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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Conference on Debate and Dialogue ends

The activities of the first International Conference on Debate and Dialogue and the associated exhibition concluded yesterday. The conference and the associated exhibition were organised by the QatarDebate Center, which was established by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) to celebrate youth graduates who have represented Qatar in international forums and championships, over the past fifteen years in both English and Arabic languages. The conference – which saw the participation of more than 800 participants from all over the world, witnessed the signing of 6 agreements. **Page 5**

Workshop on climate change effects held

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) yesterday organised a workshop on climate vulnerability assessment and its impact on Qatar to further discuss the preliminary findings of assessing climate effect of six sectors in the country. Held in partnership with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), the two-day workshop included presentations delivered by a team of GGGI's employees, along with external experts from the Ricardo sustainable energy company and those specialised in climate vulnerability and adaptation. The preliminary findings of assessing climate effect of six sectors in the country were shared with the engagement of over 120 officials, academics, civil society's activists, and private sector. **Page 3**

US slams Kosovo after Serb clashes

The United States slammed Pristina government yesterday over the decision to install ethnic Albanian mayors in northern Kosovo "by forcible means", which they believe sparked tensions in the volatile region. A total of 30 Nato-led peacekeepers were injured in clashes with ethnic Serb demonstrators on Monday, during a protest against Prime minister Albin Kurti's government decision to install the mayors following a vote which the Serbs boycotted. Kosovo was also expelled from participating in an ongoing American-led military exercise in Europe, US ambassador in Pristina Jeffrey Hovenier announced. "For Kosovo, this exercise is over," Hovenier told in comments to local media in Pristina. **Page 11**

Drones strike Russian, Ukraine capitals

Ukrainian drones struck wealthy districts of Moscow yesterday, Russia said in what one politician called the most dangerous attack on the capital since World War Two, while Kyiv was also hit from the air for the third time in 24 hours. Since Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into its neighbour in February 2022, the war has largely been fought inside Ukraine. Aerial strikes on targets far from the front have intensified amid a ragged stalemate on the ground with Russian forces entrenched along an extended line in Ukraine's east and south. In Moscow, the defence ministry said eight drones sent by Ukraine and targeting civilians were shot down or diverted with electronic jammers, though Baza, a Telegram channel with links to the security services, said more than 25 were involved. Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential aide, denied Kyiv was directly involved but said "we are pleased to watch events" and forecast more such strikes. **Page 11**

Transport minister announces Qatar's support to ICAO plan



HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti participated in the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) second Global Implementation Support Symposium (GISS) in the South Korean capital, Seoul, in the presence of 30 transport ministers from most of the organisation's member states, and airline officials. During the opening session, HE al-Sulaiti announced Qatar's contribution to supporting ICAO's activities in the field of technical training for countries that need to raise the technical competence of their employees to enhance the plans of the GISS. **Page 2**

Digitalisation key to reach net-zero goals

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

Digitalisation will be a key driver of transformation across industries to reach net zero goals, Wael Badawy, head of Energy Performance Services at Siemens, told *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of a panel discussion at Project Qatar 2023 yesterday. "Digitalisation and sustainability are very important topics; they go hand-in-hand. You cannot separate digitalisation from sustainability," he explained. "Given the trends in the market and global challenges towards achieving sustainability, we need to accelerate the momentum to reach net zero. And how we can accelerate this or reduce carbon emissions? The only solution here is digitalisation because it enables sustainability, the Siemens official observed."

Badawy participated in the conference titled 'New Trends in Qatar's Construction Sector' together with Luis Carlos Aranda, country manager, Copasa, and Paraskevoulai, legal counsel, Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm.

ference titled 'New Trends in Qatar's Construction Sector' together with Luis Carlos Aranda, country manager, Copasa, and Paraskevoulai, legal counsel, Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm. Moderated by Craig Richardson, technical director, Parsons, the panel discussion was organised by the chambers of commerce of Italy, the US, France, and Spain, the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), German Business Council Qatar (GBCQ), Turkish Businessmen Association (TBA), and German Industry & Commerce Office Qatar (AHK), in collaboration with IFP Qatar. **To Page 6**



Wael Badawy, head of Energy Performance Services at Siemens.

281 tonnes of aid flown to Sudan, 1,620 Qatar residents evacuated

QNA
Doha

Qatar has dispatched 281 tonnes of aid to Sudan and evacuated 1,620 people holding Qatari residency from there since an airbridge was established following the outbreak of hostilities in the African country, it was announced yesterday.

Adviser to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed bin Mohamed al-Ansari stressed that the Qatari airbridge has been operational since the start of the fighting in Sudan to provide medical, relief and humanitarian aid to those affected.

On May 29, the ninth plane took off to Port Sudan, carrying 50 tonnes of food. The plane evacuated 199 people, bringing the total number of Qatar residents evacuated from Sudan to 1,620, and the aid provided through the air bridge so far to 281 tonnes.

In the Ministry's weekly media briefing, Dr al-Ansari added that the visit to Qatar the Special Envoy of Chairman of Transitional Sovereignty Council of the Republic of the Sudan, ambassador Dafallah Al Haj Ali, came as part of his tour to the region and within the framework of efforts to search for solutions to the crisis there, and to facilitate humanitarian aid and stop the fighting.

The official spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that



Dr Majed al-Ansari at yesterday's briefing

Qatar gave priority to the humanitarian aspect and stopping the fighting there, and fully supported the efforts of Saudi Arabia in calming the situation as well as the agreements that were signed in Jeddah within the broader regional role of the League of Arab States, adding that this was confirmed during the visit.

He explained that the storming of the Qatari embassy in Khartoum was by irregular armed gangs, and there were no diplomats or employees present at the embassy. He also said that some property was vandalised and stolen, stressing the need to spare diplomatic missions and headquarters of international organisations and civil institutions in Sudan.

On the nature of ties between Qatar and Turkiye following the victory of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the presidential elections, Dr al-Ansari affirmed that the relationship between the two countries is strategic and between the various institutions in the two countries, including the presidency, and the relationship between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and President Erdogan are fraternal, personal and close, adding that he expected the continuation of these relations within their natural framework.

He added that the relationship between the two sides was developing and strengthening positively, and the next stage would have more development, especially since Qatar had played a large part of its role with regard to the victims of the earthquake that struck Turkiye and northern Syria, where an integrated city was opened in northern Syria to house a very large number of Syrian refugees. This co-operation between the two countries aims to provide a decent life for the refugees there and constitutes an example of the nature of the role that countries play in the region and the world in general, he said.

The spokesperson reviewed the ministry's efforts during the past days and the interviews conducted by Qatari officials at home and abroad, which aim in their entirety to strengthen bilateral relations and discuss areas of co-operation in various fields and ways to enhance and develop them.

HMC marks World No Tobacco Day

HMC's Tobacco Control Center, a WHO Collaborating Center, has joined the world in celebrating the World No Tobacco Day, observed annually on May 31. This year's theme, 'We Need Food, Not Tobacco' was set by WHO to highlight the impact of tobacco cultivation in the world.

Dr Ahmad al-Mulla, director of the

Tobacco Control Center, said that Qatar has been a pioneer in the field of combating smoking.

"Qatar is one of the countries that do not encourage the cultivation of tobacco or manufacturing of tobacco products. Qatar contributes to reducing the spread of tobacco use by entering into international agreements

on tobacco control, developing and implementing several tobacco control policies and legislations, opening several smoking cessation clinics, raising public awareness on the harmful effects of smoking through awareness campaigns and events, as well as by promoting research in the field of tobacco control," he said. **To Page 3**

Experts raise 'risk of extinction' from artificial intelligence

Reuters
Stockholm/London

Top artificial intelligence (AI) executives including OpenAI CEO Sam Altman yesterday joined experts and professors in raising the "risk of extinction from AI", which they urged policymakers to equate at par with risks posed by pandemics and nuclear war.

"Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war," more than 350 signatories wrote in a letter published by the nonprofit Center for AI Safety (CAIS).

As well as Altman, they included the CEOs of AI firms DeepMind and Anthropic, and executives from Microsoft and Google.

Also among them were Geoffrey Hinton and Yoshua Bengio – two of the three so-called "godfathers of AI" who received the 2018 Turing Award for their work on deep learning – and professors from institutions ranging from Harvard to China's Tsinghua University.

A statement from CAIS singled out Meta, where



the third godfather of AI, Yann LeCun, works, for not signing the letter.

"We asked many Meta employees to sign," said CAIS director Dan Hendrycks. Meta did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The letter coincided with the US-EU Trade and Technology Council meeting in Sweden where politicians are expected to talk about regulating AI.

Elon Musk and a group of AI experts and industry executives were the first ones to cite potential risks to society in April.



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman testifies before a Senate Judiciary Privacy, Technology & the Law Subcommittee' on Capitol Hill in Washington, US, May 16, 2023.

"We've extended an invitation (to Musk), and hopefully he'll sign it this week," Hendrycks said.

Recent developments in AI have created tools supporters say can be used in applications from medical diagnostics to writing legal briefs, but this has sparked fears the technology could lead to privacy violations, power misinformation cam-

paigns, and lead to issues with "smart machines" thinking for themselves.

The warning comes two months after the non-profit Future of Life Institute (FLI) issued a similar open letter, signed by Musk and hundreds more, demanding an urgent pause in advanced AI research, citing risks to humanity.

"Our letter mainstreamed pausing, this mainstreams extinction," said FLI president Max Tegmark, who also signed the more recent letter. "Now a constructive open conversation can finally start."

AI pioneer Hinton earlier told Reuters that AI could pose a "more urgent" threat to humanity than climate change.

Last week OpenAI CEO Sam Altman referred to EU AI – the first efforts to create a regulation for AI – as over-regulation and threatened to leave Europe. He reversed his stance within days after criticism from politicians.

Altman has become the face of AI after his ChatGPT chatbot stormed the world. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will meet Altman tomorrow, and EU industry chief Thierry Breton will meet him in San Francisco next month.



Transport minister meets with Angolan counterpart

HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti met with Angola's Minister of Transport Ricardo de Abreu on the sidelines of their participation in the International Civil Aviation Organisation's second Global Implementation Support Symposium in Seoul, South Korea. The two ministers discussed Qatar-Angola co-operation relations in transportation fields and ways to expand their prospects in the areas of training and civil aviation's technical skills, the Ministry of Transport said in a statement.



Minister of Labour meets ambassador of Bangladesh



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri met with Md Nazrul Islam, ambassador of Bangladesh to Qatar, yesterday. During the meeting, they reviewed ways to enhance bilateral co-operation in related fields, especially in the labour sector, the Ministry of Labour said in a statement.

Official

Amir sends cables of congratulations to Croatia president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to President of Croatia Zoran Milanovic on the occasion of his country's Statehood 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 Croatia Andrej Plenkovic on the occasion. (QNA)

Qatar's special envoy meets US officials



HE the Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Counter-Terrorism and Mediation in Conflict Resolution, Dr Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani, met separately with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs Daniel Benaim, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West, and Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Ian McCary, during his current visit to the US. During the meetings, they discussed bilateral relations and a number of regional and international issues of common concern. (QNA)



Qatar partakes in inauguration ceremony of Nigerian president

Qatar has participated in the inauguration ceremony of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu as Nigeria's President in Eagle Square, Abuja. HE the Minister of State Sheikh Fahad bin Faisal al-Thani represented Qatar at the inauguration ceremony. On the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony, the Nigerian president met with HE Sheikh Fahad, who conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's greetings to the president, wishing him the best of health and happiness and for the government and people of Nigeria continued progress and development. The Nigerian president entrusted HE the Minister of State to convey his greetings to His Highness the Amir, wishing him the best of health and happiness and Qatar further progress and prosperity. (QNA)

Education ministry holds development programme for private schools

The private education affairs sector of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education concluded a programme aimed at professional development and guidance for private education practices, in co-operation with a number of schools in the country. The program for this year included holding four sessions, the last of which dealt with Finland's phenomenon-based education. The focus in this context was on the applied side, through open workshops, with the participation of elite trainers and experts from Finland, in addition to participants from about 20 private schools and kindergartens. The programme is set to resume its activities at the beginning of the next academic year by holding several counselling and professional development sessions for private schools and kindergartens, provided by the Spanish SEK International School Qatar. The Qatar Finland International School in Qatar co-hosted the programme's sessions in the current academic year 2023/2024.

Qatar extends full support to ICAO initiatives: minister

HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti participated in the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) Second Global Implementation Support Symposium (GISS) held in the South Korean capital Seoul in the presence of 30 transport ministers from most of the organisation's member states, and airline officials.

During the opening session of the symposium, HE the minister announced Qatar's contribution to supporting ICAO's activities in the field of technical training for countries that need to raise the technical competence of their employees to enhance GISS' plans. The symposium, which was held under the title 'Working Together for an Innovative and

Sustainable Global Aviation Community', discussed ICAO's main initiatives and collaborative endeavours in promoting aviation resilience, innovation, sustainable development, and operational solutions to contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals stipulated in the UN 2030 agenda and the ICAO's No Country Left Behind (NCLB) initiative. (QNA)



NHRC launches rights and duties campaign to promote CMC polls

QNA
Doha

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) announced yesterday the launch of a campaign in Doha's malls aiming to educate nationals about their rights and duties to elect municipal council representatives in the polls due on June 22. The 'right and duty' campaign seeks to elevate awareness and stresses the importance of participating in the elections as a responsible and conscious practice that reflects democracy and enabling citizens to be part of the decision-making process and the country's public policy, a statement from the NHRC read.

The transparent general elections are an advanced mechanism to embody the principle of citizen participation, and affirm the values of equal citizenship and national responsibility, the statement added. Director of NHRC's Programs and Education Department Hamad Salem al-Hajri said the campaign was



The campaign was launched at Villaggio Mall, and it would soon move to other malls.

launched at Villaggio Mall, and it would move to other malls respectively, to raise awareness of the importance of participating in the elections. This is one of the NHRC's efforts to educate all citizens on the voter lists about one of their basic rights to elect, al-Hajri said, adding the campaign would go on to encourage and urge citizens and educate them about their rights and duties

during the course of the electoral process.

The right to vote is a fundamental pillar to ensure that all citizens enjoy other human rights, based on the principle of human rights' interdependence and indivisibility, he added.

Al-Hajri stressed the NHRC's endeavours to enhance the participation of women, the elderly and people with disabilities, as



groups that need to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from exercising their right to vote, in implementation of Article 34 of the Constitution that stipulates that the citizens are equal in public rights and duties, and Article 42 that the state guarantees the citizen's right to elect and to run for public office, according to the law. These social segments' participation in the elections indi-

cates Qatar's commitment to the provisions of international human rights conventions to which it is a signatory, and leads to the realization of the principle of universal, non-discriminatory suffrage, he added. Al-Hajri noted that the participation of these social groups in the elections means that their needs, issues and problems have become the focus of attention from voters and candidates.

Qatari plastic art exhibition opens at Katara

QNA
Doha

General manager of the Cultural Village Foundation - Katara, Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, opened on Monday the Qatari plastic art exhibition at Building 19, hall 2. Attended by an elite of artists and those interested in plastic art, the exhibition features artworks of a host of Qatari plastic artists who carried the torch of plastic art and held multiple exhibitions at home and abroad to represent Qatar in several international artistic arenas.

Their works highlight the Qatari reality in the past and present, as the exhibition includes artworks of a contingent of Qatari plastic artists hailing from a variety of schools and opinions for this artwork.

In exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Director of the Public Relations and Communications Department at Katara Salem Mabkhout al-Marri said the Qatari plastic art exhibition is permanent and private for Qatari artists in the field of plastic art. The exhibition showcases 30 artworks for 14 male and female artists and addresses roughly three generations from 1960 until 2023, he outlined, adding that some abstract and real works are being showcased

The exhibition showcases 30 artworks for 14 male and female artists and addresses roughly three generations from 1960 until 2023

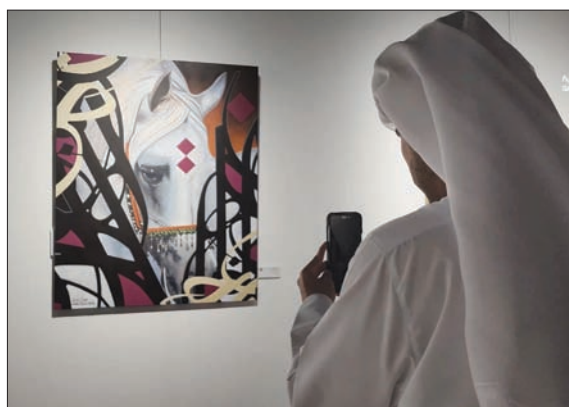
some of them are related to heritage and Islamic art, along with other numerous fields.

Plastic artist Maryam al-Mulla told QNA that she is pleased to participate in the Qatari plastic art exhibition, pointing out that the exhibition is persistent and open to attendees from various generations of trailblazers, Middle Ages, and young people, adding that paintings are changed, and opportunities are open to other artists.

She underscored the importance of this exhibition in demonstrating the artistic abilities of artists and their innovations, as well as capitalising on a wide range of expertise from schools. Katara holds this event within the framework of its permanent keenness to supply the art scene with promising artworks, in addition to supporting the Qatari artists to nurture the scene and keeping up with art fans.



The exhibition features works of a host of Qatari artists.



Al Gannas Association releases falcons into wild in Azerbaijan

QNA
Baku

The Qatari Al Gannas Association participated in the event of releasing five falcons back into the wild in Azerbaijan as an extension to the campaign devoted to returning falcons to their habitat.

The Al Gannas Association delegation included its President Ali bin Khatam al-Mahshadi and Vice-President Mohamed bin Abdullatif al-Misnad. In a statement, the association outlined that such symbolic participation to release a limited number of falcons into nature came to protect falcons and biodiversity and mark the anniversary of Independence Day of Azerbaijan with brothers in Azerbaijan and share with them their national joys.

In recent years, Al Gannas opted for staging the campaign of releasing falcons into the wild on Azerbaijan's lands, since it is the primary habitat for these species and the main line of seasonal migration of falcons, the statement noted.

On Feb 27, 2017, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the governments of Qatar and Azerbaijan in protecting endangered wild species and conserving their habitats, in their recognition of objectives and principles of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since both parties have ratified this convention.

The MoU stated that the two parties (Qatar & Azerbaijan) shall undertake essential arrangements - in accordance with the national legislation of the two



countries - to either implement programmes or conduct research within projects related to wilderness and natural reserves, in addition to supporting capacities' programmes in environmental research and conserving the biodiversity of endangered species, including fauna and fauna species



and rehabilitate eco-systems. The two parties shall co-operate in environmental protection by conserving endangered species of wild fauna and flora and creating a programme for their protection and breeding, as well as protecting their habitats and establishing programmes and centres for breeding falcons and bustard birds, the MoU stressed.

In addition, the agreement included co-operation in releasing falcons into their habitats.

HMC marks World No Tobacco Day

From Page 1

Dr al-Mulla explained that HMC's Tobacco Control Center plays an effective role in reducing the prevalence of tobacco use in Qatar by benefiting from its status as a WHO Collaborating Center to promote efforts to combat tobacco usage, and by focusing on scientific research in the field of tobacco control.



Dr Ahmad al-Mulla

"We also focus on treatment services with the opening of many clinics to help smokers quit through medication and behavioural therapy and we continue our efforts to raise public awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco products through awareness events and workshops," he said.

This year, HMC will mark the World No Tobacco Day with a series of education and awareness events to raise public awareness of the harmful impact of smoking on health, economic and social levels. The events will focus on the theme of this year's World No Tobacco Day and show how smoking has wasted many efforts and funds that could have been better invested in producing all types of food for many people across the world.

Dr al-Mulla stressed on the importance of the tobacco control legislations that Qatar has adopted, including the amended Amiri Law No. 10 of 2016 on the control of tobacco and its derivatives, which included the amendments to Amiri Law No. 20 of 2002.

"This law has placed Qatar at the forefront in combating smoking and has banned manufacturing and marketing of various tobacco products, including new tobacco products such as nicotine bags, electronic waterpipe (shisha), and heated tobacco products. Other laws have also been issued to support the ban on smoking in closed public places and workplaces. The government also raised the prices of tobacco products in 2019 to reduce tobacco use and encourage more smokers to quit," he said.

Dr al-Mulla urged all smokers to take action towards quitting and to make use of the Tobacco Control Center's services by calling 50800959 or 16060.

Over 300 measures across sectors identified to mitigate effects of climate change, says official

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) yesterday organised a workshop on climate vulnerability assessment and its impact in Qatar to further discuss the preliminary findings of assessing climate effect of six sectors in the country.

Held in partnership with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), the two-day workshop included presentations delivered by a team of GGGI's employees, along with external experts from the Ricardo sustainable energy company and those specialised in climate vulnerability and adaptation.

The preliminary findings of assessing climate effect of six sectors in the country were shared with the engagement of over 120 officials, academics, civil society's activists, and private sector.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs Ahmed Mohamed al-Sada asserted that Qatar has taken ambitious measures to achieve the Qatar National Vision 2030 in protecting environment, promoting green growth, and reducing climate change impact through setting a national strategy for environment and climate change and laying out a clear 10-year climate change national action plan in Qatar.

In addition, al-Sada pointed out that the national action plan included a roadmap through which Qatar fulfils its international obligations to mitigate climate change effects, especially the reduction of green-



Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs Ahmed Mohamed al-Sada addressing the audience.

house gas emissions. He added that over 300 measures have been identified to reduce the actual and anticipated effects of climate change, including various sectors in the country such as economic sector, infrastructure, healthcare, food security, biodiversity, and other relevant sectors.

The assistant undersecretary for environmental affairs underscored the importance of co-operation between stakeholders and national and international organisations to achieve these objectives, noting the MoECC's co-operation with the GGGI to carry out the national climate adaptation planning project which aims to enhance the national planning process for adaptation in Qatar through identifying and addressing its medium and long-term priorities to adapt to climate change.

He outlined that the workshop is one of the initiatives



challenges can be transformed into opportunities to promote flexibility through identifying adaptation's measures and implementing them in Qatar.

Head of the GGGI's programme in Qatar called on stakeholders to be part of the national planning process to adaptation through sharing

their knowledge, expertise, and comments through this workshop. For his part, Assistant Director of the Climate Change Department Mahmoud al-Marwani said the workshop aims to draw a map of the most significant challenges of climate change in Qatar and establish data on the most affected sectors by these changes and their effects, pointing out that based on these data a plan will be laid out to address these challenges and adapt to climate change effects accordingly.

He outlined that the workshop witnesses a huge turnout from some governmental entities and local partners, adding that an opinion poll will be conducted through a questionnaire with the engagement of all attendees to nurture ideas and information about identifying the nature of climate changes for each sector, as well as methods of adapting to them.

CCUS Forum turning point in joint Gulf efforts battling climate change

Chairman of the Gulf Organisation for Research & Development (GORD) and Chairman of the Global Carbon Council Dr Yousef bin Mohamed al-Horr has asserted that the launch of carbon capture and storage projects will provide millions of tonnes of long-term emissions.

He outlined that such projects would double the positive effect of 1,500 projects that were rolled out to the council by 45 countries to mitigate climate change effects within greenhouse gas reduction projects.

In his inaugural speech before the Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) Forum, under the auspices of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Sheikh Dr Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Thani, Dr al-Horr emphasised that Qatar is the first venue for a first international carbon credit programme rooted in the Global South.

He pointed out that the forum is a turning point in the joint Gulf efforts to overcome exigent challenges facing the region and the world in climate

change. Transitioning to a low-carbon sustainable economy will enable Qatar to diversify the global energy mix, reduce greenhouse gas and subsequently contribute to the global transition to a low-carbon economy in accordance with Paris Agreement, Dr al-Horr said.

The council is proud that Qatar is the venue of the first international carbon credit programme rooted in the Global South, he added, noting that the council is extending the invitation to everyone to engage in the public consultation, which is poised to be announced soon as one of the incentivising initiatives for carbon capture and storage projects through issuance of carbon credits.

The Founding Chairman of the Gulf Organisation for Research & Development revealed the ability of the new approach to providing millions of tonnes of long-term emissions, predicting that GCC states will generate 2bn of carbon credits over the next 8 to 10 years that will be utilised within storage projects.

HE Former Minister of Energy and Industry Dr Mohamed bin Saleh al-Sada said the Arab region has made great strides in overcoming climate challenges since the launch of the Climate Conference (COP18) that was previously held in Doha, in addition to the Sharm El-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP27) and the upcoming edition (COP28) which is poised to be held in Dubai this year.

He outlined that approaching net-zero emissions and their reduction requires the use of all clean and effective technologies available for energy, including carbon capture, use and storage.

The forum's objectives and its mission are incorporated into the concerned countries pledges at the national level where 13 states have submitted them, alongside the European Union, where several of them became part of countries that are committed to attaining net-zero emissions by 2050, Dr al-Sada noted.

He reviewed various methods of carbon capture and utilisation (CCU), such as the increase

in oil recovery which is injected in oil fields to augment crude oil production by storing the Carbon Dioxide underground. As for major oil-producing countries, he said, the combination of CCUS and increased oil recovery can dramatically reduce production costs, as well as utilize carbon dioxide in construction materials, chemical elements, and fuel, emphasising that such a method will open new economic access and promote innovation.

HE Dr al-Sada called for addressing the challenges that impede the implementation of the CCUS technologies to broadly utilise their benefits, pointing out that there are an array of methods in pre-combustion and post-combustion capture of carbon and each method has its technical requirements.

However, it is very imperative to optimise these technologies and reduce their energy needs, in addition to optimising the capture techniques to achieve the anticipated economic feasibility, he said.

HE Dr al-Sada said the cap-

ture technology faces overwhelming challenges related to their high costs, including the challenge of finding appropriate carbon dioxide storage sites, although depleted oil and gas reservoirs or deep salt basins are preferable storage sites, he noted, however, they should have sufficient capacity, along with geological safety to be securely stored in the long term.

It is noted that the overall site characterisation, monitoring, and risk assessment are crucial to ensure the stored carbon dioxide remains insulated and make sure that it cannot be leaked into the environment while addressing these challenges require technological advancement, supporting policies and legislations, financial incentives, and international co-operation.

The CCUS technologies can be an effective and indispensable tool to reduce emissions and contribute to global efforts dedicated to combating climate change.

Organised by Birba company, the Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) Fo-

rum features interactive sessions that offer opportunities to share expertise and ideas among the attendees, in addition to developing international co-operation in this field. The event also includes presentations on research and technologies that enhance capture operations.

The forum intends to review the latest developments in the capture, storage, and carbon utilisation field, as well as highlight the innovations and technologies that underpin these vital operations and discuss their relevant policies and regulatory framework, along with the findings that have been achieved around the world.

In co-operation with strategic partners and with the participation of a contingent of interested experts from all over the world, the forum will run until May 31.

Its convention in Qatar is a critical step towards overcoming challenges related to climate change, while the second session will convene in 2024. (QNA)

Authors' forum highlights reality of theatre in Qatar

The Qatari Forum for Authors hosted critic and media writer Dr Hassan Rasheed to discuss the reality of theatre in Qatar. Moderated by Director-General of the Forum Dr Aisha Jassim al-Kuwari, the session highlighted the reality of theatre in Qatar and addressed the writer's career including his most important innovative stations and beginnings in the fields of media, writing and theatrical criticism. The theatre has witnessed deceleration in its activities in the recent years because drama and cinema have been controlling the scene owing to the weak financial income earmarked for theatrical works, while theatre itself is interconnected with the compassion for stage, Dr Rasheed said, adding that actors simultaneously obtain wages from the spectator's reaction. He pointed to the high cost of stage shows due to the requirements of the current era, cutting-edge technologies and disappearance of sports club's theatres and youth theatres which previously played an influential role, as Qatari theatre actors won global awards starting from Sharjah to Italy, Algeria, and Morocco.

Six agreements signed as first edition of ICDD concludes

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The first edition of the International Conference on Debate and Dialogue (ICDD) and the accompanying exhibition organised by the QatarDebate Centre concluded at the Qatar National Convention Centre yesterday.

The conference saw the participation of more than 800 individuals from all over the world, and six agreements were signed at the event.

The agreements, inked with the Jordanian Crown Prince Foundation, Al Jazeera Institute, Education Above All Foundation, University of Windsor, Canada and the universities of Utah

and Louisville, US, aim to enhance co-operation with the QatarDebate Centre and expand its programmes in those countries.

Over two days, the conference discussed a number of academic issues through four main themes: *Argumentation: Frameworks and Applications*, *Debate and Education*, *Debate in Islamic Tradition*, and *Dialogue: Social and Cultural Dimensions*.

The conference had a number of accompanying activities, including two sessions for keynote speakers, two speakers from the Qatar Debate Research Fellowship Programme, the “Oasis of Dialogue” – which discussed the *Fluidity of Human Relations: The Family’s Resilience in the Face of Globalisation Challenges*, panel discus-



A panel discussion in progress.

Right: Visitors at the accompanying exhibition.

sions on *The Debate Experience in Arabic for Non-Arabic Speakers* and the *Concept of Debate between the Past and the Future*, and specialised sessions on the four main themes of the conference.

The event also witnessed the presentation of a number of research posters, as well as a space for social interaction and interactive stations, with the participation of Hamad Bin Khalifa University, the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Al Jazeera Media Network and others.

The conference aimed to direct scientific research towards finding solutions by discussing academic issues and benefiting from research results to



develop knowledge production in the fields of debate and dialogue, in addition to expanding research programmes

and spreading this culture to serve the debate community around the world.

QatarDebate Centre graduates were also honoured on the occasion, numbering more than 50 teams to represent Qatar.



Dignitaries and officials at the opening of Daiso Japan's 11th store in Qatar. **PICTURES:** Shajil Kayamkulam

Daiso Japan has a diverse range of 80,000 lifestyle items and novelty gift products.

Daiso Japan opens its 11th store in Qatar

Daiso Japan, the international retail chain renowned for its wide range of affordable, practical and high-quality products, has opened its 11th branch on the first floor of Abu Sidra mall.

The opening event took place on May 18.

The store was inaugurated by Leasing and Mall Manager Harun Kadri and LTC International Qatar (Daiso) general manager Ramesh Bulchandani.

“We thank everyone involved for their constant support and contribution to the successful expansion of the brand,” Daiso Japan said in a statement.

Daiso Japan has established itself as a household name worldwide, and this expansion further solidifies



its commitment to bringing exceptional products at affordable prices to local communities.

With a diverse range of 80,000 lifestyle items and novelty gift products, Daiso Japan introduces over 900 new products to customers every month.

From practical kitchen utensils in funky designer colours such as folding colanders and silicon garlic peelers to clever ways of dressing up bedrooms with stylish storage solutions, decorative household items, gifts, makeup, stationery, toys, and much more, the store offers something for everyone.

With the price starting, QR7 onwards; Daiso boasts of a “value for money deal”.

Now Daiso has 11 branches in the country: Hyatt Plaza, Al Khor Mall, Gulf Mall, Doha Festival City, Ezdan Mall Al Wakra, Mall of Qatar, Mirqab Mall, J Mall, Place Vendôme, City Center Doha, and Abu Sidra Mall.

Daiso Japan was launched in December 1977 in Hiroshima, Japan.

The brand has always had a simple vision of creating stores that offer unique value.

It believes in providing a unique “surprise and delight” shopping experience, filled with innovation and excitement through a huge range of products at unbeatable prices.



talabat and Google Cloud join hands



talabat, the region's leading platform for everyday deliveries, is collaborating with Google Cloud, a leading provider of cloud computing services – utilising performance analysis and operational data to further develop the talabat application towards customer needs and ordering trends.

The partnership was announced by Francisco De Sousa, managing director of talabat in Qatar, and Google Cloud country manager (Qatar) Ghassan Kosta.

talabat has also fully adopted Google Workspace in all its workforce, improving employee communication and driving better engagement throughout the tech hubs, digitalising all company content for an easier work stream.

Argentine volunteers hail Qatar 2022 experience

Argentine volunteers have praised their experience during their participation in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Guadalupe Camurati, Tomas Vicente and Facundo Ferro told FIFA.com that they are contributing to the success of the FIFA U-20 World Cup Argentina 2023.

“Being in Qatar was a unique experience where I got to discover a new culture and take a deep dive into the sports world through a mega event like the FIFA World Cup,” Ferro told FIFA.com.

Fellow volunteer Vicente added: “It was truly unforgettable, my first experience with FIFA at my first World Cup, watching my team win the World Cup for the first time in my life, and seeing (Lionel) Messi on the pitch for the first time.”

“It really was a dream come true.”

As for Camurati, she hailed the experience of being there with all the other volunteers.


“It was amazing to be in Qatar representing my country



Guadalupe Camurati with Vicente Tomas and Facundo Ferro.

along with 5,000 international volunteers, and it exceeded all my work and life expectations,” she said.

The three volunteers are doing their bit to ensure that Argentina 2023 meets the highest standards expected of an international competition of its scale. – QNA



التولية
AL-AWALLA

Invitation to Tender

In accordance with the following conditions:

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALLA/TD/2023/25	Geotechnical, Geophysical and Environmental Studies for Marine Sand Supply Project for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	1000 QAR	120,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	07 June 2023 01:00 PM

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.docs@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID, Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee, Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submit after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Al-Saad, Suhaim bin Hamad St., Qatar First Bank Building, 10th Floor before the closing date.
- Tender Fees are nonrefundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-651111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. **IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006)** Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the query(ies) in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period; must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week from the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
- For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa

QNL’s Cultural Salon explores impact of AI on Arab societies

Qatar National Library, in partnership with Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), held its second Cultural Salon on Monday, bringing together prominent academics in the fields of computing and ethics to explore the topic, “Artificial Intelligence: Science, Work, and Ethical Challenges”.

The Cultural Salon began with an insightful discussion that delved into the challenges, opportunities, and ethical considerations that arise as AI reshapes our world within the realms of work, society, and culture. The event was attended by guests from the media and the wider community.

Chaired by Dr Ahmed K Almagarmid, Executive Director of the Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) at HBKU, the panel featured Dr Ghanim al-Sulaiti, a scientist at QCRI and an AI technology expert, and Dr Mohamed Ghaly, Professor of Islamic Studies and Bioethics at the College of Islamic Studies, HBKU.

Commenting on the event, HE the Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library, Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari, said: “The Cultural Salon at Qatar National Library has made significant strides in its second session, solidifying its position as a prominent platform for intellectual and scholarly dialogue within Qatar’s cultural landscape. This success reaffirms the Qatar National Library’s role as an influential cultural institution, driving insightful discussions on key trends, developments, and issues spanning various fields of knowledge, both locally and on a regional and global scale.

“Today’s session focused on the compelling subject of artificial intelligence technology, which has garnered widespread attention across media outlets, technology platforms, internet companies, and search engines. Recognising the significance of this technology, our aim was to explore its vast and wide-ranging prospects. This endeavour aligns with the Library’s commitment to educate and raise awareness among society about future advancements that profoundly impact individuals in their professional, academic, and daily lives.”

Concluding his remarks, Dr al-Kawari said: “We take great pride in our continued partnership and collaboration with



Hamad Bin Khalifa University in organising these engaging Cultural Salon sessions. This event serves as a vibrant and dynamic channel of communication, facilitating meaningful exchanges among experts, specialists, and the wider public. Not only does it offer a platform for individuals to listen to experts, but it also encourages active participation, fostering discussions, and providing an opportunity for participants to share their ideas, perspectives, and opinions on the topics addressed during the Cultural Salon sessions.”

Opening the session with an exciting overview of AI’s evolution in all its complexity, while highlighting its significance and potential impacts, Dr Almagarmid noted: “At its core, artificial intelligence aims to design and actualise systems that are capable of learning and decision-making autonomously. Subtly yet profoundly, AI has woven itself into our everyday activities, most notably seen in virtual assistants such as Amazon’s Alexa and Google Assistant. It is leading revolutions across a vast spectrum of fields, effecting transformations that would have been unimaginable a few years ago.

“Furthermore, AI has become a catalyst in accelerating many routine tasks, enabling humans to shift their focus towards monitoring quality, improving resource scheduling and production, analysing errors, and continually fine-tuning operations. This notable shift allows for a broadening of the creative

horizon, superseding the realm of repetition.”

Sharing his expertise, Dr al-Sulaiti focused on the impact of AI on various professions, including medicine, law, education, engineering, design, and accounting.

He said: “Artificial intelligence (AI), from my perspective, serves as a powerful tool to augment human abilities, not to replace them. For instance, doctors might employ AI programmes to better detect health issues in patients, or teachers might use AI to tailor the learning experience to each student’s unique needs. This shows that AI doesn’t replace employees but enhances their capability to perform their roles more effectively.

“Current studies and reports reveal that cognitive, repetitive white-collar jobs are more influenced by AI than manual blue-collar roles. As this technology evolves, we see new job roles rising, like AI ethicists, AI system trainers, and AI maintenance specialists – positions that were unheard of just a decade ago. This stands as a testament to AI’s potential to spawn entirely new industries and professions.”

For his part, Dr Ghaly presented a comprehensive exploration of the ethical dimensions of AI. He said: “Ethical discourse on AI is still in its infancy, with most responses to date being brief and specific to certain concerns or questions. However, as we look at the current landscape and anticipate future developments, it’s apparent that AI technologies are adding complexity to these ethical matters. The uni-

versally accepted ethical principles such as justice, transparency, and respect for privacy are often broadly and ambiguously defined, leading to little room for disagreement, even among tech giants.

“A concerning scenario emerges when ‘knowledge production’ transforms into a commercial market dominated by these technology behemoths, which can accumulate significant intellectual property and decide who can access or benefit from the monopolised knowledge. This development poses substantial challenges not just to principles, but to their application in a way that resonates with diverse cultures and religious beliefs. However, there’s hope that public awareness of these risks will grow, potentially putting pressure on these companies to alter their behaviour concerning these ethical aspects.”

The expert talks led into a wider exchange with attendees in the audience. The interactions further enriched the dialogue with a diverse range of views and concerns around the impact of AI on privacy, freedom, and ethics.

The Cultural Salon was launched with the aim of creating an open public space that promotes dialogue, enriches culture and raises public awareness. In its second edition, the event succeeded in fostering a dynamic, multifaceted exchange of ideas with the potential to help shape understanding of the potential implications of AI applications on Arab and Muslim societies. (QNA)

Qatar reiterates its pledge to support Horn of Africa

QNA
New York

Qatar said it will continue its humanitarian support for the Horn of Africa, calling on the international community to learn from previous experiences in facing major challenges and crises around the world, and to unify multilateral action, in order to face international challenges and crises.

Qatar’s Permanent Representative to the UN HE Sheikhha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani said this during the high-level pledging event for the humanitarian response in the Horn of Africa, specifically in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, at the UN headquarters in New York.

HE Sheikhha Alya reiterated Qatar’s firm commitment to solidarity with the peoples of the Horn of Africa, and urged all member states to respond to the unprecedented drought hitting the Horn of Africa, as part of the commitment to address the urgent humanitarian needs in the region.

She pointed out that Qatar is honoured to participate in the event with the UN, Italy, the US and the UK, in co-operation with the governments of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, in order to respond to an urgent appeal for humanitarian assistance from the peoples of the Horn of Africa.

According to UN agencies,

more than 32mn people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are acutely food insecure, and more than 43mn people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance this year, including more than 8mn children and pregnant woman facing acute malnutrition, HE Sheikhha Alya said.

Unfortunately, the funding of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2023 so far is insufficient, and therefore, it is necessary for the international community to take decisive action to address this crisis, she said.

HE Sheikhha Alya said that at the high-level event Responding to the Urgent Humanitarian Needs in the Horn of Africa, Qatar has pledged \$12mn in humanitarian aid.

In implementation of this pledge, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and Qatar Charity has launched an urgent response project to help those affected by the drought in Somalia, she added.

HE Sheikhha Alya noted that QFFD is funding the second phase of the “Building Resilient Communities in Somalia” project (BRCIS) in co-operation with the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Somalia.

She explained that the project aims to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to rural communities in Somalia, especially those most vulner-

able to disasters, pointing out that this will be achieved by providing multi-sectoral assistance to 594,618 beneficiaries over six months.

She said QFFD is currently finalising a \$12mn joint project with USAID and Unicef in Somalia, in which QFFD and USAID have contributed \$6mn each. The joint effort aims to meet the urgent needs arising from the outbreak of measles and cholera in Somalia, with a focus on bridging gaps in the health, water, sanitation and security sectors, which suffer from a lack of necessary support as outlined in the Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.

She indicated that the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) is implementing joint projects to provide quality education for 7.5mn out-of-school children and youth in Africa, with the total budget for these projects amounting to \$1.2bn.

The contributions of the Education Above All Foundation amounts to more than \$542mn, she added.

HE Sheikhha Alya said that in partnership with Save the Children and Pan International – Niger, EAA Foundation will implement projects aimed at providing education to “177,199” children in Africa, with a total budget of about \$60mn for these projects, of which the Education Above All Foundation contributed about \$30mn. (QNA)



HBKU Press joins AI discourse with launch of its new book

Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press (HBKU Press) recently launched a critical title in the world of communications and artificial intelligence (AI) with its new book *Qatar Communication Strategies: From Managing a Crisis to Creating a Successful National Brand* by Dr Salim Zakhour and Dr Nadine Mounzer Karam.

The launch at an event at the Qatar National Library (QNL) recently saw Dr Zakhour facilitate a large-scale public discussion exploring the intersections between national branding, communication strategies, and the increasingly prevalent question of AI with a fully developed digital AI personality.

Joining via video, co-author and communications expert Dr Karam asked the critical question: “How can a nation that has worked on its brand for so long, turn a very unexpected regional crisis into an opportunity?”

She then emphasised that the question is the main focus



Dr Salim Zakhour

point of *Qatar Communication Strategies*.

“In addition to interesting, related topics, we analysed a major 21st century national/regional crisis and how through proper communication strategies and essentially prevention plans based on economic and political multinational relations, Qatar came out stronger than ever on the international scene, allowing a small country to rebrand and reposition

itself on a whole other level,” she added.

The discussion concluded with a Q&A session, with Dr Zakhour taking questions and comments from the audience, as well as speaking on the intricacies of corporate branding and communications, the growing use of AI and its utilisation in competitive political spheres.

“The FIFA World Cup 2022 boosted Qatar’s image and position greatly,” he noted. “And this success should be followed with extensive work into creating Qatar’s national brand and promoting it.”

“Competition between nations is very high, especially with AI technologies in place,” Dr Zakhour added. “Nations that understand how to use AI to create and boost their national brand will have the lead.”

“In this regard, Qatar’s Government Communication Office’s proactive role is a necessity for the country’s national brand creation and adoption,” he said.

Digitalisation key to reach net-zero goals

From Page 1

According to Badawy, Qatar “became a role model” for future FIFA World Cup tournaments when it hosted the World Cup last year, which was touted as “the world’s first carbon-neutral World Cup.”

“Stadium 974 is an example, but it’s not about how to utilise sustainable or recyclable material, rather, it is about utilising digitalisation. Sustainability is not about the material. It’s about the preservation of the next generation; it’s a mindset,” he explained.

To successfully host the FIFA World Cup,

Badawy said Qatar maximised digitalisation to manage and monitor the movement of people and transportation, including other logistics challenges to reduce carbon emissions.

“Ultimately, the tournament in Qatar was one of the lowest carbon emission World Cups in the world. And this is something that Qatar and its people can be proud of; it is something that other countries could emulate.

“This is the beauty of digitalisation and sustainability. Both can be replicated and there is scalability. Other countries could

imitate what Qatar has accomplished during the World Cup and these achievements could be applied across different sectors and industries,” Badawy pointed out.

GCC countries, including Qatar, “are on track” in terms of digitalisation, Badawy emphasised, citing the emergence of sustainable communities in GCC states, as well as smart cities like Lusail and Msheireb.

“Building a sustainable community is a vision for the next 50 years; GCC countries are thinking ahead and they are building the right technologies for the next generation, so they are on the right track,” he stressed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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holder of

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QID No. 28035645548

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Qatar Tourism achieves four ISO certifications

Qatar Tourism (QT) has successfully attained four ISO certifications from Bureau Veritas International, Doha (WLL), one of the world's leading certification bodies, it was announced yesterday.

The prestigious achievement is testament to QT's commitment to implementing world-class management systems adhering to the highest international standards, a statement said.

Following an extensive assessment of QT's management systems, Bureau Veritas awarded the tourism body with: ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (with UKAS accreditation), ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management System (with UKAS accreditation), ISO 27001:2015 Information Security Management System (with UKAS accreditation), and



ISO 20121:2012 Events Sustainability Management System.

In a press statement, QT COO Berthold Trenkel said: "We are proud to achieve the four ISO certifications from the renowned certification body Bureau Veritas, as it demonstrates Qatar Tourism's unwavering commitment in implementing robust policies, streamlined procedures, and efficient processes, while increasing environmental awareness and delivering sustainable events."

"Through adhering to the rigorous requirements of these international standards, Qatar Tourism continues to showcase its dedication to excellence across all of its operations and management systems."

The ISO 9001:2015 certification demonstrates QT's dedication to customer satisfaction and world-class

services, while the ISO 14001:2015 certification underscores QT's responsible stewardship of Qatar's natural resources.

The ISO 27001:2015 certification emphasises QT's commitment to data security and privacy, and the ISO 20121:2012 certification showcases its dedication to organising events that align with sustainable development.

This achievement marks a significant step forward in QT's pursuit of excellence, with the organisation's Quality Section successfully driving the requirements of all four ISO management systems standards.

As QT continues to advance its management systems, it remains steadfast in its commitment to providing exceptional services while fostering sustainable tourism practices.

QCS, Uber launch 'Trip to Recovery' initiative for cancer patients



Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) and Uber have launched "Ride to Recovery", a collaboration to avail free transportation to support those battling cancer.

Through this initiative, Uber will subsidise the cost of two trips of QCS's cancer patients to and from the National Center for Cancer Care and Research at Hamad Medical Corporation, as well as the Paediatric Oncology and Hematology division at Sidra Hospital, making it easier for them to access vital health-care services.

The partnership comes as part of Uber's global drive to partner with cities and communities, for which "Ride to Recovery" is one of the many initiatives Uber has undertaken in Qatar to positively

impact local communities by joining their cause.

Nasser al-Sharshani, general manager of Uber Qatar, said: "Uber is always committed to being an active member in the communities where it operates. After some challenges were voiced regarding the ability of cancer patients to reach health-care facilities, Uber and QCS's joint initiative was born to address these challenges and help current patients have access to the care they need. We are proud of our partnership with QCS, which will help us support and empower the community in Qatar over the coming period."

Mona Ashkanani, director general, QCS said: "Through this partnership, Uber, thankfully, created a means to facilitate ac-

cess to our medical facilities so our patients can receive their treatment with peace of mind. We are determined to help create a hassle-free experience for our patients, and we believe such partnerships with private sector entities are integral to help elevate healthcare and facilitate the patient experience. In line with this, we will continue our fight against this disease and contribute to the health and wellness of the society in Qatar."

"Our mission seeks to prevent cancer and control its burden in Qatar by working with our partners to educate the community, support, empower, and advocate for individuals living with cancer, and to engage in professional development and scientific research in the field of cancer," she added.

WCM-Q experts discuss major health concerns

Three Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) experts have addressed major health concerns facing communities around the world in the latest instalments of the Health and YOU: Community Wellness Series.

In three separate webinars, the experts discussed the latest advances in diabetes prevention and management, plastics and human health, and finding quality health information online. The webinars were organised by the Institute for Population Health (IPH) at WCM-Q.

WCM-Q assistant professor of medicine and endocrinology consultant at Qatar Metabolic Institute, Dr Tariq Chukir, presented a webinar titled "Diabetes - Recent Advances in Prevention and Management."

He urged people above 45 or those with risk factors to get screened for diabetes. He stated that early detection and treatment can prevent serious complications, including cardiovascular diseases, kidney disease, diabetic retinopathy, and neuropathy.

Dr Chukir emphasised the importance of following a healthy lifestyle with a focus on weight management in the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes.



WCM-Q alumnus Dr Amit Abraham, now assistant professor of clinical population health sciences and population health research specialist at WCM-Q, spoke about the health impact of plastics on the community. He outlined the solutions that can be applied to reduce toxic exposure to plastic in day-to-day life.

These include using food containers made of other materials like glass or stainless steel, and avoiding warming food in the microwave in plastic. He added that instead of using bottled water one can opt for tap water, carry a reusable water bottle and shopping bags, recycle when possible, and consider clothes made of natural fibres rather than the

synthetic ones. Plastics are found in many everyday items, including polythene bags, toys, disposable cutlery, insulators, cigarette butts, shoes, clothes, and medical items.

In a webinar titled, "Sorting Fact from Fiction: Finding Quality Health Information Online" Jamie Gray, director of the health sciences library at WCM-Q explored the health information ecosystem, how misinformation and disinformation spreads, and how to find and assess information on the web.

Gray noted that outdated or inaccurate health information could have serious impacts on well-being. For those who want to search online, starting at a site like MedlinePlus.gov is a

good initial strategy. Another approach that can be used is to look for government, organizational or educational websites.

Dr Ravinder Mamtani, professor of population health sciences and vice dean for population health and lifestyle medicine at WCM-Q, and professor of medicine at the Centre for Global Health, New York said: "The aim of the series is to create community awareness about health and disease to enhance self-care, reduce suffering, improve quality of life, and increase healthy longevity. We believe that the webinars have created a positive impact in the community because we bring experts to address health matters that are common worldwide."

Vodafone Qatar partners with Qatar Cancer Society

In line with World No Tobacco Day, and Lung Cancer Awareness month, Vodafone Qatar has collaborated with Qatar Cancer Society (QCS), as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Programme, to raise awareness on the harms of smoking and lung cancer, through an event at Vodafone offices.

A team from QCS conducted various workshops, and sessions which focused on the signs and symptoms of lung cancer, ways to help quit smok-

ing and the effects of tobacco and its dangers. Vodafone Qatar received a certificate of appreciation from QCS chairman Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani, in appreciation of its effort and participation in the campaign.

More information about Vodafone Qatar's CSR programme is available from <https://www.vodafone.qa/en/investor-relations/financial-information/annual-reports/2018/corporate-social-responsibility>



Sidra Medicine study reveals impact of immune system on colon cancer survival

A study, led by Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, has revealed the impact of the human immune system and microbiota on the ability to survive colon cancer.

Published in Nature Medicine, the study was in collaboration with main partner, Leiden University Medical Centre (LUMC) in the Netherlands.

The team analysed various aspects of primary colon cancers, including the characteristics of cancer cells, cancer immune responses, and microbiota composition. They found that a specific composition of bacteria in the tumour and intratumoural immune response were associated with a more favourable prognosis for colon cancer patients.

Core researchers from Sidra Medicine included Dr Wouter Hendrickx from the Functional Cancer Omics lab and Dr Davide Bedognetti, former director of the Human Immunology Division, while LUMC researchers included Dr Jessica Roelands, who was previously a joint PhD student at Sidra Medicine, and

Dr Peter J K Kuppen, associate professor.

Dr Hendrickx said: "This study challenges the current clinical guidelines on colon cancer, which rely solely on tumour-node-metastasis staging and the presence of mismatch repair deficiency. We validated our previously published ICR gene signature of tumour immune rejection which is already associated with survival in other cancer types, and a novel microbiome risk score, which is heavily associated with treatment outcomes and survival rates in our colon cancer cohort."

By combining the bacterial composition and the score for intratumoural immune response, the team identified a subgroup of patients with colon cancer, with an almost 100% survival rate. This score, along with ICR score, could be used as predictive biomarkers in cancer immunotherapy to successfully treat colon cancer patients. The study showcases the potential of multi-omics profiling and offers promising avenues for microbiota-targeting approaches, such as dietary interventions.

Dr Roelands said: "This is one of the best characterised colon cancer cohorts worldwide. We hope this resource will be used by physicians and scientists to accelerate research with the goal to improve the prognosis and cure patients suffering from this disease."

The study will be extended by adding other layers of data, including spatial transcriptomics, immune phenotyping, and methylome analyses. These findings could lead to more targeted treatments for colon cancer patients based on their immune response and microbiota composition.

Dr Khalid Fakhro, chief research officer at Sidra Medicine, said: "This study's impact is yet another strong example of the application of precision medicine in solving health challenges like colon cancer, which ranks as the third most frequent cause of cancer incidence and the second in mortality. It also validates our ground-breaking research collaborations with partners like Leiden University Medical Centre."



The study team.

Temporary closure at D-Ring Road intersection



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary closure at Fereej Al Ali Intersection on D-Ring Road to traffic coming from Al Amir Street on Friday June 2, from 1am until 10am, to complete the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting New Slata and Fereej Al Ali. During the closure, road users heading towards Nuaija, Al Hilal and Old Airport through Fereej Al Ali intersection can continue heading straight from Al Amir Street towards Mesameer Intersection and to Rawdat Al Khail Street, or use C-Ring Road to reach their destination. Ashghal said in a statement. The closure will be implemented in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic.

‘ICSS committed to sustainable development and environmental protection through sport’

CEO of the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) Massimiliano Montanari said the ICSS is committed to promoting sustainable development.

Sustainability is a priority for the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) and its Save the Dream initiative, a global nonprofit movement committed to promote and protect core values of sport for the good of youth and future, supported by Ooredoo as Technology Partner, Montanari said in an exclusive interview to Qatar News Agency (QNA).

“Sustainability means for us promoting long-term programmatic approaches rather than one-off projects while supporting initiatives which can continue over time through solid partnerships and the creation

of self-sustainable eco-systems able to ensure proper resource mobilisation,” he said. “It means working with multipliers and promoting as much as domino effects and multisectoral actions that can benefit sport as an industry and as system of values to be protected,” Montanari added.

Regarding the common ground between sport and sustainability, Montanari said: “Sport teaches sustainability. There are so many lessons we can learn from sport at all levels. Most of grassroots sports succeed (not just survive) since they are grounded on both well planned or in many cases spontaneous self-sustainable mechanisms where small sponsors, volunteers, communities, municipalities, and civil society work together to provide sport to youth.

“The same way that athletes are preparing and managing competitions, the way they utilise their energy provides us with important notions,” he pointed out.

About the ICSS’ projects in Somalia, Libya, and Darfur, ICSS CEO said: “We arrived in Garowe, capital of the Somali state of Puntland and we found a total lack of sport activities for children. We left after a few months of project implementation and the city has now a corps of well-trained coaches, teachers, educators, and NGOs able to manage local sport projects and use the values of sport as a part of their educational programmes.” He said that in the city there is now an inter-school league where children, both boys and girls, can participate, learn and have fun, adding, “All this is now

owned by the local community, still with some help from us, but they are ready to walk alone. This is what I call sustainability.”

“We hope to go back soon to Somalia with our partners Qatar Charity, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and the UN to expand the scope of the project. The dream is to promote the creation of small businesses to manufacture sport goods at the community level as a way to sustain grassroots sports as much as possible,” Montanari said.

Regarding partnerships (locally and internationally) the ICSS has entered to help facilitate positive change, ICSS CEO said: “All partners are important from big agencies to small youth organisations. We all have a role. You need to work with international organisations to align your work with the global agenda, the

SDGs in particular, with enlightened national agencies like Qatar Charity and QFFD which represent a unique and powerful engine, as well as an opportunity to integrate our efforts into more complex development and humanitarian efforts. And you need the local stakeholders because they will ensure the success of your work by making sure that beneficiaries become agents of change and will take the lead in the long term.”

“Sustainability is a transversal concept which should be present in all our activities and project. It should be part of our working and lifestyle. Sustainability should be actioned and not simply discussed,” he underlined. On the role that sport in general and the ICSS in particular can play in addressing climate change, Montanari



International Centre for Sport Security CEO Massimiliano Montanari.

said: “Sport teaches values like integrity and respect. If you have integrity, if you respect yourself and others you will have the right attitude towards environment. At the same time, athletes can be great advocates and help people understand that respecting environment is the only option. The sport sector itself has to become more accountable when we talk about preserving resources and protecting environment and if we really want to lead by example. Youth will look at our behaviours.”

Regarding the long-term vision of the ICSS to find solutions through sport to environmental challenges, Montanari told

QNA: “We don’t have a specific programme on environment but messages about environment are present in all our initiatives. We talk about it when we promote sustainability safety and security policies, when we promote ethics and integrity in sport or when we use sport and its values to empower and educate young people. Environment is always one of the key topics. We think about environment also in our daily activities. The items we procure, the water we drink. We give priority to zero-miles products, goods manufactured with recyclable materials and any other solution that can help us in delivering a better world to the future generations.” (QNA)

Qatar participates in senior official level strategic political dialogue in China

QNA
Beijing

The 18th Senior Officials’ Meeting and the 7th Senior Official Level Strategic Political Dialogue of the China-Arab States Co-operation Forum (CASCF) began in Chengdu, China, on Monday.

Qatar is participating with a delegation from the Department of Arab Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its permanent delegation to the Arab League.

The sessions’ agenda includes Arab-Chinese issues of mutual interest regionally and



globally. During his speech at the opening session, Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the International Political Affairs Sector of the Arab League Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Manzalawi affirmed the Arab League’s eagerness to continue

advancing Chinese-Arab co-operation within the framework of the forum.

He indicated that the forum now includes more than 15 co-operation mechanisms, and that CASCF will celebrate the next year, 20 years since its founding.

In a statement, the Arab League said a delegation of senior officials from Arab states and the Arab League’s General Secretariat is scheduled to start an official visit to the Xinjiang-Uygur Autonomous Region from May 31 to June 3.

Clash between Somalia army and Al Shebaab kills 17

Reuters
Mogadishu

Fighters from Somalia’s Al Shebaab insurgent group attacked a military base on the outskirts of a town in the centre of the country, leading to at least 17 deaths, a resident said.

The attack on Masagawa, about 300km north of Mogadishu, came days after Al Shebaab attacked a base housing Ugandan forces from an African Union peacekeeping mission in Bulamarer, 130km southwest of the capital.

“I have seen 17 dead people including the attackers and the attacked. The fighting has moved into the forest. The town is calm now and under government control,” Hussein Nur, a resident of Masagawa, told Reuters by phone. Captain Abdullahi Mohamed, a military officer in Masagawa, confirmed the attack and said 12 Al Shebaab fighters had died, but he did not know how many troops were dead.

“Fierce fighting went on for hours on the edge of the town. So far, I know we lost soldiers but I have no exact figure. We repulsed Al Shebaab and now we are pursuing them in the forest,” Mohamed told Reuters.

The Somalia National Army said on Twitter it had prevented an attack on the town itself, and killed Al Shebaab fighters, but did not say how many.

Al Qaeda-linked Al Shebaab has been fighting since 2006 to topple Somalia’s central government and establish its own rule based on its strict interpretation of Shariah law. It has launched significant attacks against hotels, military bases and government establishments in despite a relatively successful government push back.

Saudi kidnapped in Lebanon freed in ‘special operation’

AFP
Beirut

A Saudi national who had been kidnapped in Beirut has been freed in a “special operation” by the Lebanese army near the border with Syria, the military said yesterday.

Soldiers had also raided homes in Baalbek in connection with the abduction, as well as a location in the eastern city where the illicit stimulant drug captagon was being produced, the army said in a statement.

“An army intelligence patrol managed to free kidnapped Saudi national Mashari al-Mutairi during a special operation on the Syrian border,” it said in a separate statement.

Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi told a news conference nine people had been arrested over the kidnapping, and that Mutairi was “doing well”.

The Saudi ambassador to Beirut, Walid Bukhari, thanked Lebanon for its efforts to swiftly free the man.

A senior Lebanese security source had said late Monday that unidentified assailants



Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to Lebanon Walid bin Abdullah Bukhari and Lebanon’s caretaker Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi attend a press conference at Saudi Arabia’s embassy in Beirut, yesterday.

dressed as security personnel and driving a four-wheel drive vehicle had kidnapped the Saudi national on the Beirut seafont, where he had been in a restaurant.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati congratulated the army on the “great effort deployed to release him and arrest those involved in the kidnapping”.

According to Saudi government-owned television channel Al-Ekhabariya, the kidnappers had demanded a ransom.

Lebanese security forces frequently target parts of the Syrian border area in connection with drug trafficking.

Most of the Middle East region’s captagon is produced in Syria and Lebanon and smuggled to its main consumer market in the region. Kidnappings of foreign nationals have been rare in recent years in Lebanon, which since late 2019 has been facing devastating economic crisis that has impoverished the population.

Jordan gets ready for royal wedding

A worker walks near posters depicting Jordan’s Crown Prince Hussein and bride-to-be Rajwa al-Saif, the youngest daughter of Saudi businessman Khaled al-Saif, ahead of their wedding set for June 1, at a workshop in Madaba, Jordan.



SA faces legal bid to force Putin’s arrest

AFP
Johannesburg

South Africa’s leading opposition party said yesterday it had taken legal action to force the government to arrest Vladimir Putin if the Russian President were to attend a planned summit in the country.

Pretoria has been faced with a diplomatic dilemma since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against Putin, who is supposed to visit the nation for a Brics meeting in August.

Yesterday, the Democratic Alliance (DA) party said it launched a court application to ensure the government detains the Russian leader and hands him over to the ICC “should President Putin set foot in South Africa.” “This pre-emptory court action aims to ensure that South Africa upholds its obligations,” DA shadow minister of justice Glynis Breytenbach said in a statement.

A member of the ICC, South Africa, which has close diplomatic ties with Moscow, is due to host the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Brics) bloc summit. But the government is yet to say how

it intends to deal with the Russian president’s predicament. Breytenbach said the DA was seeking a “declaratory order” to avoid a repeat of 2015 when Pretoria failed to arrest then-Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who was similarly wanted by the ICC.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov yesterday declined to say whether Putin will travel to South Africa for the summit.

“Russia will be duly represented,” Peskov said, adding Moscow expected its Brics partners “not be guided” by “illegitimate decisions” such as the ICC arrest warrant.



Sudan’s General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan walks with troops, in an unknown location, in this picture released yesterday.

moved operations to Port Sudan, in Sudan’s Red Sea state, the main shipping hub which has seen little unrest.

Yesterday, the state’s security committee said it had caught several “rebellious” sleeper cells that it said had sneaked in from outside and warned that they were planning activities.

“We thank the citizens of Red Sea state for their total co-operation and for immediately reporting the presence of these rebellious elements and their agents within their neighbourhoods,” it said, without specifying their identity.

The committee later extended a state of emergency and declared a curfew from 11pm to 5am in Port Sudan.

The conflict erupted on April 15 over internationally backed plans for a transition to elections under a civilian government. Leaders of the army and the RSF had held the top positions on Sudan’s ruling council since former leader Omar al-Bashir was toppled during a popular uprising in 2019.

They staged a coup in 2021 as they were due to hand leadership of the council to civilians, before falling out over the chain of command and restructuring of the RSF under

the planned transition. Army leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan appeared in a video yesterday greeting troops. He said that the army had agreed to the ceasefire extension to ease citizens’ access to services.

“The army hasn’t used its full deadly power, but it will be forced to do so if the enemy does not obey or listen to the voice of reason,” he said in a statement. UN children’s agency Unicef said more than 13.6mn children in Sudan, a country of 49mn people, were in urgent need of lifesaving humanitarian support.

The UN World Food Programme, which expects up to 2.5mn people in Sudan to slip into hunger in coming months, said that 17,000 metric tonnes of food had been looted since the conflict began.

WFP said on Monday that it had begun to distribute food in parts of the capital for the first time since the outbreak of fighting.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk warned yesterday that fighting in Khartoum, which has spread to the war-weary Darfur region, could take on an “inter-ethnic dimension which would be terrible”.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

China snubs US request for meeting of defence chiefs

China has declined a request from the US for a meeting between their defence chiefs at an annual security forum in Singapore this weekend, media reported, a new sign of strain between the powers. “The PRC informed the US that they have declined our early May invitation for Secretary (Lloyd) Austin to meet with PRC Minister of National Defence Li Shangfu in Singapore,” the Pentagon said in a statement to the *Wall Street Journal*, referring to China by the initials of its official name, the People’s Republic of China. Li has been under US sanctions since 2018 over the purchase of combat aircraft and equipment from Russia’s main arms exporter, Rosoboronexport.

UNREST

China deploys police after mosque clashes

China deployed hundreds of police and made arrests in a mostly Muslim southwestern town after clashes erupted over the planned partial demolition of a mosque. The town of Nagu, Yunnan province, recently pushed ahead with plans to raze four minarets and the dome roof of the Najaying Mosque, a resident said. The area is home to a sizeable enclave of Hui, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group who have come under pressure in the face of a broad crackdown. On Saturday, dozens of officers wielding truncheons and riot shields repelled a crowd outside the mosque that was hurling objects at them, videos circulating on social media and the witness said.

OFFICIAL

British PM to visit US next week for talks with Biden

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will hold talks with US President Joe Biden next week when they will discuss improving economic ties and how to sustain military support for Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. Sunak will be in Washington on Wednesday and Thursday next week for meetings with Biden, members of Congress and US business leaders, but there will no talks about a formal free trade deal, Sunak’s spokesman said yesterday. Sunak, who will be on his first official visit to Washington since he was appointed prime minister in October, wants to forge better relations with the US after they were strained by Britain’s departure from the European Union in 2020.

DECISION

Indian athletes postpone medal-immersion protest

India’s top wrestlers were talked out of their plans to toss their medals into the river Ganges as part of their ongoing demand to arrest their federation chief over sexual harassment allegations. The athletes had been camping in New Delhi since April 23 demanding action against Wrestling Federation of India president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has denied allegations of sexually harassing female athletes. Olympic medalists Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik, and Asian Games champion Vinesh Phogat reached Haridwar to dump their medals as a mark of protest. Farmers’ leader, Naresh Tikait, convinced them to call off the act promising a solution within five days.

WEATHER

India monsoon advances after stalling for 11 days

India’s monsoon rains advanced into some more parts of southwest Bay of Bengal after stalling for the past 11 days at a far-flung island, weather department said yesterday. The monsoon, the lifeblood of the country’s \$3tn economy, delivers nearly 70% of the rain that India needs to water farms and recharge reservoirs and aquifers. Nearly half of India’s farmland, without any irrigation cover, depends on the annual June-September rains to grow a number of crops. Monsoon rains arrived over the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands on May 19, but then didn’t make any progress until May 30, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

China mission with first civilian reaches space station

AFP
Jiuquan, China

China sent three astronauts to its Tiangong space station yesterday, putting a civilian into orbit for the first time as it pursues plans to send a crewed mission to the moon by 2030.

The world’s second-largest economy has invested billions of dollars in its military-run space programme in a push to catch up with the US and Russia.

The Shenzhou-16 crew took off atop a Long March 2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China at 9.31am (0131 GMT).

They docked at the space station’s Tianhe core module yesterday afternoon, more than six hours after taking off, state broadcaster CCTV said.

The launch was a “complete success” and the “astronauts are in good condition”, said Zou Lipeng, director of the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center.

Dozens of employees from the space programme, many of whom live year-round on the huge site, attended the launch, snapping selfies with the rocket in the background.

Children played as they waited for the launch, some waving Chinese flags as they sat on their parents’ shoulders.

Spectators let out a loud “wow”, shouting “good luck” and waving as the rocket took off in a cloud of ochre smoke.

Leading its crew is commander Jing Haipeng on his fourth mission, as well as engineer Zhu Yangzhu and Beihang University professor Gui Haichao, the first Chinese civilian in space.

China was the third country to put humans in orbit and Tiangong is the crown jewel of its space programme, which has also landed robotic rovers on Mars and the Moon.

Shenzhou-16 is the first mission to Tiangong since it entered its “application and development” stage, authorities said.

The crew will meet their three colleagues from the Shenzhou-15 flight, who have been at the station for six months and who will return to earth in the coming days.

Shenzhou-16’s crew will carry out a number of experiments during the mission, including in “high-precision space time-frequency systems”, general relativity, and into the origin of life, China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) spokesperson Lin Xiqiang told reporters on Monday.

The space station was resupplied with drinking water, clothing, food and propellant this month in preparation for Shenzhou-16’s arrival.

One expert said yesterday’s mission represented “a regular crew rotation flight”, but even that was significant.

“Accumulating depth of experience in human spaceflight operations is important and doesn’t involve new spectacular milestones all the time,” said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer and astrophysicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

China’s “space dream” has been put into overdrive under President Xi Jinping, and the construction of a moon base is planned.

“The overall goal is to achieve China’s first crewed landing on the Moon by 2030 and carry out lunar scientific exploration and related technological experiments,” the CMSA’s Lin said.

The final module of Tiangong – which means “heavenly palace” – successfully docked with the core structure last year.

The station carries several pieces of cutting-edge scientific equipment, state news agency Xinhua reported, including “the world’s first space-based cold atomic clock system”.

Tiangong is expected to remain in low earth orbit at an altitude between 400 and 450km for at least 10 years. It is constantly crewed by rotating teams of three astronauts.

Royal Victorian Order presentation



Britain’s King Charles presents seven months pregnant medical assistant Paisley Chambers-Smith with the Royal Victorian Order and to other members of the Royal Navy for their part in Queen Elizabeth II’s funeral procession, on the Quadrangle at Windsor Castle, Britain, yesterday.

Ukraine differences not to affect India ties: US

Reuters
New Delhi

Disagreements over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine won’t hinder US relations with India, Washington’s ambassador to New Delhi, Eric Garcetti, told news channel CNN-News 18 yesterday.

Garcetti’s comments come ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s state-visit to the US from June 21-24.

Garcetti also said India had helped to keep the price cap on Russian oil imposed by the

Group of Seven economies, the European Union and Australia late last year to try to deprive Moscow of funds to fight its Ukraine war.

New Delhi has refused to condemn its old ally Russia for the war and has increased its trade with Moscow to record levels, driven largely by imports of Russian oil.

Garcetti earlier said that the entire planet was counting on the friendship between India and the US, and the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US and US President Joe Biden to India

later, will strengthen that association.

Garcetti yesterday added that the visit by Prime Minister Modi would turbo charge India-US ties in not just defence co-operation, co-production, research and development but all exercises.

The US ambassador to India mentioned that India does more military exercises with the US than any other nation on the face of this earth and made it clear that India-US ties are not just about “aligned interests”.

“This is not just about aligned

interests and transactions that are in both of our interests. This is about a relationship that’s deep, not just between our leaders but between our people,” Garcetti said.

Garcetti also spoke about India-US collaboration to combat terrorism. The ambassador insisted that both nations are collectively traumatised by “terrorism”.

Garcetti said terrorism unites both the country and touched upon the extradition of 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana. “Unfortunately terror does unite us. We have both been trauma-

tised and victimised by terror,” Garcetti said. “We stand shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm with Indian counterparts. I think that the ‘Rana extradition’ is a perfect case in point, that we are working so closely together,” he added.

Earlier this month, a US court approved the extradition of Chicago-based businessman Tahawwur Rana to India. Rana is wanted in India, for his role in the 2008 terror attack that shocked Mumbai. Rana was convicted in 2011 for supporting the militant group which spear-headed the attack.

India ‘considering’ cut in solar panel import tax

Reuters
New Delhi

India is considering cutting its import tax on solar panels by half and is seeking a rollback in goods and services taxes on the devices to make up a shortfall in local output amid rising demand for renewable energy, three government sources said.

India’s renewable energy ministry has held talks with the finance ministry to approve its request to cut the import tax on solar panels from 40% to 20%, said the three sources, who declined to be identified as the decision has not yet been finalised.

Also, the two ministries may make a recommendation to India’s Good and Services Tax Council to lower the goods and services tax (GST) on solar panels to 5%, from the 12% imposed in 2021, the sources said.

The change will come as a boost for Indian solar power giants such

as Tata Power, Adani Green and Vikram Solar which won solar power supply contracts by quoting aggressive tariffs but face shortage of local equipment to complete the contracts.

India imposed the 40% solar panel import tax in April 2022 and a 25% tax on solar cells to discourage Chinese imports, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s plan to become more self-reliant and cut emissions by scaling up renewable energy generation.

However, domestic capacity is falling short ... imports are required to fill in the gap,” said one of the sources. The proposal comes as Modi looks at achieving a target of 365 gigawatts (GW) of installed solar capacity by 2031-32, part of a green energy push that extends from promoting electric cars to sustainable aviation fuel.

India’s finance ministry did not immediately respond to e-mails, seeking comment. A spokesperson for the renewable energy ministry said a comment would be made as

soon as possible. India’s current annual solar panel manufacturing capacity is 32GW per annum but the requirement is of 52GW as demand for green, cheaper energy is rising rapidly from corporate offices, industrial units and big factories.

Though solar currently makes up over half of India’s renewable energy capacity, domestic component supplies have been slow to pick up, and the industry was also spooked by higher import taxes.

One of the government officials, who highlighted the necessity of changes in taxes, said India’s reliance on solar panel imports in the next two years was “expected to be heavy at nearly 8-10 gigawatts per annum.” India imported \$3bn worth of solar panels in 2021-22, 92% of which came from China, government data shows. The tax cuts could potentially lower the cost of imported panels by a fifth, bringing them closer to the prices of domestically made modules, the government sources said.

iLight Singapore art fest



Visitors look at the light installation “Trumpet Flowers” by Amigo & Amigo of Australia during a media preview of the iLight Singapore art festival at Marina Bay in Singapore.

Top shipper of Russian oil secures Indian cover as Western certifiers exit

An Indian agency has stepped in to provide safety certification for most of Gatik Ship Management’s fleet, a major carrier of Russian oil to India, after Lloyd’s Register and the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) withdrew classification for many of its vessels, records show. Mumbai-based Gatik, which has emerged this year as a significant player in Russian oil transport, also recently re-flagged at least four of its vessels to Mongolia, according to data from maritime platform Lloyd’s List Intelligence. This followed the de-flagging of 36 of the Gatik-managed fleet by St. Kitts & Nevis International Ship Registry. However, Indian Register of Shipping (IRClass) data showed six vessels being re-flagged to Mongolia. Other Gatik ships were recently re-flagged to Gabon. Classification societies such as London-headquartered Lloyd’s Register (LR), ABS and IRClass provide services including seaworthiness checks, certification that is vital for

securing insurance and entry to ports. IRClass, which is recognised globally, did not respond to requests for comment. As Western sanctions on Moscow’s energy trade tightened, Gatik suddenly stepped in with a fleet of tankers that has numbered more than 40, shipping data shows. India, which does not recognise the sanctions, has quickly become the biggest buyer of seaborne Russian crude since Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine in February last year. The re-flagging of vessels and changes of registry highlight the tightening oversight by Western service providers over supply of Russian oil, but also the limitations of such efforts given the ease with which ship owners and operators can find new documentation to continue sailing. While non-EU countries can import seaborne Russian crude, Western shipowners and insurers are prohibited from handling such cargoes unless they are sold at or below \$60 a barrel cap.

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GULF TIMES

Generative AI in education calls for futuristic guidelines

Ever since ChatGPT burst into the spotlight last November, demonstrating an ability to generate essays, poems and conversations from the briefest of prompts, the arms race among global tech giants has intensified.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is now making its way into the classroom, putting a spotlight on how students learn and raising questions about the value of higher education.

“I think education is going to have a huge reckoning,” said Andrea Jones-Rooy, a professor of data science at New York University.

Aside from concerns that chatbots are making it easier for students to cheat, Jones-Rooy said the rise of AI is a long-overdue “wake-up call” that is forcing institutions to rethink how they’re preparing students for the real world.

To adapt, professors will need to get creative and develop new methods of teaching and assessing less-defined skills like critical thinking, which she says will always require in-person interaction.

Universities will also need to better outline what they offer, especially as tuition fees soar across the world.

One advantage of AI could be increasing access for students who need extra help and better tailoring standardised tests to assess their understanding of a subject, says Pamela Gay, an astronomer and senior scientist at the Planetary Science Institute.

However, she fears a greater reliance on online systems could have a disparate impact if access to the Internet remains unequal.

A coalition of state and private schools in the UK are so concerned about the speed at which AI is developing, they are setting up a cross-sector body to advise “bewildered” educators on how best to use the technology, according to a *Financial Times* report.

In a wider sense, institutions are facing myriad challenges in crafting an immediate response to the sudden emergence of the powerful AI apps, according to a new Unesco survey of more than 450 schools and universities.

Less than 10% of schools and universities follow formal guidance on using wildly popular AI tools, like the chatbot software ChatGPT, according to Unesco.

Proactively, governments worldwide are in the process of shaping appropriate policy responses in a rapidly evolving education landscape, while further developing or refining national strategies on AI, data protection, and other regulatory frameworks, says Unesco.

The economic potential of generative AI systems goes far beyond web search. They could allow companies to take their automated customer service to a new level of sophistication, producing a relevant answer the first time so users aren’t left waiting to speak to a human.

There are limitations too.

The answers it pieces together from second-hand information can sound so authoritative that users may assume it has verified their accuracy.

As machine intelligence becomes more sophisticated, so does its potential for trickery and mischief-making. Microsoft’s AI bot Tay was taken down in 2016 after some users taught it to make racist and sexist remarks.

Another developed by Meta Platforms encountered similar issues in 2022.

OpenAI has tried to train ChatGPT to refuse inappropriate requests, limiting its ability to spout hate speech and misinformation. But some users have found work-arounds.

For sure, AI is no passing fad. The fact that many of the world’s largest tech companies are embracing it is evidence of that.

And there’s little doubt generative AI will shake up education, but how faculties and institutions will adapt is a key concern.

“AI can enhance our thinking, or replace it. Making sure it does the former calls for good policy, careful management and the intelligent application of intelligent systems,” writes Fahad Badar, a senior Qatar Qatari banker, in a *Gulf Times* column.

Globally, Unesco is developing policy guidelines on the use of generative AI in education and research, as well as frameworks of AI competencies for students and teachers in classrooms.

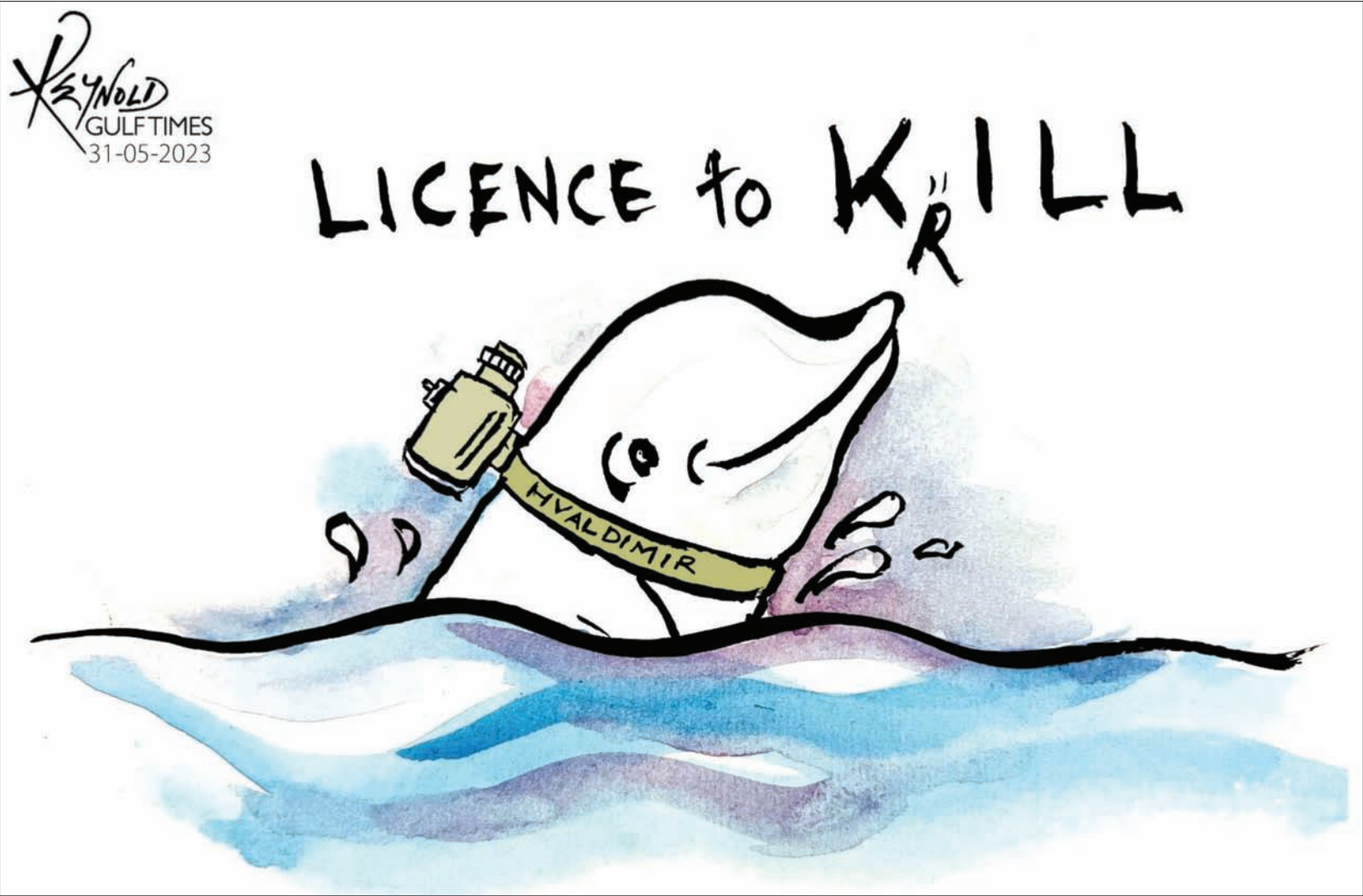
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S Korea’s race to become one of the world’s biggest arms dealers

By Joyce Lee and Josh Smith
Seoul

South Korea is using a \$13.7bn arms deal with Poland – Seoul’s biggest ever – to lay the groundwork for a military-industrial juggernaut that the two nations’ defence companies hope will feed Europe’s hunger for weapons far into the future.

South Korea’s arms sales jumped to more than \$17bn in 2022 from \$7.25bn the year before, according to its defence ministry, as Western countries scrambled to arm Ukraine and tensions rose in other hot spots such as North Korea and the South China Sea.

The arms deal with Poland, a key Nato member, last year included hundreds of Chunmoo rocket launchers, K2 tanks, K9 self-propelled howitzers, and FA-50 fighter aircraft. The deal’s value and the number of weapons involved made it stand out even among the world’s biggest defence players.

South Korean and Polish officials say their partnership will help them conquer the European arms market even beyond the Ukraine war, with Seoul providing high-quality weapons faster than other countries and Poland offering manufacturing capacity and a sales pipeline into Europe.

Reuters spoke to 13 company executives and government officials, including those directly involved in the deal, who said the arrangement provides a blueprint for using international public-private partnerships and consortiums to extend Seoul’s reach and achieve its ambition to be one of the world’s biggest weapons suppliers.

“The Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and others were thinking of buying defence products only in Europe, but now it is more well known that you can buy at a low price and have it delivered quickly from Korean companies,” said Oh Kyeahwan, a director at Hanwha Aerospace who was involved in the Poland deal.

South Korean companies do not disclose the unit prices for their weapons, which are often sold with support vehicles and spare parts.

Hanwha Aerospace already had a 55% share of the global howitzer market – a

number that will rise to an estimated 68% with the Poland deal, according to research by NH Research & Securities.

The deal established consortiums of South Korean and Polish companies that will build the weapons, maintain the fighter jets and provide the framework to eventually supply other European states, said Lukasz Komorek, director of the Export Projects Office at the state-owned Polish Armaments Group (PGZ).

That will include building South Korean arms on license in Poland, officials in Seoul and Warsaw said. Plans call for 500 of 820 tanks and 300 of 672 howitzers to be built in Polish factories starting in 2026.

“We don’t want to just play the role of subcontractor, technological transfer provider and the purchaser,” Komorek said. “We can both create the synergy and use our experiences to conquer the European markets.”

Sash Tusa, a defence and aerospace analyst at Britain-based Agency Partners, said that although both countries have well-established defence industries, the long-term plans will face hurdles. Political winds could shift, he said, reducing demand for weapons such as howitzers and tanks.

Even if production and demand hold up, European countries might want deals of their own with South Korea along the lines of what Poland has – co-production agreements that could create jobs and stimulate industry, Tusa said.

“It may work for some countries at very, very low volume,” he added of Polish-brokered South Korean weapons sales, discussing challenges the joint operation might face.

At a Hanwha Aerospace factory on South Korea’s southern coast, six huge automated robots and more than 150 production workers are churning out 47-tonne K9s destined for Poland.

The self-propelled guns use Nato-standard 155mm ammunition, have computerised fire-control systems, are designed to easily integrate into command and control networks, and offer performance comparable to more expensive Western options. Major powers such as Australia and India operate them.

To meet demand, the company expects to add about 50 more workers and more production lines, production manager Cha Yong-su said during a recent tour.

The robots handle about 70% of the welding work on a K9 and are key to expanding capacity, he said. They operate an average of eight hours per day but can work around the clock if needed.

“Basically, we can meet any amount of order you want,” Cha said.

South Korea’s offer to provide weapons faster than almost anyone was a key consideration, Polish officials say. The first shipment of 10 K2s and 24 K9s arrived in Poland in December, just months after the deals were signed, and at least five more tanks and 12 additional howitzers have been delivered since.

By contrast, Germany, another major arms manufacturer, has yet to deliver any of the 44 new Leopard tanks Hungary ordered in 2018, said Oskar Pietrewicz, senior analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs.

“Countries’ interest in South Korea’s offer may only grow considering the limited production capacity of Germany’s defence industry, which is a major arms supplier in the region,” he said.

Executives in South Korea’s arms industry say that will be a selling point for future clients.

A close relationship between South Korea’s military and its arms industry allows them to rearrange domestic orders to make room for export production and expand production in the country’s highly industrialised manufacturing base, officials said.

“They put things together in weeks or months that would take us years,” a European defence industry executive said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

Constant tensions with North Korea mean the South’s military production lines are running and its weapons have been developed, tested, and upgraded in high-pressure situations, said Cho Woo-rae, global business and strategy vice-president at Korea Aerospace Industries.

South Korea had promoted its weapons to Poland before the war, but the invasion of Ukraine – which Russia calls a “special operation” – increased Poland’s interest, said Kim Hyoung Cheol, deputy director at the Defence Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA).

After the Polish defence minister’s visit in May 2022 to observe South Korean weapons, and Yoon Suk-yeol

met with Polish President Andrzej Duda on the sidelines of the Nato summit in June that year, the stage was set for the huge deal that was finalised a month later, Kim said.

South Korea’s weapons are designed to be compatible with US and Nato systems – another selling point. The country is the third-largest supplier of weapons to Nato and its member states, accounting for 4.9% of arms purchases, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

That is far behind the United States, which accounts for 65%, and France at 8.6%.

Officials in Seoul told Reuters that they pitched Poland on producing South Korean weapons there to make it easier to deliver to European customers.

“The Korean government is promoting military diplomacy and defence co-operation so that the relationship with the purchasing country can develop into various partnerships beyond just a seller-buyer relationship,” South Korea’s Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Poland’s Ministry of National Defence did not respond to a written request for comment.

Oh said Hanwha Aerospace operates successful technology-sharing arrangements in India, Egypt, and Türkiye.

“Because of that, I don’t think there’s much to worry about regarding capacity,” he said.

The 2022 arms deal began with South Korean companies signing a framework agreement with the Polish government. Those companies formed consortiums with PGZ and its subsidiaries, which signed the final deal with the Polish government, he said.

“We have the one entity only, one big consortium that is representing the whole project from the perspective of the industry,” Komorek said, noting that the deal encompassed many projects.

In the past year, South Korea has launched its first home-grown space rocket, saw the maiden flight of its domestically designed KFX fighter, and announced billions of dollars in deals.

“For most other countries, that would be an agenda for a decade,” one executive at a European defence firm told Reuters, speaking anonymously because of the sensitivity of the matter. “We’ve underestimated Korea for a long time.”

Yoon told Reuters last month that South Korea might extend its support for Kyiv beyond humanitarian and economic aid if Ukraine comes under a large-scale civilian attack.

Seoul has since approved at least some South Korean weapons components for use in Ukraine.

The country’s sales in Asia – which accounted for 63% of its defence exports from 2018-2022, according to SIPRI – come amid regional arms build-ups driven by security concerns and the US-China rivalry.

South Korea is developing its KFX fighter jet with Indonesia, and Polish leaders have signalled interest in that project. Malaysia this year bought nearly \$1bn in FA-50s, and Seoul is in the running to win a \$12bn deal to supply Australia’s next infantry fighting vehicle.

“Asian countries see us as a very attractive partner for defence deals as we all seek to hedge against the rising tensions,” a diplomat in Seoul said. “We’re a US ally, but not the US!” – Reuters



K239 Chunmoo Multiple Rocket Launcher System.

AI political fakery sparks fears for US 2024 race

AFP
Washington

A fake image of Donald Trump's arrest. A dystopian video of a dark future in the event of Joe Biden's re-election. An audio deep fake of both men slinging insults. Fast-evolving AI technology could turbocharge misinformation in US political campaigns, observers say.

The 2024 presidential race is expected to be the first American election that will see the widespread use of advanced tools powered by artificial intelligence that have increasingly blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction.

Campaigns on both sides of the political divide are likely to harness this technology — which is cheap, easily accessible and whose advances have vastly outpaced regulatory responses — for voter outreach and to churn out fundraising newsletters within seconds.

But technologists also warn of bad actors exploiting AI to sow chaos at a moment when the political climate is already hyperpolarised in the United States and many voters dispute ver-

fied facts including that Trump lost the 2020 election.

In a sobering bellwether of what may become widespread ahead of the 2024 race, fake images of Trump being hauled away by New York police officers — created by an AI art generator — went viral in March.

Last month, in response to Biden's announcement that he will run for re-election in 2024, the Republican National Committee almost instantly released a video made of AI-produced images of a dystopian future if he wins.

It showed photo-realistic images of panic on Wall Street, China invading Taiwan, immigrants overrunning border agents, and a military takeover of San Francisco amid dire crime.

And earlier this year, a lifelike but utterly fake AI audio of Biden and Trump — expected to square off next year in a rematch of the 2020 election — hurling insults at each other made the rounds on TikTok.

"The impact of AI will reflect the values of those using it — bad actors in particular have new tools to supercharge their efforts to fuel hate and suspicion, or to falsify images, sound, or video in an effort to bamboozle the press and public," Joe Rospars, founder



An audio deep fake of Donald Trump (left) and Joe Biden slinging insults is just one highlight of the AI-induced madness surrounding next year's presidential race.

of left-leaning political consultancy Blue State, told AFP.

"Combating those efforts will require vigilance by the media and tech companies, and by voters themselves," added Rospars.

The efficiency of AI is obvious, no matter a user's intentions.

When AFP directed ChatGPT to create a campaign newsletter in favour of Trump, feeding it the former presi-

dent's false statements debunked by US fact-checkers, it produced — within seconds — a slick campaign document with those falsehoods.

When AFP further prompted the chatbot to make the newsletter "angrier," it regurgitated those falsehoods in a more apocalyptic tone.

"The current level of AI lies a lot," Dan Woods, the former chief technology officer for Biden's 2020 campaign,

told AFP. "If our foreign adversaries just need to convince an already hallucinating robot to spread misinformation, well then we should be prepared for a much bigger misinformation campaign than we saw in 2016."

At the same time, AI advancements will become a "game changing" tool for understanding voters, said Vance Reavie, chief executive of Junction AI.

"There is a large portion of the population who simply don't vote at all or vote irregularly," Reavie told AFP.

"With AI we can learn about what these potential voters care about and why at a very granular level, and from this we can understand how to engage them and what policies will motivate them."

Campaign staff previously spent hours on voter outreach with speech-writing and prepping talking points, tweets and questionnaires, but AI has made the same job possible within a fraction of that time.

"Creating content is time-consuming and costly, now imagine being able to do 10 times as much with no extra staff effort," said Reavie.

"There will also be a lot of generated content that will be false... It will be fast and easy to flood channels with

content and difficult for the average person to know otherwise."

The ability of Americans to agree on objective truths will also be challenged, with a huge swath of the US population already deeply distrustful of establishment media.

"The concern is that as it becomes easier to manipulate media, it will become easier to deny reality," Hany Farid, a professor at the UC Berkeley School of Information, told AFP.

"If, for example, a presidential candidate says something inappropriate or illegal, he or she can simply claim the recording is fake. This is particularly dangerous."

Betsy Hoover, a partner at Higher Ground Labs told AFP her company was developing an AI project called "Quiller" designed to write, send and evaluate the effectiveness of fundraising e-mails.

"Bad actors will use whatever tools at their disposal to accomplish their goals — and AI is no exception," Hoover, the former digital director for Barack Obama's 2012 campaign, told AFP.

"But I don't think we can let this fear keep us from using AI to our advantage."

Khan gets bail on new charge of abetting violence against army

Former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan was yesterday granted bail on a new charge of abetting violence against the military by his protesting supporters after he was arrested and detained on May 9 in a corruption case, his lawyer said.

The embattled Khan, who says the corruption charges have been concocted, is embroiled in a confrontation with the powerful military, which has ruled Pakistan directly or overseen civilian governments throughout its history. His May 9 arrest sparked widespread protests by his supporters who ransacked various military facilities, raising new worries about the stability of the nuclear-armed country as it struggles with its worst economic crisis in decades.

Khan, 70, was later freed on the orders of a court. His lawyer, Intezar Hussain Punjiotha, said an anti-terrorism court confirmed the bail on the new charge after the former premier appeared before it and submitted surety bonds. Khan has denied the charge saying he was in detention when the violence took place. The bail until June 2 on the new charge means he will not be detained on that charge.

The former international cricket star became prime minister in 2018 with the tacit support of the military, though both sides denied it at the time. He later fell out with generals and was ousted as prime minister after losing a confidence vote in 2022.

Khan has since then been campaigning for a snap election, with rallies with his supporters across the country, but the prime minister who replaced him, Shahbaz Sharif, has rejected the call for an election before it is due late this year. The turmoil has exacerbated Pakistan's economic crisis with inflation at record highs, growth is anaemic amid fears of a sovereign default on external debts unless the IMF unlocks delayed disbursements. Dozens of Khan's supporters have been handed over to army authorities for trial in military courts. A team of investigators looking into the May 9 violence summoned Khan yesterday for questioning but Punjiotha said a member of his legal team would go instead.



Russian President Vladimir Putin greets chef Andrei Savenkov as he visits the "Development of Creative Economy in Russia" exhibition in Moscow yesterday. (Reuters)

Putin slams Ukraine as attack drones hit Moscow highrises

AFP
Moscow

President Vladimir Putin yesterday accused Kyiv of seeking to "frighten" Russians after drones hit Moscow high-rises in the first such attack since the beginning of the Kremlin's assault on Ukraine.

As drones struck in and around Moscow, Russian drones targeted Kyiv for a third straight day while Ukraine gears up for a major offensive against Russian forces.

Officials said no one was seriously injured in Moscow and there was only "minor" damage to residential buildings, but some ordinary people said they never thought the Russian capital could be hit in this way.

"I somehow thought that all of this was somewhere far away, that this would not affect us, and suddenly this has become very close," pensioner Tatyana Kalinina told AFP in southwest Moscow near one of the dam-

aged residential buildings.

Putin said that Moscow's air defence had worked satisfactorily, referring to the attacks as Kyiv's "response" to a Russian strike on Ukraine's army intelligence headquarters.

"The Kyiv regime chose a different path to frighten Russians," Putin said.

The Russian defence ministry said that eight drones were used in the attack, adding that five of them were downed and three disabled.

The foreign ministry blamed the West, saying its "support for the Kyiv regime is pushing the Ukrainian leadership towards increasingly reckless acts, including terrorism."

The United States said it did not support attacks inside Russia.

"We have been focused on providing Ukraine with the equipment and training they need to retake their own sovereign territory," a State Department spokesperson said.

Two drones crashed into

high-rise residential buildings in Moscow's affluent southwest, while a third damaged a residential building in a suburb.

The other drones fell outside Moscow. Some of the debris was found around 15km from Putin's Novo-Ogaryovo residence.

One video shared on social media showed an explosion followed by a column of smoke rising into the sky.

This month two drones were intercepted over the Kremlin, but yesterday's attacks were the first time that unmanned aerial vehicles hit residential areas of Moscow, hundreds of kilometres from the front lines in Ukraine.

The raids are likely to be seen as a major embarrassment for the Kremlin, which has gone to great lengths to say the protracted conflict in Ukraine does not pose a threat to Russians.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, said Kyiv had "no direct relation" to the attacks.

Nato deploys more forces, EU urges calm after Kosovo clashes

AFP
Zvecan

Nato said yesterday it was deploying more forces to northern Kosovo after 30 of its peacekeepers were injured in clashes with ethnic Serb protesters, while the European Union called for an urgent de-escalation of tensions.

The commander of the Allied Force Command in Naples, Admiral Stuart Munch, said the move was a "prudent measure to ensure that KFOR (the Nato-led Kosovo Force) has the capabilities it needs to maintain security."

An extra multinational battalion of reserve forces had also been put on notice to be ready to reinforce KFOR if necessary, Nato said in a statement from its southern Italian base. The situation in the northern Kosovo town of Zvecan remained tense yesterday with ethnic Serbs gathered outside the town hall that a crowd had tried to storm the day before.

The protesters dispersed during the afternoon but vowed to rally again early today morning.

"We, as citizens of municipalities with a Serb majority, do not want tensions, but peace. It clearly suits someone else to create chaos and bring unrest to our area," local Serb official Srdjan Milosavljevic told reporters.

On Monday, Kosovo police had repelled them with tear gas, before the Nato-led peacekeepers intervened.

The soldiers at first tried to separate protesters from the police, but later tried to disperse the crowd using shields and batons, an AFP journalist said.

Several protesters responded by hurling rocks, bottles and Mol-

tov cocktails at the soldiers.

Nato's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg while in Oslo yesterday said he "strongly condemned" the attacks on peacekeepers, adding, "such attacks are unacceptable and must stop."

Many Serbs are demanding the withdrawal of Kosovo police forces, as well as the ethnic Albanian mayors they do not consider their true representatives.

They also demand that the protesters arrested after clashing with KFOR soldiers are released.

Kosovo's ethnic Serb minority boycotted local elections in the north in April, allowing ethnic Albanians to take control of the local councils despite a tiny turnout of less than 3.5%.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell yesterday urged the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia to immediately de-escalate tensions, saying the clashes were "absolutely unacceptable". He said he had spoken to Kosovo's Prime

Minister Albin Kurti and Serbian President Alexander Vucic to tell them to avoid any "further unilateral action". "I asked both parties to urgently take measures to de-escalate tensions immediately and unconditionally," he said.

Borrell said Kosovo's authorities needed to suspend police operations focused on municipal buildings in north Kosovo and ethnic Serb protesters should stand down. He warned that the EU was "discussing possible measures to be taken if the parties continue to resist proposed steps towards de-escalation."

Vucic said 52 demonstrators were hurt in Monday's clashes, three of them "seriously". Five Serbs were arrested for taking part in the clashes, according to Kosovo police.

Yesterday, an AFP journalist saw Nato peacekeepers in full riot gear stopping several hundred Serbs from entering Zvecan town hall.



Nato soldiers and International military police secure the area near Zvecan, northern Kosovo yesterday, a day following clashes with Serb protesters demanding the removal of recently elected Albanian mayors. (AFP)

Has there finally been progress in treating schizophrenia?

For decades there has been almost no improvement in the medical treatment of schizophrenia, one of the most serious and devastating of all mental illnesses, but recent advances have raised hopes of progress.

The condition often only hits the headlines after violent attacks by sufferers, such as a schizophrenic patient who stabbed a nurse to death last week in the French city of Reims. But French psychiatrist Sonia Dollfus emphasised that such cases of violence by people with schizophrenia are "extremely rare".

"All the work done over the years trying to de-stigmatisate this disease — it is swept away in 24 hours," Dollfus told AFP.

Around one in every 300 people worldwide are affected by schizophrenia, according to the World Health Organisation. It causes a wide range of distressing delusional disorders, which vary in intensity between patients but often hugely disrupts their lives.

At least 5% of schizophrenia patients are estimated to die by suicide. The condition is usually treated with a combination of anti-psychotic drugs, social support for reintegration, and psychological therapy.

Scottish psychiatrist Robin Murray, who has spent decades researching schizophrenia, told AFP that when it came to medication, "treatment has not changed dramatically" over

the last 20 or 30 years.

He added that psychological therapy had improved in that time. But unlike numerous other mental disorders — particularly neurotic conditions — taking serious drugs remains the cornerstone in treating schizophrenia.

For drugs, there has been a "blank period since the 2010s, when pharmaceutical laboratories really withdrew from psychiatry," Dollfus said.

But there has been some innovation recently, she added.

One development have been apps that can track patients' progress, ensure timely follow-up sessions and contact psychiatrists if necessary. Another is a new treatment

approved by the US Food and Drug Administration last month.

The treatment, developed by the Israeli pharmaceutical firm Teva and France's MedinCell, involves the drug risperidone which has long been used for schizophrenia.

It has traditionally been prescribed as a daily pill, but the new treatment is administered via injection, allowing the drug to be gradually released in the body over several weeks.

This makes it impossible for patients to miss a daily pill.

Interruptions to medication, often brought about by the psychosis the illness causes, are a common problem in treating schizophrenia. For example, the attacker in Reims had been off his medication,

according to several sources.

This new way of administering an old medication is not the kind of revolution that a new drug would represent. But progress may soon be made in that area.

Dollfus said that some drugs currently being investigated are "really interesting" because they work in a different way than those of the past.

Traditionally, anti-psychotic drugs used to treat schizophrenia aim to block the action of dopamine, a molecule that acts as a chemical messenger in the brain.

However, dopamine seems to play a complex role in schizophrenia — some patients can have excessive levels in some respects and

insufficient levels in others.

Traditional anti-psychotic drugs, which tend to work well at stopping certain symptoms such as hallucinations, do not help in other areas, such as the loss of willpower or struggles with language and speech.

Recent research has focused on finding other molecules which regulate rather than block dopamine, while also acting on other areas thought to be involved in schizophrenia.

These treatments, such as one that targets a protein called TAAR1, are still some way away from being available to patients.

But the TAAR1 drug has had positive results from the most advanced stage of trials, known as phase 3.

Ashghal taking effort to make Qatar a greener place: official

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) is striving to make Qatar a greener place while focusing on sustainability and environmental protection, Jasmine al-Sheikh, project design manager at the Supervisory Committee of Beautification of Roads and Public Places in Qatar, has said.

Speaking to *Gulf Times* at Project Qatar 2023, al-Sheikh noted that Ashghal's infrastructure development and beautification projects are embodied with measures to ensure sustainability, with recycled and locally made projects getting due consideration.

"The elements of sustainability are tangible in the recently completed beautification projects, including the West Bay North Beach, Ras Bu Abboud Beach Development and Doha Central Development and Beautification projects," she said, adding that heritage features are taken into account.

"We also make plans to preserve the past and heritage during the development of new areas, while also adding to their aesthetic



The Ashghal stand at Project Qatar 2023, Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

features," al-Sheikh added.

Regarding the reliance on locally made products, she said all of Ashghal's projects

promote Qatar-made products and manufacturers through its small-scale Qatari contractors initiative, Ta'heel.



Jasmine al-Sheikh.

She added that the use of modern technology is being promoted while trying to achieve digital transformation in all of the authority's projects.



The Hisense pavilion at Project Qatar 2023.

Hisense the official HVAC sponsor of Project Qatar 2023

Global consumer electronics and white goods manufacturer Hisense, in partnership with Modern Home, the premium destination for the best electronics, beauty, watches and jewellery brands in Qatar, has announced its participation as the Official HVAC Sponsor of Project Qatar 2023, which concludes tomorrow (Thursday).

Taking place at the Doha Exhibition & Convention Centre, the prominent construction exhibition in the region has a rich 20-year history of supporting Qatar's construction sector.

Hisense is displaying at the event its latest air conditioning products for both residential and light commercial construction segments, coupled with its distinctive services and solutions.

At the Hisense pavilion visitors can gain insights from the brand's experts about the special features of its portable, window, split, ducted, cassette and floor-standing air conditioners, a statement explained.

"Hisense strives to be the world's most reliable brand, drawing on to its decades of rich brand heritage and prioritising customer satisfaction by developing customer-centred brands, products, and marketing strategies," the statement said. "Its commitment extends to intelligent and eco-friendly manufacturing, continuously introducing green and energy-saving products."

"Hisense establishes a strong brand presence in the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) industry, emphasising professionalism and comprehensiveness," it added. "In addition to its B2B (business to business) solutions, the brand offers a wide variety of reliable products including TV and audio, Laser TVs and home appliances."

Hisense Middle East & Africa president Jason Ou stated: "We are honoured to be associated with this prominent exhibition and partner with Modern Home to contribute to the success of Project Qatar 2023."

"HVAC solutions are an integral part of successful developments and projects, and we are proud to be one of the best global companies to provide world-class products and solutions that meet the requirements of the new era of construction and welfare living," he said. "Together with Modern Home, we are making life easier and more comfortable for our customers here in Qatar and thus growing within an ambitious expansion plan. We welcome visitors to explore our latest solutions and unique services at our pavilion."

Modern Home chairman and managing director Bader al-Darwish said: "We take great pride in our partnership with Hisense as sponsors of the leading Project Qatar 2023 exhibition, where we are pleased to showcase the cutting-edge HVAC services in Qatar."

"This collaboration reaffirms our dedication to providing our customers with exceptional products, services, and solutions while actively contributing to the progress of our nation and the well-being of our community," he said. "Anticipating a fruitful event, we eagerly await the opportunity to serve our clients and make a concrete impact on Qatar's business landscape by delivering best-in-class technology that resonates with local demands."

Through its dedicated store in Lagoona Mall, Hisense offers a wide range of products.

Project Qatar showcases new trends in construction sector

Industry experts share insights at panel discussion

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Project Qatar 2023 has garnered global interest as influential representatives from diverse Chambers of Commerce unite to create a dynamic platform for the exchange of knowledge and industry insights, it is learnt.

The significance of sharing expertise and market knowledge among organisers and participants, in addition to highlighting the importance of collaboration among key players during this critical period of Qatar's development, has been highlighted at the event.

A panel discussion on *New Trends in Qatar Construction Sector*, organised by the Italian Chamber of Commerce, the Italian Trade Agency, the German Business Council Qatar (GBCQ), the Turkish Business Association (TBA), the German Industry and Commerce Office (AHK), and the American, French, and Spanish Chambers of Commerce in Qatar, in collaboration with IFP Qatar, brought together experts who introduced the latest trends in the sector, including sustainable practices and 3D printing.



(From left) Chambers of Commerce chairpersons Evre Senocak (TBA), David Quintanilla Camara (Spain), Sandrine Leacauoruz (France), Ille Ajra (AHK), Henning Zimmerman (GBCQ), and Palma Libotte (Italian Chamber) with moderator Craig Richardson, also the technical director at Parsons, along with panellists Copasa country manager Luis Carlos Aranda, Siemens head of Energy Performance Services Wael Badawy, and Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm legal counsel Paraskevoulia Ntai. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Industry leaders also shared insights and perspectives at the talk, guiding participants toward emerging opportunities.

Prior to the talk, attendees had the opportunity to network with industry experts.

The event also attracted selected international companies exhibiting at Project Qatar, offering them the chance to gain valuable market knowledge and explore potential collaborations in the construction industry.

Palma Libotte, the president of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Qatar, told reporters on the sidelines of the talk that Project

Qatar, which has been a cornerstone exhibition in Qatar for the past 15 years, has undergone improvements to enhance sector focus, enabling attendees to navigate the exhibition with ease.

She noted that the addition of panel discussions and conferences has further enriched the event, providing an additional platform for knowledge sharing and engagement.

Libotte emphasised the active role of international business associations in facilitating connections and providing invaluable support to visiting companies, as well as underlining the positive

impact of exchanging information and fostering bilateral relationships between countries.

According to the organisers, Project Qatar serves as a testament to the importance of proactive market engagement, as companies explore Qatar's burgeoning construction sector.

With a concerted effort to stay informed and capitalise on ongoing projects, international businesses can position themselves strategically in this dynamic market.

Recognising Qatar's rapid development in recent years and its potential to shift directions



swiftly was also underscored at the talk, stressing the need for a comprehensive understanding of the market to seize opportunities effectively.

Alfardan Sports Motors launches all-new Alfa Romeo Tonale

Alfardan Sports Motors, the official importer of Alfa Romeo in Qatar, unveiled the all-new Tonale SUV at an event yesterday at Alfa Romeo Showroom, Medina Central, The Pearl Island.

The all-new Tonale is described as the epitome of Alfa Romeo's "metamorphosis" into a new era of mobility.

Distinguished by its two unique trims – the Ti and Veloce – the Tonale integrates striking stylistic enhancements, creating a distinct and cohesive family resemblance that further underscores its captivating Italian design.

The Ti trim is defined externally with a satin chrome V front bezel, 18" dark finish diamond cut alloy wheels with coloured Alfa Romeo centre wheel caps, a gloss-black body kit

with satin side and front inserts, and black painted mirror caps.

Inside are sporty black cloth upholstery, a driver's seat with four-way electric lumbar adjustment, 60/40 split rear seats with a sport leather steering wheel with start button mark out the Ti.

The Veloce builds on this with a dark miron V front bezel, Veloce badging and body kit, matt side and front inserts, gloss black window surrounds, privacy glass and 19" dark finish diamond cut alloy wheels with monochrome Alfa Romeo centre wheel caps and red Brembo brake calipers.

The Alfa Romeo Tonale offers a distinctive, sensual and forward-looking design, extolling new stylistic elements destined to remain as points of reference in the development of

the Alfa Romeo line-up: 5-hole wheel rims, the cluster in the "telescopic" instrument panel, the 3-spoke sports steering wheel, and the sine-curve headlights.

The "3+3" headlights with new Full-LED Adaptive Matrix evoke the proud look of the SZ Zagato or the Proteo concept car.

In a world exclusive, Tonale debuts non-fungible token (NFT) technology, a true innovation in the automotive sector.

Alfa Romeo is the first automaker to link a car with an NFT digital certificate.

The technology is based on the "blockchain card" concept, a confidential and non-modifiable record of the main stages in the life of an individual vehicle.

With the customer's consent, the NFT will record vehicle data, generating a certificate that can be used as a guarantee that the car has been properly maintained, with a positive impact on its residual value.

The major new features in the Alfa Romeo Tonale include built-in Amazon Alexa voice assistant features.

The infotainment system featuring a customisable Android operating system and 4G connectivity, it also offers content, functionality and services that are always kept up to date.

The system includes a fully digital 12.3" screen, the main 10.25" touchscreen unit, and a smooth, sophisticated multitasking interface, keeping everything at a glance without distracting your attention from the road.

Totalling 22.5", the two large Full TFT screens are best-in-class in the segment.

Technology is also at the service of safety and comfort: level 2 auto-



Alfardan Sports Motors officials with the all-new Tonale (**supplied picture**).

mous driving, with new Advanced Driver Assistance Systems.

These include "Intelligent Adaptive Cruise Control", "Lane Centering" and "Traffic Jam Assist" – which automatically adjust speed and trajectory, keeping the car in the middle of the lane and at a distance from the vehicle in front, thus ensuring safety and comfort.

The all-new Tonale offers a technologically advanced 2.0-litre turbo-charged inline four-cylinder engine, releasing 268hp and 400Nm of torque, achieving 0 to 100kph in 6.5 seconds.

Tonale stands as a benchmark in the segment in terms of driving dynamics. It ensures sports car-like impeccable dynamic behaviour, proven by the best weight distribution and the most direct steering in its segment, as well as the fully independent MacPherson suspension system, with Frequency Selective Damping shock absorbers



The all-new Tonale at the launch event yesterday. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

with "Dual Stage Valve" active suspension with electronically controlled damping.

"This remarkable SUV embodies the essence of Alfa Romeo's heritage and commitment to delivering unri-

valled performance and luxury," Alfardan Sports Motors general manager Charly Dagher commented. "The all-new Tonale will captivate automotive enthusiasts and elevate their driving experience to new heights."



The all-new Tonale from the rear.