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PM, Iranian FM discuss ties, Gaza

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. They discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and the latest developments in the war on Gaza Strip along with ways of de-escalating the situation. HE Sheikh Mohamed affirmed Qatar's commitment to its efforts in mediating and facilitating negotiations between Iran and Western countries, including continuing to implement the recent agreement between Iran and the United States brokered by Qatar. **(QNA)**

US, Iraq open talks

Iraq and the United States yesterday held a first round of talks on the future of American and other foreign troops in the country, with Baghdad expecting discussions to lead to a timeline for reducing their presence. Roughly 2,500 US troops are still deployed in Iraq. **Page 7**

Haley targeted

Authorities responded to a fake emergency at the South Carolina home of Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley last month after a man claimed to have shot a woman and threatened to harm himself at her home.

Intense fighting in south Gaza; massacre toll 26,257

AFP
Gaza Strip

Intense fighting raged yesterday in the Gaza city of Khan Yunis, sending residents fleeing further south as Israel's military targets the Palestinian resistance group Hamas.

On Friday, the UN's International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled Israel must prevent possible acts of genocide in the conflict – and allow in aid – but stopped short of calling for a ceasefire.

Gaza's health ministry says the Israeli military offensive has killed at least 26,257 people, most of them women and children.

The army says at least 220 soldiers have been killed since Israel began the ground operations, which are now focused around Khan Younis.

Palestinians are fleeing the fighting, adding to the number already crowded into Rafah, near the Egyptian border, where the United Nations says most of Gaza's estimated 1.7mn displaced have converged.

They live in the street, where sewage flows, amid "conditions of desperation conducive to a complete breakdown in order," said

Palestinians carry bags of flour they grabbed from an aid truck near an Israeli checkpoint, as Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger, in Gaza City yesterday.

Ajith Sunghay of the UN Human Rights Office.

Images showed people wading through ankle-deep water around tent-like plastic shelters in Rafah, where bombardment still threatens.

The health ministry said at least 135 people were killed in Khan Younis overnight.

Experts have said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's steadfast vow to eliminate Hamas is increasingly seen within his war cabinet as incompatible with returning

the hostages held in Gaza.

His failure to bring home the captives has led to mounting protests and calls for early elections, more of which took place yesterday night.

The UN Security Council will meet on Wednesday to give "binding effect" to the ICJ decision, said the foreign ministry of Algeria, which called the meeting.

The Hamas government said "massive tank bombardment" targeted a refugee camp in Khan Younis and Nasser hospital, the city's largest. **Page 7**

Arab League to hold emergency meeting on ICJ ruling today

Arab parliament body calls on international community to build on the important verdict

QNA
Cairo

Arab League has decided to convene an extraordinary session at the level of permanent delegates today to issue a unified Arab position regarding the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with respect to the lawsuit lodged by South Africa on the commission of genocide by the Israeli occupation in Gaza Strip.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA) yesterday, Assistant Secretary-General at the Arab League ambassador Hossam Zaki highlighted that the meeting will be held at the headquarters of the Arab League in response to a bid submitted by the State of Palestine on the convention of this extraordinary session considering the ruling issued by ICJ on Friday.

Permanent Representative of the State of Palestine to the Arab League ambassador Muhanad al-Aklouk said that the State of Palestine requested this conven-

tion in co-ordination with Morocco in its capacity as president of the 160th session of the Arab League at the ministerial level and support the member states of Arab League.

The Association of Secretaries-General of Arab Parliaments has welcomed the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding Israeli occupation's commission of genocide against the Palestinian People, a QNA report from Kuwait said.

In a statement, the association said that the ruling was a victory for the rule of international law and international humanitarian law, and an important turning point in the pursuit of justice for the Palestinian people.

The statement called on the international community to build on this important step, bear legal, moral and humanitarian responsibility, move immediately to a ceasefire, demand the immediate implementation of the court's ruling, and work to establish the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

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Israeli war on Gaza spawned unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe: NHRC chairperson

QNA
Doha

HE the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiah, has asserted that the Israeli war on Gaza Strip has caused an unprecedented humanitarian and health disaster.

HE al-Attiah underscored ramping up real Arab and global pressure to enforce the international law and the international humanitarian law to hold the Israeli occupation to account for the crimes and genocide being perpetrated against the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip, act seriously to cease the Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people and compel the occupation to get the humanitarian assistance into Gaza Strip without any restrictions.

This came during her visit to a group of wounded Palestinians from Gaza Strip in Doha, during which she checked on their conditions because of the Israeli war on Gaza Strip, wishing them a speedy recovery. The NHRC delegation accompanying her offered gifts to the

HE al-Attiah praised the efforts of transferring nine batches of wounded Palestinians from Gaza to Doha, bringing the total number of those who have been transferred to more than 500, within the framework of Qatar's commitment to treat 1,500 injured Palestinians due to the Israeli aggression, and sponsor 3,000 children who lost their parents in the Gaza Strip

wounded Palestinians. HE al-Attiah praised the efforts of transferring nine batches of Gaza wounded Palestinians to Doha, bringing the total number of those who have been transferred from the strip to more than 500 people, within the framework of Qatar's commitment to treat 1,500 injured Palestinians due to the Israeli aggression, and sponsor 3,000 children who lost their parents in the Gaza Strip.

The war on Gaza should be a turning point to set an operational programme to help the Palestinian people practice their inalienable rights, represented in self-determination without foreign intervention, as well as national sovereignty and independence, HE al-Attiah stressed.

She emphasised that the Israeli

violations affected the entire strip and targeted the civilians, including children, women, journalists, ambulance personnel, health facilities, international, relief and humanitarian organisations, as well as schools and shelters, and prevented medical supplies and drinking water.

The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), under the chairmanship of HE al-Attiah, so far called for protecting the civilians, stopping the escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and providing urgent assistance to the population of Gaza Strip.

In a previous statement following a meeting held in Copenhagen, Denmark, GANHRI expressed solidarity with the Independent

Commission For Human Rights in Palestine, pointing out that the GANHRI members apprised the Director-General of GANHRI Ammar Dweik of the latest situation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Meanwhile, HE al-Attiah lauded the efforts made by the Doha-based Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRIs), along with its regional and global action that was initiated by convening an emergency general assembly, the last one was the meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk which resulted in Turk's field trip to Rafah crossing point last month to inspect the humanitarian catastrophe and the flagrant violation of all human rights in Gaza Strip.



HE Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiah visits wounded Palestinians from Gaza Strip in Doha.

EAA Foundation welcomes ICJ decision as an essential step for aid to reach Gaza



EAA has reiterated its calls for an immediate ceasefire to protect all civilians.

Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, a global champion for education, providing education services in Gaza since 2009, has welcomed the recent decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the request for the indication of Provisional Measures by South Africa against Israel.

This decision represents a crucial step in ensuring humanitarian aid to Gaza and safeguarding the rights of Palestinians, particularly children, affected by the ongoing conflict. "EAA Foundation supports the ICJ's call for parties concerned to take immediate measures to prevent acts

falling under the Genocide Convention, including the deliberate infliction of harm and conditions of life aimed at physical destruction.

"Importantly, the order urges parties concerned to facilitate the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the challenging conditions faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip," EAA said in statement.

EAA has reiterated its calls for an immediate ceasefire to protect all civilians, and to guarantee safety and shelter for civilians and children sheltering in schools. The urgent protection of

education for children and youth in Gaza remains a top priority for EAA Foundation in these challenging times.

Al Fakhoora Programme, under the EAA Foundation, has been a longstanding provider of education and other essential services for children and youth in Gaza. In response to the present war, EAA has collaborated with local and international organisations, including UN agencies, to support over 233,000 children and youth with a \$9mn humanitarian intervention. This includes mental health assistance, emergency education, hygiene kits, community-led initiatives, food security,

and scholarships for Palestinian youth. Talal al-Hothal, director of EAA's Al Fakhoora Programme, said: "Parties concerned must comply with the ICJ's order, and states parties to the Convention have an obligation to ensure adherence. This is particularly crucial in preventing acts contrary to the order and facilitating compliance with the Genocide Convention."

EAA has also called on the international community to fulfil their obligations as states parties, advocate for an immediate ceasefire, and ensure humanitarian access to provide essential aid to the people of Gaza promptly.

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LuLu Hypermarket holds 'India Utsav' to commemorate 75th Republic Day

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

LuLu Group has organised the grand 'India Utsav' at LuLu Hypermarket in Gharrafa to commemorate the celebration of India's 75th Republic Day. India Utsav, a 10-day festival, which will run until February 2, is showcasing a diverse array of Indian food, spices, fruits, vegetables, authentic dishes, and ethnic clothing. It also honours India's rich culture and heritage while promoting the highest quality products from the South Asian nation.

The festival was inaugurated by Indian ambassador Vipul in the presence of Qatari dignitaries and community leaders, including representatives from various Indian organisations like ICC, ICBF, ISC, IWA, and IBPC. LuLu Group has been organising this annual festival for the past two decades, not only to mark India's Republic Day but to pay tribute to longstanding trade relations between Qatar and India. This year holds special significance as both nations celebrate 50 years of bilateral relationship.

In a speech, ambassador Vipul said: "It is an honour to stand before you on this auspicious Republic Day of India here at LuLu Hypermarket. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the distinguished members of the Qatari society and the Indian community who have joined us today.

"As we celebrate the 75th Republic Day of India, it is a momentous occasion to reflect on the incredible journey of our nation. India stands as the fastest-growing economy among the world's largest economies – a testament to the success achieved over seven decades."

The inaugural ceremony featured a fusion of traditional art forms from Bengali, Rajasthani, Kathak, and Odissi, enriching the spirit of the festival. A choir from Podar Pearl School sang the Qatar and Indian national anthems, while a dance performance added a touch



A tour of the fruits section. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam



Cake-cutting ceremony highlights the festivities.

of cultural diversity. As part of the festival, Vipul inaugurated the 'Indian Silk and Ethnic Wear Fest' at the Saree Section, showcasing a wide collection of pure natural and synthetic silk from India, including sarees, readymade garments, and dress material at discounted rates.

In the past two decades, India has made significant strides in education, science, technology, and IT, culminating in the historic landing of Chandrayaan on the dark side of the moon in 2023 – a feat unmatched by any other nation, the ambassador said in his speech.

"Here in Qatar, I express sincere thanks to the leadership and people for hosting over 800,000 Indians, forming the largest expatriate community. Our historic and cultural ties have resulted in robust trade relations with over \$18bn in trade and

a vital long-term gas deal securing India's energy needs," he said.

The Indian envoy acknowledged the special role played by LuLu Group in Qatar-India trade ties, saying LuLu Hypermarkets cater to diverse communities, especially the Indian community and have become flag bearers in importing Indian goods.

"Celebrating India's Republic Day in this manner fills my heart with pride. I express gratitude to the LuLu Group for their commitment to fostering Indo-Qatari relations through the India festival. I am confident that our bilateral ties will continue to prosper, reflecting the shared commitment of India and Qatar to progress and co-operation.

"I extend warm wishes to everyone present here on the joyous



Indian ambassador Vipul leading the ribbon-cutting ceremony during the inauguration of India Utsav 2024 in the presence of Qatari dignitaries and community leaders, including representatives from various Indian organisations.

occasion of Republic Day. May the friendship between India and Qatar continue to thrive, and both nations march ahead with vigour in the years to come," Vipul added.

The festival offers a variety of food products, including organic items imported from different parts of India.

LuLu Group regularly imports over 4,000 items of Indian origin, encompassing popular fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), LuLu private label products, fruits, vegetables, packaged food products, household goods, kitchen essentials, traditional wear, and other garments, making them available throughout the year in all stores across the region.

India Utsav offers an exclusive display of these products at all LuLu stores, providing customers with access to a wide range of choices. Moreover, LuLu Hypermarket's special focus has been placed on showcasing a variety of millets from India, with an exclusive corner dedicated to different types of nutritious grains.

The festival also showcases a vast



The ambassador with top executives of LuLu Group, LuLu Hypermarket regional manager Shanavas P M and Regional director Shaijan M O.

selection of bakery products made from millets and freshly prepared hot foods, including biryanis, curries, popular street foods, traditional sweets, and other delightful delicacies.

This celebration not only enriches the cultural diversity of the country but also underscores LuLu Group's dedication to providing

its customers with a diverse and premium shopping experience. LuLu Group is a leading retail chain committed to providing customers with a diverse range of high-quality products. With a focus on international sourcing and cultural exchange, LuLu Group continues to set industry standards through innovative promotions and events.

Expo 2023 Doha holds symposium to support creative talents of innovators

QNA
Doha

Expo 2023 Innovation Centre held a symposium to support inventors and innovators under the theme 'Qatar Innovates', in the presence of a host of outstanding secondary school students.

During the event, several students discussed their journey in the world of innovation and the scientific certificates they have obtained, the most prominent innovations they presented and their impact on the community.

Chair of the Expo 2023 Doha scientific and cultural committee Dr Mohamed Saif al-Kuwari identified invention and innovations as a new and beneficial idea that can be easily made or applied on the ground, serves the social life and national economy, encourages trade and investment, and promotes the values of local and international environment.

Inventors or innovators are those who either translate this idea into a tangible reality or contribute to developing it and ultimately are entitled to apply for obtaining a patent, in addition to a regulatory and legal protection, along with the associated advantages, Dr al-Kuwari added. Dr al-Kuwari highlighted that inventors should

Several students discussed their journey in the world of innovation and the scientific certificates they have obtained, the most prominent innovations they presented and their impact on the community

have core elements such as being erudite and indoctrinated in a wide science to help them comprehend the job they are performing, since this job will have a potential impact on the society and serves the humanity, in addition to the creative capability that qualify them for understanding the idea and its dimensions and exploring solution accordingly.

It is important to further care for innovation and scientific research, as well as supply the educational curricula with scientific ideas by all tools and dedicate special spaces for the scientific research and shed the light on the Qatari inventors and their peers from those who reside in Qatar, the country

of giving, Dr al-Kuwari noted. He emphasised that promoting the culture of innovation and invention among young people and students of all educational stages is extremely imperative to achieve progress, adding that there are thousands of young people who have inherent talents and potential and are waiting for the chance to unlock them.

He stressed that the responsibility rests on the state, universities, and research centres to explore these creative talents, along with the excelled innovators to further qualify and care for them.

Dr Mohamed Saif al-Kuwari emphasised the importance of promoting the inventors and innovators, in terms of technological and art aspects and upgrading their skills through holding professional symposia and forums, in addition to providing the ample means required to highlight their innovations and support them with media and legal tools to achieve their scientific ambitions on the ground and help them excel further.

Dr al-Kuwari suggested that a permanent forum for inventors and innovators should be established as a focal point between them and the private sector, in addition to marketing their inventions at the domestic, regional and global levels.



Secondary school students share their journey in the world of innovation at Expo 2023 Innovation Centre.



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Sheikh Joaan crowns falcon beauty contest winners

The activities of the 15th Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2024) concluded last night with the crowning of the winners at the falcon beauty contests. The concluding ceremony was held at Katara - the Culture Village Foundation in the presence of number of dignitaries, ministers, VIP guests, head of diplomatic missions in the country, the board of directors of Al Gannas Qatari Society, and a number of falconers from Qatar and other GCC countries besides various other guests of the festival. Accordingly, HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, the sponsor of the festival, crowned the winners at the falcon beauty contest in its two different categories. The winner of first place at the category of the wild white falcon grabbed a prize of QR700,000 and the second place a prize of QR500,000, while the third place got a prize of QR200,000. However, the first winner at the wild dark and black falcon grabbed a prize of QR400,000, the winner of the second place QR300,000 and the third place got a prize of QR200,000. Abdulla bin Hamad al-Mehshadi, head of the Falcon Beauty Committee at Marmi 2024, stressed that the competitions in this category were very powerful this year as the beauty standards and specifications of the participating falcons were very close to each other, which made the job of the jury very hard to select the winners.

Sheikha Alya meets ICRC president



Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani yesterday met with President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mirjana Spoljaric Egger at the headquarters of the permanent delegation in New York. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the deteriorating situation in Gaza Strip and emphasised the importance of immediate ceasefire and ensuring unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected Palestinians. (QNA)

Rawabi Group launches QR10, 20 and 30 promotion



Rawabi Group launches new promotion.

Rawabi has launched QR10, 20 and 30 promotion from January 25 to February 07, across all the Rawabi stores in Qatar. This two-week promotion aims to redefine shopping experiences with unbelievable deals on a vast array of product categories, including groceries, fresh food, household essentials, home needs, toys, electronics, garments, and much more. "We are pleased inform the most exciting 10/20/30 promotion. We are

proud to be the region's premier shopping destination for affordable, high-quality products with best prices to cater to the requirements of our valued customers," said Kannu Baker, general manager, Rawabi Group of Companies, There are more than 1,000 products lined up with extensive range to meet customers every need, of which 350 are super products including 100 super-duper products. We are excited to highlight these pocket-friendly prices, catering to everyone's lifestyle needs, be

it daily essentials, gifting, or travelling, added Baker. Rawabi offers an outstanding selection of groceries, including rice, oil, condiments, packaged snacks, and juices. For those on the move, a tempting array of hot food options, delectable cakes, and deli products await quick bites. Additionally, Rawabi's department store section will showcase a captivating fashion and lifestyle collection, featuring garments, health and beauty items, toys, sports equipment, and home accessories.

Doha Municipality, Al-Jaiza take part in ATO meeting



The Doha Municipality and the Arab Towns Award Foundation (Al-Jaiza) took part in the 61st executive council meeting of the Arab Towns Organisation in Baghdad. Director of Doha Municipality and Chairman of Al-Jaiza Mansour Ajran al-Buainain headed the delegation participating in the meeting. Held with the participation of leaders of Arab cities and municipalities, the two-day meeting discussed, among other topics, the agendas of the organisation's institutions for 2022-2023, within a unified vision and work system to keep pace with rapid developments. (QNA)



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ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDER

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/MP/5/24	Fabrication, Installation and Construction Services on Call off Basis for Five Years	QR 6,142,500	12:00 hrs on 24th March 2024

Brief Scope:
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Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

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For each tender pay a **non-refundable document fee (cash only) of QR 1,000/-** Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) - Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative via email to tadvertising@qchem.com.qa In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, **official email address**, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**

B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email
Tender documents issuance from **28th January 2024 to 1st February 2024, 8am-12noon.**

C. Proposal details
Proposals should be valid for **240 days** from the tender closing date. Tender must be accompanied by a Bank Guarantee (Tender Bond) issued by one of the Qatari Banks or by a Bank operating in Qatar and should be valid for **240 days** from the tender closing date.

D. Submission of Proposals
Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.

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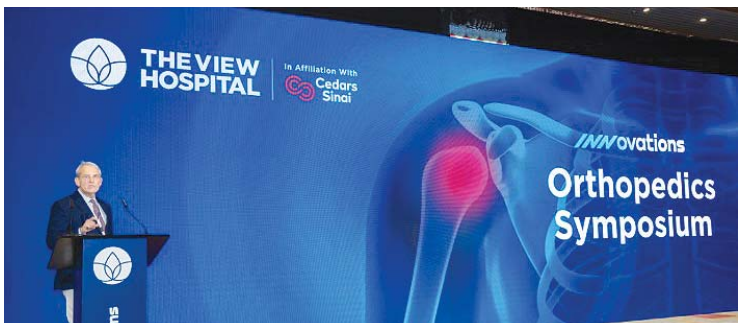
No.	Tender No.	Description	Collection Fees	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	QTC/003/24	Four (4) Years Call off Contract for Overhaul / Rewind / Repair Works for LT / HT & LV Critical Motors at QAFAC Plant, Mesaieed	Qrs. 300/-	Qrs. 50,000/-	18th February 2024

Interested companies are invited to collect the above tender documents as follows:

- **Collection Date** : From **Sunday, 28th January, 2024** (QAFAC working days from Sunday to Thursday only)
- **Collection Time** : 08:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- **Location** : The Gate, Bay Tower 2, 13th Floor, West Bay, QAFAC
- **Tender Fees** : As shown above, **(non-refundable)** can be paid at QAFAC Doha Office
- **Validity** : Offers must be valid for 120 days from closing date.
- **Bid Bond** : Offers must include a Bid bond issued from a local bank and valid for 120 Days from closing date.
- **Authorization** : Tenders will be issued to authorized company personnel with the following:
 1. Official authorization on Company Letter Head
 2. Proper Identification
 3. Copy of Company's Commercial Registration
 4. Focal Point of Contact (Name, Telephone, Mobile & Email)
 5. Valid ICV Certificate (Mandatory)

Note: "Effective from 1st July 2023, bids received from Local Companies (established under the Laws of state of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Bid Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that have been established for less than 2 years and insurance companies are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV digital Portal :- <https://icv.qa/US>

View Hospital hosts ‘Innovations in Orthopaedics Symposium 2024’



The symposium brought together pioneers and experts in orthopaedic medicine.

The View Hospital in Affiliation with Cedars-Sinai hosted the inaugural “Innovations in Orthopaedics Symposium” recently at the Equestrian Club.

The symposium, which brought together pioneers and experts in orthopaedic medicine, showcased the newest innovations reshaping the landscape of orthopaedics.

The symposium featured speakers from The View Hospital and Cedars-Sinai alongside experts from other hospitals in Qatar, specifically the Hamad Medical Corporation and Aspetar.

The goal of the gathering of international and local experts was to share knowledge and explore groundbreaking techniques and tech-

nologies revolutionising the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of orthopaedic conditions.

“From the newest surgical procedures and minimally invasive interventions to preservation protocols and the integration of stem cell therapy, we unravel the future of orthopaedics,” said The View Hospital chief executive Matthew Dronsfield. “This symposium served as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and the promotion of excellence in patient care.”

“All of us at Cedars-Sinai Department of Orthopaedics are excited to collaborate with our partners in Doha in fostering knowledge

exchange between physicians that will enhance the highest-quality patient care for patients in Qatar and throughout the region,” said Bert Mandelbaum, co-chair of medical affairs at Cedars-Sinai Kerlan-Jobe Institute and co-chair of the Sports Medicine Department of Orthopaedic Surgery Cedars-Sinai.

“There are more conferences to come,” said Heitham Hassoun, vice-president and medical director of Cedars-Sinai International. “This is the first in a series of conferences that will focus on leading-edge treatments in a variety of medical specialties, including cardiology, gastroenterology and OBGYN (obstetrics and gynaecology) care.”

HMC opens audiology, balance unit at Ambulatory Care Centre

The Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) recently inaugurated the new Audiology and Balance Unit at the Ambulatory Care Centre (ACC), which provides comprehensive evaluation and treatment for patients of all age groups experiencing hearing and balance issues.

This expanded service is committed to enhancing patients’ auditory well-being through an integrated approach that combines cutting-edge technology with personalised rehabilitation strategies.

The unit was officially opened by a delegation of senior HMC leaders led by Ali al-Janahi, the acting assistant managing director and chief of the Tertiary Hospitals Group at the corporation.

“This co-located hearing aid and auditory verbal therapy facility addresses the growing demand for such services in Qatar and the region,” al-Janahi said. “This will contribute sig-



The new facility provides comprehensive evaluation and treatment for patients experiencing hearing and balance issues.

nificantly to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided.”

“Consequently, our expert teams can better address the impact of hearing loss on a person’s ability to communicate and participate in daily life,” he added.

Dr Khalid al-Jalham, chief executive and medical director at the ACC, wel-

comed the delegation and shared his vision of establishing a comprehensive service hub for patients dealing with hearing or balance challenges.

“Our audiology and balance unit adopts a person-centred model for assessing and managing hearing loss,” he said.

“The unit not only offers compre-

hensive audiologic rehabilitation services but also houses a state-of-the-art ear mould laboratory crucial for an effective hearing aid fitting process, which ensures a superior fit and sound quality for the patient,” Dr al-Jalham added.

The Audiology and Balance Unit team provides a wide range of assessments, rehabilitation, and support to children, adults, and seniors with hearing loss, tinnitus and balance problems.

The service extends beyond individual care, emphasising support and guidance for families and caregivers to enhance the patient’s quality of life in the community.

The newly established facility for hearing aids and auditory verbal therapy offers numerous advantages, including enhanced service accessibility, comprehensive and streamlined patient services, reduced wait times, and convenience for patients.



Innovation by Qatar startup wins at ROWAD HealthTech hackathon

Qatar startup GeneDose has emerged victorious in the HealthTech category at the Gulf Co-operation Council countries (GCC) ROWAD Hackathon.

The competition, which attracted hundreds of startups from the GCC region, witnessed GeneDose’s innovation in healthcare technology, securing its place as the sole Qatari project to claim victory across all five categories: HealthTech, TeachTech, Fintech, Edutech, and Agritech.

The HealthTech challenge centres on leveraging technology to transform healthcare and elevate patient outcomes.

Participants are tasked with crafting solutions to tackle crucial healthcare issues, spanning improved patient care and remote monitoring to streamlined medical record management, fortified Telehealth Infrastructure, enhanced security and privacy measures, and an enriched overall patient experience.

“This win is a testament to our unwavering commitment to advancing personalised medicine and prioritising patient-centred care,” said GeneDose founder Dr Kholoud Abdulla. “This success fuels our passion for innovation in healthcare and motivates us to continue pushing boundaries for a brighter and more personalised healthcare future.”

Community reminded to ‘Save the Ambulance Service for Medical Emergencies’



Qatar’s public healthcare sector launched recently a joint national campaign for educating the public on emergency and urgent healthcare services.

The initiative, titled “Where For Your Care?” is a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Sidra Medicine, and the Qatar Red Crescent.

The campaign, scheduled to run until the end

of February, focuses this week on highlighting the critical role of the HMC Ambulance Service.

With Qatar’s population having recently grown to just over 3mn, “Where For Your Care?” aims to educate the public by highlighting that ambulances should be reserved for those facing a life-threatening medical emergency such as a stroke, heart attack, unconsciousness, seizure, choking or a severe allergic reaction.

Reducing the number of 999 calls for non-life-threatening conditions will allow the HMC’s Ambulance Service to continue to respond quickly and effectively to the most critical cases.


With over 295,000 emergency calls to 999 to request an ambulance in 2023, Abdulaziz Alyafei, the assistant executive director of Emergency Healthcare Co-ordination for HMC Ambulance Service, said: “There is an ever-increasing demand on the Ambulance Service, and our ambulance teams are ready to respond rapidly to any patient with a life-threatening condition, 24 hours a day.”

“By educating the public on the types of symptoms that require an ambulance, as well as highlighting other emergency and urgent care facilities for those with non-life-threatening conditions, this will allow everyone to access the most relevant care needed for their injury or symptoms,” he said.

Ali Darwish, the assistant executive director for Emergency and Scheduled Ambulance Service for the HMC Ambulance Service, emphasised the significance of the campaign, sharing that “the community of Qatar plays an integral part in supporting the Ambulance Service with its ability to reach those in need quickly.”

“In medical emergencies, time is of the essence,” he pointed out. “With support from the community of Qatar to make the best choice for their level of healthcare needs, our paramedics can continue to reach casualties rapidly and deliver lifesaving care by reducing incoming calls for non-emergency cases.”

“This campaign provides the public with the different options for medical care, and we hope this will have a positive reduction on the number of 999 calls to the Ambulance Service for non-life-threatening conditions,” Darwish added.



شركة
نפט الشمال
North Oil
Company

PUBLIC
PRE- QUALIFICATION NOTICE

Ref. No.	Description of Scope	Response Closing Date (Time)
CFT-2023-139	Offshore Construction and Maintenance Services	14 February 2024 5:00 PM Qatar time

North Oil Company (“NOC”) invites all prospective parties to participate in this Pre-qualification.

Scope of Supply:

- Offshore Construction and Maintenance Service

Contract Duration: Five (5) years

Pre-qualification Criteria:

Criteria	Supporting documents
CONTRACTOR shall have exemplary HSE records for similar services	Copy of HSE records and any LTI
CONTRACTOR shall demonstrate certification and training	List of permanent personnel and evidence of the technically qualify certifications. List of certified equipment
CONTRACTOR shall demonstrate that it has experience in offshore construction and maintenance services	List of past and present projects including details of value, duration, client, location. Client testimonials/reference letters.
CONTRACTOR shall demonstrate capabilities associated with the Services	Engineering capabilities, workshop details, capacity and production, list of personnel (per discipline), list of plant and equipment, details of sourcing additional personnel, new technologies used or developed
Regulatory compliance in pre-fabrication activity, reporting and documentation	Provide sample dossier for; workshop activities, and the management & monitoring of the services
CONTRACTOR shall demonstrate its logistics and support capabilities associated with the Services	Details of offshore personnel, office space, accommodation, workshops/yards, Medevac emergency response team

Interested parties should register their interest by providing supporting documentation, as per Pre-qualification Criteria, via e-mail to fops.rfx@noc.qa.

Interested parties shall register their interest by **14/02/2024** using the reference number **CFT-2023-138** in the email’s subject line. Only shortlisted service providers will be contacted by NOC in the next stage of the CFT.

No queries will be considered from service providers who do not comply with the contents of this Notice.

DECLARATION OF LIQUIDATOR


THE LIQUIDATOR

Linsar Karuppamveetil Shamsudheen
of Kreston SVP Chartered Accountants
Declares

LIQUIDATION OF
GRUPO REVENGA INGENIEROS W.L.L
With Limited Liability (Under Liquidation)
CR No. 65853

That the company’s activities will be liquidated as per the provisions of article (312) and following articles of the commercial companies law no. (8) for the year 2021

Anyone has claims or pending issues against the company must contact the liquidator within 20 days from this notice
**At 7712 9898 or 6668 8575 or
info@krestonsvp.com**




الأولية
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/AUC/2024/01	Selling Off Mixed Scrap Materials (BMS & SWSP) for Qatar Primary Materials Company (“Services”)	200 QAR	2,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	04 Feb 2024 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/ID/2024/05	Call-Off Agreement for Supply and Delivery of Flocculant at Al Karana (SWSP) for Qatar Primary Materials Company (“Supplies”)	1,000 QAR	25,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	04 Feb 2024 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.doc@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID. Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender Fees are nonrefundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-651111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. **IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006)**. Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the queries in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITI Documentation at least the (5) calendar days prior to the tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company’s tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
- Location of the new building



For further inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa



QMC official honours AJ Gaza scribe al-Dahdouh

Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) director of Media Development Department HE Sheikh Khaled bin Abdulaziz al-Thani has honoured Wael al-Dahdouh, correspondent for Al Jazeera channel in the Gaza Strip.

HE Sheikh Khaled expressed his condolences for the death of al-Dahdouh's wife, sons Hamza and Mahmoud, daughter Sham, and grandson Adam.

He also inquired about the health of the journalist, who is receiving treatment in Doha after being injured during his coverage of the war in Gaza.

HE Sheikh Khaled affirmed his complete solidarity and support for the family in their ordeal, pledging to provide all forms of support and assistance for them.

He further praised al-Dahdouh's exceptional performance and his courage alongside Al Jazeera teams, journalists, and media professionals

during the media coverage of the repercussions of the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

HE Sheikh Khaled highlighted the significant sacrifices made by journalists and media professionals in Gaza, with hundreds of them killed or injured.

He added that this is the price they pay for conveying to the world the truth and consequences of the aggression on the people of the region.

He stressed that the efforts of media professionals working under siege and aggression in Gaza have a significant international impact in revealing what is happening on the ground, including crimes against journalists and civilians.

Al-Dahdouh thanked HE Sheikh Khaled and affirmed his commitment to continue his professional mission, stating that his injury will not deter his determination to return to the field of duty after completing the treatment.

Over 3.1mn used Doha Metro, Lusail Tram during Asian Cup group stage

Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) has revealed that during the group stage of the Asian Cup 2023 Qatar, from January 12-25, more than 3.1mn passengers used the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram, with 3mn passengers using the metro and 113,000 passengers using the tram.

The metro and tram services had significant turnout from the Asian Cup fans during the first 14 days of the tournament, which featured 36 matches.

These services played a key role in providing a safe and reliable travel experience. Additionally, they facilitated access to various activation areas and key destinations around the city.

The total number of trips to and from the stadiums during this stage amounted

to 535,000, Qatar Rail said.

The percentage of fans utilising the metro for transportation to the nine tournament stadiums was 29%, while the percentage of those using the metro for access to stadiums within a walking distance from the metro network was 35%.

The opening day of the tournament on January 12 saw the highest ridership for an individual match via the metro, with 52% of fans opting for metro transport to attend the opening ceremony.

Additionally, January 12 recorded the highest flow into a single metro station after the match, at Lusail QNB station, where the rate reached 320 passengers per minute – equivalent to the traffic flow of a seven-lane expressway.

On January 25, the network recorded its

highest daily ridership during the group stage, with a total of 267,900 trips using the metro across its 37 stations.

January 22 witnessed the shortest headway between trains operating since the beginning of the tournament, which was two minutes on the Gold Line to facilitate the movement of fans heading to the matches that were held simultaneously at Khalifa International Stadium and Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

Doha Metro's busiest stations during the group stage were Msheireb, DECC, and Souq Waqif.

"The group stage of the tournament highlighted a substantial number of fans opting for the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram for their daily commutes," said Ajlan Eid al-Enazi, chief of Strategy and Business

Development at Qatar Rail. "We have developed operational plans to facilitate seamless movement of fans to reach the stadiums effortlessly."

"For instance, we have reduced the headway between trains to two minutes on the Gold Line, enabling fans to attend games held on the same day simultaneously using a single line," he said.

Qatar Rail developed a comprehensive operational plan in co-ordination with various relevant entities and partners.

Additionally, the metro's capacity was increased by operating the full fleet of 110 trains, including the six-car train on the Red Line.

Furthermore, the train headway on all lines was reduced to three minutes before and after the matches to facilitate fans



Fans at a metro station.

Asian Cup a boon for retail and services businesses

The ongoing activities of the AFC Asian Cup 2023 Qatar have considerably increased the number of visitors to Souq Waqif and Expo 2023 Doha, among other places of interest across the country.

Local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported that Asian Cup fans have flocked to Souq Waqif to celebrate and cheer for their teams, especially those from the GCC countries.

Restaurants and eateries spread across Souq Waqif have been experiencing excellent business over the past few weeks, a throwback to the boom during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

Other shops at the souq are experiencing brisk business, reporting excellent sales, especially for souvenirs and clothes.

A number of shop owners and operators revealed that the largest number of visitors hailed from Saudi Arabia, followed by Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE, and Iraq, aside from visitors from the Arab and Asian communities in Qatar.

They said that the shops and restaurants are open until the late hours.

The busiest timings at the souq, according to a number of sellers and service providers, is between early morning until noon, and between 3pm and midnight.

One cafe manager said that his outlet is serving around 1,500 customers a day during this period, five times the normal daily average.

Most sellers say that they have maintained the prices and service charges and avoided any increase, to encourage more customers to come and enjoy the unique atmosphere and surroundings of Souq Waqif.

Similarly, the International Zone at Expo 2023 Doha has attracted an increasing number of GCC visitors, who highly praised the high level of organisation of the exhibition and the various interesting activities and events there.

The visitors have also expressed their appreciation for the efforts exerted by Qatar to provide tourists and visitors with all the possible means of convenience and entertainment to help them experience a memorable time in the country.



Palestinian-American author speaks at VCUarts Qatar



Hala Alyan in conversation with VCUarts Qatar dean Amir Berbic.

Award-winning Palestinian-American author Hala Alyan gave a talk at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) in the university's atrium.

Titled *Endurance and Solidarity Through Art*, Alyan – a poet, clinical psychologist, and novelist – read selected poems and nonfiction pieces touching upon themes of resilience, identity, and heritage during the talk at the Qatar Foundation (QF) partner university.

VCUarts Qatar dean Amir Berbic introduced Alyan to the audience.

"Hala has roots in Palestine and Syria. She has lived in Kuwait, Lebanon, the UAE, Oklahoma, Texas, Maine, among other places," he said. "Much of her writing reflects and explores notions of displacement, relationships to home and culture, or family."

"We invited her to speak to us in the context of the tragic ongoing situation in Gaza and the impact it has had on us," he said.

Delving into the pivotal role of art in fortifying both personal capacity and solidarity, Alyan also discussed strategies for building endurance during this time.

The talk was followed by a question-and-answer session led by Berbic.

To the questions "What is home in the context of displacement?



The workshops aimed to support content creators community.

Sony, Fnac Qatar host series of workshops for content creators

Sony Middle East & Africa, in partnership with Fnac Qatar, held a series of workshops in Doha last month for content creators to experience its range of digital imaging products.

The first one-day indoor travel and portrait photography workshop saw the participation of more than 100 photographers and content creators.

It was conducted on December 15 at the Indian Cultural Centre Photography Club, under the aegis of the Indian embassy, and showcased Sony's range of cameras that combine versatility and image quality with user-friendly features, making them ideal for those looking to transition to more advanced photography and videography.

Sony ambassador Abdulla al-Mushaifri, who was present at the event, said: "Sony's advanced imaging technology with extensive usability and custom-built features are optimised for creators. This workshop was an excellent platform for photographers to learn more about the artistic possibilities with Sony cameras."

Sony also held two workshops at the Qatar Photography Centre affiliated to the Ministry of Culture, on December 15-16, with more than 20 participants.

The workshop featured commercial portraits and highlighted the secrets of lighting.

Sony ambassador Faisal al-Bisher, who was present, said: "Lighting plays a crucial role in creating a mood that effectively conveys artistic intent, whether shooting stills or movies."

"The workshop was a great opportunity for creators to learn more about Sony's lighting tools and techniques to capture professional-quality images," he said.

The workshops are a testament to Sony's continuous support to the local and region's growing media and entertainment industry where it offers better services and products to inspire content creators.

Whether vloggers, streamers, or filmmakers, Sony empowers content creators with the best image quality and creative flexibility they need.

Fnac Qatar continues to play a vital role in nurturing artistic endeavours and empowering Qatar's creative minds through strategic partnerships and engaging initiatives.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SAMPOSON KOFI TWENE

holder of

GHANA Passport No. G3838719
QID No. 28428800915

hereby change my name

from
SAMPOSON KOFI TWENE

to
SAMPSON KOFI TWENE

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, AJLA OMARI

holder of

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA
Passport No. B3070132
QID No. 29954400016

hereby change my name

from
AJLA OMARI

to
AJLA BOJIC

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Trapped in Gaza's south, displaced Palestinians languish in winter

By Mai Yaghi
AFP

It took Umm Imad three days to reach Rafah, braving rain and cold weather in hopes of reaching safety as fighting rages across the besieged Gaza Strip.

However, in the border town, on the Palestinian territory's southern edge, the 70-year-old was forced to sleep rough like hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians displaced by the Israel-Hamas war, now in its fourth month.

"I didn't find shelter, I didn't find a tent, I didn't find anything," said Umm Imad, her black headscarf ruffling in the wind.

Heavy rains in recent days have given way to the return of a blue sky over the coastal strip, but the cold remains.

Rows of tents stretch into the distance behind Umm Imad, now a common sight all over Rafah.

Some of the tents are pitched along a hill of sandy earth, criss-crossed by barbed wire fences several metres high.

Many of the displaced Palestinians in Rafah have travelled there from Khan Younis, southern Gaza's main city about 7km to the north which has become the epicentre of Israel's military offensive against Hamas.

"I spend the night in the street, under pouring rain, without shelter or anything, and I have orphaned children with me," Umm Imad said.

Holding back tears, Abdallah Halas, 24, said: "I don't know where we will go and sleep. Children, women, elderly and sick family members are in the streets."

Nearby, streams of waste water flow through the streets littered with rubbish.



A picture, taken through the window of a building damaged by Israeli bombing, shows members of a family standing on a rooftop, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

According to the United Nations, 1.3mn people – more than half of Gaza's population of 2.4mn – are now trapped in Rafah, crammed together in "desperate conditions".

On the 113th day of the war, sparked by the events

of October 7, Palestinians continue to move from one area of Gaza to another, fleeing fighting that began in the north before moving steadily south.

They move by foot, on donkey carts or crammed into the backs of diesel-powered trucks – a costly op-

tion with hardly any fuel left in Gaza.

Israel's relentless bombardment and complete siege of the Hamas-ruled territory began soon after the attacks that resulted in about 1,140 deaths in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official figures.

The Israeli campaign, according to the Hamas government's health ministry, has killed at least 26,257 people in Gaza, most of them women and children.

In Rafah, drivers must go at walking speed as they make their way on the overcrowded streets.

Roadside vendors sell basic supplies: canned goods, mattresses, blankets and tents.

Similar items are being delivered into Gaza in humanitarian aid shipments, but these have slowed to a trickle since the war erupted.

A bag of potato chips costs eight shekels (\$2) – an eight-fold increase from its pre-war price.

Hind Ahmed, 29, waited with her three children on a busy street in west Rafah, hoping to find a taxi or a donkey cart that would take her to her husband at a makeshift camp.

"We were staying in a school classroom for over a month ... we shared the classroom with more than 50 people, the air was polluted and the school is overcrowded," she said.

"So we decided to go live in a tent despite the cold weather," Ahmed said, her youngest son in one arm, a sponge mattress and a bag of clothes in the other.

The family has been displaced several times and their situation has become "illogical," she said.

"Open the crossings and let us leave, there is nothing left in Gaza, no schools, no education, no basic life necessities," she said.

A man crossing the street interrupted, angrily shouting: "We will not leave Gaza. The (Israeli) Jews are the ones who came to us, they are the ones who must leave."

More countries halt funding to UN aid agency in Gaza

Reuters/AFP
London/Paris

Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and Finland have become the latest countries to pause funding for the United Nations' refugee agency for Palestinians (UNRWA), following allegations that some of its staff were involved in the events of October 7.

The United States, Australia and Canada had already paused funding to the aid agency, a critical source of support for people in Gaza, after the allegations by Israel.

The agency said on Friday that it had opened an investigation into several employees and severed ties with those people.

Encouraging more donor suspensions, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said that the UNRWA should be replaced once fighting in the enclave dies down and accused the UNRWA of ties to religious militants in Gaza.

"In Gaza's rebuilding, @UNRWA must be replaced with agencies dedicated to genuine peace and development," he added on X.

Reuters could not immediately contact the UNRWA's communications head for comment.

The UNRWA has always rejected similar accusations in the past and maintained that it is a relief and humanitarian agency.

The Palestinian foreign ministry criticised what it described as an Israeli campaign against the UNRWA, and Hamas condemned the termination of employee contracts "based on information derived from the Zionist enemy".

The UNRWA was set up to help refugees of the 1948 war at Israel's founding and provides education, health and aid services to Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

It helps about two-thirds of Gaza's 2.3mn population and has played a pivotal aid role during the war that Israel launched to eliminate Hamas after the events of October 7.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said yesterday that while the UNRWA provides "vital, life-saving work", Brisbane would "temporarily pause disbursement of recent funding".

"We welcome UNRWA's immediate response, including terminating contracts and launching an investigation," she said on social media platform X, formerly Twitter.

Canada's International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen announced on Friday that Ottawa had "temporarily paused any additional funding to the UNRWA while it undertakes a thorough investigation into these allegations".

Finland, which had a four-year agreement to provide €5mn (\$5.4mn) annually to the UNRWA, suspended its payments and called for an "an independent and thorough investigation", in a statement from its foreign ministry.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said Italy is joining the ranks of those suspending funding, adding: "We are committed to providing humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population while protecting Israel's security".

Switzerland, which has made annual contributions of around 20mn Swiss francs (\$23mn) to the UNRWA, said yesterday that no decision would be taken on the 2024 payment until the accusations were clarified.

"Switzerland has zero tolerance for all forms of support for terrorism, and for calls to hatred or incitement to violence," it added.

Dutch Minister for Trade and Development Geoffrey van Leeuwen announced a freeze in fund-



Activists lift placards during a protest against the war in Gaza, outside the ministry of defence in the central city of Tel Aviv.

ing for the UNRWA while the investigation is ongoing, saying that the government was "extremely shocked".

"The accusation is that the attack was committed on October 7 with UN money, with our money," he told public broadcaster NOS yesterday.

The British government said it was "appalled by the allegations" made by Israel and would be "temporarily pausing any future funding" while the Foreign Office reviewed the claims.

Announcing the investigation on Friday, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said that he had decided to terminate the contracts of some staff members to protect the agency's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Lazzarini did not disclose the number of employees allegedly involved in the attacks, nor the nature of their alleged involvement.

He said, however, that "any UNRWA employee who was involved in acts of terror" would be held accountable, including through

criminal prosecution.

During weeks of Israeli bombardment of the Palestinian enclave, the UNRWA has repeatedly said its capacity to render humanitarian assistance to people in Gaza is on the verge of collapse.

Hussein al-Sheikh, head of the Palestinians' umbrella political body the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), said that cutting support to the agency brought major political and relief risks.

"We call on countries that announced the cessation of their support for the UNRWA to immediately reverse their decision," he said on X.

The foreign ministry in Germany, a major donor to the UNRWA, welcomed the UNRWA's investigation, saying that it is deeply concerned about the allegations raised against agency employees.

"We expect Lazzarini to make it clear within the UNRWA's workforce that all forms of hatred and violence are totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated," it said on X.

Lebanon's parliament approves 2024 budget, shunning major reforms

Lebanon's parliament passed an amended budget for 2024 that experts said neglected to include crucial reforms that would help the country emerge from a financial meltdown that has gutted the public sector for nearly five years.

The draft was passed late on Friday after three days of drawn-out disputes, including several heated exchanges in parliament's chamber with caretaker premier Najib Mikati, highlighting the deep divisions that have paralysed Lebanese politics and prolonged a more than year-long vacuum at the presidency.

The budget, which has been amended over the course of months from a version that had been submitted to parliament by Mikati, anticipated significantly higher state revenues earned through VAT and customs fees.

It also included measures that appeared to target those who had made illicit gains during Lebanon's financial crisis, by fining companies which unfairly benefited from the central bank's previous currency exchange platform and traders who used the central bank's subsidies on imports to generate profit.

Since Lebanon's economy began to unravel in 2019, its currency has lost around 95% of its value, banks have locked most depositors out of their savings and more than 80% of the population has sunk below the poverty line.

The crisis erupted after decades of profligate spending and corruption among the ruling elite, some of whom led banks that lent heavily to the state.

The government estimates losses in the financial system total more than \$70bn, the majority of which were accrued at the central bank.

Vested interests of the political and economic class have blocked key reforms required by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to unlock a \$3bn aid package for Lebanon, including legislation to resolve its banking crisis and unifying multiple exchange rates for the Lebanese pound.

The IMF had also urged Lebanon to consider increases in social spending "with the goal of protecting the most vulnerable".

It said last year that Lebanon "will be mired in a never-ending crisis" unless it implemented rapid reforms. – **Reuters**

Washington, Baghdad open talks on the future of foreign soldiers in Iraq

Iraq and the United States held yesterday a first round of talks on the future of American and other foreign troops in the country, with Baghdad expecting discussions to lead to a timeline for reducing their presence.

Roughly 2,500 US troops are still deployed in Iraq as part of the anti-Islamic State (IS) group international coalition formed in 2014 – the year the religious militant group overran swathes of Iraq and neighbouring Syria.

However, after the Israel-Hamas war began in October, US-led coalition forces in Iraq and Syria have faced frequent attacks by Iran-aligned groups, leading to US retaliatory strikes and Iraqi complaints of American "aggression" against its territory. The volatile situation has pushed Iraq's prime minister – whose government relies on the support of Iran-aligned parties – to call for the coalition to leave, although talks between the two sides had been planned since August.

The office of Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani issued a photograph of him with top-ranking officials from both the Iraqi armed forces and the US-led coalition.

Sudani's foreign affairs adviser, Farhad Alaaldin, told AFP that the talks "and whatever progress made will determine the length of these negotiations".

"Iraq is engaging the other countries taking part in the international coalition for bilateral agreements that serves the best interest of Iraq and these countries," Alaaldin said. – **AFP**

Mali junta eyes new peace talks after ending accord with separatist rebels

Mali's junta has issued a decree to establish a committee to organise national peace and reconciliation talks, a day after it ended a 2015 peace deal with Tuareg separatist rebels and accused mediator Algeria of interfering in its affairs.

The decision to end the so-called Algiers accord threatens to further destabilise the conflict-torn West African nation. Algeria, which shares a 1,300km border with Mali, said the decision could put the entire region at risk.

In an apparent move to establish a new internal peace process, the junta's decree outlined the structure of a committee and the steps it should take to prepare talks.

It did not give a timeframe or say which groups it wanted to include in the dialogue.

Tuareg rebel spokesperson Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadan told Reuters yesterday that the new initiative was a "staged event" between groups who are already aligned.

"We think it's a show, a waste of time and a waste of state resources," he said.

An alliance of Tuareg rebel groups on Friday acknowledged the termination of the 2015 peace deal in a statement and called on their members to review and update their objectives in light of the new situation. – **Reuters**

Hundreds march against gender violence in Kenya

AFP
Nairobi

Several hundred people marched in Nairobi yesterday to protest against femicide in Kenya where more than a dozen women have been killed this month in cases that shocked the nation.

The campaigners took to the streets of the capital holding placards that read "Being a woman should not be a death sentence" and "Patriarchy kills" while others featured names and photographs of the victims.

"Stop killing us," they chanted as they marched towards parliament, bringing traffic to a halt in Nairobi's central business district.

At least 16 women have been killed in Kenya this year, according to media reports, shining a spotlight on violence against women which the government has described as "rising".

"Femicide is the most brutal manifestation of gender-based

violence," Amnesty International's Kenya chapter said in a statement ahead of the march.

"It is unacceptable and must never be normalised," the rights group said, calling on authorities to expedite investigations and prosecution of the perpetrators.

At the protest yesterday, Terry Wangare, a communications officer, said it is "time for Kenya to stand up and make a decision".

"Nobody cares. If you complain, you are bad," the 32-year-old told AFP.

Student Faith Claire Wanjiru, 23, who was at her first protest, said she is "angry" and is not going to tolerate the violence.

"Taking someone's life should not be anyone's work," she said.

Organisers of the protest said other marches took place in 10 other regions, including the lake-side city of Kisumu and the Indian Ocean port city of Mombasa.

More than 30% of women in Kenya experience physical violence and 13% experience some form of sexual violence, according



Protesters shout slogans as they march through Nairobi's Central Business District at a demonstration over an alarming rise in murder of young women.

to a government report last year.

Human rights watchdogs are convinced that the number represents just a fraction of actual cases.

There were at least 152 cases of femicide in Kenya last year, according to non-profit Femicide

Count, which keeps a tally of only reported incidents.

In 2022, some 725 women and girls were murdered in the East African country, according to a report from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.



Protest in Farnborough



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg (centre) bangs a tambourine as she stands with members of the Extinction Rebellion (XR) climate change group, protesting against plans to increase private jet flights, at Farnborough Airport in Farnborough, west of London.



UK Post Office chairman to quit in fallout from software scandal

Reuters
London

The chairman of the UK Post Office will step down, the government said yesterday, amid growing frustration over the state-owned company's governance as it reels from a scandal which led to the wrongful conviction of hundreds of sub-postmasters.

British business minister Kemi Badenoch and Post Office Chair, Henry Staunton, "agreed to part ways with mutual consent" in a phone call earlier, a government spokesperson said in a statement. An interim chair would be appointed shortly and a recruitment process for a new chair will be

Japan's Fujitsu is under pressure because the Post Office workers were convicted as a result of glitches in the Horizon software developed by the company

launched in due course. Staunton joined the Post Office board in December 2022.

Amid mounting public anger, Britain is moving to quash convictions and pay compensation after

the self-employed sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses were wrongly prosecuted or convicted of theft, fraud and false accounting between 1999 and 2015.

Japan's Fujitsu is under pressure because the Post Office workers were convicted as a result of glitches in the Horizon software developed by the company.

Last week, Fujitsu said it would work with the British government on "appropriate actions" including compensation, based on the findings of an inquiry into the scandal.

Postal minister Kevin Hollinrake said on Wednesday that Fujitsu should be contributing hundreds of millions of pounds to pay the compensation bill the government is expecting over the scandal.



President Macron visits a mausoleum at the Nizamuddin site in New Delhi.

India, France sign up for joint defence production

Reuters
New Delhi

India and France have agreed to work together on the joint production of defence equipment including helicopters and submarines for the Indian armed forces and production for friendly countries, New Delhi said.

The deal was reached during a visit by French President Emmanuel Macron, who met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and attended a state banquet hosted by President Draupadi Murmu, the government said in a statement late on Friday.

Macron and Modi agreed to expand bilateral ties in defence production, nuclear energy, space research and the use of artificial

intelligence for public services like climate change, health and agriculture, the statement said. It did not specify the value of any deals. After Russia, France is the largest arms supplier to India, which has relied on its fighter jets for four decades.

The leaders welcomed the setting up of maintenance, repair and overhaul services by France's Safran for leading-edge aviation propulsion (LEAP) engines in India and adding such services for Rafale engines, and a helicopter partnership.

The bilateral summit during Macron's 40-hour visit, was the fifth Macron-Modi meeting since May.

India's Tata Group and France's Airbus have signed an agreement to manufacture civilian helicop-

ters together, Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said.

French jet engine maker CFM International also announced an agreement with India's Akasa Air to buy more than 300 of its LEAP-1B engines to power 150 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft.

Akasa Air previously ordered 76 aircraft powered by the engine, of which 22 are in use.

India and France agreed to intensify co-operation in the southwest Indian Ocean, building on joint surveillance missions carried out from the French island territory of La Reunion in 2020 and 2022, the government statement said.

Macron also said France would create conditions to attract up to 30,000 Indian students a year for higher education.

Taiwan issue biggest threat to Sino-US ties, says Wang Yi

Reuters
Bangkok

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan held candid talks in Bangkok aimed at keeping in contact, both sides said, with Wang stressing that "Taiwan independence" posed the biggest risk to Sino-US ties.

The meeting came just over two months after US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco.

China and the United States had a rocky start to 2023 but met more often in the second half of the year to try to stabilise ties ahead of democratic Taiwan's presidential transition in May and a potentially caustic 2024 US election campaign.

China's struggling economy may also dampen Beijing's appetite for what had been more combative ties with Washington amid improving Chinese relations with Russia.

Wang and Sullivan agreed to properly handle important and sensitive issues in US-China relations, China's foreign ministry said, and for Xi and Biden to "maintain regular contact to provide strategic guidance for bilateral relations...and make good use of the current strategic communication channels."

The White House in a statement said both Wang and Sullivan recognised recent progress in resuming military-to-military communication and the importance of maintaining those channels. Sullivan also "underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the statement said.

Taiwan's defence ministry said yesterday it detected 11 Chinese military planes crossing the Taiwan Strait's median line in the past 24 hours. The ministry on Friday reported 23 Chinese air force planes operating around Taiwan, carrying out "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships ahead of high-level China-US talks in Thailand.

The White House added that "Sullivan stressed that although the United States and China are in competition, both countries need to prevent it from veering into conflict or confrontation." In San Francisco, Xi and Biden agreed to open a presidential hotline, resume military-to-military communications, and work to curb fentanyl production, but remained at odds over Taiwan.

China claims the island as its own territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring it under its control. Taiwan strongly objects to China's sovereignty claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Tai-

pei to Beijing in 1979 and has long said it does not support a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan. It does, however, maintain unofficial relations with the self-governed island and remains its most important backer and arms supplier.

Saturday's meeting was the latest quiet engagement between Wang and Sullivan, who reports directly to Biden, having met previously away from media to try to lower the temperature.

Wang, according to a foreign ministry statement, told Sullivan the two countries should treat each other as equals and respect their core interests, rather than undermine them, and "build mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win co-operation" to establish the "correct way for China and the United States to get along".

Wang said Taiwan was China's internal affair, and a recent election there "cannot change the basic fact that Taiwan is a part of China." China criticised the United States on Thursday for causing "trouble and provocation" after the US Navy sailed its first warship through the sensitive waters separating China and Taiwan since the election.

"The biggest risk to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is 'Taiwan independence' and the biggest challenge to China-US relations is also 'Taiwan independence,'" Wang was quoted as saying.

Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan PM loses seat in election

Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan prime minister has lost his parliamentary seat, according to election results released yesterday, fuelling speculation the microstate may be poised to switch diplomatic recognition to Beijing.

Results showed that Kausea Natano, who has backed long-standing relations with Taipei, failed to win one of two seats up for grabs on the main atoll of Funafuti. Just 12 nations around the world still formally recognise Taiwan, after Nauru abruptly severed diplomatic ties in favour of China earlier this month.

Some Pacific watchers have questioned whether Beijing could persuade Tuvalu to also make the switch. Natano's finance minister, Seve Paeniu, has floated the idea of reviewing Taiwan ties. He

won his election race uncontested and is expected to try to chase the island country's top job.

There are only a little over 6,000 registered voters in the country of around 11,500 people and votes are still coming in from some islands. With no formal political parties, the process of MPs selecting a prime minister and potentially changing government policies could be slow.

Taiwan's ambassador to Tuvalu Andrew Lin dismissed the idea of a potential switch, recently telling AFP the two allies enjoyed a "very long-term friendship" that would endure beyond the election. But China has been methodically poaching Taiwan's Pacific allies, convincing Solomon Islands and Kiribati to switch recognition in 2019 before Nauru did the same.

China claims democratic, self-

ruled Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary. Tuvalu's looming leadership change may also throw into doubt a recent treaty with Australia, which saw Canberra offer refuge to Tuvaluans threatened by climate change.

The United Nations says Tuvalu is "extremely vulnerable" to the effects of climate change, with most of its landmass less than 5m above sea level. Most of it is predicted to be underwater - at least some of the time - by 2100.

Around 40% of the main atoll Funafuti already gets submerged during periodic "king" tides that wash away taro and cassava which were the islands' staple crops. Two of the atolls represented on its flag of 11 stars have already disappeared. (AFP)

Campaign trail



Presidential candidate Anies Baswedan greets his supporters at his campaign rally in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Wildly popular Khan, party erased from poll drive

AFP
Mianwali

Pakistani cricketing legend turned world leader Imran Khan is wildly popular in his constituency and ancestral homeland of Mianwali, but the political posters that line the streets do not bear his face and flags do not fly his colours.

A relentless crackdown widely attributed to Pakistan's powerful military has seen him and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party almost erased from the election campaign ahead of the vote.

"Our party workers are facing harassment, and I personally have received death threats," says 61-year-old Jamal Ahsan Khan, who is standing for PTI in Mianwali in place of his leader.

"Throughout my life, I have never witnessed an election as intense and threatening as this one."

Khan, currently in jail facing dozens of legal challenges, is barred from contesting elections on February 8 because of a disputed conviction — cases he claims are politically motivated.

Across the country, PTI has been obstructed from holding rallies and the heavily censored media is restricted in its coverage of the opposition, pushing the party's campaign almost entirely online.

Dozens of candidates nationwide have also had their nomination papers rejected by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Like many other party candidates, loyalist Ahsan Khan has been in near hiding in the build-up to the election, unable to hold meetings or distribute leaflets.

"It feels disheartening that as a candidate of Pakistan's leading



Students walk at the University of Mianwali campus, an education project built during the government of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, in Mianwali, Khan's native town in Punjab province. **Right:** Candidate of Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz party Inam Ullah Khan Niazi speaks during an interview with AFP at their family house in Mianwali. (AFP)



political party, I am unable to conduct my campaign in a meaningful way," he told AFP.

With two weeks until the vote, there is none of the fervour and excitement that usually marks an election in the country of more than 240mn people.

It was from Mianwali, a largely rural district in the central province of Punjab, that Khan built his political career and was elected three times as a member of parliament.

PTI's national victory in 2018, driven by its promises to put an end to corruption and the family dynasties which have ruled the country for generations, propelled him to prime minister.

In Mianwali, where he notably built a hospital and a university, the 71-year-old "is not just a political figure, he is a hero", Rana Amjad Iqbal, editor-in-chief of

Imran Khan was widely believed to have been backed by the military in his rise to power, but became emboldened during his leadership and began to push against the control of the mighty generals

local newspaper *Nawa-e-Sharar*, or the Daily Spark, tells AFP.

"However, the primary and most significant reason for his enduring political relevance lies in his anti-establishment stance," underlines the journalist.

Khan was widely believed to have been backed by the military in his rise to power, but became emboldened during his leadership and began to push against the control of the mighty generals.

Eventually, he lost their favour and was ousted in a controversial parliamentary no-confidence vote in 2022 after dozens of his MPs

defected. His subsequent arrest in May 2023 brought supporters onto the streets who protested against military symbols — sparking the start of a widespread crackdown against PTI.

Thousands of supporters were arrested and around 100 — half from Mianwali — are awaiting trial before military courts, while senior party leaders were detained and forced underground before defecting in their dozens.

Khan "is still popular with the public, but he is unacceptable" to the army, retired schoolteacher Ijaz Khan said.

Dozens of parks closed as fires rage in Colombia

AFP, Reuters
Bogotá

Colombian capital Bogotá has closed some 40 parks and hiking trails due to heavy smoke from wildfires raging in the area, the mayor's office announced yesterday.

Following an air-quality alert, the parks will remain closed through the weekend, the office said on X, the former Twitter.

A mountain range bordering the city of 8mn to the east has seen at least four wildfires break out since Monday. Most are now under control, but at least one reached within a few hundred meters (yards) of the popular El Paraiso neighbourhood.

Amid hot, dry conditions linked to the weather phenomenon El Nino, fires have devastated more than 17,000 hectares (42,000 acres) across Colombia over the past three months, the authorities say.

As the country suffers through record heat, the Environment Ministry says at least 20 fires are still active, affecting forests, farmland and the mountain ecosystems that provide water to lower altitudes. With thick smoke degrading air quality in Bogotá, the authorities are urging residents — who enjoy hiking and biking on weekends — to stay inside as much as possible and wear masks if they must go out.

The office of Mayor Carlos Fernando Galán said he was studying whether he might have to issue mandatory restrictions on citizens' movements.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro declared a natural disaster on Wednesday, allocating funds to address the emergency, and asked UN and European Union member nations for help.

This month could be the hottest in Colombia in 30 years, and February is expected to see even higher temperatures, according to the country's Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies. Rain is not expected before March.

Ukraine to Russia: Where are the bodies of dead POWs?

Ukraine's spy chief yesterday questioned why Russia had not shown any images of the bodies of Ukrainian soldiers that Moscow claims were killed when a military plane was shot down. Russia said 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war died when Kyiv shot down a military transport plane on Wednesday near the border between the two countries. While Kyiv has not outright denied Russia's claims, it has questioned key parts of its narrative — in particular, who was on board the plane. "There are a number of factors that are unclear," Kyrylo Budanov, chief of Ukraine's GUR military intelligence unit said in an interview with Ukrainian state TV. "First of all, they did not show fields covered with corpses and remains," he said. "If it happened as Russia claims, why does Russia...continue to hide the bodies?" Budanov said yesterday. Russia's Investigative Committee has published three videos of what it says is the crash site. One showed a blurred close-up of a dead body. Another showed a forensics team sealing up a single body bag.



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (right) accepting the credentials of Pakistan's new ambassador Mohamed Mudassir Tipu in Tehran yesterday. (AFP)

French farmers continue protests despite concessions

Reuters
Paris

French farmers maintained a series of nationwide protests yesterday, arguing government measures announced to quell the demonstrations did not go far enough to meet their demands for better pay and living conditions.

On Friday, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's government dropped plans to gradually reduce state subsidies on agricultural diesel, and announced other steps

aimed at reducing the financial and administrative pressures faced by many farmers.

The FNSEA, France's biggest farming union, said it would keep up its protests and many farmers remained at roadblocks set up by motorways and major roads yesterday.

"The measures announced by Attal are not enough, they will not help our cash flow," farmer Natacha Guillemet told BFM TV.

Others stuck to their threat of setting up roadblocks around Paris.

Demonstrators also held a silent march in the northern French town of Beauvais to pay tribute to farmers who have died in recent years, with some having committed suicide due to the stress of their working conditions.

France is the European Union's biggest agricultural producer and the French farmers' protests follow similar action in other European countries such as Germany and Poland, with many demonstrators saying they are being hit by globalisation and foreign competition.



Farmers of the CR47 union, next to a fire, attend a blocking of the A62 highway near Agen, southwestern France, yesterday, as part of a nationwide movement of protests called by several farmers' unions on pay, tax and regulations. (AFP)

Gunmen in Iran kill nine Pakistanis in border area

AFP
Tehran

Gunmen in southeastern Iran killed nine people yesterday, Iranian media reported, with Islamabad's ambassador identifying them as Pakistanis, as the neighbouring countries have sought to ease tensions after deadly cross-border fire.

Iran's Mehr news agency reported that "according to witnesses, this morning unknown armed men killed nine non-Iranians in a house in the Sirkan neighbourhood of Saravan city" in Sistan-Baluchistan province.

So far, no group had claimed responsibility, the news agency added.

The province's deputy governor, Alireza Marhamati, told official news agency IRNA that according to survivors of the incident, "three armed people shot at the foreigners after entering their residence and fled the scene."

Marhamati confirmed the toll of nine deaths and said three others were wounded.

The Pakistani ambassador to Tehran, Mohamed Mudassir Tipu, said on X, formerly Twitter, he was "deeply shocked by horrifying killing of 9 Pakistanis in Saravan".

"Embassy will extend full support to bereaved families...We called upon Iran to extend full cooperation in the matter."

Pakistani foreign ministry spokeswoman Mumtaz Zahra Baloch condemned the attack as "horrifying and despicable" and asked Iranian authorities to "investigate the incident and hold to account those involved in this heinous crime".

N), meets openly with villagers, whose leaders assure him of the support of the entire community, in return for future favours.

The PML-N is the party of another former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, who was jailed ahead of the 2018 election and later forced into self-imposed exile.

As Khan has fallen, Sharif has risen, returning to the country and into the arms of the military, analysts say.

Despite being sidelined from the election campaign, voters have not lost their love for Khan.

Hanzala bin Shakeel, a 23-year-old computer science student, will vote for the first time and is making no secret of his choice.

"I will vote for (Imran Khan) because he is the only one who really cares about this country; the others prioritise their personal interests."

Colombia recalls envoy to Argentina

Colombia has recalled its ambassador to Argentina after Argentine President Javier Milei called Colombian leader Gustavo Petro a "murderous communist". Right-wing libertarian Milei on Thursday said in an interview with a Colombian journalist that Petro was "sinking Colombia". Petro, a former urban guerrilla, took office in August 2022 as the country's first leftist president, with the stated goal of achieving "total peace" in a country ravaged by decades of fighting between security forces, leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries and drug gangs. He shot back at Milei by saying those who attack him "have no idea what is communism and what is socialism," adding that "we are not looking for" a system where "the state owns the means of production."

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GULF TIMES

Low-income countries need policy reforms to boost growth, avoid costly debt crisis

Problems associated with sovereign debt are acute in low-income countries due to various factors. High levels of indebtedness, debt servicing challenges, vulnerability to external shocks, currency depreciation, limited access to capital markets, and dependency on aid, corruption and lack of infrastructure investment exacerbate liquidity squeeze, particularly in low-income countries. According to IMF, low-income countries have significant debt repayments falling due in the next two years. They need to refinance about \$60bn of external debt each year, about three times the average in the decade through 2020. But with many competing demands for financing, including from advanced and emerging market economies that are also trying to adapt to climate change, there's a significant risk of a liquidity crunch — failure to raise sufficient financing at an affordable cost. That could in turn lead to a destabilising debt crisis. One major factor for rising debts was higher government borrowing and deficits to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and other external economic shocks. This has increased the level of debt and consequently the cost of servicing it. However, IMF recently noted it is encouraging that this trend is reversing as countries bring primary deficits back in line with pre-pandemic levels.

According to IMF, low-income countries have significant debt repayments falling due in the next two years. They need to refinance about \$60bn of external debt each year

In addition, central banks have significantly raised borrowing costs to tame inflation. That makes it costlier for governments to raise new debt or refinance existing debt. While central banks may be done raising rates, it is not clear when they will start to cut, and this uncertainty may be reflected in volatile financial market conditions. Low-income countries have also increasingly borrowed from the private sector — with about one third of financing coming from private creditors in the last decade compared with about one fifth in the previous decade. This reflected a slowdown in financing from multilateral development banks (MDBs) and through official development assistance (ODA) agencies. This shift has increased both financing costs and vulnerability to global financial shocks. Building resilience in the face of these trends requires countries to act. Some countries have made progress and have taken steps to implement significant energy subsidy reforms to create space for development spending. But many are lagging behind, especially in efforts to increase revenues, such as broadening the tax base, reducing tax exemptions, and increasing the efficiency of tax administration. For instance, the typical Sub-Saharan African country raised only 13% of gross domestic product in revenues in 2022, compared with 18% in other emerging economies and developing countries and 27% in advanced economies. Policy reforms are needed to boost growth and capture more revenue from that growth, for instance, through tax reforms. This will directly improve countries' key debt metrics and ensure they can avoid a costly debt crisis. However, reforms take time to deliver results, so countries should also proactively work on mobilising funding at lower costs, in particular grants. For some, this might mean turning to the IMF for help. Addressing sovereign debt issues in low-income countries often requires a combination of measures, including improved governance, debt restructuring, increased transparency, and international assistance to create a more sustainable and inclusive path for economic development.

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Takeaways from the New Hampshire primary

By James Oliphant
Manchester (New Hampshire)

Donald Trump, the former president, won his second straight nominating contest over challenger Nikki Haley, the only other Republican left in the race, by besting her in Tuesday's New Hampshire primary. Haley, who served as Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, was attempting to keep the margin close in order to argue she has a viable path forward. Meanwhile, President Joe Biden easily won the Democratic primary, even though he wasn't officially on the ballot. Here are takeaways from the New Hampshire primary: It was often said in New Hampshire that Haley needed to keep Trump's vote share below 50% in order to argue that more Republicans want Trump to go away than win. But she failed to do that on Tuesday, leaving her as the leader of a no-Trump coalition that is likely not large enough to get her where she wants to be. Before voters headed to the polls, Haley's campaign argued a path lay ahead for her even if she didn't win New Hampshire. Campaign manager Betsy Ankney noted that multiple states on the calendar will have setups similar to New Hampshire, where independents can crash the party and vote. South Carolina, which holds its Republican primary on February 24, allows any voter who doesn't first cast a ballot in the Democratic primary on February 3 to vote. Michigan, which follows, has an open primary and a closed convention. Then comes Super Tuesday on March 5, when 874 delegates are up for grabs from 15 states and one US territory. Ankney said roughly two-thirds of those are in states with open or semi-open primaries.

She named Virginia, Massachusetts, Texas and North Carolina among states where Haley could perform well with independent or moderate voters whom the campaign views as persuadable. Still, all of this could soon become academic. If Trump blows Haley out in her home state of South Carolina, where she served as governor, she will face mounting pressure to quit. Until then, Haley has a month to campaign, raise money and position herself as the only anti-Trump Republican left. Trump's victory wasn't nearly as sweeping as his Iowa win last week, but it was never expected to be in a state with an electorate packed with moderate Republicans and independents. In fact, the town-by-town map showed Trump fell to Haley in New Hampshire in many of the same areas where he lost to Biden in 2020. That should concern the Trump campaign because Biden beat Trump in the state by about seven percentage points, a margin that made it hard for even Trump to cry fraud. According to exit polls by Edison Research, independents flocked to Haley. She won 60% of them, and she dominated among college graduates 56% to 41%. All that suggests Biden can still assemble a coalition in November that can defeat Trump if he becomes the nominee. But there was no denying that Trump continued to flex his muscle with the Republican base. He crushed Haley among working-class voters without college degrees, according to Edison. Among those who said they made less than \$50,000 a year, Trump took 66% of the vote. He won large majorities among voters who said they attend religious services weekly and who said they own a gun. Perhaps most critical for a

rematch with Biden, Trump, unsurprisingly, kept his hold on voters who described themselves as dissatisfied or angry with the state of the country and dominated among voters who said the economy was "not so good or poor." For voters who said their families were falling behind financially, Trump won 74% of their support. And for New Hampshire voters who were most interested in which candidate could beat Biden in November, Trump handily beat Haley 59% to 39%. That means a majority of Republicans still do not buy the argument Haley has been making that Trump is unelectable. It is hard to lose to a candidate who isn't on the ballot, but Democrat Dean Phillips pulled it off on Tuesday. For Biden, the result brings a sigh of relief that his campaign avoided what could have been a mortifying night that would provide talk-show fodder for weeks. The incumbent president was on track to win the primary by a nearly 50-percentage-point margin after voters wrote his name in on their ballots. The primary offered Phillips a chance to make a name for himself after the national Democratic Party punished New Hampshire for refusing to follow the more diverse South Carolina on the Democratic primary calendar. Since no delegates will be awarded from the New Hampshire primary, Biden did not bother with qualifying for the ballot. Phillips, a Minnesota congressman and the only mainstream Democrat challenging Biden for the nomination, aired a surprising number of TV and radio ads in the run-up to the primary while the Biden campaign kept its distance from the whole thing. Local Democratic officials, looking to ensure their state did not become a political punchline, mounted a write-in effort on Biden's behalf. More than 30,000 Democrats braved the cold to write in Biden's name even though it meant nothing in the grand electoral scheme, a win that the White House will take. At least among some Democrats, there were no hard feelings about being bypassed in favour of South Carolina, which holds the first official Democratic primary on February 3. Haley needed a healthy number of independent voters, who are permitted to vote in the primary, to come out for her to offset Trump's strength with traditional conservatives. There were early signs that may have been occurring, based on Edison Research exit polls. According to Edison, 34% of voters who turned out considered themselves moderates or liberals, compared to 29% in 2016, when Trump won the primary handily. Of the 43% who called themselves independents, Haley was winning 60% of their vote compared to 35% for Trump. She was winning 73% of those who call themselves moderates. On the flip side, Trump was dominating with self-declared conservatives, winning them by a 70% to 28% margin. More than half the voters (51%) believe Biden did not win the 2020 election fairly, according to the poll. Trump, who has perpetuated that false claim since he lost to Biden, was getting the vast majority of those voters at 86%. More than half the voters (54%) also said they believed Trump would be fit for the presidency even if convicted of a crime, the poll said. Conversely, 42% said he would be unfit, and Haley was earning 84% of those voters. That suggests Trump's legal problems could hamper him in a general election matchup against Biden. — Reuters



Former US president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks on stage during a New Hampshire presidential primary election night watch party in Nashua last Tuesday. (Reuters)



An exciting road trip through Qatar with Defender 90, 110, 130



Alfardan Premier Motors Co., the official retailer of Jaguar Land Rover in Qatar, recently hosted an exclusive luxury adventure road trip, which allowed guests to go further into the stunning landscapes and scenery in the Defender, ‘a true icon of exploration and individualism for decades.’

“By exploring the incredible terrain from the privileged perspective of a Defender, guests were able to sample the special capabilities of this legendary vehicle, taking in desert tracks as well as other unforgettable paths off the beaten trail. A city drive also highlighted the urban capabilities of the emblematic Defender: the ideal companion for such a varied adventure, as a paragon of robust strength and go-anywhere versatility,” a statement said.

“The invited guests took the Defender on a unique journey, starting from the JLR showroom at Burj Alfardan in Lusail city, all the way to the Al Majles Resort: a luxury boutique resort next to the coast. On the way, the captivating route took in a wide variety of roads over both highways and desert, showcasing the Defender’s broad scope of unstoppable capabilities.

“As well as long-lasting memories, guests took away a dynamic experience that increased their knowledge and connection with the Defender: one of the four pillars that now makes up JLR’s ‘House of Brands’. More than an off-road vehicle, the Defender is an enduring icon; and this in-



A city drive also highlighted the urban capabilities of the emblematic Defender: the ideal companion for such a varied adventure, as a paragon of robust strength and go-anywhere versatility

credible journey through the rich heritage of Qatar highlights precisely why. The same values that underpin the Qatari way of life are also clearly present in the Defender: quality, trust, dependability, and a love of the great outdoors.

“Guests were able to participate in several traditional activities during the experience, reflecting the fabric of local culture within a thoroughly modern declination. The past met the future on this

latest journey through time and space with the Defender, in a way that perfectly reflects the story of Qatar itself: rooted in history yet looking eagerly towards what is to come. As a result, guests had the opportunity to create some stunning and unique content that pays tribute to the art of driving exploration and the ever-evolving scenery of Qatar.”

Hussein Adra, marketing & CRM manager for Alfardan Premier Motors, commented: “We were very excited to be hosting this wonderful event, designed to enhance the emotional connection that people feel with the iconic Defender, and the incredibly diverse landscapes and culture of Qatar. There is no better environment to demonstrate the amazing capabilities of the Defender thanks to its advanced technology, which at the same time allows its occupants to travel in perfect comfort and enjoy unparalleled modern luxury.”





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3 DAYS ONLY
حتى تاريخ 30.01.2024
رقع 2.75

طماطم قطرية
١ كيلو (فارم فريش)
Tomato Qatar
(Farm Fresh) 1kg



35.00
رقع 27.00

جبنه فيتا
دانماركية ١ كيلو
Danish
Feta Cheese 1kg



29.50
رقع 12.50

لوز
٥٠٠ غرام
Almond
18/20 500gm



2 DAYS ONLY
حتى تاريخ 29.01.2024
رقع 19.75

لحم بقري باكستاني
بالعظم ١ كيلو
Beef Bone in
Pakistan 1kg



52.75
رقع 34.75

لحم موزة خروف
بالعظم استرالي ١ كيلو
Lamb Shank Bone in
Australia 1kg



15.00
رقع 10.00

فرانجوسول دجاج
١.٢ كيلو
Frangosul Whole
Chicken 1.2kg



3 DAYS ONLY
حتى تاريخ 30.01.2024
رقع 11.75

بيض ابيض هندي
متوسط ٣٠ قطعة
Indian White Egg
Medium 30's



89.00
رقع 45.00

شيفلاين مقلاة سيراميك
أسود ٣٠ سم
Chefline Black Ceramic
Frypan 30cm DJ30



3 DAYS ONLY
حتى تاريخ 30.01.2024
رقع 28.50

بنجاب جاردن
أرز بسمتي ٥ كجم
Punjab Garden
Basmati Rice 5kg



8.75
رقع 8.75

سارولا زيت
دوار الشمس ١.٥ لتر
Sarola Sunflower
Oil 1.5Ltr



12.00
رقع 12.00

هاد أند شولدرز شامبو
منوع ٤٠٠ مل / ١ دبة
Head & Shoulders
Shampoo Asstd
400ml x 1pc



60.50
رقع 44.00

أومو مسحوق غسيل
منوع ٩ كيلو
Omo Washing Powder
Asstd 9kg



199
رقع 129

كانون طقم لحاف سرير كينغ
٤٠ على ٦٠ سم منوع ١ دبة
Cannon Comforter
King 240x260cm
Asstd. 1pc



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كينود جهاز قلي
بدون زيت ٥.٥ لتر
Kenwood Air Fryer
HFP50BK



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رقع 739
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رقع 889
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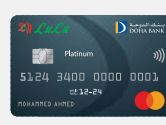


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