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In Brief

Amir, Dutch PM discuss ties, developments in Palestinian Territories

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Mark Rutte, the most prominent regional and international issues of common concern, especially the developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian Territories. This came during a phone call the Amir received yesterday from Rutte. During the call, they discussed bilateral relations and ways to reinforce them. In this regard, the Dutch prime minister thanked and appreciated His Highness the Amir for Qatar's diplomatic and humanitarian efforts with respect to the situation in Gaza. **(QNA)**

Amir, Kosovo president discuss bilateral ties

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with President of the Republic of Kosovo Vjosa Osmani, bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to enhance them. This came in a phone call the Amir received yesterday, during which they discussed the most prominent regional and international issues of common concern. **(QNA)**

Thundery rain forecast today

There is a possibility today for thundery rain associated with strong wind and poor horizontal visibility at places at times, the Met office said. The minimum and maximum temperatures are expected to be 18C and 26C. Yesterday's minimum and maximum temperatures were 17C and 27C, respectively.

'Trump re-election will not weaken Nato'

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg yesterday played down fears that a re-election of former US President Donald Trump would weaken the defence alliance as it works to ensure robust support for Ukraine. "I believe that the United States will continue to be a staunch Nato ally, regardless of the outcome of the US election, because it is in the US interest," he said. Trump's main criticism has been about the allies spending too little on Nato, Stoltenberg said.

'China targeting US infrastructure'

Hackers linked to the Chinese government are targeting critical US infrastructure, preparing to cause "real-world harm" to Americans, FBI Director Christopher Wray told a congressional committee yesterday. Water treatment plants, the electric grid, oil and natural gas pipelines and transportation hubs are among the targets of state-sponsored hacking operations, he told the House of Representatives Select Committee on competition with China.

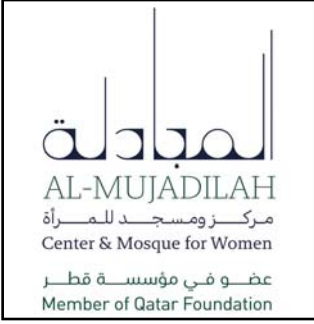
Sheikha Moza unveils Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women

This space allows women to develop themselves in religious and worldly affairs, and with a comprehensive understanding of worship

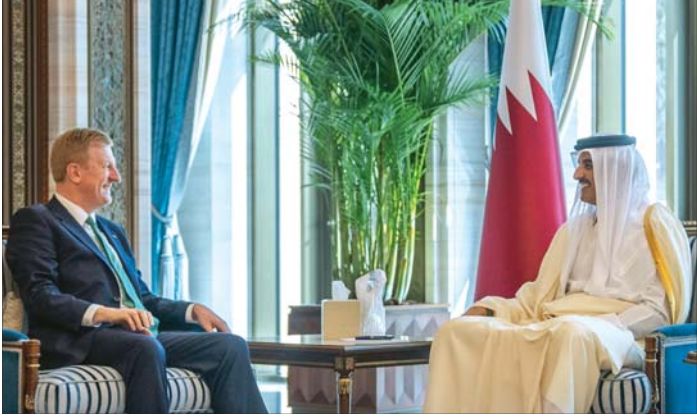
Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and founder of Al-Mujadilah, unveiled yesterday a centre and mosque that will cater to Muslim women of all ages and backgrounds. 'Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women,' founded by Her Highness, aims to strengthen the Islamic identity of Muslim women, foster a Muslim society where all women are engaged, their participation and contributions acknowledged and recognised, and their concerns and perspectives shape contemporary Muslim thought and open public discourse.



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser speaking at the unveiling of the Center yesterday. **PICTURE:** AR Al-Baker



Al-Mujadilah was inaugurated at an event which laid out to guests the vision of the centre, showcased the building facilities and introduced its purpose through a panel discussion with scholars, instructors and members of the community. The event was attended by dignitaries, community leaders, representatives of the Ministry of Awqaf and academic researchers. **To Page 5**



Amir meets UK deputy PM

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met at his office in Lusail Palace yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister of the friendly United Kingdom Oliver James Dowden, and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the country. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and aspects of enhancing and developing them in various fields. **(QNA)**

Al-Shaheen oil field output to be raised by 100,000bpd

QatarEnergy awards \$6bn EPC contracts

QatarEnergy has announced the award of the four main Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Installation (EPCI) contract packages related to the next development phase of the offshore Al-Shaheen field (Qatar's largest oil field) to increase production by about 100,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd). The award is part of Project Ru'ya (vision in Arabic), the third phase of Al-Shaheen's development since North Oil Company, a joint venture between QatarEnergy (70%) and TotalEnergies (30%), took over the field's operation in July 2017.



Project Ru'ya, which will develop more than 550mn barrels of oil, will be executed over a period of five years with first oil expected in 2027. The project includes the drilling of more than 200 wells and the installation of a new centralised process complex, nine remote wellhead platforms, and associated pipelines. The four EPC packages, with varying scopes of work, valued in total at more than six billion dollars, comprise of:

- (i) the EPC package for nine wellhead platforms valued at about \$2.1bn and awarded to a consortium of McDermott Middle East Inc and Qingdao McDermott Wuchuan Offshore Engineering Co;
- (ii) the EPC package for a Central Processing Platform valued at about \$1.9bn and awarded to a consortium of McDermott Middle East Inc and Hyundai Heavy Industries; **To Page 5**

Iran survive Syria penalty drama; Japan beat Bahrain

Iran will meet pre-tournament favourites Japan in the Asian Cup quarter-finals after surviving extra time with 10 men before defeating Syria 5-3 on penalties yesterday. Japan beat Bahrain 3-1 despite another mistake from goalkeeper Zion Suzuki, as Brighton winger Kaoru Mitoma made his first appearance in Qatar after injury. Skipper Ehsan Hajsafi scored the winning penalty for Iran. Goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand was the penalty hero for Iran, saving Syria's second spot-kick from Fahd Youssef. **Sport Pages 1, 4**



Israeli attacks continue as Hamas studies truce plan

Gaza massacre toll mounts to 26,900, most of them women, children

Reuters
Gaza/Doha

Israeli forces carried out air strikes in Gaza yesterday as the Palestinian resistance group Hamas studied a new proposal for a ceasefire and the release of hostages held in the enclave. Witnesses said Israel had stepped up air strikes on Gaza City, in the north, and bombarded parts of Khan Younis, in the south, despite what appeared to be the most serious peace initiative for months in the Israel-Hamas war. World powers hope to prevent a wider conflict, but tensions in the Middle East remained high after Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis rebels said they would keep attacking US and British warships in the Red Sea in solidarity with Palestinians.



Palestinians shop in an open-air market near the ruins of houses and buildings, in Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.

Relations between Tehran and Washington are also tense after the deaths of three US soldiers in a drone strike in Jordan that US officials blame on Iran-backed militants. Washington has not yet outlined its response, but Iran's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday they would respond to any US threat. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to destroy Hamas and to achieve "total victory" in Gaza, said a "real effort" was being made to secure the hostages' release. Israel says some 136 hostages are still being held in Gaza. Gaza health authorities said 26,900 Palestinians had been

killed — including 150 over the past 24 hours. The Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza also came under fire and tanks pounded areas of Khan Younis around Nasser Hospital, the largest still functioning in the south, witnesses said. As the health system deteriorates, Palestinian medics say they have formed field medical points to help reach front lines, as treating the wounded in Khan Younis has become increasingly difficult amid street battles and artillery strikes. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described UNRWA as "the backbone of all humanitarian response in Gaza" and appealed to all countries to "guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's life-saving work". **Page 8**

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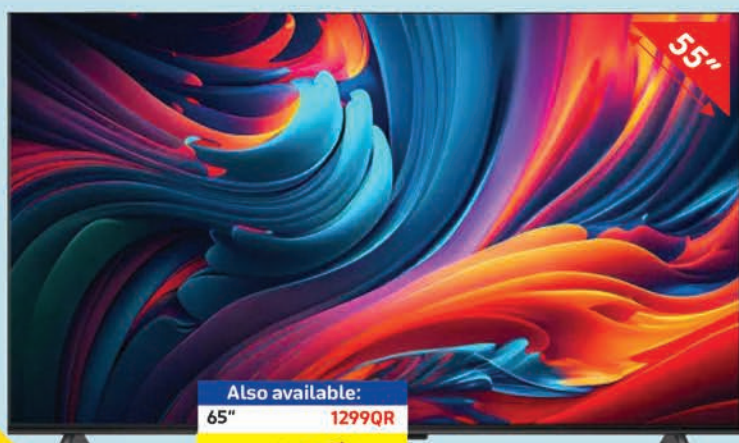
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PM meets US officials, discusses Gaza



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met separately in Washington yesterday with Chairman of the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Michael McCaul, Chairman of the US House of Representatives Committee on Rules Tom Cole, and Member of the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Gregory Meeks. The meetings touched on the strategic relations between the two friendly countries and ways of enhancing them. The meetings also discussed the latest developments in Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and the need to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue and to ensure a sustainable entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip; in addition to the latest developments in the region and ways to reduce the escalation. HE Sheikh Mohamed met on Tuesday in Washington with US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the strategic relationships between the two friendly nations and ways to reinforce and upgrade them, in addition to discussing the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, the need for finding a just and durable solution for the Palestinian cause, and the constant and sustainable delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as well as the latest developments in the region and ways for de-escalation. **(QNA)**

Alfardan Jewellery set to celebrate its 70th anniversary at DJWE 2024

Alfardan Jewellery is set to celebrate its 70th anniversary this year, highlighting the enduring legacy and rich heritage cultivated throughout the years, a statement said yesterday.

This momentous occasion will be marked through the showcase of exclusive collections at the milestone 20th edition of the Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE), the go-to, exclusive, high-profile event for jewellery experts, global brands, and aspiring designers.

The event will continue to be the heart of glamour, where exclusivity, beauty, art, legacy, and unique artistry will intertwine under one roof, with about 55 international Alfardan Jewellery brands represented. Unparalleled quality and sophistication are the hallmarks of Alfardan Jewellery, trusted by generations. Alfardan Jewellery is a pioneer in the region for holding the exclusive Jewellery and Watches Exhibition for the first time in 1977. It eventually became a public event in 2003 where the world's finest designers descended to the region to feature their best works.

In a press statement, Ali Alfardan, vice-chairman of the Alfardan Group and president, Alfardan Jewellery, said: "Alfardan Jewellery and its work remains especially close to my father's and all our hearts. Our ventures as a family began with pearly generations back, and later evolved into multiple luxury enterprises across the region. So, we are proud to continue sharing our passion with the world, by announcing exciting upcoming expansions in Oman and the UAE. We thank all clients and visitors for their support."

Alfardan Jewellery will feature several luxury brands under its portfolio with a specially designed pavilion



Alfardan Group vice-chairman and Alfardan Jewellery president Ali Alfardan at the press conference yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

and booths. Some notable brands with exclusive collections on display include Chopard, Vacheron Constantin, Marli, Saroro, Chaumet, Tiffany & Co, Girard Perregaux, Franck Muller, Butani, Gallery Al Tawash, Noudar to name a few. Dolce & Gabbana, HRH Joaillerie and Ulyess Nardin will also be present for the first time.

DJWE 2024 is expected to unfold at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre from February 5-11.

Labour ministry hosts training sessions on 'Istamer' platform

The Ministry of Labour has launched a series of induction workshops on the "Istamer" platform, with the goal of introducing retired citizens, companies and institutions to the platform's operations and how to make optimal use of it.

This initiative is aimed at achieving the highest job matching rates between the available positions and retirees registered on the "Istamer" platform, thanks to its artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities. The workshops are designed for both male and female retirees interested in rejoining the job market, as well as for companies and organisations already engaged with the platform or those considering registration to leverage the expertise of qualified national talents.

Conducting these induction sessions is part of the ministry's efforts to enhance communication with the public and customers. It also aims to improve the knowledge of retirees, companies, and institutions regarding the operation of the "Istamer" platform. Additionally, it seeks to address the difficulties that retirees encounter when applying for jobs and the challenges faced by companies in finding qualified candidates.

The ministry dedicated an induction workshop for retired female citizens yesterday, while today is dedicated to retired citizens



and Sunday (Feb 4) to companies and institutions. The "Istamer" platform, initiated by the Ministry of Labour in September, is a leading endeavour aimed at harnessing the valuable practical knowledge of retirees.

This initiative is designed to play a role in the country's development and facilitate the integration of human resources into the private sector. Recognising the significance of retirees in bolstering the national workforce and increasing their engagement in private sector organisations also aligns with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

In its first phase, the "Istamer" platform was able to register and count the number of retirees wishing to return to work in the private sector and register entities, and in the second stage, jobs were started and skills matching between supply, demand and interviews were started, and all stages of employing

retired citizens in the private sector are managed through the platform, starting from receiving applications through arranging job interviews and ending with submitting job offers electronically and completely.

The process of recruiting retirees is subject to several aspects, including the availability of vacancies in the participating institutions and the matching of qualifications with the jobs offered, which means that successfully submitting the application on the platform is the correct start of the search and matching the qualifications with the available job, and in the event of a suitable job, the retiree is contacted and the procedures are completed from the job interview and appointment.

The ministry hotline 40488061 is dedicated for receiving inquiries, communicating and enquiring about the platform. E-mail: NHRE-HotlineMOL.gov.qa **(QNA)**

British Deputy PM tours National Museum



British Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden visited the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) yesterday. Dowden, who previously served as Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in the UK, expressed his pleasure in learning more about Qatar's rich heritage and culture. He praised NMoQ's great architecture which is modelled after the desert rose and the unique immersive experience of touring the museum's galleries. Dowden said that he has seen first-hand how Qatar is developing its impressive ecosystem for the creative and cultural industries and he looks forward to strengthening co-operation between the two countries to exchange experiences and best practices in areas of museums, film, television, music and fashion, noting that the UK's creative industries generate revenues worth £108bn annually and it employs more than 2.3mn people across the country. He also stressed that his country recognises Qatar's ambitions in this field and welcomes building stronger partnerships between the two sides to develop this growing industry. **(QNA)**

UK seeks to bolster ties with Qatar in all areas

British Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden has highlighted his country's desire to enhance co-operation with Qatar, particularly in the economic, investment, and trade fields stemming from both countries' strong and historical relations.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on his visit to Doha, Dowden said that relations between the United Kingdom and Qatar are going strength to strength, particularly their political and economic ties, in addition to their co-ordination, adding, "Our bilateral trade, which is currently worth £11.4bn – an increase of 29% or £2.6bn from last year."

He said: "It's excellent to have the opportunity to visit Doha and to have productive and wide-ranging discussions covering existing UK-Qatar partnerships," adding, "I am also keen to discuss with our partners the ways in which the UK can support Qatar in delivering its new Third National Development Strategy."

Dowden said that his meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani is an important occasion, adding, "To discuss our broad bilateral relationship in the areas of defence and security, prosperity, and regional security, and to convey the UK's commitment to the close and continually expanding partnership between our two countries."

"We are committed to taking steps to further deepen the political, trade, and investment relationship we share with Qatar. We achieve this through the UK-Qatar Strategic Dialogue which was inaugurated in 2022, and is due to take place in Doha in 2024, and also, through the UK-Qatar Joint Economic and Trade Committee."

He added, "The UK and Qatar also have a Strategic Investment Partnership, signed in 2022, which aims to boost mutual investment. The UK's export credit agency, UK Export Finance

(UKEF), has a memorandum with Qatar Development Bank focused on boosting efforts to support Qatari companies export more whilst collaborating with British companies in third markets."

Regarding bilateral co-ordination on resolving international and regional issues, Dowden said: "We work together very closely. It is important to acknowledge the vital role that Qatar is playing on mediating in Gaza."

"We need an immediate pause to deliver on hostage releases, on humanitarian access and to relieve suffering, and we need that to achieve our wider goals, including of regional stability and a path to a sustainable ceasefire. So, Qatar is playing an essential role, and the UK government, at all levels, appreciates those efforts and is supporting them."

He explained bilateral co-ordination further by saying, "We have worked very closely across a wide range of files, including on Afghanistan, across the Middle East and we are exploring doing more on joint aid and development work including in Gaza and Africa. We also have very close defence ties the only joint squadron the UK has anywhere globally since WW2, is with Qatar."

On future investment and economic co-operation, he said: "Our hope is to keep building on the success of our economic relationship with even stronger ties between the UK and Qatar built through Free Trade Agreement we are negotiating with the Gulf Co-operation Council."

"We have a very strong relationship already on the investment front, which was strengthened by the UK-Qatar Strategic Investment Partnership signed in May 2022."

The UK Deputy Prime Minister said that over the past year, Qatari investment in the UK have reached around £40bn, which includes investments into: Heathrow; Sainsbury's; London Stock Exchange; Harrods; Olympic Village, London; Rolls-Royce

Small Modular Reactors.

He said: "Qatar announced they will look for opportunities to invest around £10bn in the United Kingdom over the next five years. We're pleased with this partnership's progress and look forward to further enhancing mutual investment in areas like technology, life sciences and clean technology."

As for co-operation in innovation and future technologies, he said: "The UK has a clear vision on how we will build and grow our world leading expertise on critical future technologies, including AI and Quantum. This is a major priority for the UK, and we are mobilising a national effort behind this."

Commenting on Qatar's new National Development Strategy, he said: "It sets out a clear vision to develop innovation clusters across priority areas. Qatar is making advances on AI, with the Qatar Computing Research Institute as a forerunner to an AI Strategy." He welcomed Qatar's participation in the London Tech Week this summer.

Dowden added: "Our common approach means that the UK and Qatar can partner closely in developing cutting-edge technologies and building mutual investments. Pleased that Qatar has invested in new tech companies in the UK including on AI: this is key to our Strategic Investment Partnership."

With regards to Qatar's cultural scene, he said: "Qatar has seen remarkable development of its cultural sector, particularly the museums and the library." "Creative industries are also a real strength for the UK: they generate over £108bn and employs over 2.3mn people in every corner of the UK."

Dowden said that his country aims to grow its creative industries by an extra £50bn by 2030, expressing eagerness to foster a partnership with Qatar across sport, museums, film, TV, theatre, festivals, music, and fashion. **(QNA)**

Fuel prices for February set

QatarEnergy announced yesterday the prices of diesel and petrol in Qatar for February. The prices of diesel, Petrol 91 (Premium), and Petrol 95 (Super) remained unchanged from last month: A litre of diesel costs QR2.05, Premium Petrol 91 QR1.95 and Super Petrol 95 QR2.10. **(QNA)**



Al-Muraikhi meets Hungarian FM

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with the visiting Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto. The meeting discussed aspects of bilateral co-operation. **(QNA)**



Awqaf highlights achievements at Waqf Forum

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has highlighted its achievements at the first Endowment (Waqf) Forum. According to an official statement, the forum sheds light on various endowment and charity activities that are implemented by its various entities.

The five-day forum started at the Grand Mosque on Tuesday with the participation of Awqaf departments and more than 20 government entities. It comes within the framework of introducing the public to the endowment and its vital role in society through the slogan of the General Administration of Endowments at Awqaf.

The Iftar project by the Endowment Bank reached 750,000 fasting people during Ramadan last year while 500 families inside Qatar benefited from the Qurbani (sacrificial) project. Through the Endowment Bank for the Service of the Qur'an and Sunnah, the number of male and female students at Holy Qur'an teaching centres reached 30,010 in 132 centres and 26 schools (for female students). The bank implemented several projects for Qur'an and Hadith teaching while various award ceremonies and competitions were held with the participation of students. The Endowment Bank for the Service of Mosques built 30 mosques



and imams' houses. A total of 175 mosques are being constructed and maintenance, expansion and furnishing works of several mosques were implemented and 1,264 imams and muezzins were enrolled in 55 training courses last year. The Islam Web website under the Endowment Bank for Scientific and Cultural Development recorded about 165mn visits while the network's websites in other languages recorded more than 71mn visits.

A total of 1,421 students benefited from full educational scholarships in Qatar, in addition to educational assistance for 308,017 male and female students. More than 890,000 beneficiaries benefited from the cultural programmes by the Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre (Fanar) through

3,238 programmes. A total of 52 Qatari families benefited from the initiatives of the Endowment Bank for Family and Child Welfare. The bank's campaign distributed QR10mn as part of the urgent relief campaign for earthquake victims in Syria and Turkiye and 95 needy families were helped by the bank in co-operation with the Ministry of Social Development and Family. The activities of the Endowment Bank for Health Care reached 114 heart patients and 20,271 dialyses were performed at Hamad Hospital with financial support from the bank. Various projects for diabetes, people with special needs, autism, and others were implemented. HE the Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanem inaugurated the forum.

Awqaf hosts pavilion at Qatar University Book Fair

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs is taking part in activities of the second edition of the Qatar University (QU) Book Fair, which concludes today. Awqaf's pavilion, according to an official press statement, displays publications of the departments of Islamic Affairs, Research, Studies and Endowments. The five-day book fair has the participation of 38 entities and publishing houses from Qatar and abroad.

Awqaf's pavilion displays the most prominent scientific, jurisprudential and endowment publications that these departments print and distribute to individuals and scientific and cultural institutions. The Department of



Islamic Affairs displays its most important publications in addition to books on the Islamic heritage in jurisprudence, doctrine, interpretation, Hadith and the sciences of the Qur'an.

Also, the Qur'an in its various sizes is displayed. The Department of Research and Islamic Studies displays the Book of the Nation series. The pavilion also introduces the publications of the Centre for Endowment Studies, which is one of the pioneering initiatives in developing endowment work.

Amir congratulates new Malaysian king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar on the occasion of his swearing-in as the King of Malaysia, wishing him success and the relations between the two countries further development and growth. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar. **(QNA)**

Sheikha Alya meets UN official

Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani has met with UN Under-Secretary-General and Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Co-ordinator for Gaza Sigrid Kaag in New York. The meeting discussed ways to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people amidst the catastrophic humanitarian conditions in Gaza Strip, and co-operation with the UN to facilitate the delivery of sufficient humanitarian aid to the affected citizens. **(QNA)**



Cabinet okays proposal to host meetings of GCC ministerial committees

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting at the Amiri Diwan yesterday.

After the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs issued the following statement: The Cabinet considered the topics on its agenda as follows:

First, approval of a draft Cabinet decision amending some provisions of Decision No 35 of 2004 establishing the Heavy Transport Committee.

Secondly, approval of the proposal by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to host the ministerial committee meetings for trade and industrial co-operation and standardisation affairs of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, along with accompanying consultative meetings for 2024. Thirdly, taking necessary measures to ratify:

1. The amended protocol to the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation and its annex (Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies).

2. The amended agreement on the regulation of transit transport between Arab countries.

Fourthly, approval of a draft memorandum of understanding

between the Qatar General Organisation for Standards and Metrology and the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine for co-operation in the fields of standardisation, metrology, and conformity assessment.

Fifthly, the Cabinet reviewed the following items and took appropriate decisions:

1. Report on the outcomes of Qatar's delegation led by HE the Minister of Social Development and Family at the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Report on the outcomes of the Complaints Committee at the Qatar Financial Markets Authority. **(QNA)**

Qatar, Cyprus hold political consultations



A political consultations round between the foreign ministries of Qatar and Cyprus was held yesterday in Nicosia. HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi headed the Qatari side, while Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Kyriakos Kourou headed the Cypriot side. During the political consultations, bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them were discussed. Qatar's ambassador to Cyprus Ali Yousef Abdulrahman al-Mulla, the Director of the European Affairs Department Saoud bin Abdulla Zaid al-Mahmoud, and the accompanying delegation attended the consultations round. **(QNA)**



Qatar Red Crescent – Medical Affairs Division

Tenders Announcement: -

Sr. #	Tender No.	Description	Documents Fees (Non-Refundable)	Temporary Tender Bond	Closing Date
1	QRC/EMS/01-2024	Purchase and supply of 3 ambulances (Type II) according to the conditions and specifications	1000 Q.R	100,000 Q.R	22/02/2024

The documents can be collected from Medical Affairs Division, Ain Khalid Area, Sunday to Thursday from 07:00 am to 02:00 pm till the closing date.

Required Documents:

- Authorization letter to receive tender documents + ID copy of the person will be receiving the documents.
- Company's Commercial registration copy.
- Bank deposit voucher with the value of documents (1000 Qrs) not refunded & account details:
- Account Name: Qatar Red Crescent.
- Bank: Al Rayan.
- Account Number: 003-100689-200
- IBAN: QA09MAFR000000000003100689200

For more information: please call: (50044554), or
Email whc.tenders@qrccs.org.qa

Qatar hosts meeting of GSO technical council

Qatar hosted the 57th meeting of the Technical Council of the GCC Standardisation Organisation (GSO) held in Doha under the chairmanship of Chairperson of the Qatar General Authority for Standardisation and Metrology engineer Mohamed bin Saud Mohamed al-Musallam.

The meeting, which was held from Jan 30-31, was attended by chairpersons and representatives of the national standardisation bodies of the GCC states. During the meeting, several important topics were discussed, including the review of several memorandums of the GSO regarding standards and specifications, including a memorandum on Gulf standard specifications and technical regulations, their projects, as well as a memorandum on the outputs of the Gulf technical committees for standards and working groups. Additionally, discussions covered a memorandum on metrology activities and strategic activities for standards and specifications.

Regarding conformity assessment, the meeting discussed a memorandum on the outputs of the GCC conformity verification committee, expanding the application of the Gulf technical regulation for low-voltage electrical devices and equipment, and the outputs of the technical workshop for developing procedures for the approval of Gulf vehicle conformity certificates. Discussions also included memorandums on the outputs of the Gulf laboratory committee and the adoption of an updated guide for the Gulf conformity assessment committee's work. **(QNA)**



مشروع كتارا
Katara Project

كتارا
katara

An Investment Opportunity Luxury Fine-Dining Restaurant At Katara North Hills

(KP/B237/24)

(343/2024)

The Cultural Village Foundation - Katara (CVF), invites suitably experienced Food & Beverages specialized Companies and Investors to participate and submit their proposals in a Competition to develop the Concept Design of a luxury fine-dining restaurant at the North Hills of the Cultural Village (Katara) in order to capitalize the benefits from the project's unique location on top of Katara hills with panoramic views all around overlooking the beautiful surroundings and magnificent Beaches.

Proposals shall be evaluated based on the key factors outlined in the Competition Document and in alignment with the global vision of the project.

The Competition Document is available for download via the following link:
<https://monaqasat.mof.gov.qa>

Submission of Proposals shall be made by uploading the Proposal in a compressed and undatable PDF format with a prime quality onto the portal according to the procedure stipulated in the Competition Documents.

The closing Date for submission of Proposals shall be no later than 12:00 Noon on: Sunday 10th March 2024

فرصة استثمارية

مطعم سياحي فاخر على التلال الشمالية بكتار

(KP/B237/24)

(2024/434)

تدعو المؤسسة العامة للثقافة - كتارا شركات الأطعمة والمشروبات والمستثمرين المتخصصين أصحاب الخبرات المناسبة لتقديم عروضهم في مسابقة لتطوير التصميم المبدئي لتطوير مشروع مطعم فاخر على التلال الشمالية بالحي الثقافي (كتارا) بما يكفل تعظيم الاستفادة من هذا الموقع الفريد بإطلالته الساحرة على البيئة المحيطة به من تلال كتارا الخلابة وشواطئها الرائعة.

وسوف يتم تقييم مقترحات المستثمرين المتقدمين وفقاً للعوامل الرئيسية الموضحة بكراسة شروط المسابقة بما يتوافق مع الرؤية العامة للمشروع.

مستندات المسابقة متاحة على الرابط التالي:
<https://monaqasat.mof.gov.qa>

يتم تقديم العروض بتحميلها على الموقع في صيغة ملفات PDF غير قابلة للتعديل بجودة عالية وذلك طبقاً للإجراءات الواردة بمستندات المسابقة.

تاريخ الإقفال المحدد لاستلام العروض هو يوم الأحد 10 مارس 2024م قبل الساعة الثانية عشرة ظهراً



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser and other dignitaries at the unveiling of Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women yesterday. **PICTURE:** AR Al-Baker

Sheikha Moza opens Al-Mujadilah Center

From Page 1

Her Highness Sheikha Moza recounted the inspiration for the centre and its name, referring to the story of Khawla bint Tha'labah, may Allah be pleased with her, who engaged in a dialogue with Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). Her Highness said: "In philosophy, it is said that the evolution of civilisation originated in dialogue. Through these verses, we have seen how Khawla bint Tha'labah, may Allah be pleased with her, argued well in accordance with her values. Through her advocacy, she solved her problem."

Her Highness continued: "We are not here today simply to celebrate the architectural aesthetics of this building, rather, we are here to shed light on the concept of justice in worship, through the establishment of Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque. This space allows women to develop themselves in religious and worldly affairs, and with a comprehensive understanding of worship."

"Designed to attract our young Muslim women, so that women's prayer rooms do not stay marginalised and isolated in a remote corner, this space, will host programmes that support and elevate women's education, and meet their contemporary intellectual needs to raise women's awareness of religious and worldly matters – personally, socially, and from



Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and founder of Al-Mujadilah Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser and Qatar Foundation vice-chairperson and CEO HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani at the unveiling of Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women yesterday. **PICTURE:** AR Al-Baker

the perspective of the family?"

Inspired by the traditional role of the mosque as the axis of society, 'Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women is equipped with classrooms, a library, gathering spaces, a cafe, and gardens. A community space for women, it will host activities and provide programming in Arabic and English ranging from longer courses, workshops, sessions on Islamic history, Islamic law, mental health and well-being and relationships to book clubs, training programmes and undertaking research.

Guest speaker Dr Omar

Abdelkafy, Islamic scholar and preacher, said: "Everyone among us has been formed by the care of a woman and today with the launch of Al-Mujadilah we reinvigorate a society after centuries of marginalising women."

The opening also featured a panel discussion on the importance of creating spaces for women in reinforcing Muslim identity.

The session was hosted and moderated by Dr Buthaina Abdelghani, chairman of the Board of Directors of Hadara and included HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali

al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater, Dr Abdelkafy, activist and Islamic studies researcher May al-Sayed, and Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women's programmes and impact specialist Kholood Nooh.

In addition to community programmes and activities, Al-Mujadilah will open avenues to Islamic learning, research and the study of historical and contemporary Islam. Al-Mujadilah will be a hub for research networks, capacity-building, and intellectual exchange between scholars, practitioners, and Muslim women of all backgrounds. Research focuses on, and supports, research projects in three main areas: Islamic Texts, Law and Ethics; Muslim Women's Lives and Muslim Women's Health and Well-Being.

Dr Sohaira Siddiqui, executive director of Al-Mujadilah and associate professor of Islamic Studies and Theology, commented: "We offer a destination for Muslim women from all backgrounds and walks of life to access a wide range of programmes and activities designed to help navigate the many complex aspects of modern life. The idea is to bring a comprehensive number of resources under one roof with the goal of fostering a Muslim society where all women are engaged, their participation and contributions acknowledged and recognised, and their concerns and perspectives shape contemporary Muslim thought and open public discourse."

Al-Mujadilah opens its doors to the public at a community event on February 4 and its scheduled programmes will begin on February 6. Women can also visit the centre without registering for a programme between 10am and 8pm to enjoy the public facilities. More information about Al-Mujadilah can be found at www.al-mujadilah.qa

Al-Shaheen oil field output

From Page 1

(iii) the EPC package for a riser platform valued at about \$1.3bn and awarded to Larsen & Toubro Limited; and (iv) the EPC package for subsea pipelines and cables valued at about \$900mn and awarded to China Offshore Oil Engineering Co (COOEC). HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, also the President and CEO of QatarEnergy, welcomed the award of the contract packages as an important milestone in the development of Qatar's largest oil field. Al-Kaabi said, "By awarding these contracts, we are taking an important step towards realising the full potential of Al-Shaheen field, which produces around half of Qatar's crude oil today." "I would like to thank North Oil Company and our longtime strategic partner TotalEnergies for their great efforts towards unlocking the true potential of Qatar's hydrocarbon resources and maximising value from Al-Shaheen field through the implementation of world-class development and operational excellence programmes," Minister al-Kaabi added. Al-Shaheen field is located 80km offshore Qatar and is among the world's largest in terms of "oil in place".

Certainly has Allah heard the speech of the one who argues with you, [O Muhammad], concerning her husband and directs her complaint to Allah. And Allah hears your dialogue; indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing. (Surah Al-Mujadilah: Verse 1)

Sheikha Moza's speech

Following is Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser's speech at the opening of the Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women:

May the peace, blessings, and mercy of Allah be upon you.

We have just listened to verses from the Holy Qur'an that explain the concept of dialogue. In philosophy, it is said that the evolution of civilisation originated in dialogue. Through these verses, we have seen how Khawla bint Tha'labah, may Allah be pleased with her, argued well, in accordance with her values. Through her advocacy, she solved her problem. She went to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) to contest the injustice of the pre-Islamic customs that had separated her from her husband. She asked for her family to be reunited, and her dilemma to be resolved, pleading for her rights as a woman, wife and mother, hoping for Allah's justice. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) had no issue with her argument. And she received an answer from Allah, in those noble verses to which you have listened.

Khawla bint Tha'labah had demonstrated, through her initiative, courage, personal strength and awareness, that religion eases life and does not complicate it. She did not stand idly by, but rather sought a solution to the problem from within her religious value system. Intending to uphold the boundaries set by Allah for herself and her family with reason and insight, she went to the bearer of the heavenly message Himself to ask Him about her problem and to seek a solution, and Allah responded to her appeal. So, what does this mean for us?

What have we prepared and provided for women today that allows them to achieve this distinguished level of awareness? What Khawla bint Tha'labah did out of concern for the future of her family raises persistent questions about the roles of women, roles on which the present and future of the family rests.

As Arabs and Muslims, our cultural values are founded on the sanctity of the family structure, its social cohesion and unity, and its protection from harmful outside influences. Perhaps many of our contemporary issues result from us being mere consumers and reproducers of Western thought, and our crisis is fundamentally an intellectual one. Those who do not think independently cannot be subjective or defend their identity. And this calls for an intellectual and cultural renaissance that fortifies us and allows us to participate in cross-cultural exchange rather than passively consuming the ideas of others.

I am imagining our glorious Baghdad and Andalusian eras, when we produced knowledge and thought, exporting them to those whose knowledge and thought we import today. So, and with reference to the well-known saying that the family is the nucleus of society, and that women are at the heart of this nucleus, to resolve questions of identity, we must return to the family as the foundational unit. On this foundation, we can rebuild. We must protect our Arabic language from outside influence, preserving our Arab-Islamic identity, and strengthening our values and culture. And women – mothers in particular – have a fundamental, influential role in achieving these noble goals.

It saddens me when I hear foreign jargon from our children, and sometimes even in conversation between children and their parents, it is as if we are telling those kids: "Embrace alienation! Through it you will find security and prosperity! What do you want with a language whose speakers are falling behind other civilisations and who are worn out by wars?" We seem to forget that Arabs are the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), and the Ummah of many others like Jabir bin

Hayyan, Ibn Al Nafis, Al Kindi, Ibn Al Haytham, Ibn Rushd, Abu Abdullah Al-Idrisi, Qatiri ibn Al Fuja'a, Qa'qa' ibn Amro Al Tamimi. And Arab women, like Al Khansa', Zarqa' Al Yamama, Zanoobia, Khawla bint Tha'labah, Fatima al-Fihriya, Djamila Bouhired, Sameera Moussa and Zaha Hadid.

And the Arabs of the future are the children of Palestine: Osama, Omar, and Dana are among the ones who taught us that language is not only part of our identity, but it is our homeland. Our homeland begins in a mother's lap and a lullaby that is devoid of any "hi" and "hello!"

Arabic, ladies, and gentlemen is us. It is our past, present, and future. We cannot form our identity outside of it, and to let Arabic go would be to lose ourselves. Then we are left with nothing.

Distinguished guests,

We are not here today simply to celebrate the architectural aesthetics of this building, and then allow it to become a tourist attraction. Rather, we are here to shed light on the concept of justice in worship, through the establishment of the Al-Mujadilah Center and mosque where women can develop themselves legitimately in religious and worldly affairs, and with a comprehensive understanding of worship. This is a space designed to attract our young Muslim women, so that women's prayer rooms do not stay marginalised and isolated in a remote corner, in a state unbefitting the spirituality of the mosque and the value of our faith. Therefore, in this space, we have committed to launching programmes that support and elevate women's education and awareness, and meet their contemporary intellectual needs. And the religious programmes we have developed aim to raise women's awareness of religious and worldly matters – personally, socially, and from the perspective of the family.

I have often been asked about my point of view regarding contemporary women's issues. It is not easy to articulate an objective and balanced response on such issues, where religion, culture, rationality, emotion, and the subjective and objective all overlap. As I contemplate these issues, I wonder: Is it possible to advance women's issues from outside our religion and heritage? How ready is our society to reexamine women's interests through a profound process of ijtihad, or religious assiduousness?


In considering such questions, I am conflicted as I seek an approach that reconciles the various aspects that must be considered. I was guided to a conception of the role of women based on the model of Khawla bint Tha'labah, may Allah be pleased with her, who embodied the values of truth, chivalry, and care, and who was not prevented by society from making her argument before the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in a good and proper manner.

She is a source of inspiration for every woman who seeks clarity and to live her life with insight, and to become the truest expression of a Muslim woman, a model for those who wish to advance themselves and their society from within their religion, culture and heritage.

She is the inspiration behind the name we adopted for the centre (Al-Mujadilah; "she who engages in dialogue"). And so, we hope that the Al-Mujadilah Center and mosque will achieve its purpose and objectives; that our girls and women will find in it a space for worship, learning, and development.

That they may find guidance and encouragement to devise solutions from within Islam – so that their development can start from within their religion.

My success is only with God, and to Him I turn. Peace and the mercy of Allah be upon you.



**قطر للطاقة
QatarEnergy**


The General, Limited Tenders Committees and Supply Chain Department announces the following Tenders:

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

Effective from 1st July 2023, Bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Laws of State of Qatar) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal (<https://icv.qa/en-US>) by Tender Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Companies that have been established for less than 2 years are exempt from this requirement.

Sl. No	Tender Number	Tender Sale Period Start DateEnd Date	Tender Closing Date	Tender Bond	Bond Curr.	Tender Fee	Fee Curr.
1	GT24100200	28.01.202406.02.2024	25.02.2024	150,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: PROVISION OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO DUKHAN ENGLISH SCHOOL							
Mid-Tender Meeting Location : To be advised if required							
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : To be advised if required							
2	GT24100400	01.02.202407.02.2024	10.03.2024	550,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: CALL-OFF CONTRACT FOR SAP CMMS SERVICES FOR VARIOUS QATARENERGY LOCATIONS							
Mid-Tender Meeting Location : To be advised if required							
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : To be advised if required							
3	GT24100600	31.01.202406.02.2024	03.03.2024	1,700,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: REPLACEMENT OF PAGA SYSTEMS IN ONSHORE AND OFFSHORE LOCATION							
Mid-Tender Meeting Location : To be advised if required							
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : To be advised if required							
4	GT24101000	01.02.202407.02.2024	10.03.2024	500,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: INSTALLATION OF FLARE GAS FLOW METERS IN FAHM, FHNF, RG PLANTS IN DUKHAN FIELDS							
Mid-Tender Meeting Location : To be advised if required							
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : To be advised if required							
5	GT23110900	01.02.202407.02.2024	10.03.2024	3,500,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: PROVISION OF COILED TUBING EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES FOR OFFSHORE AND ONSHORE WELLS FOR A PERIOD OF 5 YEARS ON CALL OFF BASIS							
Mid-Tender Meeting Location : To be advised if required							
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : 12.02.2024 at 10:00:00							

- * Tender documents can be purchased and downloaded from QatarEnergy Website-> Supply Management -> Tenders page during the Tender Sale Period mentioned above against each Tender. Request for issuance of Tender after the specified Tender Sale Period will not be entertained.
- * Always refer to QatarEnergy Website (www.qatarenergy.qa) -> Supply Management -> Tenders page for up to date information on QatarEnergy Tenders. Subscribe to Tender Alert to receive notification in your email on new Tenders
- * Changes to Tender Sale Period and Bid Closing Date will be updated in QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal only
- * Brief Scopes of Work for the above tenders are posted on the QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal.
- * Suppliers and Contractors who are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QatarEnergy are instructed to maintain their Company Registration and Communication details upto date and valid via QatarEnergy Mushtaryat Portal on urgent basis.
- * No queries will be entertained, or bids received, from entities who have not purchased tender documents in compliance with the above provisions.
- * QatarEnergy invites all prospective Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in QatarEnergy Tenders to register online and obtain a QatarEnergy SAP Vendor Code, a mandatory requirement for the issue of Tender Documents by QatarEnergy.
- * Prospective Qatar based Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in future QatarEnergy Tenders shall obtain an ICV score. Relevant information pertaining to ICV, ICV Scorecard, ICV Certification, and ICV Guidelines are available on the ICV Digital Portal - <https://icv.qa/en-US>




**The Transport Company
MOWASALAT (KARWA)**

Mowasalat (Karwa) announces the following tender:


Tender Ref. No.	Tender Title	Tender Fee	Electronic Tender Fee Payment Dates	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
TC-002-EGS-2024	Supply of Office Pantry Items on call-off basis for a period of 3 years	QAR 1,000	1 February 2024 to 7 February 2024	QAR 30,000	3 March 2024

CONDITIONS:

- Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:
- Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: tenders@mowasalat.com
- Tender documents will be released via email on the next working day after the tender fee payment date to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested (i.e., 8 February 2024)
- Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond: Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents.
- Tender validity: Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.
- Tender documents submission: Bids must be submitted in 1 sealed (IN RED WAX) envelopes addressed to Secretary - Tender Committee clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
 - Envelope #1 must include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
 - Envelope #2 must include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
 - Envelope #3 must include the Tender Bond (1 Original)
- Bid Closing Date: Bid submission deadline is 12.00 noon Doha Local Time as on the Bid closing date shown above. The 3 envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary - Tender Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.




Supplier Registration




Mowasalat Location

Tel.: 4458 8724


Fax: 4458 8850




كاروا




دوحة ليموزين
dohalimousine



خدمات كاروا
karwa services

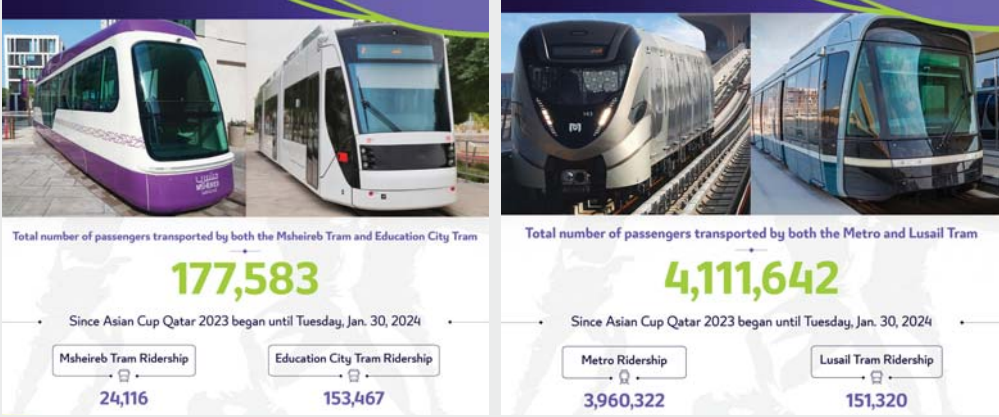


أكاديمية كاروا
Karwa Academy



كاروا للتكنولوجيا
Karwa Technologies

Doha Metro, Lusail Tram transport over 4mn passengers during Asian Cup



The Doha Metro and Lusail Tram transported as many as 4,111,642 passengers during the ongoing AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 until Tuesday, it was posted on X. The Ministry of Transport said on its X account that a total of 177,583 passengers were transported by both the Education City and Msheireb Trams until Tuesday.

Awareness campaign focuses on proper ambulance use in Qatar

20% ambulance calls are for non-emergency cases, says HMC official



Ali Darwish
By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar's public healthcare sector has launched a national campaign 'Where For Your Care' to educate the public on the use of emergency and urgent healthcare services as over 20% of the calls to the Ambulance Department are for non-emergency services.

"We noticed that 20% of the calls received daily through the National Command Centre asking for Ambulance Service, are for non-emergency cases. Such cases do not require any emergency response and for the ambulances speeding through the roads, disturbing the traffic and the people on the road and moving with the Priority One response," said Ali Darwish, assistant executive director, Emergency and Scheduled Ambulance Service, Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC).

Darwish, speaking at the launch of the campaign yesterday, explained that the campaign aims to highlight the wide range of emergency and urgent care services



A fleet of ambulances.

across HMC, Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Sidra Medicine and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS).

"We have launched the campaign to redirect all the calls which are non-emergency and non-life threatening such as minor trauma or other illnesses to other facilities in the primary health care centres across the country. Knowing all the steps during the call is a good method for all call takers and the user to understand and build up a good picture about the call. Once we realise the call and understand the priority, we will be able to redirect them accordingly to the nearest facility," Darwish said.

The Ambulance Service, which provides life-saving care to patients with critical conditions, is to be used for situations such as heart attack, stroke, seizure, choking, chest pain, unconsciousness, difficulty breathing and severe allergic reaction.

"Through the campaign, we aim to help patients make the best choice for their medical care needs. So the public will understand the message and will play a big role in this campaign. This will ensure that ambulance service is used for emergency services," added the official.

A website (www.whereforyourcare.qa) has also been launched to

have all the information regarding emergency and urgent care in Qatar in one dedicated place.

The campaign brings together the key public health sector providers such as Ministry of Public Health, HMC, PHCC, Sidra Medicine, and QRCS to work jointly to raise awareness of their services. Each provider offers various emergency and urgent care services for Qatar's population.

The campaign focuses on five key points that are critical to ensuring that an ambulance reaches the patient as quickly as possible to deliver live-saving treatment. They are: Dial 999 immediately, Know your location; Answer all questions; Follow all instructions and Give way to ambulances.

The campaign encourages the public to save ambulances for emergencies. And it is aimed at reducing the volume of non-emergency 999 calls to the Ambulance Service. 'Where For Your Care?' aims to educating the public on the types of symptoms and conditions to call an ambulance as well as alternative treatment options for cases that are not life-threatening. The campaign focuses on improving the efficiency of the health sector by advocating correct use of available services and to help patients receive the best possible medical care.

Web Summit Qatar sells out startup, partner programmes

Web Summit announced yesterday that the startups, partners, and women in tech programmes for its first-ever event in the Middle East, Web Summit Qatar, have all sold out with more than 1,000 startups, and 100 partners coming from 80 plus countries.

The summit, at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) from February 26-29, is going to be double the size expected with more than 12,000 attendees already registered, up from the original target of 7,500.

From thousands of applicants, Web Summit Qatar has selected 1,000 startups from 80 countries and counting, including Qatar, the US, Egypt, Brazil, Italy, Nigeria, the UK, and India. Attending startups represent almost 30 industries. It will be the most global representation of startups ever for a first-year Web Summit event.

The 100 partners will be exhibiting on the sold-out event floor in 2024, including Microsoft, Qatar Investment Authority, Deloitte, and Palo Alto Networks. Trade delegations from countries, including Canada, Türkiye, Bahrain, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Kenya will be attending Web Summit Qatar to explore business opportunities in Doha and Qatar in general.

The women in tech programme, which runs across all Web Summit events in its commitment to balance gender in the technology sector, has also sold out. The women in tech lounge will welcome organisations like Women of Qatar and Woman Techmakers along with thousands of women in tech attendees from all over the world, reflecting the true global nature of the women in tech programme.

Stars like Emmy Award-winning South African comedian Trevor Noah will join Sara Sabry, astronaut, founder, and CEO of the Deep Space Initiative; Amjad Masad, co-founder and CEO of Replit; Builder.ai founder and chief wizard Sachin Dev Duggal; YouTuber Felipe Neto; soccer legend and Brazilian World Cup winner Gilberto Silva; and Tabby co-founder and CEO Hosam Arab at Web Summit Qatar.

Web Summit CEO Katherine Maher said: "The incredible global representation at our first Middle East event is a powerful reminder that technology is international and opportunity is everywhere. Selling out the



startups, partners, and Women in Tech programmes weeks before the event is set to take place, speaks to the quality and calibre of the Web Summit events, alongside the support of the GCO, as we expand into a region with an incredible generational opportunity and dynamism. I'm particularly excited to celebrate women's empowerment at the Women in Tech lounge, and look forward to meeting the Women in Tech community from around the world."

Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour al-Thani, chairman of the Web Summit Qatar Organising Committee, said: "We believe emerging technologies will transform the world of work and business, as well as across education, government, public services and the private sector.

"We are pleased to host the first Web Summit event in the Middle East, which will build on the unique blend of opportunity, innovation, and connectivity our country has to offer."

Web Summit Qatar joins the company's global roster alongside its flagship event, Web Summit, which draws 71,000 attendees to Lisbon each November; North America's fastest-growing tech event, Collision, in Toronto; and Web Summit Rio, which will take place for the second time in 2024.

Qatar-chaired GCC terror list meeting ends in Riyadh



The two-day 14th meeting of the Gulf committee for the GCC unified terrorist list, which was held in Riyadh concluded yesterday under the chairmanship of Qatar. Head of Qatar's delegation, Secretary of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee Colonel Khalid Ali al-Kaabi chaired the meeting. The meeting discussed several topics on the committee's work. (QNA)

Qatari philanthropists provide sewing machines in Pakistan

Qatar Charity (QC), with the support of philanthropists in Qatar, provided 33 sewing and embroidery machines, along with the essential supplies, for two women tailoring centres in Jhang and Muzaffargarh, both districts in Pakistan's province of Punjab.

This is part of QC's efforts to enhance women's vocational skills and economically empower them.

While 19 machines were handed over to the tailoring centre in Jhang, the Muzaffargarh centre received 14. The project, implemented in collaboration with local government social care associations, aims to create employment opportunities and provide sustainable livelihoods for young women and women-headed families, especially widows and caretakers of orphans.

The two tailoring centres work on producing a variety of handmade clothing items, bedding, curtains, and children's clothes. This assists the beneficiaries in increasing their income and covering their children education expenses.

Abdullah Khuram Niazi, deputy commissioner of the Jhang district, expressed his happiness and gratitude to the benefactors of Qatar and QC. Rehana Kousar, director of the tailoring centre in Jhang, said: "We had old and limited equipment that was not functioning properly. The women enrolled regularly. We recently organised exhibitions and received numerous orders (for sewing and embroidering clothes) from customers and shopping malls."



The beneficiaries also expressed their satisfaction with the project. Shaha Sherin from Jhang, said: "As I am a widow and live with six children in a small mud house, I used to stitch the clothes of my neighbours to earn a meagre income. The situation worsened after my husband's death, and my income became insufficient for the family's needs and the education of children. However, thanks to the interventions of Qatar Charity, I received training and employment, which helped me earn a sufficient income to meet my needs and educate my children. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who assisted us."

Closure on part of Wadi Al Askar Street



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary two-day closure on part of Wadi Al Askar Street in both directions, between Wadi El Ebb and Wadi Al Samer Streets from tomorrow. The closure in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic is to complete the works of the final asphalt layer. Those using Wadi Al Askar Street have to take Wadi El Ebb Street and Wadi Al Samer Street to reach Wadi Zekreet Street, and then their destinations using internal streets. Ashghal will install road signs advising motorists of the temporary closure and has requested all to follow and abide by the speed limit to ensure safety.

QU Health's Interprofessional Education activity focuses on diabetes management

In a significant step towards enhancing health professional education in Qatar, the Interprofessional Education (IPE) office at Qatar University Health (QU Health) organised an IPE activity on diabetes.

The 'IPE Case-Based Discussion on Diabetes' brought together a diverse group of 290 students from QU and the University of Calgary in Qatar, specialising in pharmacy, nursing, medicine, dental medicine, nutrition or biomedical sciences, a statement said yesterday.

The activity, designed around four key objectives, aimed to foster mutual understanding and respect among health care students from various disciplines. It provided a platform for students to engage professionally, encouraging teamwork, shared decision-making, and effective communication, all of which are essential skills for their future collaborative practices.

Centred on the globally significant issue of diabetes, a leading cause of mortality, the activity illuminated the importance of addressing this critical topic within the health care system. By engaging in problem-solving scenarios, students collaborated across professions to explore perspectives and contribute to solving a diabetes case and gaining insights into comprehensive diabetes management.

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Myriam El Jaam, a teaching assistant at the College of Pharmacy (CPH) in QU, and lead facilitator of the activity, said: "It

is good to build the spirit of collaboration with the students early on, considering that diabetes is a serious condition that requires collaboration between health care professionals."

Dr Stephanie Atweh, a teaching assistant of Clinical Pharmacy and Practice at the CPH, QU, and a facilitator for the activity, recalled that her group exhibited impressive knowledge on diabetes, demonstrating expertise in managing the hyperglycemic crisis case.

"All disciplines, including medicine, nursing, lab tech, and dentistry, humbly addressed and resolved preconceptions during this IPE event. As a facilitator, seeing students collaborate so effective-

ly to strengthen the health care system brings me immense joy."

Aya Hamdan, a student at the College of Health Sciences, QU, and a group facilitator in this activity, said: "Witnessing the exchange of knowledge and ideas among different health care disciplines was truly inspiring. This experience reaffirmed the importance of teamwork in providing holistic patient care."

Sara Khan, a student at the College of Medicine, QU, highlighted the enlightening nature of interprofessional education. "Fortunate enough to have the opportunity to learn from and about each other in the setting of Interprofessional Education, is always enlightening," she said.

Carrefour Qatar ‘Spin & Win’ contest offers weekend surprises

Majid Al Futtaim
Carrefour Qatar
‘Spin & Win’ is full of good surprises every weekend until March 9, 2024, a statement said yesterday. Customers have a chance to win 250 free trolleys through a ‘Spin & Win’ competition (terms and conditions apply). **Pictured:** A happy family winning one of the 250 trolleys last weekend.



QNL hosts forum on teaching Qatari history

Qatar National Library (QNL) yesterday hosted a two-day seminar to promote the teaching of Qatari history – the first event of its kind in the country.

Titled the “Inaugural Forum for Teaching and Learning Qatari History”, the seminar brought together academics, education experts, historians and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for discussions on the significance of national history as a key element of Qatari identity.

The conference provided a platform for the exchange of expertise on the various aspects of educating the public – and school students in particular on Qatari history and heritage and the role of the educational curricula in fostering a national identity.

Discussions also touched on efforts to bolster collaboration between QNL and Qatar’s various cultural institutions to advance history education from a scientific perspective.

HE the Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari said learning history is not only a pillar of Qatari identity but a compass that determines one’s direction and path from the past to the present and towards the future.

“A person without history is unlikely to shape the present or build the future tomorrow. I extend my sincere appreciation to all experts from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Qatar Foundation and the Shura Council for attending and participating in this necessary forum that contributes to achieving our National Vision and its mission by providing citizens and residents insights into the country’s history in a way that enables them to positively contribute society while building on the achievements of our fathers and grandfathers to ensure a bright future for coming generations.”

Khalid bin Ghanim al-Maadheed, a member of the Shura Council, said the forum’s importance lies in the fact that it serves as an initiative to strengthen the



Qatari national identity during a critical period that marks a historic turning point for the world.

“As the world goes through radical changes, the forum holds significant importance in terms of highlighting the role that our collective memory and history play in determining factor our Qatari identity,” al-Maadheed said.

“My participation in the forum sheds light on the concept of identity as well as its apparent and deep-rooted components and pillars, including the shared history of the people of Qatar, while emphasising the need to write history relying on primary sources, such as our collective memory, or manuscripts and documents. These sources have a significant impact on the formation of our identity and social self-awareness.”

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr Ibrahim al-Nuaimi emphasised the importance of this forum lies in the hope of continuously organising similar forums, in addition to holding them in various state institutions, especially schools and museums to instil values and principles in our students, affirming that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education spares no effort in pro-

viding such cultural programs and incorporating them into its curricula.

Abeer al-Kuwari, Director of Research and Learning at QNL, said the forum builds on the library’s mission and long-standing efforts to preserve Qatar’s heritage and to further develop the educational ecosystem.

“Through this latest initiative we sought to deliver on our mission to create and sustain an exceptional environment for learning and discovery that positively influences society and strengthens our national identity,” she said.

The first day of the forum featured three workshops on the best educational strategy to adopt when it comes to teaching Qatari history and heritage in schools.

On the second day, speakers from QNL, the Ministry of Education, the Shura Council and Qatar Foundation came together with a number of experts to discuss the educational curricula and collaborative efforts to advance history education.

The forum concluded with an awards ceremony, recognising the winners of a student poster competition on documenting Qatari history and heritage. (QNA)

The course offerings are layered based on doctrine, function and application, with each step aimed at preparing graduates to deal with the rigours of a dynamic legal environment, including a broad engagement with society.

He also examined how the globalisation of the legal sector presents further complexities for professionals to navigate, as well as the College of Law’s ability to better prepare graduates to operate within this landscape.

Susan L Karamanian, dean, College of Law, said: “We were honoured to welcome Dr Francis back to HBKU. His knowledge and expertise hold great relevance to our work at the College of Law and indeed the entire legal profession.”

ing dean of the College of Law and currently a professor at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, provided critical background into the establishment of HBKU’s College of Law, particularly as to the philosophy reflected in the design of the curriculum of the Juris Doctor degree.



The Clinton W Francis Lecture in Legal Professionalism highlighted how technological developments and globalisation are changing the legal profession.

Hamad Bin Khalifa University’s (HBKU) College of Law recently hosted the third Clinton W Francis Lecture in Legal Professionalism, highlighting how technological developments and globalisation are changing the legal profession.

Dr Clinton W Francis, found-

beIN Sports reveals broadcast plan for Riyadh Season Cup

beIN Media Group, the global sports and entertainment broadcaster, and its flagship sports channel beIN Sports, announced securing the media rights in the Mena, Turkey, France, and Asia Pacific to the star-studded Riyadh Season Cup, the three-team exhibition tournament set to feature Lionel Messi’s Inter Miami, Cristiano Ronaldo’s Al Nassr, and Saudi Pro League leaders Al Hilal.

The matches will be broadcast live in Mena on beIN Sports’ free to air channel in Arabic, beIN Sports1 English in English, and in Ultra HD on beIN 4K. Messi and Ronaldo are expected to go head-to-head today. On February 8, Al Hilal will face Al Nassr, whom they lead by seven points at the top of Saudi’s domestic league, a statement said.

Today’s face-off between Miami and Al Nassr, being billed as ‘The Last Dance’, will pit the two greatest players of the modern era against each other for, possibly, the last time in their pro-



fessional careers. Messi, 36, and Ronaldo, who will turn 39 on February 5, between them share 13 Ballon d’Or awards. They last faced each other a year ago in the inaugural Riyadh Season Cup when Al Nassr slipped to a 5-4 defeat to Messi’s former club Paris Saint-Germain.

Portuguese Ronaldo, who is expected to recover from a slight

calf injury to lead Al Nassr out at the Kingdome Arena, scored 54 goals in 59 games in 2023 to finish the year as the world’s top goal scorer. Al Nassr have other star players in their squad, including the likes of Senegalese striker Sadio Mane, Spanish defender Aymeric Laporte, and Croatian midfielder Marcelo Brozovic, the statement added.

QMC holds panel discussion on reading and social media at QU Book Fair

The Qatari Media Centre of the Ministry of Culture held a panel discussion under the theme of leveraging the social media for encouraging the reading habit within the centre’s participation in the 2nd edition of the Qatar University (QU) Book Fair, alongside a host of researchers, academics, and media professionals.

Members of the QU’s teaching staff, writer Dr Khalifa al-Hazaa, Dr Asma Hussein Malkawi and media professional Amal Arab also participated in the discussion.

Moderated by media professional Buthaina Abdul Jalil, the panel highlighted the role played by social media platforms in encouraging the reading habit, and ways to take advantage of the potential offered by these platforms in consolidating the reading habit as a practice in the community.

In remarks, Dr Malkawi echoed the adverse ef-

fect of social media platforms that virtually kept the public away from reading, based on numerous studies and research conducted in this field, and pointed out that the digital space and the potential it offers could be active and positive in the community, such as encouraging individuals to read.

Dr al-Hazaa tackled the cultural and literal contents of digital platforms and their impact on the community, especially as there are myriad cultural and other platforms that have been omnipresent in the community.

Media professional Amal Arab talked about the potential offered by social media platforms and how they contribute to spreading knowledge, chiefly linguistic, and noted her experience in presenting the linguistic material more expeditiously on social media platforms, along with the extent of the public reaction to them. (QNA)

Kia Signs MoU to Offer Ride Hailing PBVs to Drivers on the Uber Platform



- MoU formalizes collaboration between Kia and Uber, as Kia plans to develop and offer PBVs for drivers

- Kia’s specialized PBVs will offer innovative mobility improvements while supporting Uber in achieving its 2040 zero-emission goal

- Previewed by the Kia Concept PV5 at CES 2024, commencing in 2025 a three-phase introduction aims to see PBVs transform the mobility landscape over the next decade

Kia Corporation and Uber have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at this week’s Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, committing the two companies to collaborate on Kia’s planned development and deployment of PBVs.

With the goal of enhancing electric vehicle offerings available on Uber’s mobility platform and supporting the global ride hailing leader in achieving its 2040 zero-emission goal, the partnership will seek to produce Kia PBVs optimized for drivers and fleets as part of Kia’s ‘Platform Beyond Vehicle’ strategy in this field of the mobility market.

“PBVs will play a key role in the customization of mobility, and by partnering with Uber, Kia aims to deliver industry-leading technology with advanced software and services to enhance the ride hailing experience,” said SeungKyu (Sean) Yoon, president & CEO, Kia North America, and Kia America.

“Drivers on the Uber platform will also have the ability to choose Kia vehicles with a comprehensive suite of offerings that will ease the ramp up of electrification and help achieve both Kia’s and Uber’s sustainability goals.”

The intentions of the collaboration are for Kia to identify optimal specifications for PBV models, with the possible further integration of technology and services to benefit drivers and ride hailing users alike. The partnership’s goals also extend to the creation of proofs of concept, prototypes, and the production of PBVs tailored to the needs of drivers that use the Uber platform.

“PBVs will play a key role in the transformation of mobility. This collaboration will enhance Kia’s PBV development, with optimized vehicles for drivers’ and riders’ needs,” said Sangdae Kim, Head of PBV Division, Kia. “This will focus on advanced software and services, with the integration of interactive In-Vehicle Infotainment and advanced safety technology.”

New driver and passenger experiences could be facilitated through the development of optimized operational solutions, building connected car experiences for all. Personalized riding environments, including climate and sound control, and interactive rear-seat entertainment systems, may also follow.

Kia and Uber will collaborate on ways to moderate total cost of vehicle ownership by analyzing the various

PBV options and potential Battery as a Service (BaaS) subscription offerings to reduce initial vehicle purchase costs.

Bringing benefits to Uber and drivers alike, the collaboration will also see the growth of the Kia Flex program in North America, with global expansion planned for the near future.

Currently in operation across several states in the U.S., Kia Flex allows drivers to choose Kia vehicles for use on the Uber platform. The expansion of Kia Flex will offer drivers on the Uber platform a comprehensive vehicle package, including EV options, insurance, and maintenance.

“Drivers on the Uber platform are already EV early adopters, going electric six to seven times faster than the general population in the US and Europe,” said Susan Anderson, Vice President, Global Head of Business Development. “That’s great for all of us because when rideshare drivers go electric, communities see three to four times the emissions benefits compared with an average driver making the switch.

“By teaming up with Kia and providing our insights, we aim to broaden the appeal and lower the cost of electric vehicles, making them a more natural choice for more drivers.”

The application of Kia Connect diagnostic and preventive services will drive operational efficiencies by using data-driven solutions to detect signs of potential malfunctions, minimizing maintenance outlay and downtime.

Revealed earlier this week at CES, Kia’s PBV project is a multi-phase, decade-long plan which will see PBVs revolutionize the mobility industry while helping to advance Hyundai Motor Group’s ambitions in robotics, Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), and autonomous driving.

The PBV business will initially be based around the introduction of an all-new, modular vehicle, called the Kia PV5, with more versions set to be launched, including: PV5 High Roof, PV5 Van, PV5 Chassis Cab, PV5 robotaxi and PV5 Pickup. While all variants will be based on the same modular versatility of the base model, each will offer a unique set of characteristics, with further Uber-specific optimizations tailored for the ride hailing market.



A displaced Palestinian boy carries a cooking pot as he walks with his sister at a tent camp, amid the ongoing conflict, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Gaza population ‘starving to death’

AFP
Geneva

The population of Gaza is starving to death due to constraints imposed on humanitarian aid, the World Health Organisation’s emergency director Michael Ryan said yesterday.

The WHO said the risk of famine in the Palestinian territory was already high and on the rise, with the space for humanitarian intervention being increasingly squeezed.

“This is a population that is starving to death, this is a population that is being pushed to the brink,” Ryan told a press conference.

“The civilians of Gaza are not parties to this conflict and they should be protected, as should be their health facilities.

“The Palestinian people in Gaza are right in the middle of a massive catastrophe,” Ryan said, adding that things could get worse.

Ryan said access to proper nutrition had become a major issue in the Gaza Strip, with the calorie count and the quality of nutrition consumed by Gazans having dropped sharply.

Populations are not supposed to survive indefinitely on food aid, he said.

“It’s supposed to be emergency food aid to tide people over.

“And if you mix a lack of nutrition with overcrowding and exposure to cold through lack of shelter... you can create conditions for massive epidemics,” particularly in children.

“And we’re seeing them,” Ryan said.

The space for humanitarian intervention was being constrained in “every aspect,” he added.

He pointed to the dramatic reduction in the number of operational health facilities and to how efforts to bring aid into the Gaza



Protesters gather outside the United Nations headquarters in response to the decision by the United States to defund the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in New York City, yesterday.



Displaced Palestinians sit outside their tent in Rafah, amid the ongoing conflict, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Strip were constantly disrupted and impeded.

The war was triggered by Hamas’ October first week storming of Israel.

Following the storming, Israel’s military launched an air, land and sea offensive that has killed at least 26,900 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, according to the territory’s health ministry.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the agency was facing continued “extreme challenges” in propping up Gaza’s health system.

“Over 100,000 Gazans are

either dead, injured, or missing and presumed dead,” he said.

“The risk of famine is high and increasing each day with persistent hostilities and restricted humanitarian access,” Tedros said the Nasser medical complex, the chief hospital in the southern Gaza Strip, was now operating with one ambulance, with patients being brought in on donkey carts.

The WHO attempted to deliver food to the hospital on Tuesday but that aid was stripped from the trucks “by crowds who are also desperate for food,” said Tedros.

Guterres underlines UNRWA is ‘backbone’ of Gaza aid response

Reuters
UN

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday described the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) as “the backbone of all humanitarian response in Gaza” and appealed to all countries to “guarantee the continuity of UNRWA’s lifesaving work.”

The US is the biggest donor to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and has temporarily paused its funding – along with several other countries – after Israel accused some agency staff of taking part in the October first week storming by Hamas fighters.

“I was personally horrified by these accusations,” Guterres told the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. “Yesterday, I met with donors to listen

to their concerns and to outline the steps we are taking to address them.” The accusations became public on Friday when UNRWA announced it had fired some staff after Israel provided the agency with information. Guterres said on Sunday that of 12 people implicated nine were fired, one is dead, and the identity of the remaining two was being clarified.

At a meeting of the UN Security Council on Gaza yesterday, UN aid chief Martin Griffiths stressed the importance of UNRWA.

“To put it very simply and bluntly: our humanitarian response for the occupied Palestinian territory is dependent, completely dependent, on UNRWA being adequately funded and operational,” Griffiths told the 15-member council.

“UNRWA’s lifesaving services... to over three quarters of Gaza’s residents should not be jeopardised by the alleged actions of a few individuals. It is a

matter of extraordinary proportion,” he said. US ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the council that Washington’s decision to temporarily pause funding was made independently from other donors.

“Let me be clear, it was not a punitive measure. But it is a wake up call. We need to see fundamental changes at UNRWA to prevent this from happening again,” she said.

The Palestinians have accused Israel of falsifying information to tarnish UNRWA.

UNRWA employs 13,000 people in Gaza, running schools, its primary healthcare clinics and other social services, and distributing humanitarian aid.

“The humanitarian system in Gaza is collapsing,” Guterres said. “I am extremely concerned by the inhumane conditions faced by Gaza’s 2.2mn people, as they struggle to survive without any of the basics.”

Gaza medical student’s dreams of becoming doctor tested by war

Reuters
Rafah, Gaza

Palestinian medical student Aseel Abu Haddaf was due to graduate medical school in Gaza this year but instead she is living in a tent as her home and her university lie in rubble from Israeli air strikes, wondering if she will ever become a doctor.

Israel’s war in Gaza was triggered by a Hamas storming in the first week of October into Israel.

For students like Abu Haddaf the future is even more uncertain than for most, not knowing if their hard years of study will now count for anything or if what remains of the university still has any record of their academic progress.

“Medicine has been my ambition ever since I was young. As a child I always used to see myself as a doctor because of the situation we live in Gaza,” Abu Haddaf said, adding that the devastation of the war had made her yet more determined to achieve that goal.

She had been in the final year of her six-year course at Al-Azhar University in the southern part of Gaza City, ready to graduate later this year and start work as an intern to become a fully fledged doctor.

She hoped eventually to become a surgeon.

Gaza City has been largely cut off from the rest of the enclave for weeks after Israeli forces encircled it during their first major offensive into the enclave, but massive destruction has been evident from video, photographs and satellite pictures.

Abu Haddaf has no idea what has become of her lecturers, other university staff or fellow students. “There is no connection. I know nothing about them, if they are alive or dead,” she said of classmates. “I hope we can go back to our studies even if it is in tents and to have access to the educational staff to teach us and help fulfil our dreams to become doctors,” she said.

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VOLUNTEER

The Abu Haddaf family had lived in Khan Younis, the biggest city in southern Gaza. Israeli strikes have pounded the entire strip since the start of the war but have greatly intensified in Khan Younis as ground forces invaded it this year.

Their home was destroyed and like about 85% of Gaza residents the family is now homeless. Like most others they are now in Rafah, hard against the Egyptian border and seen as relatively safer from Israel’s bombardment.

Abu Haddaf spends much of her day cleaning the family tent, washing clothes, cooking the little food they can find and getting

through the many hard chores required when living without a house or electricity.

But she also volunteers for medical duties as far as she can with local authorities to get practical experience in doctoring, but she regards it as a poor substitute for her university training.

Gaza needs all the medics it can get, with tens of thousands of people injured by Israel’s bombardment, the enclave facing famine according to UN projections and much of the population at growing risk from disease.

Whether medical students like Abu Haddaf will ever complete their training is yet another of the war’s unanswered questions. Meanwhile, like everybody else in Gaza, her biggest focus is simply survival.

“Here in the camp we live through tough days. All that consumes us is how to find food and drink,” she said.



Aseel Abu Haddaf (second right), a Palestinian medical student who fled her house in Khan Younis with her family due to Israeli strikes amid the ongoing conflict, looks on as she sits next to her father at a tent camp where they shelter, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

Iran warns US against threats after deadly attack on troops

Iran yesterday warned the US not to threaten it, after Washington said it decided on a response to an attack that killed three American troops in Jordan, AFP reported from Tehran. “America must stop using the language of threat and projection and focus on a political solution,” Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said, according to the official IRNA news agency. “Iran’s response to threats is decisive and immediate,” he added. The killing of American troops in a drone strike on Sunday marked the first US military losses since the Israel-Hamas war broke out in the first week of October. US President Joe Biden, who blamed “radical foreign-backed groups”, said he had decided on a response but insisted that he was not seeking a wider war in the Middle East. The White House warned that “multiple actions” could be taken in retaliation for the attack but gave no further details. Yesterday, General Hossein Salami, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, said threats by American officials “will not go unanswered,” IRNA reported. “We are not looking for war, but we are not afraid of war,” said Salami. Iran has denied any links to the attack on the US troops and said it was not seeking an “expansion” of conflict in the Middle East.

Gaza ambulances turn mobile clinics as fighting blocks way to hospitals

Reuters
Khan Younis

The ambulance left its usual home base at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis six days ago with as many bandages, syringes and other basics as its crew could find, and has been operating as a mobile clinic ever since as there is no way back.

The hospital, the largest still functioning in southern Gaza, is in an area of the city where intense fighting is taking place between Israeli forces and Hamas fighters, making it too dangerous for patients or even ambulances to pass.

“We now function as an ambulance field point in central Khan Younis,” said paramedic Nassim Hassan, who heads the emergency unit at Nasser Hospital. That means treating patients who arrive by their own means, or rushing to collect wounded people, including in locations very close to the frontlines, and taking them to tents with basic medical facilities.

“Since we left six days ago, we have been working. There’s a lot of injuries among the displaced who were in the industrial quarter and some schools. Many of the injured left loaded on carts, tuk-tuks, cars or even on foot.” Khan Younis saw a huge influx of displaced people during the first weeks of the war between Israel and Hamas, after the Israeli army told civilians to evacuate northern Gaza for their own safety.

Since then, the fighting has moved south and into the heart of the city, causing new waves of displacement towards Rafah, on Gaza’s southern



A medic helps a Palestinian woman at a medical point, formed to get better access to frontlines, amid the ongoing conflict, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

boundary with Egypt, and making conditions ever harsher and more dangerous for those left behind in Khan Younis.

With no immediate prospect of getting new supplies from any hospital storeroom, Hassan was concerned about running out of essentials.

“This is one of the items we are missing,” he said, holding up a tourniquet during a sort-out of the supplies stored inside the ambulance. “Maybe we have one or two left.”

In one of the medical tents where Hassan’s ambulance has been depositing patients, paramedic Ibrahim Abu al-Kass was doing his best to deal with a wide variety of injuries and illnesses with only basic equipment.

“This medical point was created after the siege of hospitals, including Nasser Hospital and Al-Amal Hospital, and the hard access to them under the current events,” said Abu al-Kass.

CONFLICT

Yemen’s Houthis fire missiles at US warship

Yemen’s Houthi rebels fired “several” missiles at a US warship in the Red Sea, they said yesterday, hours after the US military reported shooting down a missile, AFP reported from Sanaa. “The naval forces of the Yemeni Armed Forces, with the help of God Almighty, fired several... naval missiles at the American destroyer USS Gravely in the Red Sea,” the Houthi statement said. Earlier, US Central Command said the USS Gravely shot down a Houthi missile at about 11:30pm (2030 GMT) on Tuesday – the latest in a series of such incidents in the Red Sea. “Houthi fighters fired one anti-ship cruise missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the Red Sea,” a Centcom statement said. “The missile was shot down by USS Gravely. There were no injuries or damage reported.”

TRAGEDY

Building collapse kills seven in Senegal

Seven people were killed and several others injured after a building collapsed in Senegal’s capital Dakar, President Macky Sall said yesterday, AFP reported from Dakar. Part of a residential building, which had been undergoing construction work, collapsed at 1:00am (0100 GMT) on Tuesday, said Martial Ndione, commander of the fire and rescue unit of the fire department. Dakar is experiencing rapid demographic and economic growth and has seen an explosion in construction in recent years, sometimes with little regulation and without official permits. “I am deeply saddened by the tragic collapse of a building in Xaar Yalla, causing seven deaths and serious injuries,” Sall posted on X, formerly Twitter.

STRIFE

IS-linked attack in DR Congo leaves many dead

Militants linked to the Islamic State group carried out an attack in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo that left several dead, reportedly including five people in a church, local sources said yesterday, AFP reported from Beni. The rebel raid took place late Tuesday in Baeti, near the town of Oicha in the territory of Beni. “Eight bodies of civilians killed by ADF have been taken to the morgue” at Oicha hospital, the town’s mayor Nicolas Kikuku said. He said five Christians were among them and were killed “in full worship” in Baeti. It is located in North-Kivu province near the border with Ituri province, both of which were placed under a so-called state of siege in 2021.

UK publishes N Ireland deal aimed at ending deadlock

AFP
London

The United Kingdom government yesterday outlined its proposals to get the Northern Ireland assembly back up and running after a political deadlock of nearly two years caused by divisions over post-Brexit trade rules. London published the deal it has struck with the pro-UK Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) that could see the devolved government in the British province restored in the coming days.

The DUP walked out of the power-sharing government at Stormont in February 2022 to protest post-Brexit trade arrangements for Northern Ireland, which has the UK's only land border with the European Union. The agreement would notably remove checks on goods shipped from mainland Great Britain - England, Scotland and Wales - to final destinations in Northern Ireland.

That would effectively scrap the contentious so-called Irish Sea border that had angered unionists who feared it would cut Northern Ireland adrift from the three other UK nations and make a united Ireland more likely.

A key part of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which ended three decades of sectarian violence over British rule in Northern Ireland, was to keep an open border with the Republic of Ireland, an EU member, to the south. But the 2016 Brexit vote caused a problem - how to protect the European single market



and customs union if the UK was no longer part of it, when there was effectively an open back door for goods to cross in and out via Northern Ireland.

The post-Brexit trading arrangements signed between London and Brussels sought to square that circle by introducing goods checks from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and partly keeping the British province under EU rules. DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson on Tuesday said that party members had voted to approve the new agreement, which removed the "border within the UK internal market".

UK Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris told parliament that under the deal, "the idea of automatic dynamic alignment with EU law will no longer apply". "We will also future-proof Northern Ireland's position within the UK internal market against any future protocol that would create a new EU law

alignment for Northern Ireland and with it barriers for Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom," he added.

The deal appears to represent a change to the Windsor Framework agreement signed between the UK and European Union in February 2023, which kept Northern Ireland inside the EU's single market for goods. If so, it is believed the changes would need to be approved by Brussels. The European Commission did not immediately respond to request for comment from AFP.

Downing Street says the deal contains "significant" changes to the framework's "operation", but is not about altering the "fundamentals" of the framework. The UK parliament is expected to vote through the legislation on Thursday, paving the way for the DUP and the nationalist pro-Irish Sinn Féin to elect a speaker and restore power-sharing, possibly on Saturday.

Big waves



A person's hair is caught by the wind as waves break over the end of the runway at Sumburgh Airport in Sumburgh, Shetland Islands in Scotland, as severe weather from Storm Ingunn affects flights and ferry travel.

UK opposition Labour courts business leaders before election

AFP
London

With a UK general election looming, the country's main opposition Labour party is starting to persuade business and financial sector leaders that it can be trusted to grow the economy. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative party trails badly behind Labour in polls before a national vote expected this year, owing to rapidly losing its reputation for economic competence.

Labour yesterday launched what it described as "ambitious proposals to drive competitiveness, streamline regulations and unlock billions of pounds of growth in financial services". Keir Starmer's party was boosted this week by news that the chairman of British supermarket Iceland was switching his support to Labour from the Conservatives.

Richard Walker, a former Tory donor, wrote in the left-leaning Guardian newspaper that Labour

was "the right choice for everyone in business who wants to see this country grow and prosper". UK business remains hampered by high inflation and stagnant growth. Companies are also counting the cost of Brexit.

Following Britain's departure from the European Union, the country on Wednesday finally rolled out post-Brexit border checks on food, plant and animal products imported from the neighbouring bloc, fanning fears of fresh price hikes. On financial services, Labour said it planned on "building a more collaborative relationship with the EU".

Labour's plans Wednesday focused on financial services, which have also taken a knock following Brexit, with companies picking the likes of Wall Street over London for new listings.

Online betting giant Flutter this week took the first step to switch its main listing from the British capital to New York.

"The financial services industry is one of Britain's greatest assets, supporting millions of jobs

and billions of pounds of investment to our shores," Labour's spokesperson on finance, Rachel Reeves, said Wednesday.

Confident of replacing finance minister Jeremy Hunt, she added: "The next Labour government will unashamedly champion the UK's financial services sector. We will work in partnership with business to kick down the barriers to growth, spur on investment and showcase Britain's standing as a world leader in the industry."

Barclays bank chair Nigel Higgins said Labour's plan recognised that "a vibrant and dynamic financial services sector is crucial for long-term economic growth" as well "the importance of international competitiveness". Miles Celic, CEO of financial services lobby group TheCityUK, added that Labour had "set out a forward-thinking plan for financial services with a clear focus on innovation, modernising the regulatory landscape, driving more investment, and unlocking growth in the wider economy".

London mayor calls for govt help as homelessness jumps

AFP
London

The number of rough sleepers on London's streets has increased by almost a quarter this winter, the latest figures showed yesterday, as Britain battles a cost-of-living crisis. Homelessness charities recorded 4,389 people sleeping rough in the last three months of 2023, up from 3,570 during the same period a year before - an increase of 23 percent.

More than 1,200 people used emergency accommodation during a two-week cold snap in January, when mayor Sadiq Khan activated the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, around

30% more than during the same period last year. Of those, 242 people reported that they were newly-granted refugees who had just left government-provided accommodation, according to data from London Councils, which represents all 32 local authorities in the British capital.

Newly-recognised refugees currently have 28 days to move on from asylum support accommodation.

"The government's continued hostile approach to refugees has meant that hundreds of people are becoming homeless or sleeping rough on our streets," Khan said in a statement. "As mayor, I'm determined to do everything I can to work with boroughs and the voluntary sector to tackle

rough sleeping in the capital and I urge government ministers to back our efforts to end this shameful situation for good," he added. The mayor also announced a new west London hub providing additional beds to deal with the rising number of rough sleepers. A cost-of-living crisis in the G7 nation and world's sixth-biggest economy has left many Britons struggling to make ends meet, as bills for food, energy, rent and mortgages increase.

Annual inflation hit a 41-year peak of 11.1% in October 2022, and while it has come down, charities say a range of factors - notably cuts to welfare payments in the last decade and a housing shortage - has exacerbated homelessness.

Elusive snow leopards snapped in key survey

AFP
New Delhi

Snow leopards have been dubbed the "ghosts of the mountains" for their elusive behaviour, but Indian researchers have successfully photographed more than 200 in a landmark study estimating at least 718 across the country.

The mammoth five-year survey, the first nationwide review of snow leopards in India, monitored 120,000sq km of their remote mountain habitat, according to the environment ministry. It involved setting out camera traps in nearly 2,000 locations recording more than 180,000 nights - the equivalent to nearly 500 years - to record 241 individual leopards on camera.

The leopards - with thick grey fur dotted with dark spots, and large paws that act as natural snow shoes - are "masters of stealth and camouflage" according to the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) India, who assisted the assessment. The environment ministry said the survey has "significantly increased understanding" of the

rare creatures, Indian media reported yesterday. Snow leopards, scientific name panthera uncia, are listed as "vulnerable" species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Before the survey, the WWF had suggested that there were between 400-700 snow leopards in India. The report now puts the total number in the upper range of earlier estimates.

Two-thirds of the cats are found in India's far northern Ladakh, with the rest in Himalayan states including Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, the survey found. "Consistent monitoring is essential to ensuring snow leopards' long-term survival," the environment ministry added.

The Snow Leopard Trust, a US-based conservation group, says the exact total number is not known but that "there may be as few as 3,920 and probably no more than 6,390" across 12 countries in Asia.

The IUCN has dubbed the solitary cat the "ghost of the mountains" for its ability to hide, noting numbers are "decreasing mostly due to habitat loss, poaching, and the impacts of climate change".

In the works



Labourers launch a tunnel boring machine (TBM) known as 'Pelican' at the 'Chennai Metro Rail project' construction site in Chennai yesterday.

Sri Lanka eyes near 50% rise in visitors to its temples, beaches

Sri Lanka expects to pull in nearly 50% more tourists this year, a minister said on Wednesday, as the tropical island nation, famous for its ancient temples and golden beaches, pins its hopes on tourism to emerge from a long financial crisis.

Tourist arrivals increased to 1.48mn last year, an increase of 106% from 2022, government data shows. The highest arrivals were from India, Russia and Britain. It is aiming for 2.2mn tourists this year. Sri Lanka is also targeting \$4bn in tourism revenue, Tourism Minister Harin Fernando said, almost doubling the \$2.1bn earned last year, and will target travellers from Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Sri Lanka, also famous for its lush hillside tea plantations, will launch a global campaign later this year, after a lapse of about 15 years, to attract tourists, the minister added. "In January there have been about 200,000 arrivals so Sri Lanka has immense potential. We are a top ten destination on every travel index," Fernando told reporters. "Our target is to reach 4mn tourists by 2030."

The country of 22mn people, racked by civil war with Tamil separatists between 1983 and 2009, has been struggling to emerge from a severe financial crisis caused by a foreign exchange crunch in 2022. Sri Lanka's economy is estimated to have contracted 3.8% in 2023 by the World Bank but is expected to grow by 1.7% this year. Tourism is Sri Lanka's second-highest foreign exchange earner after workers' remittances from abroad, making it crucial to its economic recovery, Fernando said. — Reuters

Industry wants more sugar used for ethanol as supply improves

The Indian sugar industry yesterday urged the government to allow more sugar to be diverted for the production of ethanol, citing improved supply after unseasonable rainfall in key cane-growing states in November and December.

The world's second-largest sugar producer last month capped the amount that could be diverted for ethanol in the current season to end-September at 1.7mn metric tonnes, after below normal monsoon rains between June and September hit the cane crop. "We believe that the government may now easily allow around 1.8mn tonnes of additional sugar diversion for production of ethanol in the current season," the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said in a statement.

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
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GULF TIMES

A second Khan
innings stalled
ahead of polls

Former international cricket star Imran Khan had vowed to lead the country a second time after being ousted as prime minister in 2022, but two lengthy prison sentences in a week have put paid to his chances — for now at least.

Khan and his wife were sentenced yesterday to 14 years in prison after being convicted in connection with gifts he received while premier from 2018-2022. A day earlier, he was found guilty of leaking state secrets and jailed for 10 years.

With national elections one week away and his party severely hamstrung by the military establishment, it would be easy to write off the charismatic 71-year-old's political career.

But Khan won cricket matches from seemingly impossible positions as national captain, and Pakistan has seen dozens of politicians sentenced to lengthy prison terms only to see them overturned when they are back in favour.

That Khan remains wildly popular is not in doubt, but the fate of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party he founded is uncertain without him at the helm.

Many senior leaders are also locked away, or have abandoned the party following a major crackdown by the country's powerful military, vastly diminishing his street power.

The party was also stripped of its cricket bat symbol — vital in elections in a country where adult literacy is just 58%.

That he remains
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but the fate
of his party
is uncertain
without him at
the helm

successor, Shehbaz Sharif, and a senior army officer. Both denied involvement, and Khan did not offer evidence of his allegations.

Khan enjoyed genuine popular support when he became premier in 2018, but critics say he failed to deliver on promises to revitalise the economy and improve the plight of the poor.

He was voted in by millions who grew up watching him play cricket, where he excelled as an all-rounder and led the nation to World Cup victory in 1992.

PTI overturned decades of dominance by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) — two usually feuding groups that joined forces to oust him in April 2022.

Khan's vision was for Pakistan to become a welfare state modelled on the Islamic golden age of the seventh to 14th centuries, a period of cultural, economic and scientific flourishing in the Muslim world.

But he made little headway in improving Pakistan's financial situation, with galloping inflation, crippling debt and a feeble rupee undermining economic reform.

He also went after his political opponents, with many prominent PPP and PML-N leaders jailed for corruption during his tenure. Some have been released or seen the cases against them evaporate since he left power. Rights groups also decried a crackdown on media freedoms under his rule, with television news channels unofficially banned from airing his opponents' views.

Today, with the tables turned, he faces many of the same curbs.

The crucial blow to his premiership was a reported falling out with the military, the country's kingmakers who can control the rise and fall of any government.

The Oxford-educated son of a wealthy Lahore family, Khan had a reputation for a colourful life until his retirement from international cricket. For years he busied himself with charity projects, raising millions to build a cancer hospital to honour his mother.

He tiptoed into politics and for years held the PTI's only parliamentary seat.

The party grew during the military-led government of General Pervez Musharraf and the civilian government that followed, becoming a genuine force in the 2013 elections before winning a majority five years later. Married three times, his current wife Bushra Bibi — who was also jailed for 14 years yesterday in the same gifts case — comes from a politically prominent family and is a religious leader.

Often described as being impulsive and brash, Khan draws frequently on cricket analogies to describe his political battles.

"This trial is not a trial but a fixed match," he said in a message posted on his X account following Tuesday's sentencing. — AFP

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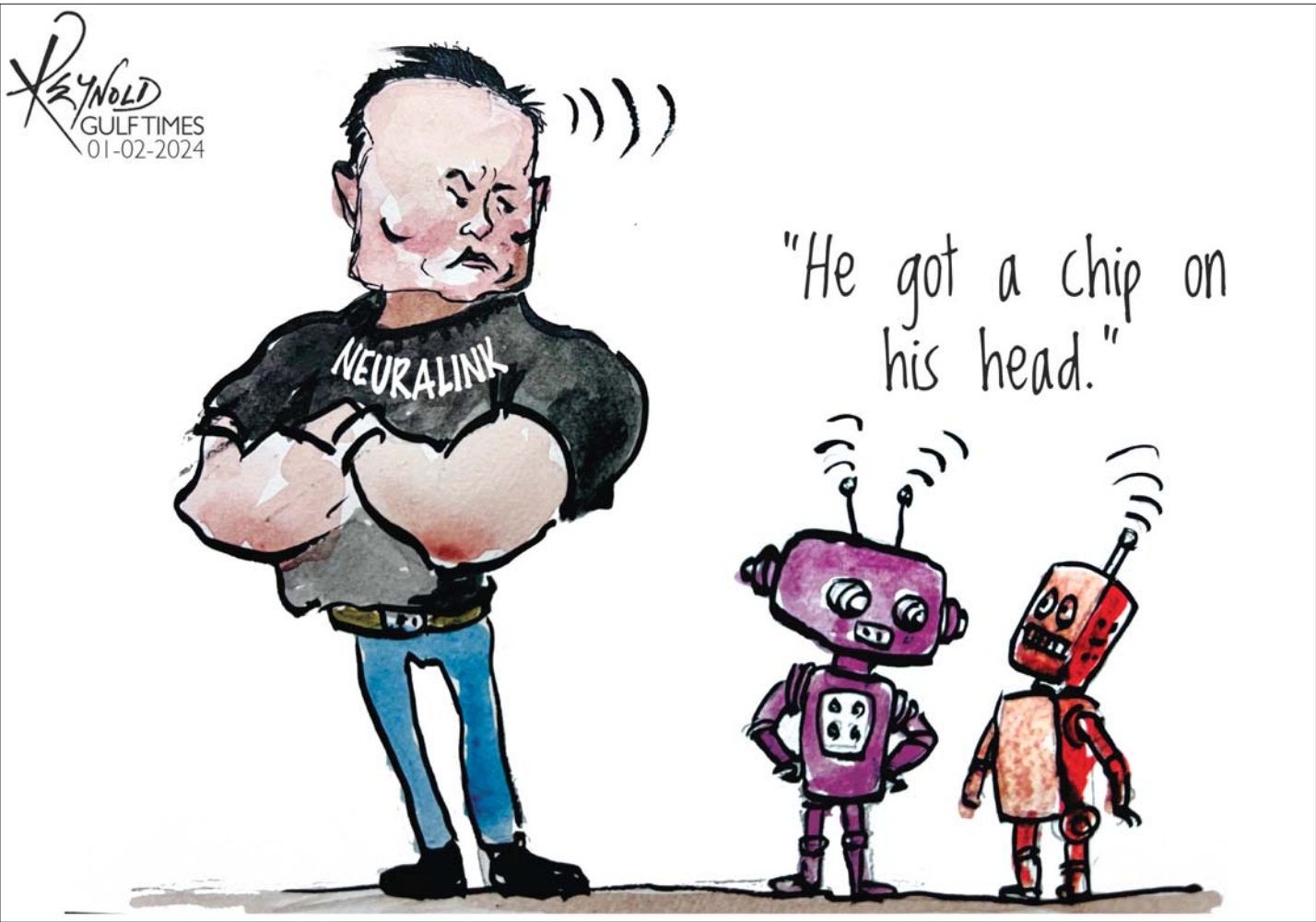
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Thanks to Tatarstan,
tourist flow from Islamic
countries to Russia rises

A noticeable increase in the number of tourists from many countries of the Islamic world was recorded last year by the Federal State Statistics Service of Russia; almost twice as many visitors from Turkiye, Iran and Tajikistan as in 2022, and 5.5 times more tourists from the United Arab Emirates.

Today, Russia is home to more than 20mn Muslims, a significant part of which is associated with the Republic of Tatarstan. This is a unique region whose culture developed at the crossroads of two major civilisations: Eastern and Western.

Thanks largely to Tatarstan, the tourist flow from Islamic countries to Russia grows by 15% annually. This opinion was expressed by Russian Deputy Minister of Economic Development Dmitry Vakhrukov at the International Economic Forum "Russia - Islamic World: KazanForum" 2023 in the capital of Tatarstan.

Muslims' interest in Tatarstan is not accidental - it is the northernmost region in the world with preserved Islamic medieval architecture, amazing natural monuments and developed Halal infrastructure for tourists.

Here on the bank of the Volga River not far from Kazan is the ancient city of Bolgar. It is a unique monument of medieval Muslim architecture, a place of archaeological excavations and historical discoveries. In 922 the Volga Bulgaria, the ancestor of modern Tatarstan, converted to Islam here. The event is

traditionally celebrated in May - on the holiday "Izge Bolgar zhyeni" thousands of Muslims from Russia and abroad try to visit the ancient town.

In Veliky Bolgar you can see the neighbourhood from the Great Minaret of the medieval Cathedral Mosque, visit the Eastern and Northern Mausoleums, the preserved ruins of the Khan's Palace, the bath and tomb of the Khan's family, as well as the Small Minaret and the legendary Black Chamber - one of the most mysterious and beautiful buildings of the XIV century made of white limestone.

On the territory of the Bulgarian Museum-Reserve is the modern Museum of Islam, where the largest printed Qur'an in the world is kept. The size of the book is 2m x 1.5m and its weight is 800kg. The cover is made of malachite with precious metals and stones.

The number of visitors to Bolgar grows considerably during the KazanForum, which brings together representatives of 57 countries of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) in Tatarstan. Traditionally, the forum is held in May during the "Izge Bolgar zhyena" celebrations, and excursions to the holy places of Islam with a cultural programme are organised for the participants. Last year a special feature of the holiday was an exhibition of 10 authentic relics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Many pilgrims from all over the world come to Bolgar to visit the modern pearl of Tatarstan

- the White Mosque. This huge architectural ensemble consisting of a clergy residence, a madrasah and a mosque with majestic minarets. It resembles a famous world monument of religion and culture - the Taj Mahal mausoleum. The White Mosque was erected in 2012, and since then it has attracted thousands of foreign tourists who want to see one of the masterpieces of world Islamic architecture in Russia.

The Bulgarian Historical and Archaeological Complex is included in the Unesco World Heritage Sites.

KazanForum's host city, Kazan, which was granted the status of "Youth Capital of the Islamic World" by the OIC in 2022, has also preserved its rich spiritual traditions and relics. Here, guests from Muslim countries can see and visit the Kazan Kremlin Museum-Reserve, the only preserved Tatar white stone fortress in Russia and the world.

The objects of the Kazan Kremlin were built since the 10th century and are also included in the Unesco World Heritage List. Among them are: the main cathedral mosque Kul Sharif, one of the largest mosques in Russia and Europe, the central cathedral of Tatarstan, created by architects of the main cathedral of Moscow in the 16th century; the famous falling tower of Syuyumbike, which is among the top 10 most famous falling towers of the world; the most ancient tombs of the Khans. The residence of the Rais of Tatarstan is also located here.

In 2023, during KazanForum, the Kazan Kremlin hosted an amazing evening light show, when historical sketches, symbols and attributes of traditional Islam inherent in the Tatar people appeared on the walls of the fortress.

In 2024, at the XV KazanForum, the business programme will also be combined with an immersion into the history of the development of world Islam. Forum guests will see ancient Tatar cities, spiritual artefacts, and find themselves at the origins of traditional Islam in Russia.

An important feature for Muslims: Russia now offers halal tourism with hotel accommodation, catering and even medical and financial services in accordance with the norms of Islam. This year, Russia adopted the state standard "Halal Products and Services", which will make it possible to certify service facilities and provide guests from Islamic countries with full halal service, taking into account the requirements of international standards.

In particular, Muslim tours are already being organised to Tatarstan, where it is possible to stay in hotels according to Halal standards or undergo health procedures in a halal medical facility. Thus, in December, a new tourist destination «Moscow + Kazan» on the route "Two Capitals of One Horizon" was presented within the framework of the national project "Tourism and Hospitality Industry".



The mosque of Kazan Kremlin in Tatarstan.

Khan jailed for 14 more years a day after 10-year sentence

- Verdict bars ex-PM from contesting polls for 10 years
- Khan’s housewife also gets 14 years in the gifts case
- Outcry over lack of final argument, cross-examination

Reuters
Islamabad

A Pakistani anti-graft court jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Khan for 14 years each on charges of illegally selling state gifts, his party said yesterday, a day after Khan was jailed for 10 years in another case.

The sentence, after the third conviction handed down to the embattled ex-cricket star in the last few months, also included a 10-year disqualification from holding public office, his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), said.

Bushra Khan, commonly known as Bushra Bibi, has, however, been allowed by authorities to serve her sentence at Khan’s Islamabad hilltop mansion, the party’s media team confirmed. Khan is already in a prison in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

Khan was jailed for 10 years on Tuesday on charges of revealing state secrets as Pakistan prepares for a general election on February 8. It was not immediately clear if the two sentences for Khan would run concurrently.

“Another sad day in our judicial system history, which is being dismantled,” Khan’s media team said, repeating his denial of the charges.

“No cross-questioning allowed, no final argument concluded and decision pops up like a pre-determined process in play ... this ridiculous decision will also be challenged.”

Khan’s lawyer, Intezar Panjutha, told Reuters: “It is a sham verdict.”



Policemen escort former prime minister Imran Khan (centre) upon his arrival at the high court in Islamabad on May 12, 2023. (AFP)

Khan and his wife were charged with illegally selling gifts, worth more than Rs140mn (\$501,000) and received during his 2018-2022 premiership, from a state treasury known locally known as the “Toshakhana”.

Government officials have alleged Khan’s aides sold the gifts in Dubai.

A list of these gifts shared by a former information minister included perfumes, diamond jewelry, dinner sets and seven watches, six of them Rolexes — the most expensive being a “Master Graff limited edition” valued at Rs85mn (\$304,000).

Khan was also handed a three-year prison sentence in August for the same charge by another court, but that sentence had been suspended on appeal.

A long list of former premiers, including current favourite Nawaz Sharif, who has the backing of the military, have however, not been touched despite similarly taking more expensive gifts from the treasury for reportedly, a fraction of the price.

Yesterday’s verdict followed an investigation by the country’s top anti-graft body, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

Bushra’s conviction was an attempt to pressurise Khan further, PTI’s acting chairman and lawyer, Gohar Ali Khan, said in a television interview. “Bushra Bibi has no link to this case,” he said.

The two were married in 2018, months before Khan ascended to premiership for the first time. It was Khan’s third marriage after two divorces.

A prosecution team member, speaking to Reuters on the condition of anonymity, confirmed the verdict. A detailed verdict would be released soon, he said. Local broadcaster Geo News reported that the verdict also came with a hefty fine.

Khan’s earlier conviction on the selling of state gifts charge resulted in a five-year ban from holding public office, ruling him out of the February 8 election. Yesterday’s verdict, however, means that he will be ineligible to hold office until he is 81.

His rival parties — the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) of the late former premier Benazir Bhutto — hailed the ruling.

Benazir’s son, Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari, who now leads the PPP, termed Khan’s convictions “karma” in a public rally yesterday.

Khan’s political opponents and some rights activists have accused him of using the same anti-graft body when in power to throw opponents in jail and getting critical journalists fired, a charge his PTI party denies.

Sharif’s daughter, Maryam Nawaz, who is considered his political heir, also said the verdict “was nothing but karma”.

Following the verdict against Khan and his wife police were deployed outside his party’s offices in Islamabad and Lahore.

Khan has been fighting dozens of cases since he was ousted from power in a controversial parliamentary vote of no-confidence in 2022. He says his ouster was backed by the powerful military

Khan’s candidate for parliament shot dead

Election Commission calls security meeting

A National Assembly candidate in Pakistan’s election next week was shot dead on Wednesday in a tribal district along the Afghan border, police said, in the second killing of a candidate linked to jailed former leader Imran Khan’s party this month.

Rehan Zaib Khan, an independent candidate in the February 8 election who had claimed to be supported by Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and four aides were shot in Bajur district, police officer Rasheed Khan said.

Rehan Zaib Khan died at a local hospital and his aides were in a critical condition, he said.

No-one has claimed responsibility for yesterday’s attack in a region where militants operate on both sides of the border. It was the second killing of a candidate linked to the PTI in northwestern Pakistan’s tribal regions in recent weeks.

Yesterday’s attack took place a day after a bombing claimed by Islamic State in southwestern Balochistan region following a rally held there by PTI, raising security concerns amid an uptick in militant violence around the parliamentary vote.

The PTI says it been subjected to a military-backed crackdown, including arrests of hundreds of supporters, party members and key aides. The military, which has for decades held sway over Pakistan’s politics, denies the charges. Imran Khan’s party has been stripped of its traditional electoral symbol, a cricket bat, in a shocking decision by the Supreme Court and its candidates are contesting the election as independents.

PTI’s provincial president Atif Khan said Rehan Zaib Khan was a party member but the PTI had another candidate in the constituency with its official backing. In absence of the party symbol on the ballot, several independent candidates are claiming to have PTI’s support. Also yesterday, a local leader of the left leaning Awami National Party was shot and killed by gunmen at its election office in Chaman district in Balochistan on the Afghan border, said local police official Zahoor Ahmed.

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s election commission yesterday announced an urgent meeting of security officials after a candidate was shot dead and several others wounded in separate attacks a week before the country goes to the polls.

Elections in the South Asian nation are often marred by violence, with candidates and rallies targeted by militant groups as well as over personal vendettas.

The Election Commission of Pakistan told media that it would meet with government and intelligence officials today to discuss the violence. “In view of the deteriorating law and order situation in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Election Commission has convened a meeting on February 1,” it said.

Authorities had previously announced that thousands of paramilitary troops would be deployed in the days leading up to the February 8 polls. — AFP, Reuters

with whom he fell out with when he was in office.

He and his party say that since his ouster, they have been faced with a brutal military-backed crackdown, including arrests of hundreds of supporters, party members and key aides.

The military, which has for dec-

ades held sway over Pakistan’s politics, denies the charges.

NAB, the anti-graft agency that tried Khan, has at various times investigated, tried and jailed all prime ministers to have served since 2008, including Sharif, whose party is considered the frontrunner in next week’s election.

Russia, Ukraine exchange hundreds of POWs

Russia and Ukraine traded hundreds of prisoners of war yesterday, just a week after Moscow said Kyiv had shot down a plane carrying captured Ukrainian soldiers to an exchange. The crash of a Russian military cargo plane near the border with Ukraine — which Russia said killed 65 Ukrainian POWs — had thrown doubt on future prisoner swaps between the two sides.

President Vladimir Putin said it was “obvious” Ukraine shot it down, and yesterday claimed Kyiv’s forces used a US Patriot system to do so. “This has already been established by forensics,” Putin said in a televised appearance. Despite the tension, both sides made simultaneous announcements hailing the latest agreement yesterday to free more than 400 people captured during the course of the two-year war. Russia’s defence ministry said 195 of its soldiers were freed, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said 207 people — both soldiers and civilians — had returned to Ukraine. “Our people are back. 207 of them. We return them home no matter what,” Zelenskyy said in a social media post.

Russia’s defence ministry said “195 Russian servicemen... were returned home”. The exchange was brokered by the United Arab Emirates — which has played a role in several previous swaps — Moscow said. Ukraine said the youngest soldier returning home was 20, while the oldest was 61. The freed Ukrainians include those who fought in Mariupol and on Snake Island — a scrubby rock in the Black Sea that secured worldwide fame when the Ukrainians stationed there issued an expletive-laden radio message to Russian attackers. The announcement of the swap — in a flurry of statements and photos released simultaneously by Moscow and Kyiv — contrasted sharply with the rhetoric surrounding last week’s crash. Zelenskyy has accused Moscow of “playing with the lives of Ukrainian prisoners” while Moscow says Ukraine committed a “terrorist act”. Uncertainty remains after the Russian plane crashed in a fireball in the western Belgorod region on January 24. Moscow says it was ferrying 65 Ukrainian POWs on the way to a scheduled exchange.

UN court rejects Ukraine’s ‘terror’ case against Russia

The United Nations’ top court yesterday mostly rejected Ukraine’s claims that Russia was financing “terrorism” in eastern Ukraine, saying only that Moscow had failed to investigate alleged breaches.

Kyiv had accused Moscow of being a “terrorist state” whose support for pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine was a harbinger of the full-fledged 2022 invasion. It wanted Russia to compensate all civilians caught up in the conflict, as well as victims from Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, which was shot down over eastern Ukraine in 2014.

But the International Court of Justice (ICJ) tossed out most of Ukraine’s claims, ruling only that Russia was “failing to take measures to investigate facts... regarding persons who have allegedly committed an offence”.

The ICJ “rejects all other submissions made by the Ukraine”, it said in a statement. This case predates Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The ICJ will decide tomorrow whether it has jurisdiction to rule in a separate case over that war. The court said that only cash transfers could be considered as support for alleged terrorist groups under the terms of the international convention on terrorism financing (ICSFT). This “does not include the means used to commit acts of terrorism, including weapons or training camps”, the court ruled.

“Consequently, the alleged supply of weapons to various armed groups operating in Ukraine” falls “outside the material scope of the ICSFT” convention, the court said. Ukraine’s top lawyer in the case, Anton Korynevych, said the verdict nonetheless had “big value”.

“For us it is a very important day because this is a judgement that says the Russian Federation violated international law,” he told reporters after the verdict.

“This is the very first time that Russia is called a violator of international law.” Russia was also in the dock for alleged breaches of an international convention on racial discrimination because of its treatment of the Tatar minority and Ukrainian speakers in occupied Crimea.

Dozens arrested as tensions soar at farmers protests

AFP
Paris

French police arrested dozens of people yesterday as tensions escalated to new levels at protests by farmers in search of better conditions that have spread to other European countries.

Defying warnings by the authorities, some farmers converged on the Rungis wholesale market outside of Paris where almost 80 people were arrested when some individuals penetrated the complex.

The French government has generally struck a conciliatory tone during more than a week of protests. But it had also warned that actions at Rungis, which provides food and other essentials to much of the Paris region of 12mn people, and other key infrastructure such as Paris airports, would cross a red line.

France has been at the centre of growing rural discontent across Europe, with protests also held in Germany, Poland, Romania, Belgium and Italy, putting pressure also on

the EU for protections.

Amid mounting calls for higher incomes, less red tape and protection from foreign competition, “there are huge expectations” among farmers, said Arnaud Rousseau, head of France’s largest agricultural union the FNSEA.

But he added that not all of the demands could be immediately answered “so I’m trying to call for calm and reasonableness”.

French police in the evening detained 79 people after protesters broke into a storage area in the Rungis market south of Paris causing damage, a police source said. They were taken out by security forces, added the source, who asked not to be named.

Television images showed a heavy security presence around the market including gendarmerie military police armoured vehicles. The extent of the damage was not immediately clear.

The action took place after dozens of farmers from the Lot-et-Garonne department of southwest France arrived at the market.

US lawmakers grill tech CEOs over youth safety

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and the chief executives of TikTok, X, Discord and Snap faced a grilling by hostile US lawmakers yesterday over the dangers that children and teens face on social media platforms. The tech chiefs were convened by the US Senate Judiciary Committee where they were put to task about the effects of social media in a session titled “Big Tech and the Online Child Sexual Exploitation Crisis.” The executives are confronting a torrent of political anger for not doing enough to thwart online dangers for children, including from sexual predators and teen suicide. During one round of particularly heated questioning, Zuckerberg was made to stand up and apologise to the families of victims who had packed the committee room. “Mister Zuckerberg, you and the companies before us, I know

you don’t mean it to be so, but you have blood on your hands. You have a product that’s killing people,” Senator Lindsey Graham told the chief executives. Testifying to senators were Zuckerberg, X’s Linda Yaccarino, Shou Zi Chew of TikTok, Evan Spiegel of Snap and Discord’s Jason Citron. “We work hard to provide parents and teens support and controls to reduce potential harms,” Meta’s Zuckerberg told the committee in his opening statement. “Keeping young people safe online has been a challenge since the internet began and as criminals evolve their tactics, we have to evolve our defenses too,” he added.

Zuckerberg also told the lawmakers that according to research, “on balance” social media was not harmful to the mental health of young people. TikTok’s Chew said “as a father of three young children myself I



Meta’s CEO Mark Zuckerberg attends the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on online child sexual exploitation at the US Capitol in Washington yesterday. (Reuters)

know that the issues that we’re discussing today are horrific and the nightmare of every parent.” “I intend to invest more than \$2bn in trust and safety. This year alone, we have 40,000 safety professionals working on this

topic,” Chew said. Meta also said 40,000 of its employees work on online safety and that \$20bn has been invested since 2016 to make the platform safer. Ahead of their testimony, Meta and X, formerly Twitter,

announced new measures in anticipation of the heated session. Meta, which owns the world’s leading platforms Facebook and Instagram, said it would block direct messages sent to young teens by strangers.

By default, teens under age 16 can now only be messaged or added to group chats by people they already follow or are connected to. Meta also tightened content restrictions for teens on Instagram and Facebook making it harder for them to view posts that discuss suicide, self-harm or eating disorders.

Singling out Meta, senators pointed to internal company documents that show that Zuckerberg declined to strengthen the teams devoted to tracking online dangers to teens. “The hypocrisy is mind-boggling,” Senator Richard Blumenthal told the *New York Times*. Those documents are part of a

major lawsuit brought by about 40 states jointly suing Meta over alleged failures with children. Under US law, web platforms are largely shielded from legal liability in relation to content that is shared on their site. While lawmakers would like to set up more rules to increase online safety, new laws have been stymied by a politically divided Washington and intense lobbying by big tech. One existing proposal is the Kids Online Safety Act, or KOSA, which aims to protect children from algorithms that might trigger anxiety or depression. Another idea would require social media platforms to verify the age of account holders and completely bar children under the age of 13. “I don’t think you’re gonna solve the problem. Congress is gonna have to help you,” Senator John Neely Kennedy told the executives.

Xinjiang performers enthrall Katara audience



Dignitaries at the 'Xinjiang is a Nice Place' folk music and dance show at the Katara Opera House yesterday.
PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Chinese embassy in Doha organised 'Xinjiang is a Nice Place' folk music and dance show at the Katara Opera House yesterday. The grand event was part of the Chinese embassy's celebration of the Spring Festival 2024 and as part of the activities accompanying the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023.

Yu Jie, deputy director general, Xinjiang Department of Culture and Tourism, China, stressed that Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China is a beautiful place year-round rich with scenery and resources and celebrate the diverse and unique culture of its people.

"Xinjiang has a very special location neighbouring eight Asian and European countries. The autonomous government of



Xinjiang encourage exchange of dialogue among different people and mutual understanding among peoples to enable diverse people from different backgrounds to live peacefully and in harmony together," Jie said while adding that the performance reflects the richness of culture, folk and traditions of Xinjiang.

Katara - the Cultural Village general manager Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti expressed his joy in hosting such an event at Katara as it would reflect the deeply rooted Chinese culture and its well-established civilisation in addition to its renewed and modern spirit.

He also expressed his hopes that the Chinese embassy in Qatar will continue its efforts to organise various events and activities in Qatar that reflect the deep relations between the two friendly countries.

The Chinese ambassador to Qatar Cao Xiaolin expressed his happiness at starting his assignment in Qatar in such an amazing atmosphere.

"In eight days, it will be the

Chinese Lunar New Year. On this festive occasion, we are very pleased to welcome artists from the largest Muslim-populated region in China - the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. They will showcase a peaceful and scenic Xinjiang, and the happy lives of Xinjiang people with Xinjiang's ethnic songs and dances.

"In China, Xinjiang is widely praised as a nice place for its unique ethnic minority's cultures, picturesque landscapes, and abundant resources. The Xinjiang's ethnic songs and dances in tonight's show will guide us to discover Xinjiang as a nice place.

"Xinjiang artists come to perform in Qatar because Xinjiang's culture, while inheriting the origins of Chinese civilisation, is also influenced by Arab-Islamic civilisation. Through the artistic performances, we could promote drawing on each other's strengths and enhance people-to-people bonds between the two sides."

A large number of guests attended the performance, which had the backdrop of various scenery from Xinjiang.

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