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# Gaza massacre toll tops 25,000; Hamas defends attacks on Israel

## Netanyahu government rejects Hamas's conditions for releasing hostages

AFP  
Gaza Strip

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas yesterday defended its October 7 attacks on Israel but admitted to “faults” and called for an end to “Israeli aggression” in Gaza, where the health ministry said the death toll passed 25,000.

Southern Gaza is the latest focus of Israel's battle to destroy the resistance movement.

In its first public report, Hamas said the October 7 attacks were a “necessary step” against Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, and a way to secure release of Palestinian prisoners.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his government would not accept Hamas's conditions for releasing hostages still held in Gaza. “If we accept this, we won't be able to guarantee the safety of our citizens,” he said.

Hamas said in the report its fighters were committed to “Islamic values”, and if civilians were targeted “it happened accidentally and in the course of the confrontation with the occupation forces”.

Israel's military offensive has killed at least 25,105 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the latest toll

People take part in a demonstration to show solidarity with the Palestinian people, in Belgium yesterday.

issued yesterday by the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza.

Israeli vessels were bombarding Gaza City and other areas in the north early yesterday. Hamas has also reported heavy combat in the north.

Netanyahu is under intense pressure to return the hostages and account for security failings surrounding the October attacks.

The United Nations says about

1.7mn people have been displaced in Gaza, with about one million crowded into the Rafah area of Gaza's south near Egypt.

UN agencies have warned better aid access is needed urgently as famine and disease loom. Gazans are also struggling with shortages of water, medical care and other essentials.

With fuel scarce, they have increasingly turned to donkey carts for transport.

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh held a meeting with the Turkish foreign minister, diplomatic sources said. Among their discussion was “a two-state solution for a permanent peace,” one of the sources said.

The United States and Arab countries are also seeking such a solution involving Palestinian statehood, but Netanyahu has rejected it, saying “Israel must retain security control over Gaza”.

Hamas in its report rejected any international and Israeli efforts to decide Gaza's post-war future.

Israel's northern border with Lebanon has seen near-daily exchanges of fire between Israeli forces and the Iran-backed Hezbollah movement.

An Israeli drone strike on a car in southern Lebanon killed two Hezbollah fighters, a source said.

The White House said it was taking “extremely seriously” a weekend attack by Iran-backed militants using “multiple ballistic missiles and rockets” against a base hosting US forces in Iraq.

Dozens of such attacks in Iraq and Syria have taken place since mid-October and most have been claimed by militants opposing US support for Israel, but the use of ballistic missiles marked an escalation. **Page 8**

## Amir meets president of Tatarstan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met at his office in Lusail Palace yesterday with President of the Republic of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways of enhancing and promoting them, in addition to issues of common concern. **(QNA)**

## Saudi beat Kyrgyzstan to reach Round of 16

DOHA: Regional football powerhouse Saudi Arabia yesterday beat a nine-man Kyrgyzstan side 2-0 to reach the Round of 16 of the AFC Asian Cup 2023.

Mohamed Kanno opened the scoring for the three-time champion Saudis in the 35th minute. Faisal al-Ghamdi (84) scored the second goal of the match that witnessed plenty of drama at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

Ayazar Akmatov was sent off in the ninth minute for a studs-up challenge in the 9th minute of the clash. Kyrgyzstan's Kimi Merk also saw red for another rough tackle just seven minutes into the second half.

Earlier in the day, Thailand boosted their hopes of advancing to the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 knockout stage after battling to a goalless draw with Oman in their Group F clash.

The result took Thailand to four points with Saudi Arabia their final group stage opponents while the draw means Oman's hopes hang in the balance with the West Asian side to play Kyrgyzstan in their concluding tie.

Thailand defeated Kyrgyzstan 2-0 in their opener while Oman suffered a 2-1 defeat to Saudi Arabia.

Today, defending champions

Saudi Arabia's Faisal al-Ghamdi celebrates scoring their second goal against Kyrgyzstan.

and points leaders Qatar take on China in a Group A clash at the iconic Khalifa International Stadium where the kick-off is set for 6:00pm. Also today, Lebanon face Tajikistan, the other two sides in Group A at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium (6:00pm). **Sport Pages 1, 4**

## Amir to patronise Maritime Academy graduation today

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will patronise the graduation ceremony of the second batch of cadets of Mohammed Bin Ghanem Al Ghanem Maritime Academy at the academy's headquarters in Al-Shamal today morning. **(QNA)**

## 4 survive jet crash

Four people survived and two are unaccounted for after a Russian plane crashed in mountainous northeastern Afghanistan, the air transport agency Rosaviatsia said. The Falcon 10 business jet was believed to be carrying six people on a hospital flight from India to Uzbekistan and Russia. **Page 11**

## Huge anti-AfD rallies

Hundreds of thousands joined rallies in Germany against the far-right AfD party again yesterday. Between Friday and Sunday alone, protests were organised in around 100 cities. The influx of demonstrators was so large in Munich that organisers were forced to ask people to disperse for safety reasons. **Page 11**

Today's  
schedule



Group A:  
Qatar vs China, 6 pm  
at Khalifa International Stadium

Group A:  
Tajikistan vs Lebanon, 6 pm  
at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium

## Chinese ambassador visits Gulf Times office

Chinese ambassador Cao Xiaolin with Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka in the Gulf Times office yesterday. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Gulf Times Editor-in-Chief Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka met with Chinese ambassador Cao Xiaolin in the Gulf Times office yesterday. Faisal al-Mudahka welcomed the new ambassador to Qatar and wished him all success and Qatar-China relations further growth during his tenure in Doha. They discussed bilateral relations and the envoy was also briefed on the history of the newspaper and Qatari journalism. In recent years, the relationship between Qatar and China has evolved into a robust and multifaceted partnership, expanding across various fields and fostering mutual co-operation.

## 102 flights cancelled at Dublin airport

Airlines cancelled 102 flights in and out of Dublin airport yesterday due to a storm that was forecast to rage for the rest of the day. Storm Isha had also forced 24 aborted landings by 1700 GMT, while 27 flights opted to divert to other airports.

## 25 killed after Ukraine shells Donetsk

Twenty-five people were killed and 20 injured when Ukrainian forces shelled the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, yesterday. According to sources, Ukrainian forces bombarded a busy area where shops and a market are located. **Page 11**

# Qatar launches urgent care awareness campaign

Qatar's public healthcare sector providers are collaborating to deliver a national campaign to raise awareness of emergency and urgent healthcare services.

The campaign aims to highlight the wide range of emergency and urgent care services available and to help patients make the best choice for their medical care needs, a statement said yesterday.

The campaign by Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Sidra Medicine, and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), will see awareness messages delivered to Qatar's population through a wide range of channels until the end of February.

Ali Abdulla al-Khater, chair of the Supreme Committee for Healthcare Communications, said: “Qatar's public healthcare providers deliver high-quality care and support to patients with emergency and urgent care needs across more than two million patient interactions each year.”

“The Ambulance Service and various trauma and emergency departments provide excellent care to patients with the most critical, life-threatening conditions, while the many urgent care services enable patients with urgent but non-life-threatening conditions to access the care they need quickly without adding unnecessary pressure on emergency services. We are partnering to deliver this awareness

Ali Abdulla al-Khater

campaign to help patients make the best choice for their medical care needs as we know that choosing the right option for their care enhances patients own treatment experience and that of

**The campaign will help patients make the best choice for their medical care needs.....choosing the right option enhances patients own treatment experience and that of others**

others,” explained, al-Khater.

Qatar's healthcare sector has grown significantly in recent years and there are now more options for patients with emergency and urgent medical care conditions than ever before. These services are delivered across the public healthcare system:

HMC: The National Ambulance Service, seven emergency departments, five paediatric emergency centres, and the Urgent Consultation Service helpline.

PHCC: 10 Urgent Care Units providing the service for adults, and five out of the 10 providing the service for both adults and paediatric

atrics, within its primary health centres and the Urgent Consultation Service helpline.

Sidra Medicine: Paediatric Emergency Department (Public), Paediatric Urgent Care Centre (Private) and Women's Obstetrics Triage and Urgent Care (Private).

MoPH/QRCS: Three Urgent Care Centres.

As part of the awareness campaign, the healthcare partners have launched an emergency and urgent care website, www.where-foryourcare.qa providing details of all service options in Qatar and advice on when and how to access them.



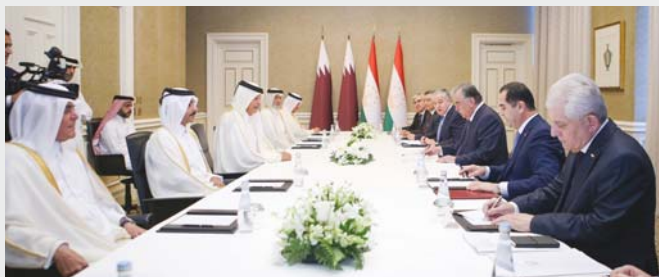


## Tajik president arrives



Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon arrived in Doha yesterday on a state visit to the country. He and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, Qatar's ambassador to Tajikistan Mubarak bin Abdulrahman al-Nasr, and Tajik ambassador to Qatar Khisrav Sohobzoda. **(QNA)**

## President Rahmon meets Shura Council Speaker



Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon met at his residence in Doha yesterday with Shura Council Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral relations, especially those related to the parliamentary co-operation and ways to reinforce and upgrade them. The meeting was attended by a number of Shura Council members, alongside Qatar's ambassador to Tajikistan Mubarak bin Abdulrahman al-Nasr. **(QNA)**

## PM receives message from Belarus FM



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a written message from Belarus Foreign Minister Sergei Aleinik, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and upgrade them. HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi received the message during his meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Evgeny Shestakov in Doha yesterday. **(QNA)**

# Qatar-Tajikistan ties go from strength to strength

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will meet visiting Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon at the Lusail Palace today, to discuss the relations of friendship and standing co-operation between the two countries and ways to enhance them on all fronts, in addition to the most prominent issues and developments in the regional and international arenas.

The state visit of the Tajik president is an embodiment of Qatar's strategy set by the Amir to build bridges and adopt an approach of openness to all world countries, in addition to establishing the strongest of ties with various sisterly and friendly states.

The visit emphasises the strength of bilateral ties, where it is expected to enhance them to reach a strategic partnership, especially in terms of the economy, trade, and investment, in service of the two friendly countries and their peoples.

The Qatar-Tajikistan ties date back to 1994, when the two countries establish diplomatic relations on the sidelines of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation summit held in Morocco. As a result, the Qatari embassy in Dushanbe opened its doors in 2012, whereas the Tajik embassy in Doha followed suit in 2013, as such, this year marks the 30th anniversary of establishing bilateral relations.

The strong relations that bind the two countries stem from their peoples spiritual and historical ties on the one hand, and from the brotherly relations between both countries leaders: His Highness the Amir and President Emomali Rahmon, who share a mutual keenness to advance relations.



Trust and mutual respect form the basis for both countries' ties, especially that Qatar was the first Arabian Gulf country to recognise Tajikistan's independence and the first Arab country to invest in it through the \$300mn-worth Diar Dushanbe project. Furthermore, Qatar financed the construction of Central Asia's largest mosque: Imam Azam Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit Central Cathedral Mosque of Dushanbe whose area stretches over 12 hectares and has the capacity of accommodating 133,000 worshippers at a time.

Mutual official visits of the highest order helped strengthen relations between Doha and Dushanbe, during which a number of bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed, in addition to various ministerial, commercial, and investment delegations exchanging visits.

One of the most prominent bilateral summit-level official visits was when His Highness the Amir paid Tajikistan a state visit in June 2023, and his visit in June 2019 to participate in the 5th Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). President Rahmon paid his first official visit to Qatar in May 2007 while his second official visit took place in February 2017.

Qatar and Tajikistan share similar stances on crucial regional and international issues and dossiers, with both countries being eager on co-operation to maintain international security and peace. The

two states also work closely in the framework of regional and international organisations, such as the UN, the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), and the Asia Co-operation Dialogue.

As part of their continuous bilateral political talks, both countries foreign ministries held a round of talks in the Tajik capital in May, whereby they discussed bilateral co-operation, in addition to a number of topics of mutual interest.

The Qatar-Tajikistan joint labour committee convened in Dushanbe in February to discuss aspects of co-operation and the exchange of expertise in labour affairs, facilitating the recruitment of specialised labourers from Tajikistan, the mechanisms for implementing the signed bilateral agreement regarding the organisation of the workforce, among other topics on the agenda.

Tajikistan is taking part in the Expo 2023 Doha through its pavilion which introduces visitors to the country's history, culture, attractions, arts, and Islamic religious and cultural heritage.

Tajikistan is eager to enhance relations with Qatar and considers it as a main partner internationally, calling on Qatari businesspersons to invest in various Tajik sectors, be it in hydraulic energy, banking and financial services, metals, tourism, and agriculture.

Tajikistan is currently implementing promising economic programmes, with the country ranking 6th among the most advanced countries in terms of hydraulic energy, the source of 98% of the country's electricity.

Tajikistan also enjoys a competitive economic environment and has four economic zones fo-

cusing on mining, energy, and textile. Moreover, the country offers a competitive market for investments and provides a range of foreign investment guarantees including 240 advantages and facilities such as those regarding its taxation and customs laws.

Tajikistan is a mountainous, landlocked country located in Central Asia and is the smallest country in its region. The country's population is estimated at about 9.5mn people living on an area of about 143,000sq km. The economy of Tajikistan relies on agriculture and the production of cotton and high-quality aluminium. Thanks to it being a mountainous country, Tajikistan enjoys huge water resources, ranking it 8th globally in terms of water reserves and first in Central Asia. Thus, Tajikistan offers great investment opportunities in agriculture, textiles, tourism, and clean and green energy.

Tajikistan has several important advantages, including its geopolitical position among three of the world's largest economies of China, India, and Russia, as well as bordering several countries with emerging economies. The country is resource-rich, whereby it enjoys vast water reserves accounting for 65% of its regions water, in addition to having the world's largest silver mine, as well as possessing gold and precious stone mines, a vast river system which enables it to generate huge amounts of hydraulic energy, the Norak Dam, one of the world's highest dams. The country is also home to grand fertile lands with fresh water rendering its environment ideal for agriculture and is a destination for rare bird hunting. The country has a lot of tourist attraction potential. **(QNA)**

## Qatar, Belarus hold political consultations



The foreign ministries of Qatar and Belarus held the sixth round of political consultations in Doha yesterday. HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi chaired the Qatari side while Deputy Foreign Minister Evgeny Shestakov presided over the Belarusian side. The consultations dealt with discussing bilateral relations and several topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

## PM gets phone call from French minister

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call on Saturday from French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Stephane Sejourne. During the phone call, they discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to discussing the initiative of Qatar in co-operation with France to provide medicines to civilians and detainees in the Strip. They stressed the necessity of sustaining the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and strengthening regional and international efforts aimed at an immediate ceasefire. **(QNA)**

## Qatar-Lebanon meeting



HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah met yesterday with Lebanese Minister of Interior and Municipalities Bassam Mawlawi. During the meeting, the two sides discussed reinforcing co-operation between Qatar and Lebanon, particularly in municipal affairs. **(QNA)**

## Labour minister meets Kuwaiti ambassador



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri met yesterday with Kuwaiti ambassador to Qatar Khaled Badr al-Mutairi. The meeting discussed topics of common interest, and the co-operation between the two countries in the labour sector and ways to support and develop it. **(QNA)**

# Envoy sees signing of new deals



Mubarak bin Abdulrahman al-Nasr

Qatar's ambassador to Tajikistan Mubarak bin Abdulrahman al-Nasr said that Tajik President Emomali Rahmon's visit to Doha may result in signing new agreements between the two countries in trade, industry and investment, noting that the Tajik side is expected to propose to Qatar to invest in the promising hydroelectric power field.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said the visit may include discussion on the most prominent issues on the scene today, such as the Palestin-

ian issue, in addition to issues of common concern.

He noted that the relations between Qatar and Tajikistan have entered a new phase of co-operation since 2007, when President Rahmon visited Qatar, and His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani visited Tajikistan. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited Tajikistan in 2019 to participate in the 5th Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). His latest visit was in June 2023 as part of his Central Asia

tour. The visit resulted in the signing of 15 new agreements for co-operation in various fields.

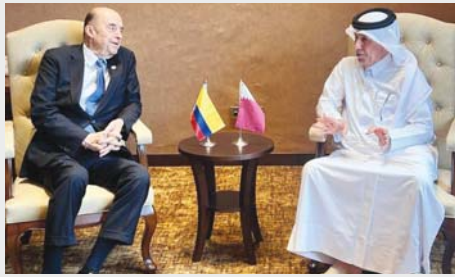
Ambassador al-Nasr noted continuous co-operation between the two countries through supporting international conferences in combating terrorism and water which Tajikistan hosts from time to time.

He added that Qatar supported the health sector in Tajikistan during the Covid-19 pandemic, provided medical equipment, and supported several projects for the Committee of Emergency Situations of Tajikistan. **(QNA)**

## Al-Muraikhi meets FM's of Benin, Colombia



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi held separate meetings with foreign ministers of Benin and Colombia Olushegun Adjadi Bakari and Alvaro Leyva, respectively, on the sidelines of the Third South Summit in Kampala. The meetings dealt with co-operation relations between Qatar and the two countries, besides topics of mutual interest. **(QNA)**



## Tatarstan president ends Doha visit



Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov left Doha yesterday, following a visit to the country. He and the accompanying delegation were seen off at Hamad International Airport by HE the Director of the Department of Protocol Ibrahim bin Yousif Fakhro. **(QNA)**

## Qatar takes part in meeting on Haiti



Qatar participated in the meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Situation in Haiti of the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), that took place in Paris. Representing Qatar at the meeting was Sheikh Ali bin Jassim al-Thani, Qatar's ambassador to France and its representative to the OIF. Qatar's participation in the meeting is part of international efforts to achieve stability and peace in Haiti, and reflects its commitment to supporting dialogue and stability worldwide. **(QNA)**



# QU forum discusses AI integration in higher education quality assurance



**Q**atar University's Academic Planning and Quality Assurance Office organised its third forum which provides a collaborative space for the discussion of artificial intelligence integration in higher education quality assurance.

QU's Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Dr Ibrahim al-Kaabbi, said in his opening statement, "Today, we gather to reaffirm our ongoing commitment and continuous efforts to achieve Qatar University's mission of qualitative excellence in various fields and the delivery of high-quality academic programmes."

He added: "Through the pre-



vious editions of this forum, our work aimed to solidify the central value of quality culture and excellence within the Qatar University community. We aimed to increase awareness of the importance of the learning outcomes assessment process at the level of academic programmes, and to establish connections between the outcomes of education and continuous development and improvement in programmes and academic practices. We also sought to familiarise participants with the learning outcomes system adopted at Qatar University and to understand all its aspects."

Dr al-Kaabbi emphasised QU's keenness to consider the opinions

and suggestions of attendees regarding the quality and evaluation of programmes.

This reflects the university's belief in the importance of collaboration and concerted efforts to achieve goals that serve the nation. He pointed out that this forum provides a unique annual opportunity for dialogue, communication, and openness to new perspectives on quality assurance in academic programmes at the university.

The forum is also seen as a platform for exchanging experiences and opportunities for improvement and development to ensure the quality of learning in academic programmes. **(QNA)**

## Qatar Tourism's special edition of Qatar Calendar celebrates Asian Cup football fever

**A**s the country continues to welcome football fans from across the region, Qatar Tourism (QT) has released a special edition of the Qatar Calendar, celebrating the football fever during the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023.

From sporting championships to festivals and star-studded exhibitions, January and February will showcase more than 25 events, demonstrating once again the country's ability to host world-class events, supported by its curated infrastructure.

Fans can head to the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 Fan Activities across stadiums in Qatar, or celebrations at Hello Asia at Lusail Boulevard, running until February 10.

Sikkat Wadi Msheireb will also celebrate the tournament with the Asian Sikka running until February 10. Equestrian enthusiasts can witness more than 115 horses during the Doha Tour 2024, taking place until February 11, at the Longines Arena - Al Shaqab.

Other sporting celebrations include the Qatar Camel Festival (until February 15) at Labsir Square in Al-Sheehaniya.

The World Aquatics Championships Doha 2024 Festival (February 2-February 18) will host 2,600 athletes from more than 190 countries to compete in water sports such as swimming, high diving and water polo at Aspire Dome, Old Doha Port and Hamad Aquatic Centre.

Adrenaline seekers can witness a world of parachuting and loops during the 6th FAI World Parachute Slalom Championships at Lusail Boulevard, from February 1-14. Visitors and residents can participate in Shop Qatar 2024, running until January 27, for a chance to win incredible prizes. Food connoisseurs can also experience a world of flavours with over 100 food stalls at the Qatar International Food Festival (February 7-17), at the Expo Family Zone in Al Bidda Park.

Qatar Kite Festival 2024 (January 25-February 3) will showcase a vibrant collection of colourful kites soaring across the Doha skyline in Old Doha Port.



Events celebrating Qatar's culture and heritage will continue where falconry hunters can honour country's roots and traditions with the return of Marmi Festival 2024, which will take place until January 27, or visit the Katara International Arabian Horse Festival running until February 11 to watch purebred horses compete.

Celebrating 20 years of luxury and opulence, this year's edition of the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition (February 5-11), will unveil the finest jewellery collections and unite local, regional, and international brands under one roof at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center.

A ladies-only exhibition is taking place at Galleria Alhazm, Zin-

natha Women Elegance (January 25-February 2).

The first edition of Design Doha, a biennial event that will feature more than 100 designers from the Middle East and North African region, is scheduled from February 24-28.

Additionally, the 'Shattered' exhibition is running at the Museum of Islamic Art until May 7, depicting works by the Turkish artist, Feleksen Onar.

Modi & Rehab AlShamrani and Najwa Karam are set to perform at Katara Amphitheatre as part of Qatar Concerts 2024 on January 27 and February 1, respectively. Nassif Zeytoun is also performing live on February 3 at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

## Dukhan Bank picks QR1mn grand prize winner of Thara'a savings account

**D**ukhan Bank has announced Hussain al-Jaber as the winner of its QR1mn Thara'a grand prize.

The draw was conducted under the supervision of a representative of the Qualitative License and Market Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Thara'a, Dukhan Bank's Shariah-compliant savings account and the first in Qatar's Islamic banking sector, offers account holders the chance to benefit from cash rewards up to QR1mn. Based on several criteria, Thara'a account holders are eligible for a number of periodic draws for cash prizes.

Over the past year, each month witnessed 59 winners per draw, each receiving a cash prize of QR5,000, as well as two winners per draw for the cash prize of QR10,000. Quarterly, there were two winners per draw for the cash prize of QR25,000 each, two winners per draw for the cash prize of QR50,000 each, and yearly, one winner of the grand prize of



QR1mn, rewarding 501 winners in total with cash prizes up to QR3.79mn.

Coupled with cash prizes and a reward scheme, Thara'a is a product full of value-added benefits and services. Thara'a offers account holders access to Dukhan Bank's innovative banking channels with benefits, which include unlimited withdrawals and deposits, as well as free fund transfers across their accounts and through all Dukhan Bank channels.

Dukhan Bank offers an extensive variety of personal

banking products and investments, as well as seven strategically located branches and a broad network of ATMs located across Qatar. Customers can access their accounts at any time through the state-of-the-art online banking or via the 24/7 contact centre.

Customers may learn about the many benefits of Thara'a savings account by visiting [www.dukhanbank.com](http://www.dukhanbank.com) or calling 800 8555 or ask 'Rashid', the bank's virtual assistant, on the website, mobile app or via WhatsApp on 44100888.

### QU magazine spotlights soil-free vegetable cultivation

Qatar University *Research Magazine* highlighted in its new issue the vertical farming technology for year-round soil-free vegetable cultivation in Qatar, as well as the prospects of this new technology in supporting the domestic agricultural product.

The vertical farming technology is a qualitative shift in agriculture and has succeeded in providing effective means of cultivating soil-free crops utilising stacked layers or shelves instead of resorting to open fields, something that would potentially contribute to providing spaces, increasing them, reducing resource consumption and increasing production during the whole year with the emphasis on observing the environmental impacts, the magazine outlined.

The magazine noted the Agricultural Research Station patented agricultural technology to grow vegetables without soil throughout the year in Qatar through hydroponic vegetable cultivation system in the facility, for fresh leafy vegetables that leverages the cutting-edge scientific technologies in a highly controlled environment to offer the optimal growth conditions. The journal touched on the cultivation process

starting from a careful selection of high-quality seeds, focusing on varieties that thrive in controlled environments to ensure optimal growth. Subsequently, seeds are sown on the seeding mat, using seedling trays and kept under a lighting shade cover for one day. These trays are placed in a seedling pool where temperature, humidity and lighting conditions are carefully controlled to encourage rapid and uniform germination.

The report pointed out that vertical farming offers a host of benefits. It allows for year-round production, ensuring a consistent supply of leafy greens regardless of external factors like weather and seasons. The research team is currently working on adapting and developing project ideas to fit the Qatari environmental conditions, particularly in terms of cooling systems and energy supplies, in collaboration with researchers from Qatar University in these fields. This project is expected to open new research horizons for various disciplines within and outside of Qatar University, offering new training and research opportunities for students. **(QNA)**



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## BMW, Ford, Toyota models recalled

**T**he Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Alfardan Automobiles, has announced the recall of BMW 735i Saloon, 740i Saloon, and i7 xDrive 60 Saloon, 2023 model, as it is possible that the warning lights won't function correctly due to a programming defect in the control device.

The MoCI, in co-operation with Almarna Motors Company, announced the recall of Ford Bronco 2021-22 models, as the wiper system may enter a dry detect mode in certain conditions. If this occurs, the wipers slow down to an intermittent speed while in the continuous low or high wiper setting.

The MoCI, in co-operation with Al Abdulghani Mo-

tors, also announced the recall of Toyota Yaris S/D, and Veloz, 2023 model, over an improper tightening torque of the front shock absorber upper nut, which leads to abnormal noise and the nut(s) coming-off. The MoCI said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers.

The MoCI urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquiries and suggestions through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: [info@moci.gov.qa](mailto:info@moci.gov.qa), X (formerly Twitter) - @MOCIQATAR, Instagram MOCIQATAR. The MoCI mobile application available on iPhone and Android devices MOCI\_QATAR





# Alfardan Premier Motors opens Jaguar Land Rover facility

Alfardan Premier Motors (APM) Company, the official retailer of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) in Qatar, has continued its expansion with the opening of a new JLR facility at Jery Al Samur, offering sales, service and spare parts.

The facility, which includes a body shop and a training centre, is located within the new Alfardan Automotive Complex just 12 minutes away from Doha Festival City, a statement explained yesterday.

The modern facility has been built to the new JLR global ARCH standard, designed to provide a bright and welcoming atmosphere to clients.

It can accommodate the expanded line-up from both brands, as well as future additions to their extensive range.

Clients can expect striking architecture and a stunning interior design concept from the Jery Al Samur facility – a reflection of the supreme design applied to every vehicle under the facility's roof.

Those looking for vehicle customisation services will find a high-end Personalisation Studio within the sales area.

Completing the experience for JLR's discerning clients, the facility provides drop-off services and online service booking.

Omar Hussain Alfardan, president and chief executive of Alfardan Group, remarked on the significant occasion, saying: "This new and high-tech facility reiterates our commitment first and foremost to our clients, and to the Jaguar and Land Rover brand."

"Alfardan Premier Motors is committed to bringing an exclusive experience to not only our clients, but to our employees as well, and are confident that this groundbreaking facility will maintain and enhance our exceptional standards," he said.

A team of highly certified



experts from APM are always available to receive clients' vehicles for inspection and repairs at Jery Al Samur.

The facility provides clients with the latest in vehicle repairing techniques and services, allowing the in-house team of specialists to better support the brands' loyal client base.

The skilled members are also adept in aluminium structural repairs and possess the know-how to take on any repair or customisation job efficiently.

The new facility features a Training Centre: investing in human resources tops APM corporate agenda since it is the reason for its outstanding track record.

With regular training, each team member is equipped to uphold the exceptional standards motorists expect from APM and the JLR brands.

"The growth of our iconic brands with the same rigorous



quality standards and delivery applied in Qatar through Alfardan Premier Motors is a partnership we are proud of," JLR Mena (Middle East and North Africa) managing director Bruce Robertson said.

"Today is yet another special occasion as we launch this outstanding new Jaguar Land Rover brand facility in the country."

"This is testament to our partner's passionate team and relentless commitment to the best client experience, trust and satisfaction," he added.

The facility has been developed in accordance to JLR's recently unveiled new corporate identity, as part of their move to a House of Brands organisation.

The new brand identity aspires to remove ambiguity and bring to the fore the unique DNA of each of JLR's brands – Range Rover, Defender, Discovery and Jaguar – as well as accelerate the delivery of the company's vision to be Proud Creators of Modern Luxury.

The showroom will be home to an all-new and flagship JLR models, including Jaguar XF, XE, F-PACE, E-PACE, F-TYPE and I-PACE.

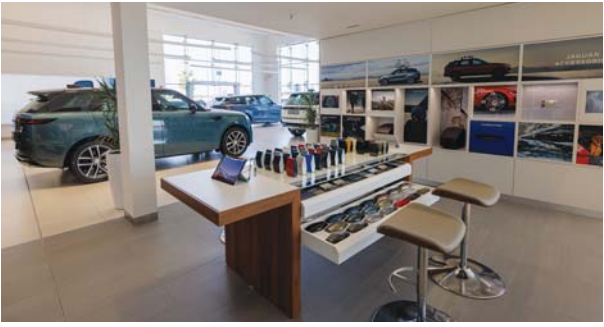
Featured under the Land Rover line-up will be the Range Rover, Range Rover Sport, Range Rover Velar, Range Rover Evoque, Land Rover Defender, Land Rover Discovery and Land Rover Discovery Sport.

The facility includes Approved Pre-Owned vehicles from Jaguar and Land Rover that meet the high-quality standards and maintenance that represent the everlasting legacy of the brands.

Clients can also enjoy a shaded parking area including parking and entrance assistance for people with disabilities.

Along with a wide range of accessories displayed, the facility sports a relaxing lounge area for clients, inviting them into the APM community through a complete experience.

Clients can also choose from many JLR premium lifestyle branded goods and merchandise with the same attention to detail applied when building the JLR range



مؤسسة قطر  
Qatar Foundation

INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
CO-RFQ-115	Refurbishment, Maintenance, Waterproofing and Painting of WCM-Q (Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar) Lecture Halls	1,000.00	100,000.00	22nd February 2024, 2:00 PM
QF-RFQ-372	PR and Social Media Agency for EARTHNA	500.00	100,000.00	20th February 2024, 2:00 PM
QF-RFQ-375	Creative Campaign for Genome Heroes Application	200.00	N/A	22nd February 2024, 2:00 PM

**Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement & Program Management Directorate** is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

**1) Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

**Tender Fee:** Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.

All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

**Tender Fee Payment Dates:** Payment of Tender Fee online will be from 22<sup>nd</sup> until 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

2) All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.

3) Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.

- The commercial bid must be valid for **180 days** from Bid Closing Date.
- The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date [where applicable as per the Tender documents].
- The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
- Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

**Note:** All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>

مؤسسة قطر  
Qatar Foundation

INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
CO-RFQ-116	Replacement of floor tiles for WCM Building in Education city	QAR 1000.00	NA	27-Feb-2024 02:00 PM
HBKU-RFQ-29	Supply & Installation of Research Equipment (Optical Micro System Analyzer) for HBKU	QAR 300.00	NA	27-Feb-2024 02:00 PM
HBKU-RFQ-30	Supply & Installation of Laboratory Workstations for HBKU	QAR 300.00	NA	27-Feb-2024 02:00 PM
HBKU-RFQ-31	Supply of High-Performance Systems with Multi-GPU Acceleration for HBKU	QAR 2000.00	QAR 100,000.00	28-Feb-2024 02:00 PM

**Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement & Program Management Directorate** is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

**1) Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

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## Participants learn about Qatari traditions at Nomas Centre's camp



The Nomas Centre of the Ministry of Culture concluded its three-day Wild Camp in the Lab-sair Al Shahaniya area. Targeting youth aged 8 to 14, the camp aimed at instilling values and to enhance national identity by utilising the leisure time of children in engaging in various activities related to Qatar's authentic heritage, customs and traditions.

Through Qatari trainers, the camp focused on teaching participants council etiquette, falconry, archery, Qatari traditional dance, camel riding, cooking, preparation of Arabic coffee, building traditional tents and more.

Director of the Nomas Centre Ghanem Abdulrahman al-Kuwari said that the first edition of the Nomas Wild Camp, which started last Thursday, saw the participation of young children who stayed back in the camp during the weekend and learned traditional hobbies, among others.

The camp's programme included a variety of activities allowing participants to familiarise themselves with the Qatari environment, traditional games, poetry and stories, hunting with traps, learning of traditional knotting as well as archery among others, he noted.

Al-Kuwari added that Nomas Centre is organising 12 similar camps this year, where a variety of theoretical and practical workshops will be offered. (QNA)

## Qataris' generosity benefits over 80,000 people in Kosovo



Qatar Charity (QC), through its office in Kosovo and with the support of benevolent people in Qatar, implemented 470 humanitarian and developmental projects in 2023, benefiting over 80,000 persons from impoverished communities, a statement said yesterday.

Additionally, QC continued to provide social care for 3,500 sponsored orphans, students, individuals with special needs and poor families, as part of the "Rofaqa" initiative that focuses on issues concerning children and orphans worldwide. These projects



were completed in co-ordination with the ministries and government institutions in Kosovo, in line with their developmental strategy to combat poverty.

This was achieved through the signing of 20 executive agreements with the bodies concerned

in the country. The projects implemented by QC in Kosovo include 160 wells, 290 economic empowerment projects, 13 projects in the fields of education, culture, health and social housing, and seven projects in the humanitarian and relief domains.

## Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana partners with Japanese pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha



Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co, the exclusive agent of Nissan in Qatar, has partnered with the Japanese pavilion in the international zone at Expo 2023 Doha, where the spirit of Japan's rich cultural heritage intertwines seamlessly with contemporary sustainability initiatives.

This unique exhibition space, both indoor and outdoor, showcases a blend of traditional and modern aesthetics, embodying a harmonious convergence of nature and design. A Nissan Patrol Pickup, adorned with Japanese flowers and symbolic plants,



serves as a mobile garden.

Kiyohito Tamotsu, Japanese Landscape Producer, said: "Our innovative approach involves frac-

tal shading, a nature-based design that provides calm sunshade and cools the air by up to 10°C, creating a serene environment."

Nassim Mourani, general manager, Automotive Group at Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co, said: "We are thrilled to endorse this captivating exploration of Japanese culture. As a prominent representative, Nissan takes pride in the Patrol Pickup renowned for its power, performance, capability to conquer diverse terrains, and its rugged good looks. The Japanese pavilion provides an exclusive glimpse into Expo 2023, where Yokohama City is poised to host the World Horticultural Exposition at the former Kamiseya Communication Station site.

### FREE VEHICLE RECALL

وزارة التجارة والصناعة  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry  
دولة قطر - دولة قطر



**BMW 735i Saloon, 740i Saloon, i7 xDrive 60 Saloon**

Manufacturing Year  
**2023**



DEFECT

The possibility of the warning lights won't function correctly because of a programming defect in the control device



PROCESS

Contact the dealer for the free required repair



CONTACT

**Al Fardan Automobiles**  
Phone: 44601177  
bmw@alfardan.com.qa



For any consumer protection issues please contact us on the hotline 16001

 mociqatar | 16001 | +974 66111400 | www.moci.gov.qa

### FREE VEHICLE RECALL

وزارة التجارة والصناعة  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry  
دولة قطر - دولة قطر



**Ford Bronco**

Manufacturing Year  
**2021 - 2022**



DEFECT

In the affected vehicles, the wiper system may enter a dry detect mode in certain conditions. If this occurs, the wipers slow down to an intermittent speed while in the continuous Low or High wiper setting



PROCESS

Contact the dealer for the free required repair



CONTACT

**Almana Motors Company**  
Phone: 44489002



For any consumer protection issues please contact us on the hotline 16001

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# Qatar wins praise for being peace mediator

QNL president speaks at University of Indonesia



HE Dr al-Kawari at the book signing (supplied picture).

The University of Indonesia in Jakarta hosted a lecture on “Cultural Diplomacy: A Safety Valve for International Relations,” featuring HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari, Minister of State and the Qatar National Library (QNL) president.

The special event was organised as part of the concluding ceremony for the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture.

Opening the public lecture, Dr Bondan Kanumoyoso, University of Indonesia Lecturer at the History Studies Programme within the Faculty of Humanities, said: “Qatar has succeeded in making innovations in the world of diplomacy, including becoming a mediator of peace for countries in conflict by carrying out purposeful cultural diplomacy.

“I thank HE Dr al-Kawari for being here and Qatar’s ambassador Fawziya bint Edrees al-Sulaiti, and our university’s Arabic Studies Programme for their support in organising this lecture.”

Dr al-Kawari, who also serves as the Years of Culture Ambassador, shared insights on the pivotal role of cultural diplomacy in developing international relations. With a wealth

of experience and a deep understanding of cultural exchange initiatives, he is uniquely positioned to shed light on the transformative power of cultural engagement as a means of building bridges between nations.

“I had the privilege of visiting Indonesia last year, leading a Qatari delegation as part of the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture to strengthen bonds between nations and peoples. This initiative reflects Qatar’s deep-rooted belief that culture serves as a more impactful language of communication than official diplomacy, playing a pivotal role in extending bridges of compromise and fostering dialogue and interaction,” said Dr al-Kawari.

The Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture successfully celebrated the rich cultural heritage of both nations, cementing the countries’ historically strong ties. Years of Culture organised more than 50 programmes across Qatar and Indonesia focusing on the creative industries, social development, innovation, and cultural heritage aspects of both countries.

He went on to explain, “Through my diplomatic experience and lifelong career, I have come to understand that the path to global harmony

begins with enhancing the role of culture in international relations. Thus, I firmly believe that cultural diplomacy is the key to bringing nations closer and serving as a catalyst for stability.

“The Years of Culture stands as a unique testament to the success of culture in connecting nations and promoting understanding through the exchange of creative experiences. This diplomatic approach, blending cultural exchange with traditional diplomacy, has proven effective in projecting Qatar as a state that values global peace and actively encourages nations to pursue it.”

Another point raised by Dr al-Kawari was the successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup and the current AFC Asian Cup as a testament to Qatar’s commitment to international engagement that has been instrumental in building bridges with nations worldwide.

During the event, Dr al-Kawari also signed copies of his book *Bridges not Barriers*, which delves into the intricacies of inter-civilisational relations and advocates for a fresh collaborative approach between the North and the South, echoing the lecture’s emphasis on cultural diplomacy.



Sidra Medicine-Microbiome Cancer Research Team.

## Sidra Medicine study seen as key advancement in cancer microbiome field

Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, has announced that one of its research studies published in *Nature Medicine* in May 2023, has been featured in the Year in Review section of *Nature Reviews Gastroenterology & Hepatology*, which focuses on key advances in the field of cancer microbiome in 2023.

Titled “Microbiota-based biomarkers and therapeutics for cancer management”, the article provides a comprehensive overview of the latest discoveries and applications of microbiota-based approaches for improving cancer prevention, prognostication, and therapy, with a focus on colorectal cancer.

The research study from Sidra Medicine “An integrated

tumour, immune and microbiome atlas of colon cancer” by Roelands et al, revealed the impact of the immune system and microbiota on the ability to survive colon cancer. The study was done in collaboration with Leiden University Medical Centre (LUMC) in the Netherlands.

The study comprehensively characterised the genomic, transcriptomic, immunological, and microbial features of a cohort of 348 patients with colorectal cancer, sequenced at Sidra Medicine, with long-term follow-up data to devise a composite score for prognosis.

The Sidra Medicine and LUMC team analysed various aspects of primary colon cancers, including the charac-

teristics of cancer cells, cancer immune responses, and microbiota composition. They found that a specific composition of bacteria in the tumour and intratumoural immune response were associated with a more favourable prognosis for colon cancer patients.

Dr Wouter Hendrickx, one of the senior authors of the article and a principal investigator at Sidra Medicine, said: “Our article showcases the cutting-edge research that Sidra Medicine is conducting in collaboration with leading institutions such as LUMC. This is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team and our partners and reflects the high quality and impact of the research coming out of Qatar.”

# Kia Qatar shows off the EV6 and more at the 2024 Qatar Custom Show

Looking to bring their latest product offerings closer to the market, Al-Attiya Motors and Trading Co. (AMTC), the official distributors of Kia in Qatar participated in the 11th edition of the Qatar Custom Show, held from January 16 to 20, 2024 at the Qatar Racing Club in Mesaimeer.

The Qatar Custom Show is the annual gathering of automotive enthusiasts as the finest vehicle customization projects in Qatar and around the GCC are showcased. Car dealers are present as well to showcase their latest and most exciting models for the audience to view.

With the launch campaign of the all-new EV6 underway, the display was a welcome opportunity for the show’s visitors to see Kia’s global EV superstar up close. With its sleek and sporty styling, exhilarating drive and EV-centric technology, the EV6 is poised to make waves in the local market as a performance EV worth owning.

**Inspiring every journey: The all-new Kia EV6**

Kia’s all-new EV6 packs up to 506 km on a single charge with its long-range and AWD offering. Having been named the 2023 World Performance Car in global markets and the first vehicle to utilize the E-GMP architecture, the EV6 boasts ultra-fast charging capabilities – going from 10 percent to 80 percent in just 18 minutes.

The EV6 features an advanced Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) function, allowing your Kia electric vehicle to power home appliances and electronic devices using an internal or external socket.

Drivers can choose from six regenerative braking levels (none, 1 to 3, ‘i-PEDAL’, or auto mode), depending on the desired level of energy recuperation. The system’s ‘i-PEDAL’ driving mode also allows the car to harvest the maximum amount of energy from its brakes, and enables the driver to bring the car to a gentle halt without needing to push the brake pedal.

A distinct product of the EV era, the interior design benefits greatly from the application of Kia’s dedicated E-GMP platform. Despite the EV6’s compact exterior dimensions, its 2,900mm wheelbase results in a cabin space similar to many mid-size SUVs.

The high-tech infotainment system includes 12-inch dual screens. Curved displays applied to EV6 have thin film panels that utilize new structure and advanced technology for reducing impact of light.



Forming part of this ‘Digital Tiger Face’, daytime running lights display a sleek, modern appearance and include a ‘sequential’ dynamic light pattern.

**Moving forward: The new Kia Sorento**

Experiencing a facelift late last year, the Sorento is Kia’s versatile and high-tech 3-row SUV that is now in its 4th generation. Coming



in three (3) trims and two (2) engine types, AMTC is looking to have a Sorento option available for families in Qatar.

The exterior is characterized by the application of the ‘Bold for Nature’ element of Kia’s ‘Opposites United’ design philosophy. Design changes have been applied to the hood, fender, radiator grille, bumper and lamps to reflect a modern update and more voluminous looking façade. Not to be outdone is the sleek interior which emphasizes wideness with a horizontal layout and provides better usability and a high-tech image through a curved display and a switchable keyboard. The high option comes with a Panoramic curved display that has a 12.3” instrument cluster and 12.3” multimedia display for greater information and amusement.

Following in the footsteps of the EV9, the Sorento is the second Kia to offer the brand’s next-generation, ultramodern Connected Car Navigation Cockpit (ccNC) operating system. Kia’s roster of Advanced Driver Assistance

Systems features ADAS features including Forward Collision-Avoidance Assist (FCA), which has been upgraded to help detect pedestrians, cyclists in front of the vehicle, and oncoming vehicles while turning left at an intersection (FCA-JX), and can help prevent collisions with them under certain circumstances. Other standard staples to the ADAS suite include Lane Keeping Assist (LKA) and Lane Following Assist (LFA).

The Sorento is powered by ‘Smartstream’ engines that are either the robust 3.5L V6 with an output of 272 PS or the smooth and efficient 2.5L MPI with an output of 180 PS.

**Speaks your language: The Kia Seltos**

One of the leaders of the competitive entry SUV segment, the Kia Seltos offers head-turning design, interior space and comfort and reliability and pair it with the latest safety technology and new powertrain in the lively Kappa 1.4L Turbo-GDI and efficient Gamma 2.1.5L MPI engines.

For both convenience and safety purposes, the new Seltos can now be connected to the latest smartphones without cables with the Wireless Smartphone Charger and Apple CarPlay/Android Auto.

The latest Kia Seltos is re-engineered to provide maximum safety through the integration of ADAS (Advanced Driver Assist Systems) to ensure maximum safety on the road including: Forward Collision Avoidance Assist (FCA), Lane Keeping Assist (LKA), Lane Following Assist (LFA), and Smart Cruise Control (SCC). These systems actively monitor the road and provide alerts to the driver to prevent potential collisions, enhancing overall road safety.

In addition, the Kia Seltos is equipped with an electric parking brake, a significant improvement compared to the previous Seltos’ manual brake. The Seltos SX trims (Mid and Top options) now come with a livelier engine in the Kappa 1.4L Turbo-GDI. The engine is mated to a robust 7-speed dual-clutch transmission (DCT) system and produces a maximum output of 140 PS @ 6,000 RPM and a torque of 242 Nm @ 1,500-3,200 RPM. There are seven (7) modes to choose from as well with four (4) Drive Modes to cater to different driving styles in the Normal, Eco, Sport and Smart along with three (3) Traction modes for different terrain: Snow, Mud and Sand.

Interested parties can visit the Kia Qatar showrooms in Al Rayyan Road (next to LuLu Shopping Center) or the Kia City in the Industrial Area main road.



# BLANCPAIN X SWATCH

## BIOCERAMIC SCUBA FIFTY FATHOMS DISCOVERS

### A SIXTH OCEAN, OCEAN OF STORMS

A new ocean is joining the five watches and five oceans in the Blancpain X Swatch collaboration. Even though planet Earth only has five, Swatch is welcoming OCEAN OF STORMS into its Bioceramic Scuba Fifty Fathoms Collection that celebrates Blancpain's iconic Fifty Fathoms, a watch that revolutionized watchmaking by becoming the first true diver's watch more than seventy years ago. Known by the Latin name Oceanus Procellarum, this is actually a lunar mare located on the western edge of the near side of the moon. Meaning Ocean of Storms, it is the biggest mare or "sea" on the moon, spanning more than 2,500 kilometers from north to south and covering around 2 million square kilometers. The new Bioceramic Scuba Fifty Fathoms OCEAN OF STORMS, however, is nowhere near that big. In fact, it has exactly the same dimensions and features as ARCTIC OCEAN, PACIFIC OCEAN, ATLANTIC OCEAN, INDIAN OCEAN and ANTARCTIC OCEAN.

A non-limited model, OCEAN OF STORMS, comes in a black color inspired by the new moon (also known as the Black Moon). Just like the other five Bioceramic Scuba Fifty Fathoms, OCEAN OF STORMS has a Swatch mechanical movement, SISTEM51, the first and only mechanical movement whose production is entirely automated. This mechanism, made up of just 51 parts - including one central screw, is anti-magnetic, thanks to its Nivachron™ hairspring and has a 90-hour power reserve. In 2013, SISTEM51 revolutionized the world of automatic watches with its visible movement: the front tells the time, the back tells the story.

OCEAN OF STORMS has been given its own nudibranch (scientific name: Nudibranchia), Okenia Luna. It is featured in a digital print on the movement's rotor, the part that allows the watch to recharge automatically with a simple movement of the wrist. The full moon zoomed in on the Ocean of Storms is also digitally imprinted on the oscillating weight.

OCEAN OF STORMS, like ARCTIC OCEAN, PACIFIC OCEAN, ATLANTIC OCEAN, INDIAN OCEAN and ANTARCTIC OCEAN, is water resistant in deep waters, down to 91 meters. This is another nod to Blancpain: the name Fifty Fathoms refers to the fathom - historically the maritime measure of depth in the English-speaking world - fifty fathoms equaling 91 meters (or 300 feet).

In the same spirit as the other five models in the collection, OCEAN OF STORMS is made of Bioceramic. This unique material is patented by Swatch and made of two-thirds ceramic and one-third biosourced material derived from castor oil. As an expression of commitment to ocean preservation, the NATO straps are made from recycled fishing nets.

The shared Blancpain X Swatch logos can be found on the black sunray-finish dial and the crown. The word "Swatch" is also inscribed on the case, just as "Blancpain" is inscribed on the original Fifty Fathoms watches. The back of the watch features inspirational inscriptions like PASSION FOR DIVING - LICENCE TO EXPLORE - OCEAN BREATH - PROTECT WHAT YOU LOVE and IMMERSE YOURSELF.

OCEAN OF STORMS will be available worldwide from January 11, 2024, the **day of the new moon** at selected Swatch stores. As with the five watches in the Bioceramic Scuba Fifty Fathoms Collection, purchases are limited to one watch per person, per store and per day.

#### OCEAN OF STORMS / SO35B400

**Case material:** Case and crown made of black Bioceramic

**Case diameter:** 42.3 mm

**Case thickness:** 14.4 mm

**Lug-to-lug distance:** 48.0 mm

**Movement:** SISTEM51 mechanical movement (self-winding) with

90-hour power reserve. Illustration of the full moon (zoomed in on the Ocean of Storms) and a digital imprint of nudibranch Okenia Luna

**Water resistance:** 50 fathoms (91 m/ 300 ft/ 9 bar)

**Glass:** Biosourced material with anti-scratch coating

**Dial:** Sunbrushed black, date indicator between 4 o'clock and 5 o'clock

**Hands, hour markers, 60 minutes diving scale:** Grade A Super-LumiNova®

**Bezel:** One-direction rotating bezel in black Bioceramic with anti-scratch coating insert

**Strap:** NATO strap made from recycled fishing nets. Black Bioceramic pin buckle and loops

#### SISTEM51 by Swatch

SISTEM51 is an automatic mechanical movement (self-winding) made up of 51 parts in total. Each of these parts forms five distinct pre-assembled, pre-welded modules. The transparent oscillating weight that controls the automatic winding is fixed by the movement's one and only screw. Conventional automatic watches have twice as many parts if not more. Some of the more complicated high-end models have more than 600. These are assembled by hand over a number of weeks, sometimes months, by master watchmakers in their workshops.

SISTEM51 is the first and only mechanical movement with fully automated assembly. The high-tech escapement does not have a regulator (no-index assembly). The rate, or precision, is factory-set using laser



technology. This avoids the manual adjustments usually required with mechanical watches. The movement, with its 90-hour power reserve, is made of German Silver and anti-rust by design. All parts are housed in a hermetically sealed case. That means no moisture, no dust and no impurities that could impair performance, guaranteeing longevity and lasting precision over time (-5/+15 seconds per day).

Each Swatch featuring a SISTEM51 movement is made visible thanks to a display back. This feature has enabled Swatch to stand out from the crowd from the very beginning since this transparency is a key part of SISTEM51. Automatic movements are driven by an oscillating weight. In SISTEM51, this weight is shaped like a transparent disk that rotates freely on the single central screw, providing a captivating view of the mechanism. The oscillating weight and the visible surfaces of all five modules of the movement are all imprinted, which ramps up the potential to add a creative touch to the back of this watch and, of course, set up new collaborations, something the brand has been doing for forty years now.

SISTEM51 is the ultimate embodiment and celebration of Swiss manufacturing as a state of mind, one based on absolute quality of innovation, provocation, maintaining traditions and research.



#### Blancpain Fifty Fathoms

Seventy years ago, an icon was born: the Fifty Fathoms. The watch that would go on to revolutionize watchmaking by becoming the first modern diver's watch was designed by a passionate scuba diver, Jean-Jacques Fiechter.

At the time he was CEO of Blancpain. He was a pioneer in a discipline that was still in its infancy and he grasped how vitally important it was to be able to track time underwater.

The tool he designed to meet his own needs instantly found unanimous favor with the ocean community, so much so that it became an unwavering ally of elite divers and underwater explorers. Over time, it became a highly valued diver's watch and was worn by Jacques-Yves Cousteau and his team of divers in his film The Silent World, among others. It was also used by the Navy Seals elite diving unit, as well as German and French marines, to name a few. By making diving safer, Fifty Fathoms has played a part in the development of this sport and encouraged people to discover the world of the oceans. The year 2023 marks 70 years of Fifty Fathoms as well as a re-birth with the arrival of an innovative anniversary diver's watch: the Fifty Fathoms Tech Gombessa. Since the fifties, diving has experienced immense changes, the biggest being a major increase in the amount of time a diver can spend underwater. Although the 1953 Fifty Fathoms met the needs of Jean-Jacques Fiechter and the veteran divers of the time, today's technical divers, who are able to spend several hours underwater, have new needs when it comes to timekeeping. And the Fifty Fathoms meets these perfectly.

The Fifty Fathoms has played a key role in the development of underwater diving and discovering the ocean world. It has enabled Blancpain to forge strong ties with the ocean community and these ties have only grown stronger over the last 70 years. Exploring and preserving the oceans have always been key concerns for Blancpain. Throughout the history of its Fifty Fathoms diving watch, the brand has forged strong ties with explorers, photographers, scientists and environmental specialists who know how invaluable these precious resources are. These ties have led Blancpain to provide substantial support to important activities and initiatives dedicated to the oceans. Thus was born the Blancpain Ocean Commitment (BOC) program. The Fifty Fathoms is the catalyst for this commitment.





# Jordanian minister hails Qatar’s efforts to stop war in Gaza

QNA  
Amman

Qatar and Jordan have developed historical and sustainable relations, hinging upon consolidated decades-long bedrocks, said Jordanian Minister of Government Communications Dr Muhannad Mubaidin said.

Speaking with Qatar News Agency (QNA), Mubaidin, who is also the official spokesperson for the Jordanian government, added the two countries established a unified position on Arab issues and crises in the region, in a way that serves the Arab interests.

Both countries’ leaders co-ordinated stances on the issues pertaining to Arab and Islamic nations, mutually respecting each country’s agenda and interests on certain issues, he added, highlighting that the harmonious policies included political, cultural, economic and social fields and led to continuously solid and fruitful bilateral relations.

He added that Qatari investments in Jordan are continuing to grow and that the Jordanian expat community is highly respected in Doha.

Commenting on the aggression on the Gaza Strip, he said the two countries had involved since the first day of the aggression, in a high-level co-ordination, highlighting the consensus reached during the Riyadh Summit in November by Doha, Amman and other Arab countries on a clear position that rejects war and the killing of civilians.

The Qatari Foreign Ministry and diplomacy made great efforts in parallel with the Jordanian Foreign Ministry, and held consultations with many countries concerned with the Palestinian issue that led to a UN General Assembly resolution to stop the war.

In this context, Mubaidin hailed Qatar’s efforts within the Security Council, relief assistance and diplomatic endeavours to reach a humanitarian truce and to release prisoners, expressing his country’s unrelent-



Jordanian Minister of Government Communications Dr Muhannad Mubaidin.

ed support for Qatari efforts.

Qatar also backs the clear-cut positions of Jordan and Egypt that reject displacement and the liquidation of the Palestinian cause, and aid deliveries to Palestinians in Gaza through Egypt and Jordan – an indication that Doha strongly supports a unified Arab position that backs the Palestinian cause, and condemns the barbaric Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and restrictions on Palestinians in the West Bank.

This Qatari support was highly manifested in backing the Jordanian custodianship over the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Al Quds Al Sharif, reflecting an affirmation of the two leaderships’ ability to adopt clear and harmonious policies on the dangers threatening the Palestinian cause and peace in the region, he said. Mubaidin also highlighted King Abdullah II’s calls, during the Riyadh Summit, for mobilising an international and global position for a sustainable humanitarian aid delivery and for stopping the war, with the international community unable to convince Israel to stop the war.

The aid by the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO) still reaches the Rafah crossing to be delivered into the Gaza Strip through the King Hussein Bridge, and other aid supplies are airdropped on the Jordanian field hospital in southern Gaza’s Khan Younis, he added.

Mubaidin highlighted that confidence in the Jordanian relief efforts prompted some global activists to call on Jordan to carry out repeated airlifts of supplies in various areas of the Gaza Strip, something which overtly indicates the effectiveness and significant impact of these airlifts.

He added that Jordan’s support for the Palestinian brothers has not been limited to supporting Gaza, but has been present in the West Bank through establishing the field hospital in Nablus, as well as medical aid and interventions for the Palestinian brothers and the people of the West Bank, by supplying them with medicines, food items, wheat and grains, in addition to receiving children from Gaza at the King Hussein Cancer Center, an action that really expresses the Jordanian humanitarian position. He affirmed that the Western position is unjust regarding the Palestinian cause and does not recognise the fact that Israel’s policies that violated all international charters are primarily the major cause that has stepped up overwhelming pressure on Palestinians and triggered the Operation Al Aqsa Flood.

He pointed out the Western position which has backed Israel from day one of the eruption of the war, and claimed that Israel has been defending itself, but this position, he said, ignored the fact that it has backed the establishment of the occupation force and planted it in the region to shatter the hopes of Palestinians, occupy their territories, undermine their security, devastate their homeland and displace them to many countries and territories even inside the historical Palestinian territories.

Mubaidin noted that even in these territories, the West has been keen to split them between Arabs of 1948, people of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, indicating that the Western position is the key supporter and curator of the Zionist and political scheme in the region.

## UN’s Guterres condemns Israel for ‘heartbreaking’ killings in Gaza

Reuters  
Kampala

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday denounced Israel for the “heart-breaking” deaths of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and called it unacceptable to resist statehood for the Palestinian people.

“Israel’s military operations have spread mass destruction and killed civilians on a scale unprecedented during my time as secretary-general,” Guterres said at the opening of a summit of the G77+China in the Ugandan capital Kampala.

“This is heartbreaking and utterly unacceptable. The Middle East is a tinder-box, we must do all we can to prevent conflict from igniting across the region.” Israel launched its offensive in Gaza after the Hamas group stormed Israel in the first week of October.

Israel’s campaign has killed more than 25,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities yesterday, and displaced most of the enclave’s 2.3mn people from their homes.

Over the course of the war, the Israeli military has expressed regret for civilian deaths but it accuses Hamas of operating in densely populated areas and using civilians as human shields, a charge the group denies.

Guterres added that the refusal to accept the two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians is totally unacceptable, saying denying Palestinians the right to statehood “would indefinitely prolong a conflict that has become a major threat to global peace and security”.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared on Saturday to push back against US President Joe Biden’s remarks about Palestinian statehood after the war against Hamas ends. His office



Secretary-General of the UN Antonio Guterres speaks in Kampala, yesterday.

said that in talks on Friday with Biden, Netanyahu “reiterated his policy that after Hamas is destroyed Israel must retain security control over Gaza to ensure that Gaza will no longer pose a threat to Israel, a requirement that contradicts the demand for Palestinian sovereignty”.

Guterres was in Kampala to attend the summits of G77+China and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Leaders and senior officials from dozens of countries including South Africa, Iran, China, Turkiye, Cuba, India, Vietnam and others attended the meetings.

The G77+China is a group of 134 developing countries that champions the common interests of countries from the global south.

A document released late Saturday at the end of the NAM summit included a condemnation of “the illegal Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip, the indiscriminate attacks against Palestinian civilians, civilian objects, the forced displacement of the Palestinian population” and called for an immediate and durable humanitarian ceasefire.



Palestinian young women sit on their beds next to members of the French Civil Security, onboard the French LHD Dixmude military ship, which serves as a hospital to treat wounded Palestinians, as it docks at the Egyptian port of Al-Arish, yesterday.

## French warship treats around 1,000 injured Gazans off Egyptian shore

Reuters  
Al-Arish, Egypt

About 1,000 people from Gaza have been treated in a French field hospital aboard a ship off the coast of Egypt, its captain said, providing care for some as health infrastructure in the war-devastated enclave collapses.

The Dixmude, a French helicopter carrier, has been docked in the Egyptian port of Al-Arish, 50km west of the Gaza Strip, since November. The vessel is equipped with wards, operating theatres and 70 medical staff.

Nearly 120 injured people have been hospitalised on board, while hundreds more have been seen for outpatient consultations, includ-

ing follow-ups on injuries and psychiatric issues, said Captain Alexandre Blonce, calling it an “unprecedented mission”.

Israeli forces launched all-out war to eliminate Gaza’s ruling Palestinian group Hamas after its fighters stormed southern Israel in the first week of October.

Gazans have struggled to get medical care at home as tens of thousands have been wounded, with most of Gaza’s 36 hospitals no longer functioning, and those remaining operating at far over capacity, the World Health Organisation says. Israel has targeted the largest remaining hospitals, saying Hamas fighters are operating there, something Hamas denies.

Those lucky enough to cross into Egypt, like 16-year-old Ahmed Abu Daqqa, who was in-

jured on Nov 1, faced long waits for medical care.

Doctors in Gaza “took out the shrapnel and put in two rods, but a month later they discovered more shrapnel in my knee. They told me they’ll handle it later because there were too many surgeries,” he said on board the Dixmude.

“I tried many times to get a transfer” before finally crossing into Egypt, he said.

He was then able to undergo further surgery where the rods and shrapnel were removed and a resulting infection dealt with, as well as receiving physical therapy.

He and others on board the French ship were awaiting further transfers to hospitals in Egypt or abroad. Italy sent a similar floating hospital to the Egyptian coast in December.

## Israeli strike killed 13 in Damascus: monitor

A strike on Damascus targeting the Iranian Revolutionary Guards’ Syria spy chief and blamed on Israel killed 13 people, a war monitor said yesterday in an updated toll, AFP reported from Beirut.

“The death toll has risen to 13,” said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights of Saturday’s strike, revising earlier death tolls.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) confirmed it lost five members in the strike it blamed

on Israel. The British-based monitor, which has a vast network of sources inside Syria, said the deaths include “five Iranians, including three IRGC leaders, four Syrians working with the Iranians, one Syrian civilian, two Lebanese, and one Iraqi national”.

Iranian news agency Mehr, quoting an anonymous informed source, said “the Revolutionary Guards’ Syria intel chief” and his deputy were among those “martyred in the attack on Syria by Israel”.

## Pro-Palestinian march in Brussels draws 9,000: police

AFP  
Brussels

Around 9,000 demonstrators marched through Brussels yesterday calling for an end of Israel’s fierce bombardment and fighting in Gaza, in a pro-Palestinian protest that ended in the EU district.

The march came a day before EU foreign ministers will meet their Israeli, Palestinian, Egyptian, Saudi and Jordanian counterparts in a string of meetings to discuss the ongoing war in Gaza and the plight of Palestinian civilians.

Participants in the peaceful “Justice for Palestine” demonstration, whose size was estimated by Brussels police, yelled out “stop genocide”, “Israel: terrorist” and “free Gaza”.

Some also cried out “EU, shame on you” for perceived inaction by Brussels to protect Palestinian civilians while others urged a boycott on Israeli goods and businesses.



Demonstrators wave Palestinian flags as they attend a rally in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Brussels, yesterday.

“We really need to unite against the genocide happening in Gaza and fight for an end to Israel’s occupation,” said one demonstrator, Victor Dumont.

“No people deserves that, whatever side they’re on – it’s not possible,” said another, Bahija Dioune.

Today, the 27 EU ministers will first meet with Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz, before sitting down separately with the Palestinian Authority’s top diplomat Riyad al-Maliki.

Katz and Maliki are not expected to meet each other.

Hamas, the movement that controls the Gaza Strip, stormed Israel in the first week of October.

Israel has vowed to “annihilate” Hamas in response and its relentless air and ground offensive has killed at least 25,000 Palestinians, around 70% of them women, children and adolescents, according to figures from the Hamas-run health ministry.

## Israeli strike on south Lebanon kills Hezbollah fighter

AFP  
Beirut

An Israeli strike yesterday on south Lebanon killed a Hezbollah fighter, a source close to the group said, with a security official saying the target was a high-level commander who survived.

Since the outbreak of war between Hamas and Israel, the Lebanese-Israeli border has seen

near-daily exchanges of fire between Israel’s army and Lebanon’s Hezbollah group, an ally of Hamas.

The strike on a car in south Lebanon “killed a member of Hezbollah’s protection team”, a Lebanese security official said, adding that the senior commander he was protecting “escaped death”.

A source close to Hezbollah confirmed a Hezbollah fighter had been killed, but denied that a high-level official had been the

target of the strike. Both sources spoke on condition of anonymity for security concerns.

According to the security official, the Hezbollah commander was in a vehicle with three other people, behind the car that was hit.

The source close to Hezbollah said the strike also wounded a civilian woman who was in the area at the time of impact.

State-run Lebanese media earlier reported one death in an Israeli

drone strike on Kafra, a village near the border.

“The strike that targeted a car in Kafra killed one person while others suffered moderate and minor injuries,” the official National News Agency (NNA) said.

It added that the drone struck near an army checkpoint, destroying a four-wheel drive vehicle and setting another car on fire.

Another security official said there were no casualties among Lebanese soldiers.



This picture taken from a position along the border with Lebanon yesterday shows smoke billowing over the Lebanese village of Markaba during reported Israeli bombardment, amid ongoing tensions.



## Australia sweats in heatwave, raising risk of bushfire

Large swaths of Australia sweltered again yesterday through a widening heat-wave, which the national weather forecaster said raised the bushfire risk in an already high-risk fire season as the country endures an El Nino weather pattern.

“Extreme” heatwave alerts, the highest danger rating, were in place for a second day for parts of Western Australia and were extended to South Australia, while areas of Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory were under “severe” warnings, the forecaster said.

It cautioned that in Western Australia, the nation’s largest state geographically, the remote Pilbara and Gascoyne areas could hit the high forties Celsius (up to 120° Fahrenheit).

In the Pilbara mining town of Paraburdoo about 1,500km (930 miles) north of the state capital Perth, a high of 48C (118F) was forecast, more than 7C above the average January maximum, according to forecaster data.

It was 45.7C (114F) at 12.30pm (0430 GMT).

Australia’s highest recorded temperature, 50.7C (123F), was logged at the Pilbara’s Onslow Airport on January 13, 2022.

In the West Australian town of Meekatharra, Royal Mail Hotel manager Alex McWhirter said the heat could “cook you alive”.

“You have the sun beating down from above, you’ve got the hot ground heating you from below and it is quite a challenge,” the 29-year-old English national said. “I’m not sure that I want to try and go to bed tonight in 50° without an aircon.”

On the east coast, parts of New South Wales’ capital Sydney were forecast to reach 40C, almost 10° above the average January maximum.

In the city’s west, it was 37.9C (100F) at 3.30pm (0430 GMT).

The hot, dry conditions raised the risk of bushfires in some areas, the forecaster said, during the El Nino, which is typically associated with extreme phenomena such as wildfires, cyclones and droughts. – **Reuters**

## Marcos draws ire for helicopter use to attend concert

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr drew flak on social media for his use of a presidential helicopter to attend a concert by British rock band Coldplay in a province north of the capital, Manila.

The Philippine Arena, the world’s largest indoor arena, saw an influx of 40,000 concert-goers resulting in “unforeseen traffic complications along the route”, the Presidential Security Group said in a statement. The traffic situation posed a security threat to Marcos who attended the Friday night concert with his wife, prompting the use of the presidential chopper, it added. However, social media users criticised the use of taxpayer money by Marcos, the son and namesake of the late strongman president whose rule ended nearly four decades ago in a historic “people power” revolution.

“Using official resources, like the presidential chopper, for personal and non-official activities is generally considered an abuse of power or misuse of government resources,” Facebook user James Patrick Aristorenas said in a post on Saturday.

“We paid for the use of the chopper, fuel and security, who knows even for the tickets for everyone,” Facebook user Arvine Concepcion said. – **Reuters**

# UK is taking election interference threats ‘very seriously’: minister

AFP/Reuters  
London

The UK is taking threats of foreign interference elections expected later this year “very seriously”, the defence minister said yesterday, after a warning from a counter-terrorism official.

“Obviously, that’s something that we take very seriously,” Defence Secretary Grant Shapps told the Sky News channel.

Counter-terrorism bodies and other institutions would “be looking very carefully at that”, he said.

UK counter-terrorism chief Matt Jukes said on Friday that the espionage threat from foreign states – such as China, Russia and Iran – is greater now than it has been “since the days of the cold war”.

He said the police had set up a new unit to counter the threats of interference ahead of the election, which is expected to be called later this year.

## UK to upgrade warship defence missile system used in Red Sea

The unit would use powers granted by the National Security Act passed in July to make it harder for countries to spy and interfere in the political process, he said.

“We are talking about parts of the state apparatus of Iran, China and Russia,” Jukes said.

A report by US software company Micro-soft in November last year said that Russia, Iran and China were likely to engage in sophisticated influence and interference efforts ahead of the 2024 US presidential election and in other pivotal elections worldwide.

All three countries were expected to seek to shape geopolitical outcomes in their favour amid major ongoing or potential regional conflicts, the report said.

Interference efforts were likely to take place on different online platforms than

those targeted in elections in 2016 and 2020.

The counter-terrorism chief also warned that conflict in the Middle East had led to a surge in religious extremist activity and that the United Kingdom is facing “a radicalisation moment”.

He said there had been a 25% increase in information flowing through police systems about terrorism and violent extremism, “a significant increase” on “usual levels”.

“We always see spikes after terrorist incidents but what we’ve seen since October 7 has been a spike which is higher and more sustained than ever before,” Jukes said in comments to local media. “I would describe the speed and the scale of the impact of those global events as extraordinary.”

The defence ministry (MoD) has meanwhile said that it would spend £405mn

(\$514mn) to upgrade a missile system now being used by the Royal Navy to shoot down hostile drones over the Red Sea.

The Sea Viper Air Defence system will be upgraded with missiles featuring a new warhead and software enabling it to counter ballistic missile threats, the MoD said in a statement.

The contracts were awarded to the British division of MBDA, a missiles joint venture owned by Airbus, BAE Systems and Leonardo, the MoD said.

“As the situation in the Middle East worsens, it is vital that we adapt to keep the UK, our allies and partners safe,” Shapps said in the statement. “Sea Viper has been at the forefront of this, being the Navy’s weapon of choice in the first shooting down of an aerial threat in more than 30 years.”

US and British naval forces in the Red Sea have shot drones and missiles fired by Yemen’s Houthi movement this month as the conflict between Israel and Hamas spilled out into the broader region.

## Kidnapped Nigerian sisters rescued after outcry

Five kidnapped Nigerian sisters have been rescued after their abduction and the death of another sister triggered a public outcry, police said yesterday.

The sisters were seized at the start of the year by armed men who burst into their home just 15 miles (25km) from Abuja city centre, according to the family.

Attackers killed one sister, 21-year-old Nabeeha al-Kadriyar, when a ransom deadline passed.

Federal Capital Territory (FCT) police and the army rescued the girls on Saturday night in the Kajuru forest in neighbouring Kaduna State.

“The FCT Police has rescued the victims and reunited them with their families,” a police statement said.

A cousin of the girls confirmed to AFP that they were back with the family.

Kidnapping for ransom is a major problem in Nigeria with criminal gangs targeting highways, apartments and even snatching pupils from schools.

Gangs known locally as bandits operate out of bases in forests across the northwest and central states.

After public outrage over the sisters’ case, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu condemned what he called the “recent spate of kidnappings and bandit attacks”.

Tinubu has made tackling insecurity one of his major promises since coming to office in May last year.

Some experts believe the country’s economic situation is driving a rise in kidnappings as desperate Nigerians turn to crime.

The kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in northeastern Nigeria by Boko Haram militants made global headlines in 2014, but daily abductions rarely gain as international attention. – **AFP**

## Briton convicted of murder in France dies in Ireland

A British journalist convicted in his absence by a Paris court over the 1996 murder of a Frenchwoman died yesterday, his lawyer told Irish press.

Sentenced to 25 years in prison in 2019 for the death of Sophie Toscan du Plantier, Ian Bailey consistently maintained his innocence and lived in Ireland, which refused to extradite him. Bailey, 66, died yesterday in Bantry, southern Ireland, following an illness, according to broadcaster RTE, which added that his death was confirmed by his lawyer Frank Buttimer.

Bailey suffered two heart attacks last year, according to the *Irish Times* newspaper.

The body of 39-year-old Toscan du Plantier, wife of film producer Daniel Toscan du Plantier, was discovered by a neighbour on December 23, 1996, outside a holiday home in southwestern Ireland.

Irish police soon after suspected Bailey, who was arrested in 1997 and again in 1998, but was never prosecuted in Ireland due to a lack of evidence.

A Paris trial, however, ruled that there was “sufficient evidence” linking Bailey to the crime.

Multiple French extradition bids for Bailey were struck down by Irish courts. – **AFP**

## India plans to fence off Myanmar frontier

AFP  
New Delhi

India plans to construct a fence along its vast and porous frontier with Myanmar and will scrap a free movement border zone agreement, Indian media reported yesterday.

The announcement by Home Minister Amit Shah comes after hundreds of troops from Myanmar fleeing insurgent attacks crossed into India.

The government had “decided to fence the entire open India-Myanmar border”, Shah said on Saturday during a visit to the north-eastern state of Assam.

The frontier stretches for more than 1,200km (750 miles), ranging from remote jungle to soaring snow-capped Himalayan peaks.

Shah, who gave no details of a timeframe or how the fence would be built, said the government would also end a free movement agreement.

The deal allows those living in border zones to venture a short distance into each other’s territory without a visa.

Many in the border zones share close cultural and religious ties.

“We are going to end this facility,” Shah said, according to a video posted by the *Times of India*.

India has already fenced more than

2,000km of its border with Pakistan, and at least 3,100km with Bangladesh, according to government statistics from 2021.

Parts of Myanmar near the Indian border have seen frequent clashes since Arakan Army (AA) fighters attacked security forces in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since a 2021 military coup.

In October, an alliance including AA insurgents and other ethnic minority fighters launched a joint offensive across northern Myanmar, seizing vital trade hubs on the Chinese border.

Earlier this month, the alliance announced a China-mediated ceasefire, but it does not apply to areas near the Indian border, where fighting continues.



## Time out

Participants run on Mumbai’s Bandra-Worli sea link bridge as they take part in a marathon yesterday.

Left: A dancer hoists a child during an annual celebration in Manila’s Tondo district.



A woman takes photographs amid colourful candy-land themed sculptures at the ‘Great and Grand Sweet Destination’, an ice-cream cafe and theme park in Pattaya.



Members of a self-taught acrobatics quartet calling themselves ‘Busaka Team Entertainers’ perform stunts for donations at a traffic light intersection in Nairobi.

## Investigation under way after China school fire kills 13

AFP  
Yanshanpu, China

Authorities in central China’s Henan Province were looking yesterday into the cause of a night-time fire that killed 13 schoolchildren as they slept in a dormitory.

The infirmary, which took place at the Yingcai School in Yanshanpu village, was reported to the local fire department at 11pm (1500 GMT) on Friday and was put out around 40 minutes later, official news agency Xinhua said.

Thirteen students died in the accident, while one other person suffered injuries.

Dozens of police were in and around a cordoned-off area near the school yesterday morning, AFP journalists saw.

An official at the scene told AFP: “There is an investigation ongoing inside. Nobody can go in.”

Several windows on the side of the school were broken – the only obvious signs of a major accident at the building.

Vertical metal bars covered the school’s windows, AFP saw, while a permanent sign on the building’s facade read: “Enter the kindergarten happily and go home happily”

A teacher at the school told state-run *Hebei Daily* that all the victims were from the same third-grade class of nine and 10-year-olds.

Yesterday a row of shops next to the school stood mostly shuttered, while a small clinic in a crumbling courtyard building appeared unattended.

A few locals went about their day and a couple of children played as police cars

made loops around the cordoned-off area.

Some people passing by stared at the scene, and one man at an auto workshop across the street told AFP that he had been unaware of the fire until the following morning.

Authorities in the area are investigating the fire’s cause, and at least one person linked to the school has been detained, Xinhua reported on Saturday.

No official explanation of the precise cause of the deadly blaze has yet been provided, although some domestic media reports suggested it was related to an electric heating device.

Yanshanpu village lies on the outskirts of Nanyang, a city of nearly 10mn people about 850km west of Shanghai.

Little information about the boarding school is publicly available, though social

media videos published before the tragedy showed young children including kindergarteners wearing smocks with the school’s logo as well as older children learning calligraphy.

Fires and other deadly accidents are common in China due to lax safety standards and poor enforcement.

In November, 26 people died and dozens were sent to hospital after a fire at a coal company office in northern China’s Shanxi province.

The month before, an explosion at a barbecue restaurant in northwestern China left 31 dead and prompted official pledges of a nationwide campaign to promote workplace safety.

In April, a hospital fire in Beijing killed 29 people and forced desperate survivors to jump out of windows to escape.



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Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar  
✉ editor@gulf-times.com  
☎ 44350478 (News),  
☎ 44466404 (Sport),  
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GULF TIMES

Why high-fat and high-sugar foods are so irresistible, dieting challenging

Finally, researchers have identified distinct neural pathways in the brain for fat and sugar cravings. A study found that activating both fat and sugar circuits simultaneously leads to a significant increase in dopamine release and overeating in mice. This discovery provides key insights into why high-fat, high-sugar foods are so irresistible and why dieting can be challenging, opening new avenues for developing anti-obesity strategies.

The research by a team at Monell Chemical Senses Center, a non-profit independent scientific institute located at the University City Science Center campus in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US, reveals that separate circuits in the vagus nerve, originating in the gut, communicate information about consumed fats and sugars to the brain, triggering dopamine release in the brain's reward centre.

"Food is nature's ultimate reinforcer," said Monell scientist Guillaume de Lartigue, PhD, lead author of the study, published in *Cell Metabolism*. "But why fats and sugars are particularly appealing has been a puzzle. We've now identified nerve cells in the gut rather than taste cells in the mouth are a key driver. We found that distinct gut-brain pathways are recruited by fats and sugars, explaining why that doughnut can be so irresistible."

Ultimately this research provides insights on what controls "motivated" eating behaviour, suggesting that a subconscious internal desire to consume a diet high in both fats and sugar has the potential to counteract dieting efforts. The team used cutting-edge technology to directly manipulate fat or sugar neurons in the vagus nerve system and demonstrated that both types of neurons

Understanding the wiring diagram of our innate motivation to consume fats and sugars is the first step towards rewiring it

cause a dopamine release in the brain's reward centre in mice. They discovered two dedicated vagus nerve pathways: one for fats and another for sugars. These circuits, originating in the gut, relay information about what we have eaten to the brain, setting the stage for cravings.

To determine how fats and sugars affect the brain, the team stimulated gut vagal nerves with light. This, in turn, induced the mice to actively seek stimuli, in this case food, that engage these circuits. The results indicated that sugar and fat are sensed by discrete neurons of the vagus nerve

and engage parallel but distinct reward circuits to control nutrient-specific reinforcement.

But the story doesn't end there. The team also found that simultaneously activating both the fat and sugar circuits creates a powerful synergy. "It's like a one-two punch to the brain's reward system," said de Lartigue. "Even if the total calories consumed in sugar and fats stays the same, combining fats and sugars leads to significantly more dopamine release and, ultimately, overeating in the mice."

This finding sheds light on why dieting can be so challenging. Human brains may be subtly programmed to seek out high-fat, high-sugar combinations, regardless of conscious efforts to resist. "The communication between our gut and brain happens below the level of consciousness," said de Lartigue. "We may be craving these types of food without even realising it."

The team predicts that this line of research offers hope for future development of anti-obesity strategies and treatments. Targeting and regulating gut-brain reward circuits could offer a novel approach to curb unhealthy eating habits. "Understanding the wiring diagram of our innate motivation to consume fats and sugars is the first step towards rewiring it," said de Lartigue.

"This research unlocks exciting possibilities for personalised interventions that could help people make healthier choices, even when faced with tempting treats." De Lartigue's co-authors are Molly McDougall, Alan de Araujo, Arashdeep Singh, Mingxin Yang, Isadora Braga, Vincent Paille, Rebeca Mendez-Hernandez, and Brandon Warren, all from the Monell Center; Macarena Vergara, Abhishek Gour, Abhishek Sharma, and Nikhil Urs, all from the University of Florida, and Lauren N. Woodie, University of Pennsylvania.

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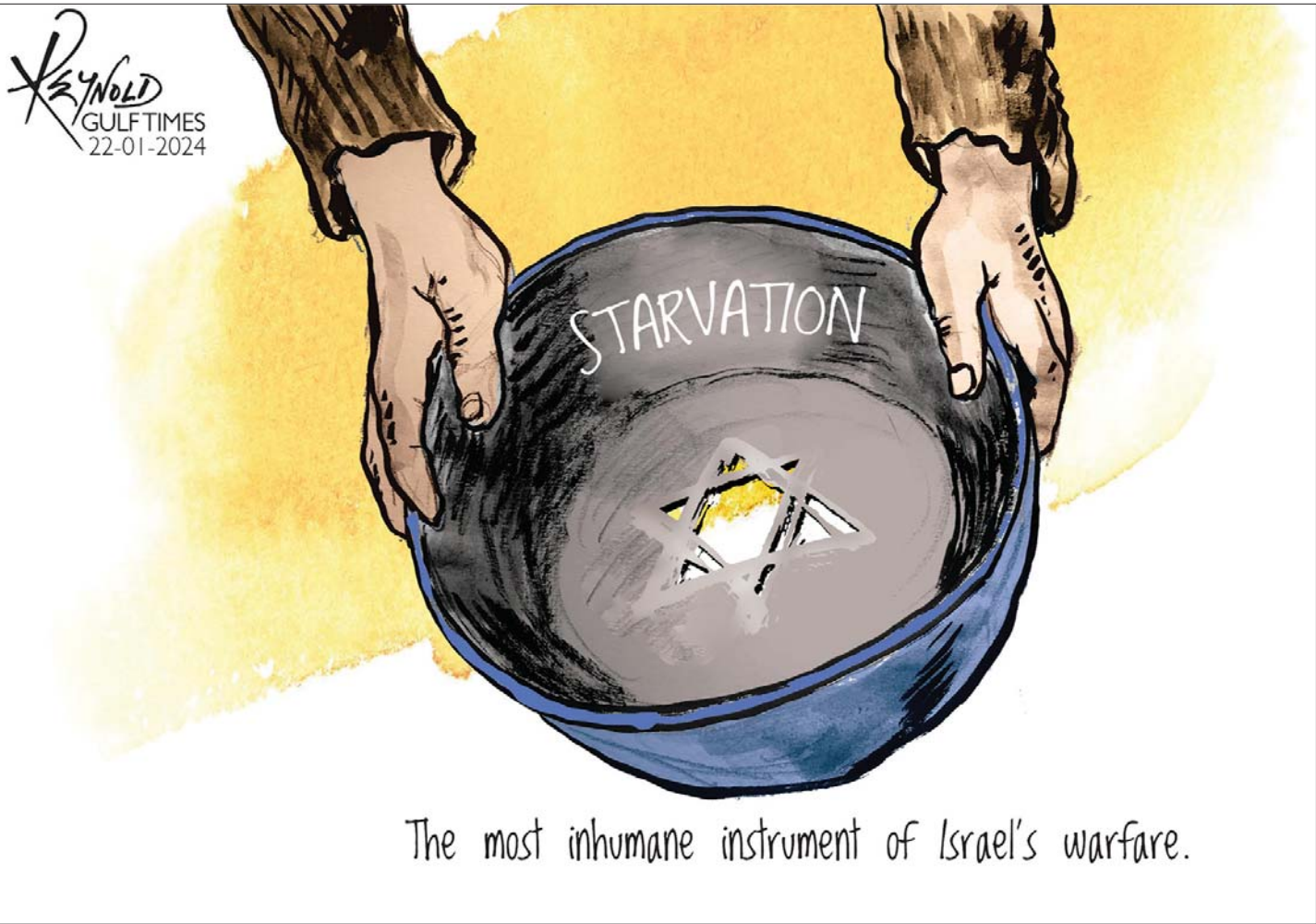
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Qatar, Tatarstan cement ties

QNA  
Doha

Strengthening relationship between Qatar and the Republic of Tatarstan is vitally important within the two nations' plans to expand partnerships and investments, particularly in the energy field, as Qatar maintains a privileged standing in oil, gas, and petrochemical markets at regional and global levels. The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the most critical Russian territories that produce oil, gas, and petrochemicals.

In this framework, the visit of President of the Republic of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov to Doha reflects Qatar's commitment to deepening foreign relations and forging co-operation with a variety of trade partners within the framework of its economic openness, especially with the Republic of Tatarstan, since the latter represents a vital economic destination within the Russian Federation.

During the last decade, the Qatar-Tatarstan relationship has been cemented at multiple levels through shared visits of officials, as well as economic forums that brought the two nations together. The last visit of the president of the Republic of Tatarstan to Doha was in 2022, when President Minnikhanov attended the final match and the opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 tournament.

In December 2015, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani welcomed President Minnikhanov and his accompanying delegation on a work visit, during which bilateral relations and avenues to reinforce and upgrade them were discussed, in addition to discussing a range of topics of common interest.

Qatar participated in the 14th International Economic Forum "Russia the Islamic World: Kazan Forum 2023" held in Kazan City, the Republic of Tatarstan, during May 18-19, 2023, with a delegation led by HE Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Sultan bin Rashid al-Khater.

During his remarks before the forum, HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce emphasised that Qatar has been keen to strengthen foreign relations and forge co-operation with a variety of trade partners, particularly the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan. He noted the strength of the historic and strategic partnership between Qatar and those nations.

Al-Khater commended the depth of relations between Qatar and the Republic of Tatarstan that has numerous investment opportunities and potential that can benefit the Qatari companies, pointing out that the Qatar has succeeded in proceeding with its balanced economic growth, notwithstanding the

multiple global evolutions it has witnessed during the past three years.

HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce said he hopes the meeting would serve as a catalyst to renew the pledge and continuing the work to invest in the opportunities available, in addition to broadening partnership horizons between Qatar, Russian Federation, and the Republic of Tatarstan in a variety of fields to support the development goals and common aspirations aimed at achieving the sustainable economic prosperity.

HE Sultan bin Rashid al-Khater held bilateral meetings with President Minnikhanov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Oleg Korobchenko, and Chief Executive of the Investment Development Agency Taliya Minullina to boost co-operation between the two nations in trade, investment, and industry fields.

He underscored the promising prospects, legislatives, and opportunities available in Qatar, which aim to encourage investors, businessmen, and owners of companies to invest in the country.

HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce attended the international exhibition "Russia Halal Expo" and toured the sections of the exhibition held within the framework of the forum during which he was apprised of the services and products provided by the companies and participating institutions.

The forum was held concurrently with the inauguration of Tatarstan Oil and Gas Chemicals Forum held at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center, under the patronage of President Minnikhanov. The forum was an effective platform to expand

trade co-operation among institutions specialised in energy.

The Kazan Forum 2023 which saw the attendance of roughly 15,000 participants from 85 nations was intended to bolster trade, economic, technological, educational, social, and cultural ties between the territories of the Russian Federation and states of Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC).

About one month later, the forum was followed by the convention of the International Forum of Education Ministers under the theme of "Shaping the Future" in which Qatar participated with a high-ranking delegation led by HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi.

The forum discussed issues of high priority in advancing the education and offering opportunities to share expertise and best practices in the fields of education, technical and vocational training, formulate the orientations of the global vision in building the future, as well as develop digital skills in the pedagogical field in the context of digital transformation.

Addressing the forum, HE the Minister of MoEHE affirmed that education is one of the core pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030 to build a diverse knowledge-based economy that offers a promising future for citizens through building a global educational system that provides exceptional opportunities for high-quality education and training, in addition to the significance of co-operation and partnership to achieve qualitative education for all.

On the economic side, the relationships between

the two countries have been significantly evolving since 2013 when HE the Chairman of the Qatari Businessmen Association (QBA) Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani met with Chief Executive of Tatarstan Investment Development Agency (TIDA) Linar Yakupov and his accompanying delegation to discuss avenues for trade and investment co-operation between the Qatari businessmen and their Tatarstan counterparts, especially in food and agriculture.

HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani underscored the interest of Qatari businessmen in capitalising on investment opportunities available in Tatarstan, in addition to establishing projects in a variety of sectors and supporting the co-operation of Qatari businessmen with their Tatarstan counterparts.

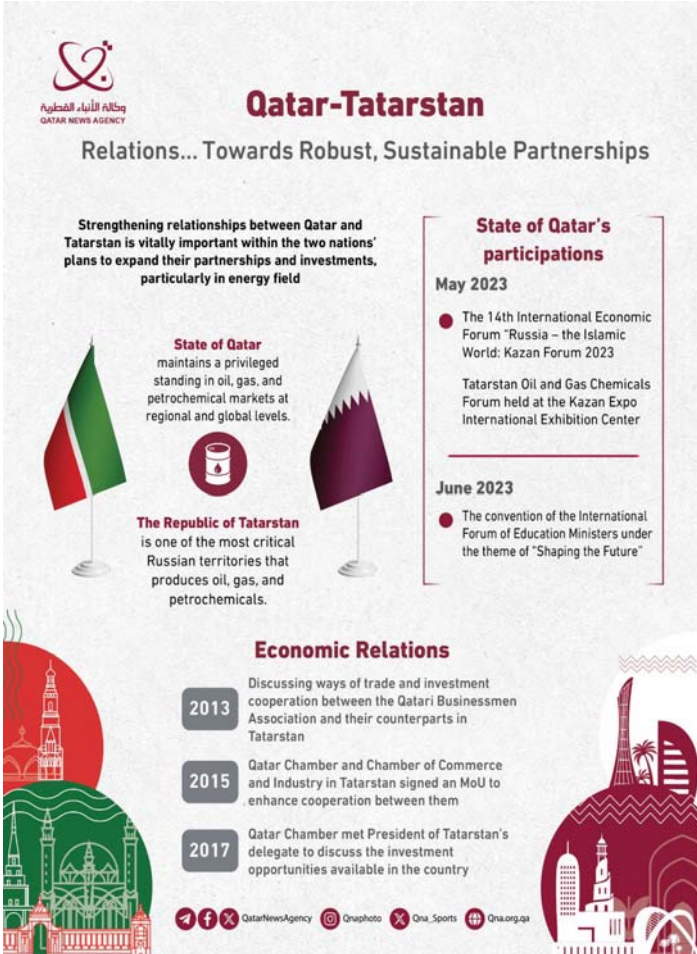
Yakupov highlighted that his country had developed medicine and pharmaceutical sectors and focused on optimising IT and communications, as well as halal food industry and sectors of services and tourism. He reviewed the investment prospects his country offers, including the provision of a sophisticated infrastructure, conducive tax policy and the existence of qualified manpower.

In 2015, Qatar Chamber and Tatarstan Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to reinforce co-operation between the two countries. During the meeting, Vice-Chairman of Qatar Chamber Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Twar al-Kuwari said Qatar succeeded in achieving massive development in multiple fields, including trade, oil, industry, and agriculture.

For his part, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade of Tatarstan Albert Karimov said his country appreciates co-operation with representatives of the Qatari private sector, highlighting that the objective of the visit is to apprise the Qatari business community of the potential available in Tatarstan. He affirmed that there is an interest in attracting the Qatari businesspeople to invest in his country, especially in energy, gas, oil, Islamic banking, and tourism fields.

In 2017, a member of the Board of Directors of Qatar Chamber and Honorary Treasurer Eng. Ali Abdul Latif al-Misnad met a delegation commissioned by the president of Tatarstan to discuss the investment opportunities available in Tatarstan, along with the merits it offers to investors, particularly in the fields of agriculture, infrastructure, and sports.

The meeting discussed the possibility of holding a meeting that brings Qatari business owners together with their Tatarstan counterparts to discuss prospects of co-operation between the private sectors in the two nations, as well as the investment opportunities available in the two countries, especially that there is a MoU signed between the chambers of the two countries.





# Ukraine market strike kills 27 in Russian-held Donetsk

AFP  
Moscow

A strike on a crowded market in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine left at least 27 people dead and 25 wounded yesterday, Moscow-backed officials said.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of a sharp escalation in attacks on civilian areas in the past two months.

Shattered storefronts and broken glass could be seen in videos shared by Russian state media, along with what appeared to be bodies lying on the ground nearby.

“At the moment, information about 27 dead has been confirmed. At least 25 more people have been injured,” said Denis Pushilin, head of the region’s Russian-controlled administration.

He blamed Ukraine for the strike, calling it a “horrific” attack on a civilian area.

Ukraine did not immediately comment, and AFP was not able to immediately verify the circumstances of the attack.

Officials said the strike hit a southwestern suburb of the city, less than 15km from the eastern front.

Local resident Tatiana said she heard an incoming projectile overhead, and hid under her market stall.

“I saw smoke, people screamed, a woman was crying,” she told a local media outlet.

“Where is there anything military here? It’s just a market,” another resident named Tatiana told the same outlet. “This is one of the strongest blows in recent times,” she said.

The toll marks one of the deadliest in Donetsk since Moscow



People remove debris at a food market following a Ukrainian strike in Donetsk yesterday.

launched full-scale hostilities against Ukraine in February 2022.

Donetsk, occupied by Russia and its proxy forces since 2014, has been repeatedly targeted by what Moscow has called indiscriminate Ukrainian shelling.

Moscow called yesterday’s attack a “barbaric terrorist attack” that showed the need for its “special military operation” in Ukraine.

“Security threats and acts of terrorism should not be committed from the territory of Ukraine,” its foreign ministry said.

News of the attack came as Russia reported another blaze on its energy infrastructure, this time at a gas terminal in the Baltic Sea port of Ust-Luga.

Kyiv earlier this week claimed responsibility for two attacks on oil depots in Russia, including one in the same Leningrad region where Ust-Luga is located.

Operator Novatek said there were no victims and the fire was

“currently localised” at the site, some 110km (west of St Petersburg near the Estonian border.

Novatek said the fire was caused by an “external factor”, without providing any further detail.

Ukraine, which has targeted Russian oil and gas infrastructure throughout the almost two-year conflict, did not immediately comment on the incident.

“No casualties as a result of a fire at Novatek’s terminal in the port of Ust-Luga. Personnel

were evacuated,” Aleksandr Drozdenko, governor of Leningrad Oblast, said.

He shared a photo showing firefighters spraying water on a large fire at the terminal.

The RIA-Novosti news agency said a 100 cubic metre container was ablaze.

The Ust-Luga complex processes natural gas condensate into naphtha, jet fuel and ship fuel components, according to Novatek’s website.

## Russia suspends operations at gas export terminal after drone strike

Reuters  
Moscow

Novatek, Russia’s largest liquefied natural gas producer, said yesterday it had been forced to suspend some operations at a huge Baltic Sea export terminal due to a fire started by what Ukrainian media said was a drone attack.

The giant Ust-Luga complex, located on the Gulf of Finland about 170km west of St. Petersburg, is used to ship oil and gas products to international markets. It processes stable gas condensate into light and heavy naphtha, jet fuel, fuel oil and gasoil, according to Novatek’s website.

It was not clear how long the disruption would last, how many tankers would have to idle outside the port, and what the knock-on effect would be on international energy markets.

The Interfax-Ukraine news agency, citing unnamed sources, said the fire was the result of a special operation carried out by Ukraine’s security services.

“The Ust-Luga Oil terminal in the Leningrad region is an important facility for the enemy. Fuel is refined there, which, among other things, is also supplied to Russian troops,” it cited one source as saying.

“A successful attack on such a terminal not only causes economic damage to the enemy, depriving the occupiers of the opportunity to earn money to wage war in Ukraine, but also significantly complicates the logistics of fuel for the Russian military,” Reuters could not confirm that the fire resulted from a Ukrainian drone attack.

If it did, such an attack would demonstrate Kyiv’s ability to conduct strikes deeper into Russia than usual using what are believed to be domestically produced drones at a time when it is on the defensive on the battlefield and struggling to secure as much

Western financing as it wants.

Such an attack, the latest in a spate of apparent strikes in recent days targeting Russian energy facilities, would also raise awkward questions about the quality of Russian air defence systems around key infrastructure facilities.

The incident, along with what Russia says was a Ukrainian artillery strike on civilians in a Russian-held city in eastern Ukraine that left at least 25 dead, could prompt wider Russian retaliation in a war which shows no sign of ending.

Alexander Drozdenko, the Leningrad region’s governor, said on the Telegram messaging app, that there had been no casualties at the Ust-Luga terminal and all workers had been safely evacuated. Russian news agencies reported that two storage tanks and a pumping station had been damaged, but that the fire had been

brought under control.

Novatek said in a statement it had suspended some operations after the fire which it said was the result of “external influence.”

“The technological process at Novatek-Ust-Luga has been stopped, and an operational headquarters has been established to eliminate the consequences. Damage assessment will be carried out later,” the company said.

Russian news outlet Shot reported that local residents had heard a drone operating nearby followed by several explosions.

Russia and Ukraine have targeted each other’s energy infrastructure in strikes designed to disrupt supply lines and logistics, each side seeking to demoralise the other.

On Friday, a drone attack hit an oil depot in Russia’s western region of Bryansk, bordering Ukraine, for which Moscow

blamed Kyiv. That came a day after an attack on a Russian Baltic Sea oil terminal that Russian officials said was unsuccessful.

Baza, a Russian news outlet known for its security services contacts, posted footage on Telegram yesterday of large flames shooting into the sky over what appeared to be an industrial complex.

Three international tanker ships were anchored near the Ust-Luga terminal, though there were no reports of damage to them from the fire, the St Petersburg-based Fontanka outlet said.

Drozdenko said a “high alert regime” had been introduced and that officials had gathered for an emergency meeting.

Novatek processed 3.4mn tons of stable gas condensate at the complex in the first half of 2023, according to the most recent data available, up 0.6% from the same period a year earlier

## Tens of thousands flood protests against far-right in Germany

Tens of thousands gathered across Germany again yesterday to protest the far-right AfD, after it emerged that party members discussed mass deportation plans at a meeting of extremists.

The influx of demonstrators was so large in Munich that organisers were forced to cancel a planned march and ask people to disperse for safety reasons.

Organisers said some 50,000 people had turned up to the demonstration, twice as many as were registered for the event. An earlier estimate announced to the crowd had put the figure at 200,000, according to an AFP journalist.

Police estimated a figure somewhere in the middle, around 100,000, according to the German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

Those who made it to the site of the planned protest carried signs saying “Nazis out” and “never again is now”.

Some 250,000 people had already gathered in cities across the country on Saturday, according to ARD estimates.

Demonstrations were called in some 100 locations across Germany from Friday through the weekend, including in Munich, Berlin and cities in the east of the country where the AfD has its strongholds.

The wave of mobilisation against the far-right party was sparked by a January 10 report by investigative outlet Correctiv, which revealed that AfD members had discussed the expulsion of immigrants and “non-assimilated citizens” at a meeting with extremists.

## ‘Four survivors’ after Russian jet crashes in Afghan mountains

Four people survived and two are unaccounted for after a Russian plane crashed in mountainous northeastern Afghanistan, the air transport agency Rosaviatsia said yesterday.

The Falcon 10 business jet was believed to be carrying six people on a hospital flight from India to Uzbekistan and Russia before communication was lost on Saturday evening.

“Of the six people on board the aircraft, tentatively, four are alive. They have various injuries. The fate of two people is being clarified,” Rosaviatsia said, citing the Russian embassy in Afghanistan.

The RIA Novosti news agency said two passengers were Russians, one who was seriously ill, and the other her husband who had paid for the flight. The two-engine plane was built by France’s Dassault in 1978 and owned by a company called Athletic Group and a private individual.

A provincial government official in Afghanistan told AFP the aircraft came down in Badakhshan province, which borders China, Tajikistan and Pakistan. The area of the crash is eight hours by road from the provincial capital Faizabad, said Zabihullah Amiri, head of the provincial information department. Russian investigators announced the opening of a probe into the cause of the crash.

## 100th death anniversary of Lenin

Dozens of Russian communists gathered in Red Square yesterday to mark the 100th anniversary of Vladimir Lenin’s death, in one of the few official events commemorating the Soviet founder.

The centenary of the Bolshevik revolutionary’s passing has largely been ignored by ordinary Russians, but Lenin continues to be venerated by those nostalgic for the USSR. “I came here to honour the memory of Vladimir Lenin — our leader, the founder of the Soviet state,” said 47-year-old Yulia, one of many admirers who gathered outside Lenin’s mausoleum in freezing temperatures. “His ideas lit the way for many revolutionaries, fighters for the bright future of the people, for justice,” she told AFP. Attendees could be seen carrying portraits of the late leader and waving flags of the Russian Communist Party.

## Haley woos independents in final New Hampshire push

Reuters  
Portsmouth/Keene (New Hampshire)

Tom Mita, a 45-year-old non-profit worker in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is not registered with a political party. That makes him the perfect target for Nikki Haley, who needs independent voters for a chance to prevail in this pivotal primary state.

Mita is thinking about voting for Haley, he told a pair of door knockers who were canvassing on behalf of the former US ambassador to the United Nations outside his suburban home on Saturday, but he isn’t completely sold on her candidacy.

He wants Haley, who has so far spared

Donald Trump from some lines of attack, to go after him more aggressively. He considers Trump a threat to democracy for trying to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democratic President Joe Biden. If Haley pulls her punches, he may vote in the Democratic primary instead.

“It’s really about stopping Trump,” said Mita, standing outside his door, hands stuffed in his pockets, on a 19-degree Fahrenheit day. “Best scenario would be if she comes out and says that she won’t endorse Trump for president.”

Voters like Mita, who are unaffiliated with either major party, will be crucial to Haley if she is to pull off an upset and beat Trump in New Hampshire, which holds its primary tomorrow. She likely needs

a victory here or a very close second to survive, following her third place finish behind Trump and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis last week in Iowa.

Voters untied to either party are the state’s most important bloc. They account for 343,000 of all registered voters, eclipsing both the number of registered Republicans and Democrats, according to data from the secretary of state.

Unaffiliated voters are allowed to participate in the primary of their choice. About 30% are effectively Republicans, 35% align with Democrats, and 35% are truly independent, estimates Andrew Smith, director of the University of New Hampshire Survey Center and a political science professor.

Given Trump’s stranglehold on the Republican base, Haley will need to secure the support of 70% to 75% of unaffiliated voters in order to win the state, he said.

“That’s never happened before,” said Smith. “That’s a really tall order.”

While Haley has closed the gap with Trump in New Hampshire, the former president retains a comfortable lead of 14 percentage points according to an average of polls compiled by website FiveThirtyEight. Trump has in recent days sought to portray Haley’s gains in state polls as improper because they reflect growing support among independents. He has also falsely claimed registered Democrats would be allowed to

vote in the Republican primary.

Chris Ager, chair of the state Republican party, noted that Trump himself benefited from the backing of independent voters when he won New Hampshire in 2016, reviving his campaign after a loss in Iowa. Ager thinks Trump will win but gives Haley an outside shot.

“Nikki Haley could win New Hampshire,” he told a media roundtable hosted by Bloomberg in Manchester on Saturday. “The undecideds can break very late.”

Haley’s bid could be boosted by a super PAC formed to persuade right-leaning independents in New Hampshire to support her. The group, Independents Moving the Needle, has been airing a number of supportive ads on local television.





# UDST launches UHUB business incubator

The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has launched UHUB, a dedicated business incubator aimed at empowering members of the UDST's ambitious community as they transform their innovative ideas into tangible realities.

In collaboration with tech incubator DMZ based out of Toronto Metropolitan University, this dynamic space seeks to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit within the UDST community.

Committed to guiding and supporting innovative idea owners, UHUB focuses on monetising applied research, commercialising capstones, and capitalising on intellectual property.

The dynamic catalyst adopts a comprehensive approach to create highly competent entrepreneurs equipped with market-ready solutions.

The incubator will provide budding innovators with a robust roadmap, incorporating essential components, such as workshops on marketing, scaling, and pitching.

Additionally, it provides access to valuable networking opportunities with mentors, alumni, and investors.

UHUB offers a truly unique experience.



Officials at the launch.

One of its landmark features is its non-cohort-based approach, allowing for flexibility and inclusivity.

Moreover, UHUB is committed to continuous evaluation, supporting its participants with analytics and valuations of their projects.

These concepts provide tailored guidance and insights that align with the evolving needs of each aspiring entrepreneur.

The centre's main office was officially opened in Building 5 at the heart of the UDST campus.

The new facility offers students a con-

ducive space to work and host start-up meetings.

Ultimately, it serves as a hub to inspire creativity and collaboration.

"UDST is home to some of Qatar's most brilliant and ambitious young innovators," UDST president Dr Salem Al-Naemi said.

"UHUB is committed to nurturing their talents and assisting them in realising their ambitions by supplying international expertise and delivering consistent support and mentorship throughout their path of entrepreneurship."

Abdullah Snobar, executive director of DMZ and CEO of DMZ Ventures, said: "Students are a foundational pillar to any thriving startup ecosystem and ensuring they have the support and resources to excel is essential."

"DMZ is thrilled to partner with the UDST, and by combining their commitment to cultivating brilliant minds with DMZ's world-renowned expertise in startup support, UHUB will be a dynamic environment that empowers young entrepreneurs to turn their ideas into successful business ventures," he added.

UHUB's launch underscores the UDST's commitment to its students' success beyond academics and higher education.

As a space dedicated to applied learning, UHUB emphasises the importance of supporting the realisation of research and graduation projects.

It aims to drive impact even beyond national borders, driving economic progress in Qatar and across the globe.

## Fire Station: AIR programme announces invited artists

Fire Station: Artist in Residence (AIR) announced the invited artists and the beginning of their "Ruwad in Residence" programme, which began on January 1.

The artists are Haifa Alkhuzaei and Ahmed al-Hamar.

Fire Station began running the "Ruwad in Residence" programme in 2021, in support of Qatar-based established artists.

It is a continuation of the programme that supported Qatari artist Faraj Daham from 2017 to 2020.

In a press statement, Fire Station director Khalifa al-Obaidli said: "This initiative provides an exceptional space for established creatives to engage with other emerging and mid-career artists, cultivating an exchange of art practices, knowledge, insights, and expertise."

Head of programmes and exhibitions Said al-Khulaifi said: "The Ruwad artists will take part in a one-year programme, allowing them the opportunity to engage with other resident artists and share their extensive experience and journeys with other local artists who aspire to have a similar career."

Alkhuzaei is a Qatari former art teacher with 20 years of experience at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

She was awarded a General Diploma in Fine Art from Besancon France in 1984 and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art Education from Qatar University (QU) in 1989.

Alkhuzaei has participated in numerous exhibitions in Qatar and abroad, and presented six exhibitions between 1984-2019.

Al-Hamar, who has participated in several exhibitions in Qatar and abroad, obtained a Bachelor of Art Education from the QU in 1999, and has been a member of the Qatar Society for Fine Arts since 1997.



One of Ahmed al-Hamar's artworks.



One of Alkhuzaei's artworks.



Haifa Alkhuzaei.

## DI organises two-day symposium on *The Gulf Novel: Parallel Sociology*

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI), represented by the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Unit, organised a symposium on *The Gulf Novel: Parallel Sociology* from January 20-21.

The afternoon session on January 21, titled "The Other in the narrative in Gulf societies: The Other and the narrator" was moderated by *Gulf Times* Editor-in-Chief Faisal al-Mudahka.

"In this session, we will talk about Gulf literature, specifically the Gulf novel, which took a romantic turn at its beginning," he said in his introduction. "The novel *Shahanda* by Rashid Abdullah from the Emirates may be one of the first clear examples of this trend."

"The Gulf novel touched on the transition from desert and sea life to city life after the discovery of oil, which moved Gulf society from the simplicity and harshness of life to the complexity, spaciousness and improvement of the city, as well as the standard of living and education," al-Mudahka said.

"One such work is the novel *Cities of Salt*, by the Saudi novelist Abdul Rahman al-Manif, which is one of the most famous Arabic novels, depicting life with the beginning of the discovery of oil and the rapid transformations that befell the cities and villages of the Arabian Peninsula," he continued.

Al-Mudahka then introduced Prof Mageb al-Adwani, professor of Criticism and Theory in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at King Saud University in Riyadh's College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Prof Maisa al-Khawaja, associate professor of Literature and Criticism in the Department of Arabic Language at King Saud University."

Prof al-Khawaja said that her idea "revolves around how the novel can depict societal transformations and present a vision about a society, and that among the



Prof al-Khawaja, al-Mudahka and Prof al-Adwani at the symposium yesterday.

PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

questions and problems that such seminars can raise is the idea of identity and that of 'Other'."

"My paper concerns those who lived in Saudi Arabia, in Jeddah specifically, and wrote about Saudi society," she continued. "Therefore the idea was about how to create their own identity, and also how to formulate an image of Saudi society."

"Is this picture imaginary or an approximate picture of what is happening in society, and is it exclusionary?" Prof al-Khawaja posed. "All of this is included within the work of fiction and how it is presented through the characters, through cultural discourse or patterns that exist within the work of fiction."

"The period that I am studying is related to the transformation in Saudi society, and the entry into what is called the awakening and the dominance of the clergy, etc., and how these people responded to some laws and some regulations related to dealing with others," she said.

"But the idea is that they are the ones who are writing by themselves and trying to create an identity that distinguishes them, or perhaps includes them under the dominant category of society in which

they live," Prof al-Khawaja continued. "I was exposed more to cultural patterns related to religious discourse, racist discourse, the relationship between men and women, and self-discovery and identity and how one rediscovers oneself by discovering one's own identity, for example, that he is Eritrean and not Saudi or half-Saudi, as he expresses it."

Prof al-Adwani presented six literary works and stressed that the novel does not relate to reality at all, especially in relation to the representation of the Western or Eastern "Other".

In the novel *Grandma Nina and I*, he pointed to the great symbolic aspect and how good triumphs over evil, stressing that the language of this novel was characterised by simplicity and was based on simple narration.

The successful debate, he said, is the one that depends on simplicity in this novel, which shows the relations between a Russian and a Jew among its characters, and openness to Russian culture.

At the conclusion of the session, the speakers agreed that the "Other" is a linguistic event or linguistic fact, so that the issue remains relative.

## QRCS distributes winter aid in Yemen

The representative office of the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Yemen has implemented a winterisation aid distribution project to meet the needs of 6,000 most vulnerable families in Sana'a, Taiz, Ma'rib, Ibb, and Dhale, at a cost of \$274,466 (QR1,000,428).

The project, under the QRCS's "Warm Winter campaign" with the theme *Humanity First, Hope for Warmth*, involved two phases, comprising distribution of 2,700 winterisation kits containing blankets and mattresses, and distribution of winter clothes for the benefit of 3,300 children.

During the inauguration ceremony in Ma'rib, Ali al-Marqat, Shelter Sector Officer at the governorate's executive unit for internally displaced people (IDPs), said: "This aid will be handed over to the poor IDPs in Al-Wadi and Al-Madina districts and help cover some of the winter needs of poor people in the governorate."

"Ma'rib is a desert governorate where the temperature drops sharply during the winter," he explained. "Hosting approximately 2.2mn IDPs, it needs more projects and humanitarian aid in food, medicine, and shelter. We call upon the QRCS to provide more aid for the governorate, which bears

the burden of 70% of IDPs in the entire country."

In Taiz, Nabil Jamil, the director-general of Planning and International Co-operation in the governorate, said: "The QRCS has significant interventions and is at the heart of health, shelter, and water priorities in Taiz."

The QRCS allocated 650 winterisation kits for some medical and social organisations, including the Sana'a-located Al-Amal Hospital for Psychiatric and Addiction Treatment.

Dr Mohamed Ibrahim al-Qashar, assistant general manager of the hospital, said: "Working against the scarce resources, we are trying to continue to receive the patients, offer high-quality services, and hire senior consultants and specialists. I would like to thank the QRCS for their continuous support."

The protracted conflict in Yemen is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

According to the International Organisation for Migration, it forced 4.1mn Yemenis to flee their homes and face difficult living conditions at camps.

With the winter, challenges become even more serious, including harsh weather conditions and lack of adequate household needs.



The QRCS winter clothes distribution centre in Taiz.



Distribution of winter clothes in Sana'a.



## 52 falconers qualify for Marmi 2024's Haddad Challenge

The number of finalists in the Haddad Challenge at the ongoing Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival's 15 edition (Marmi 2024) has reached 52. The final of the elite round is to be held today (Monday). The festival, under the patronage of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, continues until January 27 at Sabkat Marmi in Sealine.

