

The shared border meant there was no safe country en route for refugees to shelter, unlike, for example, for Syrians fleeing the civil war and crossing into Türkiye.

However, the EU's first use of temporary protection may also be the last. In 2020, well before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the bloc proposed repealing the directive, but it has yet to agree on an alternative.

The benefits of swift processing, access to protection and routes to integration via education and employment are elements to consider when reforming asylum rules, experts said.

The ability to apply for jobs right away means many thousands of Ukrainians are in work within the EU, easing the financial cost to member states.

"The humanitarian spirit and solidarity that EU states have shown over the past year or so to refugees fleeing Ukraine should set the example for all refugee crises globally," said Maeve Patterson, a spokesperson for the United Nations refugee agency.

"The EU can better protect refugees wherever they may come from by ensuring a comprehensive, well-managed and predictable approach to asylum and migration in the EU," she said.

There are also lessons to be learnt from allowing Ukrainian refugees freedom of movement within the bloc. This means they are able to easily travel to join family, friends or other support networks, rather than being stuck in one place.

The bloc's Dublin regulation places a greater burden on frontier states by insisting other refugees have to apply for asylum in the first EU country they enter.

They can apply to join immediate family members elsewhere in the EU, but that takes more time and campaigners have accused some governments of blocking such reunifications.

The temporary protection Ukrainians received may also be down to the perception that the protection they needed would be just that – temporary – and the vast majority would return once the war in their country was over.

But as the conflict drags on, more Ukrainians are putting down roots, finding jobs and sending their children to school.

While many hope to return, some already plan to settle. Official surveys of Ukrainian refugees in Germany and Denmark, showed around one-third want to return to Ukraine, one-third plan to stay, and the remaining third is uncertain.

Justyna Frelak of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development think-tank wants to push EU states to develop an "exit strategy" for temporary protection which ends in 2025.

"We have just two years to go, which is absolutely not enough – it's high time to start preparing for possible scenarios," she said. – Thomson Reuters Foundation



Asylum seekers at a demonstration outside Belgium's asylum reception centre 'the little castle' Brussels in February. (Thomson Reuters Foundation)

Consumption of unlawful corrupts hearts

There is clearly a strong relationship between the soundness or corruption of a person's heart and his food and earnings. A person's heart becomes corrupt when he earns what is prohibited and dares to eat of it. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said in this regard: “Indeed, what is lawful is evident, and what is unlawful is evident, and between the two are matters which are doubtful and unknown to many people.” Then he, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, followed this with: “Beware! In the body there is [a piece of] flesh which, if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Behold, this [piece of flesh] is the heart.” [Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim]

The heart is like a king and the limbs are its subjects. They are good when the king is good and corrupt when the king is corrupt.

Al-Munawi, may Allah have mercy upon him, stated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, spoke about the heart after illustrating what was lawful and unlawful to indicate that consuming what is lawful lightens and reforms the heart, while doubtful things harden it.

A warning against eating the unlawful

The Islamic *Shari‘ah* (religious law) forbids its followers from consuming what is unlawful, whether it is other people's money or rights, or foods that Allah, the Almighty has declared prohibited. Allah, the Almighty Says (what means): {And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that [they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful]} [Qur'an 2:188]

Commenting on this verse, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, said: “This

is regarding a person who is indebted with something, but there is no evidence to prove that he is. When the creditor claims his right, this person refrains from repaying it, and sues the claimer although he knows that it is not his right and that he is sinful - and thus he consumes what is unlawful.”

Qatadah, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “O son of Adam, know that the judgment of a judge does not permit you what is unlawful. A judge passes a verdict according to his observation and the testimonies of witnesses, and he is a human and thus liable to make mistakes. Know that anyone who has been favoured with an invalid verdict will never have his case finished. Allah, the Almighty, will judge between him and the other party on the Day of Resurrection, giving the latter a verdict far better than the former had in this worldly life.”

Unjustly devouring the orphans' property

There are various forms of consuming what is unlawful, the worst evil of which is devouring orphans' property unjustly. This is strictly prohibited in the Qur'an; Allah, the Almighty Says (what means): {And test the orphans [in their abilities] until they reach marriageable age. Then if you perceive in them sound judgment, release their property to them. And do not consume it excessively and quickly, [anticipating] that they will grow up. And whoever, [when acting as guardian], is self-sufficient should refrain [from taking a fee]; and whoever is poor - let him take according to what is acceptable. Then when you release their property to them, bring witnesses upon them. And sufficient is Allah as Accountant.} [Qur'an 4:6]

In his commentary on this verse, Shaykh As-Sa'di, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “The verse prohibits consuming the property of orphans while they are young, when they can neither take it from one nor prevent him from consuming it.



One can devour it while they are still young, before they are grown and can take it or prevent him from consuming it. Many guardians who do not fear Allah and have no mercy upon or love for the children in their custody do this. They find the opportunity, which they seize, and thereby hasten to commit what Allah, the Almighty has prohibited. Therefore, Allah, the Almighty forbids this act specifically.” Moreover, this verse is followed by

severe warning to those who devour the property of orphans unjustly. Allah, the Almighty Says (what means): {Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming into their bellies fire. And they will be burned in a Blaze} [Qur'an 4:10]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, was the most concerned with the well-being of his *Ummah* (nation) and with warding off evil from it. Therefore, he warned Muslims against consuming the unlawful, including the property of orphans. He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Avoid the seven destructive sins.” One of which is: “Devouring the property of orphans.” [Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim]

Consuming Riba [interest/usury]

Another form of prohibition which many people consider trivial and dare to indulge in is the consumption of *Riba*. Allah, the Almighty Says (what means): {But Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden *Riba*} [Qur'an 2:275]

In forbidding the consumption of *Riba* and warning against its consequences, Allah, the Almighty Says (what means): {O you who have believed, fear Allah and give up what remains [due to you] of *Riba*, if you should be believers. And if you do not, then be informed of a war [against you] from Allah and His Messenger. But if you repent, you may have your capital - [thus] you do no wrong, nor are you wronged.} [Qur'an 2:278-279]

Who could bear a war against Allah the Almighty?

Additionally, Allah, the Almighty explains in the Qur'an that *Riba* is ultimately going to be destroyed. Allah, the Almighty Says (what means): {Allah destroys *Riba* and gives increase for charity} [Qur'an 2:276]

Moreover, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, counted the consumption of *Riba* as one of the seven deadly sins.

There are many other forms of consuming what is unlawful, including: theft, bribery, gambling, usurpation, fraud and deception, taking booty before it is distributed, and excessive overcharging or undercharging when selling or buying. We are not going to discuss in detail each of these, however our intention is to warn generally against consuming what is unlawful.

Supplications and the consumption of the unlawful

A person's means of living, whether lawful or unlawful, has a direct impact on whether his supplications are answered. If a person investigates his sources of income for the sake of eating what is lawful, his supplication will be closer to being accepted and more likely to be answered. If the person dares to eat what is unlawful, he thereby causes his supplication not to be answered by Allah, the Almighty.

In this regard the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Indeed, Allah is Good and He therefore accepts only what is good. Allah commanded the believers as He commanded the messengers by Saying (what means):

- “O messengers, eat from the good foods and work righteousness. Indeed, I, of what you do, am Knowing.” [Qur'an 23:51]

- “O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship.” [Qur'an 2:172]

He then made mention of: “a person who travels widely, his hair dishevelled and covered with dust. He lifts his hand towards the sky [and thus makes supplication saying]: “O Lord! O Lord!” But his diet is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his clothes are [of] unlawful [means] and his nourishment is unlawful. How could his supplication, then, be accepted?” [Imam Muslim]

Imam Ibn Katheer, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “Eating from

what is lawful is a cause for supplication and other acts of worship to be accepted, and eating from what is unlawful prevents the acceptance of supplication and other acts of worship from being accepted.”

Ibn Rajab, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “Eating, drinking, or wearing what is unlawful prevents supplication and other acts of worship from being accepted.”

Consuming what is unlawful does indeed prevent supplication and other acts of worship from being accepted. Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, said: “Allah, the Almighty does not accept the prayers of a person whose belly contains something unlawful.”

Ibn Rajab said: “If [one's] nourishment is unlawful, how can [his] deeds be acceptable?”

Wahb Ibn Al-Ward, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “Even if you worship Allah endlessly, nothing will help you until you scrutinise whether what is in your belly is lawful or not.”

In sum, a Muslim should be sure that this worldly life is not his end, and that he will be reckoned in the Hereafter for any unlawful thing he earns. In the Hereafter, accounts will not consist of money; rather they will consist of good and evil deeds.

Therefore, everyone should fear Allah, and seek lawful sources for your living expenses and savings, and make sure that your consumption is not unlawful as mentioned in the Qur'an; {And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly...} [Qur'an 2:188]

May Allah, the Almighty guide all of us to do so, and keep all Muslims and us away from everything evil and unlawful.

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Seeking lawful earnings

People, fear Allah as regards to yourselves and to your families. Fear him concerning your deeds and to your wealth. Fear him with regards to what you eat and to what you save.

Allah says the meaning of which translates as: “O Mankind eat from whatever is on earth that is lawful and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan indeed he is to you a clear enemy” (*Al-Baqarah*: 168).

Earning provisions and seeking sustenance, is something that is commanded to be done by Islamic law – *Shari‘ah*. It is something that is dictated by nature.

Allah, *subhanahu wa ta‘ala*, has made the day for seeking livelihood and commanded people to walk among the slopes of the earth and eat of His provisions. He says which translates as: “He has known that there will be among you those who are ill, and others travelling through the land seeking the bounties of Allah and other fighting for the cause of Allah. So recite what is easy from it, meaning the Qur'an” (*Al-Muzzammil*: 20). The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said in the book of Imam al-Bukhari: “Never has anyone eaten a better food than what he has procured through his manual work”.

Dawood, *‘alaihi sallam*, the messenger of Allah, ate only from the earnings from his manual work. Some of the *Salaf* said: “Some of the sins are not expiated but through seeking lawful provisions”.

From the narrations reported about Isa, *‘alaihi sallam*, that he saw a man and said: “What do you do?” He said: “I am worshipping.” He said: “Who is providing for you?” He said: “My brother.” He said: “Where is your brother?” He said: “In the field.” He said: “Your brother is more of a worshipper to Allah than you”.

In Islam, worship is not only by standing on you feet – meaning standing the for prayer, while someone else goes to seek your provisions. Rather you go seek the lawful earning and also worship.

Being independent of people by earning lawful provisions is a great honour and strength, so much so that the Khalifa Umar Ibnul Khatab, *radhiallahu ‘anh*, said: “I would not prefer to die in a position better than a position where I am buying for my family or trading”.

From the words of wisdom from Luqman, he said to his son: “O Son avoid poverty by lawful earnings. For no-one becomes poor but will adopt three characteristics

1. Softness in his religion.
 2. Weakness in his mind.
 3. His manhood and sense of honour will be lost.”
- Lawful earnings and sound wealth safeguard the religion, protect one's honour, beautify one's face, and result in a strong position.

It is obvious from all this that seeking lawful provisions is desirable. For Allah is Tayyib, which implies goodness and kindness. He does not accept but what is good and lawful. Allah commanded the believers as He commanded the messengers, when He says which translates as: “O Messengers eat from the good foods and work righteousness. Indeed I am knowing of what you do” (*Al-Mu‘minun*: 51). Allah also says which translates as: “O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah if it is indeed him that you worship” (*Al-Baqarah*: 172).

The greatest fruits of faith is the goodness of the heart, honesty, purity of the hand, and the soundness of the tongue. Good words are for good men and good men are objects of good words.

The most eminent objective of the messenger Muhammad, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, is to

make good lawful and to make evil prohibited, and on the Day of Resurrection the good consequences will be for good people.

Allah, *subhanahu wa ta‘ala*, says which translates as: “The ones whom the angels take in death being good and pure, the angels will say: “Peace be upon you, enter paradise for what you use to do” (*An-Nahl*: 32).

In the book of Imam Tirmidhi, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Whoever eats from good, and acts according to *Sunnah* and people felt safe from his evil, will enter paradise”.

Also in the book of Imam Ahmad, Abdullah Ibnu Amri, *radhiallahu ‘anh*, said that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “If you have four things, then do not be concerned about what you miss out in this life: Preserving the trust, saying the truth, good manners, and chastity and purity in what you eat.”

Seeking lawful provisions and searching for it, is an obligation and a must. No slave's feet will be moved on the Day of Resurrection until he is asked about his wealth. How he earned it? How he spent it? It is incumbent upon every Muslim male and female to look and search for lawful provisions and chaste and pure work, to eat of the lawful and spend on the lawful.

A good example is Abubakr, *radhiallahu ‘anh*, who had a slave who brought him some food, which he ate. After which the slave asked him if he knew from where he had got the food. Abubakr asked: from where did you get it? He replied: “I acted as a soothsayer for a man in the pre-Islamic period, and not being good at it I deceived him. Today he met me and rewarded me for that soothsaying. From this you have eaten. Therefore, Abubakr, *radhiallahu ‘anh*, put his hand in his mouth and vomited all that he ate.

In another narration he said: “If it would not have come out except with my soul, meaning except with my death, I would have still forced it out. O Allah I ask you to excuse me for what my veins have carried from this and what has mixed in my stomach.” (Bukhari).

Umar, *radhiallahu ‘anh*, drank some milk, which he liked. He asked the one who gave him the milk: “Where did you get this?” He said: “I passed by the camels of *Zabaah* while they were drinking water so I took from its milk.” Umar put his hand in his mouth and vomited it up.”

A righteous woman advising her husband: “O husband fear Allah, and the provisions you bring us, for we can persevere through hunger but we cannot stand and persevere through the punishment of hell fire.”

These are the righteous ones. They bring out whatever is unlawful or questionable out of their stomachs, though it was something they had taken unknowingly from food or drink.

However, generations came after them, earning unlawful provisions, filling their stomachs and the stomachs of their families with it.

O Muslims, do you know of the man whom the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, mentioned in a *Hadith* found in Sahih Al-Bukhari: “He travels for long periods, his hair tousled, his feet dusty, raising his hands in supplications to the heavens saying, My Lord, My Lord, but he eats from unlawful earnings, he dresses from unlawful earnings, and he lives by unlawful earnings. His supplications will never be answered.”

This man has symptoms of humility, and poverty and his situation invokes pity, compassion, and the desire to help him in his need. He has lost his way, his journey is long, and he feels like a stranger, he has lost everything. He has lost connection with

his Lord and has deprived himself of the support of his Lord. So his *du‘as* (supplications) are not accepted. He ate from the unlawful, dressed from the unlawful and his lived on unlawful earnings, so his ‘hands’ (meaning his *du‘a* [supplication]), were rejected.

Some of the *Salaf* said: “If you stand up in worship like a pole, meaning for a long time without giving up. It will not benefit you, until you watch for what goes in your stomach.”

What is amazing, O brothers, is the acts of some people who avoid lawful provisions in fear of getting sick, but they do not have enough fear of Allah to avoid unlawful earning.

Eating from unlawful means blinds the insight, weakens the religion, hardens the heart, darkens the mind, prevents the body from worship, entraps one in this life and prevents one's *du‘a* (supplication) from being accepted. Allah does not accept, except from the righteous.

Unlawful earnings and provisions have bad effects on the individual and the community. It removes blessings and causes the spread of diseases, disasters, financial crisis, unemployment, oppression, and disputes.

O Muslims, Woe to the ones who eat from unlawful provisions, raise their children and family by means of unlawful earnings. Their example is like the example of one who is drinking out of the seawater. The more they drink the thirstier they become. They drink as the drinking of a thirsty camel. They are not content with little provisions, nor do a lot of provisions satisfy them.

They enjoy unlawful provisions and they use twisted means – usury, gambling, stealing forcefully taking, and they give insufficient measures and weights. They conceal deficiency in items. They use magic, fortune-telling, they usurp the property of orphans and minors, they lie when they swear, they deceive, they plan, they forge, they betray, – all twisted – dark ways.

In the *Hadith* found in the books of Imam Al-Bukhari and An-Nasa'i, he, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “A time will come on people, when a man will not worry where his earning come from, lawful or unlawful,” and in another narration he added: “Such is one whose *du‘as* (supplications) and are not accepted”.

O workers and officers, businessmen, consultants, brokers, Muslim men and Muslim women, it is a duty upon you to seek what is lawful and stay away from the doubtful. Preserve the rights of people. Finish your jobs completely. Fulfil your pledges and your contracts. Refrain from cheating, and lying and delaying and fear Allah.

Lawful provisions are satisfying, bring ease, enlighten the heart, energise the limbs and the body, rectify and reform the situation of the person, make the body healthy, and Allah accepts the *du‘as* (supplications) of such a person.

Muslim brothers, the best way to refrain from unlawful and illegal things is to stay away from doubtful things, and to persevere through devout, pious ways and means, when hesitant.

In the *Hadith* found in the books of Al-Imam Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, Baiyhaqi and others, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The servant will not be among the pious until he gives up things that are objectionable for things that are not objectionable and harmful”.

In Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “So he who guards against doubtful things, keeps his religion and his honour blameless, but he who falls into doubtful things, falls into that which is unlawful.” Narrated by An-Nu‘aman Ibnu Bashir.

And cause not corruption upon the earth

Allah, the Almighty has created this earth by His Mercy and Favour which He bestowed upon His creatures in a perfect manner for their utilisation. He sent His Messengers and revealed His books that contain clear evidences and guidance to mankind. He guarantees for them the means that will lead to their prosperity in this life and the next by His truthful and un-failing promise. It is by following these guidelines that humanity will become perfectly reformed. In reality there is no other way of reformation except for the complete and comprehensive one that is brought by this religion in all areas belief and law.

Little wonder then that the corruption caused upon the earth after it has been reformed is regarded by Allah as being the worst of all crimes for it is tantamount to challenging Allah and His Messenger and waging war on them. It is an attack on the strong pillars upon which the belief and firm constitution of the Muslim nation are built and on which its moral structure stands. The perpetrators of such mischief are guilty not only of their own crimes, but also of laying a bad precedence for others to follow – what an evil practice and ugly path!

There are many ways of spreading corruption upon the earth, the worst of them being the association of partners with Allah in worship by attributing the rights that are exclusively His to others. This is indeed a great injustice; Allah tells us of Luqmaan's admonition to his son with that which translates as: “O my son, do not associate [anything] with Allah. Indeed, association [with Him] is great injustice” (*Luqmaan*: 13).

The greatest crime that people can commit against themselves and the greatest self-harm that they can accomplish is by committing *shirk*, or associating partners with Allah in worship. By doing this, they equate Allah, who is the Creator, the Omnipotent and the All-Provider, with a weak and limited creature. That is why the perpetrator of *shirk* is likened to a person who falls from the top of a high cliff to the ground far below. Allah says that which translates as: “And he who associates with Allah - it is though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.” (Al-Hajj: 31).

What corruption upon the earth is greater than that of one who calls others beside Allah who can neither benefit nor harm anything?

Committing different types of sins are also an act of causing corruption on the earth. The most grievous of these sins are the destructive ones

which Allah and His Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, threaten the perpetrators of with a severe punishment. Some of them are: Practising magic, committing murder, making interest-based transactions, usurping the property of orphans, fleeing from a battle with disbelievers, falsely accusing innocent believing women with fornication, mistreating one's parents, bearing false witness, adultery and fornication, drinking alcohol and taking narcotics, stealing, severing bonds of kinship, etc.

These sins destroy man and turn him into an obedient servant of Satan, who will then lead him to all evils and blind him from seeing the truth and receiving guidance. Satan will also make his evil deeds fair seeming to him so much so that he will actually view the evil and corruption that he does as good deeds; just like the hypocrites whom Allah describes in His book when he says that which translates as: “And when it is said to them, ‘Do not cause corruption on the earth,’ the say, ‘We are but reformers!’ Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive (it) not.” (*Al-Baqarah*: 11-12).

Another clear act of corruption and mischief on the earth today is the merciless transgression, injustice, killings and destruction that the Jews are perpetrating in the holy land of Al-Quds, or Jerusalem. They kill innocent people, expel them from their land and besiege them without even showing mercy to the elderly or infants. We are not surprised by this, for it is just one of a series of oppressive and arrogant acts of corruption that they are taking part in.

Environmental pollution with its widespread destruction is another form of causing corruption upon the earth in modern times. This pollution has caused immense and unnecessary damage to human beings, animals, plants and aquatic creatures. This harm is caused by man's selfish desire to hasten productivity and is a result of his selfish materialism and his craving for wealth which knows no limit.

We must realise and acknowledge that all this corruption occurs upon the earth as a result of mankind's evil deeds. Allah says that which translates as: “Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He [i.e. Allah] may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [i.e. refrain]” (*Ar-Room*: 41).

It must then be an indisputable fact that the remedy lies at the hands of the people, for Allah will never improve the condition of a people while they are not changing their behaviour.



Snapshots from the official opening ceremony.

United School International on The Pearl Island officially opens

United School International on The Pearl Island was officially opened by Omar al-Nehma, assistant undersecretary for Private Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 18, a statement said yesterday.

Sheikh Faisal bin Fahad bin Jassim al-Thani, vice-chairman of United Development Company (UDC) and chairman of the Board of United School International; Kevin McNeany, chairman of Orbital Education and vice-chairman of United School International; and Razan Osman, education

sector lead in the Department of Business and Trade at the British embassy, were present.

Sheikh Faisal said: "Opening United School International is a major milestone for United Development Company and is part of its commitment to providing residents of The Pearl Island with a completely integrated living community."

"No doubt, the opening of this school would not have happened without the full support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, for which we are extremely thankful," he said.

"It gives me immense pleasure to celebrate the official

opening of this remarkable school," McNeany said.

"We can proudly say that our partnership with UDC has delivered a thriving community of students, families, teachers and leaders and we look forward to continuing to work together to inspire, empower and educate our students," he added.

United School International is a partnership between UDC, and UK-based Orbital Education.

The school first opened its doors to students in August 2022, and is currently home to 700 students, studying an enhanced British curriculum as part of an outstanding in-



ternational education, in a state-of-the-art campus with a capacity of more than 2,000 students.

United School International will begin its second year of operation on August 27 with more than 1,100 students enrolled, the statement added.



Parades at 7pm and 9.30pm, each with a duration of 30 minutes, are major attractions of the festival.

PICTURES: Thajudheen



Darb Lusail Flower Fest blooms with a riot of colours and fun

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

Hundreds of visitors witnessed yesterday the opening of the three-day Darb Lusail Flower Festival, with Al Sa'ad Plaza towards one end of Lusail Boulevard becoming an ocean of flowers.

The event, organised by the Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company and open from 7pm-11pm, concludes tomorrow (Saturday).

Flowers on the street dividers and other structures towering over the path have created a festive ambience and instagrammable frames for the visitors.

Parades at 7pm and 9.30pm, each 30 minutes long, are major attractions of the festival.

Artists in costume, popular cartoon characters and floats featuring prominent landmarks of Lusail City, including the Katara Towers and Al Sa'ad Plaza towers, are perfect eye candy.

Buildings on either side of Lusail Boulevard, which will be a pedestrian zone throughout the

festival, have been lit up in myriad colours.

Light music wafts through the air.

"We like this place and it has turned out to be one of the favourite weekend destinations of families," Indian expatriate Abdul Rasheed told *Gulf Times*.

Game stalls for children and adults, a local market selling flowers, bouquets and perfumes, artists doing live paintings and eateries offering a variety of snacks and beverages add to the attraction of the festival.

In a statement, engineer Khaled al-Hammadi, director of Asset Management at Qatari Diar, stated that the Lusail Boulevard has proven to be an immensely popular destination, both during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the several other events.

"Everyone is invited to visit the festival and enjoy the various activities," he added.

The entities concerned at the Ministry of the Interior has appealed to the public to co-operate with traffic police and abide by the traffic diversions to ensure the security and safety of all festival-goers.

