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MONDAY Vol. XXXXIII No. 12904

January 29, 2024
Rajab 17, 1445 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

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SC releases report on Qatar 2022

The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) has released a report detailing Qatar's exceptional journey to host the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the mega-event which was held for the first time in the Arab world and the region and generated international acclaim. Titled "FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Amazing Delivered for Football. For Qatar. For the World", the report highlights Qatar's innovative abilities and its success in fulfilling its promises to organise what FIFA President Gianni Infantino hailed as the best World Cup ever.

Importance of proton therapy highlighted

The Middle East Proton Therapy Summit emphasised the importance of proton therapy in cancer treatment and exploring the future directions of cancer care in the region. Held for the first time in Qatar, the summit was organised by Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) in collaboration with the Penn Medicine Department of Radiation Oncology at University of Pennsylvania. The event brought together global experts in proton therapy from the US and Qatar.

UN plea to continue to fund UNRWA

UN officials urged countries to reconsider a pause in funding for the UN agency for Palestinians yesterday, pledging that any staff found involved in Hamas' attack on Israel would be punished and warning that aid for some two million people in Gaza was at stake. "While I understand their concerns...I strongly appeal to the governments that have suspended their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. **Page 7**

3 US troops killed, 34 hurt in Jordan drone strike

Three US service members were killed and dozens wounded during an unmanned aerial drone attack on US forces stationed in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border, President Joe Biden and US officials said yesterday. Biden blamed Iran-backed groups for the attack, the first deadly strike against US forces since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October, sending shock waves throughout the Middle East. At least 34 personnel were being evaluated for possible traumatic brain injury, a US official said. Some wounded US forces were medically evacuated from the base for further treatment. The drone struck near the barracks, which, if confirmed, could explain the high number of casualties. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of hardline Iran-backed militant groups, claimed attacks on three bases, including one on the Jordan-Syria border. **Page 7**

Today's schedule



ROUND OF 16:

Iraq vs Jordan, 2:30pm
at Khalifa International Stadium

Qatar vs Palestine, 7 pm
at Al Bayt Stadium

Amir receives credentials of six new ambassadors



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received at Sheikh Abdullah Bin Jassim Majlis at the Amiri Diwan yesterday the credentials of six new ambassadors to the State of Qatar. His Highness the Amir received the credentials of ambassador of the People's Republic of China **Cao Xiaolin**, ambassador of the United Kingdom **Neerav Patel**, ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic Marat Nuraliev, ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway **Olav Myklebust**, ambassador of New Zealand Richard George Kay and ambassador of the Kingdom of Cambodia Sman Manan. His Highness the Amir welcomed the ambassadors and wished them success in their assignments and the relations between Qatar and their countries further development and growth. For their part, the ambassadors conveyed the greetings of the leaders of their countries to His Highness the Amir along with their wishes for further progress and prosperity for the people of Qatar. Upon arrival at the Amiri Diwan, the ambassadors were accorded official reception ceremonies. **(QNA) Page 2**



MoC reduces licence fees for culture, media sector

The Ministry of Culture (MoC) has announced the reduction of all the licence fees related to the culture and media sector in the country.

For advertising and public relations, the fee for issuing licence has been reduced to QR5,000 from the previous QR25,000. The previous renewal fee of QR10,000 is reduced to QR5,000.

For publishing houses, the previous fee for issuing a licence was QR100,000, while the new fee for this has been brought down to QR1,500. The previous renewal fee was QR10,000, which is now QR1,500.

For artistic production, the previous fee for issuing licence was QR25,000, while the new fees for this is QR5,000. The previous renewal fees of QR10,000 has been slashed to QR5,000.



For cinema houses, the previous fee for issuing licence was QR200,000, while the new fees for this is QR25,000. The previous renewal fees of QR50,000 has been reduced to QR25,000.

For importing, exporting and distribution of printed materials, the previous fee for issuing licence was QR15,000, while the new fee has been fixed at QR1,500. The previous renewal fee of QR3,000 has been reduced to QR1,500.

For major print houses, the previous fee for issuing licence was QR200,000, while the new fees for this service is QR25,000. The previous renewal fees of QR50,000, has been slashed to QR25,000.

Tajikistan, Australia reach Asian Cup quarter-finals; Qatar face Palestine today



Tajikistan players celebrate with coach Petar Segrt after their win over the UAE in the Asian Cup at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan yesterday.

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Debutants Tajikistan booked their place in the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup Qatar with a dramatic 5-3 penalty shootout win over the United Arab Emirates at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan yesterday. Alisher Shukurov buried the final spot-kick to send the Central Asians into a showdown with either Jordan or Iraq. Tajikistan

goalkeeper Rustam Yatimov saved from Caio Canedo with the UAE's second penalty of the shootout.

Earlier, Australia became the first team to qualify for the last eight when they beat Indonesia 4-0 at Jassim Bin Hamid Stadium. The Socceroos will face South Korea or Saudi Arabia in the quarter-finals.

Meanwhile, hosts and holder Qatar take on Palestine in last 16 at Al Bayt Stadium today, while Iraq face Jordan in another clash at the Khalifa International Stadium.

Sport Pages 1, 4

'Progress in talks to halt Gaza conflict'

● Massacre toll 26,422, most of them women, children

AFP/Reuters
Doha/Gaza

Israeli forces were engaged yesterday in "intensive battles" in southern Gaza, the army said, as CIA chief William Burns met with Israeli, Egyptian and Qatari officials for ceasefire talks in Paris.

The Israeli army reported "intensive battles" in Gaza's main southern city of Khan Younis.

The health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory said at least 24 people were killed in Israeli strikes on Khan Younis. Strikes were also carried out in central and northern Gaza, the army added.

Meanwhile, Burns was in Paris for talks with top Egyptian, Israeli and Qatari officials, sources close to the participants said, after media reports suggested some progress in negotiations towards a halt to hostilities.

More than three months of war have led to a spiralling humanitarian crisis and mass displacement within the Palestinian territory, with many Gazans driven south towards the Egyptian border.

Israel's ensuing military offensive has killed at least 26,422



Palestinians fleeing Khan Younis, move towards Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

people in Gaza, most of them women and children, according to the Gaza health ministry.

Medical facilities are at risk of collapse in Khan Younis, the southern Gaza city now at the focus of Israel's offensive, the Gaza Health Ministry warned yesterday.

The armed wing of resistance movement Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters clashed with Israeli troops in several areas across the enclave overnight. Hamas' armed wing said its fighters destroyed two Israeli tanks in Khan Younis. **Page 7**

QRDI Council awards TDG to 4 local firms

The Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council has announced that four local companies, namely Karty LLC, Qatar Navigation QPSC (Milaha), Cytomate, and Syook have been awarded the Technology Development Grant (TDG) programme.

The TDG programme is another instrument from QRDI Council to establish a dynamic R&D ecosystem for the QRDI 2030 strategy. The programme mainly targets for-profit companies operating in Qatar - small and medium enterprises, startups, large local enterprises, and multinational corporations to support their R&D-based product development or process innovation projects.

Projects are funded with grants



up to QR10mn to help companies undertake technology, product, or process development projects that will significantly improve their competitiveness in their target markets. To be eligible for

support, all development must be carried out locally, and companies are expected to provide job opportunities for local tech talent for their projects. The grant is running as a pilot and will be expanded more broadly after its soft launch.

"The TDG programme demonstrates QRDI Council's commitment to driving innovation and technological advancement in Qatar. Through this and other initiatives, we aim to increase the capacity for innovation in the country and raise the capability for R&D in companies operating in Qatar. "Over time, we seek to position Qatar as a thriving hub for research, development, and innovation in the Middle East," said Omar Ali al-Ansari, secretary-general, QRDI Council. **To Page 2**



Amir receives credentials of new ambassadors to Qatar



From left: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani receiving yesterday at the Amiri Diwan the credentials of new ambassadors of the Kyrgyz Republic, New Zealand and the Kingdom of Cambodia Marat Nuraliev, Richard George Kay and Sman Manan, respectively. (QNA)



Qatar honours winners of Arabic Language Doha Prize in Moscow

Qatar's ambassador to Russia, Sheikh Ahmed bin Nasser al-Thani, honoured the winners of the Arabic Language Doha Prize, which is being organised for the fifth consecutive year by the Qatari embassy in Moscow, in collaboration with Qatar University.

A list of 372 students from various Russian universities participated in the first round of the competition, before 30 of them were shortlisted for the

final round. Seven contestants claimed the prize.

Two Qatar University professors were among the judges.

In his speech at the ceremony, ambassador Sheikh Ahmed said Qatar attaches great attention to elevating the Arabic language and providing opportunities for students wishing to study it from all around the world. Qatar enacted a law in 2019 on the protection of Arabic, he pointed.

He added that the embassy has opened the 'Qatar Arabic Language Centre'.

The ambassador awarded the winners a year-long scholarship to study Arabic at Qatar University, wishing them success.

He expressed his thanks to all the contestants for their love of the Arabic language, saying that loving a language is the pathway to the respect for other cultures and civilisational interaction between peoples. (QNA)

Qatar stresses need for accelerated aid delivery into Gaza

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater has demanded an accelerated and obstacle-free humanitarian aid delivery and adequate levels of aid supplies into all Gaza Strip areas.

Speaking to the BBC, HE AlKhater said that less than 100 daily trucks had entered the Gaza Strip, a stark decrease compared to the Strip's urgent aid supplies and the daily 400-500 aid trucks that used to flow into the Gaza Strip before the Oct 7 Israeli aggression.

The arrival of aid to Egypt's Al Arish city is the easiest part of delivering aid from around the world into Gaza, she said, high-



HE Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater

lighting that the many obstacles created by the Israeli entity blatantly in violation of Article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which obligates "the occupying power, in this case it would be

Israeli occupation, to ensure adequate levels of aid supplies and aid schemes".

Commenting on the food, medical supplies, and other materials included in the aid, HE AlKhater said the supplies range from basic needs of the Palestinian people and items that can be dispensed with at the current phase, and this is what is being done at the present time, stressing the keenness to deliver urgent aid, particularly medical and food items, to the Palestinian people.

Qatar is constantly reviewing the necessary and actual needs of the Palestinians, so that it can bring in the aid that the Palestinian people in Gaza actually need, HE AlKhater added. (QNA)

QRDI Council awards TDG to 4 local firms

From Page 1

Milaha spokesperson said: "The TDG will accelerate Milaha's innovation journey, enabling us to go beyond the incubation of ideas to the development of technologies and products that have the potential to revolutionise the maritime industry."

Karty LLC co-founder and CEO Mohamed Suleiman said: "The assistance from QRDI Council is invaluable, offering tangible and intangible support. Such support is critical for startups like Karty as it helps us develop excellence to compete at the regional stage and globally."

Cytomate's CEO, Hammad Saleh Hadeed, said: "This is a significant milestone for our team, allowing us to dive deep into cybersecurity research with more resources. The application process for the TDG grant was clear and well-structured, ensuring a fair evaluation of our proposal. The QRDI Council team was helpful and communicative throughout, making the process a very smooth experience."

"This grant will help to significantly accelerate our journey towards innovations in the realm of the Industrial Internet of Things. As part of this initiative, our focus will be to substantially enhance safety and operational efficiency in Industrial environments. This opportunity enables us to broaden our technological horizons to enhance the safety of Industrial operations, not just in Qatar but globally," Syook CEO Arjun Nagarajan added.

NCSA calls for transparency in processing personal data

The National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) has urged all organisations and companies in Qatar to adhere to the principles of transparency and integrity in processing personal data and complying with the Qatari Personal Data Privacy Protection Law.

To mark the Data Privacy Day yesterday, NCSA President HE Engineer Abdulrahman bin Ali al-Farahid al-Malki said Qatar is one of the pioneering countries in data privacy protection, adding that this well demonstrated in NCSA's unwavering efforts in showcasing the importance of Personal Data Privacy Protection Law, through launching support tools for organisations and regulated entities to facilitate their compliance with the principles of privacy and the obligations of the Qatari law. (QNA)

Al-Muraikhi bids farewell to South Sudan's envoy



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with South Sudan's ambassador to Qatar Maw Maw Reng, on the occasion of the end of his tenure. HE al-Muraikhi thanked the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening the bilateral relations, wishing him success in his new duties. (QNA)

AlKhater meets Turkish ambassador



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with Turkish ambassador to Qatar Dr Mustafa Goksu. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the latest developments in Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to discussing avenues for co-operation in humanitarian field to contribute to handling the cataclysmic situation in the Strip. (QNA)

Al-Khulaifi meets Chief of Staff of US National Security Council



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met in Doha yesterday with the visiting Chief of Staff of the US National Security Council, Curtis Ried. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. HE Dr al-Khulaifi stressed the need to continue sustainable delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, and to bolster regional and international efforts aimed at an immediate ceasefire. Ried highlighted the solid strategic partnership between the two countries. (QNA)



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QIB unveils 'QIB Marketplace' on its mobile app

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has launched its innovative e-commerce platform, "QIB Marketplace", available exclusively on the QIB mobile app, a statement said yesterday.

QIB Marketplace provides a hassle-free, comprehensive shopping experience with competitively priced products offering an extensive selection of over 10,000 items, which span across various categories like electronics, household items, consumer durables, clothes, perfumes and more.

All purchases made through QIB Marketplace qualify for complimentary doorstep delivery, with the added convenience of 24-hour delivery available for select products.

QIB Marketplace provides local entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and micro enterprises a streamlined onboarding opportunity, enabling them to join and grow within the marketplace.

Customers can shop using their credit cards or redeem their existing Absher points or a combination of both.

Alternatively, customers can also choose to debit their current or savings account to pay for purchases or combine it with Absher points redemption.

Furthermore, customers have the option to purchase gift cards for personal use or as thoughtful presents.

QIB general manager (Personal Banking Group) D Anand said: "With the introduction of QIB Marketplace, we're not just leading in digital banking innovation, we are creating a new paradigm by offering our customers a marketplace that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of banking."

Available on App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery, customers can download the QIB mobile app and easily self-register using their active ATM/debit card number and PIN.

The app offers customers the ability to have full control of their accounts, cards, and transactions, and to fulfil all their banking requirements remotely.

In addition, QIB customers can open a new account, instantly get personal financing or credit card, and open additional accounts via the QIB mobile app.

Safari 10, 20, 30 promotion starts today

The 10, 20, 30 promotion kicks off today (Monday) at leading hypermarket chain Safari.

Fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, bakery items, hot food, and other food products, cosmetics, household items, ready-made clothing, footwear, electronics, computer accessories, daily use items, and more than a thousand products are now available under this promotion at Safari outlets.

Among the featured deals are 2kg Rosana Indian Basmati Rice (QR10), four pieces of 170g Dettol Soap (QR10), Quality Ice Cream three boxes of 1litre each (QR20), Gitco Opelware 12 Piece Dinner Set (QR20), Heinz Super bass speaker (QR30), Olsensmark hair straightener (QR20), 400g Nutella (QR10), and a rechargeable drone (QR30).

Safari's Bakery and Hot Food section has prepared a variety of dishes, including Western, South Indian, North Indian, Arabic and Chinese, all available with excellent combo offers.

The Daily Fresh Food section features Fresh Jams, Raumi Cheese, Baladi Feta Plain Cheese, Beef Mortadella, Lemon Pickle, and more as part of the 10, 20, 30 promotion.

The frozen section offers various juices, drinking water, chicken parts, chicken nuggets, ice creams, milk and milk products, and many other food items for QR10, 20, and 30.

The grocery section provides a wide range of snacks and other food products, while the household section offers a variety of multi-purpose products.

The cosmetics section includes products from leading brands such as N Chander, Dove,



Seba Med, Pantene, Lux, Olay, Johnson & Johnson, perfumes, body sprays, makeup sets, various soaps, face wash, body lotion, and various health and beauty care items.

The stationery section boasts a diverse range of school stationery items for school children and office supplies.

Additionally, the toys section and sports section offer a variety of goods at QR10, 20 or 30.

In the Garments and Readymade category, Safari presents a large collection of quality items, including men's wear, ladies' churidar, churidar materials, ladies' denim jackets, kids'

wear, footwear, ladies' bags, and newborn baby items, all priced at QR10, 20 or 30.

In the electronics category, the 10, 20, 30 promotion features significant price reductions on electronic devices such as emergency lights, trimmers, torches, calculators, headsets, smartwatches, and more.

As part of the Safari Shop and Shine mega promotion, customers have the chance to win 6kg of gold as a gift.

To participate, simply draw a raffle coupon, available with a purchase of every QR50 from any of Safari's outlets.

Ooredoo Qatar showcases stellar network performance

As the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 progresses into the knockout stages, nearly 1mn fans enjoy uninterrupted connectivity, many supported by Ooredoo Qatar's advanced network, a statement said yesterday.

The tournament has thus far witnessed a total official attendance of 928,573, many supported by Ooredoo's robust network.

The data volume reached 190TB, while the total number of calls made was approximately 3.8mn, it was revealed.

A highlight of Ooredoo's network performance is the substantial share of 5G and VoLTE usage.

The 5G share stood at 50.1%, with VoLTE share at 83.7%, illustrating the growing preference for advanced network technologies among users.

The network's Call Setup Success Rate was 99.94%, and the Call Drop Rate, 0.02%.

The average 5G throughput was recorded at 284 Mbps, showcasing Ooredoo's high-speed connectivity.

The primary hot zones for total traffic – both data and calls – recorded a combined figure of 780TB and 10.3mn calls.

Ooredoo Qatar chief executive Sheikh Ali bin Jabor bin Mohamed al-Thani said: "As we reflect on the phenomenal group stages of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, we are thrilled to see how our network has successfully managed the surge in connectivity demands."

"Our team has worked tirelessly to ensure that fans can share their experiences seamlessly," he said, adding: "We're excited to continue providing exceptional service as we look forward to the knockout stages this week and the final on February 10."



Snapshots from the event.



8th Shop Qatar fest concludes

Qatar Tourism (QT) has concluded the activities of the 8th Shop Qatar Festival, announcing the names of the winners of the last draw.

Aisha al-Braid took home a Land Rover Defender under her winning ticket 151459.

The other winners were: Faten al-Ansari (QR50,000/ticket 361743), Saleh Bakri (QR20,000/312932), Jomana al-Malek (QR20,000/192050), Maryam al-Ansari (QR10,000/341902), Olga Covarrubias (QR10,000/250718), and Randy Salamance (QR10,000/334111).

In a press statement, QT head of Marketing and Planning Sheikha Hessa al-Thani said: "Shop Qatar is an integral element in Qatar's annual calendar, as it attracts residents and visitors alike enhancing family tourism in the country."

"Qatar Tourism works closely with all its partners in the public and private sectors to host family-friendly events and festivals that are well-known for their wonderful and safe atmosphere," she said.

Shop Qatar is the largest shopping festival in Qatar, with this year's edition themed "Your World of Shopping".

With the participation of 13 of the top shopping districts and malls in the country, Shop Qatar 2024 ran from January 1-27, offering an assortment of activities suitable for all ages, raffle draws, and wins of cash prizes and new cars.

Shop Qatar 2024 gained wide popularity and great traction as it coincided with the "Hayakum Qatar" campaign launch and the activities surrounding the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, encouraging regional and international tourists to visit Qatar.

The closing ceremony of Shop Qatar 2024 at Doha Festival City was filled with different activities and events.

The surprise musical number by the artist Hammoud al-Khader was the highlight of the ceremony, as he performed the original track for the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023.

The closing ceremony also saw a performance by the band Adem Crew, which won the Golden Buzzer from *America's Got Talent*, a musical performance by Asian musicians, and a performance by the Atai Omurzakov & Tumar KR group.

Children had the opportunity to meet their favourite characters and watch the festivities.

At the festival's closing, QT Shared Services director Omar al-Jaber honoured the shopping malls, their teams, and brands at the "Retail and Mall Awards" ceremony, in recognition of their contributions to the success of this year's edition of the festival.

The winners were Place Vendôme for the Highest Participation Award and Best Mall Award, and Doha Festival City for Best Branding Award.



Music Affairs Center launches Nagham 2023 competition



The Music Affairs Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, has announced the launch of the third edition of the Nagham 2023 competition for the Arab and foreign categories, through its YouTube channel.

The competition includes five episodes, in four of which the contestants sing before the jury and the audience with a Oud (lute) player.

Eight contestants participate in each episode, and in each episode two of them qualify, while the fifth episode features the qualifiers from the previous four episodes.

In that fifth episode participants perform with a band, followed by voting by the public until the end of the competition



and the announcement of the winners.

The centre announced four episodes will be shown per week: two episodes for the Arab category and two others for the foreign category.

The first episode was shown yesterday.

The fifth episode will be displayed and voting opened on February 11, followed by the final awards ceremony.

The jury for the Arab and foreign cate-

gories comprises Ali Abdulsattar, Ghanem Shaheen, Yassin al-Ayari, Dana al-Fardan, Dr Nasser Suhaim and Maestro Giovanni Basile, in addition to the panel of five listeners. – QNA

Health minister stresses key role of WHO executive decisions



HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mo-hamed al-Kuwari stressed the importance of the decisions of the 154th WHO Executive Board meetings, which concluded in Geneva under the presidency of Qatar.

At the conclusion of the meet-ings, HE al-Kuwari, who chairs the current WHO Board, said that these decisions and procedural decisions contribute to strength-ening the WHO's efforts to reach practical solutions to various health challenges.

Among the key decisions and procedural decisions approved during the meetings were a pro-cedural decision to present a draft resolution on promoting health and wellbeing through sport events.

Submitted by Qatar to be adopted by the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024, the draft resolution earned sup-port from many sides, including the EU countries, the African Union countries, China, Belarus, Malaysia, China, Panama, and the countries of the Eastern

Mediterranean region.

This draft resolution was the result of the accumulated expe-riences and legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 to make it a beacon of health and safety for all future major global sporting events, and to confirm that sport and health are two intercon-nected elements and a source of happiness and prosperity for the world. The Board also adopted a resolution, co-proposed by Qa-tar, on health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, the

Global Health and Peace Ini-tiative (GHPI) resolution. It also adopted the procedural decision to present a draft resolution, co-proposed by Qatar, on increasing availability, ethical access and oversight of transplantation of human cells, tissues and organs to the 77th World Health Assem-bly in May 2024 for adoption.

The Board approved a proce-dure to present a draft resolution on strengthening health emergen-cy preparedness and response to the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024 for adoption. (QNA)

Sidra pioneers treatment protocol for infant with congenital hyperinsulinism

Sidra Medicine announced that it has pioneered a new treatment protocol for a young infant with congenital hyperinsulinism the first-of-its-kind milestone globally, and said the findings have been published in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Division Chief of Endocrinology at Sidra Medicine Prof Khalid Hussain said the case refers to a three-month-old infant from Kuwait, whose condition was deteriorating because of congenital hyperinsulinism as she was experiencing severe hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar).

He highlighted that although in some mild cases the condition can be managed with medication,

but for most children the hypogly-caemia cannot be controlled with conventional medications. In such cases, he said, surgery to remove either part or all their pancreas (pancreatectomy) remains the only option. This is a major procedure, and the children then must live with lifelong diabetes mellitus and pancreatic exocrine insufficiency.

To manage her low blood sugar, the patient was first put on conventional medical therapies and medications as well as a combination of intravenous dextrose therapy and continuous gastrostomy-tube feeding to maintain acceptable blood glucose levels. Since the infant wasn't responding to the conventional medicines,

she was at increased risk of having to undergo a pancreatectomy, Prof Hussain pointed out, adding that Sidra Medicine team were keen to try other methods and decided to trial a new treatment protocol using 'Alpelisib' drug.

It was trialled, following previ-ous case reports in which adult patients with breast cancer, after being treated with the same drug, were shown to have experienced high blood glucose profile. It is a protein-targeted medication that is used for treating breast cancer and overgrowth disorders in chil-dren.

The medical team avoided per-forming a pancreatectomy that would drastically impact the young girl's future growth and



CEO of Sidra Medicine Dr Iyabo Tinubu-Karch said this was the first time in the world, a medication had been re-purposed for treating severe low blood sugar levels in an infant

within six weeks, started to show a vast improvement in her blood sugar levels. She also continued maintaining a healthy weight, without impacting her growth. Thereafter, she was discharged with minimal low blood sugar lev-els with the management of her condition requiring three-hourly oral feeds and two daily doses of the medication.

CEO of Sidra Medicine Dr Iyabo Tinubu-Karch said this was the first time in the world, a medica-tion had been re-purposed for treating severe low blood sugar levels in an infant.

Sidra Medicine also stated that the young girl is now back in Ku-wait and her blood sugar levels is currently stable. She continues with the daily oral intake of 'Alpe-lisib' with the Sidra Medicine team regularly following up, to monitor her progress. The team have also noted that to date, she has not ex-perienced any side effects. (QNA)



NOW HIRING

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IN DOHA, QATAR

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HMC partners with Penn Medicine for Middle East Proton Therapy Summit

Hamad Medical Corpo-ration has collaborated with the Penn Medicine Department of Radiation Oncology at University of Pennsylvania Health System for the Middle East Proton Therapy Summit, a pivotal event that took place recently for the first time in Qatar and the Middle East.

This summit brought together global experts in proton therapy from United States and Qatar, with a primary focus on empha-sising the importance of proton therapy in cancer treatment and exploring the future directions of cancer care in the Middle East.

Penn Medicine, affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania, is a renowned institution celebrated for its excellence in patient care,



Participants at the Middle East Proton Therapy Summit.

medical education, and research. Home to the esteemed Perelman School of Medicine, Penn Medi-cine has a rich history dating back to 1765.

With top-tier hospitals, includ-ing the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, it is a leader in advancing medical knowledge and providing high-quality healthcare services.

The summit and its focus on Proton Therapy are part of HMC and the healthcare sector's ef-forts to provide world-class healthcare services to Qatar's population, with the latest, most advanced treatment techniques. The one-day summit featured scientific sessions, panel discus-sions, patient stories and discussions on the clinical rationale, physics and administrative aspects of proton therapy.

At the helm of this conference is Dr Noora al-Hammadi, serving as the chair of the Scientific Planning Committee. Her leadership in the scientific planning committee and her expertise in radiation oncology have played a pivotal role in shaping the summit's agenda, ensur-ing a comprehensive ex-ploration of proton ther-apy's clinical, physics and administrative aspects.

Dr Mohamed Salem al-Hassan, chairman of the organising committee, CEO and medical direc-tor of NCCCR and chair-man of Corporate Cancer Services, stated: "This collaborative effort rep-resents a significant leap forward in our commit-ment to advancing cancer

care. The exploration of proton therapy, with its precision and sparing of healthy tissues, not only reflects our dedication to cutting-edge treatments but also underscores the importance of global partnerships in shaping the future of healthcare outcomes for our community."

Proton therapy is a highly precise cancer treatment that has the ability to precisely target tumours while sparing normal tissue and vital or-gans. Distinguished from conventional (photon) radiation, proton therapy offers superior precision, minimising the impact on surrounding healthy tissues and vital organs. This unique precision contributes to the reduc-tion of both immediate and delayed side effects, including the potential risk of radiation-induced secondary cancers.


The therapeutic ad-vantages of proton ther-apy are particularly note-worthy when addressing cancer in paediatric and young adult patients, emphasising its poten-tial impact on improving outcomes and minimis-ing long-term risks in this specific population.

Ministry recalls Hyundai, Range Rover models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Skyline Automotive, has announced the recall of Hyundai Santa Fe, 2021-2023 models, as some vehicles might experience a front seat belt pretensioner malfunction.

The MoCI, in co-operation with Alfardan Premier Motors, has announced the recall of Range Rover Vogue, and Range Rover Sport V8, 2024 model, as there may be a defect in the structural adhesive applied to the bodyshell during body assembly because the adhesive is not bonding the panels together as intended.

The MoCI has urged all customers to report any violations through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, X (formerly Twitter) - @MOCIQATAR, Instagram MOCIQATAR. The MoCI mobile application available on iPhone and Android devices MOCI_QATAR



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110	DALJIT SWINGH	1493067	339.00
111	SHRI KANT	1514373	673.00
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119	MOHAMED FYEROOK M H FAROOK	1655401	280.00
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130	CHANNERLEGAM P	1477643	580.00
131	M NIYAF M KASEEM	1490484	300.00
132	MOHAMED ISHAK MOHAMED MAHROOF	1542224	150.00
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135	DULAN WARNA SISIRA KUMARA	1639286	290.00
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137	MANOJ KUMAR SINGH	1674138	40.00
138	THILEEP SELVARASA	1718522	940.00
140	احمد عبد الصنع عبد الحيد	1714074	530.00
154	NIROSHAN AS	1599651	600.00
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157	RAMESH P	1809393	200.00
160	RAMESWARAN MARIMUTTU	1687399	500.00
185	المطيع عارف مطيع عبدالفتاح	1504729	1,025.00
186	ABDULLA AND SONS APHOLSTARY	2040314	1,115.00
187	HAFEZ MOZAMMEL HOQUE ABUL	2016604	2,000.00
188	ابو القاسم عثمان حواله	1643799	19,900.00
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216	RAJESH S UBALDE	1636401	15
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Qatar University Book Fair begins with 34 publishers, research centres

The second edition of the Qatar University (QU) Book Fair commenced yesterday (Sunday) with the participation of 34 publishing houses, Qatari centres and universities from both within and outside Qatar.

The joint effort between the Ministry of Culture, QU Press and the Qatari Publishers and Distributors Forum promises four days of literary interactions from 9am to 6pm. Notable participants include the National Archives, the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, the Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding, as well as representatives from universities and research centres across the Arab world.

The inauguration was led by Prof Mariam al-Maadeed, vice-president for Research and Graduate Studies at QU; Prof Eiman Mustafawi, vice-president for Student Affairs at QU; and Prof Fatma al-Sowaidi, director of QU Press.

Prof al-Maadeed emphasised the significance of organising the fair

within the university, lauded QU Press for its outstanding contribution to scholarly publishing and commended the partners.

Prof al-Sowaidi, described the event as a crucial aspect of the university's mission to support education, cultural dissemination, and knowledge sharing through various means.

"In organising this fair, QU Press aims to attract intellectuals and writers, providing students with opportunities to access books across various educational and academic fields. Our focus on translating books aims to understand diverse perspectives and share our experiences with others," Dr al-Sowaidi stated.

At the opening ceremony, Shaikha al-Thani, head of Marketing and Sales at QU Press, noted the overwhelming participation of publishers and research centres at the local, regional, and international levels. She highlighted the distinguished presence of renowned Gulf universities and honoured guests, including Dr Rafia Ghobash from the UAE.



Prof Mariam al-Maadeed at QU Book Fair.

Qatar Airways flying lesson for QF early education kids

Qatar Foundation (QF) recently hosted pilots and flight attendants from Qatar Airways for an interactive learning session with children from its Pre-University Education's Early Education Centre.

More than 180 children up to the age of three years, were given the opportunity to learn about flying through engaging stories, fun activities, and simulated airport processes, including stamping fake passports, weighing pretend luggage, and sending school bags through a cardboard box posing as a baggage scanner.

The visits, which took place at Qatar Academy Doha and Multaqa were held as part of the Early Education Centre's current learning journey "Discover Qatar", which started in December to coincide with Qatar National Day and help children learn about the country.

Elizabeth Kennedy, Early Years Education associate director, Pre-University Education, QF, said: "We are a play-based learning centre, so our Discover Qatar inquiry allowed our educators, through play, to enrich the learning and curiosity of the students about their home country, Qatar."

Kennedy continued: "Qatar Airways has been an inspiration to our EEC as they go beyond international exploration by proudly showcasing incredible places and adventures to be explored right here in Qatar. We really wanted to take that, that wisdom and sense of national pride, and share it with our children."

As part of the Discover Qatar learning journey, the children at EEC have also had the opportunity to learn about animals native to Qatar, including engaging with falcons, and explore a variety of artifacts through hands-on learning.



Qatar Airways crew with the students.

Oryx International School in a world-first



Oryx International School has achieved a world-first by being awarded the IATA Environmental Assessment (IENVA) Stage 2 Compliance Certificate, a significant milestone and achievement for the school's commitment to sustainability and its environmental footprint, a statement said yesterday.

The IENVA certification is the

global industry standard assessment recognising the highest degrees of Environmental Management Planning. The aviation industry's impact on the environment is at the top of sustainability agendas. Oryx International School is a wholly owned subsidiary of Qatar Airways and therefore contributed significantly to the airline's overall award, showcasing

the school's dedication and alignment to the airlines global sustainability vision. The global airline group is the only organisation in the world to have acquired this status. The school confirmed an on-going collaboration with the global airline to work towards achieving a world-first IENVA Level 3 standard in the upcoming years.

QU hosts University of Southern California students



Students from University of Southern California Rossier School of Education.

Qatar University (QU) welcomed students from the University of Southern California's (USC) Rossier School of Education, who visited as part

of their Global Executive Doctor of Education programme, designed for senior educational leaders, policymakers, administrators, and other professionals

who are committed to improving educational outcomes on a large scale. The students visiting the QU campus are enrolled in the hybrid learning experience of this programme, which combines online classes with nine one-to-two-week intensive class sessions at various international destinations.

During their visit, QU director of International Affairs Office, Cesar Wazen delivered a presentation covering the history of QU, its colleges and programmes. Dr Khalid al-Khanji, chief, Strategy and Development, highlighted QU's strategy and vision for the future. Dr Ibrahim al-Kaabi, vice-president for Academic Affairs was on hand to answer student questions in relation to academic programmes and student profile.

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Al Wakra Municipality gets four new parks



Engineer Mohamed Hassan al-Nuaimi

Four new public parks have been introduced to Al Wakra Municipality.

They are Al Arak, Al Khazayim, Al Mashmoom, and Al Mashaf, bringing the total number of parks within the municipality to ten, engineer Mohamed Hassan al-Nuaimi told local Arabic daily *Arrayah*.

These parks include all the components and public facilities that serve the community, in addition to several other green spaces distributed within the municipality. The official pointed out that in 2019, the total green spaces within the jurisdiction of Al Wakra Municipality amounted to 160,000sq m.

It is expected that the total green area will reach approximately 2.1mn sq m by the end of this year. He also highlighted the issuance of 16 demolition orders and 26 maintenance orders for as many properties.

Al-Nuaimi said: "During the current year, we will see the completion of several beautification projects, including those surrounding the Argentinian neighbourhood, in the western area of Al Mashaf, the initial handover of the project at the entrance of Al Wakra city and the main street of the city, the initial handover of the project for five intersections on Al Majd Road, and the final handover of the project for the western intersection. In addition, there will be the initial handover of the beautification project for residential neighbourhoods south of Al Mashaf, and the commencement of beautifica-



tion works in residential neighbourhoods in the central area of Al Wukair."

These projects are being regularly monitored by specialists from Al Wakra Municipality to ensure that the highest standards of quality are followed.

Regarding the enforcement of Law No 15 of 2010 on the Prohibition of Workers Camps within Family Residential Areas and its amendments by Law No 22 of 2019, the official pointed out that 478 buildings have been spotted across the municipality in 2023 violating this law, with 87 violation reports issued and around 110 buildings evacuated.

Work is still going on to take the

necessary procedures to address such issues.

Meanwhile, around 2,800 abandoned vehicles have been spotted during last year, with 850 of these removed by the municipality and the process continuing to combat such unacceptable actions.

Regarding food health control at Al Wakra, al-Nuaimi pointed out that the health control section carried out more than 44 inspection campaigns at a rate of about four campaigns a month during the last year.

The inspectors ensure that food on display at the local market comply with the highest food health standards, in addition to other surprise inspection campaigns.

Giovanni Soldini, Maserati collaboration concludes

After 11 years of goals that have entered the history of ocean navigation and more than 200,000 miles covered, the collaboration between Giovanni Soldini and Maserati around the project of the mono-hull Maserati VOR70 and later through trimaran Maserati Multi70, which brought foiling technology to the ocean, and which was the first to mount a foil under the keel, comes to an end.

Over the decade Soldini and his team have set nine new records on historic routes and participated in 27 regattas around the world, a statement said yesterday. Maserati Multi70 also remains the only MOD to have sailed around the world. And not just once, but four times (once on the mono-hull and three times on Maserati Multi70), the last of which, in 2023, in full energy independence thanks to the installation on board of a photovoltaic system and an electric engine. As a result, Maserati Multi70 also became the first ocean racing yacht capable of self-producing all the energy needed for long sailing.

Since 2022, the trimaran has been at the service of Unesco's monitoring programme, and has contributed along its routes to



the collection of data such as CO2, salinity and temperature, which are very valuable for the scientific community.

Soldini said: "It has been an exciting, adventurous experience full of discoveries, conquests, innovations and flights over the ocean. With the invaluable support of Maserati, it has been possible to experiment at the highest level and go further with feats and results that we are proud of. I would like to thank the Maserati team and all the partners who have accompanied us on this journey of over two hundred thousand miles. Lastly, a special thanks to all the people on the crew who over these years have contributed with passion and competence to achieve beautiful and important goals with me."

Qatari contributions provide homes to Pakistan flood victims

Qatar Charity (QC) has constructed 12 homes in the Khairpur district of Pakistan's Sindh province for the families affected by the 2022 floods, a statement said yesterday.

The initiative was supported by philanthropists in Qatar as part of QC's housing efforts, especially in disaster and crisis-affected areas. These houses were handed over to the families who lived in tents.

Each of the constructed houses includes two bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, a courtyard, and a boundary wall, in addition to providing water sources, solar energy, and sanitation facilities for these homes.

Fayaz Hussain Abbasi, commissioner of the Sukkur Division, expressed his happiness and praised Qatar Charity's efforts and gratitude to the donors, confirming that the houses have been handed over to the deserving recipients.

A beneficiary, Saeeda Khatoon, a widow and mother of seven children, said: "I lost my husband and home in the floods, and we had to live in a tent where my children suffered a lot in the summer and winter. I work as a daily wage and cannot afford the cost of building a house. However, I had a dream of having a home, and I am very happy to say that I have received my own house from Qatar Char-



ity, which has become a source of realising my dream."

Another beneficiary, Alisha Begum, said: "I work as a daily wage labourer with my husband. After losing our home in the floods, we were living in a

tent under the open sky without electricity or water. Today, I am happy because I have received my own cement-built house. I express my gratitude to Qatar Charity and the benefactors who have made our lives easier."

MoECC's Sustainability Makers Programme targets schools

In co-operation with Qatar Charity and the Biology Education of Qatar University Alumni association, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) launched the first Sustainability Makers Programme under the slogan "2030 Challenge."

The programme, which runs from January to April, aims to enhance the concept of sustainable development among government school female students and is organised in two phases. The first phase includes a series of introductory and training workshops to train students on ways to transform sustainable development goals into projects and practical tools to overcome existing local challenges, while the second phase includes holding a competition next April to display and evaluate project models submitted by students participating in the programme.

In this context, environmental researcher Suzan Mohamed Essam from the MoECC stressed the importance of this programme in educating schoolgirls about the goals of sustainable development, and ways



to preserve and sustain the country's natural resources, in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

She pointed out that two workshops have been organised since the launch of the programme at the beginning of January, while several other workshops are to be organised during the coming period, qualifying the students to propose and implement sustainable development projects following the programme's regulations, which will be presented to the judging committee next April in preparation for announcing the winning projects.

The environmental researcher indicated that the first workshop held at the university under the title "Sustainability in Qatar" dealt

with the definition of sustainable development and its goals, and a presentation of the most important sustainable projects in Qatar, in the presence of 150 female students from the participating schools.

The workshop also included the presentation of interactive exercises to enrich students' information and raise levels of creative thinking, in addition to training on teamwork within the groups that have been formed.

She explained that the second workshop was organised at Qatar University under the title "take care of the earth...the earth will take care of you," in the presence of 100 female students from the schools participating in the programme. (QNA)

Filipino domestic workers, local employers honoured

For the first time in the country, Filipino household service workers (HSW) and their local Arab employers were recognised by a rights advocate group.

Leading Philippine migrant workers rights group 'Advocates & Keepers Organisation of Overseas Filipino Workers Inc (AKO-OFW Inc) recently held its Gawad Ulang Mangagawa Awards (Exemplary Workers Awards) for Filipino HSWs who have served one local employer for at least 10 years.

In a ceremony held on January 26 in Doha, similar awards were also given to local employers who treated Filipino HSWs as family for a minimum of 10 years.

In a press statement, AKO-OFW noted that special recognition was given to Philippine Recruitment Agencies (PRA) and Foreign Recruitment Agencies (FRA) who had no unresolved cases with the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) for the past two years.

The event was hosted by AKO-OFW Qatar chapter president Mary Jill Lluza and graced by Philippine ambassador Lilibeth



Filipino HSWs in Qatar were awarded.

Pono and Philippine MWO Qatar head of Assistance to Nationals, Cherry Rhose Curreg who served as guests of honour. Pono lauded the event for its uniqueness and relevance to the inspiring stories of the deserving awardees.

Confirmation of the awardees was made by visiting AKO-OFW national president Marcia Sadicon who also officiated the selection process. She was joined by AKO-OFW national vice chairman for Overseas Affairs, Dr Joseph Timothy Rivera, a Qatar resident.

Awardees include Jovita Ari-

ola Condino who served her employer for 18 years; Norie T Abas who served her employer's family for more than 32 years and spouses Romeo Balgoa and Amelia Monegro who jointly served one family for 37 years.

Their respective employers, Ahmad Ismael Chiekha, Ali Saleh Khamis al-Sulaiti, and Abdeslam Aboumalik, also received awards.

AKO-OFW, established in 2015 noted that it is currently present in more than 37 countries with an active membership of more than 220,000 OFWs.

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OIC says suspending UNRWA funds will aggravate humanitarian crisis in Gaza

The halt in funds directed at the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) taken by some countries will risk worsening a humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Gaza Strip, according to the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), citing the measure as tantamount to collective punishment, QNA reported from Jeddah.

OIC called on those countries to reverse their decision so that UNRWA can proceed with providing services to the Palestinian refugees and meeting their fundamental needs, such as food items, shelter and primary healthcare, particularly in Gaza Strip which is experiencing tough conditions due to the persistent

Israeli aggression that has been dragging on for 114 days, and has heretofore claimed tens of thousands lives of martyrs and wounded innocent civilians, including women, children, medical personnel, and journalists. The organisation added that the aggression has resulted in the intentional devastation of buildings, hospitals, schools, places of worship and UN facilities, in addition to preventing the arrival of food and medical items, as well as water and electricity.

In addition, OIC warned of the danger of bringing UNRWA's contributions to a halt and cutting off its services that reach millions of Palestinian refugees which could potentially affect security and stability in the region.

ARAB LEAGUE WARNS OF CONSEQUENCES

Arab League warned of the perilous consequences of the incitement campaign unleashed against the UNRWA, along with the decisions taken by some countries to suspend their financial contributions, over the claim of the Israeli occupation that some of its staff were allegedly involved in October storming of Israel, QNA reported from Cairo.

The systematic incitement led by the Israeli occupation primarily intends to eliminate UNRWA's role almost entirely after its facilities and personnel have been targeted in the attacks within the framework of the relentless aggression on the Gaza Strip, said Secretary-Gen-

eral of Arab League Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

Aboul Gheit added that it is surprising that some Western nations have decided to suspend their funding to UNRWA in this critical period based on unleashed accusations that target a limited number of individuals. He noted that, if such accusations are presumably valid, they do not reflect the nature of UNRWA that includes nearly 300,000 personnel, with most of them being Palestinians.

Secretary-general of Arab League pointed out that such a campaign is not new, given the fact that the intention to liquidate UNRWA's operation that serves millions of Palestinians in its five areas of operation, recurred differently over the past years and whose purpose has been

debunked. This has been done to push the international community towards abandoning their responsibility in aiding the Palestinian refugees and putting the entire responsibility on the countries that are in sympathy with the Palestinian cause, primarily the Arab states.

UNRWA was established by a UN resolution in 1949, while the responsibility for the livelihood of Palestinian refugees falls on the international community and donor countries, pending a just solution for their cause, Aboul Gheit noted, adding that evading from this responsibility amid the bloody war implies forsaking them to face hunger and displacement and to carry out the Israeli scheme to liquidate their cause.

More Palestinians displaced amid offensive in south Gaza

Reuters
Doha/Gaza

Medical facilities are at risk of collapse in Khan Younis, the southern Gaza city now at the focus of Israel's offensive, the Gaza Health Ministry warned yesterday, as fighting raged across the Palestinian enclave.

Residents said Israeli planes and tanks also pounded areas in Gaza City to the north, where Israel has been pulling out troops. The fighting could be heard in the nearby towns of Beit Lahiya and Jabalia, near to Gaza City.

Israel's military said it was engaged in "intensive battles" in Khan Younis, where it said troops "eliminated fighters and located large quantities of weapons".

The armed wing of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters clashed with Israeli troops in several areas across the enclave overnight. Hamas' armed wing said its fighters destroyed two Israeli tanks in Khan Younis.

The latest fighting came as UN officials and aid groups urged countries to reconsider their decision to pause funding for the UN refugee agency for Palestinians, a vital source of aid in Gaza. At least nine countries have paused funding.

Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra said 165 Palestinians were killed and 290 wounded in the past 24 hours, bringing the total killed in Israeli strikes since the war began to 26,422.

Officials in the Hamas-ruled territory do not distinguish between fighters and civilians in their count.

Israel says it has lost 220 soldiers in the ground offensive and has killed 9,000 Gaza fighters, a figure that Hamas has dismissed.

One strike on a house in a suburb of Gaza City killed eight people, health officials said.

Israel launched a war it says aims to eliminate Hamas after the fighters' unprecedented cross-border storming of Israel.

The Israeli military declared a closed military zone at the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza after right-wing demonstrators and some families of hostages tried to stop aid from going into the enclave, saying it was merely helping Hamas.

Protests in Israel demanding that the government do more to secure the hostages' release have been spreading.

Palestinian medics and residents said Israel continued to



Palestinians fleeing Khan Younis, due to the Israeli ground operation, move towards Rafah, amid the ongoing conflict, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.



A woman holds a baby as displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, shelter at a tent camp, amid the ongoing conflict, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

bomb areas around the two main hospitals in Khan Younis, hindering efforts by rescue teams to respond to desperate calls from people caught in the Israeli bombardment.

"There is a complete failure of the healthcare system at Nasser and Al-Amal hospitals," said Qidra.

Israel says it is taking steps to keep hospitals running and minimise civilian casualties. It accuses Hamas of operating in densely populated areas, including around hospitals, and using civilians as human shields and has released photos and videos

supporting this allegation, which the group denies.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said in a statement that medical teams at Al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis would be unable to perform surgeries because oxygen supplies were depleted.

More families were displaced from Khan Younis yesterday. Some people took dirt roads to get closer to the city of Rafah along the border with Egypt or Deir Al-Balah to the north. Others headed west to an area called Al-Mawasi where residents described being crammed into a small area. "It

is as crowded as it can get," said electrician Abu Raouf, a father of four. "People have lost their ability to think, their ability to feel, they are moving like robots, it is just a matter of time before Israel sends tanks into here as well, there is no place safe."

Reem Abu Tair left Khan Younis in the cold with three children, one of them an infant.

"We managed to save our lives, we escaped bombings and the destruction that is surrounding us only to end up in the cold. So, if a child does not die from the bombing, he will die from the cold," Abu Tair said.

Nations pausing UN Gaza funding could be violating genocide convention: expert

AFP
Geneva

A UN expert warned yesterday that countries defunding the UN agency for Palestinian refugees were breaching a court order to provide effective aid in Gaza and could be violating the international genocide convention.

A number of donor countries - including Australia, Britain, Finland, Germany and Italy - on Saturday followed the lead of the United States in suspending additional funding to UNRWA.

That came after Israel alleged that several of the UN agency's staff members were involved in Hamas' storming of Israel in the first week of October.

Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur for the occupied Palestinian territories, warned that the decision to pause funding to UNRWA "overtly defies" the order by the International Court of Justice to allow effective humanitarian assistance" to reach Gazans.

"This will entail legal responsibilities - or the demise of the (international) legal system," she

wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Israel has nonetheless vowed to stop the agency's work in Gaza after the war.

The row between Israel and UNRWA follows the UN's International Court of Justice ruling on Friday that Israel must prevent possible acts of genocide in the conflict and allow more aid into Gaza.

Albanese, who is an independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, but who does not speak on behalf of the United Nations, highlighted the timing of the defunding decisions.

"The day after ICJ concluded that Israel is plausibly committing genocide in Gaza, some states decided to defund UNRWA," she said in a separate post on X.

By doing so, she said, countries are "collectively punishing millions of Palestinians at the most critical time, and most likely violating their obligations under the Genocide Convention".

Israel's ensuing military offensive after the Hamas fighters' storming has killed at least 26,422 people, most of them women and children, in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Three US troops killed in Jordan, Biden vows reprisal

AFP
Washington

A drone attack on a base in Jordan killed three American troops yesterday, with President Joe Biden blaming foreign-backed fighters and vowing to hold the perpetrators to account.

It is the first time American military personnel have been killed by hostile fire in the Middle East since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, and the incident will further raise tensions in the region and fuel fears of a broader conflict directly involving Iran. Hamas said the death of the soldiers shows Washington's backing for Israel could put it at odds with the whole Muslim world if innocent lives continue to be lost in Gaza, and that the war there could lead to a "regional explosion".

"While we are still gathering

the facts of this attack, we know it was carried out by foreign-backed fighter groups operating in Syria and Iraq," Biden said in a statement on the attack.

US Central Command put the number of wounded from the attack near the Syrian border at 25, and said the identities of those killed will be withheld pending notification of their families.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said the killing of the soldiers "is a message to the American administration that unless the killing of innocent people in Gaza stops, it may be faced with the entire (Muslim) nation."

"The continuation of the American-Zionist aggression on Gaza risks a regional explosion," Abu Zuhri said in a statement.

Many of the attacks on US personnel have been claimed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, a loose alliance of armed groups that oppose US support for Israel in the Gaza conflict.

Burkina, Mali, Niger quit West African bloc Ecowas

AFP
Bamako

The military regimes in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger yesterday announced their immediate withdrawal from the West African bloc Ecowas, saying it has become a threat to member states.

The leaders of the three Sahel nations issued a statement saying it was a "sovereign decision" to leave the Economic Community of West African States "without delay". Struggling with militants' violence and poverty, the regimes have had tense ties with Ecowas since coups took place in Niger last July, Burkina Faso in 2022 and Mali in 2020.

Ecowas said in a statement yesterday that it "remains committed to finding a negotiated solution to the political impasse" with all

three countries. It said it had yet to receive any direct formal notification of the withdrawal of the three states. All three - founding members of the bloc in 1975 - were suspended from Ecowas with Niger and Mali facing heavy sanctions as the bloc tried to push for the early return of civilian governments through elections.

The sanctions were an "irrational and unacceptable posture" at a time when the three "have decided to take their destiny in hand", the three countries said - a reference to the coups that removed civilian administrations. The three nations have hardened their positions in recent months and joined forces in an "Alliance of Sahel States".

The leaders' joint statement added that the 15-member Ecowas, "under the influence of foreign powers, betraying its founding principles, has become a threat to member states and peoples".

Iran launches three satellites into orbit

AFP
Tehran

Iran yesterday said it simultaneously launched three satellites into orbit, nearly a week after the launch of a research satellite by the Revolutionary Guards drew Western criticism.

"Three Iranian satellites have been successfully launched into orbit for the first time," state TV reported.

The satellites were carried by the two-stage Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite carrier and were launched into a minimum orbit of 450 kilometres, it added.

The Mahda satellite, which weighs around 32 kilogrammes and was developed by Iran's Space Agency, is designed to test advanced satellite subsystems, the official IRNA news



A handout picture provided by the Iranian Defence Ministry yesterday shows Iran's two-stage Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite carrier lifting off at an undisclosed location.

agency said. The other two, Kayhan 2 and Hatef, weigh under 10 kilogrammes each and are aimed to test space-based positioning technology and narrowband communication, IRNA added.

Last week, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps sent the research satellite Soraya into space. Britain, France,

and Germany condemned that launch in a statement rejected by Iran as "interventionist".

Western governments including the United States have repeatedly warned Iran against such launches, saying the same technology can be used for ballistic missiles, including ones designed to deliver a nuclear warhead.

Explosive kills six students from Nigerian religious school

At least six schoolchildren were killed in northeast Nigeria by an improvised explosive device which they had mistaken for scrap metal, police and a local official said yesterday, Reuters reported from Maiduguri.

The children, aged between 13 and 15, picked up the explosive device along with some scrap metal and stored it in an uncompleted building at a religious school in the Gubio area of Borno state, heartland of a long-running religious insurgency. A spokesperson for the Gubio local government said the device had detonated and killed the six as they sought to sell it as scrap metal on Saturday. The students at the school, which teaches children to recite the Qur'an, often collect scrap metal to sell to local communities. Borno state police spokesperson Daso Nahum Kenneth confirmed the incident.



Former Philippine leader Duterte’s son calls President Marcos ‘lazy’

Reuters/AFP
Manila

Former Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte’s son has urged President Ferdinand Marcos Jr to resign, calling him lazy and uncompassionate in a deepening rift between the two politically powerful families.

Marcos teamed up with Duterte’s daughter Sara to make her vice-president in their 2022 election win.

However, cracks in the families’ alliance have emerged as the incumbent has veered away from his predecessor’s anti-drugs and foreign policies.

Sebastian Duterte, who is mayor of Philippines’ third most populous city Davao, said that there had been a resurgence in crime after his father’s headline campaign had been relaxed.

At a leadership forum, he also accused Marcos of endangering innocent Filipinos by allowing the Americans in, a reference to expanded US access to military bases, including several close to Taiwan.

The older Duterte had forged closer ties with China.

Sebastian Duterte also opposed



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and Vice-President Sara Duterte deliver their speeches during the kick-off rally for the New Philippines movement at Quirino Grandstand in Manila yesterday.

Marcos’s decision to restart peace negotiations with communist rebels, saying that he did not know anything about the suffering of people living in areas that used to be rebel strongholds.

“You are lazy and you lack compassion. That’s why we are unhappy,” he said.

He spoke just before Marcos took the stage at a government-led rally in the capital to drum up support for his “Bagong Pilipinas (New Philippines)” campaign,

where he has promised to improve state services and budget transparency.

Marcos’s alliance with the Dutertes was crucial to his presidential victory, so a souring of their relations could have implications in his bid to solidify his support base ahead of the mid-term Senate and congressional election next year.

Sara Duterte, who is also education secretary, attended the president’s rally before flying to Davao to join her father and siblings at



a prayer rally against moves to amend the Philippine constitution, which Marcos backs.

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

“He is putting politics first, their self-preservation ... rather than focusing on the job,” Sebastian

Duterte said. “Mr President, if you have no love and aspirations for the nation, resign.”

Like her brother, Sara Duterte has openly defied some of Marcos’s policies, including the peace talks with communist rebels which she said was an “agreement with the devil.”

There was no immediate comment from Marcos’s office or from the vice-president on Sebastian Duterte’s remarks.

At the Davao rally, the Duterte

patriarch warned Marcos that “you may suffer your father’s fate” and called on the police and military to “protect the constitution.”

An ever-shifting coalition of powerful families has long ruled the Philippines, holding onto power for generations.

Left-wing political party Akbayan branded the rallies as a “dynastic war among ruling elites” that did not serve the interests of regular Filipinos.

Police estimated 400,000 people were at the Manila rally, many of them government workers, while more than 40,000 were at the Davao event.

“This would be the most public and deliberate way of letting the people know that the Unity Team is no more,” University of the Philippines political science professor Jean Franco told AFP.

In Manila, some members of the crowd told AFP that they believed in Marcos, although they said they knew next to nothing about the constitution controversy.

“If he runs again why not, for as long as he is doing a good job for the country,” Manila resident Dennis Ardea, 53, told AFP, adding: “The Dutertes belong to the past. We should go with another (leader).”

North Korea launches multiple cruise missiles off east coast

Reuters/AFP
Seoul

North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles off its east coast yesterday, its second such launch in less than a week, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

The missiles were launched around 8am (2300 GMT on Saturday) and were being analysed by South Korean and US intelligence authorities, the JCS said, without specifying how many missiles were fired or how far they travelled.

“While strengthening surveillance and vigilance, our military is co-operating closely with the United States and monitoring additional signs and activities from North Korea,” it said in a statement.

The latest launches came days after North Korea fired what it called a new strategic cruise missile called “Pulhwasal-3-31”, suggesting it is nuclear capable.



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

North Korea demands that we be fully prepared for a deadly war,” the dispatch said.

North Korea carried out its first test of a cruise missile with possible nuclear strike capabilities in September 2021.

While UN Security Council sanctions do not bar the isolated country from testing conventional cruise missiles, South Korea’s Defence Minister Shin Won-sik condemned the recent launches as a serious threat to his country and beyond.

The latest launch came a day after a Chinese delegation led by Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong returned home following a three-day visit to Pyongyang, during which both sides vowed to boost tactical co-operation and defend common interests.

In a separate dispatch yesterday, KCNA said a North Korean delegation headed by Sports

Minister Kim Il-guk left on Saturday for China.

Recent months have seen a sharp deterioration in ties between the two Koreas.

Earlier this month, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un declared the South his country’s “principal enemy” and threatened war over “even 0.001mm” of territorial infringement.

In Seoul, President Yoon Suk-yeol told his cabinet that should the nuclear-armed North carry out a provocation, South Korea would hit back with a response “multiple times stronger”, pointing to his military’s “overwhelming response capabilities”.

At Pyongyang’s year-end policy meetings, Kim threatened a nuclear attack on the South and called for a build-up of his country’s military arsenal ahead of armed conflict he warned could “break out any time”.

Australia’s New South Wales state premier condemns neo-Nazi rally

The premier of Australia’s New South Wales state has condemned a neo-Nazi rally in the state capital Sydney as “appalling”, a day after Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said neo-Nazism was on the rise in the country.

Police said yesterday that around 30 men gathered at a park in the city’s north and were issued with orders preventing them from entering other areas of Sydney, before they dispersed, with no arrests made.

“Police are meeting these obnoxious and appalling racists head-on in New South Wales streets,” Premier Chris Minns told reporters in Sydney, describing the event as a “neo-Nazi demonstration”.

The far-right event comes a day after Albanese condemned domestic neo-Nazi activity following the arrests of six members of a black-clad group in Sydney on Friday, the country’s national day, amid rallies in support of its Indigenous people.

The prime minister said Australia had seen a rise in neo-Nazism, which was condemned “by all decent people”.

This month, new laws banning the Nazi salute and display or sale of symbols associated with terror groups came into effect in Australia in response to more anti-Semitic incidents following the Israel-Gaza war.

— Reuters

Thailand, China sign mutual visa exemption

AFP/Reuters
Bangkok

Thailand and China have signed off on a visa waiver agreement at talks between their foreign ministers as the two countries look to boost ties.

The agreement inked yesterday by Thai Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi allows people from the two nations to travel to one another’s country visa-free from March 1.

Thai officials hope the deal will encourage more Chinese to come and boost the kingdom’s vital tourism sector, which has struggled to bounce back from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

“This agreement is a symbol of our long-lasting friendship, trust and confidence ... and help to stimulate the tourism indus-

try in both countries,” Parnpree said.

Wang welcomed the agreement, saying that Thai and Chinese people “are one family”.

“This visa-free era will bring people-to-people exchanges to a new height,” Wang said.

Precise details of the visa arrangements were not announced yesterday, but earlier this month Thai officials said the deal would allow stays of up to 30 days per visit.

“There will be a big increase in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand,” Wang said.

The number of Chinese tourists to Thailand plunged to 3.5mn last year from 11mn in 2019 before the pandemic.

Beijing and Bangkok also pledged to speed-up the construction of the China-Thailand railway and work together in combating transnational crimes, Wang said.

Before his talks with Parn-



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Thai Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara shake hands during a signing ceremony of the agreement on mutual visa exemption in Bangkok.

pree, Wang held two days of talks in Bangkok with US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan covering the sensitive issues of Taiwan and the attacks in the Red Sea by Houthis rebels.

Japan arsonist sentenced to death ‘accepts’ verdict

A Japanese man sentenced to death for an arson attack on an anime studio that killed 36 people in 2019 said he accepted the court’s verdict, a local media report said.

Shinji Aoba, 45, was convicted on Thursday over the blaze at the studios of Kyoto Animation – Japan’s deadliest crime in decades.

On Friday, his defence team, who had entered a plea of not guilty claiming he had a mental disorder, appealed the ruling.

However, in a rare interview with the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper published late on Saturday, Aoba said: “I seriously accept the verdict.”

He told the daily that he chose to appeal “because I would not be able to speak out if I did not continue (with the court case)”.

The interview took place one day after Aoba was sentenced.

“As the person who caused this incident, I tried to speak as much as possible during the (court) proceedings,” he was quoted as saying. “But there are a few more things that I want

to leave behind as lessons for others.”

Japan is one of the few developed countries with capital punishment and public support for it is high.

As of December, 107 people were on death row.

Many of those killed in the July 2019 fire were young, including a 21-year-old woman.

Aoba broke into the building, spread gasoline around the ground floor, lit it and shouted “drop dead,” according to survivors.

The victims “were engulfed in fire and smoke in the blink of an eye ... they died an anguishing death as the studio instantly turned into a hell”, presiding judge Keisuke Masuda said in his ruling.

“Immolating people is truly cruel and inhumane,” the judge added.

Aoba himself sustained burns on 90% of his body and only regained consciousness weeks after the fire, and the ability to speak later still.

Aoba believed that the studio – known by its fans as KyoAni – stole his ideas, prosecutors said, a claim the company has denied. — AFP

Bhutan’s liberal Tobgay becomes premier after fourth free vote

Bhutan’s liberal politician Tshering Tobgay, leader of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), officially began his second term as prime minister yesterday, following elections earlier this month.

To mark his appointment formally, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck handed a scarf to Tobgay, a statement posted on the king’s official Facebook page said.

Tobgay, 58, is country’s fourth freely elected prime minister since democracy was established in the Himalayan kingdom 15 years ago.

A former bureaucrat and an advocate for Bhutan’s Buddhist culture, he was previously prime minister from 2013 to 2018.

He was also the leader of opposition in the parliament set up after the first free vote in 2008 until 2013.

Bhutan is a country of fewer than 800,000 people, situated between China and India.

It is known for its Gross National Happiness (GNH) index, an economic gauge that takes into account factors such as recreation and emotional well-being that are ignored by gross domestic product measures.

However, Tobgay faces the challenge of revamping the \$3bn economy following the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and creating jobs to prevent young Bhutanese people from going abroad, mainly



This picture taken in 2018 shows Prime Minister Tobgay with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

to Australia, in pursuit of better opportunities.

Bhutan has extensive economic and cultural ties with India, which is also its largest donor and trade partner and Tobgay has made clear his wish to maintain a deep rela-

tionship with the country.

It has no formal diplomatic relations with China but is in talks with Beijing to resolve border disputes – negotiations closely watched by India, which has its own border dispute with China. – **Reuters**

Minister sacks UK Post Office chief over IT scandal

AFP
London

The UK business minister, Kemi Badenoch, said yesterday that she had sacked the chairman of the Post Office amid tensions over the scandal of hundreds of sub-postmasters wrongly convicted of theft due to faulty accounting software.

A television drama in early January that told the story of the sub-postmasters’ ordeal and their ongoing battle to clear their names and secure compensation shocked the nation.

The strong public reaction prompted Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to announce in parliament that his government would legislate to ensure the victims of what has been called Britain’s biggest miscarriage of justice were “swiftly exonerated and compensated”.

“We had a conversation and it was agreed that it was better that the Post Office had new leadership going forward,” Badenoch told Sky News, confirming that she had removed Post Office chief Henry Staunton.

There has been intense criticism of previous Post Office chief Paula Vennells and others who are accused of allowing the prosecutions to continue even after problems with the software were known about.

Staunton, appointed in December 2022, was not at the helm during the installation of the faulty Ho-

rizon software or the subsequent legal cases.

“But I decided that given all of the difficulties the Post Office is having, it’s not just about Horizon, it’s about the entire business model, how we make it work, that we needed someone who could chair a board that was able to deal with these things effectively,” Badenoch added.

The minister also said she “certainly” expected Japanese tech firm Fujitsu to pay compensation over the scandal.

Glitches in the IT system made it look as if money was missing leading to the conviction of over 700 sub-postmasters for theft or false accounting between 1999 and 2015.

Some went to jail, were made bankrupt or lost their homes.

Four took their own lives.

Badenoch said she had written to the chairman of Fujitsu asking for meetings.

“Fujitsu ... are very much a part of this story, it’s not just Post Office management, and I hope that they will do the right thing,” she said.

Head of Fujitsu’s European arm Paul Patterson told a public inquiry probing the scandal earlier this month that the company had a “moral obligation” to help compensate the sub-postmasters.

“I am personally appalled by the evidence that I have seen and what I saw on the television drama,” he said.

Bangladesh’s Yunus vows to help the poor despite legal woes

Bangladeshi Nobel laureate Mohamed Yunus has vowed to overcome scores of court cases that his supporters say are politically motivated to achieve his environmental and economic policies.

“Our dream is to create a new world,” 83-year-old Yunus told reporters outside court, after he was formally granted bail in his appeal against a six-month prison sentence in a case widely criticised by human rights groups.

Yunus is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his pioneering microfinance bank but has incurred the wrath of Bangladesh’s longtime Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has accused him of “sucking blood” from the poor.

Hasina, who was sworn in for a fifth term this month after a landslide victory in an election boycotted by the opposition, has made several scathing verbal attacks against the internationally respected 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner.

His conviction on January 1 related to labour law violations, but lawyers said Yunus faces at least 170 other cases, including major corruption charges that could see him jailed for years if found guilty.

He denies all wrongdoing.

Yunus, in an emotionally charged speech, said he had dedicated his life to supporting those most in need and was “committed” to continuing his work.

His “Three Zero” plan is aimed to slash carbon emissions, end unemployment and cut poverty.

“We have chased a dream,” Yunus said. “We have incurred the annoyance of someone because of chasing this dream,” he added, without specifying names.

In the most recent case, Yunus and three colleagues from Grameen Telecom, one of the firms he founded, were accused of violating labour laws when they failed to create a workers’ welfare fund in the company. – **AFP**

Looking up



Dark clouds are seen over the Kuala Lumpur city skyline, as viewed from the KL Tower, yesterday.



Lion dancers perform during a procession in Hanoi yesterday for the upcoming Lunar New Year.



A man stands under Taiwanese flags on a street in the Chinatown section of Yokohama, south of Tokyo.

Charles spends third day in London hospital

AFP
London

Queen Camilla visited her husband King Charles III again in hospital yesterday, his third day at a central London clinic where he has undergone corrective prostate surgery.

Charles, 75, was admitted to The London Clinic on Friday after officials took the unusual step of disclosing that he had an enlarged prostate although the condition was benign.

Camilla left the hospital in a black Audi around 3.10pm (1510 GMT).

A small crowd of well-wishers gathered on the pavement as she departed.

The king’s daughter-in-law is also currently at the clinic following abdominal surgery.

Catherine, Princess of Wales, 42, who is the wife of heir to the throne Prince William is on her 13th day of an expected two-week stay.

The king’s announcement has prompted a surge in Internet searches for the term “enlarged prostate” on the state-run National Health Service (NHS) website.

The charity Prostate Cancer UK said it had seen a more than 100% increase in people using its online risk checker on Thursday compared with Wednesday.

“The nature of these things (is) if it becomes public knowledge it will lead to more men seeking help. That’s a good thing,” said consultant urological surgeon Ian Eardley.

Opinium poll shows Conservatives trail Labour by 16 points

The British opposition Labour Party’s lead over Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s ruling Conservative Party has increased from 14 to 16 points, according to an opinion poll published on Saturday.

Ahead of a national election expected later in 2024, the poll, conducted by Opinium, predicted Labour would take 42% of the vote, versus 27% for the Conservatives. Opinium’s previous poll two weeks ago had given Labour a 14-point lead.

Its latest poll, based on 2,060 UK adults surveyed from January 23-26, found two-thirds of voters saw the health service as the most important issue facing the UK, followed by the economy and immigration.

Last week, a YouGov opinion poll published in the *Telegraph* newspaper found the Conservatives were set for an electoral defeat on a par with its heavy loss to Labour in 1997. – **Reuters**

England’s Cambridge targets Silicon Valley status

By Rashid Baxter
AFP

Cambridge, the English city renowned for its university, scientific breakthroughs and status as a technology hub, has its sights on becoming the next Silicon Valley.

The British government is providing funds for new infrastructure projects such as housing and transport that it says will help Cambridge, north of London, become “Europe’s science capital”.

The finance minister, Jeremy Hunt, has said the goal is for the city to become “the world’s next Silicon Valley”.

The initiative comes as a report by HSBC bank this month showed the UK as the world’s third-biggest “tech ecosystem”, with venture-capital investment totalling \$21.3bn in 2023.

Leading the way is the US with \$150bn, followed by China at a third of that total.

The original global hub for technological innovation is in the San Francisco area. The attraction of highly skilled jobs makes living in and around the US city expensive.

Homes and offices are meanwhile considered overpriced in Cambridge, which has caused the UK government to offer help with “affordable” housing in the city as part of the new plan.

Innovate Cambridge – a collaboration between the university and major companies including drugs group AstraZeneca and Microsoft – aims by 2035 to double the city’s “unicorns”, or privately held startups valued at more than \$1bn.

Cambridge has 23 unicorns, according to recent data from its university, around the same number as Berlin. London has 39.

The small English city is home also to tech giant Arm, whose semiconductor design is used in most smartphones worldwide.

The UN has ranked Cambridge as the number one science and technological

cluster by intensity, in relation to its size.

Excluding this factor, the 2023 Global Innovation Index has Paris as Europe’s top cluster, or area with the highest density of inventors and scientific authors.

Mark Slack, co-founder of CMR Surgical, said his life science company likely achieved unicorn status in 2019 thanks to its Cambridge location.

“We probably couldn’t have done this in many other areas in the world,” he told AFP.

CMR Surgical, founded in 2014, produces small, modular robots capable of minimal access surgery.

“The technical knowledge we needed in terms of physicists, mathematicians and computer scientists” would have been “quite difficult” to find elsewhere, Slack added.

Cambridge gives “access to an incredible infrastructure of talent”, he said.

A study by Virgin Money had Cambridge as the best UK city to start a business last year.

“The historic university city ranks as the top city for both innovation and happiness, as well as placing in the top five cities for length of commute, people in employment and Internet quality,” it concluded.

Population size does not appear to be a key factor in whether Cambridge becomes the next Silicon Valley.

The region in California is home to about 3mn people, many times more than the roughly 150,000 people residing in Cambridge.

At the same time, the number of Silicon Valley unicorns stands at only about three times the amount found in the English city.

Cambridge can draw on its successful past as it looks to reinvent itself, according to Michael Anstey of Cambridge Innovation Capital, a venture capital firm that focuses on life science and deep tech.

The city “for the last 60, 70 years has been very strong at turning academic innovation into specific commercial opportunities”, he said.

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
✉ editor@gulf-times.com
☎ 44350478 (News),
☎ 44466404 (Sport),
☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
📠 44350474
📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
✉ twitter.com/gulftimes_Qatar
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GULF TIMES

Greenland's ice loss surges: Satellite data shows alarming retreat

Aggravating concerns about global warming and its consequences, a new, comprehensive analysis of satellite data has found Greenland has lost more ice than previously estimated and that the majority of glaciers on the landmass have retreated significantly. The Greenland Ice Sheet has shed about one-fifth more ice mass in the past four decades than previously estimated, researchers at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California reported in a new paper. Icebergs are falling into the ocean at an accelerating rate. Though this additional ice loss has had only an indirect impact on sea levels, it could hold implications for ocean circulation in the future.

Published in Nature on January 17, the analysis offers a comprehensive look at retreat around the edges of the entire ice sheet from 1985 to 2022, drawing from nearly a quarter million pieces of satellite data on glacier positions. Of the 207 glaciers in the study, 179 retreated significantly since 1985, 27 held steady, and one advanced slightly. Most of the ice loss came from below sea level, in fjords on Greenland's periphery. Once occupied by ancient glacial ice, many of these deep coastal valleys have filled with seawater – meaning the ice that broke off made little net contribution to sea level. But the loss likely accelerated the movement of ice flowing down from higher elevations, which in turn added to sea level rise.

“When the ice at the end of a glacier calves and retreats, it's like pulling the plug out of the fjord, which lets ice drain into the ocean faster,” said Chad Greene, a glacier scientist at JPL and the study's lead author. For decades researchers have studied the Greenland Ice Sheet's direct contributions to global sea level rise through ice flow and melting. Scientists participating in the international Ice sheet Mass Balance Inter-comparison Exercise (IMBIE) estimated that the ice sheet had lost 5,390 billion tonnes between 1992 and 2020, adding about 13.5 millimetres to global

The glaciers that are most sensitive to warming each summer will be most impacted by climate change in the coming decades

mean sea level, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. But the IMBIE measurements do not account for ice lost due to the retreat of terminal glaciers along the edges of Greenland. (These glacier edges were already in the water, whether submerged or floating.) The new study quantifies this amount: For the 1985 to 2022 period in the new paper, the ice sheet was estimated to have lost about 1,140 billion tonnes – 21% more mass

lost than in the IMBIE assessment.

Although it doesn't add to sea levels, the additional ice represents a significant influx of fresh water to the ocean. Recent studies have suggested that changes in the salinity of the North Atlantic Ocean from melting icebergs could weaken the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, part of the global “conveyor belt” of currents that transport heat and salt around the ocean. This could influence weather patterns worldwide, as well as affect ecosystems, the authors said.

Icebergs have tumbled from Greenland's glaciers for thousands of years as part of a natural cycle that typically balanced glacier growth in the winter with melting and retreat in the summer. The new study finds that ice retreat has far outpaced growth throughout the 21st century. The researchers also found that Greenland's ice extent remained relatively steady from 1985 to 2000, then started a marked recession that continues to this day.

The data showed a glacier in northeast Greenland called Zachariae Isstrom lost the most ice, dropping 176 billion tonnes of mass due to retreat. It was followed by Jakobshavn Isbrae on the western coast, which lost an estimated 97 billion tonnes and Humboldt Gletscher in the northwest, which lost 96 billion tonnes. Only one glacier, Qajuttap Sermia in southern Greenland, experienced any growth over the study period, but its gains were too small to offset the losses from other glaciers.

The researchers also found that glaciers with the largest seasonal fluctuations in the position of their ice front experienced the greatest overall retreat. The correlation suggests the glaciers that are most sensitive to warming each summer will be most impacted by climate change in the coming decades.

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Developing countries need debt relief to act on climate change

If nothing is done to help countries facing liquidity crises, the world will risk a wave of destabilising debt defaults

By Ishac Diwan and Vera Songwe
Washington, DC/Paris

If developing economies found it hard to manage their debts in 2023, they are likely to face even more formidable challenges this year. Though most possess relatively small debt stocks and are not considered insolvent, many are in dire need of liquidity. As long as this remains true, they will struggle not only to manage their debts, but also to invest in the green transition.

Developing economies have faced a series of external shocks in recent years, including the Covid-19 pandemic, war-related disruptions of food and energy supply chains, and an uptick in global inflation. Moreover, their access to capital markets has been curtailed, preventing them from rolling over maturing loans, as they would do in normal times. As a result, countries have been forced to channel a large share of their tax and export revenues to service their debt, avoiding default at the cost of priorities like infrastructure investment, social-welfare programs, and climate action.

The outlook for these countries is likely to worsen in the next few years. According to estimates by the Finance for Development Lab (FDL), large debt payments are coming due in 2024 and 2026 for at least 20 low- and lower-middle-income countries. As countries hit this “debt wall,” their already fragile fiscal positions will deteriorate further. This does not bode well for climate action.

Climate change is not some distant menace; its effects are

already being felt worldwide, especially in climate-vulnerable developing economies. But international summits on the topic last year sent a disappointing message: while developed economies pledged to increase climate financing by 2030, developing-economy policymakers are struggling against severe fiscal constraints. With medium-term strategies being used to address a short-term threat, developing and emerging economies have been expressing frustration, including at the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact that was held in Paris last June.

Multilateral development banks can provide an essential lifeline, but their capacity would have to be strengthened – and quickly. According to World Bank data, the new concessional loans the world's poorest countries received from MDBs in 2022 were smaller than these countries' debt-service payments, a large share of which went to private and bilateral creditors. Increasing capital flight from the developing world – driven not least by monetary tightening in advanced economies – will intensify the needs of illiquid lower-income countries.

But it is not only a matter of financial capacity. MDBs have so far been inconsistent, at best, when it comes to supporting countries struggling to repay their debts. For example, both Kenya and Ethiopia have been under pressure to repay their private and Chinese creditors, which are now collecting more in debt-service payments than they are providing in new loans. But only Kenya received enough support from

the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and others to refinance its debt that is maturing this year.

By contrast, assistance to Ethiopia has declined in recent years. As a result, Ethiopia recently defaulted on its external debt, even though it amounts to just 25% of GDP. While the Kenya approach is not the solution – providing similar levels of support to all illiquid countries would require a tripling of MDB flows – this is clearly unacceptable.

A better approach would focus on closing the gap between short-term debt concerns and long-term investment needs, by unlocking net-positive inflows for countries facing liquidity constraints. As the FDL has proposed, an agreement among debtors, creditors, and MDBs to permit countries to reschedule debts coming due – delaying maturities by 5-10 years – would create fiscal space for climate-friendly investments, financed by MDBs.

For this liquidity bridge to work, MDBs would have to accelerate progress on implementing existing reform plans and increase funding substantially, while the IMF helps manage debt-rollover risks. Importantly, private and bilateral creditors would have to agree to the rescheduling. That is why, compared to the Debt Service Suspension Initiative that the G20 introduced in 2020, the proposal includes stronger incentives for private-sector creditors to participate, in addition to longer time horizons.

There are good reasons to believe that creditors can be convinced to join the programme

voluntarily. It is, after all, in their best interest to remain invested in solvent countries with strong growth prospects; no one benefits from debt crises like those that have ensnared Zambia and Sri Lanka. In any case, creditors would continue receiving interest payments, and as global interest rates fall and economic-growth prospects improve in the coming years, debtors may well be able to return to capital markets and resume repayment of the principal.

Shaping a workable blueprint along these lines is a task for upcoming international gatherings, such as the G20 summit in Brazil later this year. Logistical and financial co-ordination will be needed to ensure sufficient liquidity. Co-ordination among the IMF, the World Bank, and regional development banks will also be essential to ensure that participating debtor countries pursue investments that genuinely support green growth.

If nothing is done to help countries facing liquidity crises, the world will risk a wave of destabilising debt defaults, and progress on the green transition will be severely undermined, with catastrophic implications for the entire world. Because promising solutions like the liquidity bridge can prevent such outcomes, they deserve broad global support.

– Project Syndicate

● Ishac Diwan is Research Director of the Finance for Development Lab.

● Vera Songwe is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the Finance for Development Lab.



TOUGH GOING: If developing economies found it hard to manage their debts in 2023, they are likely to face even more formidable challenges this year.

Mona Lisa suffers art attack yet again

Activists splash soup on the glass-protected smiling lady

Two protesters yesterday hurled pumpkin soup at the bullet-proof glass protecting Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" in Paris, demanding the right to "healthy and sustainable food", an AFP journalist and the museum said. The action, which comes as French farmers protest across the country, is the latest in a string of similar attacks against artworks to demand more action to protect the planet. Two women yesterday morning flung streams of orange soup onto the glass protecting the smiling lady to gasps from the crowd in the French capital's Louvre museum, according to an AFP journalist at the scene. "What is more important? Art or the right to healthy and sustainable food," the activists asked, standing in front of the painting and speaking in turn.

"Your agricultural system is sick. Our farmers are dying at work," they said, before security staff evacuated the room. A police source said both activists had been detained. The Louvre museum said the women had hidden the pumpkin soup in a coffee thermos. Small quantities of food are allowed inside the museum, though eating is not allowed in the exhibition rooms. The museum said the artwork had suffered "no damage", and the room housing the masterpiece had re-opened to the public after closing for around an hour. A group called Riposte Alimentaire ("Food counterattack") claimed responsibility for the stunt. They said the soup throwing marked the "start of a campaign of civil resistance with the clear demand... of the social security of sustainable food". They referred to a survey of 996 people last year by the Ipsos polling group that found that one in three French people were not always able to afford enough

healthy food for three meals a day. Member Till Van Elst said the group wanted the state to allow people to buy selected food items at reduced rates through a specialised social security card. Under the scheme, democratic assemblies would choose the food to be subsidised. "We want citizens to really be able to... decide what is in their plates," he told AFP. Culture Minister Rachida Dati criticised the soup attack. "The Mona Lisa, as our heritage, belongs to future generations. No cause can justify targeting it," she wrote on X. Yesterday's action comes as French farmers have been protesting for days to demand better pay, taxes and regulations. The government has been trying to keep discontent among the agricultural workers from spreading months ahead of European Parliament elections, which are seen as a key test for President Emmanuel Macron's government. Prime Minister Gabriel Attal on Sunday scrambled to announce



Two environmental activists from the collective dubbed "Riposte Alimentaire" (Food Retaliation) gesturing as they stand in front of Leonardo Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" (La Joconde) painting after hurling soup at the artwork at the Louvre museum in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

new measures as some farmers threatened to block roads into the capital on Monday. The action at the museum follows a series of such stunts by climate activists against world-famous paintings to demand more action to phase out fossil fuels and prevent global warming. In October 2022, two activists from the Just Stop Oil group grabbed headlines when they

splashed tomato soup over the glass protecting Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers" at the National Gallery in London. They complained that art lovers were more concerned with paintings than the planet. The "Mona Lisa" has been attacked several times before. A man threw a custard pie at her in May 2022, also saying artists were not focusing enough on

"the planet". Her thick glass casing ensured she came to no harm. She has been behind glass since a Bolivian man threw a rock at her in December 1956, damaging her left elbow. The glass was made bulletproof in 2005. In 2009, a woman threw an empty teacup at the painting, which slightly scratched the case.



Kazim Aydemir (right) uncle of the victim grieves in front of Santa Maria church as Turkish anti riot police officers block the street after the attack in Istanbul yesterday. (AFP)

One dead after armed assault on Catholic church in Istanbul

AFP
Istanbul

One man died after armed assailants opened fire in an Italian church in Istanbul during Sunday mass in an apparent assassination attempt that was swiftly condemned by Pope Francis and Turkish officials. The attack occurred at around 11:40am at the Santa Maria church in the Sariyer district of Istanbul on the European side of Turkey's largest city and was carried out by two masked men, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on social media. Turkish officials said it looked like a targeted attack against one person rather than against the Catholic church. The minister said an individual identified only as CT — who was among those attending Sunday's service — was the target of the gun attack and lost his life.

Yerlikaya added that an investigation had been launched to find the attackers, who fled the scene after the shooting. Turkish counter-terrorism police detained one man in connection with the attack, the private DHA news agency reported, without providing further details. Local officials said around 40 people attended the mass, and suggested that there could have been more casualties. "After the second shot, the gun didn't work, then they (attackers) ran. At this moment, everyone laid on the floor. There were around 35 to 40 people inside," Sariyer district's mayor Sukru Genc told reporters. Istanbul governor Davut Gul said that there were no other injuries. Television images showed police and an ambulance outside the ornate 19th century church. "We strongly condemn this vile attack," Yerlikaya said.

Haley says Trump can't 'bully' his way to party nomination

Donald Trump wants to "bully" his way to the Republican presidential nomination, his sole remaining challenger Nikki Haley said yesterday, as she accused the party leadership of seeking to declare him the nominee prematurely. Haley lost the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary but has vowed to stay in the contest, despite Trump's insistence — backed by some top Republican Party leaders — that the race is over. "He can't bully his way through the nomination," Haley said on NBC's *Meet the Press*. Haley noted that the nominating process was still in its earliest stages — Republicans have voted only in Iowa and New Hampshire so far — and suggested that Trump had pressured the Republican National Committee (RNC) to back him much too soon. "You can't do that based on just two states," she said. The former South Carolina governor took particular aim at the RNC for throwing the national party's support — and resources — behind Trump soon after the New Hampshire vote. The voters' will was "very clear," RNC chair Ronna McDaniel told Fox News on Tuesday. "We need to unite around our eventual nominee, which is going to be Donald Trump." But with 48 states yet to vote, Haley told NBC, "I don't think this is the place of the RNC... I think that Trump overstepped when he pushed them to do it." Haley suggested that she expected to stay in the race at least until so-called Super Tuesday on March 5, when voters in 16 states and US territories cast ballots in what can be a decisive exercise.

Dozens detained as police target Khan's supporters



Supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf shout slogans and protest to demand the release of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan in Karachi yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Karachi

Pakistani police detained at least two dozen supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan yesterday as they tried to rally in the country's biggest city ahead of elections next month. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has been severely hamstrung ahead of the February 8 poll, with rallies banned, its party symbol taken away, and dozens of its candidates rejected from eligibility to stand. Rights groups have warned the national and provincial elections lack credibility, with the powerful military accused of trying to influence the vote.

Yesterday, PTI officials urged supporters to rally across the country despite police withdrawing or declining permission for the gatherings to take place. Thousands gathered in Karachi, the bustling southern port city of over 20mn people on the Arabian Sea, where AFP correspondents saw about two dozen PTI supporters detained by police and taken away in trucks. PTI media adviser Zulfiqar Bukhari said there had also been arrests in Rawalpindi — the sprawling garrison city neighbouring the capital, Islamabad — as well as in other parts of Punjab, the country's most populous province. Police officials said they had no information on arrests. The election has largely been a lacklustre affair so far, with few

Rights groups have warned the national and provincial elections lack credibility, with the powerful military accused of trying to influence the vote

mass rallies — a combination of party inaction, voter apathy, and the cold winter weather. Three-time premier Nawaz Sharif, whose Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is expected to take the most seats, has barely been seen on the campaign trail, although Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who heads the other major dynastic political group, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), has been more visible. He held a rally attended by several thousand in Rawalpindi yesterday. Much of the action has taken place in the country's courts, which for months have been at the centre of battles by politicians and parties challenging everything from the use of election symbols to the eligibility of candidates to run for office. This weekend, several Pakistani journalists, political commentators and bloggers said they were summoned by the country's top crime agency to answer charges they were running a "malicious campaign" against Supreme Court judges. They had received notices from the Federal Investigation Agency summoning them to a hearing in the capital this week. "This is the price one has to pay for this sort of journalism," Asad Ali Toor, one of the journalists who had received a notice,

told AFP, adding that he had faced similar cases under successive governments. Farleha Aziz, a digital-rights activist in Karachi, told AFP the investigation was part of an increase in censorship in Pakistan. Earlier this week, the government announced it had formed a team to "ascertain facts behind a malicious social media campaign" against Supreme Court judges. Murtaza Solangi, the caretaker information minister, said more than 500 social media accounts had taken part in the anti-judiciary campaign, adding that "action will be taken". This month, PTI lost a crucial battle at the country's top court to retain its cricket bat election symbol — vital in a nation where the adult literacy rate is just 58 percent, according to World Bank data. The verdict, deemed harsh by many legal experts, was severely criticised on social media. Media groups have faced heavy pressure from the establishment — a term commonly used to refer to the country's military and intelligence services — in the lead-up to the election, including a ban on mentioning Khan's name on the airwaves. Pakistan's military has directly ruled the country for roughly half of its history, and critics say it continues to maintain control over many aspects of governance.

World's largest cruise ship sets sail

The world's largest cruise ship, Royal Caribbean's Icon of the Seas, set sail from Miami on its maiden voyage Saturday, carrying what amounted to the population of a small city. The ship, built over 900 days at a shipyard in Turku, Finland, is a monument to enormity, longer than the Eiffel Tower is tall, with 20 decks and room for more than 5,600 passengers (7,600 at maximum capacity) and a crew of 2,350. To ensure no one goes bored or hungry, the monster ship, registered in the Bahamas, has seven swimming pools including a 40,000-gallon "lake," six water slides, a carousel, what Royal Caribbean says is the largest ice arena at sea, and more than 40 dining venues and bars. Still bored? There will be 50 musicians and comedians as well as a 16-piece orchestra. The \$2bn Icon — the first in Royal Caribbean's new Quantum Class of ships — is stuffed with the latest technology and, despite its mammoth size, claims to be more eco-friendly than some smaller cruise ships. The Icon is powered by what



Royal Caribbean's Icon of the Seas sails from the Port of Miami in Miami, Florida, on its maiden cruise. (Reuters)

its owners say is eco-friendly Liquefied Natural Gas (though some experts say LNG systems can leak damaging amounts of methane gas into the atmosphere). It also features a system — microwave-assisted pyrolysis — for converting waste to energy-producing gas, and a reverse osmosis system to provide nearly all the fresh water the ship needs, the company says. The Icon was christened in style on Tuesday, when global soccer star Lionel Messi, now with the Inter Miami side,

pushed a button to send a bottle of Champagne crashing against the ship's bow. After leaving its Miami home base Saturday on its sold-out inaugural cruise — the company says ticket demand was "unprecedented" — the Icon will spend a week in the Caribbean before returning to Miami. At 2,000 feet long (365 metres), the Icon will be taking the title of world's largest from a Royal Caribbean stable-mate, the slightly smaller Wonder of the Seas.

North Macedonia elects Albanian as caretaker PM

North Macedonia's parliament elected Talat Xhaferi to head a caretaker government yesterday, the first time an Albanian has held the position, and he will lead the country until general elections scheduled for early May take place. Xhaferi served as the speaker in parliament before he was nominated by the ruling government coalition to become prime minister. The current government's main task is to secure fair and free elections. Xhaferi got 65 votes in the 120-seat parliament but the opposition party boycotted the vote even though

it will have a few seats in the caretaker government. "I will do this duty with trust, honour and high responsibility," Xhaferi told lawmakers before the vote. Xhaferi becoming PM marks the first time an Albanian has held such a high office in the country. Albanians make up about 29.5% of the population of North Macedonia which has about 1.8mn people. The elections are due to be held on May 8, where the biggest issue for the new parliament and government will be changing constitution to recognise a Bulgarian minority.

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