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Doha a phenomenal city:
Kareena Kapoor — Page 12

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Riyadh meeting discusses Gaza war

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated in a consultative meeting to discuss the developments of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, held in Riyadh upon the invitation of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud.

Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Dr Ayman al-Sa-

fadi, UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, and Secretary-General of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al-Sheikh also participated in the meeting.

The ministers emphasised the necessity to end the war on the Gaza Strip and achieve an immediate and complete ceasefire, ensuring the protection of civilians



in accordance with international humanitarian law.

They also called for lifting all restrictions hindering the entry of humanitarian aid into the Strip, expressing their support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and urging all supporters to fulfil their humanitarian duties towards Palestinian refugees.

Furthermore, they emphasised the importance of taking irreversible steps to implement the two-state solution, recognising the State of Palestine along the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant international resolutions.

They affirmed that the Gaza Strip is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory and reiterated their categorical rejection of all forced displacement operations. (QNA)

Amir, Hungarian president to meet tomorrow

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will meet with Hungarian President Katalin Novak and the accompanying delegation at the Amiri Diwan tomorrow. The Amir and President Novak will hold talks on bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them, in addition to discussing a host of issues of common concern. (QNA)

QIFF: country's biggest culinary celebration

The Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF), described as the country's biggest culinary celebration, has returned for its 13th edition, featuring an array of local, regional and international cuisines, as well as exciting activities for visitors to enjoy. From local delicacies to international flavours, the event is taking place until February 17 at Expo 2023 Doha's Family Zone at Al Bidda Park. **Page 12**

QF, Texas A&M to conclude partnership

Qatar Foundation's partnership with Texas A&M University whose Doha-based campus has graduated over 1,500 engineers, formed vital collaborations with industry, and generated pioneering engineering and sustainability research, is to conclude after more than 20 years. This was announced following a decision by the Board of Regents of Texas A&M University. Qatar Foundation (QF) has confirmed its commitment to ensuring continuity of education for current students from Texas A&M University at Qatar (Tamuq) and the continuation of engineering studies at its Education City campus. (QNA) **Page 2**

Khan allies lead in Pakistan vote count

Candidates loyal to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan were ahead in Pakistan's election yesterday as the vote count entered its final leg. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was faring better than expected despite a crackdown targeting the party, but the next government was still likely to be formed by the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) after a spell of horse trading with other parties and independents. **Page 11**

Today's schedule

FINAL:
Qatar vs Jordan, 6 pm
at Lusail Stadium

Palestinian presidency condemns Israel PM's planned Rafah offensive

The Palestinian presidency yesterday condemned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to extend a ground offensive into Rafah, warning it would create another "catastrophe" of forcible displacement.

Netanyahu has ordered military officials to draw up plans for "evacuating" civilians from the southern Gazan city, where half of Gaza's 2.4mn people are sheltering.

But Mahmoud Abbas's office said Palestinians "will not abandon their land and will not accept being forcibly displaced from their homeland" while Israel hunts Hamas fighters.

It called on the UN and the US to step in to prevent what it said could be a "disastrous escalation", as Israel was warned of the consequences of any move on the overcrowded city.

"The Israeli occupation's move threatens security and peace in the region and the world. This is a blatant violation of all red lines," a statement said.

"The time has come for everyone to bear their responsibility in the face of creating another catastrophe that will push the entire region into endless wars," it added.

Israel's plans for a military offensive on Rafah are "alarming", the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borell said yesterday.

Palestinians "will not abandon their land and will not accept being forcibly displaced from their homeland" while Israel hunts Hamas fighters

"It would have catastrophic consequences worsening the already dire humanitarian situation and the unbearable civilian toll," he posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Israel launched new strikes yesterday on Rafah, after US President Joe Biden issued the strongest rebuke yet to the US ally, warning its action has been "over the top".

The US State Department said it does not support a ground offensive in Rafah, warning that, if not properly planned, such an operation in a city sheltering 1.2mn displaced Palestinians risked "disaster".

Major Israeli military action on Rafah would heap further devastation on civilians, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) warned yesterday. (AFP) **Page 11**

Amir visits DJWE pavilions



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited yesterday the 20th Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition at Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre. During his tour of the exhibition pavilions, the Amir was briefed on the latest products from jewellery and watch companies. He also listened to an explanation about the highlights of the exhibition in its current edition and its local economic and cultural contributions. His Highness the Amir visited the pavilions dedicated to Qatari designers who showcased their products designed with Qatari, Arab, and Islamic identities. (QNA) **Page 2**

Stopover flight packages launched

Visit Qatar and Qatar Airways have launched stopover flight packages in Doha, as part of their joint efforts to promote Qatar and strengthen its position as a premier tourist destination to be added to passengers' targeted destination.

Qatar Tourism (QT) Chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji and Qatar Airways Group CEO engineer Badr Mohamed al-Meer made the announcement at Msheireb Downtown Doha, in the presence of a group of international media representatives as part of an extensive familiarisation trip.

Through Discover Qatar (DQ), Qatar Airways' destination management company, passengers can now choose one of the stopover flights, which enhances Doha's presence as an ideal stopover destination thanks to its abundance of tourist experiences and unique benefits.

Visit Qatar and DQ's stopover packages offer five options at over 100 hotels for travellers embarking on their journey on Qatar Airways' network of over 170 destinations.

Standard: choice of over 100 four-star hotels, is the best value stopover package, offering 24



Qatar Tourism Chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji and Qatar Airways Group CEO engineer Badr Mohamed al-Meer announce the stopover flight packages.

hours check in and prices starting at \$14 per person per night.

Premium: choice of 5-star hotels. **Premium with Beach Access:** choice of 5-star hotels with access to Doha Sands Beach, West Bay. **Luxury:** choice of 5-star luxury hotels including breakfast. **All-Inclusive Beach:** choice of 5-star hotels including breakfast and all-inclusive beach access to Doha Sands Beach, West Bay.

All stopover packages include 24-hour check-in facilities and can be tailored to add-on options including airport assistance, transfers and a range of tours and experiences, such as City and Desert Tours. More information

about stopover travel packages: <https://www.qatarairways.com/en-us/offers/qatar-stopover.html>

Commenting at the press conference, al-Kharji said: "It is imperative to highlight that in 2023, the number of travellers and hotel room nights for stopovers in Qatar more than doubled compared to 2022 as a direct result of Qatar Airways flying to over 177 international destinations.

"January 2024, witnessed another remarkable achievement with over 700,000 visitors, setting a new monthly record, we are continuing this growth, with the aim of welcoming six million annual visitors by 2030". **To Page 2**

Korean couple spellbound by Qatar

Qatar has left Korean couple Mohamed Aamir and Fatima Zahra spellbound after they camped in Doha during their world trip in a van. Known as Park Hyoen Min and Shin Hwa Seon in Korea, they arrived Doha last week en route to the African continent.

They are on a two-year trip that started from Korea. "We are planning to visit 80 countries while covering 250,000km," Park told *Gulf Times*. The mission is to spread the messages of friendship and connecting the nations and cultures.

The couple, who have so far visited 18 countries, including Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Georgia, Türkiye and Oman during 10 months on the road, will return home after visiting Saudi Arabia, Egypt, African countries and Russia.

What makes the trip special is the camping van equipped with bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and



The travellers pose for *Gulf Times* next to their van on Doha Corniche yesterday. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

television lounge. Named Balela, the van has a solar panel on top.

"We have travelled by air and this time we wanted to make a difference. And the first step was to buy the van," Park said while explaining that they wanted to take a break from the agricultural business in Daegu area in South Ko-

rea and embark on a world trip to know the cultures and people.

At Daegu, the duo worked in agriculture and livestock. Known for its abundance of fruit production, Daegu is called 'Apple City'.

In Doha, the couple visited various tourist destinations including Souq Waqif, the Corniche and the



Korean couple Mohamed Aamir and Fatima Zahra inside their touring van.

Grand Mosque where they were lent a warm welcome by the locals. "We explore the local places and attended receptions from the local institutions and individuals," he said.

The van is the place to travel, sleep and cook fresh meals. "We savour local cuisine during the

camping," Park said adding that they're offered food and water during their journey by kindhearted persons.

The flag stickers, notes and signatures on the Balela from various countries resonates with the love they received from the countries they visited.

Amir tours Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited yesterday the 20th Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition at Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre. During his tour of the pavilions, the Amir was briefed on the latest products from jewellery and watch companies. He also listened to an explanation about the highlights of the exhibition in its current edition and its local economic and cultural contributions. (QNA)



QF, Texas A&M University set to conclude partnership

QNA
Doha

Qatar Foundation's partnership with Texas A&M University whose Doha-based campus has graduated over 1,500 engineers, formed vital collaborations with industry, and generated pioneering engineering and sustainability research, is to conclude after more than 20 years.

The conclusion of the partnership was announced following a decision by the Board of Regents of Texas A&M University. Qatar Foundation (QF) has confirmed its commitment to ensuring continuity of education for current students from Texas A&M University at Qatar (Tamuq) which was established in 2003 and the continuation of engineering studies at its Education City campus.

"Through its long-term vision for its world-class ecosystem of education, research, and community development higher education vision, Qatar Foundation has formed longstanding partnerships with international universities," said HEND ZAINAL, Executive Director,

Strategy, Management and Partnerships, within QF's Higher Education division.

"This has seen them establish campuses at QF's Education City and deliver undergraduate and graduate level programs in fields aligned with the needs of Qatar and the region, alongside QF's homegrown Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

"QF's strategy for higher education takes into consideration the future of the system which, following Texas A&M University's decision to conclude our partnership, is now to be accelerated and implemented to ensure continuity of learning for students including in engineering fields as well as their personal development and academic research.

"The decision of Texas A&M University's Board of Regents to end its partnership with QF has been influenced by a disinformation campaign aimed at harming the interests of QF. It is disturbing that this disinformation has become the determining factor in the decision and that it has been allowed to override the core principles of education and knowledge,

with no consideration to the significant positive impact this partnership has brought for both Qatar and the US.

"It is deeply disappointing that a globally respected academic institution like Texas A&M University has fallen victim to such a campaign and allowed politics to infiltrate its decision-making processes. At no point did the Board attempt to seek out the truth from QF before making this misguided decision.

"However, decisions based on any consideration other than the best interests of students and their pursuit of education and knowledge will not impact on our vision for higher education at QF, and our strategy for realizing this vision."

The process and timescale for formally concluding the partnership between QF and Texas A&M University is now under discussion.

QF's Education City is home to six international partner universities including Tamuq as well as HBKU. A seventh QF partner university, HEC Paris in Qatar, is based in Msheireb Downtown Doha.

Qatar hosts reception to launch candidacy for UN rights council

QNA
New York

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the UN hosted a reception to launch Qatar's candidacy for membership in the UN Human Rights Council for the term 2025-2027 in the upcoming elections in October 2024.

In her welcoming speech, HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani emphasised that Qatar has become a role model in the region in terms of promoting and protecting human rights on all fronts, represented by its humanitarian and developmental policies, mediation efforts, conflict resolution endeavours, and advocacy and empowerment of women, girls, youth, and persons with disabilities.

The Director of the International Organisations Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sheikha Hanouf al-Thani highlighted Qatar's role in empowering women under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, which has led to active



participation in political, security, and economic sectors, as well as the Shura Council, the diplomatic corps, and high government and judicial positions.

In a related context, Assistant Director of the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mashael bint Mana al-Hajri underscored Qatar's full commitment to implementing voluntary pledges and commitments, including continuing to develop national legislation and aligning it with international hu-

man rights law, expressing Qatar's pride in its achievements in the field of human rights, reflecting a leading role in the region and the world.

Qatar has previously been elected as a member of the UN Human Rights Council five times since its establishment in 2006, the latest being for the term 2022-2024, due to Qatar's continued fulfilment of its national and international obligations towards the protection of human rights.

AFC Asian Cup Qatar LOC redistributed unused food

The AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 Local Organising Committee (LOC) partnered with local charity Hifz Alnaema to redistribute unused food on match days to workers and other beneficiaries as part of its wider tournament sustainability strategy.

Local experts at Hifz Alnaema – Qatar's first food bank – were responsible for collecting surplus food from the tournament's nine venues and arranging for its redistribution to beneficiaries.

Jassim al-Jassim, CEO of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, said: "With the Asian Cup, our focus has not only been to deliver the best football experience to fans, but also to maintain the highest sustainability standards. We are delighted to partner with Hifz Alnaema who have supported us in the area of food waste management, particularly with the safe redistribution of unused food. We are keen on utilising this tournament to make a positive difference in every manner possible."

To date, Hifz Alnaema have supported over 3.76mn beneficiaries and distributed over 3.8mn meals. In addition to distributing unused food, the local charity supported the LOC with services such as meal planning and order customisation to minimise unconsumed meals.

The final of the 24-nation tournament is being played today between Qatar and Jordan at Lusail Stadium at 6pm. Qatar is hosting the AFC Asian Cup for a record third time after 1988 and 2011.

Doha College U13 team clinches championship in BSME Games

Doha College's U13 team won the championship in the Abu Dhabi British Schools in the Middle East (BSME) Games 2024, a statement said. The hosts, The British School Al Khubairat, Abu Dhabi, was second. In all, 16 British schools from across the Middle East competed.

Team results - Girls athletics: first (16 points), football: second (15 points), netball: fourth (13 points); Boys athletics: second (15 points), football: third (14 points), volleyball: fifth (12 points). Athletics - Girls & Boys combined, first overall (32 points)

Girls - 4x100 relay: third (Amy Alberts, Nour Abdellal, Millie Hegarty, Ailbhe O'Sullivan); long

jump: Amy Alberts - first; 800m: Amy Alberts - second; Millie Hegarty - third; high jump: Ailbhe O'Sullivan - third; triple jump: Treasure Adeniyi - second.

Boys - 4x100 relay: third (Jafar Okin, Alfie Allen, Luqman Gool-ammamode, Harry Gorman); triple jump: Harry Gorman - first; Adam Sanno - second; 100m and 200m: Harry Gorman - third; 800m: Alfie Allan - second.

"The achievements of our BSME U13 team underscore the holistic approach that Doha College takes in promoting physical well-being and personal growth through the whole school sporting ethos," it was explained.

"By fostering a culture of en-

gagement in sports and co-curricular activities, Doha College empowers its students to thrive both athletically and academically, setting them on a path toward success and fulfilment in all aspects of their lives.

"Doha College's Physical Education Department is deeply engaged in a diverse array of sporting competitions including BSME, COBIS, QUESS, and QPSSA. Moreover, they provide a wide selection of sporting CCAs and the school collaborates with Evolution Sports to offer community-based sports clubs. These initiatives play a pivotal role in fostering the physical literacy of our students."

Sport Day preparations under way

Preparations are going on across Qatar to mark the National Sport Day on Tuesday, with special focus on engaging various categories of residents, regardless of age and background. Many government and private entities including schools and companies have prepared special events to gather their affiliates in lively and entertaining activities, mostly at the open air areas, in particular at the public gardens and parks.

Qatar's beaches are expected to receive huge influx of visitors to enjoy the fresh air, waves and beautiful scenery.

The first-ever National Sport Day in Qatar was declared in 2012, to stress the importance of pro-

moting a healthy lifestyle and encouraging everyone to embrace sport activities as way to improve their life.

The Aspire Zone Foundation has announced the details of its activities for the National Sport Day (NSD), which will include more than 20 diverse sporting events on its open fields in Aspire Park.

The foundation said that fans of sports and activity in the early morning can benefit from walking in Aspire Park, which receives visitors around the clock, as they can participate in various activities starting at eight in the morning until noon, while the area remains open for those wishing to enjoying sports for an extended period of time.

Pitch No 10 in Aspire Park will host several events, including: 3X3 basketball, football, the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum events, martial arts, Strongest Man in Qatar, Fitness for All race and other activities for children, while pitch No 11 will also host diverse activities including racing, running with the ball, tic-tac-toe, penalty shoot-outs, vertical jumping, horizontal jumping, speed and obstacle racing, rope jumping, and shooting accuracy.

Additionally, Football Performance & Science Department at Aspire is organizing a 12-team closed football tournament for the minor categories of local clubs on the Aspire Academy outdoor pitches No 8 and 9. (With inputs from QNA)

Stopover flight packages launched

From Page 1

These statistics underscore the significant accomplishments and momentum of Qatar's tourism sector, solidifying its status as a leading premier international destination."

He concluded: "Qatar will grow and improve assets and attractions as we will witness the unveiling of new attractions, such as the Meryal Waterpark and Ras Abrouq. Visit Qatar emphasises its keenness in providing overall service excellence for visitors to have a well-rounded Middle Eastern experience in one accessible, safe, and must-visit destination."

Al-Meer said: "Our 2024 network expansion offers a very exciting summer schedule, which includes our resumption to Venice and our new route to Hamburg, along with increased frequencies on various international routes."

RP compliance

Failure to complete residence permit proceedings by the employer or expatriate within 30 days from the date of entry to Qatar may draw a fine of QR10,000, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has said. "Ensuring completion of residence permit procedures within 30 days from entry into the country by both the employer and the expatriate helps prevent violations and demonstrates adherence to regulations and laws," MoI explained in a post on its X account.



SOIR DE FÊTE

The Soir de Fête collection is freely inspired by one of the Maison's most emblematic creations: the Fuchsia tiara known as "Bourbon-Parme". The flowers' petals are stylized, giving a deliberately modern reinterpretation of the collection's naturalist inspiration.

CHAUMET
PARIS

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VACHERON CONSTANTIN LAUNCHES THE PATRIMONY RETROGRADE DAY-DATE

The art of equilibrium, minimalist design meets watchmaking elegance

Imagining a timeless style is a quest that Vacheron Constantin has been pursuing since its foundation, as is once again demonstrated by this new Patrimony retrograde day-date watch in 950 platinum with a salmon-coloured dial. Heir to the grand stylistic and technical tradition of the Maison, this limited annual production timepiece reveals meticulous attention to detail in which the expression of minimalism is combined with technical excellence. The 42.5 mm-diameter 950 platinum case frames a salmon-coloured dial with a sunburst pattern reflecting the codes of the collection. The purity of the design matches the model's mechanical and aesthetic sophistication.



Beneath the 12 o'clock hour-marker sits a faceted Maltese cross in relief, the emblem of the Maison. Crafted in 18K 5N pink gold, it features facets that are sandblasted on one side and polished on the other, offering a new expression of the Vacheron Constantin symbol specific to this signature platinum case and salmon-coloured dial. The two retrograde (day and date) indications are made with blued steel hands in keeping with tradition, while the hours and minutes are displayed by 18K white gold hands. In classic 1950s style, the latter are subtly curved to match the shape of the domed dial with its intense reflections.



Vacheron Constantin Patrimony retrograde day-date



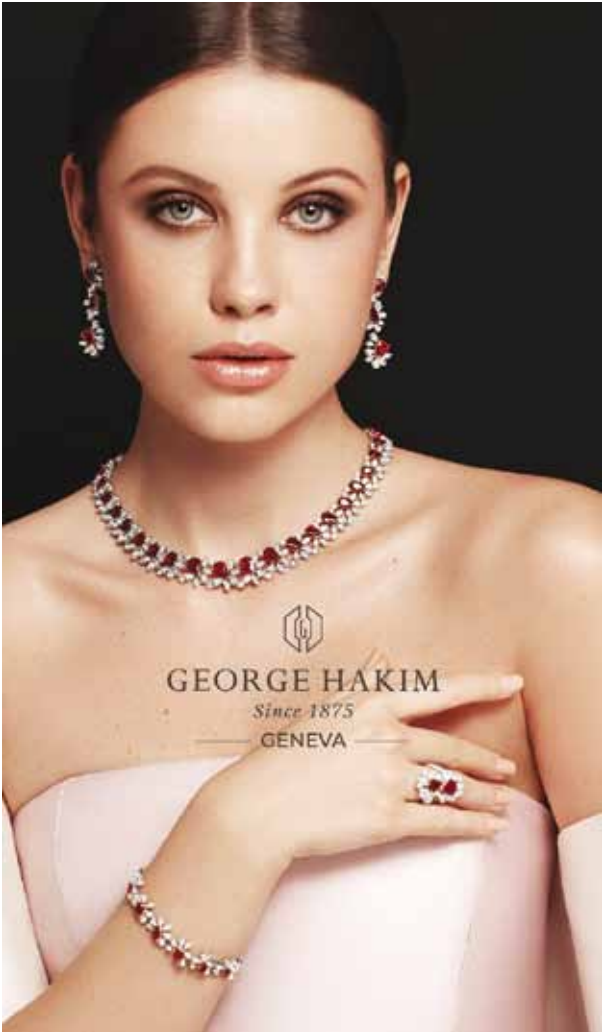
George Hakim House of Jewelry at Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition 2024

First founded by George Hakim in 1875, the eponymous jewelry maison spans four generations of family owners and almost 150 years of expertise.

The maison is known for its unmatched know-how and experience, as well as its use of the highest quality gemstones and of the finest craftsmanship to achieve undeniably elegant results that amaze. While rooted in classic beauty and tradition, George Hakim Jewelry House remains

abreast of the developments in the jewelry market to respond to its clientele's needs. A magical encounter with the maison is planned for the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition (DJWE) 2024 from February 5th to February 11th 2024 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

In addition to the Haute Joaillerie and Bridal collections, the colourful, youthful, and equally elegant Glam collection, as well as the elevated and classically inspired Gorgeous collection will be present at the exhibition. Choose your remarkable George Hakim piece to turn heads.



The Italian House of Piranesi is debuting its new high jewellery collection at DJWE 2024 in the Al Fardan Pavillion. Piranesi, in its third year at Al Fardan, has launched its collection in January 2024 in Villaggio Mall, Doha Festival City Mall, and Place Vendome Mall. Additionally, Piranesi has a newly designed and beautifully crafted salon at this year's exhibition. Most notably, the world's rarest ruby, sapphires, and emeralds will be on display at the Piranesi booth.

High Jewellery -VENDOME COLLECTION: Inspired by the iconic Place Vendôme in Paris, the Vendome Collection is a tribute to elegance and timeless style. Each piece in this collection features pear-shaped designs that echo the grandeur of this prestigious location. Meticulously crafted, the Vendome Collection brings an air of sophistication to any formal occasion.

Boutique Jewellery - FIORE COLLECTION: The Fiore Collection, where four petal flowers adorned with pave colored sapphires take center stage. The iconic design is the hallmark of the brand and a symbol of perfection. Each delicate petal whispers a story of elegance and grace, capturing the vibrance of the colored gemstones.





IWA celebrates Republic Day



The Indian Women's Association (IWA) hosted its inaugural event for 2024 by celebrating the Republic Day with the theme, 'Colours of our Soul: Unity in Diversity'. The array of activities, included a kite decorating competition and a quiz on historical events, showcasing the rich diversity and heritage of India and fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie among participants. IWA president Priya Bhedi, vice-president Monika Bhatnagar, general secretary Seema Rodrigues and the executive committee expressed gratitude to all participants and supporters.

QU YSC launches 'STEM in Sports' workshop

Qatar University's (QU) Young Scientists Center (YSC) launched the second cycle of its 'STEM in Sports' workshop, designed for 10th and 11th grade students in public schools. About 100 students participated in the exercise which aligns with the Qatar National Vision 2030, aiming to enhance students' knowledge and skills in STEM fields while exploring the relationship between technology and sports, especially artificial intelligence (AI).

The workshop emphasises hands-on activities; students learn about the latest technologies and can apply them. Students will present AI-based projects to address challenges in the sports field. This project will allow students to combine their theoretical knowledge with practical skills, leading to the development of innovative and practical solutions.

One of the highlights of the workshops is that students get the opportunity to learn and apply cutting-edge technology, such as 3D printing, for creating innovative sports equipment. They will visit the YSC lab at QU for practical training on 3D printing. Students are also assigned to design and produce 3D models and PowerPoint presentations, which will be presented in a final event. The goal of the competition is to recognise the most creative and high-quality projects.



Prof Noora Jabor al-Thani, YSC director stressed that the workshop is an important step towards achieving Qatar National Vision 2030 and offers students a unique opportunity to develop their passion and skills in STEM fields, especially by using AI to tackle sports-related problems.

"YSC is committed to providing an exceptional educational platform that helps students reach the highest levels of excellence in these vital fields. This commitment enhances their roles as active members and future leaders in society," she added.

Nicmarians alumni meet



The Qatar-based alumni of the National Institute of Construction Management and Research (Nicmar) University, Pune, India, held a meet in Doha. Registrar Dr Prashant Dave and admissions, marketing and outreach lead Hemanshu Sardana were the guests. Alumni Kamlesh Lal, Sanjay Malpani, Ashok Battula, Shashank Chauhan, Amit Umalkar, and many others shared their experiences in Qatar. Arun Jayakumar co-ordinated the event and welcomed the guests and Nicmarians.

Praxis 1.0 workshop organised



Cultural Forum organised a workshop titled 'Praxis 1.0' for select members. President R Chandramohan inaugurated the event. Vice-president Sadik Chennadan presided. Former president Dr Taj Aluva state committee member Rasheed Ahmad and Radio Malayalam director Anwar Hussain led various sessions, providing leadership in different sections. Public relations secretary Abdul Rahim Vengeri welcomed the gathering and former president A C Muneesh proposed a vote of thanks.



MIE-SPPU students shine at accounting contest

Students of MIE-SPPU Institute of Higher Education, Qatar Campus, excelled in an inter-university accounting event organised by Qatar Banking and Business Administration Higher Secondary School. In the girls' category, MIE-SPPU team with Shweta Prasad, Mirza Mohamed, Nicole Mary Goes, Krishna Santosh, and Shahd Khalid won the first place. The boys' team, with Ahmed Elsheikh, Rashid Mohamed, Farhan, Filhaz Zubair, and Sufiyan were second in their category. Acting president Yasir Nainar, said: "Their success reflects the dedication and hard work they have put into honing their skills. It also underscores the quality of education and guidance provided by our institution."



Sankranti celebrations by Telangana Jagruthi Qatar



Telangana Jagruthi Qatar (TJQ) hosted a spectacular Sankranti celebration at the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC). Attendees were treated to a kaleidoscope of cultural performances, traditional music, and dance routines that showcased the rich heritage of the festival. The highlight was an ethnic cooking competition. ICC general secretary Mohan Kumar was the chief guest. Indian Community Benevolent Forum president Shanavas Bava, Indian Sports Centre president E P Abdulrahman, community leaders Deepak Shetty, K V Boban, P N Baburajan, Koduru Shivaram Prasad, Krishna Kumar Bandhakavi, K K Usman, Satyanarayana Mallireddy, Gargy Vaidya, Kuldeep Kaur Bahl, Shankar Goud, Zareena Ahad, Abdul Raouf Kondotty, Mohamed Kunhi Thayilakandy, Ravindra Prasad, Harish Reddy, Ramaniah Gottipati, Venkappa Bhagavatula, Vikram Sukhavasi, Paniharam Choodamani, Madhu Maidam and Gaddi Raju were the guests.

KEF Toastmasters conducts annual speech contests



KEF Toastmasters Club conducted its annual speech contests led by managers, Rahul Rajendran and Bindu Pillai, on two days. The first and second place winners will represent the club in the Area 15 annual speech contests. The winners: Evaluation - Najla Azad, Pradip Sadiye, Remi Raji; Humorous speech - Sandeep Pandey, Nivin Nair, Ajinas Arangatt; Table topics - Najla Azad, Mary Shine Sajju, Meera Len Thomas; International speech - Najla Azad, Narendra Aryal, Manju Nair. The chief judges were R S K Naidu and Lakshmi Sarada.



MES finishes runner-up in Expat Scout Olympic Event



A team of scouts from MES Indian School won the second runner-up title among the 12 participating schools in the Expat Scout Olympic Event organised by the Qatar Scouts and Guides Association on February 6 at the Wakra Public Beach under the theme 'Scout Spirit Games: Unleashing Excellence'. Various events, such as flag-making relay, Alpine Green, mixed relay, Tidal Wave and London Bridge Relay were conducted. Scout activities consultant Ahmed Khamis B al-Yousef, first scout activities expert Muna Jumah al-Mansouri and expat schools co-ordinator Paramjeet Kaur Bhullar led the event. The MES team was accompanied by Rajesh K S and Blessy Peter.

PAS-Q, PSS host lecture on key role of teachers



Strategic planning expert Baber Malik delivered a lecture on the 'Role of Teachers in developing self-confidence in students' at Pak Shamaa School - Qatar (PSS). The event was a collaborative effort between Pakistan Arts Society - Qatar (PAS-Q) and PSS. Principal Nabila Kaukab welcomed the speaker. To provide attendees with a glimpse into Malik's background and accomplishments, a lighthearted yet informative face-to-face interview, 'Be My Guest' was conducted. This allowed the audience to connect with Malik on a personal

level, setting the stage for their increased engagement with his subsequent presentation. The lecture focused on the pivotal role that teachers play in fostering self-confidence in students. Malik's insights resonated deeply with the audience, prompting lively discussions and enthusiastic participation. Attendees lauded Malik's expertise and thought-provoking ideas. The key points of his presentation were defining self-confidence, education vs self-confidence, developing self-confidence and teacher's role, confidence-building exercises and what to expect from

confident students. Malik's profound insights into the importance of teachers in fostering student confidence left a lasting impression, inspiring educators and stakeholders. Following the lecture, he interacted with the audience, engaging in conversation that further enriched the educational discourse. On behalf of PSS and PAS-Q, Kaukab presented the guest speaker with a commemorative certificate. PAS-Q president Mohamed Abrar Hussain in his vote of thanks thanked the PSS management and PAS-Q chairman M A Shahid for their support.

DPS-MIS hosts art expo 'Aakaar 2024'

DPS Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) organised the second edition of the annual art exhibition 'Aakaar 2024' on the theme 'Sustainability'. Around 350 artworks and four collaborative projects by students and teachers were on display. Each piece curated for 'Aakaar 2024' narrated a unique story of sustainability, ecological awareness and cultural legacy, inviting visitors to ponder the synergy of artistic expression, the natural world, and the essence of humanity. School director Gopi Vardhan was the chief guest, Farhan al-Sheikh al-Sayed, president, Council of Modest Fashion, World of Fashion Designers and Culture; and Zeina Abbbara, a visual artist from Syria and member of the Souq Waqif Arts Center, Qatar Society for Fine Art and Sobhi Shuaib Center in Homs, Syria, was a special invitee.



RPS kindergarten holds sports day



The Kindergarten section of Rajagiri Public School (RPS) held its annual sports day featuring over 200 tiny tots. The event kicked off with a welcome speech by student Christina Chandy Alexander. Administrative director Jinsu Aju declared the meet open. The inaugural function witnessed a yoga dance performance. Principal Joshy Abraham hoisted the flag, symbolising the commencement of the games. Vice-principal S Radhakrishnan delivered the inaugural address.



BPS organises its annual sports meet



The 20th Annual Sports Meet of Birla Public School (BPS) was held at Al Arabi Sports Club Stadium recently. The chief guest, Indian embassy second secretary Bindu N Nair, declared the meet open. School chairman Gope Shahani, director C V Rappai, management representative Chindhu Antony, acting principal Radhika

Rele, non-academics head Vinod Kumar, vice principal Edna Fernandez and other officials were present. The chief guest declared the meet open, lit the torch and handed it over to the school sports captain Jerome Vijo. The torch was passed to various young athletes and sports champions who represented the school at various

national and international events, both in India and Qatar. Middle school children showcased the cultural diversity of India through dances. The chief guest gave away the medals and certificates. The meet concluded with the Mars House emerging as champions. The Student Council speaker Tarika Gorle proposed a vote of thanks.

RPS sustainability ambassadors meet Indian envoy



The sustainable development ambassadors of Rajagiri Public School (RPS) were hosted by the Indian ambassador Vipul. Accompanied by their teachers, the young environmental stewards engaged in a discussion about the crucial role they can play in fostering a sustainable future. RPS' participation in the Global Schools Programme under the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network was a key highlight of the meeting. The envoy directed the students to actively participate in India government's Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) project which envisions replacing the prevalent 'use-and-dispose' economy with a circular economy, defined by mindful and deliberate utilisation. He urged the students to undertake simple acts in their daily lives that can contribute significantly to climate change.

PPS bids farewell to Grade 12 students

Podar Pearl School (PPS) bid a grand farewell to its outgoing batch of Grade XII (2023-24). The ceremony was graced by the board of directors, principal, vice-principal, headmistress, co-ordinators, faculty and parents. Director Mohamed Nizar spoke. Class XI students presented a cultural programme.



Indian cultural shows held at Lusail Boulevard



Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, and its associated organisations are showcasing various performances as part of the ongoing 'Hayya Asia Festival' in Lusail Boulevard. On February 2, the Ernakulam District Social Organisation (EDSO) and IAM School, in collaboration with the ICC, presented 'Kala Chakram' (The Kerala Rhythms Festival), featuring performances of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Keralanadanam, Kaikottikali, and the ancient 11th-century martial art form, Kalarippayattu.



ICBF-organised free medical camp benefits workers



About 300 low-income workers, including fishermen, benefited from the 47th free medical camp hosted by the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF) recently at KimsHealth Medical Centre, Meshaf.

Indian ambassador Vipul inaugurated the camp. Indian embassy first secretary and ICBF co-ordinating officer Dr Vaibhav Tandale was present. ICBF president Shanavas Bava presided.

The services provided included consultations in General Medicine, ENT, Cardiology, Dental, Derma-

◆ Low-income workers, including fishermen, benefited from the 47th free medical camp hosted at the KimsHealth Medical Centre, Meshaf

tology, Orthopaedics and Physiotherapy. Transportation for attendees from different parts of Meshaf and Wakra was arranged under the leadership of Shankar Goud (head of fishermen committee).

KimsHealth executive director Nishad Azeem, administrator Dr Rahul Munikrishna and ICBF of-

icials including vice-president Deepak Shetty, general secretary Varkey Boban, managing committee members Sameer Ahamed, Abdul Raoof and Zareena Ahad were present. Secretary Mohamed Kunhi welcomed the gathering and treasurer Kuldeep Kaur proposed a vote of thanks.

QU honours short story contest winners



The Arabic Language Department at Qatar University (QU)'s College of Arts and Sciences, in collaboration with the Culture and Arts Chapter in the QU Alumni Association honoured winners of its Short Story Competition, held under the theme "Towards a Green Environment Full of Life".

The competition was held in connection with the ongoing Expo 2023 Doha.

Among the female students, the first place was won by Razan Ahmed al-Sheikh for her story *The Ditch*, second place was won by Jana Ahmed Zaghlul for her story *The Luminous Butterflies*, and in third place, Aisha Othman won

for her story *The Idelweis Flower*. Among the male students, the first place was won by Ahmed Ata al-Badeerat for his story *Two-Legged Beasts*, the second place was won by Mohamed Aziz Sharbeeb for his story *On the Threshold of the Abyss*, and the third place was won by Adel Abdel-Hameed for his story *Lina and Her Village*.

'Best Fan Leader' awarded

Influencer Obaid Tahir received the Best Fan Leader Award for Social Media from the Local Organising Committee of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023. The award is in recognition of his efforts to spread authentic information about the tournament which concludes today.



ICC conducts medical camp



The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, in association with Asian Medical Centre, organised a medical camp for the community. ICC officials, committee members, presidents of associated organisations and senior community leaders were present. A variety of medical services were offered at special prices. The initiative was executed by ICC's Youth Wing.



Sports fest brochure released



The brochure of the 10th Chaliyar Sports Fest organised by Chaliyar Doha on the occasion of Qatar National Sport Day was launched. Also released were the fixtures for the football, tug-of-war and women's penalty shoot-out tournaments to be held at Al Wakrah Sports Club on February 13.

Billawas Qatar elects new management panel



Indian expatriate forum Billawas Qatar has elected a new management committee for 2024-25 during the annual general meeting. The officials are: Sandeep Mallar (president), Aparna Sharath (vice-president), Mahesh Kumar (general secretary), Sandeep Kotian (joint general secretary), Ajay Kotian (treasurer), Pooja Jithin (cultural secretary), Shweta Suvarna (joint cultural secretary), Chanchalaxi Poojari (membership co-ordinator), Seema Umesh Poojari (sports secretary), Nithin Sanil (media co-ordinator) and Nithin Kumpala (logistic co-ordinator).

Area 15 conducts annual speech contests



Area 15 Toastmasters conducted its annual speech contests led by manager Babu M K. The first and second place winners will proceed to the Division D Toastmasters annual conference - Dare to Dream 2024 on March 1. Members from three clubs - KEF, Aitmaq and Al Kalema competed in four categories. The winners: Evaluation - Najla Azad, Nevine Kamel, Mufeedudheen V; Humorous speech - Sandeep Pandey, Jennifer Abdul Jaleel, Nivin Nair; Table topics - Nevine Kamel, Najla Azad, Mary Shine Saju; International speech - Najla Azad, Nevine Kamel, Narendra Aryal. Area 15 director Bindu Pillai congratulated the winners and thanked the jury panel headed by Sabari Prasad and Rajesh V C. Past district director Raghavan Menon and other guests were present.

Aitmaq Toastmasters holds annual speech contest



Aitmaq Toastmasters held its first-ever annual speech contest recently. The contestants were Mufeedudheen V, Wajahat Hussaini, Thahir Ali Naqash, Safvan Thettath, Niyas Haneef, Salman Abedi and Jennifer Jaleel. The event was supported by executive committee members and contest manager Sherin Joseph, who led a team of role players and it was also supported by area director Bindu Pillai, Babu M K, district logistics manager Pradip Sadiye and Division D director Eman Salameh. The judging panel was led by Naila Rizvan. The role players also included Rajiv Bhosale, Faizal V P, Mehjabin Cherulathodi, Afsal R P and Najla Azad.



The WOLF Churchill safe. **(Supplied pictures)**

WOLF marks 190th anniversary at DJWE 2024

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

WOLF – the renowned German makers of watch winders, watches and storage boxes – is celebrating its 190th anniversary at the ongoing Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE) 2024.

Making its debut is Silver box, a tribute to founder Philipp Wolf I's original creations and a major attraction at the WOLF booth, part of Fifty One East pavilion.

Marking WOLF's 190th anniversary, the silver-plated box has an engine-turned pattern, a LusterLoc treated deep blue ultrasuede interior and customisable removable inserts for watches, jewellery, and other valuables.

A standout this year is the bespoke Churchill safe, tailored by WOLF artisans to the buyer's preferences in leather, hardware colour, and interior configurations.

After being showcased at the DJWE, the unique creation will be moved to Fifty One East for a 6-month display.

The Silver box is inspired by the original silver boxes that Philipp Wolf I crafted in his workshop in Hanau, Germany.

A beautiful box for the dresser or coffee table, it features multiple inserts for the precious items.

From watches and jewellery to cufflinks or pens, it is the perfect way to protect the legacies.

It is silver plated with engine-turned exterior pattern and beautiful hidden piano hinged lid, and features multiple option jewellery or watch trays which can also be completely removed to use simply as a box.



A WOLF storage facility on show at the DJWE 2024. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Left: The WOLF Silver box.

"To say that I am proud of what we, as a company, have achieved would be a big understatement," said WOLF chief executive Simon Wolf. "The business has continued for five generations, 190 years, with many ups and downs, but always with a singular vision of making great product and taking care of the people who work in the company."

"I am humbled by how hard they work and care, it is an honour to work with such dedicated people," he added. "The future looks very exciting...here's to the next 190 years."

For safeguarding the most precious belongings, WOLF stands as the most intelligent choice.

While conventional safes merely shield the possessions, a WOLF safe or cabinet goes beyond, ensuring that the watches are not just secure but impeccably wound and ready to wear using patented watch winders, individually set and controlled by WOLF's Blue-tooth app, which count turns per day, unlike others which merely estimate rotations using time.

WOLF's curated collection of safes and cabinets, meticulously designed to cater to the discerning individual, offer the choice of size, finish and interior configurations for the watches, jewellery and valuables.

Swiss watchmakers TUDOR displaying the latest models

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

TUDOR, the renowned Swiss watch maker is showcasing some of its latest models at the ongoing Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE) 2024.

Situated at the Fifty One East pavilion, visitors can spot some of the most elegant time pieces by the renowned watch maker, including the new Black Bay 41mm steel case as well as the TUDOR Royal unveiled at Geneva's Watches & Wonders 2023.

The Black Bay GMT 41mm steel case features the latest technical and aesthetic evolution, highlighting its new whimsical opaline dial and TUDOR Royal, with two more exciting dial variants joining the range: Chocolate brown and Salmon.

Clients can also discover novelties from the past summer, including the new Pelagos FXD which pays tribute to decades of TUDOR watches on the wrists of US Navy divers.

Complete with fixed strap bars, a titanium case, a high-performance Manufacture Calibre and a unidirectional elapsed-time rotating bezel, it comes as the ultimate modern "Milsu".

TUDOR has introduced the newest Black Bay, the latest technical and aesthetic evolution of the



Another TUDOR Black Bay piece.

emblematic diving watch with a burgundy bezel, featuring evolved design elements, a "T-fit" clasp and is a master chronometer.

The original Black Bay, first launched in 2012 with a burgundy bezel, returns in a third evolution foregrounding the aesthetic and technical future of the line.

This emblematic design in the TUDOR collection is another example of TUDOR's expert command of one of the industry's most demanding standards in terms of chronometry and resistance to magnetic fields.

The Black Bay brings together cutting-edge watchmaking technology with design elements inspired by TUDOR's nearly seven-decade heritage of making robust professional diving watches.

TUDOR presents a new version of its Black Bay line in steel with a fixed bezel. All fitted with Manufacture Calibres, the models come in four sizes, with a five-link bracelet and clasp with rapid adjustment.

The Black Bay 31/36/39/41 models bring a unique aesthetic to the Black Bay line.

The curved cases feature a combination of finishes that elevates the watch in a contemporary fashion and offers a design language that slightly departs from the brand's iconic tool watch spirit to embrace a sophisticated, versatile, unisex chic look and feel.

With its integrated metal bracelet, notched or diamond-set bezel and automatic movement, the TUDOR Royal range is the epitome of versatile and affordable sport-chic, and now there are two more



The TUDOR Royal.



One of the timepieces from the TUDOR Black Bay Collections.

exciting dial variants joining the range.

TUDOR has expanded the dial range of the Royal to include radial-brushed Salmon and Chocolate Brown dials that offer an unexpected and exquisite aesthetic.

The Royal range offers self-winding, sporty and chic watches with integrated bracelets that are as affordable as they are aesthetically sophisticated.

Boasting first-class technical performance and a refined aesthetic, this line sits at the crossroads between classic and sports watches.



Another piece from Annamaria Cammilli.

Annamaria Cammilli makes Doha debut

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Fifty One East has introduced the latest addition to its portfolio, Annamaria Cammilli, at the Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE) 2024, which concludes tomorrow at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

With more than 40 years of expertise, the brand is a leader in jewellery making, embodying 100% "Made in Italy" production and exclusive designs.

Rooted in goldsmith specialisation and inspired by Florence's artistry, Cammilli's identity thrives on unconditional excellence.

Notably, Cammilli's jewels feature a unique finish, "Aetherna" (Latin for eternal or everlasting), blending shiny and silky effects for lasting depth.

The Maison offers eight sophisticated shades of 18-carat gold, contributing to the worldwide acclaim of its creations.

Sculptural forms define collections, like Couture, Dune, and Firenze, showcase Cammilli's recognisable, three-dimensional aesthetic.

Cammilli's jewels stand out on the international scene for their strong artistic component, recognisable in the original design and unmistakable sculptural appearance of the volumes.

A three-dimensionality emphasised by the special velvety finish of the gold surfaces gives life to unprecedented plays of light and shadow on the Maison's eight sophisticated shades of gold.

The expert hands of Cammilli's designers mould unprecedented shapes in wax, generating true miniature sculptures: this is the secret of the extraordinary three-dimen-

sionality of Cammilli jewellery, of volumes that convey the illusion of constant movement.

The first shape carved in wax is subsequently replicated through lost wax casting, which allows the sinuous shapes resulting from the hands of the creative team to be enhanced and imprinted in gold.

In this process, sculptural skills, decades of experience, creative flair and meticulous attention to detail come together to create new and unexpected forms, the direct result of an artistic talent that cannot be reproduced or imitated.

The three-dimensionality of the shapes is enhanced by the alternation of the polished surfaces and the special velvety finish of gold that gives the jewels an original and recognisable aesthetic impact.

"Aetherna" is the exclusive gold finishing method that has always distinguished Cam-



From one of the Annamaria Cammilli collections on show at the DJWE 2024. **(Supplied pictures)**

Expert explores Iran's 'Axis of Resistance' strategy at GU-Q talk

In a public talk at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), Middle East expert Dr Daniel Brumberg shared his observations on evolving challenges facing Iran and its "axis of resistance" as it seeks to contain and control the dynamic of escalation that has followed the events of October 7.

The author of *Reinventing Khomeini*, among other books, Dr Brumberg serves as a senior adviser to the Democracy and Governance programme at Georgetown University and is a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at Arab Centre in Washington DC.

Moderating the event, GU-Q professor of government and au-

thor of *Righteous Politics: Power and Resilience in Iran* (2023), Dr Mehran Kamrava, introduced Dr Brumberg as "one of the most astute observers of the Middle East".

In his talk, Dr Brumberg deconstructed a resistance strategy that increasingly requires Iran to balance its military, political, and diplomatic goals while maintaining internal stability as it sets the stage for leadership succession.

"The axis of resistance is essentially a balancing act, a strategy to reach a 'sweet spot' between multiple agendas and multiple goals, whose ultimate goal is regime survival," he said.

Highlighting the complexity of

this balance, Dr Brumberg noted: "We have to recognise that the narrative of resistance is constantly changing and integrating new elements."

"It has a much wider global perspective and has been enlarged to include Russia and China," he said, adding that "China's role in helping the birth and resumption of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia is fundamental to the diplomatic process".

"So resistance also means diplomacy and bringing into the camp new allies," the expert said.

Dr Brumberg further argued that the balancing act requires sustaining relationships with regional al-



Dr Daniel Brumberg (left) and Dr Mehran Kamrava at the talk.

lies in a way that assures Iran that it can defend its military and economic interests while averting any risk of a full-scale war with the US or Israel.

A meaningful end to the conflict in Gaza, one that leads to a diplomatic process, is essential for the de-escalation of tensions with

Iran, Dr Brumberg stressed.

"Only if there's a ceasefire in Gaza can we hope for the escalation that's occurring to stop and go back in the opposite direction," he stated.

Following the lecture, Dr Brumberg engaged in further interaction with the audience, part of an on-

going dialogue fostered during his week-long engagement with the GU-Q.

His visit, part of the Short-term DC Faculty Visitors programme initiated by dean Safwan Masri, included meeting with students and giving several lectures as part of the Faculty Seminar Series.

HBKU's Middle East Conference to explore gender, technology, digital cultures

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)'s College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) is partnering with the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)'s Middle East Centre to organise the second edition of its Middle East Conference under the theme *Gender, Technology, and Digital Cultures in the Middle East*.

Taking place February 18-19, the conference will convene experts from the humanities, social sciences domain and beyond to explore the nuanced interplay between these three fields of study.

Attendees can attend these discussions in-person at Minaretein, Education City, or view online via YouTube, a statement said.

On February 18, the event will feature panel discussions on *Gender and Feminisms in Media Practices in the Middle East*.

Presenters will analyse women's digital activism as well as the theories and practices of feminism in the region and also discuss the methods and ethics involved in researching gender within digital contexts.

On February 19, conversations will revolve around *Digital Insights and Challenges in the Middle East: Computational Text Analysis, Misinformation, and Hate Speech*.

These discussions will focus on how computational techniques can analyse media content in the Middle East, focusing on patterns, trends, and narratives and the

importance of identifying and addressing the spread of misinformation in the region's social media channels.

Other topics include an examination of how social media analytics can be used to gauge political sentiment in the Middle East, and how advanced computational approaches aimed at processing the Arabic language can aid social media analysis in the region.

In support of the Palestinian people during the current crisis, many of the topics to be discussed throughout the two days revolve around the Palestinian struggle.

The conference culminates in a special panel on *Digital Activism and Storytelling for Palestine*, which demonstrates the

event organisers' and the CHSS's dedication to amplifying and strengthening Palestinian voices.

The event will also feature two keynote speakers.

Dr Hoda Elsadda, professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University, and co-founder of the Women and Memory Forum, will deliver a talk on *Feminist Digital Archives for Change: The Story of the Women and Memory Forum*.

Dr David Kaufer, Mellon Distinguished Professor of English and Rhetoric Emeritus at Carnegie Mellon University, will hold a lecture on *Studying Arab Women Activism Digitally: The Case of DocuScope*.

Commenting on the Middle East Conference's importance as a regional plat-

form, interim CHSS dean and economics professor Dr Hassan Hakimian, who is also the director of Middle Eastern Studies Department at the CHSS, said: "The conference gives us an important opportunity to address interesting and multi-layered aspects of the challenges facing our region at a time it continues to under a global spotlight."

"With our partners at the LSE's Middle East Centre, we look forward to many robust conversations within multidisciplinary fields of humanities and social sciences," he said, adding: "Events such as these enable the CHSS to extend its network and to keep abreast of current trends in research and contribute to understanding them."

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GULF TIMES

Germany on strike: Winter of discontent tests industrial model

The latest spate of strikes by German train drivers made life difficult for Bentheimer Eisenbahn AG, a 129-year-old freight and logistics company that lost 10% of its sales in January and worries it may lose important clients.

The drivers' strike, one of the longest in their union's history, is part of a wave of industrial action inflicting pain on an already vulnerable economy and sparking calls to reform Germany's prized industrial model for worker relations.

The latest walkout saw Lufthansa ground staff go on strike on Wednesday, disrupting major hubs such as Frankfurt.

While Germany still loses a fraction of its working days to strikes compared to some of its peers, the number is rising, and scenes of snarled roads, empty airports and millions of passengers stranded have blemished its image.

"It's a toxic cocktail that's brewing... Everything comes together: poor quality, poor infrastructure, then the strikes on top of that. The system can't cope with that," said Joachim Berends, Bentheimer Eisenbahn's CEO.

"And the employees...are sawing at the branch they themselves are sitting on if they overdo it," he told Reuters.

Germany's labour market has tightened further in recent years as the post-World War Two generation of workers retires and the population ages, giving greater leverage to unions in their negotiations.

Unions are pressing for higher wages and improved working conditions to help workers cope with a cost-of-

living crisis in which inflation has climbed as high as 8.8% and real wages have dropped for three years in a row since 2020.

The German economy, Europe's largest, has a proud union tradition stretching back into the 19th century and relies on a collective-bargaining model that is meant to prevent strife.

The German train drivers' union, for example, was founded in 1867. Only a trade union is allowed to organise a strike in Germany; political strikes, such as those against pension policy in France last year, are banned.

In Germany, an average of 17.8 working days per 1,000 employees were lost due to strikes between 2020 and 2022.

This compares to 37.3 in Spain, 79.1 in France and 88.9 in Britain, the latter having seen a large jump in industrial action for example by doctors, railway, bus and metro workers, according to the European Trade Union Institute.

However, Germany's number has also been on the rise since the start of this century, from 12.6 in 2000-2009, to 17.3 in 2010-2019.

"The increasing number of strikes in Germany is having an increasingly negative impact on the entire economy," Marcel Fratzscher, president of the German Institute for Economic Research, was quoted as saying by the Tagesspiegel newspaper.

Besides striking workers, farmers protesting against subsidy cuts used their tractors to block roads, dumped manure on the streets and tried to storm a ferry carrying Economy Minister Robert Habeck.

The walkouts are starting to take a toll on an economy that is verging on recession.

A one-day nationwide rail strike costs around €100mn (\$107mn) a day in economic output, according to Michael Groemling, head of economic affairs at IW Koeln.

Commerzbank chief economist Joerg Kraemer estimated that the strike would reduce value creation in the transport sector by €30mn per day, which corresponds to 0.3% of daily gross domestic product.

"In addition, the rail strike is straining the nerves of the public and scratching the already tarnished image of Germany as a business location," Kraemer said. - Reuters

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Qatar and Hungary aim to broaden ties

Relations between Qatar and Hungary are based on decades of friendship, mutual respect, and the sharing of many social and humanitarian values. The two countries have a common and firm belief in the importance of maintaining international peace and stability, settling disputes through dialogue and peaceful means and having an active and influential role in this matter at the regional and international levels.

In the context of these principles and as an embodiment of its noble goals, the official visit of Hungarian President Katalin Novak to Doha aims to discuss bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them in various fields, as well as review the most important and current international issues of mutual interest.

President Novak's visit is expected to further contribute to improving bilateral relations in many fields as well as launch new horizons of co-operation thus servicing the goals, aspirations and common interests of the two countries and their friendly peoples.

Qatar and Hungary established relations at the level of non-resident embassies in 1990. Relations witnessed a major shift in 2004 with the opening of the two countries' embassies, representing the keenness to develop relations between the two sides and build bridges of co-operation and joint work, which even grew stronger during the past years.

The relations have grown in many fields and have reached an unprecedented level thanks to high-level visits exchanged between the two sides and the signing of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoU) in the fields of politics, commercial, industry, culture, art, tourism, sports, air services, energy, economics, business, education, higher education and scientific research, as well as avoidance of double taxation and prevention of financial evasion.

These relations were consolidated after the important official visit made by His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani to Hungary on June 12, 2002, while the first visit of a Hungarian president to Qatar was by former president Janos Ader in May 2014.

When it comes to recent visits between Qatar and Hungary, the most prominent was His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's official visit to Hungary in August last year, during which His Highness discussed with President Novak and Prime Minister Viktor Orban co-operation relations and ways to strengthen and advance them, notably in the economy, investment and energy fields, as well as discussing the most prominent regional and international topics and developments of mutual interest.

The Amir and the prime minister also witnessed the signing of agreements between the governments of the two countries in environmental protection, diplomatic training, youth and sports and agriculture.



Following the Amir's visit to Budapest, Qatar and Hungary announced that they had raised the level of bilateral relations to the level of a strategic one.

Orban also recently made several visits to Doha, the most recent of which was in May 2023, where he expressed his country's intention to raise its relationship with Doha to a strategic level to become one of its most important political and economic partners.

Mutual visits at all levels and agreements signed between Qatar and Hungary contributed to bringing the countries' business communities and investors together.

In July 2023, Budapest hosted the third session of the Qatari-Hungarian Joint Economic Committee. The session discussed co-operation in various key sectors such as trade, investment, construction, infrastructure, agriculture, maritime transport, civil aviation, health, education and information technology.

Qatar and Hungary also agreed during the third session to take the necessary steps to move forward in consolidating trade and investment co-operation between the two countries with the aim of increasing the volume of trade exchange and facilitating the flow of goods, services and investments.

Last March, a round of political consultations was held in Budapest between the foreign ministries of Qatar and Hungary where they discussed co-operation relations between the

two sides and ways to support and enhance them.

With their interest in developing economic and trade relations and exploring broader horizons for intra-trade, the prospects for co-operation between Qatar and Hungary appear promising in the future.

In 2022, the volume of trade exchange between Qatar and Hungary reached about \$77mn, showing that the two countries are still far from utilising all the trade opportunities and capabilities available.

Hungary hopes that Qatar will become a leading export destination in the future for Hungarian companies while Qataris can view Hungary as a leading investment destination, especially in the automobile industry, chemical industries, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure projects, agriculture and more.

The investment climate in Hungary also stimulates the establishment of joint Qatari-Hungarian projects. There is great interest on Budapest's part in facilitating business for Qatari investors and the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) supports the establishment of these joint projects.

On the other hand, the market in Qataris full of opportunities for cooperation, especially in light of the incentives provided by the state to encourage investments notably in the sectors of industry, agriculture, tourism and more.

The investment environment in Qatar is encouraging and its laws, legislation and procedures facilitate the launch and practice of business. There is an advanced infrastructure as well as many opportunities in the free and industrial zones.

Located in Central Europe surrounded by land on all sides and with no access to the sea, Hungary has an area of about 93,000 sq km and its population is estimated at 9.7mn. Forests cover about 20% of its lands, and its key river is the Danube River.

Hungary is also a global tourist destination that is visited annually by about 30mn people due to its picturesque nature and is also known for its hot baths that are used for natural treatment.

The Hungarian economy is currently based mainly on the services sector, which represents two-thirds of the GDP, followed by industry at 24%, and the agricultural and construction sectors. The automotive industry and related industries occupy advanced positions within the industrial sector, as some German and Japanese companies make large investments in this field.

Hungary is actively seeking to attract more foreign investments, especially as it is rich in many natural resources, the most important of which are: bauxite, coal, iron ore, manganese, natural gas and oil. It exports machinery, equipment, agricultural products, food and livestock, and mainly imports fuel and mineral raw materials.

Ambassadors see new areas of co-operation

Qatar's ambassador in Budapest, Abdullah bin Falah al-Dosari, said Hungarian President Katalin Novak would discuss several topics during her official visit to Doha, especially ways to develop multi-field relations and investment between the two countries and the situation in the region.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said Qatar has great confidence that Hungary's presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2024 would help reach the best results to stop the conflicts and wars across the world.

Further visits by delegations from both countries are expected in the coming period and multi-area joint committees are currently being worked on, he said, adding that both sides will hold the fourth session of the Joint Economic Committee in Doha during the second half of 2024, under the chairmanship of HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani and Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto.

Highlighting co-operation between the two countries, the ambassador spoke about the economic, cultural, political and energy sectors, especially in investment and exchange of experiences in various fields, highlighting that Hungary will receive in early 2026 the first Qatari LNG batch.

Hungary has been supporting Qatar on several occasions including before and during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, he added, noting that Hungary was at the forefront of the European countries that granted Qatari citizens in particular obstacle-free Schengen visas like a number of other European countries.

He added that bilateral relations are rapidly growing and have been elevated to a strategic partnership after His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's official visit to Hungary on Aug 20-21, 2023, coinciding the National Day of Hungary.

During the visit, the Amir signed some bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), and several joint committees convened including the joint economic committee, and the political dialogue, he added.

The ambassador also highlighted Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's visit to Qatar in May 2023 to participate in the Third Qatar Economic Forum, as well as other joint visits by a number of ministers from both countries.

He concluded that several co-operation agreements and MoUs, currently under study, are hoped to be completed by the end of 2024 to be added to previous agreements and MoUs that



Qatar's ambassador in Budapest, Abdullah bin Falah al-Dosari (left) and Hungary's ambassador to Qatar, Ferenc Korom.

included an agreement for bilateral co-operation in the areas of youth and sports, a co-operation MoU in agriculture, an MoU on environmental protection, and a co-operation MoU in diplomatic training.

Meanwhile, Hungary's ambassador to Qatar Ferenc Korom affirmed that President Novak's visit to Doha aims to conclude new agreements in new areas of co-operation. He pointed out that this visit is a continuation of the diplomatic visits that began during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 finals and aims to strengthen the healthy relationship based on mutual respect between the two countries.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the Hungarian ambassador said: "The most prominent file that will be discussed is the matter of peace and family. Both our countries are seeking peace and stability and are in favour of immediate peace in the Ukrainian-Russian crisis as well as in the Gaza crisis. Hungary's long-standing relationship with Qatar is based on decades of friendship and mutual respect, as our countries share many common social and human values, and the same position in a number of issues of high importance in political and social affairs."

He added: "Relations between our nations are strong and solid as ever, Hungary and Qatar have reached a never before seen level of diplomatic visits on both sides in the last 14 months. Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban has visited the State of Qatar twice recently, during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and Qatar Economic Forum in May 2023."

The ambassador stressed that the Hungarian government together with its people were honoured and pleased to welcome His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on his historic visit to Hungary, which was a wonderful opportunity for the leaders of the two countries to raise the two nations' relationship to a strategic level.

Concerning the economic aspect, he pointed out that the bilateral trade exchange has reached historical levels in recent years in light of the recent political bilateral visits.

"The Hungarian Export Promotion Agency (HEPA) in close co-operation with Qatar Development Bank are actively matching up Hungarian agricultural and food producing companies with their potential Qatari counterparts in the form of business forums. I hope that Qatar will soon become a top export destination for Hungarian companies owing to this government effort," he said.

Ambassador Korom explained: "The bilateral agreements entered under discussion are areas of investment, health and agriculture or defence, among many others. But the most important at the moment is to finalise the bilateral investment protection agreement between our nations making it a significant development and a move forward in the relationship."

He pointed out that the Hungarian government is interested in Qatar becoming a strategic investor in the fields of air transport, real estate, the hotel industry, defence industries, and others. (QNA)



Putin tells West: Russia can't lose in Ukraine, not interested in expanding the war

AFP/Reuters
Washington/Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said in an interview that aired on Thursday that Russia will fight for its interests “to the end” but has no interest in expanding its war in Ukraine to other countries such as Poland and Latvia.

Putin also said in the interview with controversial right-wing US talk show host Tucker Carlson that the West should understand it is “impossible” to defeat Russia in Ukraine.

Putin spoke in Russian and his remarks were dubbed into English. He began with lengthy remarks about Russia’s relations with Ukraine, Poland and other countries.

Putin devoted a substantial part of the interview to complaining that Ukraine had been on the verge of agreeing a deal to end hostilities at talks in Istanbul in April 2022,

but backed away, he said, once Russian troops withdrew from near Kyiv.

“Well now let them think how to reverse the situation,” he said. “We’re not against it. It would be funny if it were not so sad that. This endless mobilisation in Ukraine, the hysteria, the domestic problems, sooner or later it will result in an agreement.”

In the two-hour interview with the former Fox News host – coming just ahead of the two-year anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine – Putin also said a deal “can be reached” on imprisoned *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich.

“There are certain terms being discussed via special services channels,” he said, while insisting that the reporter is a spy – something the Journal and US government vehemently deny.

It was the first one-on-one interview of Putin by someone from the Western media since 2019.

However Carlson, who is close



Putin is seen with Carlson in Moscow during the interview.

to White House candidate and former president Donald Trump, asked few tough questions and largely listened while the Kremlin leader lectured him on his views of Russian history, portraying the country as a victim of Western betrayals.

Putin defended his decision to invade Ukraine in February 2022.

And he said that the West now realises that Russia will not be defeated, despite US, European and

Nato assistance to Ukraine.

“Up until now, there has been the uproar and screaming about inflicting a strategic defeat to Russia on the battlefield. But now they are apparently coming to realise that it is difficult to achieve, if possible, at all. In my opinion, it is impossible by definition,” he said.

He also aimed a message at the US Congress, where Trump-dominated Republicans are increasingly reluctant to keep backing

Ukraine with weapons and other military aid.

“I will tell you what we are saying on this matter and what we are conveying to the US leadership. If you really want to stop fighting, you need to stop supplying weapons,” he said.

When asked if Moscow would consider invading other countries in the region – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) members Poland and Latvia – or generally across the European continent, Putin said that was “out of the question”.

“We have no interest in Poland, Latvia or anywhere else. Why would we do that? We simply don’t have any interest. It’s just threat mongering,” Putin said.

A war with Poland, he said, would happen “only in one case: if Poland attacks Russia”.

Asked about a possible change in leadership after the US election, where Biden is expected to face off against Trump in a rematch of their 2020 contest, Putin indicated he

would see little change.

“You just asked me if another leader comes and changes something? It is not about the leader,” the president responded. “It is not about the personality of a particular person”.

Facing Putin in matching white chairs with a small table between them, Carlson rarely pushed back in his interview in an ornate room at the Kremlin – recorded on Tuesday and posted on Carlson’s own website – and did not challenge Putin over his relationship with Trump.

While president and since being defeated by Biden, Trump has repeatedly praised Putin and failed to condemn the invasion of Ukraine – saying that if he was re-elected he would be able to solve the war in “24 hours”, though not saying how.

By contrast, Biden has branded Putin a “war criminal” and has made backing for Ukraine’s elected, pro-Western government one of the key priorities of his presidency.

UN: Almost 10% of Gaza’s under-5s are now acutely malnourished

Almost one in 10 of Gazan children under five are now acutely malnourished, overwhelmingly as a result of Israel’s war on the territory’s Hamas rulers, according to initial UN data from arm measurements that show physical wasting.

The food supplies that Gaza depends on have shrivelled from their pre-war level, and aid workers have reported visible signs of starvation, especially in areas of northern and central Gaza worst hit by Israel’s war on Hamas since October 7.

Measurements of thousands of young children’s and infants’ arm circumferences showed that 9.6% were acutely malnourished, up about 12 times from pre-war levels, according to a note from the UN humanitarian office, OCHA.

In northern Gaza, the rate was 16.2%, or one in six.

Food trucks have in recent weeks regularly been mobbed by hungry crowds before they could reach the hospitals they were heading for, according to aid workers.

The charity ActionAid said some Gazans were eating grass.

“Every single person in Gaza is now hungry, and people have just 1.5-2 litres of unsafe water per day to meet all their needs,” it said.

The international non-profit organisation Project HOPE said around 15% of the pregnant women it had assessed in its Deir Al-Balah clinic in central Gaza last week were malnourished.

It also reported a surge in anaemia, or iron deficiency, which can increase premature births and postpartum bleeding.

Dr Santosh Kumar, its medical director, who returned from Gaza last week, said he and his team had limited themselves to one meal a day in solidarity with the Gazans.

“People are starving, people have no dignity,” he said. “People said to me: ‘Dead people are luckier’” – **Reuters**

Senegal security forces stop rally after protest call

Senegalese security forces used tear gas to disperse people attempting to gather in the capital yesterday after being urged to mobilise against a last-minute delay of presidential elections.

Anti-riot police kept back groups of people trying to get to the large Place de la Nation in central Dakar, where a rally had been planned. Some demonstrators responded by throwing stones and all access points to the square were closed off, AFP journalists saw.

“The situation is deplorable. We came to pray and we got gassed. It’s intolerable,” Thierno Alassane Sall, one of the 20 candidates who had been due to vie for the presidency, told AFP. “The Senegalese must be outraged and not just on social media.”

In a test of the balance of power between President Macky Sall and opponents, people were urged to show their opposition yesterday to Sall’s sudden decision to postpone the February 25 election by 10 months. – **AFP**

Two killed in Pakistan poll protest as Khan allies lead in vote count

AFP/Reuters
Islamabad

Candidates loyal to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan were ahead in Pakistan’s election yesterday, in front of the two dynastic parties believed favoured by the military, as the vote count entered its final leg.

Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was faring better than expected despite a crackdown targeting the party, but the next government was still likely to be formed by the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) after a spell of horse trading with other parties and independents.

“We don’t have enough of a majority to run the government ourselves, therefore we invite the other parties and candidates who have been successful to work with us,” PML-N founder and three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif said at his party headquarters in Lahore.

Latest results in a slow counting process showed independents – most of them Khan loyalists – had so far won around 95 of the 234 seats called for the 266 elected seats in the national assembly.

The PML-N had won 65 and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) snapped up 51 as the count continued. The remainder of the seats decided went to minor parties.

Most of the seats won by Khan loyalists were in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where police said at least 20 PTI supporters were killed and more than 20 injured when they rioted yesterday in Shangla district – the first serious post-election violence reported since Thursday’s vote.

“Due to the intense stone-pelting by PTI workers, two protesters were hit by stones and lost their lives,” local police official Sahibzada Sajjad Ahmed told AFP.

There were also protests against allegedly rigged results in Peshawar, capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Quetta in Balochistan province.

Khan was barred from contesting the election and his party subject to a sweeping crackdown – blocked from holding rallies and taken off the ballot, forcing candidates to run as independents.

Independent members cannot form a government on their own under Pakistan’s election system, which includes reserved seats that will be allotted to parties based on their winnings.

However, independent members have the option to join any party after the elections.

A nationwide election day mobile telephone blackout and slow result counting led to suspicions the military-led establishment could be rigging the process to ensure success for Nawaz.

“But even if PTI is unable to form a government, the elections show there are limits to political engineering,” Bilal Gilani, executive director of polling group Gallup Pakistan, told AFP.

“It shows that the military does not always get their way – that is the silver lining.”

Analysts have predicted there may be no clear winner, adding to the woes of a country struggling to recover from an economic crisis while it grapples with rising militant violence in a deeply polarised political environment.

“A timely announcement of the results, leading to a smooth formation of a new government will reduce policy and political uncertainty,” Moody’s Investors Service said. “This is crucial for the country that is facing very challenging macroeconomic conditions.”

Sharif has dismissed talk of an unclear result but a close aide, Ishaq Dar, told GEO TV that the party could form a

coalition with the support of independents.

“I am confident that we will form a government,” Dar said.

Sharif’s PML-N had been expected to win the most seats following Thursday’s vote, with analysts saying its 74-year-old founder had the blessing of the military-led establishment.

The PPP, whose popularity is largely limited to its Sindh heartland, also did better than expected, with leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari saying early results were “very encouraging”.

The PML-N and PPP joined forces with minor parties to boot Khan from office in April 2022 after his PTI had won a slender majority in the 2018 election.

The former international cricketer then waged an unprecedented campaign of defiance against the military-led establishment, which originally backed his rise to power.

Khan was convicted last week of treason, graft and having an un-Islamic marriage in three separate trials – among nearly 200 cases brought against him since being ousted.

Allegations of poll rigging, as well as authorities’ hours-long shutdown of Pakistan’s mobile phone network, overshadowed election day itself.

Enter the dragon



People gather to look at a giant dragon figure at a park in Beijing yesterday, the eve of the Lunar New Year of the Dragon.

Malaysia’s top court strikes down certain state laws

Malaysia’s top court has declared unconstitutional more than a dozen religious laws enacted by the state of Kelantan, in a landmark decision that could affect similar laws in other parts of the country.

Malaysia has a dual-track legal system with Islamic criminal and family laws applicable to Muslims running alongside secular laws. Islamic laws are enacted by state legislatures while secular laws are passed by Malaysia’s parliament.

A nine-member Federal Court bench, in an 8-1 decision, declared 16 laws in Kelantan’s Shariah criminal code “void and invalid”.

Chief Justice Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat, who delivered the majority judgment, said the northeastern state had no authority to enact the laws, as the subject matter was covered under parliament’s law-making powers.

“The essence of those provisions are matters under the federal list, which only parliament has the power to make,” she said.

Justice Tengku Maimun said the case did not have anything to do with the position of Islam in the country, only on whether the Kelantan legislature had acted beyond its powers.

“Seen from this position, the issue of the civil court not upholding Islam or the Shariah courts does not arise,” she said. – **Reuters**

Bolsonaro surrenders passport in coup probe

Brazil’s ex-president Jair Bolsonaro surrendered his passport on Thursday as police raids targeted him over allegations of orchestrating an invasion of government buildings last year.

Federal police said they were carrying out 33 search and seizure operations and executing four arrest warrants in an investigation of a “criminal organisation involved in the attempted coup” – a reference to Bolsonaro supporters’ storming of the presidential palace, Congress and Supreme Court on January 8, 2023. – **AFP**

Bad weather delays Tuvalu government from forming

Stormy weather has delayed the forming of a government in Tuvalu, with freshly-elected lawmakers unable to reach parliament yesterday, weeks after the Pacific nation went to the polls. Senior electoral officer Semi Malaki told AFP that around half of the 16 elected members remained stranded on outer islands and were having trouble reaching the capital Funafuti due to high winds and rough seas. – **AFP**

Harry settles UK hacking lawsuit against *Mirror* tabloid

AFP
London

Britain’s Prince Harry has settled a long-running lawsuit against Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN) but vowed to continue his legal battles with several other UK media outlets.

The Duke of Sussex sued MGN – which publishes the *Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror* and *Sunday People* tabloids – alleging that its journalists were linked to deceptive and unlawful methods, including phone hacking.

A High Court judge ruled in the prince’s favour in December, concluding phone hacking had been “widespread and habitual” at MGN titles in the late 1990s and the duke’s phone had been tapped to a “modest extent”.

Judge Timothy Fancourt awarded him £140,600 (\$177,300) in damages, after finding evidence of these practices in 15 of the 33 sample articles that Harry had submitted in the case.

Harry’s legal claim had included a further 115 articles, and they might have become the subject of a further trial.

However, following a High Court hearing yesterday, not attended by Harry, his lawyer David Sherborne confirmed a settlement had been reached with MGN to end the outstanding parts of his claim.

“Everything we said was happening at Mirror Group was in fact happening and indeed far worse, as the court ruled in an extremely damaging judgment,” Harry said in a statement read out by Sherborne outside court.

“As I said back in December, our mission continues,” he added. “I believe in the positive change it will bring for all of us. It is the very reason why I started this and why I will continue to see it through to the end.”

MGN will pay him “a substantial additional sum by way of damages and all the costs of his claim”, Sherborne revealed.

He said this included an interim pay-

ment towards the costs of £400,000.

Harry, the younger son of King Charles III, is one of seven high-profile people, including Elton John, bringing legal action against the publisher of the *Daily Mail* over allegations of unlawful information gathering.

He and actor Hugh Grant are also suing News Group Newspapers (NGN), part of Rupert Murdoch’s global media empire and publisher of the *Sun* and the now-defunct *News Of The World* tabloids, over similar claims.

However, Harry last month dropped his libel case against UK newspaper the *Mail* on Sunday over an article on his separate legal battle with the UK government over security arrangements when he is in Britain.

In the now-settled MGN case, Harry became the first British royal in over a century to take to the witness stand when he gave evidence in the trial.

The last time a royal had given evidence in court was in the 1890s, when the future king Edward VII took the

Doha ‘a phenomenal city’

The Bollywood actor, who was in town for the 20th edition of DJWE spoke to *Gulf Times* about her experience of visiting the show and her iconic roles in films through years

By Muhammad Asad Ullah
Doha

In the media lounge at Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE), “She’s 15 minutes out,” says her manager, popping her head around the door, as a phalanx of assistants move silently about a fabulous, temporary, shimmering grotto of couture. It’s the tiffany powder blue jacket I see, which seems to be freshly delivered from a couture house and steamed press to perfection. Naturally, 10 minutes comes and goes, but eventually, at an indeterminate point in superstar time, the door finally opens and through it emerges a 5ft 4in figure dressed in a powder blue couture piece, statement diamond necklace and impossibly high matching Louboutins. It is a curious experience to encounter a pop culture legend giving you her most quintessential vibe, and Kareena has not disappointed. Already photographs taken moments ago of her short walk from her car into the building are ping-pong on social media. “Let’s talk!” she says by way of hello.

There is an art to being Kareena Kapoor Khan which is to say that rising to Bollywood’s one of the most sought-after actors is not a status achieved by just bungling your exit from a limo. Everybody loves Kareena Kapoor Khan. This is a fact. Nobody in the history of the world, especially from South Asia, has ever had another take. However, the truth remains you do feel intimidated by her presence, it’s the energy!

But while the initial energy is remote and flighty, it takes absolutely no time at all to become riveted by her. Astonishingly famous since her early teens, hers is a fate perhaps only understood by a handful of people during mass media’s



Kareena Kapoor Khan with HE Saad bin Ali bin Saad al-Kharji, Chairman of Qatar Tourism, at DJWE 2024. (Supplied picture)



“People are obviously coming here whether to enjoy the different cultural parts of it, business, work or for Qatar’s kindness and hospitality which I’ve experienced today here at the exhibit. I think that is why everyone wants to be here

relatively short history. One’s reductive first instinct is to interpret her thrilling lack of chill as toxic-media-induced, post-stardom neurosis. But she is having none of that. She is grounded and now after about two decades of being in Bollywood, she’s someone who’s poised. In truth, she is sage, witty and unpredictable, prone to find the whole machinery of fame ridiculous and damaging – especially for women. Growing up as the daughter of veteran Bollywood actor Randhir Kapoor and Babita, and sister Karisma Kapoor, Kareena had a vantage point on fame and cinema that few do. She knows that as she walks out the cameras will accost her however it doesn’t really bother her as she

starts to chat animatedly about her visit to Qatar, being a part of DJWE and what jewellery appeals to her.

“I think Doha is amazing. I had a brief visit about a decade ago, but so much has changed and it’s absolutely amazing to be here today at the 20th Edition of Doha Watches and Jewellery Exhibition,” Kareena adds, “Doha is a phenomenal city. People are obviously coming here whether to enjoy the different cultural parts of it, business, work or for Qatar’s kindness and hospitality which I’ve experienced today here at the exhibit. I think that is why everyone wants to be here. My son is a football fan, so I’m hoping to catch some football here.”

There are very few actors who are able to make a name for themselves as an independent actor away from the shadow of their equally successful parents and siblings. However, that didn’t stop her from serving the characters that are deemed to be iconic. She played Poo in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (K3G) in 2001, which was her second film, but was the moment of an upward projection for her career. Since then, she has only gone from strength-to-strength for every character she has played. Poo had a duality in her that not many female characters in Hindi cinema possessed at the time – she was vain and self-indulgent, but also self-sufficient and comfortable in her skin. In today’s time if we draw a parallel, and when we watch *Gossip Girl*, one of the iconic TV Shows, we’re instantly reminded of Kareena in K3G although there’s quite a difference in timeline of when K3G was released and when *Gossip Girl* aired.

Does she think that her role was way ahead of its time that really defined pop culture for South Asians? She responds: “I completely believe it was the most iconic, female led character because of the fact that you had never seen somebody be so outlandish and confident but lovable at the same time. The female characters were always about the saree clad, typical wives that were playing the part and dancing to the songs, but Poo was a character that actually stood against everything to be herself and that is the reason why you say it’s truly iconic. And we’re talking about it after about 24 years.”

Kareena adds: “Nobody really thought that it will become such a craze. It was funny and fun but obviously when you look back and say *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, the first thing you say is Poo. I don’t think I can go back and do it all over again at

this point. There is something of Poo in everyone and every little girl.”

Over her two decade-long career, she has not only proven herself to be a fearless master of reinvention, but has also bridged the world’s of art cinema and storytelling. In 2017, many people fell in love with Geet in *Jab We Met*. But does it inspire Kareena as an actor to surpass her previous performance every time she’s part of a new project, she says, “I think no two characters should ever be compared because every year films change, writers change, people write different roles and actors come along... every decade you’d have a different bunch of beautiful actresses and actors doing different roles. Few parts, in your career, if you have two or three great roles that you can look back at after 30 years and say this was it – it will still have something about me which I’ve tried to push myself. I know Geet will always be looked back upon as the best but I will obviously still try and better that. But it was a different time, and now is a different time.”

DJWE has an extensive display of classic and contemporary luxury collections by internationally recognised brands and designers as well as local designers, with diamonds and emeralds taking the centre stage. Diamonds, they say, are a girl’s best friend. Asked what sort of jewellery appeals to the actor, she says: “I like more statement pieces and love diamonds and emeralds.”

People in South Asia consider jewellery as heirloom pieces. Coming from royalty is there a specific piece that has been passed on to the actor over the generation? Kareena Kapoor responds: “Saif has given me his great grandmother’s emerald cut piece, which we’ve made into a long neck piece. That stone has come down to four generations is close to me.”



Kareena Kapoor Khan was in Doha for DJWE 2024. PICTURES: Raffeed Allo.



QIFF a winter delight

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF), described as the country’s biggest culinary celebration, has returned for its 13th edition, featuring an array of local, regional and international cuisines, as well as exciting activities for visitors to enjoy.

From local delicacies to international flavours, the Qatar Tourism-organised event – taking place until February 17 at Expo 2023 Doha’s Family Zone at Al Bidda Park – offers a gastronomic journey like no other.

QIFF 2024 presents an impressive array of more than 100 stalls, spotlighting the culinary expertise of Qatar and the most celebrated restaurants from the region.

Live cooking demonstrations, masterclasses, and cooking competitions led by esteemed chefs across the region and beyond serve as the highlights, attracting a large number of visitors seeking culinary inspiration.

The Dinner in the Sky remains to be a popular offering at the festival, enticing many food lovers who want a unique dining experience.

One of the festival’s attractions is the Cooking Studio that caters to different age groups. Titled ‘Desert Oasis: Blissful Bites in the Sweet Haven’ engaged young visitors with a series of workshops and



Visitors enjoy the QIFF attractions at Expo 2023 Doha’s Family Zone at Al Bidda Park. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

activities. From Moroccan sweets with Chef Najat to Gingerbread Souffle with Chef Eric Lanlard, the studio offers a delectable adventure for budding chefs. Additionally,

the Black Box competition and live music performances add to the festive ambiance.

The cold weather also adds to QIFF’s charm, giving visitors a pleas-

ant moment to explore the different sections of the event.

The inaugural days of QIFF enthralled attendees with a mixology show, bento cake decoration workshop, and cooking competitions, showcasing Mediterranean cuisine and Monkfish Wellington.

‘Painting the Flavours of Morocco with Chef Najat Kaanache’ showcased a unique blend of culinary and artistic expression. This year’s QIFF edition shines a spotlight on Moroccan cuisine to mark the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture.

Festival-goers can look forward to an Ice Carving Competition, a Healthy Lifestyle Challenge workshop, and an exciting journey through Asian street food in the coming days, according to the organisers.

Some of the highlights include ‘Cooking with PSG Legends’ featuring Chef Alexandre Guillo; and a Vegan Chocolate workshop with Chef Lorena Loriato.

For those interested in nutrition and sustainability, QIFF will host a ‘Vegan Talk’ with renowned chefs Gaz Oakley, Ghanim al-Sulaiti, and Loriato, discussing farm-to-table practices and the benefits of plant-based diets. In addition, a ‘Barista Show’ will introduce attendees to the art of brewing, elevating the festival experience beyond mere culinary indulgence.

QIFF is also featuring live entertainment shows and a fireworks display every night until February 17.

