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December 5, 2023
Jumada I 21, 1445 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

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Amir to welcome GCC leaders today

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will lead the well-wishers to welcome leaders of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) countries, upon their arrival today in the country to participate in the 44th session of the GCC Supreme Council, hosted by Doha. **(QNA)**

Amir, Dutch PM discuss ties, Gaza developments

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Mark Rutte bilateral relations and ways to enhance them. This came during a phone call, the Amir received yesterday from the prime minister of the kingdom of the Netherlands. His Highness the Amir discussed with the prime minister a number of regional and international developments of mutual concern, especially those related to the developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. In this regard, Rutte thanked His Highness the Amir for his efforts as well as Qatar's mediation endeavours to release the hostages. **(QNA)**

UK raises minimum salary for skilled migrant worker visa

Britain's embattled Conservative government unveiled a raft of measures yesterday aimed at cracking down on record levels of regular migration, including raising the minimum salary threshold for a skilled worker visa. Immigration is set to be a key issue in a general election expected next year. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has pledged to reduce new arrivals. Interior minister James Cleverly said his plan would result in 300,000 fewer people coming to the UK in the coming years. Cleverly said skilled foreign workers wanting a UK visa would have to earn £38,700 (\$48,860), up from £26,200. **Page 13**

'US ex-ambassador spied for Cuba'

The United States yesterday charged a former ambassador to Bolivia with spying for Cuba for over 40 years, in what the Justice Department described as one of the highest-reaching and longest-lasting infiltrations of the US government by a foreign agent. Victor Manuel Rocha, who served as US ambassador to Bolivia from 2000-2002, was charged with committing multiple federal crimes including acting as an illegal foreign agent. **Page 15**

Swiss bank hides \$5.6bn from IRS

Swiss private bank Banque Pictet has admitted to helping US taxpayers hide more than \$5.6bn from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and has entered into a deferred prosecution agreement with the Justice Department, federal prosecutors said. According to prosecutors, US taxpayers with Pictet accounts in Switzerland and elsewhere evaded about \$50.6mn in taxes between 2008 and 2014. As part of the agreement, Banque Pictet agreed to pay \$122.9mn to the US Treasury.

Qatar, Turkiye to strengthen ties

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and President of the Republic of Turkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan co-chaired the meeting of the 9th session of the Qatari-Turkish Supreme Strategic Committee at Lusail Palace yesterday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Highness the Amir welcomed the president of Turkiye, and the accompanying delegation, wishing them a pleasant stay in Qatar and for the strategic relations between the two countries to further grow and develop in various fields to meet the aspirations of the two fraternal peoples.

His Highness the Amir praised the level of the Qatari-Turkish co-operation in vital fields, particularly in the investment sectors, trade exchange, tourism, and culture.

In turn, the Turkish president thanked His Highness the Amir for the warm reception and generous hospitality, looking forward for the discussions with him to contribute to strengthening and developing strategic co-operation between Qatar and Turkiye. Erdogan hoped that the discussions would push the strategic relations between the two countries to broader horizons.

During the session, bilateral relations and ways to strengthen and develop them in various fields were discussed, in addition to discussing key regional and international issues and developments, especially the latest developments in Gaza and the



Amir, Erdogan co-chair 9th session of Qatari-Turkish Supreme Committee

occupied Palestinian territories. The session was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Head of the State Security Abdullah bin Mohamed al- Khulaifi, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin

Smaikh al-Marri, HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai, HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi, and a number of senior officials. On the Turkish side, it was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar, Minister of Treasury and Finance Mehmet Simsek, Minister of National Defence Yasar Guler, Minister of Industry and Technology Mehmet Fatih Kacir, Minister of Trade Omer Bolat, Deputy Chairman of Justice and Development Party



Amir, Erdogan witness signing of agreements

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and President of Republic of Turkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan witnessed the signing of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoU) between the two countries at Lusail Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir and President Erdogan

witnessed the signing of the joint statement of the ninth meeting of the Qatari-Turkish Supreme Strategic Committee, and an MoU on conducting political consultations on issues of common concern between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkiye. **Page 3**

Omer Celik, and a number of ministers and senior officials.

Prior to the meeting, His Highness the Amir and the president held a bilateral meeting during which they exchanged opinions and viewpoints on a number of issues of common concern.

His Highness the Amir hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of the president and the accompanying delegation.

President Erdogan was accorded an official reception ceremony upon his arrival at the Lusail Palace. **Pages 3, 4**

Israeli air strikes hit southern Gaza

Palestinian massacre toll rises, 70% of them children and women

Reuters
Gaza

Intense Israeli air strikes hit the south of the Gaza Strip yesterday, killing and wounding dozens of Palestinians, including in areas where Israel had told people to seek shelter, residents and journalists on the ground said.

Israeli troops and tanks also pressed the ground campaign against Hamas fighters in the south of the enclave after having largely gained control of the now-devastated north.

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed to Israel to avoid further action that would make the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza worse, and to spare civilians from more suffering.

Early yesterday, Israel ordered Palestinians to leave parts of Gaza's main southern city, Khan Younis. But residents said that areas which they had been told to go to were also coming under fire.

Israel's military posted a map on social media platform X with around a quarter of Khan Younis marked off in yellow as territory that must be evacuated at once.

In the territory's northern part, the official Palestinian news agency WAFA said at least 50 people were killed in an Israeli air



Displaced Palestinians who fled from Khan Yunis, sit outside makeshift shelters at a camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

strike that hit two schools sheltering displaced people in the Daraj neighbourhood of Gaza City.

Separately, the health ministry said more than 16,000 Palestinians, 70% of them women or under 18s, have now been killed in Israeli bombardments of the Hamas-ruled enclave in eight weeks of warfare. Thousands more are missing and feared buried in rubble.

About 900 people have been killed in Israeli air strikes since the truce ended on Friday, Gaza health authorities said. **Page 12**

Qatar hosts 44th GCC summit today

QNA
Doha

Qatar has completed preparations to host the 44th Summit of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Supreme Council, set to be held today.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will lead the well-wishers to welcome leaders of the GCC countries, upon their arrival on Tuesday in the country to participate in the summit.

The 44th session is being held during special circumstances at the regional and international levels, as the summit is expected to address the most pressing regional and international issues, notably the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip since Oct 7, in addition to other economic, political and security files, as well as the summit's most prominent topic of strengthening relations among the GCC countries, increasing co-ordination among them and crystallising a unified GCC vision on various regional and international issues.

Observers expect that the 44th summit will provide a strong push and renewed start to the GCC work path, based on Qatar's keenness and firm approach to supporting GCC's progress and preserving its unity and cohesion, as it stands as a strong, integrated



and indispensable system in the face of the regional challenges.

A number of intellectuals and writers affirmed that the historical and cultural unity that brings together the peoples of the region represents a source of inspiration for unity and strengthens the bonds of brotherhood among the Gulf peoples.

The 44th session will discuss several important issues, notably the completion of the Gulf Electricity Interconnection project, which has seen rapid progress, the most prominent of which is the GCC-Iraq Electrical Interconnection Project.

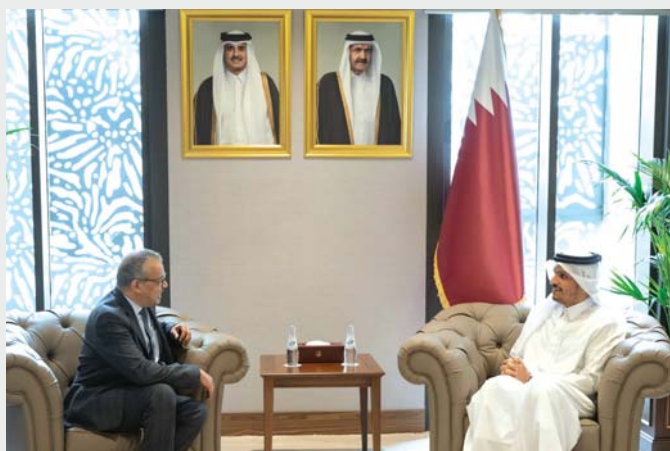
The Gulf Electricity Interconnection Project represents an aspect of co-operation among the region's fossil fuel-rich countries, aimed at supporting network stability during peak times. The project has expanded to other Arab countries, starting with Iraq, with aspirations to extend to Europe.

This comes amid expectations of a slowdown in the growth of electricity demand in the GCC countries until 2025, opening opportunities for the region to export surplus electricity.

Many media reports have indicated that a Pan-GCC visa is on the table for approval by Gulf leaders during the summit. GCC Secretary-General Jassim al-Budaiwi first announced the Unified GCC Tourist Visa Project at the 40th meeting of the Interior Ministers of the GCC. **Pages 6, 7, 14**



PM meets WHO director-general



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who is visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed aspects of co-operation between Qatar and WHO, along with a range of topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

Sheikha Moza meets WHO chief



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, and Education Above All Foundation met with Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. During their meeting, the two discussed the catastrophic state of the health system and hospitals in Gaza, due to the ongoing Israeli aggression. They also discussed strengthening existing relations between the foundations and the WHO. **(QNA)**
PICTURE: AR al-Baker

Al-Muraikhi meets Honduran FM



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with the visiting Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Eduardo Enrique Reina. The meeting discussed bilateral relations. **(QNA)**

Amir receives message from Korean president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a written message from President of the Republic of Korea Yoon Suk-yeol pertaining to bilateral relations. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received the message during his meeting with ambassador of Korea to Qatar Lee Joon-ho. **(QNA)**

Climate goals integral part of NHRC: al-Attiyah

QNA
Dubai

HE the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah underscored the significant role played by the NHRC in addressing climate change. She said that the committee has made climate goals an integral part of the core of its strategic plan and its interaction with various human rights challenges and concerns.

She added that what encouraged NHRC to do so is the United Nations' recognition of the right to enjoy a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment, as well as the approval of Qatar's constitution and national legislation for this right.

During a symposium held on the sidelines of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, HE al-Attiyah pointed out that such conferences constitute an opportunity for human rights society for dialogue on the most pressing contemporary challenges and think about the best practices that would provide solutions based on the human rights approach and the preservation of human dignity, and behind them the sustainable development goals, thanking the host country for the good organisation.

She stressed her appreciation and pride in the global recognition achieved by the Global Alli-



HE Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah

ance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) regarding the role of these institutions in relation to climate change in accordance with Human Rights Council Resolution No 51/31 issued in 2022.

HE al-Attiyah noted GANHRI's efforts to obtain observer status in the COP28, adding that this strengthens their participation in climate talks and decision-making related to climate justice. She underscored that the conference represents a glimmer of hope for obtaining this status, in recognition of their ability to confront the challenges associated with climate change contexts that do not exclude anyone.

She added that the shared responsibility and the common destiny of humanity require devoting the values of partnership, developing expertise, and building on the accumulation of experiences to achieve the best for humanity.

HE al-Attiyah expressed her

hope that the symposium would provide a wealth of knowledge that would enable them to continuously develop their work, as well as build new partnerships that expand the circle of those demanding the advancement of human rights and sustainable development.

NHRC organised the International Conference on Climate Change and Human Rights in co-operation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Development Programme (UNDP), League of Arab States, and Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), with the participation of more than 250 experts and stakeholders from different countries around the globe, including policymakers, academics, lawyers, human rights experts, climate experts and ministries relevant to climate change, as well as ministries of environment, justice, energy, water, renewable energy, climate, development and economics, media, research centres, companies and international organisations.

The conference issued 40 recommendations presented by the Doha Declaration to the concerned parties and international community institutions, which included general recommendations, recommendations for national human rights institutions, recommendations for the UN system, recommendations for the business sector, recommendations for civil society, in addition to practical proposals and recommendations.

NCSA president meets Pakistan's minister



HE the President of the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) Engineer Abdulrahman bin Ali al-Farahid al-Maliki met in Doha yesterday with Pakistani Minister for IT and Telecommunications Dr Umar Saif. They discussed bilateral relations in cybersecurity and ways to develop and strengthen the partnership in this field. **(QNA)**

Shura Council discusses draft budget for '24

QNA
Doha

THE Shura Council held its weekly meeting yesterday under the chairmanship of its Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. At the beginning of the sitting held at the Council's Tamim bin Hamad Hall, the Council welcomed the country's hosting of the 44th Supreme Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) scheduled on Tuesday, appreciating in this context the keenness of the GCC leaders to strengthen joint Gulf action, in a way that contributes to achieving development and prosperity for the GCC countries and the aspirations of their citizens.

In another context, the Council strongly condemned the resumption of Israeli occupation forces' barbaric aggression against the Gaza Strip, after the end of the pause reached thanks to Qatari efforts, stressing that the international community's failure to take a firm position obligating Israel to respect international law would exacerbate the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza and encourage the occupying entity to continue its tyranny.

After that, HE the Secretary-General of the Shura Council Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al-Fadala read out the agenda, and the minutes of the previous session were approved, as the Council unanimously agreed that the session would be confidential. During the session, the Council discussed the state's draft general budget for the fiscal year 2024, in the presence of HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari along with a number of the ministry's senior officials.



The Shura Council in session.



During the discussions, HE the Minister of Finance provided a comprehensive explanation of the draft general budget and answered the questions and inquiries of the Council members, related to the general budget's sections. HE al-Ghanem hailed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's wise policy manifested in His Highness' special attention to the sections of the draft budget for the fiscal year 2024.

The Shura Council members highlighted the foundations of the general budget project, most notably the interest in the main sectors such as health and education, and the continued implementation of

vital and infrastructure projects, in a way that ensures the achievement of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

In their interventions, the Council members appreciated the country's achievements and keenness to enhance the citizen well-being, in accordance with the Amir's sound directives. The members also voiced hopes the country would achieve further progress and development under the Amir's wise leadership.

The Council also discussed a government bill on public and private state property and referred it to the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee to scrutinise and submit a report on it to the Council.

QU, QLC join hands to advance research

Qatar University (QU) and Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), marking a significant stride towards co-operation and the utilisation of shared capabilities for the advancement of both institutions. The primary focus will be on fostering joint efforts in research and related fields.

QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari and QLC director Abdullah Mohamed al-Binali formally signed the agreement, which highlights a committed exchange of expertise encompassing information, publications, periodicals, studies, statistics, and data. QLC's managing director and vice-chairman Sheikh Dr Abdullah bin Ali bin Saud al-Thani was present.

The MoU highlights a collaborative approach to conducting studies, conferences, meetings, training programmes, and research initiatives. The agreement also encompasses other pertinent areas of mutual interest, ensuring a comprehensive scope of co-operation.

This strategic alliance emphasises the pivotal role that ministries, authorities, and public institutions play in assisting the country and society. The overarching goal is to exchange information and expertise, elevating the performance efficiency of both parties in alignment with stringent quality standards, specialised legislation, and applicable regulations within Qatar.



The agreement-signing ceremony.

QU remains steadfast in its commitment to bolster and fortify collaboration with the QLC, spanning scientific, technological, research, and administrative fields, a statement added.

President Erdogan accorded official reception



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was accorded an official reception ceremony upon his arrival at the Lusail Palace. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of the visiting president and the accompanying delegation.

Amir, Turkish president witness signing of agreements and MoUs

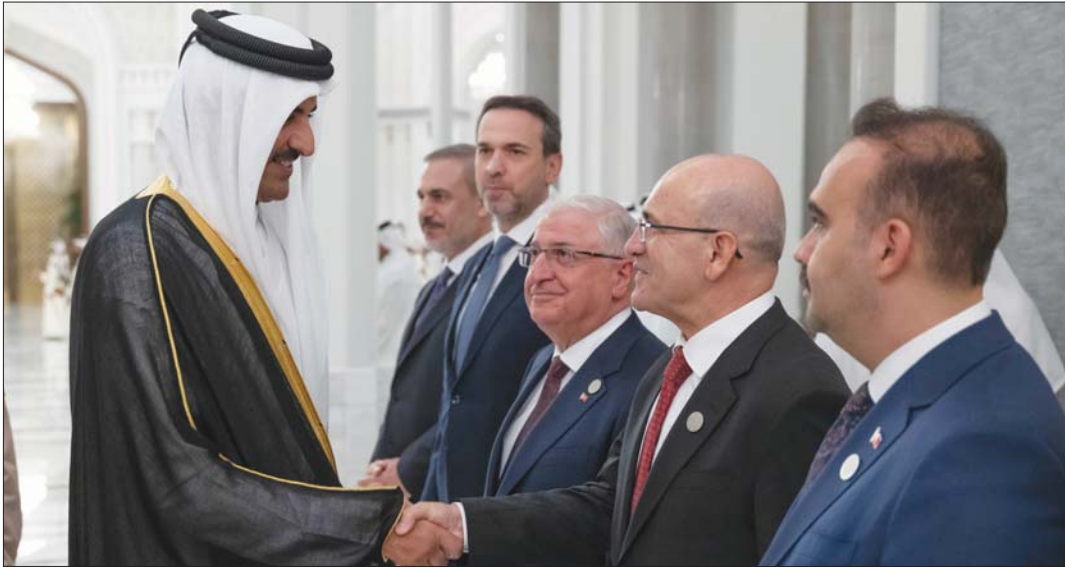


His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan witnessed the signing of a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoU) between the two countries at Lusail Palace yesterday. They witnessed the signing of the joint statement of the ninth meeting of the Qatari-Turkish Supreme Strategic Committee, and an MoU on conducting political consultations on issues of common concern between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye.

The two leaders also witnessed the signing of the third executive programme of the MoU for co-operation in the cultural field for the years 2024-2025 between the government of Qatar and Türkiye, an MoU on co-operation in the field of labour, an MoU for co-operation in the field of charitable and humanitarian work between the Charitable Activities Regulatory Authority in Qatar and the Turkish Ministry of Interior, the co-operation protocol between Lusail University and the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye and an agreement in the military framework between Qatar and Türkiye.

His Highness the Amir and the Turkish president also witnessed the signing of an MoU for scientific co-operation between Hamad Bin Khalifa University and the Turkish Academy of Sciences, a strategic co-operation agreement between Hamad Bin Khalifa University and the Council of the Turkish Scientific Research and Technology Center, an MoU between the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in Qatar and the Ministry of Industry and Technology in Türkiye for co-operation in the field of communications and information technology, an MoU on co-operation between the Ministry of Finance of Qatar and the Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Türkiye, an MoU of co-operation in the field of investment promotion between the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Investment Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, and a memorandum of understanding on bilateral co-operation.

The signing ceremonies were attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and a number of ministers and senior officials. On the Turkish side, the ceremonies were attended by ministers and senior officials, members of the official delegation accompanying the Turkish President. (QNA)



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President Erdogan visits Expo 2023 Doha



President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha, and was familiarised with its most important facilities and events. The Turkish president was accompanied during his visit by HE the Minister of Municipality and Chairman of the national committee for hosting the Expo 2023 Doha Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, and a number of ministers from the delegation accompanying him, as well as senior officials. The Turkish president signed the register of VIP visitors and planted a Sidra tree in the International Zone of Expo 2023 Doha as a symbol of co-operation and friendship between Qatar and Türkiye. The president and the accompanying delegation also visited the Qatari and Turkish pavilions where they viewed the most important modern agricultural techniques the technological equipment, and learned about the key initiatives made by the two countries in the field of sustainability. The current edition of Expo 2023 Doha seeks to find innovative solutions to turn challenges into opportunities by using modern technologies, reducing water consumption, and at the same time preserving natural resources, in addition to putting technology and innovation in the service of food security, and spreading environmental awareness to ensure sustainability. **(QNA)**

Turkish president arrives in Doha



President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived yesterday in Doha on an official visit to the country. The president and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Doha International Airport by HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah and ambassador of Türkiye to Qatar Dr Mustafa Goksu. **(QNA)**

Qatar, Türkiye constantly strive to widen areas of co-operation

QNA
Ankara

Ambassador of Qatar to Türkiye Sheikh Mohamed bin Nasser bin Jassim al-Thani has said that the Qatari-Turkish bilateral relations are known for their excellence, and the two countries worked continuously to preserve and consolidate this distinction and find other horizons that increase areas of co-operation. In exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he indicated that the holding of the ninth meeting of the Qatari-Turkish Supreme Strategic Committee affirms the two countries' commitment to develop and strengthen relations in various fields and move them towards broader horizons for the benefit of the peoples of the two brotherly countries, pointing out that a number of agreements are scheduled to be signed during this meeting. With regard to the economic as-



Sheikh Mohamed bin Nasser bin Jassim al-Thani

pect, Sheikh Mohamed pointed out that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries witnessed a growth of about 17% to reach approximately \$2.2bn in 2022 compared to \$1.8bn in 2021, highlighting that hundreds of Turkish companies are active in the Qatari market, and in return, many Qatari companies are active in Türkiye with Qatari capital amounting to \$33.2bn, in addition to the Qatari private sector, which has recently grown significantly in many invest-

ment sectors supporting the Turkish economy. On the political aspect, he explained that there is existing joint co-ordination between the two countries on many important files in the region, in addition to common visions on many issues, affirming the importance of this, especially with the great efforts made by Qatar in resolving disputes, and its well-known role in mediations aimed at ending conflicts and establishing peace, security, and stability. The ambassador of Qatar to Türkiye also referred to the dynamic movement and great current momentum in Turkish-Arab relations in general and Turkish-Gulf relations in particular, which can be read in the mutual visits, signed agreements, joint committees, and economic forums, the most recent of which was the GCC-Turkiye Economic Forum, and the 14th Turkish-Arab Economic Forum (TAF'2023) in Istanbul in Nov. 2023.

Qatar-Turkiye share strategic ties and identical political visions

QNA
Doha

In reinforcing the close strategic partnership between the two countries and the endeavours to push it forward to new horizons, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has made an official visit to the country within the framework of the deep fraternal relations between the two countries. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani welcomed his brother, the Turkish president, to discuss the developing strategic relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them in a variety of fields, in addition to sharing perspectives on the current regional and international developments of common concern that serve the common interest, as

well as the security and stability of the region and the world. During this visit, it is anticipated that the 9th session of the Qatari-Turkish Supreme Strategic Committee will be convened in the presence of His Highness the Amir and the Turkish president. The visit coincides with the two countries' celebration this year of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between them, as 2023 marks the 100th anniversary since the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. The visit and the talks that will be held during it are anticipated to give impetus to bilateral relations and upgrade them to the highest levels, as well as elevate the level of trade exchange between the two countries to advanced figures and rates. Since the signing of the joint declaration regarding the establishment of the Qatari-Turkish Supreme Strategic Committee on Dec 19, 2014, whose members have been converging each year since 2015, nearly 100 documents were signed which primarily aim to optimise the co-operation level at a variety of sectors and fields through this strategic committee. In July 2023, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and his brother President Erdogan, held official session of talks in Doha during which they confirmed the strong desire of the two countries to deepen bilateral co-operation through reinforcing trade exchange and economic ties, as the two nations underscored their commitment to bolster their positions on the global economic map. Stemming from this principle, the two sides agreed to intensify the work of the joint technical teams to determine the investment opportunities of the shared benefits, especially in the fields of export financing, tourism, clean energy, and other areas of common interest. There is no doubt that the results of the intensive shared visits between the leaders and senior officials of the two countries, and the regular meetings of the Supreme Strategic Committee, reflect the common desire to deepen bilateral relations and the full, permanent co-ordination between the two parties regarding prominent global issues worldwide.

QNA
Doha

Ambassador of Türkiye to Qatar Dr Mustafa Goksu hailed the bilateral relations between the two countries as strong and solid, saying that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's current visit to Doha would further push bilateral strategic co-operation forward, which would positively impact the two countries' regional partnership and common understanding on regional and international issues. Speaking with Qatar News Agency (QNA), he added that President Erdogan's current visit coincides with the work of the 44th Gulf Co-operation Council Summit in Doha, and that the president would discuss with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani the latest developments in Gaza, based on Qatar's outstanding diplomatic role in the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip. The visit also sets sights on economic goals, especially with Türkiye scheduled to host the GCC-Turkiye Economic Forum in Istanbul from Dec 11-13, the ambassador said, stressing the visit would play a vital role in strengthening brotherly relations, especially amid the sensitive regional and international developments, which make it important to co-ordinate positions between Türkiye and Qatar on multiple issues. Both countries adopt a common foreign policy based on supporting justice, promoting human values and the spirit of solidarity, which represents a source of hope for the oppressed in the region and worldwide, the ambassador said. Dr Mustafa Goksu highlighted the holding of the 9th session of the Türkiye-Qatar Supreme Strategic Committee in the presence of President Erdogan and His Highness the Amir. Since the launch of



Dr Mustafa Goksu

the Supreme Strategic Committee in 2014 as the most important high-level bilateral mechanism between Türkiye and Qatar, the two countries have sealed nearly 100 agreements on multiple sectors so far, he said. There are many new agreements, most notably in technology, culture, economy, education, the financial sector, industry, and defence industries, are to be concluded between the two countries on the sidelines of this session, he added. The ambassador hailed the Qatari-Turkiye strategic relations that have developed since they were launched in 1973. In July 2023, the two countries marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of relations, which have recently elevated from ordinary to strategic and covered multiple fields such as economy, industry, defence, security, investment, energy, culture, intellectual property, university, and youth. He voiced hopes the summit between the two leaders would elevate the strategic relations to broader horizons and make significant contributions to diversifying and deepening relations. Highlighting the economic co-operation as the most important pillar of the bilateral strategic relations between both countries, the envoy said the trade exchange volume recorded approximately US\$1.8bn by the end of 2022, amid efforts to elevate it to US\$5bn by 2025. With over 760 Turkish compa-

nies operating in Qatar, and about 200 Qatari companies in Türkiye, the volume of Qatari investments in Türkiye reached US\$33.2bn, and the Turkish construction companies implemented infrastructure projects in Qatar worth US\$22bn. A major investor in Türkiye, Qatar owns a 49.9-percent stake in BMC, Türkiye's largest manufacturer of commercial and military vehicles, as well as investing in the Istanbul Canal project, a megaproject planned to be implemented in the coming years. On the tourism level, the ambassador added, the number of Qatari tourists in Türkiye surged to 140,000 in 2022 from approximately 30,000 in 2016, an increase that contributed to the prosperity of the Turkish tourism sector, one of the most important economic sectors for the country. He also hailed the remarkable development in the existing military co-operation after the two sides sealed an agreement on military co-operation and defence industries in 2014 that took effect in 2017 after being approved by Türkiye's Grand National Assembly. The agreement allows both countries to exchange military expertise, develop military industries, and use each other's seaports, aircraft, airspace and military facilities. Commenting on the Qatari-Turkiye cultural co-operation, the ambassador hailed the inauguration of the Turkish Cultural Center (Yunus Emre Enstitüsü) in Doha in 2015, the 2018 agreement to exchange historical documents, scientific sources and cultural experiences, and a 2021 agreement between the Qatari National Library and the Nations Library on scientific, technical and cultural sectors. He added that the educational co-operation saw the opening of the first Turkish school in Qatar in 2016, noting that there are about 10 Turkish universities on the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE)'s list.

The two nations continue shared support in multiple fields, the latest one was demonstrated in the unwavering support in the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake that struck parts of Türkiye and Syria in February

The Qatari-Turkish relations have witnessed a qualitative evolution since its establishment in 1973 until culminated in the strategic partnership stage, and still the longstanding co-operation between the two countries is being reinforced day after day in light of the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and his brother President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The two nations continue shared support in multiple fields, the latest one was demonstrated in the unwavering support in the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake that struck parts of Türkiye and Syria in February. Qatar harnessed all capabilities to provide relief to those affected by this disaster. His Highness the Amir visited the Republic of Türkiye, where he met with the Turkish president to show Qatar's support for the Turkish and Syrian brotherly peoples at the highest level. Since the disaster, Türkiye has received over 1,000 tonnes of humanitarian assistance through more than 50 flights within the scope of the airbridge that Qatar established with Türkiye. The Qatari-Turkish container homes established in Hatay have become a significant sign of fraternity between the people of the two countries. The strategic partnership between Qatar and Türkiye is one of the most prominent and successful partnerships at the level of relations among nations, thanks to numerous factors and points of commonality and chiefly the orientations and principles that govern these relations and move them forward to achieve joint interests, bolster peace, stability and development, as well as the common visions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and his brother the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan concerning a variety of issues and solidarity

stances at various levels. In an economic context, Qatar and Türkiye share strong relations that witnessed tremendous prosperity in recent years in various fields and activities. These relations have culminated in agreements in the energy, infrastructure, manufacturing, military equipment, and tourism fields, as Türkiye is one of Qatar's most important trading partners, with the volume of trade exchange between the two countries in 2022 witnessing a growth of 18% to reach QR8bn, compared to QR6.8bn in 2021. There are approximately 200 companies with Qatari capital in Türkiye with a value of \$33.2bn. Meanwhile, more than 720 Turkish companies operate in Qatar, with a joint Qatari-Turkish capital, or Turkish 100% capital, in addition to 15 Turkish companies operating in the free zone in Qatar. The Qatar Investment Authority currently has three Mega projects in Türkiye. The growth of the trade volume between the two countries proves the upgraded bilateral relations between the two countries, especially with the existence of direct navigation lines, along with an array of agreements signed between them with abundant shared investments. Qatar is considered one of the largest foreign investors in Türkiye and, in recent years, the Qatari private sector has recorded a remarkable presence in several Turkish investment fields such as real estate, contracting, tourism, manufacturing, media, finance, and health. Recently the Qatari investments have pivoted towards ports and technological sector with the investments reaching approximately \$33bn by the end of 2020. Qatar Chamber constantly hosts many Turkish delegations and participated in several important Turkish economic events, during which it discussed ways to enhance trade and investment co-operation between the two countries. The relations between Qatari businessmen and their Turkish counterparts are described as distinct, as each side participates in all events and exhibitions organised by the other side, and there are joint investments by Qatari and Turkish businessmen in a number of countries of the world.

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Al Tala'a winners crowned

The competitions of Al Tala'a (release of falcons to hunt a Houbara bustard bird) categories at Al Gannas Qatari Society falcons championship 2023 concluded yesterday at the Marmi, the Sealine Area with the crowning of the winners, while the falcons championship is set to go on until December 9.



Smart City Expo Doha a remarkable success, says MCIT

The Smart City Expo Doha 2023, which attracted more than 4,500 visitors in-person and online from over 87 nationalities on November 29-30 at Expo 2023 Doha's Congress Centre at Al Bidda Park, was a remarkable success, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) said yesterday.

During the event – the third in the annual series – 85 local and international experts participated in 43 sessions, revealing new insights into creating thriving, next-generation cities and communities by harnessing emerging technology and the power of data.

More than 40 companies also showcased presentations around smart solutions on the Digital Enablement Platform.

“Through the success of this event, Qatar has firmly staked its claim to be a regional force in the global dialogue on the fostering of smart cities and sustainable urban initiatives,” said Reem Mohamed al-Mansoori, Assistant Undersecretary of Digital Industry Affairs, MCIT.

“Congress outcomes include the start of partnerships which are likely to result in pioneering and innovative approaches to the way we do business, work, learn and live in what promises to be an exciting and more sustainable and connected, data-driven future,” she added.

At the Smart City Expo Doha



More than 40 companies also showcased presentations around smart solutions on the Digital Enablement Platform.

2023, discussions centred on citizen-centric data governance to shape a progressive e-government landscape. The importance of cultural intelligence for inclusive and sustainable transformations in cognitive cities was highlighted as well. The event's overall objective was to advance e-governance and urban intelligence for the future.

Thani al-Malki, chief business officer at Ooredoo Qatar, said: “The event enabled us to demonstrate how with Ooredoo Qatar a range of businesses and customers can upgrade their world. As Qatar's leading telecommunications and ICT provider, the congress discussed a range of innovations designed to enrich peoples' digital lives through future-ready smart tech solutions for sustainable living in alignment with Qatar Vision 2030, and they reflected our commitment to integrating innovative solutions for a greener, more connected world.”

Commenting on this partnership, Khalid Ahmed al-Sada, senior executive vice-president – Group Corporate and Institutional Banking of QNB Group, said: “It is an honour to be the Official Sponsor of the Smart City Expo Doha 2023, one of the most important regional platforms specialised in intelligent management of future cities. Smart cities are the future, and we feel proud to be part of the State of Qatar's endeavours to become a leading smart city in the world. We have aligned our goals with ESG objectives and integrated ESG into our operations.”

The event also demonstrated growing cross-sector acceptance of the vital role of data and connectivity in forging a better world for all by attracting a powerful network of supporters, partners, and sponsors. Ooredoo was a diamond sponsor in the event, and QNB was the official bank.

QIC launches '3 Months Free Insurance' promo

Qatar Insurance Company (QIC) has announced the launch of its exclusive end-of-the-year car insurance promotion, allowing new motor customers to get three months of comprehensive car insurance for free.

With this offer, every new customer who purchases a comprehensive car policy will benefit from 12-month full insurance coverage for the price of nine months, a statement said yesterday.

Ongoing until February 29, 2024, QIC's new promotion can be availed when buying a new comprehensive policy through qic.car, directly through one of the company's 11 branches in Qatar, or through the company's call centre at 8000 742.

QIC also provides flexible payment options when purchasing car insurance poli-



Ahmed al-Jarboey

cies, including the instalment payment plan available in Qatar exclusively with QIC, allowing customers to pay their annual premium in 12 monthly instalments.

With a comprehensive QIC car policy, motorists get solid financial coverage against vari-

ous risks they may face on the roads, including coverage for the driver and passengers in the event of traffic accidents, losses and damages due to car theft, vandalism or fire.

Customers can enhance their basic policies with optional add-ons for further protection, including the agency repairs cover, off-road covers, the 24/7 roadside assistance service, the no spare parts depreciation cover, and get a courtesy car when filing claims and dropping their cars off for repairs.

Ahmed al-Jarboey, QIC chief operating officer – Qatar Operations, said: “We are happy to reward our customers once again with this exclusive end-of-the-year offer, and to allow new segments of motorists in Qatar to get the best insurance coverage at the best prices.

QF, Memac Ogilvy win several Mepra Awards 2023

Qatar Foundation (QF) and its communication partner Memac Ogilvy have won a string of honours at the 15th Annual Middle East Public Relations Association (Mepra) Awards, which recognises exceptional communications campaigns and professionals from across the region.

QF and Memac Ogilvy received five awards at the Mepra 2023 Awards Ceremony – four of which were gold – across a range of categories including Best Campaign in Qatar, Best Crisis Communication/Issues Management Strategy, and Best Sports and Recreation Campaign.

The awards celebrated QF's role, along with its communication partner, in managing the brand and reputation of one of the country's foremost institutions during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 by providing media with unique experiences, access to diverse Qatari voices, and expert commentators.

QF and Memac Ogilvy also received a bronze award for QF Voice, a media-facing platform that showcases expert commentators from across QF's centres specialising in diverse subjects who provide journalists with expert commentary and contribute to vital conversations on topics shaping the world.

“Throughout the months leading up to and including the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, QF was at the forefront of promoting its sporting, cultural, and social impact, as well as the essence of Qatar and its people, to a global audience,” said Leila Sibaey, ex-



QF and Memac Ogilvy win Mepra 2023 Awards.

ecutive director of communications, QF.

The awards won by QF and Memac Ogilvy are: Gold Awards – World Cup Campaigns; Best Campaign in Qatar – Managing the Global Narrative For the Most Discussed Event on the Planet the FIFA World Cup; Best Crisis Communication/Issues Management Strategy – Navigating the Uncertainty of the First Arab World Cup; Best Corporate Reputation – Defending the First Arab World Cup; Best Sport & Recreational Campaign – Managing the Global Narrative For The Most Discussed Event On The Planet, the FIFA World Cup; Bronze Award – QF Voice Campaign; Best Campaign in Qatar – Championing the Unique & Diverse Voices of QF.

Qatar's December calendar highlights a host of outdoor events

Qatar Tourism's (QT) December edition of the Qatar Calendar guide unveils a packed roster of events, featuring outdoor bazaars, the return of the Hot Air Balloon Festival, sports championships, art exhibitions and more.

Sheikha Noor Abdulla al-Thani, acting head of Tourism Events and Festivals Organising Section at QT, said: “This December, residents can look forward to a dynamic calendar that makes the most of Qatar's winter season.”

Residents can enjoy several bazaars and outdoor activities. Set against picturesque backdrops throughout the country, families can visit the Heen-at Salma Winter Bazaar (until December 9), MIA Bazaar (until March 9, 2024), and Torba Market (until April 27, 2024).

Some of Qatar's most popular annual events are also making a return this month: the Qatar Balloon Festival takes place from December 7 to 18 and invites guests to enjoy a ride with spectacular sunrise views over the city, while Darb Al Saai is set to take place from December 10 to 18, celebrating Qatar's history and heritage. Residents can also look forward to a Qatar National Day Celebration at Al Hazm on December 18.

Adrenaline seekers are in for a display of tricks, loops and freestyle kiting at the GKA 2023 Freestyle Kite World Cup Finals Qatar 2023 (December 5 – 9).

In addition, numerous sporting championships

ranging from cricket to handball will unfold this December, including: Al Gannas Society Championship (until December 9), Deaf International Cricket Council T20 World Cup Qatar 2023 (until December 12), GCC Billiards and Snooker Championship (until December 7), Beach Pro Tour (December 6-9), World Arabian Horse Championships (December 7-9), Qatar International Cup Grand Prix – Weightlifting (December 20-27), Qatar Men's International Tournament – Handball (December 29-January 3, 2024) and the King of the Court volleyball championship (December 13-16).

The latest edition of Qatar Calendar showcases art venues across the country hosting a variety of exhibitions and cultural events this month.

Film enthusiasts can enjoy Baraha Movie Nights (December 18-January 5, 2024) in Msheireb Downtown Doha and explore the Arab World's Cinema Exhibition: Intaj which is open to January 20. Qatar Museums Gallery, Al-Riwaq continues to show the Dan Flavin | Donald Judd: Doha Exhibition.

Finally, a diverse line-up of exhibitions are also set to take place during the month with the Adventure Sports Exhibit (until December 30), Doha Winter Trade Fair (until December 13), the Qatar Classic Car Contest & Exhibition (December 6-10), the 2nd edition of the Razza Exhibition (December 11-16), and the Teeb Al Hazm Exhibition (until December 8).

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Historical unity ‘a source of inspiration for bonding among people in GCC’

A number of intellectuals and writers from Qatar and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries affirmed that the historical and cultural unity that brings together the people of the region represents a source of inspiration for unity and strengthens the bonds of brotherhood among the people in the Gulf.

In special statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), they stressed, on the occasion of Doha's hosting of the 44th Gulf Summit today, that increasing cohesion between people who are united by one identity is achieved through culture that enhances the spirit of understanding and brotherhood among everyone, especially considering the interest of Their Majesties and Highnesses in cultural affairs.

Speaking to QNA, Qatari novelist and academic Dr Ahmed Abdul Malik said that culture in its various forms constitutes a solid basis for relations between neighbouring countries due to the imperatives of history and geography, which bring together countries. He pointed out that GCC cultural relations are rooted since ancient times before the establishment of the GCC in 1981, which led to a demographic and cultural unity automatically, and without official decisions.

He explained that the easy movement of citizens between the countries of the region has formed the basis for social, economic and cultural unity, so the features of tangible and intangible heritage are very similar, as are dialects, tastes, visual arts, songs, and trends in thinking about key issues of the Arab nation.

Dr Abdul Malik pointed out that Article 4 of the GCC Charter is concerned with the objectives that the Council seeks, including educational and cultural affairs. He expressed his hope that the cultural issue would receive more support and deeper research from the General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council, especially

in light of the individual efforts made by members of society in supporting the elements of culture, such as arts and literature, in various GCC countries.

In his statement to QNA, the Qatari novelist and academic expressed his aspiration to strengthen cultural gatherings among writers and creators of the GCC countries in a way that reflects their pride in their identity and openness to the civilisations of nations and people, and enriches the rich cultural journey of the Gulf countries.

For his part, the Saudi poet and critic Dr Adel Khamis al-Zahrani believes that cultural co-operation is inevitable if we keep in mind the dimensions of the common identity among the people of the Gulf Co-operation Council, from geography to language, religion, culture, similar customs, and traditions, among others.

Dr al-Zahrani said in a statement that GCC countries also share the urgent desire to grow, develop, and build a bright future that guarantees sustainable development for its citizens. Culture in all its forms is an important factor in raising awareness of the necessity of agreement, co-operation, joint and organised work, he explained, and pointed to the remarkable development being witnessed in understanding this matter and the work to consolidate it and to enhance awareness of it through joint plans and through the various programmes, activities and events that are being witnessed.

He pointed out that the people of the Gulf countries are well aware about how to receive these visions that the strategies seek to achieve. This is because hope is shared among the people of the Gulf, supported by the adherence of the citizens of the GCC countries to their leaders and their belief that these leaders always seek the development and wellbeing of their people.

He noted that he was a witness

to the joyful cultural movement among the people of the Gulf, where intellectuals meet in conferences, forums, and literary and cultural festivals throughout the year, adding that these meetings result in cognitive and cultural projects and works that increase the unity of this cohesive Gulf fabric despite its different backgrounds. At the same time, they constitute a model for future generations, a model that celebrates culture and recognises its centrality in building the human being and his future.

In turn, the Omani author and journalist Mohamed al-Yahyai said the cultural and civilisational commonality between GCC countries is large and diverse despite the presence of some barely noticeable differences.

He explained that language, literature, and works of art are not the only commonality among Gulf societies, as there are dialects, which are an element of cultural commonality that social studies and human studies overlook.

He noted that dialects bear characteristics of man's common roots in this region and his movement, before the oil era and the emergence of the modern state, and pointed out that images of cultural commonality include fashion, food, and oral heritage (folk tales and songs), which need more joint research and documentation, not just at the country level.

The Omani author explained that there are projects and achievements carried out by cultural institutions in each GCC country, but it is now important to think about launching major joint projects, such as establishing a Gulf union or association for authors and similar things for dramatists and musicians, or a Gulf-funded research institution concerned with social studies and other projects that present the GCC in its common cultural and civilisational image.

In turn, Kuwaiti author and novelist Saud Alsanousi saw that the

Extended process of integration, interconnection and joint Gulf action

Many hopes are placed on the success of the 44th session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), scheduled to be hosted by Qatar today, in support of the process of joint Gulf action, enhancing integration, interconnection and co-ordination among member states in all fields, and consolidating the bonds of brotherhood and unifying the Gulf ranks, in a way that achieves the aspirations and hopes of the GCC people.

For more than 42 years, the GCC, under the guidance of Their Majesties and Highnesses the leaders of the Council states, has been keen to establish strong fraternal relations between member states through many regular, extraordinary and consultative summits, which accomplished many achievements in support of the integration of joint Gulf action politically, economically, socially, humanitarially and in defence, security and at various levels, making the Council one of the strongest regional organisations in the world and the most interconnected and harmonious.

On May 1981, the leaders of the United Arab Emirates, Bah-

rain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and Kuwait reached a co-operative framework joining the six states to achieve co-ordination, integration and inter-connection among the member states in all fields in order to achieve unity and to deepen and strengthen ties, connections and aspects of co-operation between citizens of the Council states. This is based on the special relations, common characteristics, and similar systems that connect these countries according to the Islamic faith and belief in a common destiny and unity of purpose, as co-operation serves the interests of all the people of the Arab nation.

The GCC States are distinguished by the depth of religious and cultural ties and familial connection among their citizens. These are generally factors of rapprochement and unification that have been strengthened by the flat geographical area across the coastal desert environment. It facilitated communication between them and created interconnectedness among the residents of this region and harmony in identity and values, which increased the strength of

the Council and consolidated its position in the face of regional challenges.

The GCC basic objectives are to formulate similar regulations in various fields including the economic and financial affairs, commerce, customs and communications, education and culture, social and health affairs, information and tourism, and legislative and administrative affairs to stimulate scientific and technological progress in the fields of industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources, in addition to establishing scientific research and joint ventures and encourage co-operation by the private sector.

The Council includes the main bodies, namely the Supreme Council, the Ministerial Council, and The Secretariat General.

The Supreme Council is the highest authority of the organisation. It is composed of the Heads of the Member States. Its presidency rotates periodically among the Member States in alphabetical order. It meets in an ordinary session every year; extraordinary sessions may be convened at the request of any member state seconded by another member state. (QNA)



وكالة الأنباء القطرية
QATAR NEWS AGENCY

Gulf Intellectuals Affirm Historical, Cultural Unity Strengthens Bonds of Brotherhood Among Gulf People

Exclusive Statements to Qatar News Agency



Dr. Ahmed Abdul Malik
Qatari Novelist and Academic

GCC cultural relations are rooted since ancient times before the establishment of the GCC in 1981, which led to a demographic and cultural unity automatically



Session 44
of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)



Dr. Adel Khamis Al Zahrani
Saudi Poet and Critic

GCC countries share the urgent desire to grow, develop, and build a bright future for their citizens



Mohammed Al Yahyai
Omani Author and Journalist

It is now important to think about launching major joint projects, such as establishing a Gulf union or association for authors and similar things for dramatists and musicians

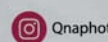


Saud Al-Sanousi
Kuwaiti Author and Novelist

The remarkable interest in culture, arts, and literature in the Gulf countries confirms their important role in preserving the identity of societies



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reality of Gulf individual work represents a significant movement at the level of each country, affirming that the remarkable interest in culture, arts, and literature in the Gulf countries confirms their important role in preserving the identity of societies and investing in culture to advance people.

He pointed out that cultural interest varies from one country to another and added that there are countries that work more than others to advance Gulf culture effectively through literary and artistic festivals, incentive awards for creative people, reading competitions for young people, and many cultural activities throughout the year.

Alsanousi said that GCC countries need to pay attention to joint cultural events instead of each country working individually. For example, a Gulf festival for culture, arts, and literature should be held yearly

in one of the GCC countries, like the Gulf Cup, he said, adding that Gulf citizens, both creatives and recipients, can participate in this festival, which can also host Arab and international names.

He stressed that such joint events would extend cultural bridges between the people of the Gulf and exchange creative production among them.

The GCC cultural strategy 2020-2030 paid great attention to strengthening its cultural identity by supporting, protecting and circulating the Arabic language as a language of communication and creativity, and encouraging the cultural product linked to the cultural identity of GCC countries. In addition, it promotes scientific research and writing to study and analyse the concept of cultural identity and its tangible and intangible elements as well as to preserve cultural herit-

age and exchange experiences in this regard. The joint cultural strategy pursued by the GCC countries is one of the most important items of its comprehensive development plan, which seeks to develop intellectual structures by describing culture as the basis for the cohesion of the nation and its civilisation and the development of cultural giving.

In addition it aims to imbue and preserve the Arab-Islamic cultural identity, consolidating the Islamic national content, and confronting attempts of cultural appropriation that enhance cultural unity and civil society institutions, and whose projects confirm that heritage is a source of inspiration and not just static texts. In addition, it aims to give importance to the role of the classical Arabic language in absorbing the era, and the necessity of dialogue with other cultures to establish common human values. (QNA)

Completion of Gulf Electricity Interconnection project in focus

Qatar is set to host the 44th Session of the GCC Supreme Council today, which will discuss several important issues, notably the completion of the Gulf Electricity Interconnection project, which has seen rapid progress in various stages over the past few years, the most prominent of which is the GCC-Iraq Electrical Interconnection Project.

The Gulf Electricity Interconnection Project represents an aspect of co-operation among the region's fossil fuel-rich countries, aimed at supporting network stability during peak times. The project has expanded to other Arab countries, starting with Iraq, with aspirations to extend to Europe. This comes amid expectations of a slowdown in the electricity demand in the GCC countries until 2025, opening opportunities for the region to export surplus electricity.

One of the key benefits of linking several international electrical networks is the reduction in capital investments needed to meet demand, especially during peak times. This increases safety and reliability and also allows for the export of surplus electricity in the network. On June 8, the GCC-Iraq Electrical Interconnection Project commenced, marking the beginning of the GCC countries' efforts to connect with other nations. The idea of implementing Gulf electricity interconnection dates back to December 1997, when the GCC Council decided to implement it during its 18th session. In 2001, the GCC Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) was established to oversee the project's creation, operation, and maintenance.

By the end of 2005, specifically in November, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain signed contracts to initiate the first phase of the GCC electrical interconnection project, with an investment cost exceeding \$1bn. The actual operation began about four

years later, in July 2009. The second phase included enhancing the efficiency of the electricity networks in the UAE and Oman, which was completed in 2006. The third phase was implemented in two parts, with the first concluding on April 20, 2011, by linking the UAE's network to the GCC interconnection grid, and bringing the number of electrically connected countries in the region to five. The second part of the third phase involved linking Oman's network through the UAE's electrical grid, officially joining the GCC interconnection grid in November 2014, thus linking all GCC countries.

In 2009, an agreement to regulate the relationship among the member states participating in the Electricity Interconnection Project was ratified and put into effect on March 23, 2009.

The project has yielded annual savings of \$200-300mn annually, with cumulative savings of approximately \$3bn since the commencement of operations.

On June 8, 2023, the GCC-Iraq Electrical Interconnection Project commenced, representing the first electrical connection with countries outside the GCC. The first phase involves constructing lines from Al-Wafra station in Kuwait to Al-Faw station in southern Iraq to transfer 500 megawatts, with an investment cost of \$228mn. The first phase is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

The GCC-Iraq Electrical Interconnection Project, funded by the Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD) and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), is set to be completed by the end of 2024. This groundbreaking initiative, the first-of-its-kind outside the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) electrical system, aims to supply approximately 500 megawatts per hour of electricity to southern Iraq. (QNA)

GCC pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha showcases unity in field of sustainability

The pavilion of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) at Expo 2023 Doha highlights environmental and agricultural co-operation between the GCC countries, and embodies Gulf unity in the field of sustainability and its vision for a better tomorrow.

The GCC Secretariat-General special pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha named "Towards a Green Gulf... for a Sustainable Environment," reflects the Gulf nations' unwavering commitment to

nature and sustainability.

It presents the GCC's joint vision for agricultural and the environmental co-operation, its efforts to protect the environment, reduce desertification and to co-operate in the fields of meteorology and climate change, in addition to highlighting the most prominent decisions issued by leaders of the GCC countries on the environment and agriculture.

Director-General of GCC Economic and Development Affairs Authority, GCC's Expo

2023 Doha Commissioner-General Khalid Ibrahim al-Sheikh said the pavilion's design embodies the achievements of joint Gulf action categorised and based on Expo 2023 Doha sub-themes of Modern Agriculture, Technology and Innovation, Environmental Awareness, and Sustainability.

He added that the pavilion takes the visitor on a journey of the GCC's interests and contributions in preserving natural resources and build-

ing a sustainable future for all. Al-Sheikh said that over the past years, GCC countries have worked to enhance sustainability environmental and agricultural systems, formulating joint policies to tackle changing circumstances.

GCC's Expo 2023 Doha Commissioner-General noted that Expo 2023 Doha provides an opportunity to strengthen GCC ties with countries of the world as well as regional and international organisations. (QNA)



GCC: Bright milestones over four decades

As it enters the 5th decade since its inception, the Gulf Co-operation Council continues its firm steps to achieve its goals and fulfil the interests of the Gulf countries and people and their aspirations for prosperity, peace and stability in the region and the world.

During the last four decades, the GCC went through many historical and distinguished milestones and positions. The first stage in the Gulf journey was the announcement of the establishment of the council at the first summit of the six countries held in Abu Dhabi on May 25, 1981. The leaders of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed to establish a council called the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. They agreed on making Riyadh in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the permanent headquarters of the council. They signed the council's Charter, which aims to develop co-operation and relations between these countries, achieve co-ordination, integration and interconnectedness, deepen and strengthen the ties and connections that exist between their people in various fields, and establish joint projects and similar systems in all economic, cultural, media,

social and legislative fields, in a way that serves their interests and strengthens their ability to adhere to their faith and values.

The decision came as an embodiment of a historical, social and cultural reality, as the GCC countries are distinguished by the depth of religious and cultural ties and family connections between their citizens. These are factors of rapprochement and unification reinforced by the flat geographic area across the coastal desert environment that hosts the inhabitants of this region and facilitates communication between them. The formation of the Council also came in response to the aspirations of the people of the region in recent decades for a form of regional Arab unity.

The Charter of the Co-operation Council has specified the council's objectives in achieving co-ordination, integration and interconnection among member states in all fields until unity is achieved, in addition to strengthening ties between peoples, and establishing similar systems in various economic, financial, commercial, customs and transportation fields, and in educational, cultural, social, health, media, tourism, legislative and administrative affairs, as well as scientific

and technical progress in the fields of industry, mining, agriculture, aquatic and livestock resources, the establishment of scientific research centres and joint projects and the encouragement of private sector co-operation.

In the second stage of the council's journey, the second summit of the Co-operation Council was held in Riyadh in November 1981, during which the unified economic agreement was signed. The agreement included the main provisions of the GCC Free Trade Area that entered into force in March 1983 and lasted for about 20 years until the end of 2002 when it was replaced by the GCC Customs Union, which was approved by the Supreme Council on January 1, 2003. The union aims to remove customs duties and trade barriers between member states, promote free trade and facilitate the movement of goods and services across borders.

At its 28th session in Doha in December 2007, the Supreme Council approved the Doha Declaration for the establishment of the Gulf Common Market. To create a reference for the laws and procedures of the Gulf Common Market, the "Gulf Common Market Document" was issued, which was approved by the Supreme Council

at its 29th session in Muscat, in December 2008.

During the era of the free trade zone between 1983 and 2002, the volume of trade exchange between the GCC countries increased from less than \$6bn in 1983 to \$15.1bn in 2002. As for future prospects, the World Bank expected that the total GDP of the GCC countries would approach \$2 n in 2022. It stated in a report that investing in green growth can help grow the GCC countries GDP to \$13tn in 2050.

At another stage in the journey of the Gulf, and out of the awareness of the leaders of the GCC states that the economic growth and prosperity enjoyed by the GCC states cannot be achieved and developed except in a safe and stable environment, the first meeting of the Ministers of the Interior of the GCC countries was held in Riyadh on Feb 23 and 24, 1982. This meeting was the start of coordination and security cooperation between the GCC countries. The first important steps to form the joint military forces of the GCC countries were taken, as a decision was issued to establish the Peninsula Shield Force, which was followed by numerous decisions to develop this force, in line with the changes in the security environment and

the types of challenges, risks, and threats that the GCC countries may face. It was developed in 2006 into the Joint Peninsula Shield Forces, and was strengthened with a naval and air force, in order to raise its efficiency. In 2009, the Joint Peninsula Shield Forces were reinforced with a rapid intervention force.

The leaders of the GCC countries signed the Joint Defence Agreement at the 21st session of the Supreme Council in Manama in December 2000, marking the beginning of a new phase of joint military action by shifting from military cooperation stage, which lasted for two decades, to joint defence between the countries of the council. The leaders' approval, at the 30th session of the Supreme Council of the Co-operation Council in Kuwait in December 2009, of the GCC defence strategy constituted an important achievement and an essential step on the path to building the joint defence system.

In December 1987, the Supreme Council approved, at its 8th session in Riyadh, the comprehensive security strategy, which is a general framework for security cooperation between member states in its comprehensive sense. This strategy has general objectives. As

for the Gulf Security Agreement, which is legal articles that address issues of security cooperation between the GCC countries, it was approved by the 33rd Gulf Summit in Manama, in December 2012.

During its journey, the GCC completed many projects, perhaps the most important of which is the unified identity card for the GCC states, which is the smart card that contributed to facilitating the movement of citizens between member states and reducing the waiting period at the ports through electronic gates. It also helped in the flow of national labour movement between member states.

In the health field, the GCC countries demonstrated their great co-operation through exchanging medical expertise and technologies between member states and coordinating between them to combat epidemics and preserve the health of communities in the region, as the Covid-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for the Co-operation Council to co-operate and co-ordinate to combat the spread of the virus, confront the challenges of the pandemic, implement preventive measures, and regulate international travel and trade. (QNA)

GCC Railway: New phase of economic integration and trade

QNA
Doha

The 44th Session of the Gulf Co-operation Council Supreme Council will be held in Doha today at a time when the GCC countries are working on strengthening their plans for economic and trade integration by adopting the general agreement to connect the GCC countries through the railway project, known as Gulf Railway, and setting the specific date for its implementation and operation in December 2030. The GCC countries adopted a number of measures to implement this ambitious integrated project, such as the budget of the GCC Railway Authority for the year 2024, in addition to approving a number of its documents and discussing the land transport strategy of the GCC countries and the executive regulations of the unified law for international land transport between them. These developments came after the GCC Railway Project Committee discussed in detail an asset management system and the operational plan for the project, the authority's document numbering system, the project and technical requirements for track junction points between neighbouring countries, and co-operation with the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF). These developments come at a time when the momentum of bilateral railway projects in the

Gulf countries has been renewed, as Qatar and Saudi Arabia agreed during 2022 to restart the railway line linking the two countries, with the French company SYSTRA chosen to conduct a feasibility study on the line. The proposed high-speed railway, which will connect Doha to Riyadh, is expected to be about 550km long. Additionally, Oman is co-operating with Saudi Arabia to establish a railway linking Duqm to Riyadh to serve the economic zone that the two countries plan to build in the Al Dhahirah Governorate of Oman. The UAE and Oman also launched the Oman-Etihad Rail company in September 2022 to implement a 303km railway network to connect the two countries. The project received an additional impetus after the aforementioned company signed a strategic agreement with Mubadala Investment Company, based in Abu Dhabi, to support its development. Saudi Arabia approved the agreement to establish a railway linking it to Kuwait, as part of the GCC project, in addition to the King Hamad Causeway project to connect Bahrain and Saudi Arabia with a similar line and the Qatar-Bahrain causeway. The project, which is considered one of the most prominent joint Gulf projects, aims to facilitate and increase trade movement between the six countries and develop public means of transport that provide services for transporting people and goods between cities, in a way that enhances co-operation

between the countries of the region in the field of transport and communication, thus reducing the cost of trade exchange operations, improving regional connectivity and reducing transportation time and cost between major ports. The Gulf Railway is expected to contribute to the economic development of all Gulf countries and accelerate the implementation of their joint economic projects, such as the customs union, the common market, and monetary union. It will also enhance trade movement between the GCC countries, provide alternative options for air transport, reduce transport costs in general, increase the pace of regional trade, support the national industries of the six countries, and contribute to providing job opportunities for their citizens, in addition to building the institutional capabilities and skills required to develop the sustainability of railways. The initial investment cost of the GCC Railway project, whose agreement was concluded in 2004, is about \$15bn, subject to increase. The project is to connect the GCC countries with an integrated railway network extending from Kuwait to Oman, with a total length of 2,177km, provided that its route begins from Kuwait, passing through Dammam in Saudi Arabia, to the Bahraini capital, Manama. There will be a line from Dammam to Doha via the Salwa border gate and will connect Qatar to Bahrain, and another from Saudi Arabia to the Emirates via Abu

Dhabi and Al Ain before going to the Omani capital, Muscat, via Sohar. The railway will be used to ship goods first, and then passenger traffic will be operated at a later stage, with more than 95mn tonnes of goods and 8mn passengers annually being transported along the line by the year 2045. In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), economic expert Dr Abdullah al-Khater noted the importance of the GCC railway connection, saying that it is part of Gulf and even Arab national security, stressing that in light of the current events and the dangers facing the Arab nation, all political obstacles that hinder the project must be overcome, highlighting in this regard the importance of announcing the projects budget for 2024 as an essential step before the launch. Regarding his aspirations for the Gulf summit in Doha, Dr al-Khater said, what is required is nothing less than Gulf unity, which will be a cornerstone for a more comprehensive Arab unity, as the risks are great. He pointed out that the implementation of an effective Gulf railway transport system is an important stage in the economic integration between the GCC countries, given that transport is one of the main economic sectors that facilitates the exchange of goods and products and stimulates the attraction of local and foreign investments, especially since the investor is looking for countries with integrated infrastructure and high efficiency.

GCC countries accelerate pace to achieve economic unity

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) has significantly accelerated the pace of co-ordination among relevant authorities to achieve the desired economic integration to achieve Gulf economic unity by 2025, about 56 weeks from now. This long-awaited dream is seen as a deserving achievement for the people of the GCC member states.

In October, the GCC Financial and Economic Co-operation Committee, in its 120th meeting in Muscat, made several decisions aimed at enhancing economic integration towards achieving economic unity by 2025.

The meeting approved a timeline for completing the remaining steps to establish the GCC Customs Union and the GCC Common Market to reach economic unity in 2025.

Prior to this, the GCC's Common Market Committee held its 37th meeting in Riyadh attended by representatives of all GCC states, GCC national statistical centres, and representatives of national chambers of commerce of the member states. The meeting focused on the digital transition strategy in the common Gulf market, which aims at formulating a unified framework for the digital transition and a media campaign to explain the benefits of establishing a common Gulf market and the gains realised by GCC membership.

Associate Professor at the College of Economics at Qatar University Dr Khalid Shams al-Abdulqader said in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that Gulf economic integration began in 2001 with the establishment of the GCC Customs Union and Common Gulf Market. Efforts are still ongoing to achieve one of the most crucial steps of integration: the introduction of a unified Gulf currency.

The GCC General Secretariat highlighted the various stages of economic integration that the GCC states underwent, starting with the free trade area in 1983, the launch of the Customs Union in 2003, and then the Common Market in January 2008 to bolster integration among member states.

Dr al-Abdulqader emphasised that the political and popular will remains strong to continue this process, which aligns with the ambitions and aspirations of the GCC people as outlined in the GCC Charter.

According to the GCC General Secretariat's official website, the GCC Common Market aims to serve both political and economic objectives. It ensures the smooth flow of goods among Gulf states, thereby increasing competition among Gulf institutions for the benefit of consumers. Additionally, it contributes to political stability in the region and fosters military and political co-opera-

tion among the member states, paralleling their economic collaboration.

He noted that the elements necessary for establishing the Gulf states as an effective economic entity are available. He emphasised that the Gulf economic bloc is better positioned to operate as a unified entity rather than as independent states without co-ordination. The geographic proximity is a significant advantage for this economic bloc, facilitating similar legislation and laws due to the resemblance in habits and traditions to create unified laws.

Gulf economic integration began in 2001 with the establishment of the GCC Customs Union and Common Gulf Market. Efforts are still ongoing to achieve one of the most crucial steps of integration: the introduction of a unified Gulf currency

He explained that despite the similarity in oil production and exportation among the Gulf states, most oil exports are directed overseas. There is little competition among the council's member states in selling these products within the GCC system, largely due to self-sufficiency in most of these countries. He highlighted that the council's states prioritise importing their energy needs from within the council, as stipulated in their energy co-operation agreements. This arrangement includes the trade of crude oil, natural gas, and petrochemical products according to the local needs of the member states.

He also commented on the potential for competition in certain industries within the GCC, saying that there is no harm, especially in the case of complete economic openness among the member states. An open economy encourages competition, production efficiency, and innovation, and in some cases, mergers. The consumer sector in the Gulf states benefits from this openness as competition results in more realistic prices and a wider variety of products.

Furthermore, Dr al-Abdulqader emphasised the crucial role of the private sector in accelerating the pace of economic integration in the Gulf economy, considering it the main engine of the Gulf trade exchange.

He called for a greater contribution of the Gulf private sector to the GDP of each Gulf country, enhancing its capacity for innovation, particularly in replacing imports and producing competitive goods in the global market. He also urged the private sector to play an active role in establishing leading institutions and brands. (QNA)

Conference discusses ways to combat corruption

The Conference on the Role of Civil Society Organisations in Combating Corruption kicked off yesterday in Doha and discussed the anticipated role of these organisations in examining and uprooting this global phenomenon with its various manifestations.

The event discussed the preventive and remediation methods in combating corruption, as well as the successful experiences of some states in this field.

Organised by the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA), the conference discussed the notion of corruption, its forms, and causes, as well as its impact on communities, along with the legal underpinnings of the role undertaken by civil society organisations in combating this phenomenon, stemming from the texts of international, regional, and local conventions and charters.

The event discussed combating mechanisms, ways to bolster integrity and transparency, and implement good governance and management, in addition to the challenges facing civil society institutions in boosting integrity and combating corruption.



Addressing the inaugural session of the conference, President of ACTA, Hamad bin Nasser al-Misnad, said the convention comes concurrently to mark International Anti-Corruption Day, outlining that corruption is a menacing phenomenon that has adverse impacts on the economy of many countries because it poses a crime that threatens social security and undermines development, stability, and progress. Due to the danger corruption poses to the international community, most world countries stepped up their efforts to unify the official international efforts, in collaboration with the NGOs and civil society organisations to decisively



counter the corruption crime, he added, stressing that state institutions cannot solely combat corruption individually away from communities, because the matter requires intervention and help from civil society organisations. Al-Misnad indicated that the existence of powerful, effective, and independent civil society organisations remained one of the most crucial anti-corruption mechanisms, among the indicators that gauge countries' advancement and progress, as these mechanisms play integrated roles with those undertaken by the state, whether individually or through engagement with other states and governmental



international organisations. He emphasised that the mechanism plays a critical and influential role within the framework of activating the societal movement in combating corruption phenomenon, highlighting that the intervention of civil society organisations in anti-corruption mechanisms has a legal, regional and internal base, as most regional and international conventions stipulated in their provisions special articles pertaining to the engagement of these organisations in countering this phenomenon, such as the UN Convention against Corruption, and Arabic Convention for Combating Corruption. (QNA)



Tarsheed conference tackles sustainability programmes

The Tarsheed Energy Efficiency Conference 2023 yesterday discussed ways to stimulate co-operation between various stakeholders to shape a more sustainable and effective future for current and future generations while accelerating access to a green and prosperous tomorrow.

Organised by the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa), the two-day forum is a vital platform aimed at pushing the energy efficiency programme to new heights and exploring its many aspects.

It acts as a platform for recognising achievements, revealing innovations and confronting challenges by enhancing the dialogue related to energy efficiency for sustainable development.

Kahramaa President Essa bin Hilal al-Kuwari said in his opening address that the forum builds a foundation for enhancing co-operation, knowledge exchange, and actionable visions.



A snapshot from the conference yesterday.

The forum marked the felicitation of the winners of the annual Tarsheed competitions, rewarding energy efficiency.

The categories and winners are:

- ☞ Government Buildings – Qatar Investment Authority
- ☞ Commercial sector buildings – Doha Festival City

☞ Hospitality sector – Hilton Salwa Beach Resort

☞ Residential sector – United Development Company

☞ Residential sector (individual) – House of Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali al-Thani.

Another winner was the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) for “Best Water Recycling Initiative”.

Qatar Foundation won for “Best Building Rehabilitation Initiative”.

The award for the “Best Sustainable Building Design” was won by the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) for its Lusail Electric Bus Depot Project.

The Lusail City District Cooling Company won the award for the “Best Performance of District Cooling System”.

The forum, which also features an exhibition featuring advanced technology and effective strategies, concludes today.

Awqaf Ministry launches app to manage Zakat

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Zakat Affairs, has launched an app on smart devices (Android & iOS) to facilitate Zakat givers and receivers.

In line with the ministry’s aim to keep pace with the latest developments, the app provides electronic services and important information.

Department of Zakat Affairs director Saad Omran al-Kuwari stated that one of the roles of the department is to collect Zakat funds from individuals and companies and disburse them according to the legitimate banks to those who are eligible within Qatar.

The department has taken all necessary means to encourage the disbursement of Zakat through platforms such as apps on smart devices and other means that make the process easier for the public.

Al-Kuwari gave a simplified explanation of the services included in the new application.

In terms of performing and paying Zakat, the department made sure to include a calculator linked to gold prices that is updated frequently.

Zakat givers can calculate the money amount, gold and silver prices, stocks, trade and more.

They can also pay Zakat through the app in co-operation with Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB).

The application also allows the request for a quick collection service electronically.

The Collection and Zakat Accounts Department of the Zakat Affairs Department receives the request and communicates with the person to determine the appropriate place and time for them to receive the Zakat amount. – **QNA**

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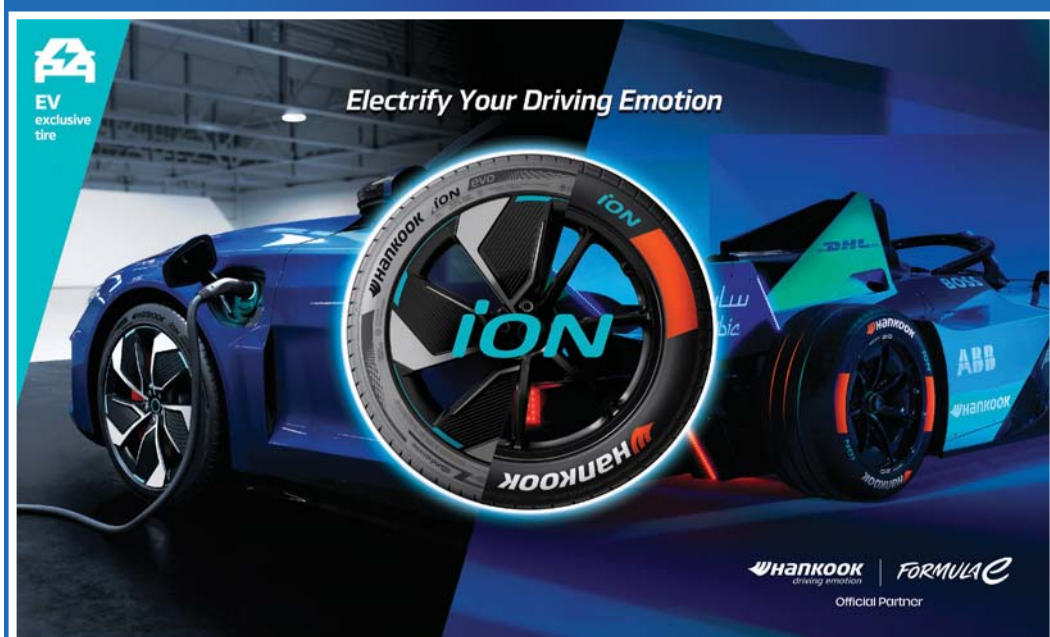


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Snapshots from the preview event yesterday.

Alfardan Sports Motors reveals the Ferrari Purosangue

Alfardan Sports Motors, the official importer of Ferrari in Qatar, has welcomed the Ferrari Purosangue to Qatar's luxury SUV market through a private preview at the Ferrari Qatar showroom.

The first-of-its-kind four-seat, four-door masterpiece embodies Ferrari's GT sports car aesthetics with its exquisite design, unmatched comfort, and unwavering performance, redefining exclusivity across the region's automotive landscape, a statement said.

The Purosangue's aerobridge-inspired appearance is distinguished by slender sides that form a dihedral shape and end in a dynamic rear.

The wheel-arch trim treatment adds a second visual layer, creating a sense of a floating coupe.

When the front and back doors are opened together, the interior's

design displays a spaciousness that defies expectations, while keeping the roof's dimensions compact.

At the rear end, two convergent scoops and vents are bounded by a horizontal cut line encompassing the taillights, and large rear wings and a broad, striking diffuser add to the sporty image of the vehicle.

The car's profile is defined by the slanted windshield, the A-pillar arches flowing into the rear spoiler, and the characteristic peaks on the rear screen.

A new feature introduced in Ferrari vehicles is the HDC (Hill Descent Control), which assists drivers in maintaining and controlling the car's speed on steep descents.

The system adjusts the Purosangue's braking to prevent exceeding the set rate, with the option to override using the accelerator pedal.

For the first time in the Prancing

Horse's history, the Purosangue boasts four separate and independently adjustable seats, integrating comfort-focused components and variable density foams for maximised occupant enjoyment.

The backseats can also be adjusted and reclined, allowing for extensive luggage capacity when raked forward.

The Ferrari Purosangue is a testament to meticulous design and exceptional craftsmanship, combining 75 years of leading research and automotive expertise.

It offers unmatched space and comfort for a Ferrari four-seater, resembling an elegant and sporty lounge.

The dual-cockpit dashboard concept extends to the rear, creating four distinct areas in terms of functionality, volumes, materials, and colours.

The wraparound forms and upholstered volumes generate a sense of spaciousness, while comfort-related controls are conveniently located in the central section of the dash.

With its sleek and athletic exterior, the Ferrari's unique selling point among other four-door, four-seater cars is the mid-front-mounted, naturally aspirated V12 engine.

The spacious, luxurious cabin combines speed and agility with ample room, while the central intake of the Ferrari cools the condenser for the air conditioning circuit and the V12's oil and coolant radiators ensure optimal cabin temperatures.

Owners can strike the perfect



balance between comfort and performance through a wide range of optional equipment and personalisation choices.

There is an optional full-length electrochromic glass roof, providing the choice between direct sunlight shining through the car or shade.

The vehicle also features the Burmester High-End Surround Sound System, delivering an immersive audio experience.

Environmental sustainability remains Ferrari's priority, and the luxury manufacturer has promised an extensive use of sustainable materials throughout the Purosangue's interiors - including recycled polyester for the fabric roof-lining, carpets made from recycled fishing nets, and a special version of Alcantara derived from post-consumer recycled polyester.

Commenting on the launch, Tarek al-Hammoud, general manager for Ferrari Qatar at Alfardan Sports Motors, said: "Alfardan Sports Motors is pleased to reveal the highly anticipated Ferrari Purosangue in Qatar, which represents the beginning of a new era in the region's automotive industry."

"The debut of the Ferrari Purosangue SUV redefines luxury and



performance by seamlessly fusing power, comfort, and versatility, setting a new standard for control behind the wheel," he said. "We are very proud to welcome the latest in Ferrari's impressive line-up of vehicles and look forward to delivering increased automotive excellence to our customers in Qatar."

"The Ferrari Purosangue is a true embodiment of the Maranello legacy and sets a new benchmark in the luxury SUV segment, combining Ferrari's iconic design, extraordinary performance, and un-

paralleled comfort for a uniquely authentic driving experience," al-Hammoud added.

Ferrari's commitment to client service is exemplified by the genuine maintenance programme offered with the Purosangue, covering all regular maintenance for the first seven years or 120,000km of the car's life.

This exclusive service ensures peak performance and safety for Ferrari owners, backed by the brand's unrivalled quality standards, the statement added.



HEC Paris in Qatar launches new Executive MBA programme

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Focusing on young professionals in Qatar and the wider region, HEC Paris in Qatar has launched the Emerging Leaders Track of its Executive MBA (EMBA) programme.

"The new programme will host its first cohort in the fall of 2024, catering to a younger audience of high-potential professionals, with an average age of 28-30," HEC Paris in Qatar dean Dr Pablo Martin de Holan told a press conference yesterday at campus in Msheireb Downtown Doha. "The average duration of the programme is 18 months."

He was joined by HEC Paris in Qatar (Partnerships and Growth) executive director Joshua Kobb and virtually, through a hologram livestream, by Prof Kristine de Valck, dean of degree programmes at HEC Paris' main campus.

Young managers with demonstrated leadership potential can enrol in the programme.

The launch of the new track of the EMBA opens a much-needed opportu-



Dr de Holan and Kobb announcing details of the new programme yesterday.
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

nity for part-time management study for this segment of the population. The programme expects enrolment from across the GCC region.

"The launch of another option in world-class EMBA, the Emerging Leaders Track, reflects HEC Paris' commitment to impact and excellence," Dr de Holan stated. "HEC Paris in Qatar develops local, regional, and global talent that Qatar and

the GCC need to build knowledge-based, diversified and sustainable economies."

"HEC Paris is immensely proud of our students, faculty, and of course, alumni, who hold key leadership roles across diverse industries in Qatar, in the GCC, in Europe, and globally, making a difference and helping create a better, more sustainable world," he added.

To be eligible, participants need a min-

imum of five years' professional experience, including one year of demonstrated career progression.

This programme is designed for those seeking to advance into more senior positions or to enhance their current roles through personal and professional development and the application of strategic and innovative thinking acquired during the EMBA.

As a part-time programme, it accommodates working professionals, enabling them to remain employed as they pursue their studies and avoiding the loss of salary associated with full-time MBA studies.

HEC Paris' EMBA is tailored to nurture talent growth in Qatar and the broader region.

Delivered from the HEC Paris campus in Doha, the programme includes modules in Paris, London, Cambridge, and Dubai.

This EMBA, led by globally acclaimed faculty, prepares participants to address the region's challenges and opportunities.

"Across the region we deliver custom designed corporate programmes. We have also associated with some of the most prestigious and leading business organi-

sations in Qatar and the region," Kobb said. "The new EMBA programme has an important role in our entire portfolio of HEC Paris in Qatar."

"It helps us to reach a segment of population that has not been served by top tier institutions," he added.

While covering essential areas such as business performance management, corporate finance, and strategy, the programme emphasises current topics and trends including innovation, digital transformation, social responsibility, and navigating the regional business environment.

Graduates, equipped with these specialised skills, gain a comprehensive business understanding and become catalysts for driving sustainable growth in Qatar and the region.

In collaboration with the business community, HEC Paris in Qatar is dedicated to positioning Doha as a regional hub of knowledge and expertise.

The new programme is set to enhance the skills of emerging leaders, supporting the development of locally based talent who will be the drivers of change and transformation.



Two planes from Qatar arrive in Herat with aid for quake-affected

Two Qatar Armed Forces planes carrying 62 tonnes of aid, including essential food, shelter supplies, and medical materials, arrived yesterday in Herat, Afghanistan.

The aid was provided by the Qatar Fund For Development, the Qatar Red Crescent Society, and Qatar Charity.

The aid is part of Qatar's support for those affected by the earthquake in Herat. -QNA

QRCS implements development projects in Somalia

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has launched humanitarian projects for the benefit of 828,850 people in Somalia's Puntland (Garowe), Banadir (Mogadishu), and Somaliland (Hargeisa), with a total budget of QR1,976,772.

The event was led by QRCS Relief and International Development Division director Dr Mohamed Salah Ibrahim, who visited Somalia for co-ordination meetings in connection with implementing the QRCS' multi-sector development projects.

In Puntland, he met the deputy prime minister, ministers, government officials, and director of the Garowe General Hospital.

He also met the deputy health minister and representatives of the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in Bana-



dir, as well as SRCS officials in Somaliland.

The QRCS opened a health centre for persons with disability (PWDs) in Garowe, with funding from Qatar's Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs' General Department of Endowments.

In Mogadishu, a general surgery and urology medical convoy was launched.

Dr Ibrahim also visited Somaliland to sign a co-operation agreement with the SRCS and inspect the QRCS-funded health centres there.

QFFD, QC distribute food baskets in Sudan

Funded by the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Qatar Charity (QC) has launched a project to distribute 50,000 food baskets to those affected by the war in Sudan.

The project was launched by Qatar's ambassador to Sudan Mohamed Ibrahim al-Sada, who described it as an extension of Qatar's assistance to the affected and displaced Sudanese people.

The project is an extension of the air bridge implemented earlier in addition to what the QFFD, QC and Qatar are contributing through its existing foundation, in co-ordination with the Sudanese government to provide food baskets and medicines.

Acting federal humanitarian aid commissioner Ahmed Othman, who is also a member of Sudan's Supreme Emergency Committee, thanked the Qatari stakeholders for carrying out major humanitarian interventions in this critical period.

The implementation of the project will continue for five months, targeting nine states: Khartoum, Al-Jazira, North, River Nile, White Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Sennar, and the Red Sea. Each food basket contains quantities of basic food supplies.



National Car Company, Mazda commemorate 50 years' partnership

National Car Company (NCC) is commemorating five decades of successful strategic partnership with Japanese auto major Mazda Motor Corporation (Mazda), which granted the company exclusive agency rights for Mazda vehicles in Qatar, way back in 1973. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of partnership in excellence, a ceremony was held at the Mazda showroom in Al Nasr. NCC president director Sheikh Ahmad Nasser al-Thani received a commemorative memento from Mazda management representative Keiko Kawajiri who made an exclusive visit to Qatar to hand over the symbolic "Shamoji (rice paddle)" in line with the Japanese tradition. Sheikh Ahmad presented a traditional Qatari memento as a mark of appreciation. The event was attended by Kei Watanabe and Kaito Shiba representing Itochu Corporation and the senior management of NCC. Reflecting on the past, present and future on the occasion, Sheikh Ahmad said: "We take pride in the longstanding partnership with Mazda Motor Corporation built over mutual trust and co-operation as we have gone through many challenges, both local and global during our 50 years of association. Over the years, we have worked together in our endeavour, positioning Mazda as a premium brand focusing on human centricity delivering the pleasure of driving. The real secret



Sheikh Ahmad presents a Qatari memento to Keiko Kawajiri.

behind our 50 years of success and achievements is the enduring relationship with our customers and our great passion and commitment to the brand." Moving into a more premium and dynamic line up, Mazda has introduced the all-new inline 6 turbo in 2024 CX-60 and CX-90 models which will be soon available in Qatar. Mazda developed this most powerful gasoline engine specifically for the large platform, Mazda's all-new rear-biased all-wheel drive layout that supports a performance-focused experience. Additionally, Kinematic Posture Control (KPC), is standard on all CX-60 and CX-90 models and will help maintain Mazda's signature driving dynamics to the three-row crossover SUV. The available 3.3-litre inline

6 turbo will have the highest horsepower and torque from a mass production gasoline engine developed by Mazda with 340hp and up to 500Nm/rpm of torque when using the recommended premium fuel. This engine provides the new range of SUVs with an engaging driving experience with a rewarding exhaust note, while also featuring a mild-hybrid system for efficiency without compromising on performance. Over the years, the NCC has been recognised by Mazda with numerous awards recognising their outstanding customer service and sales performance. To celebrate this unique milestone, NCC has planned a variety of customer appreciation programmes and exclusive offers throughout the year which will



Sheikh Ahmad, Keiko Kawajiri and other officials with symbolic Shamoji (rice paddle).

be announced through print and social media channels periodically. As Mazda and NCC together are looking forward to a bright future, the latter will continue to play a vital role in serving its customers in Qatar, delivering high levels of customer experience while Mazda is transforming its range of vehicles to meet the next generation demands with innovative technology focusing on sustainability and environment friendliness. With its commitment to providing top-quality Mazda vehicles and exceptional customer service, NCC is poised for another 50 years of success along with Mazda which continues its unique direction in the



Mazda RX-3, 1973

automotive industry manufacturing vehicles which offer the pleasure of driving and are sustainable for the earth and society.

More information is available from the Mazda showroom, by calling 44435965/44417859 or visiting www.mazda-qatar.com

Raffles Doha's festive season offers

Raffles Doha, the epitome of luxury and sophistication, has announced its festive season offers for December, a statement said yesterday. The Suite Treat offers are valid until January 8, 2024. Vintage High Tea at Malaki Lounge is among the highlights. On Festive and New Year's day, Alba by Enrico Crippa presents richly inspired authentic Italian cuisine curated by Chef Antonino Dalesio and his team. Raffles Doha's executive pastry team will hold a Gingerbread House decorating class, a tradition guaranteed to add a sprinkle of joy and creativity to the holiday season. Ushering in the New Year at L'Artisan restaurant will have the melodic backdrop of a live violinist. The New Year's celebration at Acoustic Music Penthouse, perched on the 36th & 37th floors offers breathtaking views along with five signature drinks and a delectable à la carte menu accompanied by the live band. Among the other New Year highlights are a live Cuban saxophonist, an array of Cuban bites, classic cocktails, and cigars. Celebrate New Year's Eve with Aqua at



Raffles Doha Malaki Lounge

Raffles — a Grecian-themed outdoor infinity pool party with the stunning Doha skyline as your backdrop, the statement added.

Fairmont Doha unveils festive promo

Fairmont Doha has announced its festive promotions with 'a range of delightful offerings for guests in the hotel, at the restaurants and lounge.

Spectacular festive-inspired feasts, afternoon teas to New Year's Eve celebrations are among the attractions.

With special room offers and exclusive amenities, Fairmont Doha provides the ideal setting for a memorable holiday retreat, a statement explained.

Until January 8, embrace the festive spirit at Dôme with an afternoon tea experience. Indulge in festive-inspired cakes, pastries, and savoury delicacies accompanied by a curated selection of coffees, rare tea blends, and botanical fruit infusions.

Celebrate the magic of the Festive Season at Masala Library with an extraordinary culinary journey through contemporary Indian cuisine.

Ring in the New Year at Masala Library with a specially crafted set menu, blending modern luxury with the soulful essence of Indian culinary artistry.

Ideal for corporate celebra-



Vaya! Latin Mercado at Fairmont Doha.

tions, Vaya! offers a family-style set menu featuring festive dishes that allow colleagues to come together and relish the vibrant flavours of Latin America.

Celebrate the Festive Day in style at Vaya. Guests can look forward to live cooking stations, lively entertainment, and even a caricaturist to capture the festive joy.

New Year's Eve Masquerade Dinner will feature a sumptuous feast, where Latin American-inspired delights take centre stage.

New Year's Day brunch at Pro-vok, will have a delectable menu, an interactive Mixology Lab, an extensive grapes collection, and beats by a live DJ, the statement added.

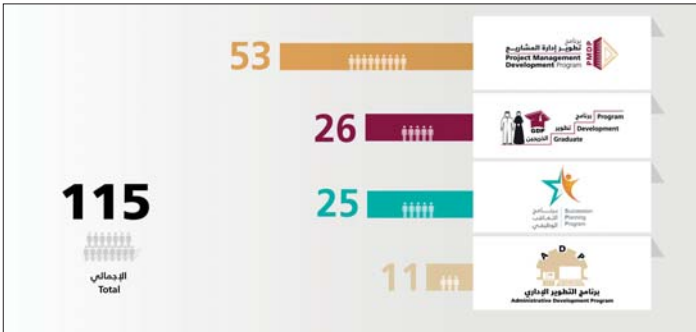
Ashghal holds graduation of training programmes



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) yesterday held the graduation of the 2nd batch of its training programmes. Ashghal president engineer Dr Saad bin Ahmad al-Muhannadi and other senior officials witnessed the graduation of 115 employees and engineers from the seven certified training programmes prepared by Ashghal's human resources department. The number of participants in the past few years has reached 15,808.

Al-Muhannadi said achieving and developing distinct human resources that can progress with high efficiency is important. "This is to keep pace and develop in the engineering field and work on establishing the State's infrastructure plans. Therefore, we place great importance on training and developing our employees by offering them various training programmes designed to develop functional career competencies and Qatari cadres, as this will positively impact their performance in their jobs," he said.

Rashid Saeed al-Hajri, manager of the human resources department, said Ashghal offers a continuous and lifelong training and development process. "We also ensure that we offer training solutions designed to be in line with the requirements of the profes-



sional development of engineers and non-engineers," he said.

Rouda Mosaed al-Nasser, acting head of the training and organisational development section, said Ashghal believes in the importance of training and developing the employees.

The training programmes include leadership Development Programme for Supervisory Positions, Project Management Programme, Job Succession Programme, Graduate Development Programme, Administrative Development Programme and Individual Development Plans in addition to the Professional Certifications Programme for Qatari Employees.

Ashghal has undertaken various initiatives in the field of training and development to achieve social responsibility by providing practical training to university students.

A total of 54 Qatari students and 11 non-Qatari students were trained in engineering and administrative fields including local and international universities for 120 hours.

The Future Engineer 2 initiative was launched in collaboration with the Scientific Club in August. It has contributed to providing various experiences and knowledge to students by introducing them to the various engineering fields in Ashghal through direct practical application in various stages of the programme in several departments and sections.

Al-Muhannadi, during the ceremony, honoured some of the partner entities that support Ashghal's engineers through training programmes. Employees who won the first three places in the Leadership Programme were also felicitated.

QNB, Visa announce mega campaign for credit cardholders

QNB has announced the latest mega usage and acquisition campaign for its Visa credit cardholders, which will run until February 29, 2024.

During the campaign period, three Land Rover Defender 75th Limited Edition will be given away as grand prizes, one each month.

In addition, a total of 91 customers will have the chance of winning up to QR5,000 cash back based on their daily spends.

To qualify for the monthly grand prize, customers will need to spend at least QR50,000 within the month while for the daily cash-back prizes, a minimum spend of QR500 within a day is required. For both prize categories, every additional spend of QR500 beyond the qualifying amount will be given one additional chance on local spends and five chances on international spends to the draw. For newly issued QNB Visa credit cards, a total of 10 chances will be given once the minimum spending criteria is reached.

Adel al-Malki, senior executive vice-president of QNB Retail Banking Group, said: "We



are very pleased to launch this mega campaign that offers very lucrative prizes to many winners. Like all our previous campaigns, we are confident this campaign will attract a large number of customers to pay using their QNB Visa credit cards and win attractive prizes. QNB remains committed to providing a safe, convenient and rewarding electronic payment experience to its customers. Shashank Singh, Visa vice-president and general manager for Qatar and Kuwait, said: "Our exclusive promotion with QNB is a great opportunity to offer additional rewards to our Visa credit cardholders. This initiative encourages the use of digital payments, which is in line with

the Qatar government's vision for a cashless society. Through this campaign, we aim to extend the benefits of digital commerce to more consumers and local businesses, thus supporting the country's progression towards a digital economy."

QNB Group currently ranks as the most valuable bank brand in the Middle East and Africa. Through its subsidiaries and associate companies, the group extends to 28 countries across three continents providing a comprehensive range of advanced products and services. The total number of employees is 30,000 operating through 900 locations with an ATM network of more than 4,800 machines.



Qatar fulfils pledge to assist UNRWA with QR65.7mn for two years

Qatar has fulfilled its pledge to support UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with an amount of QR65.7mn for 2023-24. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Qatar has expedited the fulfillment of its pledge to UNRWA for the year 2024 in order to support the brotherly Palestinian people, in light of the difficult humanitarian conditions they are facing, and to contribute to bridging the agency's funding gap. Qatar increased its dona-

tions to UNRWA during the previous years to support its basic resources, in line with Qatar's firm policy of solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people and providing all forms of support to them, noting that Qatar was the first Arab country to sign a multi-year agreement with UNRWA in 2018 to support its main resources, the ministry stated. Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) had donated an amount of QR65.7mn to support the agency's resources over two years, including QR36.5mn

in 2021 and QR29.2mn in 2022, the ministry said, adding that QFFD contributed an amount of QR25.55mn to the UNRWA emergency programme in Syria, including cash assistance, education, health and vocational training. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that Qatar's support for UNRWA stems from its conviction that it is one of the most important agencies of the UN, and that millions of Palestinians depend on it to obtain their basic needs. (QNA)



A member of 'Palestine Red Crescent Society' assists a Palestinian child as wounded Palestinians are rushed into Nasser hospital following Israeli strikes, amid the ongoing conflict, in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

WHO board to hold emergency meeting on Gaza health situation

●15 countries request UN health agency board meeting
●Palestinian envoy seeks improved medical access to Gaza

Reuters
Geneva

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) executive board will hold a rare emergency session on Dec 10 to discuss the health crisis in Gaza and the West Bank, with the Palestinian envoy seeking more medical aid and access for foreign healthcare workers. The WHO confirmed yesterday it had received a request from 15 countries to hold the session, which will be convened by Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in consultation with the Qatari chair. The Palestinian ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Ibrahim Khraishi, said the meeting would focus mostly on Gaza, engulfed by war between its Hamas rulers and Israel, but also cover attacks on the health sector in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "We want to empower the WHO and call for the Israeli side not to target the medical sector. We want to allow for fresh medical supplies," he told Reuters, adding that his diplomatic mission was drafting a motion to be reviewed by the board. "One idea is to send more doctors in from around the world," he added, saying many countries had offered. The "Occupied Palestinian Territory" is a WHO observer rather than a member state but has influence in the organisation through supporters. Israel said the session was an example of the "double standards and disproportionate attention towards Israel in the multilateral arena". Only a fraction of Gaza's hospitals remain operational due to Israeli bombings and a lack of fuel, and those that are still functioning are increasingly overwhelmed by a new wave of



Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike, amid the ongoing conflict, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.



Members of MSF, Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), carry placards during a protest demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, at Martyrs' Square, downtown Beirut, Lebanon, yesterday.

wounded arriving. A WHO database shows there have been 427 attacks on healthcare facilities in Palestinian territories since the October first week cross-border Hamas storming of Israel, and the latter's retaliatory aerial blitz and invasion of Gaza. The database does not touch on who is seen as responsible for the attacks. Israel has accused Hamas of using ordinary Gazans as human shields by placing command centres and weapons inside hospitals and other civilian buildings. A senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday Israel would facilitate the provision of humani-

tarian aid to Gaza's civilians as fighting there resumed after a week-long truce collapsed. The WHO has also warned of spreading disease which it has said could kill more people than bombardments in Gaza, with diarrhoea cases among children rising to about 100 times normal levels. As many as 80% of Gaza's 2.3mn people have fled their homes, the UN humanitarian agency OCHA says. The WHO's governing board is made up of 34 members and typically meets every January to fix the agenda for its annual assembly. Membership is split among regional groups and the US, Qatar, Senegal, Australia and China are among seat holders.

Qatar takes part in ICAN2023 in Riyadh



Qatar, represented by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), is participating in the 15th International Conference on Air Services Negotiations (ICAN) of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), in Riyadh from Dec 3 to 7. The event has the participation of more than 100 countries and international organisations as well as more than 700 experts and specialists in the field of civil aviation. The Qatari delegation is headed by Mohamed Faleh al-Hajri, who is in-charge of managing the QCAA. The ICAN2023 is considered the largest international event in its category. Negotiations and discussions are set to take place on both bilateral and multilateral fronts between delegations from the participating countries, with the aim of keeping pace with the rapid development in the air transport industry on a global scale, providing better services to the air transport community, as well as supporting the establishment of connections between regulatory bodies, air operators and other relevant service providers. (QNA)

Qatar, Antigua and Barbuda sign air services agreement

Bilateral talks were held yesterday between the civil aviation authorities of Qatar and Antigua and Barbuda during the meetings of the International Conference on Air Services Negotiations (ICAN 2023) in Riyadh. The talks resulted in the initial signing of an open skies air services agreement between the two countries, in addition to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that allows the designated carriers to operate passenger and cargo flights in an unlimited number, and to enter into code-share arrangements between the designated airlines. The agreement was signed by in-charge of managing Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Mohamed



Faleh al-Hajri on the Qatari side and Chief Technical Adviser (Civil Aviation) at the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation Brian Challengler from Antigua and Barbuda. (QNA)

Erdogan says Israel's Netanyahu 'will be tried as war criminal'

Reuters
Istanbul

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would eventually be tried as a war criminal over Israel's ongoing offensive in the Gaza Strip, while slamming Western countries supporting Israel. Türkiye, which supports a two-state solution to the decades-old conflict, has sharply criticised Israel over its campaign in Gaza, launched in response to fighter group Hamas' storming in the first week of October. More than 15,500 people have been killed in the Israeli air and ground attacks, according to Gaza's health ministry. In a speech to an Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) committee meeting in Istanbul, Erdogan said the Western nations supporting Israel were giving it "unconditional support to kill babies" and were complicit in its crimes. "Beyond being a war criminal, Netanyahu, who is the butcher of Gaza right now, will be tried as the butcher of Gaza, just as Milosevic was tried," Erdogan said, in reference to Yugoslav ex-President Slobodan Milosevic who was tried for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes at a tribunal in The Hague. "Those who try to skip over the deaths of all those innocent people by using the excuse of Hamas have nothing left to say to humanity," he added, referring to Western powers, which he said were "blind and deaf". Nato member Türkiye also hosts some Hamas members. Erdogan said a so-called contact group of Muslim countries, which was formed by the OIC and Arab League last month to hold talks on Gaza with Western countries and others, would continue discussions until the fighting in Gaza stopped, but added more must be done. "We must absolutely evaluate the UN Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC) within this frame-

Turkiye warns of 'serious consequences' if Israel targets Hamas officials abroad

Turkiye has warned Israel of "serious consequences" if it tries to hunt down Hamas members living outside Palestinian territories, including in Türkiye, a Turkish intelligence official said yesterday, Reuters reported from Ankara. "Necessary warnings were made to the interlocutors based on the news of Israeli officials' statements, and it was expressed to Israel that (such an act) would have serious consequences," the official said. Israel's public broadcaster Kan reported on Sunday that Israel would hunt down Hamas in Lebanon, Türkiye and a Gulf country even if it takes years, the head of Israel's domestic security agency Shin Bet said in a recording. It was unclear when Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar made the remarks or to whom.

work," he said, adding Israel's nuclear arsenal must not be forgotten. Erdogan, who has long called for the UN Security Council to be reformed to be more inclusive, also said that the UN had failed the test in Gaza and called for an urgent reform, repeating that the Security Council's five permanent members — the US, Russia, China, Britain and France — did not represent the world. "The sincere efforts of Secretary-General (Antonio) Guterres were sabotaged by the Security Council members," he said. "None of us have to accept this system," he added. "It is not possible for such a structure to bring peace or hope to humanity."

After a strike in Gaza's Rafah, men struggle to pull out a toddler's body

A dead toddler's legs and bare feet poked out from under layers of concrete in the ruins of a block hit by an Israeli air strike, and three men tried to release the top half of the body by pulling out chunks of debris with their bare hands, Reuters reported from Rafah, Gaza. At one point, having removed a large piece, one of the men picked up the child's legs, which were dressed in black trousers, and gently tried to retrieve the body, but it was still stuck and the legs flopped to the ground. The scene took place early yesterday in Rafah, after a strike late the previous night destroyed a residential block and left a yawning crater as deep as a multi-storey building. The dead toddler was eventually freed and wrapped in a black cloth. A man cradled the body to his chest, despair etched on his face, and carried it away from the ruins, surrounded by other men, some of whom put their hands on his shoulders. "There is no God but Allah, and all martyrs are

beloved by Allah," the men chanted as they walked. Another tiny body was also being carried away, that one wrapped in a colourful blanket. Local residents told Reuters more than a dozen people had been killed in the strike, including several children. Several of the dead were still buried in the rubble. Rafah is located at the southern end of the Gaza Strip close to the border with Egypt. Israel has been urging civilians to move southwards from other parts of the strip to avoid being caught up in heavy combat, but survivors in Rafah said nowhere was safe. The war began in the first week of October when fighters from Hamas, the group that runs the Gaza Strip, stormed southern Israel. Vowing to destroy Hamas in response, Israel has responded with a military assault on the densely populated Palestinian enclave that has killed more than 15,000 people, most of them women and children, according to health officials in Gaza.



VIOLENCE

13 people killed in gunfight between Manipur groups

At least 13 people were killed in a gunfight between two unknown militant groups in India's Manipur state yesterday, a police official said, seven months after ethnic clashes in the border state killed at least 180 people. Their bodies, with multiple bullet wounds, were found in a village in Manipur's Tengenoupal district where the official said a "massive" gunfight was reported. The state has witnessed sporadic violence since the peak of ethnic clashes that erupted on May 3 between members of the majority Meitei ethnic group and minority Kuki community over sharing government benefits and quotas.

OPINION

Sara Duterte opposes talks with communist rebels

Philippines Vice-President Sara Duterte opposed a government decision to restart peace negotiations with communist rebels, in a rare rebuke to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. The government and the communist rebels agreed last week to restart talks after a six-year hiatus. Duterte warned the rebels could take advantage of peace negotiations and were "insincere" in achieving a settlement. She has urged the president to reconsider and review the policy which includes granting amnesty to members of the Communist Party of the Philippines, its political arm, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

LAW AND ORDER

Philippines launches manhunt for blast accused

A Philippine military commander said a "massive" manhunt was underway for the assailants who bombed a Catholic service in the country's restive south, killing four and wounding dozens. The blast, claimed by the Islamic State group, happened on Sunday at Mindanao State University's gymnasium in Marawi. Security officials have said the bombing, which wounded around 50 people, may have been a retaliatory attack for a series of military operations against Islamist militant groups in recent days. "There's an ongoing massive operation to hunt the terrorist groups or the suspected perpetrators of the bombing," a military official said.

OFFBEAT

'Rizz' is Oxford University Press Word of the Year

"Rizz" - a colloquial term defined as "style, charm, or attractiveness" - has been crowned Word of the Year for 2023, Oxford University Press (OUP) announced yesterday. Its lexicographers chose "rizz", which also conveys "the ability to attract a romantic or sexual partner", from a shortlist of four words and phrases, after help from the public. An online vote had whittled down the list from eight finalists. "Rizz was chosen by the language experts at OUP as an interesting example of how language can be formed, shaped, and shared within communities, before being picked up more widely," OUP said.

11 hikers killed, dozen missing after Indonesia volcano eruption

AFP
Agam, Indonesia

Eleven hikers were found dead yesterday and another 12 were missing after a volcano erupted in Indonesia, with rescuers racing to carry injured and burned survivors down the mountain on foot.

Rescuers worked through the night to find dozens of hikers stranded on Mount Marapi on the island of Sumatra after it spewed an ash tower 9,340 feet - taller than the volcano itself - into the sky on Sunday.

The dead hikers were found near Marapi's crater after the 2,891-metre volcano rained ash on nearby villages, according to a local rescue official.

Twelve were missing, three more were found alive and 49 had safely descended from the crater, some with burns and fractures, the official said.

"Until now I have not received any information," said Dasman, father of missing hiker Zakir Habibi, who made a two-hour drive from Padang city to the base of the mountain last night in hope of good news.

"I will stay here until I hear some news," said Dasman.

Neither the three survivors nor the 11 dead bodies had reached the bottom of the mountain as of yesterday afternoon, local rescue agency chief Abdul Malik said, as heavy rain and poor visibility hampered rescue efforts.

"It slowed the evacuation team",

said Malik, adding that about 120 rescuers were involved in the response.

"The search will be conducted for seven days. Let's pray they all survive," he said.

Rescuers had been carrying the survivors down by hand, since an air retrieval had been deemed impossible with the eruption still ongoing, Malik said.

A video clip showed a rescue worker with a flashlight strapped to his head piggybacking a hiker, who moans in pain as she is carried to safety in the darkness.

At a centre for information about the missing hikers, family members waited anxiously for any news, with the view of Marapi blocked by smoke.

Forensic workers were preparing to identify the dead through their dental and fingerprint records, or based on marks such as birthmarks and tattoos, said Eka Purnamasari, an official from the West Sumatra police medical unit.

Local rescue agency spokesperson Jodi Haryawan said the rescue efforts had been broken up by sporadic eruptions but the search was still going despite the risks.

At least eight survivors had suffered burns, one had burns and a fracture and another had a head wound, according to a list of those found from Basarnas, a national search and rescue agency.

Marapi is on the second alert level of Indonesia's four-step system and authorities have imposed a three-kilometre exclusion zone around its crater.



People move in a boat past partially submerged vehicles in a residential area following heavy rains ahead of Cyclone Michaung in Chennai, India, yesterday.

Two dead, roads submerged as cyclone nears India

Reuters
Chennai

At least two people died and the runway of one of India's busiest airports lay submerged due to torrential rain, as two southern states yesterday braced for a severe cyclone likely to hit today.

Cyclone Michaung was expected to make landfall on the coast of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh today morning, the country's weather office said, with sustained winds of 90-100kph, gusting to 110kph.

Two people were killed when a wall collapsed because of heavy rain in the Chengalpattu district of neighbouring Tamil Nadu state, joint director of the state disaster management department, C Muthukumaran, said. In Tamil Nadu capital Chennai, the state's

largest city and a major electronics and manufacturing hub, cars were swept away as floodwater flowed through the streets, while its airport, one of the busiest in India, shut down operations for the day citing severe weather.

Media showed pictures of grounded planes with their wheels submerged in water as the rain pelted down.

Taiwan's Foxconn and Pegatron halted Apple iPhone production at their facilities near Chennai due to heavy rains, sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Several areas of the city were submerged in knee-deep water and there have been power outages since yesterday morning, a witness said, evoking memories of December 2015 when around 290 people died after catastrophic floods.

Authorities in both states were on high alert, evacuating thousands of people living in coastal areas, officials in both states said, with

warnings issued to fishermen not to venture out to sea.

Schools, colleges, offices and banks were closed yesterday and today in at least four districts of Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, because of weather conditions, a government notice said.

Parts of Andhra Pradesh were likely to get more than 8 inches of rain over the next 24 hours, India's weather office said.

In Andhra Pradesh, authorities had evacuated nearly 7,000 people in eight coastal districts and were preparing to evacuate a total of 28,000, depending on the cyclone's path and severity, a senior official in the state's disaster management department said.

At least 800 people have been evacuated so far from Bapatla, the coastal town in Andhra Pradesh where the cyclone is expected to make landfall today, P Ranjit Basha, district collector of Bapatla, said.

Congresswoman accuses Duterte of death threat

A Filipino congresswoman yesterday accused former president Rodrigo Duterte of threatening to kill her for a second time.

House of Representatives deputy minority leader France Castro made the allegation in a "supplemental" criminal complaint filed with prosecutors in Manila. Castro and Duterte had been subpoenaed to appear at the prosecutor's office yesterday to present witnesses and supporting documents relating to the congresswoman's first complaint filed on October 24.

Castro has alleged Duterte made "grave threats" against her during an October 10 interview with local broadcaster SMNI, violating the Cybercrime Prevention Act. She yesterday alleged Duterte had threatened her life again in an interview with the same broadcaster on November 16. In a transcript of that interview filed to the prosecutor, Duterte talked about communist rebels who are fighting a decades-old insurgency.

Philippine quake death toll rises



Residents stay at a school classroom serving as temporary shelter as frequent aftershocks hit a village in the Hinatuan town, Surigao del Sur province yesterday. The province was struck by a magnitude 7.6 earthquake on Saturday. The death toll from the powerful earthquake in the southern Philippines has risen to three, official tallies showed yesterday.

UK unveils strict visa measures to cut migration

Reuters
London

Britain yesterday sought to cut the number of migrants arriving in Britain through legal routes, raising the minimum salary they must earn in a job by a third after record net migration in 2022 piled pressure on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to act.

High levels of legal migration have for more than a decade dominated Britain's political landscape and Sunak has promised to gain more control after lawmakers in his Conservative Party criticised his record ahead of an election expected next year.

Interior Minister James Cleverly said the government would raise the minimum salary threshold for foreign skilled workers to £38,700 (\$48,900), from its current level of £26,200, reform the list of jobs where exceptions are made due to shortages, and toughen rules

on whether workers can bring their families.

"Migration to this country is far too high and needs to come down, and today we are taking more robust action than any other government before," Cleverly told lawmakers.

"This package of measures will take place from next spring."

The measures could lead to new disputes with business owners who have struggled to hire workers in recent years given Britain's persistently tight labour market and the end of free movement from the European Union following Britain's departure from the bloc.

Annual net migration to the UK hit a record of 745,000 last year and has stayed at high levels since, data showed last month.

"This package plus our reduction in student dependents will mean around 300,000 fewer people will come in future years than have come to the UK last year," Cleverly said.

US navy ship 'illegally' entered territorial waters: China

Reuters
Beijing

China's military yesterday said a US Navy ship illegally entered waters adjacent to the Second Thomas Shoal, a disputed South China Sea atoll that has recently seen several maritime confrontations.

"The US seriously undermined regional peace and stability," a spokesperson for China's Southern Theatre of Operations said in a statement, adding that the US

disrupted the South China Sea and violated China's sovereignty.

China is in disputes with several of its neighbours over its extensive claims of territorial waters in the South China Sea.

The US Navy said the USS Gabrielle Giffords, an Independence-class littoral combat ship, was conducting routine operations in international waters in the South China Sea, consistent with international law.

"Every day the US 7th Fleet operates in the South China Sea, as they have for decades," the US

Navy said in a statement. "These operations demonstrate we are committed to upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific region."

In recent months, China has had several runs-ins with Philippine vessels, and protested about US ships patrolling disputed areas.

According to the Chinese military, the US ship moved into waters adjacent to what China calls the Renai Reef, also known as Second Thomas Shoal, a part of the Spratly Islands. The Second Thomas Shoal lies in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, according to an

United Nations tribunal ruling in 2016.

The Chinese military spokesperson said the US ship was monitored and followed, and that China's "troops in the theatre are on high alert at all times to resolutely defend national sovereignty".

"We will not be deterred from continuing to work alongside our allies and partners in support of our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific," the US Navy responded.

On Sunday, the Philippine Coast

Guard deployed two of its vessels in the South China Sea after monitoring an "alarming" increase in the number of Chinese maritime militia vessels at a reef within the country's exclusive economic zone.

It is "reasonable and legal" for Chinese fishing boats to operate in the waters of the Whitsun Reef in South China Sea, China's foreign ministry said yesterday, after the Philippines deployed vessels to monitor what it said was an "illegal" presence of the boats.

"The area has been a very im-

portant operating area and shelter for Chinese fishing boats," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told a regular news conference.

Beijing has ignored a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that its claims to almost the entire sea have no legal basis.

China has ramped up patrols of the waters and reefs in the South China Sea over the past decade or so, and built artificial islands that it has militarised to reinforce its assertion.

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GULF TIMES

Job cuts, lean bonuses loom over Europe’s bankers in 2024

A mix of global economic unease and geopolitical uncertainty means optimism is in short supply among bankers from the City of London to Frankfurt’s ‘Mainhattan’ financial district.

Even rainmakers renowned for seemingly conjuring deals from nowhere are struggling to see ways to work their magic and drag investment banking revenues out of the doldrums.

Finance executives, consultants and headhunters interviewed by Reuters predict subdued deal flows, modest bonuses for most and heavy job cuts in 2024.

“2023 will ultimately be one of the lowest corporate finance fee pools in modern history,” said Fabrizio Campelli, head of Corporate Bank and Investment Bank at Deutsche Bank.

The \$2,669 billion of deals struck so far this year globally is the lowest since 2005, Dealogic data shows, while in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, the \$616 billion of deals which have been completed is the lowest since 2004.

It is not only corporate dealmaking that is on the back foot. Banks are wary profits will come under pressure from tighter regulation, including tougher capital requirements dubbed the ‘Basel Endgame’ which are set to be rolled out by global regulators from 2025.

And while consumer lending has boomed on the back of central bank policy moves, margins are now in retreat as interest rates peak and competition for deposits intensifies.

“Overall, the outlook for the next few years for banks is flat revenue,” said Ronan O’Kelly, partner and head of corporate and institutional banking for Europe at consultant Oliver Wyman.

Banks have already turned to cost cuts to try to weather the downturn, which in a people-intensive business means job losses.

Global growth is set to fall from 2.9% this year to 2.7% in 2024 before picking up in 2025, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development said on Wednesday.

Banks are wary profits will come under pressure from tighter regulation

at risk. Challenger Metro Bank said it could axe as many as 1 in 5 jobs.

Major headcount contractions are also expected at UBS and Citi amid big restructurings.

Workers’ unions, however, say banks are overstating their problems after some reported record profits this year.

Dominic Hook, national officer at Britain’s Unite, said he was fed up with them “pleading poverty”.

“The short-term approach of slashing workers, offshoring and outsourcing services has been shown to fail everyone from local communities to small businesses,” he said.

The dearth of activity means bonuses for this year are likely to disappoint, although some banks may be more generous to retain talent in case of a sharp rebound, with Goldman Sachs among those weighing hikes despite a dismal 2023.

“At relatively quiet times like these, it is still important to have the best people who are ready for when the market picks up again,” said Vis Raghavan, CEO of EMEA and Co-Head of Global Investment Banking, JP Morgan.

Morgan McKinley’s London Employment Monitor showed a 31% fall in financial services vacancies year-on-year in the third quarter, although some 52% of UK financial firms still plan to hire in the next six months.

One of those predicting an uptick in business in 2024 is Stephane Rambosson, co-founder of headhunter Vici Advisory.

“Activity should be up next year, so if you don’t pay your best people you risk losing them,” Rambosson said.

In order to reward the bankers who do remain, Deutsche Bank CEO Christian Sewing has called on the European Union to consider following Britain’s lead by removing caps on variable compensation.

Santander Chair Ana Botin told an event this week such reforms would help banks to better align staff remuneration with shareholder returns.

Wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and tensions between the West and China have led to caution in boardrooms, slowing investment and dealmaking, while putting all but the most pressing refinancings on the back burner.

“It’s not a terrible time to be a banker but you can’t keep everyone busy and as productive throughout the cycle,” said JP Morgan’s Raghavan.

“That said, there’s \$6tn in debt that needs to be refinanced over the next two years and banks will be doing that work but that is just flow, and the alpha is not in the flow,” he added, with reference to “alpha”, how banks measure their money-making advantage over competitors.

Looming elections in the United States, India and Britain next year are compounding the ongoing corporate inertia. — Reuters

“Cost (cutting) is the biggest single lever that banks can pull to bring returns to where they should be,” O’Kelly said.

Barclays is weighing cutting up to 2,000 back-office jobs in addition to layoffs across its UK retail, corporate and investment bank, Reuters reported, while rival Lloyds has put 2,500 jobs



The 44th GCC Summit in Qatar: A brief review

The meeting is expected to deliver focused agenda outcomes by reviving deferred regional projects

By Amna Abdulla Sadiq

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Introduction

Leaders of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) will gather in Doha, Qatar, today (December 5) for the GCC’s 44th Supreme Council Summit. The GCC Supreme Council meeting is held among the rulers of the GCC member states, and its hosting rotates among the member states annually. The Doha Summit is the first to be held outside Saudi Arabia since 2018 and the first to be hosted in Doha since the Al-Ula Declaration was signed in January 2021 between Qatar on one side and Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the other, thus ending the three-year Gulf crisis.

While the GCC Summit in Doha is expected to consolidate Qatar’s rapprochement with the GCC after the Gulf crisis, it is most important that the summit showcases GCC members’ commitment to more substantial and cohesive regional co-operation. To this end, this year’s GCC Summit will likely involve discussion of deferred projects, which have been on hold because of the crisis. Yet, Gulf leaders must also brainstorm ways to coordinate efforts and overcome disagreements on political and strategic issues, especially regarding the ongoing war in Gaza. As Qatar prepares to host the 44th GCC Summit, the following sections delve into details regarding its challenges and opportunities.

Intra-Gulf relations between two summits

The last time Doha hosted the GCC Supreme Council meeting was in 2014 for the 35th summit, which took place under exceptional circumstances and within days of restoring diplomatic relations with Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

The unprecedented dispute and the tense regional atmosphere resulting from the Arab Spring dominated the agenda of the 35th meeting. It focused on the strategic challenges facing the region and entailed substantial discussions of Arab affairs, including fighting terrorism and restoring order to the Arab world after the Arab Spring and the unrest in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. Ultimately, the final communiqué reasserted GCC countries’

unified position on fighting terrorism and assured the “full support of the Egyptian government and people in achieving stability and prosperity.” The 35th Summit’s main achievement was to bring the member states together once more to discuss mutually important topics.

While progress of the GCC has historically been slow, GCC leaders may benefit from the stability established by the Al-Ula declaration. In fact, the Al-Ula Declaration is more profound in its implications than the Riyadh Supplementary Agreement of 2014. Since the declaration, various high-level meetings and visits took place across the Gulf, focusing on confidence-building and ways to improve bilateral ties, with some resulting in strategic bilateral dialogues. Most recently, Qatar and Bahrain announced that construction work would begin on the deferred Bahrain-Qatar Bridge.

In a broader context, GCC states are also witnessing a regional de-escalation, with Iran and Saudi Arabia agreeing to re-establish diplomatic relations earlier this year. At the same time, Saudi, Emirati, and Turkish relationships are also witnessing a breakthrough, with emergent signs of commitment to greater co-operation.

The change in the regional atmosphere will likely balance the GCC’s focus between its external and internal agendas. In principle, the GCC is likely to benefit from this new political atmosphere and to redirect its energy toward more intra-regional co-operation. Hence, the meeting is expected to deliver GCC-focused agenda outcomes by reviving deferred regional projects.

A promising agenda

Many media reports have indicated that a Pan-GCC visa is on the table for approval by Gulf leaders during the summit. GCC Secretary-General Jassim al-Budaiwi first announced the Unified GCC Tourist Visa Project at the 40th meeting of Their Highnesses and Excellencies the Interior Ministers of the GCC. The announcement also indicated that the visa is expected to come into effect between 2024 and 2025 across the member states.

The proposed unified visa system for the region grants access to travellers under a single entry visa, streamlining the procedures for intra-regional mobility. The project is inspired by the application of the Hayya visa during the 2022

FIFA World Cup tournament. The Hayya visa allowed visitors from across the region and the world to enter certain Gulf states and enjoy the tournament.

The project is likely to simplify travel logistics across the region and strengthen the tourism sector in the member states. The move is also projected to address the longstanding logistical hurdles to further economic co-operation among member states. Most importantly, it is considered a breakthrough, away from the competition between member states.

A challenging disagreement

Despite the promising agenda, disagreements remain. The war raging in Gaza since October 7 is likely to overshadow the summit. The unfolding humanitarian catastrophe, which has fundamentally divided the world between supporting Israel or Hamas, has much more profound implications for the GCC. For the last few years, the GCC member states were at odds over the normalisation of individual states’ ties with Israel, yet these disagreements remained passive and had no clear focus. However, the Gaza war brings this disagreement to the fore, forcing GCC leaders to reach a common agreement regarding their relationship with Israel, at least for the final communiqué.

More specifically, Qatar is leading international efforts toward a ceasefire in Gaza and has opened communication channels with Hamas and Israel. Qatar is seeking to strengthen its position as a reliable and strong mediator.

Still, there is international pressure from GCC allies and from the public for the member states to take a clear and unified position on the Gaza war.

Conclusion

The 44th Supreme Council Meeting to be hosted in Doha faces great pressure from the public to present a fresh agenda. Since the Gulf crisis, public lack of trust in the GCC has persisted. However, regional stability will likely inspire Gulf rulers to further establish intra-regional co-operation and to move forward with suspended projects.

- Published as part of *Gulf Insights series* by Gulf Studies Center at Qatar University
- This article has been redacted to suit the publisher’s style and policies



PROMISING: The proposed unified visa system for the GCC grants access to travellers under a single entry visa, streamlining the procedures for intra-regional mobility. The project is inspired by the application of the Hayya visa during the 2022 FIFA World Cup tournament. The Hayya visa allowed visitors from across the region and the world to enter certain Gulf states and enjoy the tournament.

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Nicaragua recalls
envoy to Argentina
after Milei criticism

Nicaragua yesterday recalled its ambassador to Argentina ahead of the inauguration of radical right-wing libertarian Javier Milei as the South American country's next president following his criticism of the Nicaraguan government.

Milei is set to take office on December 10. In the lead-up to his November election win, Milei said Argentina would not do business with "dictators" or "communists," and that he would withdraw its ambassador to Nicaragua, among others.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Vice-President Rosario Murillo had initially congratulated Milei on the win, but Nicaragua's foreign ministry said the withdrawal of its ambassador comes "in the face of repeated declarations and comments" from the incoming Argentine government.

Ortega, a former Marxist guerrilla, has been increasingly isolated internationally since he launched a violent crackdown on dissent after protests against him erupted in 2018.

The president said he was forced to act, arguing that adversaries were attempting to oust him in a coup.

Since his election, Milei has softened his tone with some of the countries he had criticised on the campaign trail, including China and Brazil.

A representative for Milei did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Putin regrets bad
ties in meeting with
European envoys

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday complained of deteriorating ties with Western countries as he accepted the credentials of several new ambassadors.

At a Kremlin ceremony, Putin swore in some two dozen new ambassadors, including from countries such as Britain and Germany, with whom relations have been especially tense during the 21-month long offensive.

"The times are not easy," Putin told the envoys, with Russia hit by unprecedented rounds of Western sanctions as Moscow's offensive grinds on for another winter.

Addressing the new ambassador of the UK, with whom ties have been especially frosty even before the Ukraine offensive, he said Moscow and London were able to overcome differences in the 20th century.

"In the post-war (WWII) period and until recently, our countries were able to build relations," the Russian leader said.

"But the current state of things... is well known and we should hope that the situation — in the interest of our countries and nations — will change for the better."

Putin told the German ambassador that he regretted that Berlin was weaning itself off Russian energy.

"For over half a century we were able with Germany to develop a pragmatic business approach that was comfortable for both our countries and the whole European continent," said Putin, who speaks German and who was posted to Dresden during his time with the KGB.

Kangaroo captured
after punching
Canadian officer

A kangaroo that escaped its handlers during transport to a new home was captured yesterday east of Toronto after a weekend in the wild, but not before delivering a punch in the face to one of the police officers who brought her run to an end. The female kangaroo hopped over her handlers on Thursday during a rest stop at the Oshawa Zoo and Fun Farm in Ontario, the park's supervisor and head keeper, Cameron Preyde, told CBC. Videos emerged on social media on Friday of the marsupial, who was born in captivity, running along roads in Oshawa, a town on Lake Ontario about 37 miles east of Toronto. Officers on patrol spotted the kangaroo at around 3am yesterday on a rural property in northern Oshawa, Staff Sergeant Chris Boileau told CBC Toronto. They contacted the kangaroo's handlers and grabbed it by the tail, as instructed, he said. The kangaroo punched one of the officers in the face during the capture, Boileau said. "It's something that he and his platoon mates will be remembering for the rest of their careers," he said.

Guyana 'vigilant' after Venezuelans
vote 95% for claiming territory

AFP
Caracas

Guyana said yesterday it would remain "vigilant" after Venezuelans voted overwhelmingly in favour of claiming an oil-rich border region that makes up more than two-thirds of its territory.

"We have to always remain vigilant. Of course, our monitoring must be always at a high level. President Maduro, while we don't believe he will order an invasion...can do something that can be very unpredictable," Foreign Minister Hugh Todd told AFP.

Earlier, Caracas said more than half of eligible Venezuelan voters had taken part in the referendum that yielded a 95% "yes" outcome.

Venezuela has for decades laid claim to Essequibo, which Guyana has administered for over 100 years and is home to 125,000

of its 800,000 citizens.

Litigation is pending before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague over where the borders should lie.

Guyana, a former British and Dutch colony, insists the frontiers were determined by an arbitration panel in 1899.

But Venezuela — which does not recognise the ICJ's jurisdiction in the matter — claims the Essequibo River to the region's east forms a natural border and had historically been recognised as such.

The dispute has intensified since ExxonMobil discovered oil in Essequibo in 2015.

Caracas called Sunday's referendum after Georgetown started auctioning off oil blocks in Essequibo in August.

Voters were asked five questions in Sunday's referendum, including whether or not Venezuela should reject the 1899 arbitration decision as well as the ICJ's jurisdiction.

They were also asked whether or not Venezuelan citizenship should be granted to the people — currently Guyanese — of a new "Guyana Esequiba State."

There was a massive campaign for Venezuelans to vote "yes," but none against the measure.

More than 10.4mn out of 20.7mn eligible voters cast their ballots, National Electoral Council president Elvis Amoroso said yesterday, seeking to lay to rest initial doubts over the turnout.

The initial tally had been met with suspicion by opposition politicians and analysts, who said it appeared voters' responses to each of five questions on the referendum may have been counted as separate ballots cast.

Low voter turnout was observed at polling stations in Caracas and other cities, fuelling doubts.

The figure of 10.4mn announced yesterday by Amoroso, accompanied by President Nicolas Maduro, is the highest turnout ever in a Venezuelan election.

Maduro has hailed an "overwhelming victory."

"We have taken the first steps of a new historic stage in the struggle for what belongs to us, to recover what the liberators left us," he said.

The referendum raised fears in Guyana, and further afield, about Venezuela's ultimate intentions for the contested territory.

Todd told AFP Guyana would maintain defence co-operation with the United States and other strategic partners and continue diplomatic efforts to persuade



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro greets supporters during an electoral referendum in Caracas. (Reuters)

Venezuela to let the ICJ make the final determination.

"We have already made it clear that we will abide by the ruling of the court," he said.

Guyana had asked the ICJ to block Sunday's vote. On Friday, the court urged Caracas to take no action that might affect the disputed territory, but did not grant Georgetown's request for urgent intervention.

Guyana said the referendum posed an "existential" threat to the country as it could pave the way for Venezuela to "unilaterally and illegally" seize the region.

War be damned: Timeout in Kremlin



Children play atop of a snow hill at Red Square in front of the Kremlin's Spasskaya tower after a heavy snowfall in Moscow yesterday. (AFP)

White House warns
aid rupture will
'kneecap' Ukraine

AFP
Washington

The White House issued a stark warning yesterday that US aid for Ukraine will run out by the end of the year, saying that if Congress fails to agree funding, it will "kneecap" Kyiv's fight against the Russian invasion.

"We are out of money — and nearly out of time," White House budget director Shalanda Young said in a blunt letter to Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, reflecting President Joe Biden's growing frustration with a congressional stalemate.

Biden asked Congress in October for a huge \$106bn national security package including military assistance for Ukraine and Israel, but the funding has been mired in divisions on Capitol Hill.

Ukraine has been desperately pushing for more western aid as Russian forces step up attacks in the winter after Kyiv's counteroffensive failed over the summer.

"I want to be clear: without congressional action, by the end of the year we will run out of resources to procure more weapons and equipment for Ukraine," Young wrote.

"Cutting off the flow of US weapons and equipment will kneecap Ukraine on the battlefield, not only putting at risk the gains Ukraine has made, but increasing the likelihood of Russian military victories."

US aid packages to Ukraine had already become smaller due to the funding squeeze, added Young, the head of the White House's Office of Management and Budget.

Spotify cuts
around 1,500 jobs
as growth slows

Music streaming giant Spotify said yesterday it would reduce its number of employees by around 17% in a bid to cut costs amid "dramatically" slower economic growth.

The announcement comes on the heels of a rare quarterly net profit of €65mn in October, compared to a loss of €166mn for the same period a year earlier, and following 26% growth in active users for the third quarter to €574mn.

Around 1,500 people will leave the company, Spotify said. It was the latest in a series of layoffs announced in the tech industry. "I realise that for many, a reduction of this size will feel surprisingly large given the recent positive earnings report and our performance," chief executive Daniel Ek wrote in a letter to employees, which was seen by AFP. He said that in 2020 and 2021, the Swedish company "took advantage of the opportunity presented by lower-cost capital and invested significantly in team expansion, content enhancement, marketing and new verticals."

US charges ex-ambassador with spying for Cuba

The United States yesterday charged a former ambassador to Bolivia with spying for Cuba for over 40 years, in what the Justice Department described as one of the highest-reaching and longest-lasting infiltrations of the US government by a foreign agent.

Victor Manuel Rocha, who served as US ambassador to Bolivia from 2000-2002, was charged with committing multiple federal crimes including acting as an illegal foreign agent and using a fraudulently obtained passport, the Justice Department said in a statement.

"We allege that for over 40 years, Victor Manuel Rocha served as an agent of the Cuban government and sought out and obtained positions within the United States government that would provide him with access to non-public information and the ability to affect US foreign policy," Attorney-General Merrick Garland said in the statement.

Rocha, 73, was arrested and is



US ambassador to Bolivia, Manuel Rocha, speaks to members of the press in La Paz on July 11, 2001 in this file photo.

expected to appear before a federal judge in Miami yesterday. He was not immediately reachable for comment.

Rocha worked for the State Department from 1981-2002, the Justice Department said. He served on the White House's National Security Council from 1994-1995, and worked as an adviser to the Commander

of the US military's Southern Command from around 2006 to around 2012, the department added.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters he was unable to provide details on an ongoing law enforcement matter. "We will in the coming days, weeks, months, work with our partners in the intelligence community to assess any long-term national security implications for this matter," Miller said at a regular press briefing.

In a court document filed in the southern district of Florida, the US accuses Rocha of having secretly supported Cuba and its clandestine intelligence-gathering mission against Washington since 1981.

Rocha admitted his decades of work for Cuba in a series of meetings in 2022 and 2023 with an undercover FBI agent who posed as a covert Cuban General Directorate of Intelligence representative, according to the court document.

French knifeman
kills German
tourist, injures 2
others in Paris

Reuters
Paris

A man armed with a knife and a hammer killed a German tourist and left two people, including a British man, wounded near the Eiffel Tower in Paris late on Saturday in what President Emmanuel Macron called "a terrorist attack."

A 26-year-old suspect, a French national arrested after the attack, had pledged allegiance to Islamic State in a video recorded beforehand, anti-terrorism Prosecutor Jean-Francois Ricard said yesterday.

The suspect had told police he was angry about the situation in Gaza and the fact that "so many Muslims are dying in Afghanistan and in Palestine," Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

The German tourist suffered fatal injuries when he was attacked on the Quai de Grenelle, a few feet from the Eiffel Tower, authorities said.

The attacker was chased by police and assaulted two other people, including the British man, with a hammer, officials added.

Psychiatric failure

There was a clear failure in the psychiatric care of the radicalised Islamist suffering from mental troubles who stabbed the tourist to death, France's interior minister said yesterday.

The attacker was a Frenchman in his mid-20s born to a non-religious Iranian family but who had already done prison time for planning an attack and was known to the authorities as a radical with mental troubles.

"There was clearly a failure, not from the point of view of his monitoring by the intelligence services, but a psychiatric failure," Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told BFM TV, adding that the attacker had an "acute mental illness".

"Doctors said on several occasions that he was doing better, was more normal and could be free," he said.

An investigation was underway into murder and attempted murder in connection with a terrorist organisation, prosecutor Ricard told a news conference. Three other people from the suspect's family or entourage were in police

custody, he added.

The suspect had in 2016 been sentenced to four years in prison for planning another attack, and had been on the French security services' watch list, Darmanin said. He was also known for having psychiatric disorders, he added.

Darmanin said the attacker's mother had warned police that her son was no longer taking his medication and that intelligence services had suggested he should be hospitalised. But she did not want that and then reported he was doing better.

He said regional authorities currently did not have the power to issue an administrative order for such an individual to undergo psychiatric treatment, and "this has to change".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on X that he was "shocked" by the attack. Britain's foreign ministry said it was working with French authorities to support the British man.

"I send all my condolences to the family and loved ones of the German national who died...during the terrorist attack in Paris and think with emotion of the people currently injured and in care," President Macron said on the social network platform X.

No Plan B for Olympiad
ceremony

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne wrote on X: "We will not give in to terrorism."

The French government is insisting it will keep a plan to hold the 2024 Paris Olympics opening ceremony on the River Seine even after a deadly attack in the French capital at the weekend amplified existing security concerns.

Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera told French radio that the plan could still be adapted within the idea of the river flotilla, as media reports indicated grave concern within the security forces that the ceremony could be vulnerable to attack.

"There is no plan B, we have a plan A within which we have several alternatives," the minister told France Inter radio.

The plan is for a flotilla of boats to proceed along the Seine from Austerlitz bridge in the east of Paris to Lena bridge in the west carrying athletes, delegations and officials.



Pedestrians walk past flowers where a tourist was stabbed to death near the Eiffel Tower (background) in Paris. (AFP)

WHO Executive Board meeting held in Qatar

Qatar is hosting an informal meeting of the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) said in a statement yesterday.

WHO Executive Board Chairperson HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari is the chair of the meeting, in the presence of WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and the members of the board.

The meeting is aimed at discussing proposals as well as exchange views and ideas on the global health architecture and the fast-evolving health emergency landscape, and how this affects WHO governance, strategic issues, and financial sustainability.

The meeting will also discuss the proposal's terms scheduled to be discussed during the 154th session of the executive board to be convened next January.

The meeting emphasised the importance of the leading role of the WHO in ensuring global solidarity to address the challenges facing the humanitarian community, as the UN organisation acts as the directing and co-ordinating authority for international health work.

The meeting underlines the need to provide the WHO with adequate resources to respond to global health threats effectively and in a time-efficient manner and seek to build meaningful partnerships with member states and relevant stakeholders to strengthen health systems and promote health for all.

In her opening speech, HE Dr al-Kuwari welcomed the participants and confirmed the importance of the productive discussions, exchanging views and proposals on many issues of crucial importance to better address global health needs.

She expressed her profound concern about the numerous crises that are witnessed by many countries, whether man-made or natural.

The minister paid tribute to the courageous health workers who have tragically lost their lives in emergencies and conflicts.

HE Dr al-Kuwari also spoke about the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip.

"The repeated attacks on health facilities and healthcare workers are indefensible and violate international law (as) health facilities are sanctuaries designed



Members of the WHO Executive Board Right: HE Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

solely to care for people and their families," she said. "Preserving these crucial spaces and ensuring access to healthcare are fundamental imperatives."

She highlighted out the importance of issues like preparedness and strengthening the global health security architecture, in addition to the profound effects of climate change on public health, which requires setting strong strategies and resilient health systems.

The minister added: "The Draft Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW14) delineates our collective vision and strategy for advancing global health."

"Learning from the experiences of GPW13, it must serve as a beacon guiding the entire health ecosystem," HE Dr al-Kuwari said. "Achieving this ambitious goal demands unwavering dedication and collaborative efforts."

The WHO's Executive Board is respon-



sible for enforcing decisions and policies of the General Assembly, providing consultation and facilitating its work. Qatar was elected chairman of the Council at its 153rd session last May for a one-year term.

Microsoft booth showcases innovations at Expo 2023 Doha

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

Featuring the latest data and artificial intelligence (AI) innovations to ensure sustainability, build climate resilience and protect nature, Microsoft opened its booth at Expo 2023 Doha yesterday.

Expo 2023 Doha secretary-general Mohamed Ali al-Khouri inaugurated the booth in the presence of US embassy's commercial officer Harold "Lee" Brayman and Srinivasa Murthy, commercial specialist representing the Foreign Commercial Service.

Al-Khouri said the agricultural and horticultural sectors are currently experiencing tremendous technological transformation.

"Technology plays a crucial role in establishing sustainable systems that will assist us in addressing the most pressing environmental challenges," he said. "We are proud to collaborate with the world's leading technical company to introduce the world to technology-powered agriculture."

Microsoft Qatar general manager Lana Khalaf emphasised Microsoft's commitment to advancing climate change initiatives in line with Qatar National Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

She stressed the need for a balance between economic growth, social develop-



Al-Khouri inaugurating the Microsoft booth at Expo 2023 Doha in the presence of Brayman, Murthy and Khalaf yesterday. PICTURES: Thajudheen

ment, and environmental preservation.

She underscored Microsoft's efforts to continue to innovate with organisations in Qatar, offering learnings, resources, and technology – including the power of data and AI – to help them make data-driven decisions to set and achieve their own climate goals while driving

business growth and innovation.

"Microsoft believes, as the government of Qatar does, that economic prosperity and environmental awareness go hand in hand," Khalaf said. "That's why in 2020, we began a process to transform our company's work on sustainability."

"This is achieved by reducing our own environmental footprint and by accelerating research, helping our customers build sustainable solutions and advocating for policies that benefit the environment," she added.

Located at the Innovation Centre, the Microsoft booth at Expo 2023 Doha features an impressive lineup of solutions such as Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability, the Emissions Impact Dashboards for Azure and M365, and Microsoft Sustainability Manager, in addition to a range of solutions by Microsoft partners including QMIC, Siemens, Techvista, Alight, Click2cloud, Bravent, TCS, and Accenture/Agerpoint.

From renewable energy and vertical farming to carbon capture and climate monitoring, each of these solutions has been designed to help organisations cut energy and water consumption, reduce physical footprints and design sustainable products themselves.

The solutions also demonstrate the power of AI in unlocking tremendous opportunities for sustainability.

Microsoft has recently shared "Accelerating Sustainability with AI: A Playbook", highlighting AI's three game-changing capabilities to overcome bottlenecks and accelerate progress in climate action, which are AI's ability to measure, predict, and optimise complex systems, accelerate the development of sustainability solutions, and empower the sustainability workforce with solutions such as Microsoft Copilot.



The dignitaries with Microsoft officials in the booth.

QT wins three accolades at World Travel Awards

Qatar Tourism (QT) was awarded three titles at the World Travel Awards Grand Final Gala Ceremony in Dubai.

The QT was recognised for its position as the "World's Leading Business Travel Destination 2023", the "World's Leading Sports Tourism Destination", and for launching the "World's Leading Marketing Campaign 2023".

The awards were received by QT chief marketing and promotion officer Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi, director of shared services Omar al-Jaber, and Philip Dickenson, who leads International Markets and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) at the QT.

The QT was also recognised with a surprise "Resilience" award for its continued efforts.

"With a world-class calendar of events lined up for 2024, we are confident that Qatar will continue to provide an unparalleled tourism experience to its visitors and continue to differentiate itself with its fusion of culture, tradition and contemporary experiences," al-Mawlawi said in a press statement.

Winning the title of "World's Leading Business Travel Destination 2023" reflects Qatar's strategic focus on MICE and its expanding business offering.

Eased travel policies, seamless logistics into and around the country, and state-of-the-art meeting and conference facilities, and a combined exhibition space of 70,000sq m are among the highlights.

The title of "Middle East's Leading Marketing Campaign 2023" is attributed to the QT's "Feel More in Qatar" campaign which strategically launched last year following the conclusion of the World Cup to build on the momentum of the tournament.

The 360-global campaign was launched in over 17 markets and highlights the country's position as an exciting destination and as the Middle East's top choice for the well-travelled tourist.

The award for "Middle East's Leading Sports Tourism Destination" reflects Qatar's commitment to host major sporting events.

Since the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Qatar has held numerous sporting events, including the Qatar GKA Freestyle Kite World Cup 2023, Qatar TotalEnergies Open, Qatar ExxonMobil Open, Formula 1, to name a few.

The QT has also appointed Mutaz Barshim, a celebrated Olympic and World champion, as its latest brand ambassador.

Qatar also creates an environment for athletes to thrive, as noted in the recent world record set by athlete, Jan Roose, who completed the longest LED-lit slackline walk ever attempted on a single building in the performance titled *Sparkline*.



Qatar Tourism was recognised with three accolades at the World Travel Awards.

QF co-hosts third edition of leadership development seminar

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Education City, with Qatar University (QU) and the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST), co-hosted the third edition of the Leadership Development Seminar for New Rectors and Emerging Leaders of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP).

The QF, with Santander Universities, collaborated with the IAUP, QU, and UDST for the three-day event, which saw university presidents and leaders from 22 countries turn the spotlight on topics like the digital transformation of higher education, internationalisation, equality, and inclusion.

The seminar was designed to support them in facing current and future challenges and trends in higher education, with experts sharing their experiences and best practices.

"The IAUP's leadership development programme is a premier executive programme which, for



IAUP seminar participants.

the first time, has offered in the Gulf region an opportunity to current and emerging higher education leaders from around the world – the opportunity to share perspectives, learn approaches, and gain peer mentorship, as they experienced the unique, innova-

tive higher education landscape of Qatar," said QF president of higher education and education Francisco Marmolejo.

"By hosting higher education leaders at Education City, we have had a unique opportunity to share the success story of Qatar Foun-

dation with participants," he said. "Our approach – the array of top-level universities in one place, the development of innovative joint academic offerings, and the variety of initiatives at the QF working toward unlocking human potential – are among the key features

that current and future university leaders have been able to see firsthand."

The QF's education ecosystem is home to seven international partner universities as well as the QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University, 13 schools, research and innovation

hubs, and community programmes and facilities.

Marmolejo highlighted its cross-registration system – which allows students at Education City to take courses at different universities on the same campus – and the "connectedness" of the QF's universities and schools, as being among the "distinctive characteristics" of the Education City model that he hoped other education leaders can take inspiration from.

"The fact that we have partnered with the IAUP and with other universities in Qatar speaks volumes for our instrumental role in fostering conversations that are needed among leaders who are willing to experiment with new ideas aimed at reshaping higher education across the globe," he said. "I am sure the story of Qatar Foundation will serve as a tangible reference of what can be achieved when an inspiring vision, committed leadership, and community involvement are in place."