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### Qatar LNG production uninterrupted

QatarEnergy has confirmed that "Qatar's LNG production continues uninterrupted, and its commitment to ensuring the reliable supply of LNG to customers remains unwavering." In a statement yesterday, QatarEnergy said: "While the ongoing developments in the Red Sea area may impact the scheduling of some deliveries as they take alternative routes, LNG shipments from Qatar are being managed with our valued buyers."

### ICJ ruling on Israel genocide tomorrow

Judges at the International Court of Justice will rule tomorrow (Friday) whether or not they will grant emergency measures against Israel following accusations by South Africa that the Israeli military operation in Gaza is a state-led genocide. The 17-judge panel will hand down its ruling in court on Jan 26 at 1200 GMT. **Page 7**

### Japan seal Asian Cup last 16 spot, Iraq top group



Japan beat Indonesia 3-1 in their final Asian Cup Qatar Group D game yesterday to guarantee a top-two finish and qualify for the last-16 while Iraq went top with maximum points when they sealed a 3-2 win over Vietnam with a 102nd-minute winner. Japan's Ayase Ueda scored twice for Hajime Moriyasu's side, who finished second with six points, while Iraq's Aymen Hussein went top of the tournament's scoring charts. **Sport Pages 1, 3, 4**

Today's  
schedule



Group E:  
S Korea vs Malaysia, 2:30pm  
at Al Janoub Stadium

Group E:  
Jordan vs Bahrain, 2:30pm  
at Khalifa International Stadium

Group F:  
Saudi Arabia vs Thailand, 6pm  
at Education City Stadium

Group F:  
Oman vs Kyrgyzstan, 6pm  
at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium

## Amir patronises Military College graduation

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani patronised the graduation ceremony of the 19th batch of cadets of Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College, at the college's headquarters yesterday. The ceremony was attended by a number of Sheikhs and ministers, leaders of security, military and university colleges, institutes and academies from sisterly and friendly countries, heads of the diplomatic missions accredited to the country, and officers of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Amiri Guard, the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) and the State Security, as well as guardians of the graduates.

After playing the national anthem, the commander of the graduates' queue came forward requesting His Highness the Amir to inspect the queue of the 315 graduates from Qatar, Kuwait, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and Iraq, followed by the march of the graduates' queue and the military parade. Then, His Highness the Amir honoured the outstanding 18 graduates. After that, the flag was handed over from the 19th batch to the 20th batch, and the appointment order was read out. At the end of the ceremony, officers of the 19th batch took the oath and recited the college anthem. (QNA) **Page 12**



### PM opens 27th session of GCC Advisory Board



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani opened in Doha yesterday the work of the 27th session of the Advisory Board of the Supreme Council of the GCC. The opening was attended by GCC Secretary-General Jassim Mohamed al-Budaiwi. **Page 4**

### Sheikha Moza attends QF's Education Day celebration



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF), participated yesterday in a discussion to mark the International Day of Education. Her Highness Sheikha Moza spoke at the opening panel session of a series of activities and events at Education City, held through a collaboration between QF and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), under the theme 'Education is everyone's responsibility'. Also present was HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, Vice-Chairperson and CEO, QF. **PICTURE: Aisha Al-Musallam Page 3**

## 9 die in shelling of UN shelter in Gaza, US slams attack

Reuters  
Gaza/Washington


The United States was concerned by an Israeli attack on a UN training centre sheltering displaced people in Gaza's Khan Younis yesterday, Deputy State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said, repeating Washington's calls for protection of civilians, humanitarian workers and aid facilities. "We deplore today's attack on the UN's Khan Younis training centre," Patel told a news briefing, calling it "incredibly concerning". The Director of UNRWA Affairs in Gaza said that nine Palestinians



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.


were killed and 75 were injured when two tank rounds hit the building that was sheltering around 800 people in the southern Gaza Strip. Palestinian health officials said at least 25,700 Gazans had been killed in the war, including 210 in the previous 24 hours, with thousands more feared lost under the rubble of destroyed buildings. Several sources had earlier said that Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas that runs Gaza had made some progress in weeks of proxy talks on a 30-day ceasefire, during which Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners would be freed and more aid would enter the enclave. In their biggest operation in a

month, Israeli tanks have pushed through Khan Younis, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering after leaving the north - the early focus of the war. Their main target appears to be the area around Khan Younis' long-standing refugee camp, which includes the Nasser and Al-Amal hospitals and also the training centre run by UNRWA. Residents reported fierce gunbattles in the west of the city. The Palestinian Red Cross Society, which runs the Al-Amal hospital, said troops had blockaded its staff inside and imposed a curfew in the area, including its local headquarters, where three displaced individuals had been killed. **Page 7**



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~~44.75~~  
**35.75**

فيليه سمك قنبر  
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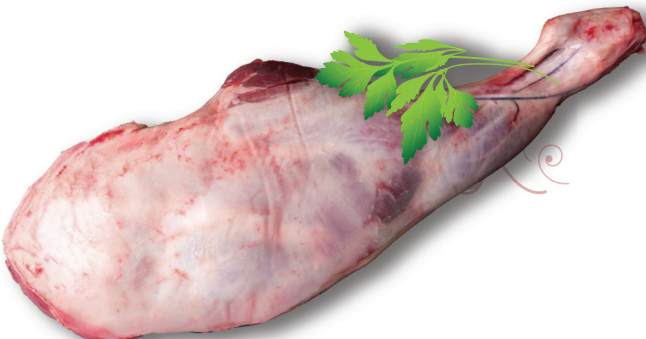
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HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani joins QF's International Day of Education celebration. **Right:** HE Sheikha Hind interacting with a group of students during the event.

# QF marks Education Day

In addressing these challenges, Her Highness Sheikha Moza em-



An activity at the International Day of Education at QF.

The session explored the role of the curricula in developing awareness of local heritage; focused on the necessity of localising education, especially in international schools, because of its impact on identity; and highlighted the role

The discussion was moderated by Maryam al-Hajri, director of Partnerships in the Department of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships in QF's Pre-University Education.

The International Day of Education activities at QF, held in the Arabic language, also showcased educational programmes in an interactive exhibition and visits by secondary school students to QF's partner universities.

# Expo 2023 Doha holds activities for students

He pointed out that the mu-

The event featured the participation of a host of Sudanese officials, directors of departments of Al Rayyan Municipality, alongside more than 120 students of secondary schools from Mohamed Bin Abdul Wahab Independent Secondary School for Boys, First Assalam School for Boys, and Sudanese School for Girls. **(QNA)**



  
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## PM opens 27th session of Advisory Board of Supreme Council of GCC

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani opened in Doha yesterday the work of the 27th session of the Advisory Board of the Supreme Council of the GCC. The opening was attended by GCC Secretary-General Jassim Mohamed al-Budaiwi. In a speech before the session, HE Sheikh Mohamed stressed that Qatar is harnessing its full capabilities to support the tasks of the Advisory Board to implement the mandate of the leaders of the GCC countries to study energy security issues in the Gulf region within the technical alternatives and new systems, and the strategy to protect young people from the danger of drug abuse and addiction in the GCC, in addition to ways to preserve the growth of emerging markets in the Gulf region from the negative effects of



variables affecting the global economy. He pointed out the effective role of the Advisory Board, since its establishment by decision of the Supreme Council in its 18th session of 1997, in supporting the process of joint Gulf action through its appreciated efforts to come up with visions and studies that support various

sectors and fields to reach the desired integration. The core recommendations of the Advisory Board support the economic, industrial, environmental and social areas of co-operation, which enhances the work and achievements of the GCC countries and its institutions, he noted.

HE Sheikh Mohamed pointed out the importance of the Advisory Board and its great impact on supporting collective co-operation programmes and enhancing economic unity, adding that this contributes effectively to developing broader and more comprehensive horizons for the region and realising the



aspirations of its countries and peoples for progress, security and prosperity. He expressed his thanks and appreciation to the GCC secretary-general and the members of the Advisory Board, among others, for their efforts to make the 27th session of the Advisory Board a success. **(QNA)**

## Al-Khulaifi meets Australian official

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with the visiting Deputy Secretary, International Security, Legal and Consular Group, in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Commonwealth of Australia Craig MacLachlan.

The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. HE Dr al-Khulaifi stressed the necessity of continuing the sustainable entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and strengthen-



ing regional and international efforts aimed at an immediate ceasefire. For his part, MacLachlan expressed his country's appreciation for the constant

Qatari mediation efforts to release the prisoners. He also thanked Qatar for its efforts in evacuating Australian citizens from the Gaza Strip. **(QNA)**

### Al-Ansari meets Australian official

Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed bin Mohamed al-Ansari met yesterday with the visiting Deputy Secretary, International Security, Legal and Consular Group, in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Commonwealth of Australia Craig MacLachlan. The meeting discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. **(QNA)**



## GCC Advisory Board submitted over 53 studies for joint action: al-Budaiwi

GCC Secretary-General Jassim Mohamed al-Budaiwi (pictured) has revealed that the Advisory Board of the GCC Supreme Council submitted more than 53 studies, covering multiple topics linked to constructive ideas that support the council's progress and meet its aspirations.

He pointed out that the GCC General Secretariat is following up on studies approved by the Supreme Council to turn them into joint action plans to support the process and meet the directives and aspirations of the council, and the aspirations of the citizens of the GCC states.

During the first meeting of the 27th session of the Advisory Board of the Supreme Council of the GCC states, held in Doha yesterday, al-Budaiwi indicated that the mandate issued by the Supreme Council during the Doha Summit came through studying a number of topics, represented by energy security in the Gulf region, the security of technical alternatives and new systems, a strategy to protect young people from the danger of



drug abuse and addiction in the GCC, and ways to preserve the growing emerging family in the Gulf region from the negative effects of the variables affecting the global economy.

He added that this mandate emphasises the important role played by the advisory body in providing studies that help in dealing with these issues in a manner consistent with the framework of the joint Gulf action system to achieve the targeted matters. He stressed that the GCC General Secretariat sup-

ports the Advisory Board by providing the necessary requirements to enable it to perform its tasks in the desired manner within an integrated work team. He expressed his belief in this solid entity, which is considered an impenetrable fortress on which the GCC states rely to protect their gains, preserve their security and stability, and enhance and develop prosperity under the leadership of the GCC leaders.

Al-Budaiwi appreciated the efforts of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Chairman of the 44th Session of the GCC Supreme Council, through the constant support provided by Qatar to strengthen the process of joint Gulf action in all fields to achieve the aspirations of the leaders, peoples, and the GCC states.

He thanked Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman and his government for the support and assistance they provided to the work of the General Secretariat and joint Gulf work during the last session of the GCC Summit. **(QNA)**

### 'Board provides qualitative views that address region's challenges'

HE the Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Supreme Council of the GCC, Dr Mohamed bin Saleh al-Sada, has praised the tangible support provided by the General Secretariat of the Council to the Advisory Board, which had a significant impact in providing qualitative views on human issues, highlighting the challenges facing the region, and meeting the aspirations of its people.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the sidelines of the first meeting of the Advisory Board in its 27th session held yesterday in Doha, HE Dr al-Sada expressed his hope that this support will continue to enhance the process of joint action in the GCC countries, achieve the aspirations and ambitions of the leaders towards shaping a bright future for

their countries, and achieve comprehensive and sustainable development for their people, hoping that the meeting will achieve the prosperity and stability that the leaders aspire to.

He explained that the Advisory Board was established by the leaders of the GCC countries more than 25 years ago. It consists of 30 members, five for each country, representing the GCC's best minds in knowledge, experience, and competence. They have a long history in various fields, have diverse experiences that enrich any topic raised for discussion and they spare no effort in supporting the council's progress.

He added that the Supreme Council, which held its last session in Doha in December 2023, referred to the board three topics: energy security in the Gulf region,

the security of technical alternatives and new systems, and the strategy to protect the youth from the danger of drug abuse and addiction in the GCC countries and ways to protect the families in the Gulf region from the negative effects of the variables affecting the global economy.

The board has begun studying these topics in all their aspects. Members will be distributed to three committees, each of which will discuss a specific topic. It will then be discussed at the level of the Board with all its members and reports will be written and presented to the Council's leaders for consideration and approval of what they deem appropriate in preparation for its distribution to the concerned authorities to take them into consideration and implement them. **(QNA)**

## Person arrested for unauthorised currency exchange

The Criminal Investigation Department at the General Directorate of Criminal Investigations arrested an individual of Asian descent for conducting unauthorised currency exchange operations. The suspect was caught receiving money in local currency in exchange for providing a certain Asian currency. Upon interrogation, he admitted to the allegations, and cash and financial receipts were found in his possession. Subsequently, the accused and the seized items were referred to the competent authorities to proceed with the legal procedures, the Ministry of Interior announced in a X post.



## Cabinet nod to draft law for district cooling operations

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting at the Amiri Diwan yesterday. After the meeting, HE the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs issued the following statement: The Cabinet considered the topics on its agenda as follows: First, approval of a draft law regulating district cooling works and services and referring it to the Shura Council.

The draft law aims to establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for the district cooling sector in the country, which includes the financial, technical, and legal aspects, and to enable the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corp to organise and

manage district cooling works and services and to set the rules regulating the relationship between the parties to this sector.

Second, approval to join the Co-operative Aviation Security Programme – Middle East (CASP – MID) Phase III.

Third, approval of: 1- A draft memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the financial field between the ministries of finance in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

2- A draft MoU for co-operation in health between the governments of Qatar and Costa Rica.

3- A draft MoU on co-operation in the fields of standardisation, conformity assessment, and metrology between the Qatar General Organisation

for Standards and Metrology (QS) and the State Committee for Standardisation of Belarus (BELST).

Fourth, the Cabinet reviewed the following two topics and took appropriate decisions regarding them: 1- A report on the results of the participation of Qatar delegation, headed by HE the Minister of Public Health, in high-level meetings on pandemic preparedness, prevention, response, and universal health coverage.

2- A report on the results of the participation of Qatar delegation, headed by HE the Minister of Social Development and Family, in the 5th International Conference on Action with Women and Peace, which was held in Korea. **(QNA)**

## EAA unveils activities on International Day of Education

In commemoration of the International Day of Education, the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) has announced a series of impactful activations to emphasise the significance of education and address critical issues facing children and youth globally. Aligned with this year's theme, 'Learning for Lasting Peace', these initiatives reflect EAA Foundation's steadfast commitment to making a positive impact through transformative educational interventions.

In collaboration with Qatar Foundation (QF), the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Unesco, and renowned Qatari photographer Azzam al-Mannai, EAA invites the public to experience a compelling exhibition at Education City. Al-Mannai's poignant images offer a unique perspective on the lives of formerly out-of-school children in Pakistan, illustrating the transformative power of education.

A panel discussion on Education Under Attack, featured development experts including EAA's Educate A Child executive director Dr Mary Joy Pigozzi and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, executive director Maleiha Malik, and students from Sudan and Palestine shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of the right to and protection of education within challenging contexts.

Collaborating with Msheireb Downtown Doha, EAA Foundation presents an installation titled 'The Last Class'. The artwork consists of 110 bags representing each day from the beginning of the war up until International Education Day, symbolising the urgent need for global attention to education in crisis zones.

EAA has released a position paper on the situation in Sudan,



EAA panel discussion on education.

with a focus on policy and law. The publication, titled 'A Lost Generation', addresses the challenges faced by children in Sudan and advocates for urgent policy interventions.

In collaboration with Expo 2023 Doha, EAA hosts a session highlighting the critical connection between education and sustainable peace. The session will feature insights from EAA's PEIC head of law and policy, Siraj Khan, emphasising the role of education in fostering lasting peace.

Another event, conducted at the Expo Innovation Centre is the 'Personality Matters Workshop' in collaboration with Silatech which explores the significance of personality development in the context of education and employment.

Reach Out To Asia, a programme of EAA Foundation, hosts a workshop conducted by Erthna at the EAA Pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha, focusing on innovative approaches to climate education.



**INVITATION FOR CONTRACTOR PRE-QUALIFICATION**

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**Important Notice:**  
Suppliers and Contractors who are already registered with QatarEnergy via Mushtaryat Portal can "Buy Tender Online and download Tender Document" from QatarEnergy website (Mushtaryat Portal).

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		Start Date	End Date					
1	LP24100500	25.01.2024	31.01.2024	19.02.2024	N/A		N/A	

Title of Tender: PRE-QUALIFICATION FOR VISITING CONSULTANT PHYSICIAN SERVICES

Submit Location : Supply Chain Department, Contracts Department (Corporate)  
QatarEnergy Headquarters - Tower 3,  
Building No. 3, Zone No. 63, Street No. 951,  
P.O. Box 3212, Doha, Qatar



# Hessa Jewels set to dazzle at DJWE



Engineer Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Hessa Jewels, originally a participant in the Young Qatari Designers initiative, is set to take centre stage at the 20th edition of the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition (DJWE), joining as a regular exhibitor.

One of Qatar's most-anticipated exhibitions is scheduled to take place from February 5-11 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, bringing together more than 500 brands from 10 countries who will showcase their finest creations.

Established in 2017 by Qatari jewellery designer Sameera al-Mulla, Hessa Jewels, which derives its name from 'pearl', became an integral part of Qatar Museums in 2019, presenting collections such as "Al Battola".

This collection features designs adorned with diamonds and gemstones, a symbol of elegance worn by women.

Hessa Jewels has been gaining increasing acclaim for its unique fusion of traditional and contemporary designs filled with a creative touch.

Notable creations from Hessa Jewels include the Kohl, the Mashmum, and the Regal Palm.

Despite al-Mulla's background of a master's degree from Aberdeen University and a career in the banking sector,



Hessa Jewels has been gaining increasing acclaim for its unique fusion of traditional and contemporary designs filled with a creative touch.

her passion for jewellery shines through in the artistic works of Hessa Jewels.

During a recent press conference, Qatar Tourism's (QT) chief marketing and promotion officer, engineer Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi said that special edition and statement pieces have been carefully curated for this edition of DJWE, with a focus on new brands joining the roster.

He stressed that Hessa Jewels serves as an inspiration for emerging talents and symbolises the success achieved by Qatari designers who started as part of the initiative.

Over the years, the Young Qatari Designers initiative reached new heights, with its jewellery designs and creations

gaining widespread popularity. It provides a platform for Qatari designers to stand alongside some of the most prestigious local and international brands, fostering an environment where designers inspire and are inspired.

QT, through DJWE, has been a catalyst for the success of Qatari designers. Many participants from previous years have evolved into prominent jewellers, contributing to the industry's growth.

The roster of Qatari designers participating in this year's DJWE includes Al Ghla Jewellery, De Trove, Ghand Jewellery, H Jewellery, Kaltham's Pavilion, Midad Jewellery, Nouf Jewellery, Thameen Jewellery and Trifoglio.

## Truffle market opens at Souq Waqif



Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi

The desert auction and exhibition of desert truffles have been moved from Al Wakra Central Market to Souq Waqif, Doha, to make it more easily accessible for all, said Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi, general supervisor of Souq Waqif desert truffles exhibition and auction.



He told local Arabic daily *Arrayah* that the auction takes place daily at the Eastern Arena of Souq Waqif from 8am-12.30pm or until stocks last. Besides, there is an exhibition with 10 outlets for retail sales to the public, from 8am-9.30pm or until stocks last.

Al-Suwaidi explained that due to limited supply, only 500kg of desert truffles are sold daily. But he expects more supply soon, up to five tonnes daily. The supply mainly is from Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Syria. The local production is minimal, he added.

## Qatar Tourism's Ambassador Programme to honour pioneers within local community

Qatar Tourism (QT) recently launched the Ambassador Programme which is designed to honour pioneers within the local community.

The initiative offers a platform for budding entrepreneurs, artists and adventurers in Qatar to share their stories with QT, aimed at fostering collaboration on initiatives and projects.

According to QT, the programme aims to increase awareness among residents and visitors about the latest develop-

ments in the tourism industry and the products and services it offers.

The inaugural session "The Right Arm" took place at the Feeh Al'Aafia restaurant at Katara - the Cultural Village, in the presence of HE QT Chairman Saad bin Ali al-Kharji. During the opening session, entrepreneurs were invited to discuss the current state of the tourism industry and to share their thoughts and experiences.

The upcoming meetings are expected to cover a range of topics, including, but

not limited to, business, arts, entertainment and adventure.

"We aim to host productive discussions with bright and ambitious individuals of the country and to provide a platform for young talents to demonstrate their ideas, innovations, and proposals. We believe it is crucial to accentuate Qatar's tourism through the initiatives of young individuals who hold both talent and potential for the growth of the country," al-Kharji said.

### Qatar Charity honours toppers in educational programme



On the conclusion of the second season of the Hayyuhum programme, Qatar Charity Center for Community Development in Al Khor organised a honouring ceremony for outstanding participants and winners in the cultural and sport competitions, Qur'an memorisation and public speaking. Some 50 students in the 12-16 age-group took part in the programme held from October to December 2023.



Indian ambassador Vipul along with other dignitaries inaugurates the festival.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

## Rawabi Group launches 'Flavours of India' festival



A display of food items in the colours of both Qatar and Indian national flags.

Rawabi Group of Companies has launched the 'Flavours of India' festival at Rawabi Hypermarket Izghawa in celebration of the 75th Republic Day of India.

The celebration was inaugurated by Indian ambassador Vipul, Al Rawabi Group managing director M P Mohamed Abdullah, executive director Ajmal Abdullah, general manager Kannu Baker in the presence of a number of guests.

A cake-cutting ceremony marked the occasion, with ambassador Vipul briefing the audience about special products and highlighting the importance of incorporating millets into daily food habits.

The envoy, in his address, emphasised the growing commercial ties between Qatar and India. He praised Rawabi Group of Companies for its pivotal role in fostering the Qatar-India commercial relationship.

The festival aims to showcase the cultural heritage of India, offering a unique and immersive experience to shoppers. Rawabi has transformed its hypermarket into an "Indian Street," resembling a bazaar-style setting where every corner displays typical Indian products, including Indian food, spices, fashion accessories and more.

Over 700 Indian products are highlighted in special displays, with a dedi-

cated 'Food Bazaar' offering traditional Indian cuisines and street food. The event also features a mass showcase of millet and millet-based products.

Ajmal Abdullah said: "Rawabi Group is at the forefront of India-Qatar trade, importing a range of Indian products through our extensive network of food sourcing and logistics centres across India. 'Flavours of India' is a testament to our commitment to providing shoppers with an amazing Indian shopping experience."

"As we unveil the 'Flavours of India' festival, we invite you to embark on a culinary and cultural journey that transcends borders. This fest is a testament to Rawabi Group's commitment to delivering diverse, authentic experiences that resonate with our valued customers," added Baker.

The festival showcases a diverse range of food products, agri-produce, meat and trendy high-street fashion. Running until January 30, "Flavours of India" spans across all Rawabi stores in Qatar and online.

As an added attraction, Rawabi is presenting the '10, 20, 30' offer, featuring a vast array of products, valid until February 7, offering "unbeatable prices on groceries, fresh food, household essentials, electronics, garments, toys, and more."

## Indian Doctors Club of Qatar Announces New Leadership Team



The Indian Doctors Club (IDC) of Qatar introduced its newly elected office bearers during a vibrant ceremony on January 12, 2024, held at the Retaj Salwa in Doha.

A special moment occurred when the IDC unveiled a commemorative souvenir and coffee table book celebrating twenty-five years in Qatar. The first copy was handed over by HE Mr. Vipul to Dr. Vaibhav Tandale.





## AFC Asian Cup festivities draw crowds at Katara



The various culture, heritage and entertainment activities accompanying the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 continue to draw big crowds at Katara - the Cultural Village. A number of art exhibitions and shows that focus on the cultures of the participating countries are among the attractions. The activities will go on until February 10, when the tournament ends.



## Kuwait pavilion holds conference on private sector's role in sustainability



The Kuwait pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha for Horticulture organised a conference entitled, “The role of the private sector towards sustainability”, in co-operation with Gulf Bank, Kuwait Finance House, and Equate Petrochemical Company.

The conference, which came as part of the participation of Kuwait in Expo 2023 Doha, aims to highlight the efforts of Kuwaiti institutions in spreading environmental awareness and to shed light on the role of the private sector in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

On this occasion, Commissioner-General of Kuwait Pavilion, Engineer Sameera al-Kandari, said that this conference emanates from the belief that the path to achieving sustainability and environmental balance is the combined efforts of the public and private sectors, civil society and individuals. She noted that Kuwait pays special attention to achieving sustainability, and that it is not possible to achieve development and wellbeing for citizens without seeking to preserve and sustain environmental and human resources.

She added that her country has invested in multiple environmental development projects, and has sought to enact laws and legislation that encourage environmental preservation and sustainability, including Environmental Protection Law No 42.

Sameera al-Kandari praised Qatar's hosting of the expo, which



is being held for the first time in the Middle East. It is an ideal opportunity for different countries and entities to share sustainable and innovative environmental solutions, to achieve a better future for the coming generations.

She indicated that this conference reviews environmental policies and the various efforts of the private sector to participate in achieving sustainability and demonstrate their social responsibility as part of Kuwait's participation in the Doha Horticultural Expo.

She stressed Kuwait's keenness to enrich its experience by organising lectures, workshops, and conferences that fall under the expo's slogan “Green Desert, Better Environment” and its four sub-themes: modern agriculture, technology, innovation, environmental awareness, and sustainability.

Sameera al-Kandari emphasised the efforts of various parties in Kuwait in combating desertification and preserving biodiversity. In turn, a representative of Gulf Bank, Ahmed al-Amir said that their participation in the conference aims to highlight the role of the private

sector in sustainable development and to review the bank's efforts in achieving sustainable development goals, as they in the bank have allocated a special committee for sustainability to present a clear plan for achieving these goals. This can be done at the environmental, social, or governance level.

For his part, Vice-President of Technical Services at Equate Petrochemical Company, Dr Salman al-Ajmi, spoke about the importance of reducing carbon emissions from the source, based on their sense of responsibility towards the environment. He explained that the company's initiatives revolve around reducing emissions, minimising the carbon footprint, and improving the quality of life.

Abdulaziz al-Dhiyab from Kuwait Finance House confirmed that Kuwait Finance House was keen to conclude various partnerships, agreements, and initiatives in the field of sustainability and environmental preservation with many governmental and private agencies in Kuwait, and to participate in environmental initiatives and workshops and other initiatives. (QNA)

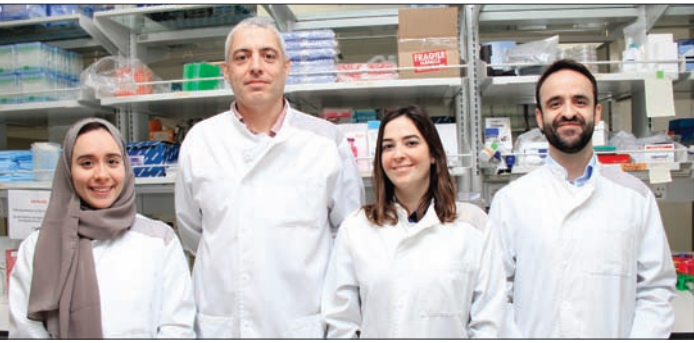
## Sidra study finds highly processed foods can cause brain abnormalities

Researchers at Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, in collaboration with teams from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) and Monell Chemical Senses Center (USA), have published a groundbreaking study in the journal *Molecular Metabolism*, demonstrating how the short-term consumption of highly processed diets can impair brain metabolism and the sense of smell (olfactory) functions in mice.

Led by Principal Investigator and A/Director of the Human Disease Modeling and Therapeutics Division at Sidra Medicine Dr Luis R Saraiva, the research team undertook the study to explore the short-term impact of consuming highly processed foods, especially in light of increasing global obesity rates and health concerns.

The study involved an elaborate experimental design where mice, over a period of less than two months were fed three distinct diets: a standard grain-based chow diet, a highly processed control diet, and a highly processed high-fat diet.

Researchers conducted a comprehensive series of tests, including behavioural and metabolic phenotyping, electro-olfactogram recordings, brain glucose metabolism imaging, and mitochondrial



respirometry. Advanced (ribonucleic acid) RNA-sequencing was performed on samples from the nose and various brain regions to understand the genetic impact.

Dr Melanie Makhoul, co-first author of the paper from Sidra Medicine said: “Our study found that even short periods of highly processed food consumption are sufficient to cause early olfactory and brain abnormalities, which has the potential to alter food choices and influence the risk of developing metabolic disease. The findings are a stark reminder of the swift and adverse effects that processed foods can have on key biological systems. It also highlights the potential risks associated with even short-term indulgence in processed foods, a concern given how processed foods have become a staple in

many household diets.” The study, co-funded by Sidra Medicine and a grant from Qatar National Research Fund, adds to the existing literature on the health impacts of processed foods and raises essential questions about dietary choices in contemporary society.

“Sidra Medicine is renowned for its commitment to pioneering research and innovation and the results of this particular study are a wake-up call. They show how quickly diets high in processed foods can lead to changes in brain functions, which could potentially influence behaviours and food choices. This research will have significant implications for dietary guidelines, public health policies and future research directions in nutrition and neurology,” said Dr Saraiva. (QNA)

## HMC's Acute Care Surgery section hosts annual meeting

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)'s Acute Care Surgery (ACS) section held its annual report meeting recently to discuss activities across different facilities affiliated with the Surgery Department, represented by chairman Dr Mohamed Abu Nada, also acting deputy chief medical officer, Surgical Services.

The meeting was inaugurated in the presence of Dr Abdullah al-Ansari, chief medical officer, Dr Mohamed al-Akkad, vice-chair, Surgery Department and Dr Ahmad Zarour, head of Corporate ACS.

Over 50 hospital directors and heads of surgery across various medical specialities within HMC attended the meeting, which featured a presentation of the programme's vision, diverse tasks and an overview of accomplishments



The meeting was attended by over 50 hospital directors and heads of surgery from HMC.

and operations conducted by ACS at HMC.

Dr Zarour, presented achievements and successful operations alongside Hamad General Hospital, Al Khor Hospital, Hazm Mebaireek Hospital, The Cuban Hospital and Aisha Bint Hamad Al-Attiah Hospital.

The meeting also included a

brief presentation of clinical and non-clinical quality domains in Acute Care Surgery at HMC. ACS was launched in 2015 to offer specialised non-trauma emergency general surgery services. The ACS team provides advanced surgical services 24/7 to ensure the best and most effective patient care at HMC facilities.

## QU's career development camp for students concludes

Qatar University (QU)'s Student Career Development Association, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC), concluded the first career development camp for university students.

Sponsored by Ahlibank, the camp aimed to empower graduating students by equipping them with essential skills to facilitate a smooth transition into the job market.

Abdulrahman Telfat, director of Qualifying and Skill Development at the Ministry of Labour, emphasised the camp's objective of establishing direct communi-

cation with graduating students to aid their entry into the job market.

He described the camp as an opportunity for participants to identify in-demand specialisations and the requisite skills to enhance their qualifications for the job market.

Mohamed al-Hafiz, president of QU's Student Association, said the camp featured 14 training workshops, practical activities and simulations of job interviews, offering students insights into the most sought-after specialisations in the job market.

Saad al-Kharji, career programmes and services manager at the QCDC, said: “The turnout for



the camp demonstrates students' awareness of the importance of these types of skills and complementary training to enhance their

academic qualifications.”

Saad al-Kaabi, head of human resources at Ahlibank, said: “Through our job interviews,

we have observed that resumes are not always organised, and sometimes applicants are not adequately prepared. This camp focused on developing these skills. I would like to thank QU and the Ministry of Labour for their outstanding performance.”

In a statement, Dr Abdulla al-Mulla, director of Student Activities Department, at QU, said the camp aimed to instil the correct culture of career development among university students.

Rizwan Ahmed al-Sheikh, a third-year computer science student, said: “The camp taught me skills that I did not expect to be beneficial in the workplace. It

shed light on skills we are familiar with in our daily lives, such as leadership, which is crucial even in self-leadership, not just leading a team.”

Yousef Hussein, a mathematics major student from the College of Education, said: “The camp is incredibly beneficial for any student, whether at QU or any other institution. It offered crucial workshops for any graduate approaching the job market or trying for self-improvement.”

There were 200 participants in the camp and more than 100 interviews conducted. A total of 43 participants were accepted according to camp criteria.



# Turkiye, Iran agree on need to avoid escalating Mideast tensions

Reuters  
Ankara

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said he and Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi agreed at a meeting yesterday on the need to avoid steps that could further threaten Middle East stability three months into the Gaza war.

Turkiye, which supports a two-state solution to the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has harshly criticised Israel for its attacks on Gaza, called for an immediate ceasefire, and backed legal steps for Israel to be tried for genocide.

Iran leads what it calls the Axis of Resistance, a loose coalition that includes Hamas and armed groups around the region that have militarily confronted Israel and its Western allies. It has voiced support for Hamas.

Speaking at a news conference after meeting Raisi in Ankara, Erdogan said the two leaders had discussed ending Israel's "inhumane" attacks on Gaza and the need to take steps for a fair and lasting peace in the region.

"We agreed on the importance of refraining from steps that will further threaten the security and stability of our region," he said, adding the two neighbours had also agreed to continue co-opera-

tion against cross-border militant threats.

In a sign of the conflict widening, US and British strikes hit Houthi targets in Yemen this month, in response for attacks on Red Sea shipping. Erdogan slammed the strikes as a disproportionate use of force.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan also said last week he had spoken to his Iranian and Pakistani counterparts after the neighbours traded cross-border fire, and called for calm.

Raisi accused the US of supporting what he called Israel's crimes against Palestinians in Gaza and repeated Tehran's appeal for some regional countries

to cut their economic and political relations with the "Zionist regime".

"What is happening in Palestine and Gaza is a crime against humanity... and the US and the West are supporting these crimes," he said.

"Cutting economic and political ties with this regime can certainly have an impact on the Zionist regime to end its crimes."

Raisi had twice postponed his visit, initially planned for November, over scheduling issues and attacks in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman. Yesterday, the two leaders chaired a meeting of a Turkish-Iranian business council and signed various agreements.



Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shakes hands with Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi at the end of their joint press conference in Ankara, yesterday.

# ICJ to rule on Gaza emergency steps in Israel genocide case tomorrow

Reuters  
Amsterdam

Judges at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) will rule tomorrow whether or not they will grant emergency measures against Israel following accusations by South Africa that the Israeli military operation in Gaza is a state-led genocide.

The United Nations' top court issued a statement yesterday saying the 17-judge panel will hand down its ruling in court on Jan 26 at 1200 GMT.

Earlier this month, in two days of hearings, South Africa asked the ICJ, also known as the World Court, to order an emergency suspension of Israel's devastating military campaign in the Palestinian enclave.

Israel dismissed the genocide allegations as "grossly distorted" and said it had a right to defend itself and was targeting Hamas fighters, not Palestinian civil-



People pray next to dead bodies, including those of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes in Khan Yunis, after they were brought into Al-Najjar hospital, amid the ongoing conflict, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

ians. In the ruling tomorrow, the ICJ will not deal with the main question if Israel is committing genocide.

The court will just look at possible emergency measures, meant as a kind of restraining order to prevent a dispute from getting worse while the court looks at the full

case, which usually takes years.

If the ICJ does decide on issuing emergency measures it is not bound to order exactly what South Africa asked for.

Rulings by the court are legally binding and without appeal, but the court has no way to enforce them.

## Qatar chairs first meeting of GCC-EU regional security dialogue

Qatar yesterday presided over the first meeting of the regional security dialogue between the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries and the European Union (EU). Held at the headquarters of the GCC General Secretariat in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the meeting was attended by representatives of the GCC countries and the General Secretariat.

The meeting was chaired on behalf of Qatar as the current holder of the presidency, by HE Director of Policy and Planning Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Khalid bin Fahad al-Khater, while the EU side was headed by Deputy Secretary General for Peace, Security and Defence Charles Fries. Representatives of security and military agencies and institutions in the GCC countries and the General Secretariat took part in the meeting.

The meeting discussed ways to enhance GCC-EU co-operation to respond to regional challenges, intensify work to strengthen defence and security structures and exchange experiences, and explored available opportunities to increase co-operation in peace and security projects.

During the meeting, the two sides also exchanged views on issues of common interest, including the war on Gaza and the regional escalation in the Gulf region, the Middle East, Europe and the Horn of Africa.

In an opening speech, HE Dr al-Khater affirmed that more than 100 days after the outbreak of the war on Gaza, the world is witnessing one of the bloodiest conflicts, adding that it is clear that the consequences of the Israeli attacks on Gaza and the continuation of the war are dire, and they have repercussions on regional security in the Gulf

region and the Middle East and even at the international level, and they undermine the joint ability to manage the current and resulting future threats.

He pointed out that the GCC and the EU represent two strong blocs that can have a decisive influence on current events. With the awareness of the scale of the challenges, there is an opportunity especially in light of the agreement on the importance of maintaining a system based on rules, justice and freedom, he noted.

HE al-Khater stressed the necessity of reaching a peaceful settlement of the Palestine cause in all its aspects on the basis of international law and UN resolutions, ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a two-state solution in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. **(QNA)**

# Activists unfurl banner at Madrid museum to demand Gaza ceasefire

Reuters  
Madrid

Rights and environmental activists demanding a ceasefire in Gaza unfurled a giant picture of a Palestinian child crying for help above the entrance to Madrid's Reina Sofia museum, home to Pablo Picasso's painting "Guernica" that depicts the horrors of war.

In yesterday's action, global campaigning group Greenpeace and the Unmute Gaza movement that supports photojournalists reporting from the war zone used a banner with an illustration by US artist Shepard Fairey based on an image taken by Gazan photographer Belal Khaled.

"Can you hear us?" read the caption, with "Ceasefire now" emblazoned below. Police and firefighters watched on without intervening.

Israel launched its assault on Gaza in the first week of October in response to a storming by the Hamas fighters. Since then, more than 25,000 Palestinians have



Greenpeace activists unveil the illustration "Obey" by US artist Shepard Fairey, which depicts a photograph by Gazan photojournalist Belal Khaled of a Palestinian child crying for help, next to a banner reading: "Ceasefire now", outside Reina Sofia museum, in Madrid, Spain, yesterday.

been killed, according to Gaza health authorities, with the assault turning much of the enclave to a wasteland.

Picasso's mural-sized work housed at the museum, inspired

by a Nazi air raid on the northern Spanish town of Guernica in 1937 that killed as many as 1,600 people, is widely considered one of the anti-war masterpieces of 20th century art.

## Blinken presses Congress to extend Aids fight mandate

AFP  
Lagos

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on a visit to Africa called on Congress to overcome an impasse and reauthorise a major two-decade plan against HIV/Aids, saying lives were at stake.

In Lagos, Blinken met doctors at the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, which has been at the forefront of anti-Aids programmes in Africa's most populous country.

The institute has been supported by PEPFAR, the massive investment in anti-Aids treatment launched in 2003 that US officials credit with saving 25mn lives, mostly in Africa.

Blinken said that the work of the Nigerian institute, which also assists other African nations, showed the importance of extending PEPFAR "quickly".

"It is literally a matter of saving more lives, changing more

lives, dealing once and for all with HIV/Aids," Blinken told reporters outside the clinic.

Blinken, who also heard about the institute's work against Covid-19, said PEPFAR helps "strengthen public health systems, so that when the next epidemic comes along — and it will — we and countries around the world are in a much better place to deal with it quickly and effectively." "The stakes are real. They couldn't be higher," he said.

Former Republican president George W Bush, best known internationally for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, considers PEPFAR, which stands for the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief, one of his greatest achievements.

The programme until recently has enjoyed near universal support in the US Congress.

But lawmakers have failed formally to renew the programme for another five years due to the hot-button US issue of abortion.

## OFFICIAL Kuwait Amiri Order assigns PM as Deputy Amir until naming of Crown Prince

An Amiri Order was issued yesterday assigning Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohamed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah as Deputy Amir while the Amir of Kuwait was out of the country.

The measure would remain valid until a Crown Prince was named, QNA reported from Kuwait.

The Order stipulates that the Prime Minister inform the National Assembly of this order and that it takes effect once published in the official gazette, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported.

The Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah issued on Jan 4 an Amiri Order appointing Sheikh Dr Mohamed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah as prime minister.

## HEALTH Namibia's president to travel to US for cancer treatment

Namibia's President Hage Geingob will travel to the United States to undergo cancer treatment, the presidency has announced, Reuters reported from Windhoek.

A regular medical check-up earlier this month revealed the 82-year old head of state had cancer, his office said last week, without giving details about his condition. The president has accepted an offer by scientists and medical professionals in Los Angeles, California, to undergo novel therapy to deal with the cancerous cells, the presidency said in a statement yesterday.

## TRAGEDY Mali gold mine collapse kills more than 70

More than 70 people have been killed after a tunnel collapsed at a Malian gold mining site last week, local sources said yesterday, the latest disaster in a region prone to mining accidents, AFP reported from Bamako. Mali, which is among the world's poorest countries, is one of Africa's leading gold producers.

# Gaza florist selling red roses aims to spread joy amid devastation

Reuters  
Rafah

Hussam Abdulhadi walks around tent camps and outside hospitals in Rafah, southern Gaza, selling freshly picked red roses to try to comfort Palestinians displaced by an Israeli offensive that has pummelled much of the enclave to rubble.

"I am here selling flowers to spread joy among people during the war in the hope that this changes their mood, makes them happy and puts a smile on their faces," said Abdulhadi, who like most Gazans has himself been displaced by the conflict.

He said many of his customers bought the flowers for injured family members, for relatives in hospital or for those who have lost their homes during the Israeli military offensive. "This raises the spirits and brings optimism after what we witnessed from war, destruction, and the destruction of homes," said resident Wafaa al-Arraj, clutching a red rose.

At least 25,700 Palestinians have been



Hussam Abdulhadi, a displaced Palestinian florist, sells flowers amid the ongoing conflict, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, in this still image taken from a video, yesterday. **Right:** Palestinian teenager Rafat al-Satari, a kidney patient, holds a red flower handed out to him by florist Hussam Abdulhadi, in Rafah.



killed and nearly 64,000 injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October first week, the territory's health ministry said yesterday. The strikes are in retaliation for a storming into Israel in the first week of October by Hamas fighters.

The tiny coastal territory's population

now live packed into communal shelters in UN schools or in makeshift tent camps.

Abdulhadi obtains his flowers from a plant nursery in Rafah and sells them for the equivalent of about 80 US cents apiece. But he gave one for free to Rafat al-Satari, a 16-year-old kidney dialysis patient being

wheeled by his sister out of a nearby hospital. "(The rose) has improved his mood, given him hope," said his sister Mahar al-Satari, adding their mother and two siblings had been killed by Israeli shelling.

"God willing, Rafat will hold on to hope, especially after what he has been through."



# Shop fire kills 39 in central Chinese province of Jiangxi, nine injured

AFP  
Beijing

At least 39 people died and nine were receiving treatment for injuries yesterday after a fire broke out at a store in the central Chinese province of Jiangxi, state media reported. “At 3:24pm on January 24, a fire broke out on the below-ground level at a store... in Xinyu, Jiangxi,” the country’s

state broadcaster CCTV reported. “Up until now, the accident has resulted in the death of 39 people, injuries to nine people, and others are still trapped,” state broadcaster CCTV reported just after 8:00pm local time (1200 GMT). The report did not specify a precise cause of the fire, or how many people were still in danger. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for “resolute containment” of deadly accidents in the coun-

try, in a statement made after the fire. Xi “issued important instructions... requiring resolute containment of the frequent occurrence of various safety accidents to ensure the security of people’s lives and property and overall social stability”, CCTV reported. Video footage released by CCTV of the scene showed several fire trucks and other emergency response vehicles lined up across the street from a row of businesses.

State-backed outlet *The Global Times* posted a statement by an “emergency command” in the city, which had been set up by local officials after the fire broke out. “At present, on-site search and rescue work is still ongoing, and the cause of the accident is also being investigated,” the statement said. Footage from the scene shared on social media by government-run outlet *The Paper* showed huge clouds of smoke billowing into the

sky as crowds of people looked on from a distance. Emergency response vehicles could be seen nearby as security staff told people not to go any nearer. Fires and other deadly accidents are common in China due to lax safety standards and poor enforcement of regulations. Yesterday’s incident comes just five days after a late-evening blaze at a school in central China’s Henan province killed 13. In November, 26 people

died and dozens were sent to hospital after a fire at a coal company office in northern China’s Shanxi province. The month before, an explosion at a barbecue restaurant in northwestern China left 31 dead and prompted official pledges of a nationwide campaign to promote workplace safety. In April, a hospital fire in Beijing killed 29 people and forced desperate survivors to jump out of windows to escape.

# China seals closer Uzbek ties

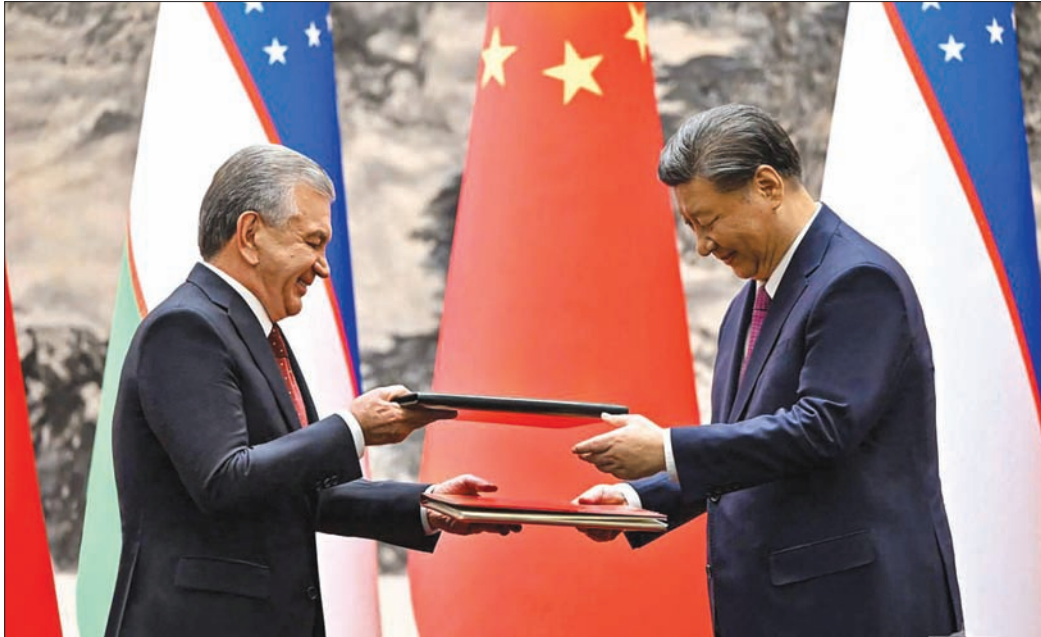


Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Chinese President Xi Jinping holding a meeting in Beijing.

Reuters  
Beijing

China yesterday upgraded its diplomatic ties with Uzbekistan and offered closer co-operation across a range of projects, including a Central Asia railway that would open up a new trade route as shippers shun an existing overland link via Russia. The two countries have elevated their ties to an “all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership” from a “comprehensive strategic partnership” previously, China’s official news agency Xinhua reported, as Chinese Presi-

dent Xi Jinping met his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Beijing. In an “all-weather” partnership, both sides maintain friendly relations at all times regardless of the international and domestic political landscape. China has a similar “all-weather” partnership with Belarus, another nation which Beijing views as strategic and has increasingly wrought closer ties. China said it was ready to expand co-operation with Uzbekistan across the new energy vehicle industry chain, as well as in major projects such as photovoltaics, wind power and hydro-



Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Chinese President Xi Jinping attending a signing ceremony following their talks in Beijing.

power. Notably, China called for work on the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway to start “as soon as possible”, after officially sealing closer ties with Uzbekistan. The project has been discussed since the 1990s but gained new importance after the invasion of Ukraine prompted sanctions on

Russia which resulted in shippers between China and Europe avoiding sending goods overland via Russia. In the long term, the Central Asia route could potentially help cut freight transport times between China and Europe. But financing and technical details for the China-Kyrgyzstan-

Uzbekistan railway project remain unclear, as is its actual route across the three countries. It is also unclear how goods would reach Europe from the western terminus of the proposed railway; potentially they could be transported via the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus or overland via the Middle East.

# N Korea fires cruise missiles off west coast, Seoul says

Reuters  
Seoul

North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles towards the sea off its west coast yesterday, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said, in the latest sign of heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula. The missiles were fired at around 7am and the launches were being analysed by South Korean and US intelligence, the JCS said in a statement. It did not specify how many missiles were fired but said further activities by the nuclear-armed North were being monitored. While UN Security Council sanctions targeting the North’s weapons development do not bar testing of conventionally armed cruise missiles, South Korea’s defence minister Shin Won-sik condemned the launches as a serious threat to his country. During a visit to the 17th Fighter Wing, an F-35 stealth fighter unit, Shin also warned that the North Korean leader’s regime would face its demise if it started a war. “If Kim Jong-un makes the worst choice and starts a war, you as an invisible force that protects South Korea should become the vanguard in removing the leadership of the enemy as soon as possible,” Shin said. The latest firing of missiles by Pyongyang comes as the South Korean Navy’s special warfare unit was taking part in training along the east coast in Gangwon Province bordering the North for 10 days. The training was aimed at strengthening operational readiness following North Korea’s recent artillery firing near a disputed maritime border and weapons tests, the JCS said. Pyongyang said it tested a solid-fuel hypersonic missile with intermediate-range earlier this month in a move that was condemned by the United States, South Korea and Japan. The North’s state media also said last week the country conducted a test of its nuclear-capable underwater attack drones, in a protest against joint military drills by South Korea, the United States and Japan. The isolated North has also demolished a major monument in its capital that symbolised the goal of reconciliation with South Korea on the orders of leader Kim, 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.



People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul yesterday.

## Ex-MFP leader reinstated as MP in Thailand



Former Move Forward Party leader Pita Limjaroenrat reacts on the day Thailand’s Constitutional Court delivers its verdict on his media shareholding case, in Bangkok. Thailand’s Constitutional Court yesterday cleared thwarted prime ministerial candidate Limjaroenrat of violating election law in a case that could have seen him banned from politics, reinstating him as an MP. The 43-year-old led the progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) to win the most votes in last year’s general election, but was blocked from becoming prime minister after he was suspended as a lawmaker in July.



# UN experts urge rights reforms in Bangladesh

AFP  
Geneva

UN experts yesterday urged Bangladesh to carry out major human rights reforms to reverse “repressive trends” following controversial elections that were boycotted by the opposition. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was sworn in for a fifth term on January 11. Her ruling Awami League party won nearly three-quarters of elected seats in parliament, with allied parties and friendly inde-

pendent candidates making up nearly all the remainder. Hasina has presided over breakneck economic growth in a country once beset by grinding poverty, but her government has been accused of rampant human rights abuses and a ruthless crackdown on dissent. The UN experts said they were “alarmed” at reports of “widespread attacks, harassment and intimidation of civil society, human rights defenders, journalists and political activists, which marred the recent elections”. The experts included the special

rapporteurs on freedom of assembly, on the independence of judges, on human rights defenders and on freedom of opinion. Special rapporteurs are unpaid experts mandated by the UN Human Rights Council as part of its fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms. They are independent and do not speak for the United Nations. UN human rights chief Volker Turk has previously said that mass arrests, threats, enforced disappearances, blackmailing and surveillance were all methods reportedly used by law enforcement

officials in the months leading up to the January 7 vote. He also lamented reported acts of political violence, including arson attacks allegedly committed by opposition groups, and said around 25,000 opposition supporters had been arrested. The experts yesterday said that they had written to the Bangladeshi government urging full investigations into the alleged numerous human rights violations. They called for the immediate and unconditional release of all civil society and political activists detained without charge.

# Sri Lanka passes new law to regulate online content

Reuters  
Colombo

Sri Lanka’s lawmakers yesterday passed a bill to regulate online content, the speaker of the parliament announced, a law which opposition politicians and activists allege will muzzle free speech. The Online Safety Bill proposes jail terms for content that a five-member commission considers illegal and making social media platforms such as Alphabet’s Google, Meta’s Facebook and X, formerly known as Twitter, liable for such content on their platforms. President Ranil Wickremesinghe’s government says the bill is aimed at battling cyber crime including child abuse, data theft and online fraud. “Sri Lanka had 8,000 cyber crimes complaints last year. We all agree that we need laws to address these issues. This is why we are bringing this law,” Public Security Minister Tiran Alles said on Tuesday while introducing the bill in the house. “It is not to suppress the media or the opposition ... Any complaint will be taken up by the commission, who will be appointed by the president and they will decide how to act.” The bill was passed with a majority of 46 votes in the 225-member house, the speaker announced. 108 votes were in favour while 62 members voted against it. The Asian Internet Coalition (AIC), which has Apple, Amazon, Google and Yahoo as members, warned Sri Lanka that the bill could impact investment in the country’s IT industry and called for extensive amendments to it. “We unequivocally stand by our position that the Online Safety Bill, in its current form, is unworkable and would undermine potential growth and foreign direct investment into Sri Lanka’s digital economy,” the AIC said in a statement. Last year, the United Nations human rights office (OHCHR) said the law “could potentially criminalise nearly all forms of legitimate expression” while New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) said it would “seriously threaten” the right to freedom of expression in the country. “Sri Lanka has engaged with AIC and consulted with stakeholders since November. We are open to considering fresh changes and bringing them as amendments to the legislation at a later date,” Alles said before the debate on the bill concluded yesterday and voting was called. A group of activists and opposition members protested against the legislation outside parliament. Harsha de Silva, a lawmaker of Sri Lanka’s opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya, told parliament that it was not right to hold social media platforms accountable.



London calling!



People pass souvenir stalls at Westminster Pier river boat stop, with the London Eye tourist attraction in the background, in central London, yesterday.

# British PM defends Royal Mail delivery obligation

AFP  
London

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak yesterday pledged to maintain Royal Mail's obligation to deliver letters six days a week, despite calls for less frequent service to slash costs.

Communications regulator Ofcom earlier yesterday proposed that the former state-monopoly cut delivery to five days, or even three days per week, potentially saving the company hundreds of millions of pounds.

Its conclusions followed a report last year by British MPs that showed Royal Mail had "systemically failed" to meet its Monday-Saturday delivery requirement, as it prioritises parcels in the age of the internet. "I agree about the importance of the Royal Mail's universal service obligation, and... we remain absolutely committed to ensuring that it remains as it is," Sunak told MPs when asked about Ofcom's proposals.

The regulator said "the universal postal service risks becoming unsustainable as people send fewer letters and receive more parcels, meaning reform is necessary to secure...(the) long-term future" of the postal operator set up more than 500 years ago.

Ofcom proposed "reducing the number of letter delivery days in the service from six to five or three", adding that this "would require government and parliament to change primary legislation".

It estimated that Royal Mail could save up to £200mn (\$255mn)



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak leaves from 10 Downing Street in central London, to take part in the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons.

if deliveries of letters were reduced to five days - and as much as £650mn for a reduction to three days.

Royal Mail parent, International Distributions Services, has long called for a shakeup of the universal service obligation (USO).

"The lack of action means that we are now facing a much more serious situation," IDS chief executive Martin Seidenberg said yesterday. Ofcom noted that other European countries had reduced the frequency of delivery or extended delivery times for letters - including Sweden in 2018, Belgium twice since 2020, and Norway and Denmark twice each since 2016.

The watchdog will consult on its proposals, which include also suggestions on prices paid to send letters, before providing an update in the summer. "Postal workers are

part of the fabric of our society and are critical to communities up and down the country," Ofcom chief executive Melanie Dawes said yesterday.

"But we're sending half as many letters as we did in 2011, and receiving many more parcels. The universal service hasn't changed since then, it's getting out of date and will become unsustainable if we don't take action," she added.

Royal Mail's USO stipulates that it must deliver letters six days a week to all 32mn addresses in the UK for the price of a stamp. A first class stamp costs £1.25 and should guarantee next-day UK delivery for a letter, although the target is not always met. A second class stamp, costing 75 pence, means a letter should arrive within three days.

## Who invented butter chicken? Judge to rule on dispute over global favourite

Reuters  
New Delhi

Butter chicken - one of India's best-known dishes globally - is delicious and apparently also contentious, with two Indian restaurant chains doing battle in court over claims to its origins.

The lawsuit - which has become a hot topic in India - was brought by the family behind Moti Mahal, a famed Delhi restaurant brand that has counted late US president Richard Nixon and India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru among its guests.

It claims restaurant founder, Kundan Lal Gujral, created the curry in the 1930s when the restaurant first opened in Peshawar before it moved to Delhi. In a 2,752-page court filing it has sued rival chain Daryaganj, accusing it of falsely claiming to have invented the dish as well

as dal makhani, a popular lentil dish that is also laden with butter and cream. The Gujral family is seeking \$240,000 in damages, also alleging that Daryaganj has copied the layout of Moti Mahal's website and "the look and feel" of its restaurants.

"You cannot take away somebody's legacy...The dish was invented when our grandfather was in Pakistan," said Monish Gujral, managing director at Moti Mahal. Daryaganj - which was established relatively recently in 2019 - counters that its late family member, Kundan Lal Jaggi, had partnered with Gujral to open the Delhi restaurant in 1947, and the dish was invented there. That gives it the right to also lay claim to the creation of the dish, it argues.

Daryaganj shared with Reuters a faded, hand-written partnership document registered in 1949 to back its argument.

The dispute has captured the nation's attention with Indian TV

broadcasters running segments on the history of the dish and debate raging on social media. "It's an offbeat, unique case. You really don't know who created the first dish of butter chicken. The court will be hard pressed and will need to rely on circumstantial evidence," said Ameet Datta, an intellectual property lawyer at India's Saikrishna & Associates.

Testimonies of people who can link the brand to the dish they consumed decades ago could be critical proof, Datta added.

Made with tandoor-cooked chicken pieces mixed in a tomato gravy with dollops of cream and butter, the dish was ranked 43rd in a list of world's "best dishes" by TasteAtlas as rated by nearly 400,000 users. It was the second-ranked Indian food after butter garlic naan bread. The two are often paired together.

The case was first heard by the Delhi High Court last week and the next hearing is scheduled for May.

## Wave of destruction



Castlebar Tennis Club dome is destroyed following recent storms, in Castlebar, County Mayo, Ireland.

## Britons should be prepared to fight a land war: army chief

AFP  
London

British citizens should be prepared to fight in a potential land war, the highest ranking army officer General Patrick Sanders said yesterday. The chief of the general staff said any conflict would need to be a "whole-of-nation undertaking" and that citizens should be trained and equipped to be in a state of readiness.

The general's remarks come after the UK defence ministry said last year that it would cut overall numbers in the UK's professional army from 82,000 to 73,000 by 2025. "Taking preparatory steps to enable placing our societies on a war footing when needed are now not merely desirable but essential," Sanders said in a speech at an armoured vehicles conference in southwest London. "Within the next three

years, it must be credible to talk of a British Army of 120,000, folding in our reserve and strategic reserve."

Sanders, who steps down later this year, said the UK could not rely on its navy and air power, arguing that "we must be able to credibly fight and win wars on land". UK allies were already doing so, he said. "Our friends in eastern and northern Europe, who feel the proximity of the Russian threat more acutely, are already acting prudently, laying the foundations for national mobilisation," he added.

"Ukraine brutally illustrates that regular armies start wars; citizen armies win them." Last week the chair of Nato's military committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, said civilians in member states should be prepared for a potential future war with Russia.

A large number of civilians would have to be called up if conflict accelerates in Europe,

he added. Earlier this month UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said that the UK wants to increase defence spending from 2.1% of GDP to 2.5% in the future. In a speech last week the minister said that the world was "moving from a post-war to pre-war world".

The UK, he said, must ensure its "entire defence ecosystem is ready" to defend its homeland. Richard Dannatt, who was chief of the general staff from 2006 to 2009, compared the current situation to the 1930s when the "woeful" state of the UK's armed forces failed to deter Nazi aggression. "There is a serious danger of history repeating itself," he wrote in The Times newspaper last week, calling for UK defence spending to reach 3.0% of GDP. "If our armed forces are not strong enough to deter future aggression from Moscow or Beijing, it will not be a small war to contend with but a major one."

## India to strengthen ties with France with Macron as chief guest on R-Day

Reuters  
New Delhi

French President Emmanuel Macron will attend India's Republic Day celebrations on Friday as the chief guest, as New Delhi and Paris continue to negotiate multi-billion dollar deals to buy French fighter jets and submarines for the Indian military.

However, officials in New Delhi and Paris said the visit will be more ceremonial than substantial, and no major outcomes are expected.

France is India's second largest arms supplier, and has been one of its oldest and closest partners in Europe for decades. It was the only Western nation that did not impose sanctions on New Delhi after India conducted nuclear tests in 1998.

Ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit for Bastille Day celebrations in July, the Indian government had given an initial approval to buy 26 Rafale jets and jointly produce three Scorpene class submarines worth around Rs800bn (\$9.62bn).

But the deals are yet to be finalised. France is also keen to enhance co-operation in space and nuclear sectors. For France, this visit is an opportunity to cement the strategic partnership



Punjab police personnel takes selfie before they participate in full dress rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day at the Guru Nanak Stadium, in Amritsar, India, yesterday.

Paris has forged with New Delhi over the past decades, but no new contract in the defence sector is expected, French presidential advisers told journalists ahead of the visit.

India has relied on French fighter jets for four decades now. Much before buying Dassault Aviation's Rafale, India bought Mirage jets in the 1980s and those still comprise two squadrons of the air force. This would be the fifth meeting between Modi and Macron since May.

India had earlier hoped to have US President Joe Biden as well as

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to be the ceremony's chief guests. The three nations along with India form part of the Quad group of countries, and New Delhi had planned to hold a Quad summit this week.

That plan fell through because Biden was unavailable.

During his 40-hour state visit Macron will also meet business leaders from pharmaceutical, auto, space, energy and hydrogen industries, according to officials in New Delhi and Paris.



Schoolgirls cheer after they perform a Punjabi folk dance 'Giddha' during a full-dress rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day at the Guru Nanak Stadium, in Amritsar, yesterday.



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GULF TIMES

Why European farmers are up in arms

The European Commission is due today to begin “strategic” talks with farmers’ federations, agri-business firms, NGOs and experts on ways to assuage the ire on farms in several countries.

On the agenda are key issues including farming incomes, sustainable agricultural practices, technological innovations and competitiveness, which will be discussed in advance by the European Union’s agriculture ministers at their meeting in Brussels on Tuesday.

The initiative was not confirmed until late last week, even though Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had promised in September to start discussions, insisting that farming and environmental protection were not mutually exclusive.

Here is a look at some of the grievances that have sparked discontent in various parts of the 27-nation bloc ahead of this year’s European Parliament elections. Grumbings in the Dutch farming sector bubbled to the surface in June 2022, when the government unveiled plans to cut nitrogen emissions by reducing the country’s herd of four million cows by nearly a third, and possibly shut some farms.

Farmers said the move would ruin their livelihoods. Nitrogen compounds produced by manure and fertiliser used in farming can contribute to climate change and harm natural habitats.

The move followed a 2019 Dutch court ruling that the government was not doing enough on nitrogen, and that key house building and road projects that also produced the chemical would be on hold until it did.

But farmers in the country of 18mn, which is the world’s second-largest food exporter after the United States, reacted furiously, dumping manure and rubbish on roads and blocking supermarket warehouses.

In France, they turned signposts upside down to show the world itself was ‘upside down’

Their protests drew support from populists abroad, including former US president Donald Trump, who claimed the Dutch farmers were fighting “climate tyranny”

Months of demonstrations triggered a wave of support at the ballot box for the recently founded BBB farmers’ party, which made a significant breakthrough in Senate elections in March 2023.

It was less successful than predicted in the general election in November last year but continues to attract support from a rural community that feels urban elites in The Hague, Amsterdam and Brussels do not understand its concerns.

In recent months, there has also been an increase in exasperation in the east of the EU, namely in Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria, where food producers have complained of unfair competition from cut-price cereals from Ukraine, which is not part of the bloc.

After Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and blocked Ukraine from using the Black Sea to export its goods, the EU suspended customs duties on imports from Ukraine and set up corridors so Kyiv could transit its grains through the EU to world markets. But because of logistical issues, the grain started piling up in EU countries and driving down local prices. Tractor-riding farmers in Bulgaria and Romania jammed border crossings with Ukraine and in Poland the anger triggered the resignation of the agriculture minister in April 2023. That did little to calm tempers and in November, Polish farmers and lorry drivers started blockading roads from Ukraine.

Farmers only suspended their protest on January 6 after the government agreed to provide subsidies. In Romania, the rural sector staged new demonstrations on January 14 over what they said were excessively high levies. The customs exemptions granted to Ukrainian exporters expire in June, so the European Commission will need to tell EU farmers fairly soon whether it intends to prolong them or not.

In Germany, farmers have been up in arms since early January over a government plan to roll back tax breaks on fuel for agricultural machinery and other subsidies.

On January 8, they launched a week of nationwide rallies, blocking several city centres and major road arteries with hordes of noisy tractors, and have vowed to push on with their demands.

The coalition government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz has agreed to stagger the cuts between now and January 2026 and reduce red tape.

But it may feel unable to offer more concessions, after a court ruling forced the government to find savings in the 2024 budget.

Farmers in France are also cross about increases in production costs and environmental regulations. In the autumn, they turned signposts upside down to show the world itself was “upside down”

Since last Thursday they have been blockading motorways in the southwest and rallying at roundabouts.

The powerful farming union FNSEA is planning other forms of protest, after a meeting with newly installed Prime Minister Gabriel Attal on Monday failed to produce a breakthrough. — AFP



A green growth narrative

By Mariana Mazzucato  
Davos

With voters in 76 countries heading to the polls in 2024, this is a record-breaking year for democracy. Yet it coincides with an alarming rise in right-wing populism, which increasingly blames policies to address climate change for voters’ economic hardships.

Despite the clear potential of green initiatives to boost incomes, productivity, and economic growth, the progressive left struggles to articulate a compelling counter-narrative. If the false dichotomy between economic prosperity and environmental sustainability persists, the green transition will lack the political support it needs to succeed.

Consider the debate in the United Kingdom over the Labour Party’s £28bn (\$35.5bn) Green Prosperity Plan, which it has presented as a key instrument to “make Britain a clean energy superpower.” Instead of dwelling on the sums being spent, the conversation should focus on what it will take to complete the stated mission. The point is not to throw money at the problem and hope for the best; it is to offer a strategy for mobilising massive private- and public-sector investment toward a collective goal.

To make clean energy the engine of its industrial, financial, and innovation strategies, Labour needs a new narrative. It needs to show that a mission-oriented government working with businesses to invest and innovate in an outcomes-oriented way will result in new skills, jobs, productivity gains, and higher wages.

Labour can bolster its case with six arguments. First, there need not be any tradeoff between climate action and economic growth. The UK has a huge green industry and capital markets it can tap into with

mission-oriented public-sector investment. Green industries will be worth more than \$10tn globally by 2050, and in the UK they are growing four times faster than the rest of the economy.

When public investment is guided by a clear mission, it can create new markets, crowd in private investment, and increase long-term competitiveness. Germany’s green steel sector is a good example. It owes its growth to the German public bank’s (KfW) green loans programme, which helped create an entirely new market for carbon-efficient steel.

Second, climate finance represents an investment, not a cost. Mission-oriented policies can generate private-sector investment by increasing firms’ productive capacity and spurring cross-sectoral economic activity that will have positive spillovers now and in the future. Nasa’s Apollo mission and moon landing required research and development not only in aerospace technology but also in nutrition, materials, electronics, and software. Camera phones, foil blankets, baby formula, and software are just a few of the hundreds of innovations that still benefit us today.

Strategies to address climate change can recreate this pattern with investments in infrastructure, transportation, agriculture, energy, and digital innovation. Countries getting a head start on energy-efficient ways to produce steel and cement and cleaner ways to extract key minerals will become more competitive as green standards are normalised. And a digital economy that helps sectors go green will attract global investment. Likewise, a school-meal programme that ensures access to healthy, tasty, and sustainable lunches for all children would require outcomes-oriented public procurement and cooperation with local green companies across the food supply chain.

Third, missions require patient, long-term, risk-

tolerant finance that can crowd in other forms of finance and drive transformational changes at different stages of the innovation and business cycle. If structured well, public finance can shape and even create markets by channelling loans, grants, guarantees, and debt- and equity-based instruments toward companies that are willing to invest in solving specific problems. While often presented as a form of “de-risking,” this term misses the point. These cases call for risk-taking, and hence mechanisms for sharing both risks and rewards.

In the case of renewable energy, national development banks around the world have often invested in portfolios with higher-risk technologies that are working their way toward scalable commercialisation. By leading on early-stage, high-risk, and capital-intensive projects, public finance can function as an investor of first resort, not a lender of last resort, playing a critical role in creating and shaping new green markets.

Fourth, public-sector capabilities matter. An ambitious national clean-energy mission requires confident, competent, and well-equipped national, regional, and local governments that work together to deploy tools like outcomes-oriented procurement and investment.

To deploy and operationalise a £28bn climate plan effectively, the UK needs appropriate skills both in green industries and in public-sector organisations. Yet many governments, including in the UK, have become over-reliant on big consultancies with extractive business models, resulting in a stunting of state capacity. With Labour having quadrupled its own reliance on consultants, a change of thinking is clearly in order.

Fifth, a green, just transition requires a new social contract, which means redefining the typical partnership between government and business. While

profit rates are high globally, investment rates are not, owing to the increasing financialisation of both finance and business. In the United States and the UK, only 20% of finance goes into the productive economy; the rest flows into the more speculative finance, insurance, and real-estate domain.

In addition to redistributive policies (like a progressive wealth tax), putting public purpose at the heart of the economy requires pre-distributive measures. For example, Labour should embed conditionalities in the Green Prosperity Plan to ensure access to goods and services for consumers, or to share profits resulting from public support with a wider range of stakeholders, including workers. Companies receiving government support must commit to reinvesting profits in green innovation and better working conditions and pay. And, as the United Auto Workers’ recent victory in the US shows, trade unions are critical to ensuring that greening the economy results in better skills, and that productivity increases are matched by higher wages.

Finally, the £28bn plan must be seen as an investment in the country’s financial future. Although public investment may increase the deficit in the short run, economic expansion that greens productive capacity in manufacturing and services will ultimately reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio.

The fiscal austerity of the past 15 years weakened not only the social fabric, but also the economy and its growth potential (as did Brexit which reduced the market size for UK industry). By creating a dynamic hub of green investment and innovation across the economy, including public services like sustainable mobility, a mission-oriented government can improve the country’s fiscal position over the long term. For both the climate and society, inaction is the costlier option.

Sources of finance include UK Green Gilt – government bonds specifically designated for green initiatives – as well as proposed reforms to the UK’s outdated public accounting rules. Currently, loans extended by state investment banks are counted as part of the overall public debt, while the returns they generate for the state go untallied. This quirk artificially inflates public debt figures. Simply by aligning its rules with global standards, the UK could leverage public banks, like the UK Infrastructure Bank, more effectively.

With so many elections this year, a progressive green narrative is imperative. To persuade voters, it must show how new public and private investment aimed at socially and environmentally beneficial outcomes can create an economy-wide growth multiplier, good for people and planet. — Project Syndicate

● Mariana Mazzucato, Founding Director of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, is Chair of the World Health Organisation’s Council on the Economics of Health for All.



NEED OF THE HOUR: With so many elections this year, a progressive green narrative is imperative. To persuade voters, it must show how new public and private investment aimed at socially and environmentally beneficial outcomes can create an economy-wide growth multiplier, good for people and planet.

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# Bilawal targets youth to break with old politics

By Ariba Shahid, Reuters  
Larkana

Youth appeal and ambitious plans to combat climate change form the core of Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's effort to become prime minister of Pakistan, which, if successful, would make him its youngest premier since his mother Benazir was in office.

As general elections near on February 8, the 35-year-old, a former foreign minister and scion of a family that gave the nation two prime ministers, called for new ideas and leadership to calm political and economic instability.

"The implications of the decisions taken today are going to be faced by the youth of Pakistan," Bilawal told Reuters in Larkana, his hometown in the southern province of Sind, a family bastion.

"I think it would be better if they were allowed to make those decisions."

About two-thirds of Pakistan's population of 241mn is younger than 30, while its prime ministers since 2000 have been older than 61, on average.

The Oxford-educated Bilawal is less than half the age of three-time premier Nawaz Sharif, 74, whom analysts consider the frontrunner in next month's election, and former cricket super star Imran Khan, 71, who won the last election in 2018.

The eventual winner faces the task of

reviving a struggling \$350bn economy grappling with historic inflation and an unstable rupee currency that limit growth and job opportunities for the young.

The South Asian nation received a \$3bn loan programme from the IMF in July that averted a sovereign debt default in a standby arrangement set to expire this spring.

Bilawal plans to tap into widespread anger, saying he has a concrete plan to provide free electricity and boost social safety programmes, despite fiscal constraints.

"What we propose is to completely restructure Pakistan's development model, putting the threat of climate change front and centre," he said, in a reflection of his party's election manifesto.

Making a promise rare in Pakistan, it aims to ensure that funds exceeding \$10bn pledged last year go to fight climate change, after super floods in 2022 that displaced more than 7mn people.

A member of Pakistan's most powerful political dynasty, Bilawal spoke in an interview during a gruelling four-week campaign that took him to more than 33 towns, while other parties began canvassing just last week.

He is the son of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, assassinated while on the campaign trail in 2007, and the grandson of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali



Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, speaks during an interview with Reuters in Larkana.

Bhutto, hanged by a military dictator in 1979, both still venerated by Pakistanis.

If Bilawal won the election, subject to the vagaries of government formation, calculations show he could be just 25 days short of his mother's age on entering office in 1988, at the earliest.

"I haven't actually counted, but ... I think she was the youngest," he responded, when asked how he rated his chances.

However, his Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has lost space to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of Sharif and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of Khan, who have been locked in a bruising political battle for more than a decade.

Positioning himself as an alternate to them in 2024, he recently called on supporters of Khan to vote for him while their leader is in jail.

In the 2013 elections, the PPP came second after Sharif's party, garnering 42 of the 342 seats up for grabs. In 2018, with 54 seats, it was runner-up to the parties of both Sharif and Khan.

Bilawal ruled out joining hands with either contender, however, saying he preferred to form a government with independent candidates.

"You know, lots of independent politicians, probably the highest (number) in our history, are taking part in the coming elections," he added.

Most of the independents belong to Khan's party, which lost the right this month to contest on a single platform, making the approaching election the most open in recent times.

But one analyst felt the role of prime minister might be a tough goal for Bilawal, saying his party had struggled to build its political strength.

"One might be tempted to look at Bilawal as a dark horse candidate for prime minister," said Michael Kugelman, director of the Wilson Center's South Asia Institute, as he appeared to be favoured by the military and had been foreign minister.

"But I don't see him as prime minister material just yet," Kugelman added. "The

election will likely lead to a coalition government, and Bilawal could be in the mix for a cabinet-level position, but the top slot is likely too much of a reach."

Instead, Pakistan's army may prefer more experienced leaders, such as Sharif, he said.

Analysts believe the powerful military has thrown its backing to Sharif following a standoff with Khan, giving the former an edge in a country where army generals exert undue influence over setting up governments. The military denies the accusations, and says it remains apolitical.

Bilawal, asked if he thought the military backed Sharif, responded, "He's certainly giving the impression that he is relying on something other than the people of Pakistan to become prime minister for the fourth time."

Questions of transparency will hover over the 2024 elections, just as with earlier ones, he added, but he and his party hoped to win against expectations.

Pushed into the political fray as a teenager in 2007, after his mother's assassination, Bilawal later inherited her party, but steered clear of politics until he finished his education.

His father, Asif Ali Zardari, was elected president after Benazir's death.

Bilawal won a parliamentary seat in his first contest in 2018, which was followed by a 16-month stint as foreign minister, until August 2023.

## Trump eyes Biden rematch after New Hampshire victory

AFP  
Manchester

Get ready for round two: Donald Trump all but nailed down a rematch with President Joe Biden after winning the New Hampshire primary, promising 10 months of unprecedented tension and bitterness.

Trump's only remaining challenger, Nikki Haley, vowed yesterday to fight on despite her defeat, but no Republican has ever won both opening contests and not ultimately secured the party's nomination.

A rambling Trump previewed the divisive rhetoric to come with a victory speech that attacked Haley for having a "very bad night" and even lashed out at her dress.

"I don't get too angry, I get even," the 77-year-old said.

Biden, 81, said it was "now clear" that Trump would be the Republican nominee for November's election and warned that the future of American democracy itself rode on the result.

While polls show that most Americans don't want a contest between the two oldest presidents in US history, Biden's campaign says it is relishing another shot at the man he beat in 2020.

"Donald Trump is running a campaign of revenge and retribution," Biden campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez told reporters



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures on stage during a New Hampshire presidential primary election night watch party, in Nashua, New Hampshire. (Reuters)

yesterday. "Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are running to move the country forward."

Haley had hoped for a major upset in New Hampshire, but Trump — her former boss when she was UN ambassador — won by around 54% to 43%.

She went on the offensive yesterday, heading to South Carolina, where she launched attack ads targeting Trump as "too much chaos" as she tries to turn around weak polling in her home state ahead of its February 24 primary.

"Trump is completely consumed by his own perpetual drama and grievances," Haley's communications director Nachama Soloveichik said.

Playing on Trump's beloved "Make America Great Again" slogan, Soloveichik said voters must choose "Make America Unhinged Again or Make America Normal Again."

The twice-indicted former president has kept to his hard-right messaging, with no hint of reaching out to moderate voters who supported Haley.

At one point swearing on prime-time TV late Tuesday, Trump said the United States was a "failing country" and loaded his speech with ominous warnings about immigration and false claims about winning the 2020 election.

He lashed again out at "Bird-

brain" Haley on social media yesterday morning.

Biden meanwhile cruised to victory in an unofficial Democratic primary in New Hampshire, giving him a symbolic boost.

The president is focusing on hot-button issues as his economic message fails to resound with inflation-hit voters.

After Trump's win, he said "the stakes could not be higher" in the coming election.

His campaign is now selling merchandise for a rematch, including a T-shirt reading: "Together, we will beat Trump. Again."

The election race is already being watched closely around the world, with US allies Ukraine and Israel embroiled in wars, and concerns about Trump's foreign policy plans including a possible pullback from Nato.

US media said that the New Hampshire results did hold hope for Biden, despite polling showing him neck and neck or even behind Trump.

Not only did Trump lose nearly half the Republican vote, but his failure to win over independents and floating voters gave succour to Democrats.

"He is struggling to make himself palatable to these key constituencies that will ultimately decide the election," Biden campaign official Quentin Fulks said.

## German train drivers ramp up pressure with longest strike yet

Train drivers walked off the job yesterday in Germany's longest rail strike yet, stranding commuters and piling pain on the country's economy, with both sides far from agreement.

Across Europe, transport workers have staged strikes to demand higher wages to cope with the impact of inflation. Germany's six-day strike, the fourth and longest round of industrial action in a months-long dispute over pay and working hours, began at 2am (0100 GMT) yesterday and is set to last until Monday evening.

Two weeks after a previous strike halted national rail traffic for three days, the new action prompted calls for a resumption of talks between the GDL union and state-owned rail company Deutsche Bahn to try to limit the damage to Europe's largest economy. "We believe you have to come to the table, you have to find compromises. That is the only way," a Deutsche Bahn spokesperson told reporters, pointing to the strike's "massive impact on the economy". The spokesperson also referred to "massive restrictions" on the rail network.

## Russia decries 'barbaric Ukraine attack that killed its own 65 PoWs'

- Kyiv to continue attacking military transport
- Moscow calls for emergency session of UNSC

Reuters  
Moscow

Russia accused Ukraine yesterday of deliberately shooting down a Russian military transport plane carrying 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers to a prisoner exchange in what it called a barbaric act of terrorism that had killed a total of 74 people.

The Russian defence ministry said six Russian crew members and three Russian soldiers had been on the Ilyushin Il-76 military transport plane shot down near the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border.

Ukraine did not directly confirm it had shot down the plane, nor that Ukrainian prisoners were on board. But after a long pause the Ukrainian military said it would continue to destroy Russian military transport aircraft it believed were carrying missiles with which to strike Ukraine.

It said it had noticed more Russian military transport aircraft landing in Belgorod, something it linked to Russian missile strikes on Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities.

"With this in mind, the Armed Forces of Ukraine will continue to take measures to destroy means of delivery and exercise airspace control to eliminate the terrorist threat, including in the Belgorod-Kharkiv direction," it said on Telegram.

The Russian defence ministry said the exchange was to take

place yesterday afternoon at the Kolotilovka border checkpoint and Ukraine knew a transport plane carrying captured Ukrainian soldiers was expected at the Belgorod airfield.

"By committing this terrorist act, the Ukrainian leadership has showed its true face. It disregarded the lives of its own citizens," the ministry said in a statement.

But Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency said Ukraine had not been asked to ensure airspace security around Belgorod unlike previous swaps and had not been informed about what means of transport would be used and which routes.

"On this basis, we may be talking about planned and deliberate actions by Russia to destabilise the situation in Ukraine and weaken international support for our state," GUR said in a statement on Telegram.

Russia's defence ministry said its radar operators had detected the launch of two Ukrainian missiles at the time of the crash. Russia's foreign ministry called it "a barbaric act" and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow had called for an emergency UN Security Council session yesterday.

If the details are confirmed, it would be the deadliest incident of its kind inside Russia's internationally recognised borders during the almost two-year-old war.

Ukraine's intelligence agency confirmed a prisoner swap with

Russia had been planned for yesterday and said the captured Russian servicemen had been delivered to the agreed exchange point on time and were safe.

"Landing a transport plane in a 30-kilometre combat zone cannot be safe and in any case must be discussed by both sides, because otherwise it jeopardises the entire exchange process," it said.

It had no reliable information about who was on the downed plane, it added.

Video footage posted on the Telegram messaging app by Baza, a channel linked to Russian security services, and verified by Reuters, showed a large aircraft falling towards the ground near the village of Yablonoovo in the Belgorod region and exploding in a vast fireball. Andrei Kartapolov, a lawmaker in Russia's parliament and a retired general, said in a TV interview with the SHOT outlet that it was impossible for the operators of Ukrainian surface-to-air missile systems to mistake transport planes for military planes or helicopters as targets.

"It was done deliberately to sabotage the prisoner exchange," said Kartapolov, saying a second Russian Il-76 transport plane carrying around 80 Ukrainian soldiers to the exchange had managed to turn around.

Kartapolov, who has close links to the Russian defence ministry, said the plane had been downed by three missiles of either US or German manufacture.

## IVF breakthrough could revive nearly extinct rhino species

Scientists have carried out the first successful in vitro fertilisation of a southern white rhino, a major breakthrough that could pave the way to saving its highly endangered northern cousin.

Only two female northern white rhinos remain in existence but neither is capable of carrying a pregnancy to term.

To save the functionally extinct species, researchers from the scientific consortium Biorescue are attempting to implant a lab-grown northern white rhino embryo in a southern surrogate.

The ambitious reproduction programme is the last chance at survival for the northern white rhino species, whose last two members live at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya under 24-hour guard to protect them from poachers.

The successful impregnation of a southern white rhino with an embryo of the same species was a "milestone", project leader Thomas Hildebrandt said at a press conference in Berlin.

"We achieved something that was not believed to be possible," Hildebrandt said.

The successful recent trial ended in tragedy when the bull and the surrogate, along with the foetus, were killed by an unrelated infection the scientists believe was caused by bacteria released by a mudslide in their enclosure.

The foetus was only 70 days old at the time but the team said they were confident it could have survived the 16-month pregnancy period.

The next step will see scientists try to repeat the feat with other embryos made with eggs harvested from the surviving females and sperm preserved from two long-dead males.

The team aims to "produce northern white rhino calves in the next two to two-and-a-half years", Hildebrandt said.

To place the embryo in the surrogate, the team of conservationists use a sterile "teaser" bull rhino, whose approaches to the female indicate she is ready to conceive.

The team subsequently carry out the delicate operation in just under an hour with the surrogate under anaesthetic.

The size and delicate anatomy of the white rhinos means the embryo is implanted via the rectum into the uterus.

## Alabama set for nitrogen gas execution

A convicted murderer is scheduled to be executed in the southern US state of Alabama this week using nitrogen gas, a novel method that the United Nations has likened to "torture."

Kenneth Eugene Smith, 58, has been on Death Row for more than three decades after being convicted in 1989 of a murder-for-hire.

Smith is to be put to death at Holman Prison in Atmore, Alabama, during a 30-hour window beginning at 1am Eastern Time (0600 GMT) today. He is to be executed by nitrogen hypoxia, a method which has not been used before in the United States. There were 24 executions in the United States in 2023, all of them carried out using lethal injection.

Smith was subjected to a failed execution attempt in 2022, when prison officials were

unable to set intravenous lines to administer a lethal injection.

The last US execution using gas was carried out in 1999 when a convicted murderer was put to death using hydrogen cyanide gas.

Alabama is one of three US states that have approved the use of nitrogen hypoxia as a method of execution. It involves administering nitrogen gas through a facemask, depriving the body of oxygen.

Ravina Shamdasani, a spokeswoman for the UN rights office in Geneva, urged Alabama last week to abandon plans to execute Smith using the "novel and untested" method. Shamdasani said it could "amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, under international human rights law."

## 6 dead in Canada's remote northwest plane crash

Six people were killed after a small plane carrying global miner Rio Tinto's workers crashed near Fort Smith in Canada's remote Northwest Territories (NWT) on Tuesday, the NWT Coroner Service said yesterday.

Four passengers and two North Western Air Lease crew members died in the crash, Chief Coroner Garth Eggenberger said in a statement.

There was one survivor who was treated at the Fort Smith Health Centre before being taken to hospital in the provincial capital Yellowknife.

The plane had been travelling from Fort Smith to Rio Tinto's Diavik Diamond Mine, located 200 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle. Three Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons supported search and rescue

efforts for the British Aerospace Jetstream aircraft, which was found near the Slave River after losing contact shortly after take-off.

The aircraft is registered to Northwestern Air Lease, which is headquartered in Fort Smith, a small town of 2,500 people. The company did not respond to requests for comment.

Fort Smith's mayor and council released a statement yesterday extending condolences to friends and family of those killed.

"These people are treasured members of our community and their loss touches everyone," the statement said. A team of investigators from Canada's Transportation Safety Board has been deployed to look into the accident.



# Amir patronises graduation ceremony of Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College



**Amir congratulates military graduates**

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani congratulated all security and military college graduates following their graduation, wishing them progress in their careers and success in carrying out their national duty. In a post on X, His Highness the Amir congratulated the sons of the nation in all security and military colleges on their graduation, wishing them progress in their careers and success in fulfilling their national duty of thriving for the prosperity of Qatar and preserving its safety and security. (QNA)



## WEEKEND DEALS

العرض متاح في جميع منافذ سفاري بتاريخ: ٢٠٢٤/١/٢٥  
Promotion available at all Safari outlets on: 25-01-2024  
Purchase limit may apply. Offer valid until stock last only



23.75 QR

لحم ضأن تنزاني ١ كجم  
Tanzanian Mutton 1kg



39.75 QR

سلمون نرويجي طازج ١ كجم  
Fresh Salmon Norway 1kg



20.00 QR

حبار عماني طازج ١ كجم  
Fresh Squid Oman 1kg



7.50 QR

ماكريل طازج كبير عمان ١ كجم  
Fresh Mackerel Big Oman 1kg



4.50 QR

موز إكوادور ١ كجم  
Banana Ecuador 1kg



3.00 QR

طماطم الدوحة ١ كجم  
Tomato Doha 1kg



2.25 QR

فليفلة خضراء الدوحة ١ كجم  
Green Capicum Doha 1kg



1.75 QR

قربيط الدوحة ١ كجم  
Cauliflower Doha 1kg



12.75 QR

بيض أبيض ٣٠ حبة  
Fresh White Egg 30pcs Tray



32.00 QR

بوك جرة زجاجية عضوية جبن ٥٠٠ جم x ٢ حبة  
Puck Organic Glass Jar Cheese 500gm x 2pcs



5.00 QR

أناناس كينيا ١ كجم  
Pineapple Kenya 1kg



1.00 QR

ملفوف مسطح الدوحة ١ كجم  
Flat Cabbage Doha 1kg



20.00 QR

برطمان نوتيللا ٧٥٠ جرام x ١ حبة  
Nutella Jar 750gm x 1pc



22.75 QR

البادية حليب كامل الدسم ١ لتر x ٤ حبة  
Al Badia Full Cream Milk 1ltr x 4pcs



10.00 QR

تمر خضري ٥٠٠ جم  
Khudri Dates 500 Gm



15.00 QR

ساديا دجاج شواية ١٣٠٠ جم x ١ حبة  
Sadia Chicken Griller 1300gm x 1pc



9.50 QR

زين زيت دوار الشمس الصافي ١.٨ لتر  
Zain Pure Sunflower Oil 1.8Ltr x 1pc



23.75 QR

روزانا أرز بسمتي ٥ كجم  
Rozana Basmati Rice 5kg



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2nd Prize: 150gram Gold (22 Carat Gold x 3 Winners)  
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