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Amir patronises graduation of Al Zaeem Air Academy

QNA
Doha

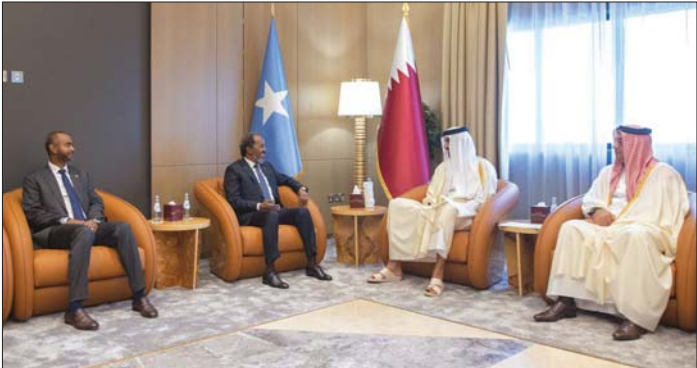
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani patronised the graduation ceremony of the 11th batch of cadets of Al Zaeem Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al Attiyah Air Academy at Al Udeid Air Base yesterday.

President of the Federal Republic of Somalia Hassan Sheikh Mohamud attended the ceremony along with a number of Sheikhs and Ministers.

The ceremony was also attended by a number of leaders of security, military and university colleges, institutes and academies, high-ranking officials of sisterly and friendly countries, senior officers of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Amiri Guard and the State Security, in addition to heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the country, guardians of the graduates, and guests. **To Page 12**



Amir discusses relations with Somali president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with President of the Federal Republic of Somalia Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who called on the Amir to greet him on the occasion of his visit to the country to attend the graduation ceremony of the 11th batch of cadets of Al Zaeem Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al Attiyah Air Academy. The meeting discussed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al- Attiyah, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Head of the State Security Abdullah bin Mohamed al-Khulaifi, and a number of senior officials. On the Somali side, the meeting was attended by Minister of Defence of the Federal Republic of Somalia Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur, and a number of senior officials. **(QNA)**

Amir to patronise Military College graduation today

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will patronise today morning the graduation ceremony of the 19th batch of the cadets of the Armed Forces and other security agencies, at the Ahmed Bin Mohamed Military College. **(QNA)**

\$1mn WISE Prize from 2025

The World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) has announced a new approach to its WISE Prize for Education with the laureate winning \$1mn from WISE Summit in 2025. The WISE Prize for Education laureate used to be awarded \$500,000 each until the last summit held in 2023 along with a gold medal. **Page 2**

Palestine create history, reach knockouts



Palestine's Mohamed Saleh in action with Hong Kong's Everton Camargo at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday.

Palestine reached the Asian Cup knockout rounds for the first time yesterday with their maiden win in the history of the competition. Palestine narrowly missed out on second spot in Group C but squeezed through as one of the four best third-placed teams after beating Hong Kong 3-0 at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium. **Sport Pages 1, 3, 4**

**Today's
schedule**



Group D:
Japan vs Indonesia, 2:30pm
at Al Thumama Stadium

Group D:
Iraq vs Vietnam, 2:30pm
at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium

Israel faces growing pressure to end war

**25,490 Gazans, 70% of them women and children, massacred
24 Israeli soldiers killed in deadliest day for troops in Gaza**

AFP
Gaza Strip

Israel yesterday said 24 soldiers died in the biggest single-day losses since the start of its ground war in Gaza amid growing pressure on the government to end the conflict.

Israel's army said 21 of the 24 troops killed were reservists slain when rocket-propelled grenade fire hit a tank and two buildings they were trying to blow up.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said an investigation was launched into the "disaster" and that Israel "must learn the necessary lessons".

Israela Oron, of the Ben-Gurion University in the Negev, said the mounting toll of soldiers killed - now 221 - since Israel launched its ground offensive in Gaza will heap pressure on the government.

On the ground, fighting raged in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza's main city, which the Israeli

army said it had "encircled".

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said Israeli tanks fired on Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis, with "dozens expected wounded".

The Palestinian Red Crescent said Israeli forces had hit its headquarters in Khan Yunis "resulting in injuries among internally displaced individuals who sought safety on our premises".

UN agencies and aid groups have sounded the alarm about the growing threat of disease and famine in Gaza, where 1.7mn people are estimated to have been uprooted.

Israel has carried out a relentless offensive since October 7 that has killed at least 25,490 people in Gaza, around 70% of them women, young children and adolescents, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Netanyahu's vow to destroy Hamas is increasingly seen within the cabinet as incompatible with returning hostages, experts say. **Page 7**



An injured Palestinian man receives medical assistance at Al-Amal Hospital, in Khan Yunis, Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Amir inaugurates F15 QA jet wing



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani inaugurated the strategic fighter jet wing No. 5 Ababil (F15 QA) of the Qatar Amiri Air Force at Al Udeid Air Base yesterday. His Highness the Amir made a tour during which he was briefed on the newly-manufactured Ababil F15 QA aircraft and their combat capabilities, and the most prominent methods of modern technology used in it. His Highness the Amir also made a tour during which he was briefed on the immediate take-off building (air-to-air) and (air-to-surface), pilots building, in addition to visiting the aircraft depot and maintenance building. **(QNA) Page 12**

500 plus brands to feature at 20th DJWE from Feb 5 to 11

Exhibition to take place at DECC

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Indian and Turkish pavilions, along with 10 exhibitors under the Qatari Designers pavilion, will have a significant presence at the 20th Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition (DJWE) this year, it was announced yesterday.

The latest edition of DJWE, scheduled to take place from February 5 to 11 at a 30,000sq m space at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, will bring together more than 500 brands from 10 countries around the world.

At a press conference at Raffles Doha, Qatar Tourism (QT) noted that the new additions to the lineup include Key Gems, AlMa-



HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji at the press conference yesterday. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

jid Home, Renee Jewels, Naylah Jewellery, Kooheji Jewellery, and Hessa Jewels.

The spotlight remains on the

"Big 8" for this year's exhibition: Alfardan Jewellery, Al Majed Jewellery, Ali Bin Ali Luxury, Amiri Gems, Fifty One East, Al Muftah Jewellery, Blue Salon, and Bulgari.

DJWE 2024 will showcase exclusive pieces, such as Tiffany & Co's 2024 Bird on a Pearl and the bespoke 'High Jewellery' necklace from Bulgari. AlMajed Jewellery and Blue Salon will introduce new jewellery brands, along with a fresh collection of 'Qatar Limited Edition' watches.

According to QT, Phillips, a prominent global platform for trading 20th and 21st-century art and design, will participate in this year's DJWE. Phillips, in association with Bacs & Russo, holds the world record for the most successful watch auctions. **To Page 12**



Culture minister meets Kyrgyzstan counterpart



HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Kyrgyz Minister of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy Altynbek Maksutov. The meeting discussed cultural co-operation between the two countries. **(QNA)**

Transport minister meets Gambian counterpart



HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti met yesterday with Gambian Minister of Transport, Works, and Infrastructure Ebrima Sillah. The two ministers discussed bilateral relations in the areas of transportation, harbours, and civil aviation, and ways to enhance them. **(QNA)**

Meeting on human trafficking issue



HE the Minister of Labour and Chairman of National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCHT) Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri chaired yesterday the committee's first periodic meeting for 2024. The meeting focused on developing an action strategy to enhance the committee's initiatives in addressing human trafficking throughout 2024. Several proposals were examined to improve protective measures and support for victims of human trafficking, to reinforce the NCCHT's engagement in addressing this issue, and to increase collaboration with relevant authorities and organisations, thereby strengthening the protection and assistance provided to victims of human trafficking. **(QNA)**

Legal co-operation discussed



HE the Minister of Justice, and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa al-Hassan al-Mohannadi met yesterday with the visiting Prosecutor-General of Uzbekistan, Nigmatilla Yuldashev. During the meeting, the two sides discussed legal co-operation between Qatar and Uzbekistan, along with ways to reinforce them and activate the co-operation agreement in legal area between the governments of the two countries.

Minister meets Uzbek prosecutor-general



HE the Minister of State for Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal al-Thani met yesterday with the visiting Uzbek Prosecutor-General Nigmatilla Yuldashev. A number of topics of common interest were discussed during the meeting. **(QNA)**

Official

Amir sends cables of congratulations to Liberian president on taking oath

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Joseph Boakai on the occasion of taking the constitutional oath as president of Liberia, wishing him success in performing his missions and for bilateral relations further development and progress. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani also sent a cable of congratulations to President Boakai. **(QNA)**

PM meets GCC secretary-general



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with the visiting GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi. The meeting discussed strengthening the process of the GCC, the latest developments in the war in Gaza, and regional developments. **(QNA)**

\$1mn 'WISE Prize for Education' from 2025

The World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) has announced a new approach to its WISE Prize for Education with the laureate winning \$1mn from WISE Summit in 2025. The WISE Prize for Education laureate used to be awarded \$500,000 each until the last summit held in 2023 along with a gold medal.

WISE is Qatar Foundation's global initiative for creative thinking, debate, and purposeful action in education. The new approach to WISE Prize for Education aims to empower visionary innovators to develop groundbreaking solutions to perennial education challenges.

The next generation of the WISE Prize for Education shifts its focus from recognising exemplary work in the field of education to facilitating the development of breakthrough programmes or products with potential to transform global education systems.

Under this goal, the biennial cycle features a broader scope by inviting global innovators, leaders, and organisations - with a demonstrable track record in successful education-focused initiatives - to propose solutions to one of the three education challenges, to compete for the WISE Prize for Education.

Applications will be evaluated by an international committee of



Aurelio Amaral

education experts against a set of criteria assessing applicants' past achievements that showcase their ability to solve the challenge, their use of evidence-based innovation, and their proposal of a coherent minimum viable product timeline with resource allocation and manpower planning. The submissions will also be evaluated for their potential to adapt and scale across different contexts, in particular the Mena region.

After a rigorous screening process, a group of finalists will embark on their innovation journeys, benefitting from monetary support and tailored mentorship from WISE, to convert their proposed ideas into tangible solutions. The 12-month programme will cul-



WISE Prize for Education laureate to receive \$1mn from WISE Summit in 2025.

minate at the next edition of the WISE Summit in 2025, which will showcase the pioneering solutions. The finalists will compete for a \$1mn prize to further advance their solutions and the selection will be made live at the summit.

The challenges include:

Improve the teaching of Arabic language: Develop a solution to improve the effectiveness of teaching, acquisition and use of the Arabic language.

Accelerate foundational literacies: Create a personalised learning tool to accelerate basic literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in under-resourced areas.

Address challenges in AI: Design a tech-based intervention to equip youth with skills to navigate challenges of increasing presence in an AI-driven market and society, such as biases and disinformation.

Aurelio Amaral, programmes manager at WISE, commented: "The 2025 WISE Prize for Education fosters actionable solutions and champions the cause of a more inclusive, sustainable and equitable future of education. WISE is pleased to take on a more active role in educational innovation by offering valuable guidance and vital resources to forward-looking individuals and organisations to design and deliver impactful solutions that can revolutionise education systems."

The new WISE Prize for Education is committed to driving impact and excellence in the global education landscape. Under this new iteration, the WISE Prize will maintain a strong focus on capacity building and professional development. Selected teams will gain access to WISE's growing network of global innovators, changemakers, and key education stakeholders, and participate in community events. Applications for the WISE Prize for Education are now open until March 15, 2024, 17 GMT.

Qatar attends meetings of WHO Executive Board

QNA
Geneva

Qatar is taking part in the meetings of the 154th session of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Executive Board, which started in Geneva on Monday and continues through Jan 27. HE the Minister of Public Health and Chairperson of WHO Executive Board Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari heads Qatar's delegation to the meetings.

In her opening speech, HE Dr al-Kuwari stressed that the year 2023, which coincided with the 75th anniversary of the founding of the WHO, was a very important year for the organisation, as it saw the affirmation of its role and its commitment to promoting its strength and funding.

She pointed out that the current year is equally important to demonstrate the values and commitment of the WHO to work towards promoting and protecting the health of all people. HE Dr al-Kuwari also pointed out that the



HE the Minister of Public Health and Chairperson of WHO Executive Board Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari participating in a session with WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

informal meeting of the Executive Council of the WHO, which was hosted by Qatar early last month, provided the opportunity for an in-depth review of some critical priority issues in the current

session of the Executive Board, including the drafting of the 14th General Programme of Work, sustainable financing, negotiations for the International Compact on Epidemics, the mechanism for

electing regional directors, and necessary reforms.

Such issues are of great importance in shaping the global health agenda and strengthening governance in the future, she said. The Executive Board meeting is being held while the world is going through very difficult time, as conflicts are occurring in different countries, health facilities are affected and often destroyed, and a number of health professionals have been injured or killed, HE Dr al-Kuwari said.

She indicated that the members of the Executive Board held a special session on the Dec 10, to discuss the conflict in Palestine and reached a consensus on a resolution calling for, among other things, ensuring respect and protection for all medical and humanitarian workers in the region. For his part, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in his opening remarks that the dawning of a new year gives the opportunity to look forward with hope, and to look back on the year that has been.

Qatar chairs appointment session for new WHO regional directors

The Executive Board of the World Health Organisation (WHO) held yesterday a special session to select and appoint new regional directors for the WHO in the Eastern Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and the Western Pacific regions.

The session was chaired by the State of Qatar, represented by HE the Minister of Public Health and President of the WHO Executive Board Dr Hanan Mohamed al-

Kuwari. The special session took place as part of the meetings of the 154th session of the Executive Board, currently convened in Geneva.

During the session, Dr Hanan Balkhy was appointed as the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Saima Wazed as the WHO Regional Director for Southeast Asia, and Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala as the WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific.

HE Dr al-Kuwari congratulated the newly appointed regional directors of the WHO, wishing them success in their roles for the benefit of the organization and the respective regions.

She also conveyed her gratitude and appreciation for the efforts of the outgoing regional directors, acknowledging their contributions to the development of the organization and wishing them success in their future endeavours. **(QNA)**



Conference spotlights private sector's key role in sustainability



Ahmed al-Ameer presents his lecture at the conference yesterday. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

By **Joey Aguilar**
Staff Reporter

A conference held yesterday at the Expo 2023 Doha's Congress Centre, put spotlight on the private sector's commitment to environmental responsibility.

The event, titled "The Role of the Private Sector in Sustainability" and organised by Kuwait Pavilion's commissioner general Samira al-Kandari, featured three presentations that tackle the importance of working towards a sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

A lecture by Gulf Bank titled "Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance and Sustainability Progress," delivered by Corporate Communications' deputy general manager Ahmed al-Ameer, underlined a comprehensive set of standards and components to enhance governance management strategies.

He unveiled Gulf Bank's pioneering Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategy for 2030 and presented the Sus-



Mohamed al-Arbeed

tainability Progression report. He noted that the bank financed (external) \$1 billion in projects classified as "environment friendly."

Internally, Gulf Bank showcased its commitment to sustainability with initiatives such as branch and head office refurbishments, featuring sustainable elements, a shift towards paperless operations, centralised printers, reusable water bottles for employees, and substantial efforts in electronic and material recycling. The "Rebag" initiative was also introduced to encourage the adoption of reusable shopping bags, described as a crucial step towards positive change.

The conference further explored responsible banking with a lecture by Kuwait Finance House (KFH), titled "Responsible Banking to Achieve Sustainable Growth," which was presented by Mohamed al-Arbeed, executive manager of Governance and Sustainability.

He said KFH is known for its pioneering role in Islamic Finance and Shariah-compliant



Engineer Bashayer al-Maraghi during her presentation.

banking, noting the importance of banking policies and procedures in ensuring the accurate implementation of sustainable growth strategies.

Al-Arbeed said a Memorandum of Understanding between KFH and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was signed, aimed at strengthening alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under the agreement, UNDP will provide technical support to facilitate investments that align with SDGs through key instruments such as SDGs impact standards and the Green Sukuk framework.

The third lecture of the conference, presented by Engineer Bashayer al-Maraghi from Equate Company, focused on "Reducing the Carbon Footprint at the Source." She outlined Equate's efforts, particularly in polyethylene and ethylene glycol plants, to decrease the use of feed streams contributing to emissions. The goal is to minimise the carbon footprint at its source, aligning with global efforts to combat climate change.

Govt forum discusses upgrading communications sector in Qatar

The first Government Communications Forum, aimed at developing Qatar's communications sector, was held yesterday with the participation of over 200 media and communication professionals from key entities in the country, alongside prominent industry experts.

Held under the theme 'Effective and Unified Communications,' the forum focused on further strengthening and streamlining communication practices across Qatar.

Organised by the Government Communications Office (GCO), the event came on the heels of the recent launch of the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. It highlighted the importance of effective communication in the country's ongoing development journey, towards achieving its national vision for the year 2030.

The forum featured high-level participation from several government entities, including HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, HE the Minister of Municipality Abdul-



lah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah, and HE the President of the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau Abdulaziz bin Nasser Mubarak al-Khalifa.

In his closing remarks, GCO director Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, emphasised the vital role of coherent communication in successful governance, building collaboration among government entities, unifying efforts, and realising the national vision's ambitious goals.

He added: "We must work together to uphold a unified visual brand and communication identity, convey government policies with clarity and transparency, support the implementation of good governance and sustainability practices, and improve the quality of our communication

mechanisms. We aim to achieve this by developing government channels that address the public in a connective and reliable way, and act as a reference for the community and all of Qatar's institutions."

The event concluded with the GCO honouring outstanding government communication efforts of 2023. The Ministry of Municipality received the Newsroom Award, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education was awarded Best Media Campaign, and the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau earned the Digital Media Award.

In addition, the forum offered a series of workshops on government branding guidelines, media campaigns, LinkedIn and the latest Microsoft application. **(QNA)**

Qatar Cancer Society reveals new strategic plan to enhance care

Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) chairman Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani has announced that a new strategic plan 2025-2027 is being processed, prepared and developed with Averroes company. The project aims to formulate QCS' strategic direction, determine the results and strategic objectives, prepare the roadmap, design performance indicators, matrix and as well as prepare the executive plan for the initiatives of the first year of the plan.

Sheikh Khalid said that this development comes based on the community role of QCS in cancer prevention, support



Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani

for those living with the disease, professional development, and scientific research which is consistent with the National Cancer Strategy.

He noted that QCS is starting a new phase of work using the results-based planning methodology and identifying its executive and operational initiatives and tools with follow-up to ensure effective

implementation of the strategic plan. This plan comes into effect as the strategic plan for 2018-2024 of QCS comes to an end and the need to evaluate the performance of the previous years to identify the most prominent limitations, risks, and strengths. It will also look into the outputs of the previous plan on which the new plan is based and will come as a continuation of the previous strategy. The strategic goals of QCS are: Raising community awareness of cancer, ways to prevent it, support, empowerment, advocacy for those living with the disease, professional development and scientific research in cancer.

QMC holds workshop on public speaking

The Qatari Media Centre (QMC) of the Ministry of Culture organised a training workshop under the title "Art of public speaking and influence."

The workshop, presented by journalist Abdullah Hamdan, addressed several topics, including charisma and building the speaker's personality, building international content, defining the concept of content in general, and about how a speaker can build content suitable for presentation in various media outlets.

The workshop also discussed body language and its importance in presentation, explanation and definition, in addition to the concept of vocal colouring and the necessity of adjusting the rhythm and timbre of the voice with the nature of speech, which contributes to increas-



ing the area of influence on the viewer or listener. In addition, the workshop focused on the methods of persuasion and inspiration that the media speaker should master.

QMC director Iman al-Kaabi said the centre organises several workshops and training courses, which primarily aim to offer qualitative training for those in the media field, alongside those

who desire to join this field, as well as to upgrade their capabilities. She stressed that these training courses and workshops are provided free of charge, and those who wish to benefit, must follow the digital platforms of the Qatar Media Centre, learn about these courses and workshops, and register for them in a way that suits their needs. **(QNA)**

Ministry aims to protect Al Karaana Lagoon with public awareness drive

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has installed surveillance cameras and information boards at Al Karaana Lagoon as part of a campaign to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving biodiversity and the natural ecological system in the lagoon, which is abundant with migratory birds.

The installations are in collaboration with the Public Works Authority (Ashghal). This campaign is part of the ministry's plans to protect and activate the role of natural reserves in mitigating the effects of climate change and educating the public on proper environmental practices.

The information boards in Arabic, English and Urdu aim to introduce the visitors to the artificial lagoon of Al Karaana and on the importance of preserving all living organisms in the lagoon, and avoid causing any harm to the migratory birds, in addition prohibiting fishing. These boards include excerpts from ministerial decisions related to environmental conservation, reminding people to avoid prohibited practices that harm the ecological system.

Mohamed al-Khanji, director of the Wildlife Development Department at MoECC, stressed that the campaign aims to familiarise people with the Ministerial Decision No 4 of 2002, which regulates the hunting of animals, birds, and wild reptiles within reserves, islands, cities, and villages. Al Karaana Lagoon is a no-hunting zone due to its biodiversity, serving as a habitat for many migratory birds that choose Qatar as a breeding ground and a station during migration.

The official explained that the campaign, in co-ordination with various entities concerned, will continue in the future. The surveillance cameras will monitor the place round-the-clock.

Engineer Hassan Mohamed al-Mohammadi, with the Sewerage Networks Operation and Maintenance Department - Assets Affairs - Ashghal, said that "mitigation and adaptation policies are crucial in addressing climate change and thus continuous co-



ordination with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is maintained."

Engineer al-Mohammadi stressed the collective responsibility of individuals and institutions to preserve the active and effective environmental system in these reserves, reducing human-caused damages and climate change impact. Co-ordination is ongoing to expand the awareness campaign to cover 21 other artificial lakes in the coming period, preparing information and warning boards based on MoECC database, and installing cameras in these sites to maintain better control.

Al Karaana Lagoon has been rehabilitated and holds more than 2.4mn cubic metres of clean water. It is considered a new habitat for wildlife, providing a natural and healthy environment for various bird and fish species. It is located 60km southwest of Doha.



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Minister affirms importance of schools and society in achieving goals of education



HE al-Nuaimi interacting with a student during her visit.

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi has affirmed the importance of the complementary role between schools, families, and other groups of the society in achieving the goals of education.

This came during her visit to a number of government schools as part of activities and events organised in celebration of the International Day of Education, marked under the theme *Education is Everyone's Responsibility*.

The minister's visit included Al Falah Primary School for Girls, Qatar Preparatory Schools for Girls, and Umm Al-Qura Primary School for Boys, where she met students, their parents, teachers, and school administrators.

The activities included theatrical performances in astronomy, various scientific experiments in science laboratories, and awareness workshops on healthy nutrition and sound agricultural methods.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) supports events and activities of the International Day of Education, which continue until tomorrow.

The International Day of Education, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1980 to be celebrated on January 24, is an occasion that emphasises, among other things, the role of basic education in achieving the goals of sustainable development, highlighting the individual's right to education, honouring teachers and learners, and building and strengthening partnerships between schools and families to improve the quality of education and improve student performance. – QNA



HE al-Nuaimi listening to a briefing by a student during her visit.

MoEHE organises panel discussion to mark International Day of Education

Marking the International Day of Education, which falls on January 24 each year, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) held a panel discussion on the theme of *Education is Everyone's Responsibility*.

For the first time the ministry allocated a week to celebrate this global event, to promote concepts of social responsibility and to remind everyone of the role of education in improving the lives of individuals and advancing society.

A number of experts and specialist educators spoke at the session about the importance of partnership and co-operation between segments of society to advance education.

Qatar's interest in the educational system and investment in the human element, one of the most important pillars of its National Vision 2030 to build a generation armed with knowledge to build Qatar of the future, was noted at the session.

The panellists spoke on the positive role and influence of partners in the educational process and the necessity of using this role to develop and benefit from feedback from those in the field, parents, and society.

Director of the MoEHE's Public Relations and Communication Department, Maryam Abdullah al-Mohannadi, affirmed that the



theme of the discussion panel emphasises the role of partners, including the school, guardians, and the society, in the educational process to reaching the desired goals through positive interaction.

She reviewed some educational methods

to convey information and ideas to students and develop their spirit of responsibility, along with other partnerships, initiatives, and strategic programmes of the MoEHE.

A psychological and family consultant from Kuwait, Dr Hanan al-Qattan, discussed

the importance of schools, educational process partners, and other concerned parties working through various means to build the student's personality from a young age and enhance his values and morals.

She also addressed the benefits and drawbacks of social media on students in terms of their academic focus and the need for families to pay attention to such issues and work to address them.

Head of Aspire Academy's Leadership Development Programme, Salah al-Yafei, discussed the role of educational training and related activities that concern all age groups of students, the role of schools, extracurricular activities, youth centres, the process of guidance and value education, and the educational education system in promoting values among students and providing them with various life skills.

At the end of the panel discussion, HE the Undersecretary of the MoEHE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi honoured the speakers of the panel discussion, which is the sixth session in a series for the "Edaat" initiative launched by the MoEHE two years ago to provide a purposeful dialogue platform bringing together educators from the public and private sectors to address specific educational and academic issues of common interest. – QNA Page 10



HBKU Press highlights importance of literature

Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press (HBKU Press) is taking the opportunity to emphasise the power of literature as an impactful tool for positive change on the occasion of International Day of Education marked today.

The theme *Learning For Lasting Peace* emphasises the importance of combating the alarming rise of conflict, fuelled by discrimination, racism, xenophobia, misinformation, and an all-too-high number of other hate-fuelled attitudes, a statement said yesterday, adding that literature serves as a potent remedy, a supplemental treatment in the search for a cure for violence.

"HBKU Press is an international publisher that introduces pioneering Qatari, Arab, and regional voices to the world," said HBKU Press executive director Bachar Chebaro. "This International Day of Education, we are especially proud of these voices which often contribute to critical global discourse and approach complex topics through a unique perspective."

"We also publish and translate books that carry with them messages on the importance of learning at all ages," he added.

Recipe for Home by Ghenwa Yehia takes young readers on a delicious journey around the globe as they experience the world through food.

One Box, Many Hearts by Bayan Khaled stresses the importance of cultivating home wherever one finds it, and the need for understanding and community when making a big move from one culture to another.

HBKU Press's offerings include *The Cultural Landscape of Qatar* by Mufleh al-Anzi, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the multicultural nature of Qatar, while *The Last Days of Terranova* by acclaimed Spanish writer Manuel Rivas tells a moving story about Terranova, a family-owned library in danger of closing for good.



Snapshots from the competition.

Education ministry holds second 'Digital Designer' competition

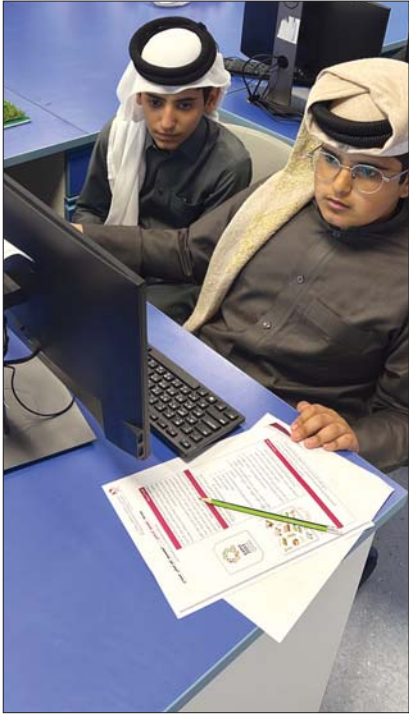
The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), represented by the information technology (IT) division of the Educational Guidance Department, has organised the second edition of the "Digital Designer" competition for academic year 2023-2024.

The competition at the level of public schools, organised under the supervision and guidance of specialists from the IT division in co-operation with Sakina Bint Al Hussein Preparatory School for Girls and Al Ahnaf Bin Qais Preparatory School for Boys, saw the participation of 46 schools for girls and 41 schools for boys, with a total 174 students.

The competition was aimed at developing the students' digital design skills in support of creative thinking, developing and enhancing their talents and creative abilities in design using computer programs.

The students exchanged experiences and presented their works in digital design.

At the end of the competition, the department announced the results, following which a number of schools were crowned in various categories, such as graphic design for beginners, design and three-dimensional printing, and advanced graphic design. – QNA



Labour ministry honours participants of the first vocational camp for university students

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has honoured the trainers and trainees participating in the first vocational camp for university students, which it organised in co-operation with Qatar University's Interprofessional Education Student Association, in partnership with the Qatar Career Development Centre (QCDC), and sponsored by Ahlibank.

The five-day camp was aimed at empowering students who are about to graduate by equipping them with the skills required for the job market, familiarising them with the various aspects and prerequisites of the market, directing them toward vocational training, and presenting opportunities within this field.

The camp offered a range of hands-on workshops, activities, and on-site visits to gain insight into the working environment.

This boosted the participants' awareness regarding the significance of self-improvement and bolstered self-




assurance, critical thinking, and problem-solving capabilities.

It facilitated the application of acquired knowledge and skills in real-life projects and interactive workshops, ultimately leading to the acquisition of robust professional competencies applicable across various domains.



The honouring ceremony was attended by the assistant undersecretary of National Manpower Affairs in the private sector at the MoL, Shaikha Abdulrahman al-Badi, and QCDC director Abdulla al-Mansoori, in addition to a number of officials from the MoL and the QCDC. – QNA



Public Announcement

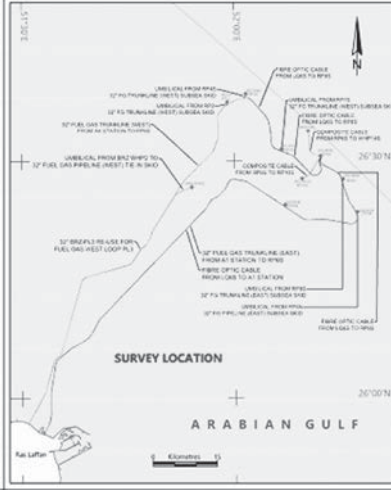

To all Ships, Fisherman and Mariners
Subsea Survey Works Offshore in North Fields
By the Vessel "Stanford Hobby"

Subsea Survey Works Offshore Qatar from 20 Dec 2023 to 05 May 2024

In pursuant to and under directives from the Department of Marine Regulations, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners and Fisherman that QatarEnergy LNG (formerly known as Qatargas Operating Company Limited intends to undertake subsea survey works by the vessel "Stanford Hobby" in North Field locations, bound by the coordinates and location map shown below.


Coordinates:-

Corner coordinates covering survey area				
Nahrwan 1967, UTM Projection, Zone 39 CM 51° E				
ID	Easting [m]	Northing [m]	Latitude	Longitude
A	550193.42	2870605.84	25°57'11.80" N	51°30'04.83" E
B	561641.86	2905498.14	26°16'04.39" N	51°37'02.42" E
C	599811.08	2953384.81	26°41'52.98" N	52°00'11.91" E
D	617932.82	2939344.53	26°34'11.65" N	52°11'02.88" E
E	633996.14	2918076.15	26°22'35.35" N	52°20'35.44" E
F	556160.14	2867365.91	25°55'25.70" N	51°33'38.88" E



All Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations. QatarEnergy LNG takes no responsibilities for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operations following publication of this notice.

For more details contact 31094969



قطر للطاقة
QatarEnergy
LNG

QU's Sesri and Difi organise seminar on family cohesion

Qatar University (QU)'s Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (Sesri), in collaboration with the Doha International Family Institute (Difi), organised a seminar on *Understanding Family Cohesion in Qatar*.

The aim was to share and discuss the results of the study on family cohesion in Qatar, affirming the comprehensive approach to the family cohesion framework and continuing its implementation.

The seminar was attended by QU vice-president for Research and Graduate Studies Prof Mariam al-Ali al-Maadeed, Sesri director Prof Kaltham al-Ghanim, and Sesri executive director Dr Sharifa al-Emadi, along with executives from various government entities, academic researchers, stakeholders, and those interested in this field.

Prof al-Ghanim emphasised in her speech the importance of family cohesion as a fundamental mechanism for the stability and continuity of this cell in society.

It is a necessary requirement, she said, that enables the family to fulfil its functions towards its members and the community, adding that family cohesion is the cornerstone of the overall cohesion of society.

Prof al-Ghanim said achieving this cohesion within the family is a shared responsibility between family members and society as a whole. "We jointly put our efforts with Sesri to de-



Dr Sharifa al-Emadi addressing the seminar.

velop a family cohesion scale and preliminary test it on a representative sample of Qatari society," said Dr al-Emadi. "This collaboration has produced an unpublished research report that establishes a new phase in national work related to monitoring and developing family cohesion indicators in Qatar."

"Unlimited emotional family support is the cornerstone of positive family cohesion indicators enjoyed by the original Qatari society," said

Difi family research and policy director Dr Khalid al-Naama.

Senior Sesri researcher Dr Buthaina al-Khulaifi commented on the study's importance, saying: "This study is foundational for understanding and enhancing family cohesion in Qatar, providing decision-makers with valuable information based on scientific methodologies to increase family cohesion and solidarity."

The seminar included an opening session with Prof al-Ghanim and Dr al-Emadi, followed by a session on *Study Presentation: An Overview of Family Cohesion in Qatar*.

Dr al-Khulaifi discussed the aspects of family cohesion, and Sesri research project manager Rima Charbaji El-Kassem addressed the family cohesion index.

The session concluded with a question-and-answer segment.

The second session on *Family Cohesion: Challenges and Opportunities* featured Dr al-Naama and Dr Asmaa al-Asiri, the acting director of the Therapeutic and Rehabilitative Services Department at the Behavioural Healthcare Centre.

Nasser Mubarak al-Hajri, manager of branches and external offices and family consultant at Wifaq, and Dr Mohamed Raheel, acting department head of Social Sciences at the QU's College of Arts and Sciences, were also present.

LuLu launching 'Half Pay Back' promotion today

LuLu Hypermarkets is launching today their "Half Pay Back" promotion, which runs until February 13.

"Shoppers can enjoy unbeatable offers on a diverse range of products, including readymade garments, saris, churidars, footwear, ladies' bags, baby accessories, and selected sunglasses," a statement said.

With purchases worth QR200, customers will receive an instant QR100 gift voucher.

LuLu Hypermarkets has stocked up on leading international brands, such as Lee, Wrangler, Crocs, Doc & Mark, Sketchers, Reebok, Louis Philippe, Arrow, Eten, Cortigiani, De Backers, John Louise, Killer, Sunnex, Twills, Sin, Tom Smith, Ruff, Marco Donatelli, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, Peter England, Oxemberg, Zero, Dickies, and many more for this promotion.

"Throughout the campaign, LuLu Hypermarkets will present a wide spectrum of products across various categories at attractive prices," the statement said. "LuLu invites all customers to participate in this promotion and take advantage of the best offers available."

"As always, LuLu Hypermarkets strives to be a one-stop shop for the multiethnic community, offering a wide variety of products through international sourcing and employing a dedicated staff representing various nationalities," it added.

"This special promotion extends beyond fashion, covering a wide spectrum of categories, from food to electronics and household items, offering unbeatable deals to further enhance our customers' shopping experience," the statement said.



Qatari generosity supports education internationally

Thanks to the generosity of the people of Qatar, Qatar Charity (QC) has succeeded in benefiting almost 6,000 male and female students over the past years through the establishment of Al-Fajr School in Tirana, the capital of Albania, and the Qatar Training Centre in Kosovo, in addition to building and furnishing other schools.



This is part of the QC's continued efforts to support the education of orphans and children from impoverished families around the world and comes in the context of marking the International Day of Education, a statement said yesterday.

Al-Fajr School in Albania, which works on the cognitive, behavioural, and ethical advancement, currently has 400 students, including orphans and children from impoverished families, as well as children from the Syrian and Arab communities.

The Qatar Training Centre, established in Kosovo in 2013, benefits 5,200 students, providing training in the areas of languages, information technology, design, photography, and management.

Additionally, it offers training programmes for orphans sponsored by the QC.

The QC also established, as of September 2023, a primary and preparatory school in Kosovo, benefiting 220 male and female students, the statement added.



Lagoona Mall is hosting the live screening of the AFC Asian Cup matches in its outdoor Piazza.



Lagoona Mall welcomes football frenzy with big screens

Lagoona Mall is hosting live screening of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 matches in its outdoor Piazza, a statement said yesterday.

Until February 10, football enthusiasts can experience the excitement on two large screens.

Fans are invited to dine around the water feature at the mall, savouring delectable offerings from Al Aker Cuisine Express, Caffe Como, Diet

House, Huda Restaurant, and Marrakech.

For those seeking an exclusive experience, Lagoona Mall is also offering VIP tents featuring a majlis setting with plush sofas, a TV screen, PlayStation, and a dedicated menu from Layali and Grams.

Children are in for a treat with a carnival of football-themed activities, including a penalty kick booth, mini soccer, magician shows, face

painting, arts and crafts, and even wall graffiti.

Daily shows, such as a fire dance, a soccer ball parade, a mascot parade, and more, offer non-stop entertainment for all ages.

To enhance the football celebration, Lagoona Mall will be adorned with the spirit of Asia's biggest tournament, featuring giant hanging soccer balls illuminated with neon lights, neon stands, and hanging figures.

QU Press announces second Qatar University Book Fair

In collaboration with the Qatari Publishers and Distributors Forum, QU Press will unveil the second edition of the Qatar University Book Fair, from January 28 to February 1, it was announced yesterday.

QU Press has so far published 74 titles, spanning books, translations, conference proceedings, encyclopaedic works, specialised references, literary and educational studies covering areas such as social sciences, medicine, engineering, applied sciences, and more.

QU Press also provides textbooks for Qatar University (QU).

Throughout 2023, QU Press published 26 new titles.

Some notable releases include *The Law of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf* by Prof Abdullah Abdullatif al-Muslemani, *Policy of Iran in the Arabian Gulf during the Reign of Nasser Al-Din Al-Qajari (1848-1896)* by Dr Mustafa Aqeel al-Khatib, *Universal Design for Learning: A Contemporary Vision* by Dr Khalid Rashid Khader, *Principles of Housing Planning: Academic Studies in Urban Planning* by engineer Monthir B al-Adhami, *Dysphagia for Adults: The Role of Speech-Language Pathologists in Evaluation and Treatment* by Dr Nabil Zairi, and *Institutional Reputation and its Role in Brand Building* by Yahya al-Sayed Omar.

QU Press introduced a collection of legal textbooks in collaboration with the QU's College of Law.

These include the latest releases such as *The Combating of Corruption Crimes in the Law of Qatar in Light of the United Nations Convention against Corruption* by Dr Ayad Haroon al-Douri, *Principles of the Qatari Commercial Law (Business-Merchant-Store)* by Dr Yassin El Shazly and Nazzal Kisswani, *Rights in Rem in the*



QU officials at an event to announce the book fair.

Qatari Civil Law by Dr Farouk El Abasiri and Dr Mohamed Ammar Torkmanie, and *Summary of the Sources of Obligation in Qatari Law* by Dr Gaber Mahgoub Ali, in addition to the book *Introduction to Qatari Law* by Dr Mohamed Ammar Torkmanie.

Dr Nabil Darwish, head of the Production Department, said: "While 15 releases are available for free electronic access, 13 titles have been published in English and 10 books have been translated from and into Arabic."

"The direct authors whose works have been published by QU Press exceed 77 from various nationalities and academic affiliations in approximately 21 countries worldwide, and QU Press is proud to consider them as partners in the industry of knowledge," he said.

Regarding the prominent future projects, Dr Mohamed Isam Almadani, head of acquisitions at QU Press, stated: "In light of the ongoing events in the region and the continuous escalation of the Palestinian issue, QU Press is currently collaborating with Dr Mohamed Hashem Ghosha to accomplish two significant works related to the Palestinian issue."

"The first involves republishing the Arabic version of *The Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque* after its current update, with

plans for an English translation," he said.

"The second work is the *Palestinian Encyclopedia*, one of the largest encyclopaedias linked to Palestine and its history, published in English (in 24 volumes)," Dr Almadani added. "QU Press will work on translating it into Arabic, as well as Spanish and Chinese, to introduce speakers of these languages and raise awareness about the Palestinian issue."

Shaikha al-Thani, head of marketing and sales at QU Press, said: "The current edition of the QU Book Fair will have participation from local, regional and international publishing houses and research centres."

QU Press director Prof Fatma al-Sowaidi said: "During the QU Book Fair, QU Press will launch the event 'Baqoun' (we will stay), aiming to highlight forgotten achievements in Qatari history, including material and architectural artefacts such as (Al-Zubarah) and cultural artefacts such as the works of important Qatari poets of the past."

Prof Mariam al-Ali al-Maadeed, vice-president for Research and Graduate Studies at the QU, praised the accomplishments of QU Press has achieved in the field of scientific publishing, and peer-reviewed journals, as well as the academic references for law students in various translation fields.

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

- ✔ Warehouse for rent in Industrial area
- ✔ Warehouse 600 Sqm/1200 Sqm
- ✔ Municipality Approved
- ✔ Civil Defence Approved
- ✔ Secure Boundary Wall
- ✔ 24/7 Security

 6672 2989



Arab League Council backs joint Qatar-Egypt efforts for Gaza truce

QNA
Cairo

The Council of the League of Arab States, at the level of permanent delegates, affirmed its support for the joint efforts of Qatar and Egypt aimed at reaching a permanent ceasefire and restoring life to normal in the Gaza Strip.

This came in the final statement issued by the meeting of the extraordinary session of the Arab League Council held in Cairo on Monday at the request of the State of Palestine, to discuss Israeli crimes and plans against the Palestinian people.

The statement condemned the continued crimes of Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people, targeting tens of thousands of civilians, and subjecting the Palestinian people in the Strip to a deadly siege that cuts off all means of life and the destruction of infrastructure, and stressed that these crimes in their entirety constitute the crime of genocide against the Palestinian people.

The statement also called on the US and the countries that support the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people within the Security Council to adopt positions

consistent with international law and international humanitarian law, and to call for a complete and sustainable ceasefire and obligate Israel to stop its aggression against the Palestinian people, warning of the danger of Israel's planning and committing the crime of forced displacement of about 2mn Palestinian citizens who have become displaced inside the Strip.

It stressed that the Arab countries will not allow the Nakba scenario of 1948 to be repeated, or the Israeli plans to displace the Palestinian people to succeed; and will take the necessary political, diplomatic, legal and economic steps to prevent it.

The statement called for the rapid implementation of Security Council Resolution No 2720 (2023) and taking urgent steps to allow the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and to create the necessary conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities, and welcomed the decision of the UN secretary-general appointing a chief co-ordinator for Humanitarian Affairs and Reconstruction in Gaza.

The statement condemned the escalation of Israeli crimes in the occupied West Bank, including the systematic destruction of Pal-

estinian refugee camps and their infrastructure, as well as the daily incursions into dozens of Palestinian cities, villages and camps, the terrorism of Israeli settlers, the killing and wounding of hundreds of Palestinian citizens, the demolition of homes, and the arrest of thousands of Palestinians in inhumane conditions.

The statement also condemned the Israeli siege imposed on Al-Aqsa Mosque for more than a hundred days, which includes undermining the freedom of worship in the mosque, preventing worshippers from entering it, desecrating it, storming it, desecration and vandalising its contents.

It affirmed support for Jordan's custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, stressing that the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque with its entire area of 144,000sq m, is a pure place of worship for Muslims, stressing that the Jordanian administration of the Jerusalem Endowments and the affairs of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque are the legal authority.

The statement called on countries still providing weapons and ammunition to Israel to stop doing so, as these weapons are then used to kill Palestinian civilians and to destroy their cities, thus, making these countries com-



licit in crime. Moreover, It called on countries whose citizens are participating with the Israeli occupation army and its crimes, to take the necessary legal measures to hold these citizens accountable and prevent them from doing so.

The statement expressed the Arab League Council's appreciation for South Africa taking Israel to the International Court of Justice, urging more peace-loving and international law-abiding countries to follow suit. It also welcomed Libya joining the prosecution team.

It also appreciated the countries that referred the situation in Palestine to the International Criminal Court, and urged countries to provide justice to the victims and prevent the perpetrators from escaping punishment. The statement called on the international legal system to process swiftly and carry out its investigation professionally and impartially.

The statement called on states to

designate Israeli settler organisations on their terrorist lists, and to prevent the entry of Israeli settlers into their territories.

It also denounced the repeated Israeli attacks on Lebanese and Syrian territories, as an assault on the sovereignty of the Arab countries and a threat to the security of its citizens and to regional, international peace and security.

The statement stressed that the only way to achieve security, stability and peace in the region is for the Palestinian people to gain their freedom and independence by ending the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and enabling the State of Palestine to exercise its full sovereignty over its land, and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise all their legitimate and inalienable rights.

The statement affirmed its support for all the steps taken by Egypt to tackle the consequences

of the brutal Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, supporting its efforts to bring aid into the Strip in an immediate, sustainable and adequate manner, and supporting the steps that Egypt is taking in defence of its national security, which is an essential part of Arab national security.

It welcomed Algeria's efforts as a non-permanent Arab member of the UN Security Council, including its call to hold an emergency public session of the Security Council to stop forced displacement in Gaza, and noted the unanimous consensus in the session on rejecting the policy of forced displacement.

It also commended the efforts of the UAE during its membership period extending from (2022/2023) as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, in following up on developments in the Palestinian issue and the Council's adoption of Resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023).

Qatar participates in Arab League Council extraordinary meeting on Israeli crimes against Palestinians

Qatar participated in the the Arab League Council extraordinary meeting at the level of permanent delegates, to discuss Israeli crimes and schemes against the Palestinian people.

Held under Morocco's current Arab League Council chairmanship and at the request of the State of Palestine, the meeting took place at the Arab League in Cairo.

The Permanent Representative of Qatar to the Arab League Tariq Ali Faraj al-Ansari chaired the Qatari delegation.

Speaking at the meeting, al-Ansari paid tribute to the government and people of the State of Palestine and its timeless cause in the face of the Israeli occupation's crimes.

He expressed support for all efforts within legal and counter-criminal frameworks to bring about peace to the sisterly State of Palestine and for the Palestinian people to be granted their right to remain on their land and to be free, as

guaranteed by international law.

Al-Ansari stressed Qatar's firm position on the need to reach a peaceful settlement on the Palestine issue in all of its aspects, on the basis of international law and UN resolutions, whereby an end is put to the Israeli occupation and the two-state solution is materialised, establishing an independence, sovereign, and self-reliant Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. In addition, it was appealed to grant Palestinian people all of their inalienable rights based on the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

He noted that the Palestinian cause has strongly been at the forefront of Qatari policy, adding that Qatar's position is evident through its voting on UN resolutions, in addition to Qatar working side by side with Egypt on mediation efforts to reach a comprehensive ceasefire, with Qatar continuing to support a political solu-

tion based on a number of sisterly, friendly and peace-loving countries and partners' initiatives, not to mention Qatar's ongoing humanitarian aid delivery efforts.

Al-Ansari said Qatar sees reducing tensions as a priority for which it is making a lot of diplomatic efforts together with the various parties concerned. He added that this stems from Qatar's belief in the justice of the Palestinian cause, which remains a central issue for His Highness the Amir, the Qatari government, and the Qatari people, based on firm priorities, solid principles and moral values.

Al-Ansari called for Arab unity and expressed support for the draft resolution presented at the meeting regarding countering ongoing Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people, as well as supporting a follow-up of the resolution's implementation within the relevant committee. He counted on Algeria's role, being a new Arab member on the UN Security Council. (QNA)

BMW models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Alfardan Automobiles, has announced the recall of BMW i5 M60 xdrive Sedan, and i5 eDrive40 Sedan, 2024 model, over a fault in the control unit software, which may cause engine start problem.

The MoCI said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

The MoCI said it will co-ordinate with the dealer to follow up on the mainte-

nance and repair works, and will communicate with customers to ensure that necessary repairs are carried out.

The MoCI has 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, X (formerly Twitter) - @MO-CIQATAR, Instagram MO-CIQATAR.

The MoCI mobile application available on iPhone and Android devices MOCI_QATAR

Casa Milano Unveils Luxurious Home Solutions Hub in Qatar



Casa Milano, the distinguished provider of luxury home solutions, is set to captivate the residents of Qatar with the grand opening of its newest showroom in the heart of Doha. This marks the latest expansion for Casa Milano, reinforcing its commitment to offering premium home solutions to discerning customers.

The much-anticipated showroom is open to the public from Thursday, 25 January 2024. The expansive space displayed across three floors on Salwa Rd, Doha will be a testament to Casa Milano's evolution from a luxury sanitary ware and tiles brand to a comprehensive home solutions destination. The showroom spans an impressive 2,700 square metres, making it one of the largest luxury showrooms in the region. Casa Milano will showcase an exclusive assortment of meticulously crafted products from over 40 world-renowned brands, creating an experiential space that goes beyond the conventional showroom concept. Casa Milano presents 54 design mock-ups, providing customers with a visual preview before transforming their chosen design into reality.

Azhar Sajan, the visionary Director of Casa Milano, shared his excitement about the venture, stating, "Casa Milano is here to bring the art of luxe living to your home." The showroom features uniquely designed counter bowls, showers, sanitary ware, tiles/slabs, and solid surfaces, transforming it into an immersive experience rather

than just a retail space. The portfolio includes prestigious brands such as Italgraniti, Glass Design, Devon & Devon, Roberto Cavalli, Maison Valentina, Isvea Italy, Cora, Ter Hurne, and many more. New additions to the Casa Milano family include Vado, Arredo3, Mercantini and Güral Seramikamong others.

In articulating his vision for introducing Casa Milano to the Qatari market, Azhar expressed, "Qatar presents a significant opportunity for us, given the growing interest among residents in renovating their homes and exploring diverse design trends. Our mission is to bring the latest global innovations in the home solutions industry to the heart of Qatar."

The opening of Casa Milano's Qatar showroom comes at a time when the home improvement segment is witnessing significant growth. With the changing dynamics of home spaces due to extended periods spent at home, Casa Milano aims to meet the evolving demands of customers. Azhar Sajan noted, "Earlier, people were keen on giving their living rooms a luxurious touch. Now the bathroom has evolved to become a personal space with people wanting to add luxury to their bathrooms as well."

The brand's commitment to excellence in design and innovation is evident in the fusion of Italian design and state-of-the-art technology showcased in its new showroom.

Iran's Raisi to visit Turkiye for delayed talks with Erdogan

AFP
Istanbul

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will pay an official one-day visit to Turkiye today for talks focused on the regional repercussions of the Israel - Hamas war, a diplomatic source said.

Raisi will meet Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the capital Ankara, making a visit that was postponed twice — once in November and once earlier this month — because of spiralling tensions across the Middle East.

Iran's official news agency IRNA said Raisi would lead a "high-ranking political and economic delegation".

The visit comes amid growing fears about the regional repercussion of the war in Gaza, which Israel

launched in reprisal for the unprecedented October first week storming by Hamas fighters into Israel.

In response, Israel has carried out a relentless offensive that has killed at least 25,490 people in Gaza, around 70% of them women, children and adolescents, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Raisi vowed on Monday that Israel "will certainly pay" for the killing in Syria of a senior general with the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The US and Britain launched a second round of joint military strikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen yesterday in reprisal to their repeated attacks on Red Sea shipping.

Erdogan condemned the first round of strikes early this month as "disproportionate", accusing Washington and London of trying to turn the Red Sea into a "bloodbath".

Houthis order all US, British UN staff to leave Yemen

Yemen's Houthi rebels have ordered all US and British staff of the UN and its agencies to leave the country within a month, a UN official said, AFP reported from Dubai.

In a letter dated January 20 and shared on social media, the authorities in the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa told the UN resident co-ordinator that employees with British and US nationality had one month to "prepare to leave the country".

"They must be ready to leave as soon as the deadline expires," the document said, adding that 24 hours' notice would be given by letter.

While they only control a fraction of Yemen's territory, the Huthis hold sway over most of the country's population centres.

A UN official confirmed to AFP that they had received the memo. "The UN and its partners have taken note of this and are waiting to see what are the next steps," said the official, who asked to remain anonymous. Peter Hawkins, the UN's humanitarian co-ordinator in Yemen, is himself British.

The expulsion followed joint strikes by the US and Britain against the Houthi aimed at ending the group's attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, threatening global trade. The US has launched multiple further strikes and yesterday carried out a second set of joint strikes

with Britain. Last week, Washington redesignated the Houthis a "global fighter group", having lifted it in 2021 to ease aid delivery to the country.

The Houthis have fought a nearly decade-long civil war against government forces, who are backed by Saudi Arabia. The conflict plunged Yemen, into a deep humanitarian crisis, labelled among the worst in the world by the UN. Since mid-November, the rebels have launched missiles and drones from Yemen's coast aimed at shipping the group says is linked to Israel, in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza. Gaza is under siege by Israel, which aims to destroy Hamas after the group's surprise storming of the country in the first week of October.

The Houthis have reacted to the US and British strikes with defiance, targeting further ships. The US, Israel's major ally and provider of military equipment, has created an international coalition to patrol the Red Sea and protect commercial traffic. Maritime traffic through the Red Sea shipping route has fallen by 22% in a month due to attacks on international vessels by Yemen's Houthi rebels, the EU's trade commissioner said yesterday.

"That decrease should be bigger now that shipping companies are rerouting their vessels around the Cape of Good Hope," Valdis Dombrovskis told journalists.



Displaced Palestinian youths carry food rations they received at a makeshift tent camp in Rafah near the border with Egypt in the southern Gaza Strip.

Risk of ‘pockets of famine’ in Gaza, says WFP

Reuters
Geneva

The World Food Programme said yesterday that very little food assistance has made it beyond southern Gaza since the start of the conflict and that the risk of pockets of famine in the Palestinian enclave remained.

Israel's offensive launched in the wake of a storming by Hamas fighters in southern Israel in the first week of October has displaced most of Gaza's 2.3mn population and caused acute shortages of food, water and medical supplies.

At least 25,295 people in Gaza have been killed, according to Palestinian authorities, with thousands more feared buried under the rubble of a coastal strip largely laid to waste.

"It's difficult to get into the places where we need to get to in Gaza, especially in northern Gaza," said Abeer Etefa, WFP spokesperson for the Middle East.

"Very little assistance has made it beyond the southern part of the Gaza Strip... I think the risk of having pockets of famine in Gaza is very much still there." Since the start of hostilities, aid deliveries to northern Gaza have been limited, and the area was cut off altogether from external aid for weeks earlier in the conflict. Etefa noted that there was a "systematic limitation on getting into the north of Gaza, not just for the WFP".

"This is why we're seeing people becoming more desperate and being impatient to wait for food distributions, because it's very sporadic," she said.

"They don't get it frequently, and they have no trust or confidence that these convoys will come again."

The UN humanitarian office (OCHA) also said this month Israeli authorities were systematically



denying it access to northern Gaza to deliver aid and this has significantly hindered the humanitarian operation there.

Israeli authorities have previously denied hampering aid and say they work to minimise harm to civilians.

Israel said on Monday said it was making efforts to help keeping hospitals running, delivering fuel and medical aid and that it expected more field hospitals to be established in the coming days.

OCHA said that in the first two weeks of January, humanitarian agencies had planned 29 missions to deliver essential supplies to areas to the north of Wadi Gaza in the northern part of the enclave.

Only 24% were carried out either fully or partially, which OCHA said represented a significant increase in denials compared with the previous months.

"These denials prevent a scale-up in humanitarian assistance and add significant cost to the overall response," OCHA said.

"The capacity of humanitarian agencies to operate safely and effectively also remains heavily compromised by the long-term restrictions applied by the Israeli authorities on the import of critical humanitarian equipment into Gaza."

Swearing-in of Liberia's Boakai scrutinised after attendee death

AFP
Monrovia

Liberian media speculated yesterday over the health of the country's new leader Joseph Boakai and the organisation of his inauguration after one man died and the president suffered "heat exhaustion" at the event.

A 48-year-old Liberian man collapsed while watching the ceremony reportedly due to heat exhaustion and he was later confirmed dead at a hospital in Monrovia.

The Chief Medical Officer at JFK Memorial Hospital, Dr Sia Wata Camanor, confirmed to AFP that Dauson Kamara, based in the US, was declared "dead on arrival" but did not give further details.

At Monday's event, the 79-year-old presi-

dent also had to pause and sit down to finish his inaugural address after speaking for more than 30 minutes in front of foreign delegations and local officials outside the parliament.

The scheduled programme for the rest of the ceremony was abruptly cut short because of the incident. "Heat exhaustion contributed to the few minutes of disruption in his speech but the speech ended successfully and the president was advised by his doctors to come home as a result of that," Amos Tweh, secretary-general of Boakai's party, said on Monday.

The president was not taken to hospital and later resumed his "normal presidential duties," Tweh said. Boakai's age and health are the source of much discussion in the West African nation and his exhaustion on Monday prompted debate in local media and on social networks.

Some claimed the incident showed that

Boakai was too old to take office, while others blamed organisers for not providing adequate equipment to cool down guests.

An AFP correspondent at the ceremony, where the temperature was around 29 degrees Celsius, said the event appeared overcrowded and some guests were left without shade.

Boakai beat former Ballon d'Or winner Weah in November's run-off poll, with 50.64% of the vote to 49.36%.

During his speech, the political veteran stressed unity, the fight against corruption, and pledged to improve basic services for Liberians.

He also said his government would explore the possibility of opening a War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC) for "those who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity to account for their actions in court".



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Nigerian President Bola Tinubu at the Presidential Villa in Abuja, yesterday.

AFP
Abuja

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday sought progress combatting coups and extremism in West Africa in talks with two key leaders, as he pointed to Ivory Coast as a model.

In a four-nation tour of African democracies as crises engulf the world, Blinken met separately yesterday with Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, elected last year on a platform of economic reforms, and Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara, a veteran leader who has won US praise for consolidating democracy.

In Abidjan, Blinken hailed Ivory Coast's stand against last year's coup in Niger and its approach of

"building security together" by investing economically to combat extremism in northern areas bordering Mali and Burkina Faso.

"I have to applaud the approach that's been taken by Cote d'Ivoire – working with communities, listening to communities, making sure that their security forces understand the needs, the concerns of communities," Blinken said alongside Ouattara.

"I think that can serve as a very powerful model for other countries," he said.

Ivory Coast has not experienced a major terrorist attack for some two years, despite its troubled neighbourhood.

Ivory Coast, like its Gulf of Guinea coastal neighbours, Togo, Ghana and Benin, is wary of militant conflicts spilling over the region's

northern borders from the Sahel.

Blinken promised to boost co-operation on the ground with Ivory Coast, largely through training of its security forces.

He also said that the US would provide an additional \$45mn to West African nations as part of a

plan to battle instability, bringing total funding under the year-old programme to nearly \$300mn.

Ouattara expressed appreciation for the US assistance and voiced alarm over a spate of coups in West Africa.

"Like the US, we are very com-

mitted to democracy and justice," he said, promising that his government would do "everything possible to improve people's day-to-day lives."

Nigeria is unlikely to receive similar praise for a nuanced approach on extremism, but the US has welcomed Tinubu's call for an inquiry after a recent Nigerian army drone strike killed 85 civilians by mistake.

Nigeria and Ivory Coast have largely stood by the US – as has another key partner, Kenya – despite unease in much of the continent over the Western focus on arming Ukraine and, more recently, US support for Israel in its war with Hamas. Their stance stands in contrast with another heavyweight, South Africa, which the US has accused of allowing arms shipments to Russia and which

most recently annoyed Washington by bringing a genocide case against Israel before the International Court of Justice.

Blinken will not travel to South Africa during his trip but he will visit Angola, which has transitioned from war to democracy and played a vital mediating role to end unrest in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

On Monday Blinken stopped in Cape Verde, a long-standing partner of the US. He has sought to showcase a softer side during his trip.

On Monday, he also attended a critical football match in the Africa Cup of Nations between Ivory Coast and Equatorial Guinea, when his hosts gifted him an Ivorian orange jersey bearing his name.

EU top diplomat says Israel can't 'have veto' on Palestinian state

AFP
Brussels

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell yesterday said that Israel cannot be allowed to unilaterally block the creation of a Palestinian state after the war in Gaza.

"One thing is clear – Israel cannot have the veto right to the self-determination of the Palestinian people," Borrell told a Brussels press conference with his Egyptian counterpart.

"The UN recognises and has recognised many times the self-determination right of the Palestinian people. Nobody can veto it." The comments come after Borrell on Monday chaired talks between the EU's 27 foreign ministers and

the top diplomats from Israel, the Palestinian Authority and key Arab states.

Borrell has floated a roadmap involving an international conference on a two-state solution and has said peace needs to be "imposed" on Israel.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said there is "an international consensus on the necessity of resolving the conflict on the basis of a two state solution". "It is time to implement it and the international community has the means, has the resources, has the mechanisms to do so," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has drawn condemnation from the UN and defied key backer the US by rejecting calls for a Palestinian

state. Israel insists it is focused on its military operation in Gaza aimed at destroying the Hamas movement and freeing hostages captured during the storming in the first week of October.

The Gaza war broke out with Hamas' unprecedented storming.

Israel's relentless offensive in response has killed at least 25,490 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Shoukry warned that displacement of Gaza's population from the territory "will occur" if adequate humanitarian assistance is not allowed in.

"Making the conditions in Gaza unliveable in itself will induce displacements," he warned.

Hamas health ministry says Israeli tanks fire on Gaza hospital

AFP
Gaza Strip

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday the Israeli army fired directly at a hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis, where civilians are caught amid heavy fighting.

A ministry statement said Israeli tanks were "firing heavily on the upper floors of the specialised surgery building and the emergency building of Nasser hospital, dozens expected wounded."

The Israeli military said they were "not aware of the event" when asked about firing at the hospital.

Khan Yunis has become the epicentre of fighting between Palestinian fighters and Israeli soldiers, who have pressed south over nearly three months of their ground offensive.

Gaza's health ministry accused Israeli forces of "cutting off Nasser medical complex, putting the lives of staff, personnel and displaced people at risk".

"Medical staff are unable to transport serious cases from Nasser medical complex to the Jordanian field hospital nearby as a result of relentless bombardment," a second ministry statement said.

The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said one of its



A Palestinian woman holds a child wounded in an Israeli strike at Nasser Hospital, amid the ongoing conflict, in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip.

Khan Yunis shelters for displaced people "was hit during military operations" on Monday.

"At least six displaced people were killed and many more injured during intense fighting" around the facility, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini wrote yesterday on X, formerly Twitter.

Although Israel's military says its troops have encircled Khan Yunis, a spokesperson told AFP they were "not aware of strikes" around the UN shelter on Monday.

As Israeli forces press on, more than a million people are now crammed into Rafah, which abuts the Egyptian frontier.

The UN humanitarian agency described yesterday the "indescribable pain" in Gaza where the death toll "climbs relentlessly".

"In Khan Yunis, fighting escalates, destroying civilian areas and claiming lives. Attacks on healthcare continue to rise," OCHA wrote on X.

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The war broke out with Hamas' unprecedented storming into Israel.

Nigeria's polluted economic hub Lagos bans styrofoam, plastics

Nigeria's Lagos State, which includes the country's sprawling economic capital of more than 20mn people, has announced a ban on styrofoam and single-use plastics to curb pollution, AFP reported from Lagos. The state government said in a statement Sunday the ban would take effect immediately but environmental experts said implementing and enforcing it could be complicated.

Many street vendors and markets in Lagos use styrofoam containers to serve and deliver food or produce and the plastic and other containers litter roads and block drains in the megapolis.

"Following the menace which single-use plastics especially non-biodegradable Styrofoam are causing on the environment, the Lagos State government... is hereby announcing a ban on the usage and distribution of Styrofoam and other single-use plastics," the Lagos environment commissioner said on X. Some Nigerians welcomed the initiative, but others questioned its implementation and what the alternative would be for traders and manufacturers.

Blinken seeks progress in West Africa with Ivory Coast as model

AFP
Abuja

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North Korea’s AI development raises sanctions concerns, says report

Reuters
Seoul

North Korea is developing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning for everything from how to respond to Covid-19 and safeguard nuclear reactors to wargaming simulations and government surveillance, according to a new study.

International sanctions imposed over its nuclear weapons programme may have hindered North Korea’s attempts to secure AI hardware, but it appears to be pursuing the latest technology, wrote study author Hyuk Kim of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) in California.

“North Korea’s recent endeavor

ours in AI/ML development signify a strategic investment to bolster its digital economy,” Kim wrote in the report, which cited open-source information including state media and journals and was published on Tuesday by the 38 North project.

Some of North Korea’s AI researchers have collaborated with foreign scholars, including in China, the report found. North Korea established the Artificial Intelligence Research Institute in 2013 and in recent years several companies have promoted commercial products featuring AI, the report said.

Communications technology is heavily restricted and monitored in the authoritarian North.

During the Covid-19 pandemic North Korea used AI to create a

model for evaluating proper mask usage and prioritising clinical symptom indicators of infection, Kim said in the report. North Korean scientists have also published research into using AI for maintaining the safety of nuclear reactors, the report added.

The UN nuclear watchdog and independent experts said last month that a new reactor at North Korea’s Yongbyon nuclear complex appears to be operating for the first time, which would mean another potential source of plutonium for nuclear weapons. The AI development presents many challenges, Kim wrote. “For instance, North Korea’s pursuit of a wargaming simulation program using (machine learning) reveals intentions to better comprehend operational

environments against potential adversaries,” he wrote. “Furthermore, North Korea’s ongoing collaborations with foreign scholars pose concerns for the sanctions regime.”

North Korea has demolished a major monument in its capital that symbolised the goal of reconciliation with South Korea on the orders of leader Kim Jong-un, who last week called the rival a “primary foe” and said unification was no longer possible.

Satellite imagery of Pyongyang on Tuesday showed that the monument, an arch symbolising hopes for Korean reunification which was completed after a landmark inter-Korea summit in 2000, was no longer there, according to a report by NK News, an online outlet that monitors North Korea. Reuters

could not independently confirm that the monument, known informally as the Arch of Reunification, had been demolished. Kim called the monument an “eyesore” in a speech at the Supreme People’s Assembly on Jan. 15, where he ordered that the constitution be amended to say the South was a “primary foe and invariable principal enemy,” official media said. Tensions have spiked on the Korean peninsula following intensifying military manoeuvres by the South Korean and US militaries in response to weapons testing by the North, which said it was readying for a “nuclear war” with its enemies.

The arch, formally known as the Monument to the Three Charters for National Reunification, stood 30m tall and was symbolic of the

three charters, which were self-reliance, peace and national co-operation, according to South Korean government records. South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol who took office in 2022 has taken a hard line against the North, calling for immediate and tough responses to North Korea’s military actions that have raised tensions on the Korean peninsula. North Korea has vowed to “wipe out” the South if attacked by the South and US forces. Late last year, the North declared as no longer valid a key agreement signed with the South in 2018 aimed at de-escalating military tensions.

Following Kim’s speech last week, the North’s assembly abolished key government agencies that have been instrumental to decades of exchanges with Seoul.

3 dead, dozens hurt in quake on China-Kyrgyzstan border

AFP
Almaty

Three people were killed and dozens injured after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck along the mountainous China-Kyrgyzstan border yesterday, authorities said. The major quake was registered just after 2am at a depth of 13km in China’s Xinjiang region, about 140km west of the city of Aksu.

Local authorities dispatched a team to the quake’s epicentre, Beijing’s Xinhua state news agency said, while around 800 people were on standby for any large disaster relief mission.

The earthquake caused three deaths, while five other people sustained injuries, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported yesterday evening. CCTV added that “12,426 people in the disaster area have been relocated” as rescue and relief efforts continue.

The health ministry in Kazakhstan said earlier that 44 people suffering “various” injuries had sought medical help in Almaty, the country’s largest city. Images posted on social media and by local news outlets showed citizens streaming outside following the quake. In China’s Akqi County, six people suffered injuries – two of which were “serious” – according to a Weibo post by a Xinjiang government media account.

A total of 47 buildings in the county collapsed, while a further 78 were damaged, the post said.

Two residential houses and livestock sheds collapsed in the

area near the epicentre, in rural Wushi County, Xinhua reported, while electricity was temporarily knocked out. Video circulating on Chinese social media showed household appliances crashing to the floor as wild shaking rocked homes.

More footage shared by state broadcaster CCTV showed firemen entering a damaged building with cracked walls and police helping an injured local. Local TV channels in the Indian capital New Delhi reported strong tremors in the city, about 1,400km away.

One Aksu resident told Xinhua that people rushed outside for safety during the shaking despite the frigid early morning temperatures hovering around -10C. Cao Yanglong, in the city on a business trip, told the state news agency that while on the 21st floor of a hotel, he felt like he was “going to be shaken out of bed”. People also fled their homes to seek refuge in the street in Kyrgyzstan’s capital Bishkek, according to an AFP reporter, after the quake caused walls to shake and furniture to shift.

Bohobek Azhikeev, head of the Kyrgyz Ministry for Emergency Situations, said in a video message that “no casualties or damage have been registered” in the city. Five villages are located within 20km of the epicentre, according to Xinhua, and a slew of small aftershocks followed in the area, with magnitudes as high as 5.5.

And yesterday morning the Kazakh seismological agency reported two new tremors of magnitude 5.2 and 5.3 around 10am local time in the same area. The tremors were felt in



The rubble of houses damaged by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake is seen on a street in Wushi County.

Almaty, where schools were closed, according to an AFP correspondent. Yesterday’s earthquake came the day after a landslide killed at least 31 people and buried several others in the southwest of China. A December quake in the northwest of the country killed 148 people and displaced thousands in Gansu province. That quake was China’s deadliest since 2014, when more than 600 people were killed in southwestern Yunnan province.

In the December earthquake, subzero temperatures made the aid operation launched in response even more challenging, with survivors huddled around outdoor fires to keep warm.



Local residents rest at a temporary shelter after a magnitude 7.0 earthquake strikes Wushi County, Aksu prefecture, in China’s northwestern Xinjiang region yesterday.

31 dead in southwest China landslide

AFP
Beijing

The death toll from a landslide that struck a remote and mountainous part of southwestern China reached 31 yesterday, state media said, as rescuers raced to find those still trapped under the debris.

The pre-dawn landslide buried 18 homes and sparked the evacuation of more than 200 people when it struck in Zhenxiang county, Yunnan province early Monday.

Nearly 36 hours since the disaster, 31 people have been confirmed dead, state news agency Xinhua said. An earlier report yesterday afternoon by state broadcaster

CCTV, which announced the toll had risen to 20, added that 24 people were still missing at that time. Xinhua said rescue workers were in a “race against time” to find those still missing, after a night of sub-zero temperatures.

“Search and rescue efforts persisted through the night,” firefighter Li Shenglong told Xinhua.

Wu Junyao, director of the natural resources and planning bureau of Zhaotong, told Xinhua that the disaster “resulted from a collapse in the steep cliff area atop the slope”. Two hundred rescue workers have been dispatched to the scene as well as dozens of fire engines and other equipment.

The site was covered in thick snow and rescuers were “using all kinds of tools to

search for survivors”, Xinhua reported. Wu said the rescuers were digging through collapsed debris of “100 metres in width, 60 metres in height, with an average thickness of around 6 metres”.

CCTV showed footage of rescue workers digging through twisted metal and concrete overnight in a bid to find survivors. Other CCTV footage showed locals huddling for warmth around a fire in a shelter, eating instant noodles. People from the surrounding area have chipped in to help with relief efforts, state media said.

“Our main focus is on distributing supplies, cooking, and delivering food to those in need,” Hong Jie, a 38-year-old resident of a nearby village, told Xinhua. Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday ordered “all-

out” rescue efforts. Landslides are common in Yunnan, a far-flung and largely impoverished region of China where steep mountain ranges butt against the Himalayan plateau. Monday’s disaster occurred in a rural area surrounded by towering peaks dusted with snow, state media footage showed. China has experienced a string of natural disasters in recent months, some following extreme weather events such as sudden, heavy downpours.

Rainstorms last September in the southern region of Guangxi triggered a mountain landslide that killed at least seven people, according to media reports. In August, heavy rains sparked a similar disaster near the northern city of Xi’an, killing more than 20 people.



Rescue workers search for missing victims at a landslide site, a day after a landslide hits Liangshui village in Zhaotong, in Yunnan province.



Marcos backs change to constitution to match ‘globalised world’

Reuters
Manila

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said the country’s constitution should be changed to support the economy and was “not written for the globalised world”, as the country’s senate criticised efforts to amend it as “sinister and underhand”.

Marcos, in an interview with GMA News TV aired yesterday, said the economic provisions of the 1987 constitution, introduced after the overthrow of his father and namesake after two decades in power, must be changed to attract more foreign investors.

While he was not closing doors to amending political provisions, Marcos said the priority should be economic parts of the constitution to ease curbs and lure foreign businesses. Certain provisions, such as limits on ownership by foreign firms, have been criticised by some international businesses as protectionist and favouring local conglomerates.

However, some opponents of constitutional change say it is driven by an agenda to change the political system and remove term limits, including that of the president, who can currently serve just one, six-year term.

Yesterday, the Senate in a manifesto signed by all of its 24 members, including the sister of Marcos, condemned what it described as “sinister and underhanded attempt” to change the constitution without the senate’s participation and vowed to thwart it. “Throughout Philippine history, the Senate has always been one of the first targets by those who seek to undermine our country’s democracy,” it said.

‘Does not endorse Taiwan independence, seeks to avoid conflict’

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said he does not endorse Taiwan independence and reiterated his country was committed to its One-China policy, a response to China’s outrage over recent remarks in congratulating Taiwan’s election winner.

Marcos said in an interview with GMA News TV aired yesterday that his congratulatory comment to Lai Ching-te earlier this month, where he referred to him as president, was a “common courtesy”.

“The One-China policy remains in place. We have adhered to the One-China policy strictly and conscientiously since we adopted (it),” Marcos said.

“We are not endorsing Taiwanese independence. Taiwan is a province of China.”

The congratulatory message, however, drew a sharp rebuke from China, with its foreign ministry spokesperson telling Marcos last week to “read more books to properly understand the ins and outs of the Taiwan issue”.

UN expert slams Britain's 'severe crackdown' on climate activists

AFP
Geneva

Environmental activists face a severe crackdown in Britain, a UN expert warned yesterday, lamenting that peaceful protesters face long prison terms and are the targets of "toxic discourse". Michel Forst, the UN special rapporteur on environmental defenders, said he had received "extremely worrying information" during a recent visit to Britain about "an increasingly severe crackdown".

"Regressive laws" were being used to slap environmental and climate activists with severe penalties, "including in relation to the exercise of the right to peaceful protest", he warned in a statement.

Forst, an independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council but who does not speak on behalf of the United Nations, stressed that "the right to protest is a basic human right".

"It is also an essential part of a healthy democracy," he said.

British police were controversially granted anti-protest powers by the government last year following several years of disruptive demonstrations by

environment activists. Forst said peaceful demonstrators are being prosecuted under the 2022 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act for the criminal offence of "public nuisance", punishable by up to 10 years behind bars.

In addition, the 2023 Public Order Act is being used "to further criminalise peaceful protest", he said.

Last month, for instance, a peaceful climate protester who took part in an approximately 30-minute slow march on a public road was sentenced to six months in prison. Forst stressed it had hitherto been "almost unheard of since the 1930s for members of the public to be imprisoned for peaceful protest in the UK". The expert also said it was incomprehensible that some judges were barring "environmental defenders from explaining to the jury their motivation" for protesting "or from mentioning climate change at all".

He voiced alarm at harsh bail conditions slapped on environmental protesters while they await trial, including bans on further protests or having contact with others in their movement.

Some activists were also re-

quired to wear electronic ankle tags or GPS trackers. Currently, "environmental defenders may be on bail for up to two years from the date of arrest to their eventual criminal trial," he said.

Forst said environmental activists were frequently publicly derided in British media and by politicians, placing them at heightened risk of threats, abuse and physical attacks. This "toxic discourse", he warned, "may also be used by the state as justification for adopting increasingly severe and draconian measures against environmental defenders".

"We are in the midst of a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Environmental defenders are acting for the benefit of us all," Forst said. A spokeswoman for Britain's Home Office told AFP: "The right to protest is a fundamental part of our democracy but we must also protect the law-abiding majority's right to go about their daily lives."

"While decisions on custodial sentences are a matter for the independent judiciary, the Public Order Act brings in new criminal offences and proper penalties for selfish, guerrilla protest tactics," the interior ministry added.

Question hour



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delivers a ministerial statement on Houthis maritime attacks in the Red Sea and tributes to Sir Tony Lloyd MP, at the House of Commons in London.

N Ireland devolved govt deadline extended again

AFP
Belfast

A missed deadline to hold an election in Northern Ireland unless the region's long-suspended devolved government is restored was extended by the British government yesterday to February 8. The previous deadline expired last Thursday with the Democratic Unionist Party, the province's largest pro-UK party, still undecided on whether to end its almost two-year boycott of the Northern Ireland Assembly executive, known as Stormont, over post-Brexit trading rules.

"Tomorrow (Wednesday) I will

be introducing the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill to allow for the reformation of Stormont," said Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris on X, formerly Twitter.

"The bill only has a single clause: to extend the period of time Stormont can legitimately come back until the 8th February."

The DUP, which collapsed the power-sharing executive by walking out in February 2022, says that Northern Ireland's place in the wider United Kingdom is diminished by rules within a "Windsor Framework" trade deal agreed between London and the European Union. It fears the new rules cuts Northern Ireland adrift from the

rest of the country, making a united Ireland more likely.

The first minister-designate of the assembly is Michelle O'Neill, from the nationalist party Sinn Féin. She called on DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson to "do the right thing and restore the democratic institutions". Stormont's mothballing has coincided with a decay in public services and escalating pay demands by workers that led to the province's biggest mass strike in decades last Thursday.

Heaton-Harris says long held up pay awards for public service workers can be met by a £3.3bn (\$4.2bn) package offered last month, on condition that the assembly restarts.

India threatens to expel French journalist ahead of Macron visit

AFP
New Delhi

A French journalist said yesterday she was facing expulsion from India after two decades for what authorities have termed "malicious and critical" reportage, days before a state visit by President Emmanuel Macron.

Critics say that press freedom in the world's biggest democracy is increasingly under attack, with journalists who touch on sensitive topics often subjected to government rebuke. The latest is Vanessa Dougnac, a contributor to several French-

language publications including the weekly magazine *Le Point*, who has been based in India for 22 years.

Last week the home ministry sent a notice to the reporter saying her work was "inimical" to national interests. "Her journalistic activities are malicious and critical in manner...they create biased perception about India," the notice said. "In addition, her activities may also provoke disorder and disturb peace."

The notice gave Dougnac, who has an Indian spouse, until February 2 to challenge the ministry's decision to cancel her permanent residency — a move that would force her to leave the country. Dougnac, who has re-

ported on a number of flashpoint topics including the ongoing Maoist Naxalite insurgency in parts of rural India, denied "all the allegations and imputations" made against her in the letter.

"India is my home, a country which I deeply love and respect, and I have never engaged in any acts that are in any manner prejudicial to Indian interests," she said in a statement. The home ministry and foreign ministry were contacted for comment. The notice was issued to Dougnac a week before Macron's Thursday arrival in India, where he will be guest of honour at the annual Republic Day military parade.

As France woos India, its former colony recalls the past

AFP
Puducherry, India

Seventy years after France quit once hard-fought for territories seized from India, the dwindling influence of Paris on the bustling streets of Puducherry is still reflected in language, architecture and cuisine.

It is more than 8,000km from Paris to Puducherry, but some women dressed in colourful saris still chat in French, policemen wear the peaked kepi hats of the gendarme, and road signs mimic the famous blue and white enamel lettering of Paris.

As President Emmanuel Macron heads to New Delhi to celebrate Republic Day on Friday - marking the day independent India's constitution came into force - Francophiles in Puducherry say the impact of France's colonial rule was better than British brutality elsewhere in the country.

"Indians of Pondicherry were considered as French nationals - culturally and legally," said 96-year-old David Annonssamy, a former judge who served in the French court in the port city, using its colonial-era name.

"Nationality wasn't about colour, it's about knowing France," the author told AFP, wearing a traditional Tamil wrap around his waist and speaking from his sprawling



Saloua Sahl, founder of 'Eat My Cake' bakery, speaking during an interview with AFP in Puducherry.

home with a tree-lined central courtyard.

"The main thing was to know French".

Today, New Delhi and Paris celebrate growing ties, with France seeking to boost economic deals including already valuable military contracts with India, the world's fifth-biggest economy and most populous nation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was guest of honour at France's annual Bastille Day celebrations last July, and Macron is expected to be likewise feted this week in India. The territory on India's southeastern coast was taken by France in 1674 when the French East India Company set up a trading centre

to exploit its rich spices and goods.

France only left in 1954 - seven years after India's independence from Britain - and it took until 1962 for Paris to formally cede full sovereignty. The former French trading post has since changed its name to Puducherry, an administrative territory also incorporating other French ex-colonial enclaves including Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam.

Together, 1.25mn people reside in the Puducherry territory, according to the last census in 2011, and most speak the Tamil language. Just 5,000 French nationals live in Puducherry city today, the majority having Indian forebears who took citizenship from France.



The old French quarter known as 'La Ville Blanche' or 'White Town' in Puducherry.

Annonssamy took French nationality at the time of the handover, something he is proud of.

"Someone born in Paris or someone born in Pondicherry both had the same rights," he said, speaking in fluent French. He counts Provençal-style bouillabaisse fish soup as his favourite dish. "It's a country we've adopted, and it's become our country," said Franco-Indian fashion designer Vassanty Manet, showing a black and white photo of her father when he served in the French army.

"We're a population that looks Indian but has a French culture,

and that's what's so special".

Manet said she grew up with stories about France that "fed our imagination", adding her uncle also fought for France during World War II in Algeria. "We've never had any resentment towards France," she said.

Unlike elsewhere in India, where there have often been wholesale name changes of streets to strip away Britain's legacy and statues of London's imperial leaders torn down, echoes of France remain.

A white marble statue of France's patron saint Joan of Arc - who battled the English in the 15th century,

just as the French fought British forces for control of Puducherry in the 19th century - stands tall.

The old French quarter - "La Ville Blanche" or "White Town" - is a favourite with tourists for its colonial architecture with centuries-old mansions. Elegant streets are adorned with bougainvillea-laden bungalows, with the aroma of freshly baked baguettes from cafes filling the air. "They want to try French croissants, baguettes, pain au chocolat, lemon tarts and chocolate tarts," said Saloua Sahl, 44, who was drawn from France to set up a bakery.

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GULF TIMES

Uneasy equilibrium
seen for global economy
amid geopolitical risks

As 2023 was drawing to a close, there were mounting concerns that the war in Ukraine, Israel- Gaza conflict along with the Red Sea tensions, soaring inflation and the rising cost of servicing debt could trigger a global recession.

But the world is finding an uneasy equilibrium with a more benign economic backdrop overshadowed by geopolitical risks, according to the final Davos panel of 2024.

The prospects of subsiding inflation and a pickup in global trade offer some encouragement for investors despite the backdrop of war and populism, European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde and peers agreed as the World Economic Forum drew to a close.

“Normalisation — that’s what we have begun to see,” she told the audience, before adding an important qualifier. “It is not normality that we’re heading to,” she added.

The optimism has at times been undermined by the spectre of geopolitics, with wars in Ukraine and the Middle East looming large, and Red Sea tensions too.

Donald Trump’s Iowa victory, setting him on the road to the Republican nomination, was also greeted with alarm by many attendees.

The optimism has at times been undermined by the spectre of geopolitics with wars in Ukraine and the Middle East along with Red Sea tensions

While the explosion of debt is throwing a shadow over global economic growth, WEF experts warn that sub-Saharan Africa, where several countries are already in default, is experiencing its worst-ever crisis.

In 2022, African public debt stood at \$1.8tn, a 183% jump from 2010, having grown at around four times as fast as economic output, according to UN figures.

After Covid and the war in Ukraine, free-trade boosters in Davos fretted over a new bout of turmoil

in global supply chains due to rising geopolitical frictions.

Before the Israel-Hamas conflict in October, the World Trade Organisation had forecast global trade growth of 3.3%, an improvement from 0.8% in 2023. But WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala told the WEF that she was now “less optimistic” about world trade in 2024 due to “worsening geopolitical tensions”.

She added, however, that it would be “much better than what we saw in 2023. Unless a major war breaks out, then all bets are off”.

The Red Sea route carries about 12% of global maritime trade, but the attacks have prompted many companies to take a massive and costly detour around the southern tip of Africa.

There are concerns along other major trade routes.

Taiwan’s presidential election has renewed US-China tensions over the island, which China considers a part of its territory that must be brought back under its control, by force if necessary.

Speaking in Davos, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken recalled that a huge amount of commerce flows through the Taiwan Strait.

“If that were to be disrupted, it would affect the entire planet. And it’s about the last thing we need, especially coming back from Covid,” Blinken said.

On top of geopolitical tensions, climate change has also played tricks on global trade.

A drought and water shortages linked to the El Nino weather phenomenon reduced ship traffic through the Panama Canal.

Talk of AI rippled through Davos meeting rooms and panels, its promise touted on signs and its security risks invoked by China’s premier. While conversations included how to regulate the burgeoning technology and how to apply it to scientific discovery, the question of how to monetise it persisted.

Heads of global banks have warned of inflationary pressures from increased shipping costs and the possibility of oil price rises. Bank executives fear the market is mispricing interest rate cuts, and that geopolitical risks could cause volatility.

In Davos, participants tended to put a brave face on the global outlook, accentuating the likelihood that a deep recession will probably be avoided despite unprecedented monetary tightening to bring inflation under control.

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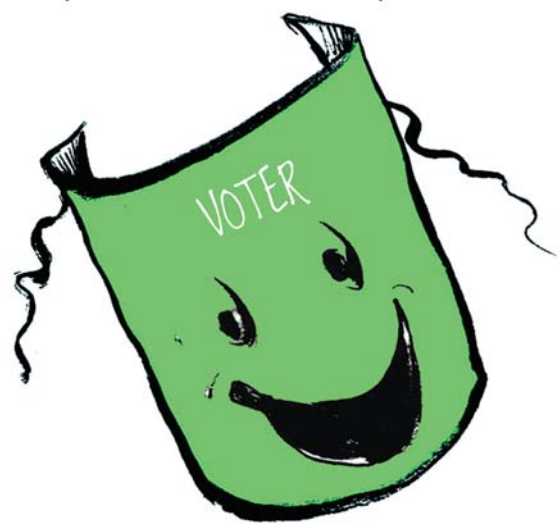
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"Beware of my deepfakes,
they could sway the election!"



"Don't worry, no deepfake can
be any shallower than you, Sir!"



Investing in education Qatar’s
top priority, nationally, globally

QNA
Doha

Qatar celebrates the International Day of Education today, recognising education as a major goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN. Qatar is committed to aligning education with the requirements of the current era, aiming to be a leading country in digital transformation in education. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) launched the e-learning strategy to equip Qatari students with high-level digital skills for a future heavily reliant on these skills.

To mark this global educational event, the MoEHE, for the first time, dedicated a week to celebrate the International Day of Education at the local level under the theme “Education is Everyone’s Responsibility.”

During this week (January 21-25), the ministry will partner with the Civil Services and Government Development Bureau to conduct various activities, including an educational dialogue session involving students, teachers, parents, families, and all schools in the country. The goal is to reinforce concepts of social responsibility and highlight the role of education in improving individual lives and advancing society, aligning with the Qatar

National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030).

Qatar consistently celebrates international occasions related to education, such as the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, a Qatari proposal unanimously adopted by the UN in 2019. It designates September 9 each year to urge the international community to address the challenges faced by students, institutions, and educational centres affected by armed conflicts.

In a related context, Qatar observes World Teachers Day on October 5 annually, honouring veteran teachers in recognition of the importance of the teaching profession. This aligns with the joint recommendation between the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) regarding teacher conditions, rights, duties, and standards for their preparation.

Under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Qatar is dedicated to achieving the highest quality assurance indicators in the educational process. This aligns with the international Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the fourth goal focusing on the quality of education. Qatar envisions the future of education and ensures the right to education as a public good for all, in line with individual needs, abilities, and potentials.

Internationally, Qatar has established broad educational and development partnerships benefiting millions worldwide. The efforts and initiatives of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and Her Highness the Chairperson of Education Above All Foundation (EAA) Sheikha Moza bint Nasser are appreciated for their contributions to education and protecting it from attacks globally.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), MoEHE’s Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs, Maha Zayed al-Ruwaili, emphasised Qatar’s celebration of the 2024 International Day of Education on January 24, affirming the state’s belief in education as a force for achieving Qatar’s vision and a foundation for building knowledge societies and achieving sustainable development.

Al-Ruwaili highlighted purposeful activities during the celebration, aiming to strengthen the partnership between parents and schools, emphasising educational and pedagogical dimensions. She stressed that community participation in the educational process contributes to putting students on the right path to becoming productive forces in their homeland.

The state’s commitment to quality, equitable education for all has led to global successes

and achievements, consolidating Qatar’s position in education at the global level, al-Ruwaili added. Achieving ambitions requires ongoing effort and co-operation with state institutions to compete and excel globally, making education a long-term investment with increasing returns for children and society.

QNV aims to transform Qatar into an advanced state capable of achieving sustainable development by 2030. This necessitates establishing an advanced educational system aligning with contemporary global standards. Mandatory, free education with a modern and evolving system ensures no Qatari child of school age is outside the school premises. The education system offers scientific programmes, advanced curricula, and a comprehensive and diverse educational approach, focusing on ethics, Islamic values, and social principles.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education provides special education services through inclusive schools and specialised schools for individuals with special needs. Talented students receive support, and adult education programmes encourage continued learning. The ministry also offers parallel education paths for students unable to complete their studies in the general education system.

To align with modern changes and instil a spirit of innovation from an early age, the ministry dedicates a comprehensive foundational curriculum for early education, including kindergarten and the first and second grades of primary school. Specialised education schools, such as the Qatar Technical Secondary School for Boys and Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys, prepare students for various options in higher education and the workforce.

Qatar’s commitment to education extends internationally, with a focus on promoting and protecting quality education for all. CEO of Education Above All Foundation, Fahad al-Sulaiti, emphasised the Foundation’s role in meeting the needs of vulnerable groups outside Qatar through effective international partnerships, with a special focus on Palestine and Sudan for this year’s International Day of Education celebration.

Various state institutions celebrate the International Day of Education on January 24 each year, organising interactive events to promote social responsibility and emphasise education’s role in improving lives and advancing society. The Civil Services and Government Development Bureau provided facilitations and guidelines for parents to attend celebrations and activities in schools.

Qatari educational efforts at various levels have solidified Qatar’s position in the field of education and highlighted its commitment to developing the educational system using the latest methods. Investing in quality education remains a top priority for Qatar, both nationally and internationally. (QNA)

International Education Day
Continuous Keenness to Develop,
Invest in Educational System in Qatar

In an exclusive statement to QNA

Maha Al Ruwaili
Undersecretary of the
Ministry of Education

Fahad Al-Sulaiti
CEO of Education
Above All Foundation

Qatar’s celebration of International Education Day confirms the state’s belief that education is an effective force to achieve the state’s vision.

Our effective and successful partnership covers 60 countries around the world.

The participation of families, schools, and universities in the activities celebrating International Education Day is a clear message that education in the country is everyone’s responsibility

The Foundation’s celebration of International Education Day focuses this year on Palestine and Sudan.”

Qatari Leadership

In the field of digital transformation with the aim of preparing Qatari students with a high level of digital skills

Many activities and events with the participation of students and parents on this occasion during the period from January 21 to 25

Initiatives

National and international educational initiatives and partnerships that have benefited hundreds of millions worldwide

Army to be deployed for Pakistan election

Pakistan will deploy the army to ensure peace at its general election next month, the prime minister's office said, amid concerns that recent attacks by militants could threaten the holding of the February 8 polls. The military's deployment at the polling stations has been controversial in the past, with several political leaders alleging the army uses troops to help its favourite party rather than provide security, a charge the army denies. The cabinet chaired by caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar approved the deployment of army and paramilitary troops to ensure a peaceful election, a statement by Kakar's office said, adding: "These contingents will perform duty at polling stations and in sensitive areas." An uptick in attacks by militants who aim to overthrow the government and install their own brand of strict Islamic law has underscored worries among political leaders that such violence could threaten the peaceful holding of the polls. Pakistan's last election in 2018, which brought former prime minister Imran Khan to power, saw hundreds of thousands of troops deployed across the country to provide security. Khan's opponents and several analysts alleged that vote rigging helped by the troops contributed to his victory, which the military denied. Khan is now in jail after falling out with the generals and his party faces what analysts consider a military-backed crackdown.

Father kills son for hoisting Khan's party flag, flees

A father killed his son after the pair disagreed about which political party flag to display in the lead-up to Pakistan's general election, police said. The argument broke out when the son, who recently returned from working in Qatar, hoisted the flag of former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party at the family home on the outskirts of Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. "The father prohibited his son from hoisting the PTI flag at home, but the son refused to take it down and abandon PTI," said district police official Naseer Farid. "The argument escalated, and in a fit of anger, the father fired a pistol at his 31-year-old son, before fleeing the house." The son died on the way to the hospital. Police are searching for the father, who was affiliated with the nationalist Awami National Party and had previously displayed their flag. In the first week of February some 5,000 paramilitary Frontier Constabulary (FC) forces will deploy to the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, commander Moazzam Jah Ansari told AFP.

Turkiye okays Sweden Nato membership bid

Reuters
Ankara

Turkiye's parliament ratified Sweden's Nato membership bid yesterday, clearing the biggest remaining hurdle to expanding the Western military alliance after 20 months of delay. Türkiye's general assembly, where President Tayyip Erdogan's ruling alliance holds a majority, voted 287-55 to approve the application that Sweden first made in 2022 to bolster its security in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. When Sweden and Finland asked to join Nato that year, Türkiye surprised some members in raising objections over what it said was the two countries' protection of groups it deems terrorists. It endorsed Finland's membership in April last year but, along with Hungary, had kept Sweden waiting. "We support Nato enlargement to improve the alliance's deterrence efforts...We hope



GREEN SIGNAL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Finland and Sweden's attitude towards fighting terrorism sets an example for our other allies," Fuat Oktay, head of parliament's foreign affairs commission and a ruling AK Party member, said during debate. Erdogan is expected to sign the legislation into law within days, leaving Hungary — whose Prime Minister Viktor Orban has friendly relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin — as the only member state not to have approved Sweden's accession.

18 killed, 130 hurt in Russian missile strikes: Zelensky

AFP
Kyiv

Russian strikes on Ukraine yesterday killed 18 people and wounded 130, President Volodymyr Zelensky said, warning that the death toll could increase as rescue efforts were ongoing. The strikes hit the capital Kyiv and the northeastern city of Kharkiv in a deadly day for Ukraine as Russia's invasion drags on for almost two years. "Unfortunately, 18 people died," Zelensky said in his evening address, adding that another 130 people were wounded. He said Kharkiv was particularly badly hit and warned "the number of dead may increase." Zelensky said rubble from an "ordinary high-rise building" in Kharkiv was still being dismantled and search efforts were ongoing. "Ordinary people lived here," he said. He said around 139 "ordinary houses" were damaged in the attack and that Russia had fired "more than 40 missiles" onto Ukraine. He also warned of retaliation, saying: "Let them know over there, in Russia, that the Ukrainian character knows how to be sufficiently far-reaching in response." "The Russian war will surely return home, to where this evil came from...Right there, in Russia," he added. Rescue workers in Kharkiv — Ukraine's second city that is near Russia's border — hauled survivors from smouldering piles of rubble as apartment blocks were set ablaze and toppled by the strikes, AFP journalists reported. The toll rose after emergency services said they pulled out "the body of a dead woman from under the rubble of a destroyed high-rise building". Rescue operations, they said, were ongoing. Interior Minister Igor Klymenko praised "heroic" rescuers that he said had pulled 27 survivors from rubble. He posted dramatic footage of workers cutting free a man who had been trapped in freezing temperatures for hours. Ukraine's army chief Valery Zaluzhny said Russian forces fired 41 missiles in the barrage and his forces had downed 21 of them. The UN slammed the attack that it said "brought more death, life-changing injuries, trauma, loss of property and destruction."

US defence secretary makes his first appearance since secret hospitalisation



This frame grab from a video conference released by the Department of Defence yesterday shows Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin speaking from a nondescript white room. (AFP)

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin yesterday made his first appearance since being hospitalised for complications from cancer treatment — a stay he concealed from both the White House and Congress for several days. Austin, who was admitted to Walter Reed on January 1 and spent two weeks in the military hospital, spoke via videolink from his residence at the opening of a meeting on aid for Ukraine's fight against invading Russian forces. "The security of the entire international community is on the line in Ukraine's fight. I am more determined than ever to work with our allies and partners to support Ukraine and to get the job done," Austin said in front of a Defence Department seal and small American and Ukrainian flags. He highlighted a \$250mn military assistance package that Washington announced last month, but did not detail any new American aid, with funding having dried up and Republicans refusing to authorise more until President Joe Biden bows to their demands for measures to curb migration over the Mexican border. Austin's prepared comments — which were posted on the Defence Department's website — included a reference to his health: "As you can tell, I'm joining from home today. I'm feeling good and looking forward to being back at the Pentagon very soon." But he skipped over that section in the remarks he delivered, making no mention of his medical situation.

CIA tries to recruit double agents in Russia in new video release

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has released a Russian-language video to try to persuade Russian intelligence employees to switch sides and work as double agents for Washington. CIA Director William Burns said in July that disaffection among some Russians over the war in Ukraine was creating a rare opportunity to recruit spies, and that the CIA was not letting it pass. The video, released on the CIA's official social media channels, tries to appeal to what it suggests are patriotic Russians working in intelligence agencies who may feel betrayed by what it called corruption in elite circles and the poor way the Russian armed forces are equipped and supplied. "Those around you may not want to hear the truth. But we do. You are not powerless," says the video, the latest in a series of recruitment videos targeting Russia, before detailing ways to contact the CIA. Accompanied by melancholy classical music, the video's main, fictional character is an unnamed 35-year-old male employee of Russia's military intelligence agency who casts himself as a patriot who loves Russia and once served as a paratrooper. "Do I have enough courage to confront this betrayal?" the video shows him saying, before he says he has realised the real enemy is inside Russia in the form of a corrupt leadership and elite. "The top leadership has sold the country out for palaces and yachts at a time when our soldiers are chewing rotten potatoes and firing from prehistoric weapons. Our people are forced to give bribes to simply find work," the man says as video clips of a bleak Russian winter are spliced with images of official limousines and wealthy Russians giving toasts. The fictional character says his patriotism has spurred him to act and work with the CIA, and the video's final shot depicts a well-dressed man contacting the CIA by mobile phone from a snowy courtyard. President Vladimir Putin, a former KGB spy who served in what used to be East Germany, has called on Russia's FSB domestic security service to step up its activity to counter what he has said is increasing espionage by the West. The Kremlin says everything is done to ensure the Russian military has the equipment it needs to be successful in what Moscow calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine. It has rejected as false various corruption allegations, and shrugged off the CIA video. "You know, this practice is quite common, intelligence agencies around the world very often use the media and social networks to recruit new employees. And they do it all the time, the CIA does it every year," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said yesterday.

'Doomsday Clock' remains at 90 seconds to midnight



Rachel Bronson, president and CEO of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists stands next to the Doomsday Clock that reads "90 seconds to midnight," a decision made by The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, during an announcement in Washington, DC. (AFP)

The symbolic "Doomsday Clock" was held at 90 seconds to midnight yesterday, reflecting existential threats to humanity posed by potential nuclear escalation from the war in Ukraine and the multiplying impacts of the climate crisis following Earth's hottest recorded year. Set by top scientists and security experts, the timing of the clock remains the same as last year and the closest it has ever been to midnight in its more than 75-year-history. "Trends continue to point ominously towards global catastrophe," said Rachel Bronson, president and CEO of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. "The war in Ukraine poses an ever present risk of nuclear escalation, and the war in Gaza provides further illustration of the horrors of modern war, even without nuclear escalation."

Woman dies after car rams French farmers' roadblock

A car rammed into a roadblock put up by protesting farmers in southwestern France yesterday, killing a woman and seriously injuring her husband and teenage daughter. The three occupants of the car that crashed into the barrier on a motorway in the southwestern department of Ariège were taken into police custody on suspicion of involuntary manslaughter, police said. The vehicle was travelling on the dual-lane carriageway leading to the roadblock despite it being clearly marked as closed to traffic because of the protest, Ariège prefect Simon Bertoux told reporters. The woman who was killed was a member of the powerful FNSEA farmers union which has been leading nationwide protests.

Oppenheimer tops Oscar nominations with 13

Oppenheimer — Christopher Nolan's masterly portrait of the father of the atomic bomb — topped the Oscars nominations yesterday, earning an impressive 13 nods including for best picture. It was followed by *Poor Things*, a female-focused take on the Frankenstein myth, on 11, and Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon* on 10, in the race for Hollywood's most prestigious awards. But it was a somewhat disappointing morning for Barbie, the other half of last summer's *Barbenheimer* box office phenomenon and the year's highest-grossing film. The comedy had to settle for eight nods — not bad for a satire based on a popular line of plastic dolls, but lower than many had predicted, and missing out on key nominations for Greta Gerwig as director, and star Margot Robbie in best actress. *Oppenheimer*, which came out in theatres on the same day, and grossed almost \$1bn, led the way with nods for its director Nolan, and stars Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr and Emily Blunt. Murphy told the *Irish Times* he was at his parents' house in Cork, when he heard the news, and celebrated in a low-key, but very Irish, way. "We were just having a cup of tea, and then my mum brought



Actors Zazie Beetz and Jack Quaid host the announcement of the 96th Oscars Nominations, in Beverly Hills, California. (Reuters)

out the cake — so we had tea and cake," the star said. *Oppenheimer* — which is the clear favourite to win best picture, the industry's top prize, at the 96th Academy Awards on March 10 — also racked up nods in an array of technical categories. *Killers of the Flower Moon*, Scorsese's three-and-a-half-hour true crime opus on murders ripping through the oil-rich Osage community in early 20th century Oklahoma, made history. Star Lily Gladstone became the Oscars' first Native American nominee for best actress. She will now go head-to-head with Emma Stone, the star

of *Poor Things*, which also earned an acting nod for Mark Ruffalo, along with a swathe of technical nominations, from cinematography to costume design. But there was disappointment for *Killers* star Leonardo DiCaprio, who failed to earn a best actor nomination, and the movie also missed out on best adapted screenplay. It proved to be a record year for female directors. Three movies helmed by women — French courtroom drama *Anatomy of a Fall*, *Barbie* and *Past* — were nominated for best picture, for the first time in more than nine decades of Academy Awards. Only 19 films by female directors

had previously ever been nominated for best picture. Yesterday's announcement was a big success for *Anatomy* — despite it not being France's official entry in the international film category, a decision that has caused a little hand-wringing in Paris. As well as earning expected best picture and best actress (Sandra Huller) nominations, director Justine Triet secured a nod that had been widely predicted to go to Gerwig, and it also earned recognition for editing and original screenplay. Bradley Cooper earned an impressive three individual nominations for acting in, producing and writing *Maestro*. The Leonard Bernstein biopic, which Cooper also directed, took seven nominations. Other strong performers included Alexander Payne's *The Holdovers*, about a teacher, a cook and a student holed up in a boarding school over the festive season. It took five nominations, including acting nods for Paul Giamatti and Da'Vine Joy Randolph, who are both now considered strong contenders in their respective categories. And it was a good morning for *American Fiction*, a deft satire on race, publishing and Hollywood, which also had five nominations including for stars Jeffrey Wright and Sterling K

Amir visits Al Udeid Air Base



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at Al Udeid Air Base yesterday. His Highness the Amir was given a briefing on the newly-manufactured Ababil F15 QA aircraft and their combat capabilities, visited the aircraft depot and maintenance building.

Amir patronises Al Zaeem Air Academy graduation



From Page 1

The national anthem was played at the beginning of the ceremony.

The commander of the graduates' queue then came forward requesting His Highness the Amir to inspect the queue of the 116 graduates from Qatar, Jordan, and Somalia.

After reciting verses from the Holy Qur'an and the march of the graduates' queue and the military parade, His Highness the Amir honoured the 12 outstanding graduates.

The flag was then handed over from the 11th batch to the 12th batch, the appointment order was read out, and the parade queue left.

The air show began with a number of trainer aircraft belonging to Al Zaeem Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al Attiyah Air Academy, including PC-21, Super Mushshak trainers, and H-125 helicopters.

The Amiri Air Force participated in the air show with F-15, Rafale and Typhoon aircraft, along with transport aircraft C-17 and C-130, and the Apache, NH-90 Agusta helicopters.

At the end of the ceremony, officers of the 11th batch took the oath and recited the academy anthem.



QM selects *Plantoir, Blue* installation for expo

Qatar Museums (QM) has announced the selection of the *Plantoir, Blue* installation to be displayed at Expo Doha 2023, taking place in Al Bidda Park, as part of its ongoing initiative to nurture Qatar's thriving cultural landscape.

The QM said in a statement that it selected *Plantoir, Blue* as an example of Qatar's remarkable collection of works by both local and international artists presented in Qatar's public spaces.

The statement added that the French noun *plantoir* is a pointed hand-tool for making holes in the ground for seeds or young plants, and that the art installation was fabricated from aluminium, fibre-reinforced plastic, and steel by American Pop Art master Claes Oldenburg in 2001.

Plantoir, Blue stands at more than 23' tall and weighs around 2,300lb. Oldenburg (1929-2022) was a Swedish-born American sculptor best known for his public art installations, typically featuring large replicas of everyday objects. - QNA

Expo 2023 Doha celebrates Kyrgyzstan Day

The International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha has celebrated Kyrgyzstan Day in the celebration square at the International Zone, in the presence of HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai, the Kyrgyz Minister of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy Altynbek Maksutov, and a number of government officials and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Qatar.

The celebration included a number of cultural and artistic activities about Kyrgyz culture, with cultural, heritage and artistic performances featuring musicians and singers in traditional costume playing Kyrgyz instruments.

Following the celebration, the participating officials visited the Kyrgyz pavilion, which showcases key tourist attractions and the most prominent sustainability and climate change initiatives.

The Kyrgyz pavilion provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about the new paths that the country is adopting to build the future, and displays its growing economic potential as well as the approach it is taking to benefit from innovation and knowledge and enhance sustainability as an engine for development, in addition to its efforts to develop and promote its vital sectors such as agriculture, tourism and energy.

Visitors can explore sections highlighting the landmarks that reflect the history, traditions and cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people.

A delegation from the Kyrgyz ministry of culture, information, sports and youth policy also visited the Qatar pavilion.

Maksutov praised the magnitude of innovations and initiatives that promote sustainability present at the expo, reflecting the vision of the participating countries to address climate challenges and supporting the agricultural sector in addition to the initiatives that enhance sustainability.

He also praised the efforts by Qatar in organising the expo. - QNA



20th DJWE to feature more than 500 brands

From Page 1

A consistent presence at the DJWE, Education Above All, has confirmed its return this year with collaborations with Brazilian jeweller and designer Silvia Furmanovich, and Qatari designers.

Citing the importance of the DJWE in attracting a large number of international visitors, QT chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji said: "The release of the Qatar National Vision 2024-2030 identified tourism as a major sector within the economic diversification clusters entrusted with contributing to achieving sustainable economic growth."

"Over the past years, Qatar has been able to strengthen its position as a premier tourist destination, working on designing tourism assets, maintaining the excellence of services, providing new tourism services, and designing unique experiences for visitors," he said.

He thanked DJWE partners, including QNB as the official sponsor in this year's exhibition, who he described as "the reason behind its development and success over the last years."

QNB Group chief business officer Yousef

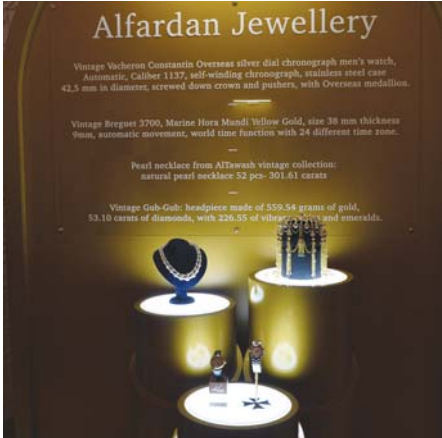


Yousef Mahmoud al-Neama speaking on the occasion. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

Mahmoud al-Neama said: "Our prestigious role as the official sponsor of the 2024 DJWE marks a significant milestone in our commitment to supporting local and international events within the dynamic landscape of the tourism sector."

"It also affirms the long-term sponsorship we value having with the QT," he added. "The DJWE serves as a unique platform, bringing together creativity, craftsmanship, and innovation, elements that resonate deeply with our core values at QNB."

The unveiling of the DJWE's 20th edition branding coincided with the introduction of the "Jewellery Connoisseurs" campaign,



which was showcased at the press conference. It features renowned model and Russian television personality Irina Shayk and former professional footballer and current sports broadcaster Thierry Henry.

It was accompanied by an original score composed by Qatari composer Dana Alfardan.