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**Al Darwish Jewellery**
showing off unique pieces at **DJWE** **Page 7**

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Amir crowns national team with Asian Cup trophy

◆ Qatar beat Jordan to retain Asian Cup with Afif hat-trick at Lusail Stadium

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani attended the closing ceremony of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 at Lusail Stadium yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by His Highness the Personal Representative of the Amir Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE Sheikh Jassim bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin

Jassim al-Thani, HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem, and a lineup of sheikhs and ministers.

Also present at the ceremony were President of the friendly Republic of Rwanda Paul Kagame, Crown Prince of the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, President of the FIFA Gianni Infantino, President of the Asian Football Confederation Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim al-Khalifah, and a number of senior officials from the fraternal and friendly countries along with heads of delegations, heads of Olympic committees and Arab and foreign football federations, heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the

Qatar's Akram Afif celebrates with teammates after winning Asian Cup.

state, and a huge crowd of spectators.

Afterwards, His Highness the Amir crowned Qatar national football team with AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 trophy following their 3-1 victory over the brotherly team of Jordan as Akram Afif scored a hat-trick of penalties for Qatar.

His Highness the Amir, the FIFA President, Jordan Crown Prince and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president awarded the golden medals to the Qatar national team players and the silver medals to the national team players of Jordan, the runner-up.

It was a fitting final act to a month of football that began with 24 teams and witnessed a series of dramatic games and plenty of goals.

It will also help dispel the memories of Qatar's 2022 World Cup, when they lost all three games.

The 27-year-old Afif was the hero, holding his nerve once from the penalty spot in the first half and, after under dogs Jordan equalised, twice more in the second period.

He was named player of the tournament and finished top scorer with eight goals.

His teammates threw him in the air at the final whistle.

"It is not about the technique or the angle," said Afif, asked how he was able to score three penalties under pressure in front of 86,492 spectators at Lusail Stadium.

"It's about the feeling that the team and people are behind me."

Sport pages 1,3,4



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Chief of Staff in Turkiye meetings



HE the Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces, Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabit separately met in Ankara with Turkish Minister of National Defence Yasar Guler and Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Army, General Metin Gurak, during his visit to Turkiye. The two meetings discussed a host of topics of mutual interest. **Right:** HE al-Nabit met with President of Turkiye's Defence Industry Agency Haluk Gorgun in Ankara yesterday. During the meeting, the two sides discussed a host topics of common interest. HE the Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces also met with Commander of the Turkish Air Force General (Pilot) Ziya Cemal Kadioglu at the first tactical air force base in Eskisehir City yesterday. The meeting discussed a range of topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

Amir, Rwandan president review ties



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met at his Lusail Palace office yesterday with Rwandan President Paul Kagame. They discussed bilateral relations and ways to promote them, besides regional and international issues of common concern, especially the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi, and a number of senior officials attended the meeting. On the Rwandan side, the meeting was attended by Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning Jeanine Munyeshuli and a number of senior officials. **(QNA)**

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QMC named 'National Media Sponsor' for Dimdex 2024

The organising committee of the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2024) announced the signing of a sponsorship agreement with the Qatar Media Corporation (QMC), designating it as the 'National Media Sponsor' for the eighth edition of the event, taking place from March 4-6, at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

Dimdex is held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and is hosted and organised by the Qatar Armed Forces.

The biannual event will be held under the theme "Igniting the Future of Maritime Security and Beyond".

The signing ceremony took place at the Ministry of Defence in the presence of HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabit and HE the Chief Executive Officer of QMC Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Thani al-Thani.

Chairman of Dimdex, Staff Brigadier (Sea) Abdulbaqi Saleh al-Ansari, and Director of Qatar TV Ali Saleh al-Sada signed the agreement.



This collaboration aligns seamlessly with the vision of national institutions to actively support major events in Qatar. As outlined in the agreement, QMC commits to utilising its diverse platforms to amplify the international event's reach and convey its message to the local and regional community. The corporation will also spotlight various key activities within the event, including the main exhibition, the Middle East Naval Commanders Conference (MENOC), visits by official delegations of leaders and prominent figures, and the showcasing of visiting warships at Hamad Port.

Lieutenant-General al-Nabit said that the collaboration between various national institutions is a crucial step in

supporting major events and activities held in Qatar, pointing out that these partnerships play a central role in unifying efforts and highlight the capabilities, and contribute to supporting development in various fields.

"It will also highlight the significant role of the Qatar Armed Forces on social, economic, and developmental levels, in addition to their primary mission of preserving security and enhancing stability of our nation", Lt Gen al-Nabit added.

For his part, Brig al-Ansari said the partnership with QMC will help disseminate the message of Dimdex to a broader audience, emphasising the significance of the event and its diverse activities on a national scale.

"We extend our gratitude to QMC for this collaboration, and we are assured that its mandate across different platforms will underscore the importance of Dimdex in various fields and its contribution to supporting development frameworks in Qatar," Brig al-Ansari added.

For his part, HE Sheikh Abdulaziz pointed out that QMC is committed to providing robust media support through its channels, broadcasts, and platforms, prioritising the interests of the Qatari national entities, adding that this will effectively highlight Qatar's dedication in hosting world exhibitions, solidifying its position as one of the most advanced destinations in the region.

Al-Sada said: "Strengthening partnerships between the media sector and all ministries remains a key objective for us. At Qatar TV, we consistently strive to deliver the best services and promptly address the needs of prestigious events such as Dimdex. The collaborative agreement between Dimdex and QMC marks a positive and unprecedented milestone to both of our organisations". **(QNA)**

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Father Amir

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

and to all the honorable people of Qatar

on **Qatar National Team**
winning the
AFC ASIAN CUP QATAR 2023

We ask Allah for successes and auspicious times for Qatar to enjoy security, glory and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness The Amir

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all employees of Commercial Bank

Qatar slams Israeli threats to storm Rafah

Qatar has strongly condemned the threats by Israel to storm Rafah City in the southern Gaza Strip, warning of a humanitarian disaster in the city that became a last refuge for hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) called for urgent

action to prevent the Israeli occupation forces' planned invasion of Rafah and the commission of genocide in the city, in addition to providing full protection to civilians under international law and international humanitarian law.

The MoFA statement underscored Qatar's categorical rejection of the attempts by Israel

to institute forced displacement of the Palestinian people from the Gaza Strip.

It also reiterated Qatar's unwavering stance on the justice of the Palestinian cause, the legitimate rights for the Palestinian people, and the establishment of their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. – **QNA**



Customs introduces new tourist vehicle inspection devices

In co-ordination with the Permanent Committee of the Abu Samra Border Port, the General Authority of Customs (GAC) introduced new inspection devices to be used at the Abu Samra border crossing to help ensure that tourist vehicles passing through the land borders are free of prohibited, ra-

dioactive or illegal materials.

The authority said that the new devices are capable of screening 130 cars an hour, at an approximate rate of two minutes per vehicle, adding that they employ artificial intelligence to detect materials banned from entry into Qatar.

GAC chairman Ahmed bin Ab-

dullah al-Jamal said the authority constantly seeks to enhance its capabilities in tightening security and controls over border crossings by using the latest technologies and devices to carry out screening tasks, speed up processes, and providing capacity building training to employees to handle such devices

and conduct their tasks effectively.

The GAC recently upgraded the customs facilities at Abu Samra by dedicating a specific border crossing area to handle tourist vehicle traffic, in addition to modernising truck inspection platforms and enhancing insurance company digital services. – **QNA**



Qatar to organise recycling and sustainability conference

The 4th Recycling Towards Sustainability Conference & Exhibition (RTS – Doha 2024), organised by the Ministry of Municipality, will open on February 14 with the participation of a number of governmental and semi-governmental institutions, the private sector, local factories, foreign parties and an elite group of experts and specialists in the field of waste management and treatment.

A press conference held on this occasion highlighted the most notable themes and ses-

sions of the two-day conference which include artificial intelligence and technology in the field of recycling, the circular economy in recycling, how to market recycled products, recycling in cities, and waste management during crises.

The RTS – Doha 2024 will additionally review successful experiences of countries that have established waste management laws, private sector experiences in the field of recycling and sustainability, strategies to avoid sending waste to landfills, and the best technological solutions

and innovations for treating organic waste.

Speakers underlined during the press conference the importance of the RTS – Doha 2024, coinciding with the International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha which aims to promote sustainable innovations.

They pointed to Qatar's great interest in waste recycling, encouraging all segments of society to recycle waste and providing the latest technologies in the field of recycling for relevant companies to adopt. – **QNA**

Ministry of Labour to hold National Sport Day events

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) is arranging a series of sports events next Tuesday, February 13, at the Museum of Islamic Art Park to celebrate National Sport Day (NSD).

This initiative is a part of the ministry's ongoing engagement with the national workforce, entrepreneurs, employees, and the general public.

The MoL announced that the event lineup features a range of sports activities, encompassing children's obstacle courses, sack races for children, soccer, volleyball, pool, badminton, tug of war for children, horseback riding, giant bowling, snakes and ladders, tennis, along with exclusive events for children.

The ministry invites the national workforce in the private sector, business owners, workers, employees, their families and the public to participate in the sporting events and activities organised by the Ministry of Labour on Tuesday, starting from 8am, a press release is issued by the ministry said.

The ministry emphasised that its commitment to the National Sport Day and the yearly organisation of this event stems from recognising the vital role of sports in fostering a healthy community capable of contributing to the country's holistic development, in alignment with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

In 2011 Qatar designated by Amiri decree a National Sport Day for the state, which falls on the second Tuesday of February every year, and made that day an official holiday to ensure expansion of participation in the event and consolidating the culture of sports and healthy behaviour.

Aspire Zone announces details of NSD activities

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

The AZF 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 from 8am until 12 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 a number 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 activities for children.

Pitch No 11 will host diverse activities including racing, running with the ball, tic-tac-toe, penalty shootouts, vertical jumping, horizontal jumping, speed and obstacle racing, rope jumping, and shooting accuracy.

Additionally, the Football Performance & Science Department

at Aspire is organising a 12-team closed football tournament for the minor categories of local clubs on the Aspire Academy outdoor pitches No 8 and 9.

Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital will also participate in the NSD celebration through a series of events aimed at promoting the practice of sports and providing a safe environment for the community.

Free medical services are provided, such as medical examinations including biometric examination, blood sugar, body mass, as well as heart rate.

Visitors to the Aspetar booth will also be able to obtain awareness and educational consultations, in which health and nutrition advice is provided on how to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

The AZF will also host government and private entities at its stadiums for their activities, some of which are designated for employees of these entities.

The Aspire Zone Foundation invites all segments of society in Qatar to participate in the National Sport Day, and to enjoy the comprehensive sporting services provided by the foundation. – **QNA**

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And to all the honorable people of Qatar
on Qatar National Football Team
winning the
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We hope for more success in promoting the name of our beloved country Qatar to the highest level under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir





Qatar Shell 

Al Darwish Jewellery shows off unique pieces, more than 20 brands at DJWE

Al Darwish Jewellery is hogging the limelight at the 20th Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE) with unique pieces on display and over 20 brands exhibiting under its umbrella.

"So far, the DJWE 2024 is quite busy for us. Almost 10 new brands have joined us this year with their exclusive and modern pieces," said Al Darwish Jewellery chairman Abdallah Jassim al-Darwish.

"We have been participating in the DJWE for the last eight years...every year we try to be different," he said. "We pick and filter our partners in such a way that we present something new to our customers."

"I am glad that our partners have added a lot of variety to this milestone edition," al-Darwish added.

"People come to us to buy specifically designed pieces and stones, and I am happy that our partners have come to meet the expectations of our customers this year as well," he said. "People buy pieces from us as an investment and get full value for their invested money."

The DJWE is a great platform to showcase new products and find a variety of customers, al-Darwish said, adding: "This mega jewellery exhibition also serves as an ideal platform to learn new things and understand the changing demand of customers better."

"We take it seriously to build up our knowledge so that we can cater to our clients with the right information and consultancy when they want to buy a piece," he added. "It's a continuous learning process for us."

"There is no doubt that marketing plays a vital role in reaching out to new customers, and the DJWE is the ideal platform to market your products," al-Darwish explained.

"In my opinion, Qataris should give

more importance to gems and jewellery products sold in Qatar, so that they do not need to fly to other countries for such products," he remarked. "Everything is available here now. Also, the authorities should make it easier for both the exhibitors and visitors to take part in this exhibition."

"Over the years, the DJWE has emerged as one of the best exhibitions for jewellery in the region, and we do see people from other countries," al-Darwish continued. "More efforts should be made to increase this number."

"We are ready to cater to the demands of both domestic and international customers," he said.

"It was a very busy exhibition for us as our permanent outlets at the Al Darwish Jewellery showroom have made us more popular in Qatar," staff manning Al Darwish Jewellery's pavilion at the DJWE said.

Italian brand Moratti, which entered the Middle East market with its first outlet in Qatar almost two years ago, was the point of reference for its extraordinary creations at the pavilion.

"Each piece is a work of art that comes from a journey between multi-ethnic cultures and is brought to life by the hands of fine Italian craftsmen," a Moratti official said.

Founded in the Italian city of Florence and inspired by the world, Moratti is a luxury jewellery brand known for the creation of extraordinary fine jewellery that celebrates femininity in all its beauty and modernity, blending years of experience with world-class design.

"We have introduced a good number of new designs at the exhibition," the official said.

"Each of our designs is a result of an exhilarating journey between multi-eth-



Abdallah Jassim al-Darwish



nic cultures and influences, through nature," he added.

"Translated into reality by the hands of fine Italian craftsmen, each Moratti masterpiece is a work of art brought to life and



Al Darwish Jewellery's pavilion at the DJWE.



Some of the pieces on display.

tells a different story, a story that we are now proud enough to share with people in Qatar," he said.

"Our association with Al Darwish family and the liking for our products among

Qataris give us confidence to take part in this exhibition," he said. "We have received good response since the DJWE opened. Our goal is always to meet expectations, especially of our female clients."



Members of Team Qatar at the IIFME.

Inventors from Qatar win medals at IIFME



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B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email

Tender documents issuance from **11/02/2024 to 18/02/2024, 8am-12noon.**

C. Proposal details

Proposals should be valid for **240 days** from the tender closing date.

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

D. Submission of Proposals

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

A team of inventors from Qatar won five medals at the 14th International Invention Fair in the Middle East (IIFME), which was held in Kuwait from February 4-7, which saw some 200 inventions from more than 40 Arab and other countries.

Omar al-Emadi won a gold medal for his innovative water quality monitoring system.

One silver medal went to Dr Saif al-Hajari's innovation, and one silver medal went to Bandar al-Mansoori and Nayef al-Ajmi's project of a device for growing plants with solar and air energy.

Two bronze medals were won by Dr Hitmi al-Hitmi and Hamad al-Yafei.

Qatar Scientific Club (QSC) manager Sheikh Ali bin Salman al-Thani, who headed the delegation from Qatar to the 14th IIFME, expressed his pride in the group of ambitious Qatari youth eager to achieve the best.

Sheikh Ali said that the delegation members exhibited presented great ability to overcome challenges and develop proper solutions to any obstacle.

He praised Qatar University (QU)'s pioneering role in the field of research and innovation, which has been proven in international scientific forums and exhibitions.

The IIFME's panel of judges comprises 60 academics and specialists in all scientific fields.

The participating inventions are classified into 22 fields that are similar to the Geneva International Exhibition of Inventions classifying system. - **QNA**

'TaD' training camp 2024 at QU

The Research and Postgraduate Studies sector at Qatar University (QU) recently organised the 5th edition of its TaD (Theses and Dissertations) Training Boot Camp.

The event focused on providing support to students regarding theses and dissertations by bringing together various support entities within the university.

The activities included TaD writing sessions, individual writing support sessions, research consultations with experienced researchers in various fields, and an open writing space.

QU dean of Graduate Studies Dr Ahmad al-Own emphasised the significance of the TaD Training Camp, saying that it has been a hallmark of the university for five years, offering an opportunity to all postgraduate students and faculty members to benefit from the university's services, such as the library and publishing house, which support scientific research.

"Students come to this camp to meet expert professors, exchange ideas and experiences, consult on their research ideas, and participate in workshops on academic writing, critical readings, selecting appropriate titles for their theses, and creating comprehensive plans to support students and motivate them to write outstanding research," he said.

Dr Mary Newsome, assistant dean of Graduate Learning Support for Postgraduate Students at the QU, said: "The 'TaD Boot Camp' serves as a gathering point to support and serve university students, aiming to enhance participation in scientific writing and research at all writing stages."

"The camp also provides support wings and consultations from various departments and offices at the QU, including Graduate Learning Support, the library, the Statistical Consultation Unit and the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute," she said.



An activity from the TaD boot camp.

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Mannai launches the all new Showroom for JAC passenger cars in Qatar

Mannai Mobility, a subsidiary of Mannai Corporation QPSC, launched its first dedicated showroom for JAC Motors passenger vehicles in Qatar. The launch ceremony was attended by an elite group of local dignitaries, public figures, media correspondents, bloggers, and prominent social media influencers. This event reflects a solid testament to Mannai's constant endeavors towards delivering excellence and upscale level of services in the automotive field. This endeavor also complements the Group's efforts since its inception to meet the needs of the diverse and rapidly growing automobile market in the country, especially at the entry level segments.

During the event, Mannai Mobility and JAC Motors unveiled the four models that will be made available initially in the Qatari market - JS3, JS4, JS6 SUVs and J7 SEDAN, thus announcing the beginning of a new era to provide an exceptional driving experience that combines innovative design and dynamic aesthetics that characterize each car model. This launch leads the way for a totally new horizon of excellence in the world of cars.

On this occasion, Mr. Rajesh Krishnan, Group General Manager, Mannai Automotive commented: "We are extremely honored to launch the JAC Motors showroom in Qatar



today, which reflects the strategic alliance between Mannai Mobility – a subsidiary of Mannai Corporation and JAC Motors, to provide a wide and diverse choice of the best prestigious Chinese cars in this sector. Since its launch, Mannai has distinguished itself by representing the best brands in the world of cars, and today we are witnessing the launch of a new era in the Qatari market, and we are confident that the models we have unveiled today will meet all the aspirations of our customers and the new generation of automotive aficionados looking for smart technology, top notch quality, unique performance, and elegant design."

From his side, Mr. Jerry Zhou, General Manager of JAC Middle East & Africa, said: "We are witnessing a special milestone today with the opening of the first showroom for our brand passenger vehicles in Qatar. This opening reflects the positive growth witnessed by the automotive sector in the country and comes as a culmination of joint efforts with Mannai Mobility to provide the latest models of JAC vehicles, which have confirmed their position on the global stage by offering the highest quality and avant-garde technology".

"Thanks to Mannai's prestigious position and proven record as one of the country's premier and most well-regarded automotive dealership for its world-class services, exceptional after-sales support, market knowledge, and customers trust, we are certain that our brand will be the most appropriate choice for all those looking for an exceptional and enjoyable driving experience, distinctive elegance that captivates the eye, durability and sturdiness, and the highest standards of quality that can be relied upon," Mr. Jerry added.

The presence of the JAC Motors in the Qatari passenger cars market reinforces Mannai's customer service-centric ethos, assured by an unprecedented 6 years unlimited mileage warranty for the retail sector, in addition to internal financing and the possibility of buyback and car replacement, which reflects the company's commitment to enduring quality and reliability.

The JAC JS3 belongs to the category of small SUVs, which derives its power from a four-cylinder engine with a capacity of 1,600 cc, generating a power of 115 horsepower and a torque estimated at about 150 Newton/meters.

The JAC JS4 SUV, which belongs to the category of broad and practical family cars, is distinguished by its elegant, sporty shape and innovative interior design, in addition to all the modern and exclusive technology factors present in the safety and security systems, which provides distinguished protection for passengers on the road.

Designed specifically for the young generation drivers who are passionate about technology, the JAC JS6 provides a smooth, safe, and unique driving experience, as it blends elegance, practicality, streamlined surfaces and sporty body curves that form a visual masterpiece that captivates the eye.

The JAC J7 is a luxurious, practical, multi-use family car, distinguished by its elegant and attractive design. The J7 provides a wide range of technical and comfort features such as the navigation system, touch screen, advanced audio system, luxurious adjustable seats, keyless entry system, and many more features that make it a comfortable and practical car for daily use.

Located in the industrial area, in the vicinity of Mannai Corporation renowned showroom, JAC Motors welcomes its guests from Sundays to Thursday from 8 a.m to 8 p.m and on Saturdays from 9 a.m to 7 p.m



The new showroom welcomes automotive aficionados from across the country

The new launch unveils diverse JAC models available for the Qatari market

Qatar Trading Company and Doosan Bobcat EMEA in a Strategic Partnership for Cutting-Edge Power Generators Solutions in Qatar



QTC, a leading provider of innovative industrial solutions, and Doosan Bobcat EMEA, a global leader in construction equipment, proudly announce the successful signing of a strategic contract to introduce state-of-the-art power generators and tower lights in Qatar.

The contract signing ceremony, was held on 23rd of January, was signed by Marzooq Tariq Al Shamlan, Group CEO of Marzooq Shamlan Al the Shamlan Holding, and Mousa Mousa / District Manager Middle East and Africa for Bobcat Generators.

QTC's commitment to delivering cutting-edge industrial solutions aligns seamlessly with Bobcat's reputation for innovation and reliability. The collaboration marks a significant milestone in the industrial landscape of Qatar, as both companies join forces to provide advanced power solutions catering to the evolving needs of the market.

Speaking at the ceremony, Marzooq Tariq Al Shamlan expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership, stating, "We are excited about the possibilities that this collaboration unlocks. The introduction of QTC and Bobcat's generators



and tower lights will undoubtedly contribute to the efficiency and productivity of various industries in Qatar."

Mousa echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the shared commitment to delivering high-quality solutions. "Bobcat is thrilled to partner with QTC in bringing our equipment to Qatar. Together, we aim to set new standards in reliability, performance, and sustainability," he remarked.

Bobcat generators & tower lights are engineered for easy serviceability and intuitive operations. The equipment are set to maximize productivity with longer runtimes, longer maintenance intervals and longer lifespans.

Bobcat generators and tower lights supported with a strong aftersales service are poised to address the growing demand for efficient and flexible power solutions across diverse sectors – Government,

Oil and Gas, Construction, Industrial, Rental and Telecom.

This collaboration signifies a strategic alignment between two industry leaders, setting the stage for transformative advancements in the industrial landscape of Qatar. QTC and Bobcat look forward to a successful partnership and are confident that the introduction of these innovative solutions will contribute significantly to the development and progress of the region.

DAVIDOR

PARIS

LUXURY JEWELRY MAISON DAVIDOR ATTENDING DJWE 2024

PARIS, FRANCE – February 1, 2024 – DAVIDOR, the French luxury jewelry maison inspired by architecture and the impeccable quality of French craftsmanship, is pleased to announce its attendance to DJWE taking place from February 5 – 11, 2024.

DAVIDOR will be participating at DJWE 2024 in the Alfardan Pavillion for it's second time in a newly designed concept. The Maison's new booth pays homage to DAVIDOR's Parisian roots incorporating the DNA; DAVIDOR's signature Bordeaux color, antiqued mirrors, lacquered ceramic artwork representing the color pallet used within the precious jewelry and Calacatta Viola marble, found in each DAVIDOR boutique globally.

During the DJWE, DAVIDOR will present the Maison's signature collection, L'Arc de DAVIDOR as well as pieces from L'Arc Voyage, Diamant Sculptural, Couleur Sculptural and L'Arc Deco, a coveted high jewelry collection in platinum and 18k rose gold featuring the house's patented DAVIDOR Arch Cut Diamond and Gemstones. Exclusively launching at the DJWE are three of DAVIDOR's most requested new releases in the Qatari market: the L'Arc de DAVIDOR Bangle PM and L'Arc de DAVIDOR Ring MM in 18k Gold with Lacquered Ceramic or Satin Finish and Diamonds (unique diamond patterns by model). Not previously offered with diamond, these additions to the collection offer diamond in two signature patterns in 18k rose, yellow and white gold as well as 16 unique colors of Lacquered Ceramic or Satin Finish. Additionally, DAVIDOR will be introducing L'Arc de DAVIDOR Cufflinks, a highly requested model which allows for personalization and a one of a kind high jewelry piece: Feuillage Manchette, 18k Yellow Gold with Arch Cut Green Tourmaline and Brilliant Diamonds

“DAVIDOR is honored to be exclusively represented by Alfardan Jewellery in Qatar. It's with great pleasure and excitement that we return to DJWE 2024 after many years of participation, developing great relationships with our Qatari clients. Qatar has always held a special place in the Maison's universe. Our relationship with our Qatari client is one of mutual respect and a shared passion for jewelry and the beauty of quality craftsmanship, “said Davidor Gusky, Founder and Creative Director of the Maison.

In addition to Qatar, DAVIDOR is opened its GCC flagship boutique in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia at Centria Mall in May 2023. The boutique which is over 125 square meters is the largest globally for the Maison. The GCC is an important region to DAVIDOR with continued growth plans in 2024. DAVIDOR continued its global expansion in late 2023 with a mountain chalet inspired boutique in Vail, Colorado in the U.S.

ABOUT DAVIDOR:

Founded in 2012 by now 36 year old David “Davidor” Gusky, DAVIDOR is a French luxury jewelry maison inspired by architecture and the impeccable quality of French craftsmanship. The Maison combines both tradition and innovation, balancing contemporary luxury with fine jewelry expertise, an expertise that was undoubtedly inherited from his family, who have been manufacturing fine jewelry for over forty years. Gusky studied gemology at the GIA in New York and design at L'Ecole des Arts Joailliers in Paris where he moved to establish his namesake brand. DAVIDOR'S Paris maison and atelier is located on Rue de la Paix, just off Place Vendome. Gusky is the maison's Creative Director and leads the creation from personal inspirations to his travels and surroundings.



2,000 students participate in Destination Imagination tournament

The participants at the challenges of Destination Imagination National Tournament 2024 concluded their activities at Qatar University College of Education yesterday after a two-day programme packed with various activities.

The tournament is organised by the Al Faisal Without Borders Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for the academic season 2023/2024. In this edition, 96 schools participated, represented by 202 teams comprising around 2,000 students from various educational stages: early childhood, elementary, intermediate, and secondary. The school teams compete

in seven main challenges: engineering, technical, scientific, fine arts, community service, improvisation, and early childhood challenges.

Accordingly, HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani toured the various venues of the tournament and interacted with the participants at the various categories accompanied by a number of officials.

Further, an awards ceremony will be held at the Qatar National Convention Centre on February 15 to honour the winners from different categories. The winning teams from each challenge will qualify to participate in the World Championship of the programme, which will be held in Kansas City, United States, in May.



505 families benefit from Zakat in Jan

A total of 505 families in Qatar benefited from the Zakat aid provided by the Department of Zakat Affairs at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs in January. According to an official statement from Awqaf, the department distributed QR14,135,277.

Mohamed Hassan al-Tamimi, head of the Zakat Banking Department, said the department is keen to assist deserving families in Qatar.

The Zakat Affairs Department disburses aid to the beneficiaries of the registered families following the controls, Shariah banks and approved mechanisms. The aid disbursed in January was of two types – periodic aid provided monthly to eligible families or lump-sum aid disbursed one-time as needed. The Zakat Affairs Department allows those who are entitled to request assistance to apply on the department's website www.zakat.gov.qa. The applicant for assistance



must check the required documents mentioned on the site. These documents should be filled and uploaded according to their specified places.

The assistance, according to al-Tamimi, is distributed to help the beneficiaries meet their needs for food, drink and housing. The periodic aid amounted to QR9,067,236 and the lump sum aid, which is provided to families once according to need stood at

QR5,068,041. The aid was distributed to the eligible registered families.

Al-Tamimi added that individuals and companies can pay their obligatory Zakat through the application or offices and collection points spread throughout the country or through the express collection service on the phone numbers: (55199990-55199996) as well as through the bank accounts of the department.

HMC nursing network holds first educational symposium

The Long-Term Care and Community Nursing Network (LTCNN) celebrated a significant milestone by hosting the first symposium recently, a statement from Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) said.

Al-Multaqaa symposium's theme of 'Advocating, Empowering and Transforming Tomorrow's Long-Term Care' represented an opportunity to share knowledge about the growing need for providing effective long-term care services.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), "formal long-term care aims to prevent, reduce, or rehabilitate functional decline and it can be provided in different settings, such as home care, community-based care, residential care, or hospital care."

HMC's commitment to promoting long-term care services is evident by the expansion and enhancement of targeted services that support patients and their families who rely on long-term care support to improve their quality of life.



The LTCNN was established with the purpose of driving system enhancements that support best practices with patients and their families in mind

deputy chief of Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatrics, Rumailah Hospital and Medical Director of Rumailah Hospital and Qatar Rehabilitation Institute commenced her presentation by sharing the WHO's definition of healthy ageing: "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age."

Dr Hanadi, who is also the Qatar National Health Strategy Lead for Healthy Ageing and the Head of the WHO Collaborating Center for Healthy Ageing and Dementia, highlighted the crucial need for a strategic vision and revolutionary transformation of and advocacy for long-term care and services at HMC and in the community due to the rapid rise of older adults with co-morbidities.

She explained the need to develop a sustainable and high-functioning system for long-term care. She added that teams should build on the excellent services provided in long-term care facilities such as Daam and Enaya Specialized Care Centers, Residential Care Compounds and other inpatient services but ensure a comprehensive system-wide view is maintained.

For the system to perform well

and really help those in need, it needs to be integrated and accessible across primary, secondary and tertiary care sectors. Mariam al-Mutawa, acting chief nursing officer, underscored the vital significance of the nursing network and the advancement of nursing professionals within the nursing community. She stated that the network helps to promote ongoing learning, mentorship, as well as support opportunities for career development.

These endeavours play a pivotal role in cultivating emerging leaders who contribute to sustainable leadership. Moreover, they foster the adoption of innovative technologies and advocate for person-centred care.

The symposium featured a debate that enabled the sharing of insights among long-term care and community nursing professionals on the important content topic of: "The wellness programme implementation and its impact on preventing caregiver burnout."

Additional topics included long-term care quality indicators on advance directives, strategies on effective care transition, and recognising high-quality and care service delivery across various levels of the health system.

QU researchers develop blood test for autism diagnosis in kids

Researchers from Qatar University (QU), Qatar Biomedical Research Institute, Sidra Medicine, and collaborating institutions in the United Kingdom (University of Birmingham) and Pakistan National University of Sciences and Technology have led a study that successfully validated a blood test for diagnosing Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in children aged 5–12 years.

This innovative study, conducted across multiple international centres, builds upon previous research that identified specific changes in blood proteins caused by sugar and oxidative damage processes as potential markers for ASD, commonly referred to as biomarkers. The study, published in Molecular Psychiatry, not only screens for the presence or absence of autism in children but may also provide insights into potential contributing factors.

The findings suggest a correlation between levels of the reactive metabolite methylglyoxal and the severity of autism; increased methylglyoxal is associated with severe symptoms of autism, opening avenues for new therapeutic approaches and offering insights into metabolic dysfunction in the central nervous system. The successful validation supports the potential clinical use of the blood test for ASD diagnosis in children aged 1.5–12 years, for which submission



Prof Naila Rabbani

for regulatory approval is under consideration.

The latest prevalence estimate for ASD in Qatar was found to be 1.14% among children aged 6 to 11 years. Current diagnostic procedures involve a multidisciplinary team, can take 3–6 months in Qatar due to a shortage of specialists, and may take much longer – up to 4 years – in Europe and the USA. Addressing this unmet clinical need, the researchers aimed to develop a blood test based on biomarkers in plasma proteins with high specificity and sensitivity.

Healthcare providers, parents, and doctors can now diagnose autism swiftly, allowing for timely intervention and treatment. This breakthrough has the potential to transform the landscape of autism diagnosis globally.

The team developed diagnos-

tic algorithms based on blood biomarkers, analysing samples from 478 children across Qatar and Spain. From the 478 total participants, 311 were diagnosed with ASD, and 167 were classified as typically developing children. This comprehensive study validated earlier findings from a smaller Italian cohort, identifying four significant biomarkers associated with autism.

The test, which examines specific substances in the body to understand how proteins are affected by sugar and oxidative stress, demonstrated an 83% accuracy in identifying ASD in children aged 5–12 years. Changes in these substances might indicate issues with metabolism or increased stress from harmful molecules in individuals with ASD.

Prof Naila Rabbani, the lead investigator from QU Health, College of Medicine, said: "The newly validated blood test enables a swift diagnosis of autism, facilitating early support and therapy during crucial stages of a child's brain development. Moreover, the study unveiled a groundbreaking correlation between the severity of autism and the levels of biomarkers associated with the reactive metabolite methylglyoxal. This discovery opens avenues for potential therapeutic interventions using a food supplement known as the glyoxalase-1 inducer."

42 WCM-Q students take part in Clinical Observership Programme

Forty-two students from the foundation and pre-medical programmes at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) participated in this year's edition of the Pre-Medical Observership Programme 2023-2024.

The programme is designed to expose students to the healthcare system in Qatar and the daily practices of medical professionals as they explore the different medical specialties and career options available.

The students spent two weeks of their winter break at affiliate hospitals, where they had the opportunity to shadow physicians during their daily rounds at various clinics, including obstetrics and gynaecology, surgery, internal medicine, emergency, and trauma. The students also observed doctor-patient interactions while discussing cases, diagnoses, and possible treatments.

Many of the student participants highlighted that the experience reaffirmed their decision to become physicians. Al Jazi al-Naimi, a second-year pre-medical student, said: "Through the experience, I was able to understand how the emergency room operates, the movement of doctors, details of sub-specialties, and what is required of each physician and their responsibilities towards their teams. Being exposed to these different areas



Students who took part in the Pre-Medical Observership Programme 2023-2024.

also helped me understand which specialty would interest me in the future."

First-year pre-medical student, Vivian Chetachi Eziefula Njoku said: "We had the chance to see patients and observe the communication between doctors and patients. When I came into medical school, I was only interested in surgery, but this experience broadened my horizons and motivated me to look at different medical departments. I am now more open to emergency and internal medicine."

Upon completing the observership, students submitted a reflective essay and received a

certificate of participation. Dr Rachid Bendriss, associate dean for foundation, student outreach and educational development programmes, said: "By offering our foundation and pre-medical students a glimpse into life as practicing physicians, we are essentially guiding them in identifying their areas of interest and enabling them to make well-informed decisions about their future career path early in their educational journey. We are extremely grateful to our affiliates for providing our students with such an enriching practical experience."

Qatar Charity provides healthcare services in Ghana village



New health centre in Ghana's Dar ElSalaam village.

Qatar Charity (QC) has inaugurated a new health centre in Ghana's Dar El-Salaam village, with the support of the people of Qatar.

The health centre is expected to provide healthcare services to more than 2,000 individuals belonging to impoverished families of the village and neighbouring areas.

The 250sq m health centre is the first project of its kind in the area in the past 40 years. It provides vital healthcare services for the local community in Kadewaso.

Community leaders in Kadewaso and health officials in the Eastern region of Ghana stated that the new health centre is a beacon of hope for more than 2,000 people who have struggled immensely to receive primary healthcare services after the old clinic of the area was completely destroyed.

Emmanuel Annoh, the Assembly man of

Kadewaso, where the health centre was constructed, expressed his happiness with the construction of the centre by the philanthropists of Qatar. He commended the ongoing efforts of Qatar Charity in serving the community and in assisting the impoverished at various levels.

The Atiwa East District health director, Vida Efua Afful, said: "I am very surprised at the speed and quality with which the facility was built and ready for operation. We are indeed grateful to Qatar Charity for this all-important edifice."

Hasan Owda, director of Qatar Charity's Ghana branch, said that the new health centre is an important component of the greater Dar ElSalaam model village project implemented by Qatar Charity in Ghana. He said that there were over 70 housing units under construction while 24 others had been completed.

15th batch of injured Palestinians arrives for treatment in Doha

A Qatari Armed Forces aircraft brought to Doha on Friday the 15th batch of Palestinians injured in the Gaza Strip, to receive treatment, as part of the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to provide treatment for 1,500 Palestinians from the Strip. The initiative is a continuation of Qatar's steadfast support and its ongoing efforts to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, in co-operation with various regional and international partners, in the backdrop of the current difficult humanitarian conditions in the Strip. **(QNA)**

GCC slams Israeli plan to invade southern Gaza's Rafah

QNA
Riyadh

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) has condemned and strongly rejected the intentions of the Israeli occupation on the invasion of the city of Rafah after forcibly displacing its civilian population.

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi stated, "This Israeli criminal act or contemplation thereof threatens to escalate violence, destabilise the region's security and stability, and lead to further deterioration and suffering for the Palestinian people. It constitutes a blatant violation of international law and humanitarian conventions that protect the rights and sovereignty of nations."

He called on the international community, "in this challenging time", to work collectively and in solidarity to confront these Israeli plans with a spirit of unity and shared responsibility. This should reflect a deep commitment to the principles of peace, justice and human dignity, and a clear and unified rejection of such actions that reaffirms our joint commitment to regional and international justice and peace, he pointed out.

At the same time, Albudaiwi emphasised the steadfast commitment of the GCC countries to support the Palestinian cause and to defend the rights of the Palestinian people. He highlighted the joint efforts with international partners to ensure the return of rights to their rightful owners and to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

Yemen's Houthis hold funeral for 17 fighters killed in air strikes

Yemen's Houthi fighters held a funeral yesterday for at least 17 fighters killed during joint US-British air strikes targeting the fighters, the Houthi-run Saba news agency said, Reuters reported from Cairo. The Houthis have launched waves of exploding drones and missiles at commercial ships since Nov 19 in what they say is a response to Israel's military operations in Gaza, prompting Britain and the US to start retaliatory strikes last month. "These crimes will not discourage the Yemeni people from continuing their support and backing of their brothers in the Gaza Strip," Saba said. The US Central Command (Centcom) said yesterday its forces conducted self-defence strikes against two mobile unmanned surface vessels (USV), four mobile anti-ship cruise missiles, and one mobile land attack cruise missile (LACM) that were prepared to launch strikes against ships.

Hamas warns Israel Rafah push may cause casualties in 'tens of thousands'

AFF
Gaza Strip

Gaza's Hamas rulers warned yesterday that Israel's planned army operation in overcrowded Rafah could cause "tens of thousands" of casualties in the city that has become the last refuge for displaced Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered the army to set its sights on Rafah, telling military and security officials late Friday to "submit to the cabinet a combined plan for evacuating the population and destroying the battalions" of Hamas in the southern city.

Hamas said in a statement that any military action would have catastrophic repercussion that "may lead to tens of thousands of martyrs and injured if Rafah... is invaded".

Netanyahu's announcement, coming only hours after US President Joe Biden had issued his strongest criticism of Israel's response to the October first week storming by Hamas fighters, sparked concern among world leaders and the UN.

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

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi warned "another bloodbath in Gaza cannot be allowed", in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "An Israeli attack on 1.5mn Palestinians already facing inhumane conditions in Rafah will cause a massacre of innocent people," he wrote, urging the "whole world" to prevent it.

Spain and Germany joined Saudi Arabia in warning of a "humanitarian catastrophe" if the plan went ahead.

"We call for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, respect for international humanitarian law and the entry of aid," Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares posted on X. The war in Gaza was sparked by Palestinian group Hamas' unprecedented October first week storming of Israel.

Vowing to eliminate Hamas, Israel launched a massive military offensive in Gaza that the territory's health ministry says has killed at least 28,064 people, mostly women and children.

The US is Israel's main international backer, providing it with billions of dollars in military aid.

The US State Department has said it does not support a ground offensive in Rafah, warning that, if not properly planned, such an operation risks "disaster".

In a sign of growing frustration, Biden issued his strongest



Palestinians walk at the damaged UNRWA school, following an Israeli ground operation, amid the ongoing conflict, in Gaza City, yesterday.

criticism of Israel yet on Thursday, describing the retaliation for Hamas's October first week storming as "over the top".

Biden said there are "a lot of innocent people who are starving... in trouble and dying, and it's got to stop." But Netanyahu's office said it would be "impossible" to achieve the war's objective of eliminating Hamas while leaving four of its battalions in Rafah.

The Israeli leader, whose coalition government includes far-right ministers, faces calls for an early election and mounting protests over his failure to bring home hostages seized in the attack. Fears are mounting over the fate of more than 1mn displaced Palestinians who have taken shelter in Rafah, many of them in plastic tents pushed up against the border with Egypt and also hemmed in by the sea.

"We are between life and death," said one of them, Bassel Matar. "We don't know if there will be hope tomorrow for a truce or there will be changes on the ground." Witnesses reported new strikes on Rafah yesterday. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Israeli bombardment killed at least 110 people overnight, including 25 in Rafah.

At the city's Al-Najjar hospital, APTV images showed a family gathering around the shrouded bodies of relatives.

Rafah is the last major population centre in the Gaza Strip that Israeli troops have yet to enter



Palestinians mourn after identifying the bodies of relatives killed in overnight Israeli bombardment on the southern Gaza Strip, at Al-Najjar hospital in Rafah, yesterday.

and also the main point of entry for desperately needed relief supplies. Humanitarian organisations have sounded alarm at the prospect of a ground incursion.

The UN children's fund, Unicef, warned this week against a military escalation in Rafah, saying "thousands more could die in the violence or lack of essential services".

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

Netanyahu announced the plan for a ground operation in Rafah only days after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel seeking a ceasefire and hostage-prisoner exchange.

Hamas negotiators departed

Cairo on Friday after what a Hamas source described as "positive and good discussions" with Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

The delegation "is awaiting Israel's response," a Hamas official said on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak on the issue. Citing US and Egyptian officials, the US news outlet Axios said late Friday that Biden is sending CIA director William Burns to Cairo next week to push for a deal to secure the release of more hostages.

The impact of the war has been felt widely, with violence involving allies of Hamas surging across the Middle East and drawing in

US forces, among others.

A Palestinian security source said an Israeli strike targeting a senior Hamas member in the village of Jadra, in central Lebanon, had failed but killed two other people yesterday. It came after the Lebanese group Hezbollah said Friday it had fired dozens of rockets at an army position in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, hours after launching a salvo at northern Israel.

And in Syria, Israeli strikes near Damascus killed three people yesterday, a war monitor said, adding the targeted neighbourhood hosted villas for top military and civilian officials.

Israel offensive on Lebanon would 'spell end' of Netanyahu: Iran FM



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian is received by his Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib in Beirut, yesterday.

AFF
Beirut

Iran's top diplomat warned yesterday that a full-blown attack on Lebanon would "spell the end" of Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu during a Beirut trip, as cross-border tensions surge over the Gaza war.

Israeli forces and Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah group, have traded near-daily fire following the outbreak of war in the first week of October between Israel and the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip. "Any move by the Zi-

onist regime (Israel) for a large-scale attack on Lebanon will spell the end of Netanyahu," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told reporters in Beirut.

Amir-Abdollahian, whose country backs a number of armed groups in the region including Hezbollah and Palestinian factions including Hamas, was on his third visit to Beirut in over four months of hostilities.

"Our assessment is that the Zionist regime will never be able to fight on two fronts," he added. "Netanyahu is struggling to get out of the Gaza quagmire." On

Tuesday, France's top diplomat had warned officials in Beirut that Israel is threatening to wage war on Lebanon to return citizens displaced by cross-border fire, Lebanon's foreign minister had said.

Earlier yesterday, an Iranian foreign ministry statement quoted Amir-Abdollahian as saying "the developments in Gaza are moving towards a political solution, but Netanyahu still sees the solution in war to save himself".

"Everyone should try to find a political solution to end Israel's attacks and war crimes against Palestinians as soon as possible," the statement quoted him as saying.

Amir-Abdollahian met top officials in Beirut including Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah and parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a powerful ally of the group.

He also met Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader Ziad Nakhleh, senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan, and deputy chief of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine Jamil Mazhar, the statement said.

"Only the Palestinian nation and Palestinian groups have the exclusive right to determine their own destiny," he said, adding that "other regional and international actors should refrain from imposing their plans".



Bodies of Gaza girl, ambulance team trapped under Israeli fire found

Reuters
Gaza

Relatives found the body yesterday of a 6-year-old Palestinian girl who had begged Gaza rescuers to send help after being trapped by Israeli military fire, along with the bodies of five of her family members and two ambulance workers who had gone to save her.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) accused Israel of deliberately targeting the ambulance it sent to rescue Hind Rajab after she had spent hours on the phone to dispatchers begging for help with the sound of shooting echoing around. "The occupation deliberately targeted the Red Crescent crew despite prior co-ordination to allow the ambulance to arrive at the site to rescue Hind," the Red Crescent said in a statement.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on the Red Crescent statement.



Palestinian girl Hind Rajab poses for a photograph, in this undated handout obtained yesterday.

Family members found Hind's body along with those of her uncle and aunt and their three children still in a car near a roundabout in the Tel al-Hawa suburb of Gaza City, the official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported.

The PCRS released a photo of the ambulance, seen almost completely burned out. Al Jazeera footage of the scene appeared to show the ambulance only steps away from the car they said the family was in, a damaged



A destroyed car where the body of Palestinian girl Hind Rajab, 6, was found along with the bodies of five of her family members as two ambulance workers who had gone to save her were killed, amid the ongoing conflict, in Gaza City, yesterday.

black Kia Picanto riddled with bullet holes. The plight of Hind, revealed in harrowing audio clips of her terrified conversation with rescue workers 12 days ago, underlined the impossible conditions for civilians in the face of Israel's four-month assault on Gaza. During the course of the war, the Israeli military has said it takes steps to avoid civilian casualties. It has faced strong international criticism over the casualty toll.

The audio clips released by the Red Crescent earlier this month recorded a call to dispatchers that was first made by Hind's teenage cousin Layan Hamadeh, saying an Israeli tank was approach-

ing before shots rang out and she screamed. Believed to be the only survivor, Hind stayed on the line for three hours with dispatchers, who tried to soothe her as they prepared to send an ambulance.

"Come and get me," Hind was heard crying desperately in another audio recording. "I'm so scared, please come." The PCRS said that after co-ordinating with the Israeli military through mediators and receiving a green light, it determined it was safe enough to send an ambulance with two crew, Youssef Zeino and Ahmed al-Madhoon.

"In our last communication with the team, they said the occupation forces aimed a laser

beam at them. We heard gunshots and then an explosion," said Red Crescent spokesperson in Ramallah, Nebal Farsakh.

Contact was then lost with both the ambulance team and Hind, leaving their families, colleagues and many around the world concerned about their fate.

"While we continue to look into exactly what happened, we want to reiterate that civilians must be protected — no child should ever be terrified for their life, surrounded by the bodies of their family members. That these were potentially Hind's last moments is devastating and unbearable," a spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told Reuters.

UN mission says staff, vehicles attacked in Congolese capital

Reuters
Kinshasa

The head of the UN peace-keeping mission in Democratic Republic of Congo said its staff and vehicles were attacked in the capital Kinshasa yesterday as a worsening eastern security crisis fuels a backlash against the mission.

Crowds on motorbikes gathered in the riverside Gombe district, where the UN mission known as Monusco and many embassies are located. They burned tyres and attacked people, a Reuters reporter said.

A number of the mission's vehicles were torched, said Monusco head Bintou Keita in an online post.

"I strongly condemn the series of attacks," she said.

The Ivorian embassy also said one of its vehicles had been vandalised in Kinshasa, and described indiscriminate attacks on vehicles belonging to embassies and international organisations.

Kinshasa police and the gov-



People look inside a burnt UN mission in Congo Monusco vehicle after a protest in downtown Kinshasa, DR Congo, yesterday.

ernment did not respond to a request for comment.

An advance by rebel group M23 that threatens the strategic eastern city of Goma in conflict-torn North Kivu province has aggravated a decades-old security and humanitarian crisis.

Clashes between the rebels, the armed forces and self-defence groups that support the

army have escalated in recent weeks, forcing over 135,000 more people to flee to perceived areas of greater safety near Goma, the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said on Thursday.

The fighting "could compromise food security and economic activities in Goma and the region. The risk of Goma being isolated is high," it said.

Monusco has been deployed in eastern Congo since taking over from a previous UN operation in 2010. Its mandate includes supporting the Congolese government's effort to stabilise the region, but in recent years it has faced sometimes violent protests linked to perceptions it has not done enough to stem the eastern bloodshed.

Figure close to Hamas survives Israeli strike in Lebanon, three others killed

Reuters
Beirut

An Israeli strike about 60km inside Lebanon's southern border yesterday targeted a Palestinian figure close to Hamas but he survived, four security sources said.

Three other people were killed, including one member of the powerful Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, the security sources also told Reuters.

One source said the person targeted was close to Saleh al-Arouri, the Hamas deputy chief killed last month in a suspected Israeli strike on a suburb of Beirut.

Yesterday's strike was much deeper into Lebanese territory than the usual exchanges of fire between Hezbollah and Israel's military, which have been mostly limited to the border region.

There was no immediate comment from Hamas in Lebanon or from the Israeli military.

An Israeli strike on a group of people outside a mosque in the town of Houla later yesterday killed one civilian and wounded at least six more, according to Dr Mohamed Hamadi, head of the Tebnnin Hospital, where the casu-

alties were transferred. Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging near-daily fire since October first week when Hamas stormed into Israel territory.

Israel's military then launched a land, air and ground assault on Gaza that has left more than 27,000 people dead. Yesterday, Hezbollah said it had seized an Israeli Skylark drone over Lebanese air space "in good condition".

The Skylark is a small, unmanned aerial vehicle typically used for surveillance and produced by Israel-based weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems.

Lebanese officials and Western diplomats have said Hezbollah has signalled its openness to US diplomatic efforts to secure calm on the border with Israel once a ceasefire is in place in Gaza. Hamas this week proposed a ceasefire of 4-1/2 months, during which remaining hostages would go free, Israel would withdraw its troops and agreement would be reached on an end to the war.

Netanyahu said Hamas' terms, offered in response to a proposal drawn up by US and Israeli spy chiefs with Qatar and Egypt, were "delusional" and vowed to fight on.

'Restaurant of Love' helps feed Tunis homeless

AFP
Tunis

On a corner by the entrance to Tunis zoo, Leila waits for a hot meal from the Tunisian capital's "Restaurant of Love" in a cardboard shelter where she and her dogs sleep.

The 50-year-old says she has been living on the streets for more than 27 years.

"I don't want to go to the shelter centres," and feels safer in her makeshift abode, despite the dangers of robbery and violence on the street, she says as she fixes a plastic cover over her bed for the cold winter night.

Leila is always happy to see the volunteers from the NGOs Universelle and Samu Social when they bring her food and clothing every Friday night.

For the rest of the week, she often has to make do with no more than a tin of sardines.

The Friday night meal is from the kitchen of the "Restaurant of Love", a charitable initiative launched by Universelle three years ago to help feed the growing number of Tunis' homeless.

There are no official data on the exact number of people living on the streets in the capital, but it is



Volunteers at the "Restaurant of Love", work in the kitchen of the NGO, in Tunis. **Right:** Leila and another homeless man share the Friday night dinner offered by the "Restaurant of Love", a charitable initiative launched three years ago to help feed the growing number of Tunis' homeless, in her cardboard shelter.



estimated to be in the hundreds.

The "Restaurant of Love" is the "first of its kind" in Tunisia, says Nizar Khadhari, the 39-year-old head of Universelle. The idea is simple — a regular eatery affordable for everyone, with a plate of pasta costing just 4.5 dinars or \$1.40. Homeless people can eat there for free — accounting for around 30% of the 400-450 meals served there every day.

But paying customers can also make donations in a tin by the cash register to help cover the costs.

"All profits go to the homeless, and we also employ some of them... We try to motivate them

to return and integrate into society," says Khadhari.

"The economic situation is hitting this vulnerable group of people particularly hard," says Khadhari, who predicts that the number of rough sleepers in the capital will continue to grow "due to rising prices and a lack of opportunities".

According to World Bank data, growth of the North African country's highly indebted economy stood at just 1.2% in 2023, while inflation stood at 8.3% in 2022. And with the economic woes exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and soaring food prices in the wake of the war in

Ukraine, poverty rates are on the rise in the population of 12mn.

According to official statistics, the poverty rate in Tunisia stood at 16.6% nationwide in 2021 but was nearer 25% in rural areas.

Many Tunisians flee the poorer regions in the interior of the country to coastal cities in the hope of finding work.

But with no luck when they get there, they often find themselves with nowhere to live.

Some are kicked out by their families or suffer from mental health problems and can often only find shelter in a metro or bus station. Sabri, a man in his thirties who makes a living sell-

ing paper handkerchiefs on the street, says he has repeatedly tried to kill himself.

"I'm tired of being on the street for 20 years," he says, and sees "no solution" in sight.

Last year, Tunisia's ministry of social affairs said it helped 223 homeless people in the greater Tunis area. But in other areas of the country, such help is non-existent. "The economic impact on vulnerable people cannot be ignored, and there are programmes to help them," said Rafik Bouktif, a ministry of social affairs official who heads a shelter centre in Tunis. The centre is home to about 50 people and has a budget of 400,000 dinars (\$128,000) to work with Universelle and Samu Social in the greater Tunis region.

"Combining state resources with those of NGOs is a sure way of reaching more people," says Bouktif. Nevertheless, "while ambitions are great, the means remain limited".

The "Restaurant of Love" recently moved from the outskirts of the city to downtown Tunis. And the paying customers — from all walks of life — think it's a great idea. "We eat while we feed others," says Asmaa, a government worker who eats there every day after finding out about it on social media.

Second protest death deepens Senegal political crisis

Senegal's political crisis deepened as a second person died yesterday in increasingly violent protests against President Macky Sall's decision to postpone upcoming presidential elections, AFP reported from Dakar.

The latest violence has brought fresh condemnation from opposition leaders, some of whom were candidates for the presidency.

A fresh round of protests is planned for Tuesday. Market vendor Modou Gueye, 23, died yesterday after having been shot the previous day during clashes in the capital Dakar, two of his relatives said. "Tear gas grenades were fired and then we went to the train station at Colobane to go home," said his brother, Dame Gueye. "It was there that a gendarme shot him in the stomach with a live round." His brother-in-law Mbagnick Ndiaye said he had succumbed to his injuries yesterday morning.

Already on Friday, a 22-year-old second-year geography student died in the northern town of Saint-Louis, in circumstances that are still not clear. In Saint-Louis, Alpha Yoro Tounkara died on the campus of Gaston Berger University where he was studying geography. A hundred of his classmates held an all-night vigil for him.

London mayor fears Eurostar ‘chaos’ under new EU checks

AFP
London

London mayor Sadiq Khan warned yesterday that Eurostar passengers going from Britain to the continent face “chaos” once a new computerised border scheme proposed by the European Union takes effect.

All visitors entering the EU with visas or visa waivers will have to go through the automated EU Entry/Exit System, which has been long delayed and now scheduled due to start in October. Almost 19mn people used the Eurostar – which connects Britain with Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands – last year as traveller numbers returned to their pre-pandemic levels.

The system will record a

non-EU national’s details and biometric data along with their date of entry and exit, keeping track of overstay and refused entries. “As it stands these new post-Brexit checks will cause chaos at St Pancras (the London station serving Eurostar passengers), with cuts to services and potentially huge queues facing passengers at peak times,” said Khan. “This is directly a result of Brexit, and it’s not an issue ministers can now wash their hands of,” added Khan, of the main opposition Labour party. Britain formally left the EU in early 2020 following the 2016 Brexit referendum, with its citizens losing the right to freedom of movement in the bloc.

The automated system will replace the stamping of passports for Britons travelling to France. HS1, which operates the line between London and the Channel

Tunnel to France, has said that preparations are “severely inadequate” and could lead to massive queues and the potential capping of passenger numbers.

It told UK lawmakers recently that registering a non-EU passenger at the border could add at least an additional two minutes of travel time per person. “Ministers now need to offer HS1 and Eurostar all the support it needs to resolve these issues as a matter of urgency.

“Cuts to services and longer delays simply isn’t an option,” said Khan. Khan is a vocal critic of the ruling Conservatives’ handling of Brexit and has called for the UK to forge a closer relationship with the European Union. A UK government spokesman said officials are “working closely” with the EU to “minimise any impact” from the introduction of the new system.

British PM Sunak pays more than \$630,000 in taxes in 2023

AFP
London

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, a former banker, paid more than 500,000 pounds (\$630,000) in taxes in 2023, his office revealed on Friday.

The 43-year-old, who has been prime minister since October 2022, had revenues of 2.2mn pounds in the 2022-23 tax year, a 13% increase on the previous year, according to documents released by Downing Street.

About 140,000 pounds was earned as prime minister and a member of parliament. Another 2.1mn pounds came from capital gains, share dividends and interest. The figures indicate that Sunak paid an overall rate of 23% in tax, with capital gains taxed at a lower rate than employment income.

The capital gains come mainly from an investment fund based in the US. Sunak is married to Akshata Murthy, daughter of N R Narayana Murthy, founder of the Indian tech giant Infosys. The couple’s personal wealth has

landed them in controversy and been used by opponents to criticise the prime minister as being out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Britons.

After media revealed that Murthy had used a non-domestic status to pay less tax on money earned outside Britain, Murthy said she would declare all revenue earned around the world.

A parliamentary inquiry highlighted how Sunak had failed to disclose interests that his wife had in a child care company, but did not impose sanctions.



Politician from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) Puan Maharani, daughter of Indonesia’s former president and PDI-P leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, speaks on the stage during the final day of the election campaign of presidential candidate Ganjar Pranowo and vice-presidential candidate Mahfud MD in Surakarta, Central Java, yesterday.

Huge rallies in Indonesia as candidates finish campaign

Reuters
Jakarta

Hundreds of thousands of supporters of Indonesia’s presidential contenders packed final rallies in the capital Jakarta and the Central Java city of Solo yesterday, ahead of the world’s biggest single-day election.

Candidates enter a cooling-off period on Sunday, running through election day on Wednesday, when voters will choose among three contestants running to succeed the hugely popular President Joko Widodo, who has led Indonesia for a decade and cannot run again.

The contenders to lead the world’s third-largest democracy are popular ex-governors Ganjar Pranowo and Anies Baswedan, and former special forces commander Prabowo Subianto, who has soared in opinion polls with the tacit backing of the president, and with the incumbent’s son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as his running mate.

At stake is the leadership for the next five years of a mineral-rich Group of 20 economy of 270mn people positioning itself as a future destination for multinational firms in the electric vehicle supply chain. A light-blue

wave took over Jakarta’s main sports complex as hundreds of thousands of Prabowo’s supporters gathered, many wearing T-shirts in his signature colour.

High-schooler Alfianan, 18, said she would vote for Prabowo because this was his third attempt at the presidency. “I think there’s no harm giving opportunity to someone who is trying. His optimistic spirit influenced me to choose him.”

Supporters at Anies’ rally in the capital filled an 82,000-capacity stadium, chanting prayers. Some stayed overnight to secure a spot to see the former Jakarta governor.

“I arrived here yesterday on purpose because if I had come today, I’m afraid I couldn’t have gotten inside,” said Ida Zubaedah, 50. “I need to be inside because I want to see Anies.” Anies fired up the crowd, urging them to “fight with conscience” any intimidation before or on voting day.

“Hearing that in the next few days there will be operations, intimidation, opinions being led so that voting will be done in one round for a certain candidate, I believe Indonesian people..will show they are the ones who determine their future,” he said, without naming anyone or presenting any evidence.

Responding to Anies’ claim of

expected intimidation, Prabowo’s vice presidential candidate Gibran asked in a campaign appearance for his rival to bring proof.

A spokesperson for Jokowi, as the president is popularly known, did not respond to a request for comment. His administration has ordered civil servants and law enforcement officers to remain neutral.

In Solo, Ganjar rode a cart filled with produce pulled by oxen, underscoring his man-of-the-people style, greeting thousands of supporters braving the rain. Ganjar, Central Java’s former governor, called on people to vote for him to show “true resistance” against the use of state resources during campaigning, without naming any of his rivals.

At another rally in Central Java, Ganjar’s running mate, Mahfud MD, said Indonesian democracy was “in crisis” and “heading into darkness” because corruption was rising, law had been misused and “the constitution has been played.”

Jokowi, has faced allegations of interfering to try to sway the outcome of the election by making highly publicised appearances with frontrunner Prabowo. Jokowi has responded that a president has the right to campaign, while saying he did not plan to campaign for anyone.

Lunar New Year in London



People walk through China Town during celebrations for Chinese Lunar New Year of the Dragon in central London yesterday.

Earthquakes halt search at deadly Philippines landslide site

AFP
Manila

Earthquakes in the southern Philippines halted a search yesterday for scores of people believed buried in a deadly landslide, forcing rescuers to temporarily vacate the area, officials said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage from the magnitude 5.8 quake that shook the Mindanao region at 11:22am or from a second magnitude 5.4 tremor that followed about two hours later. However, rescuers were ordered to stop their search in the remote gold-mining village of Masara.

A massive landslide buried a bus terminal and 55 houses near an Apex Mining Co gold mine on Tuesday night, killing 35 people, mostly miners, and leaving 32 injured, according to an updated official tally. Hundreds of rescuers are searching for miners and residents believed buried under the rubble spread over 8.9 hectares (22

acres) at the bottom of a wooded mountain valley.

“We ordered them (rescuers) to go up to a safer area,” Apex Mines official Ferdinand Doble told a news conference. Rescue efforts resumed nearly three hours later after officials became satisfied the quakes would not cause more landslides, Edward Macapili, spokesman for the provincial disaster office of Davao de Oro province told AFP.

Despite the authorities recovering seven more bodies since the first quake, rescue officials decided to keep the estimated number of missing unchanged at 77, he said.

The stronger quake’s epicentre was in the mainly rural municipality of Esperanza, about 150km north of the landslide site, with the second to the east.

Rescuers found a three-year-old girl alive on Friday after nearly 60 hours under the rubble, but mostly they have only been finding bodies. “We’re still hoping to save more people even after four days,” Davao de Oro disaster chief Randy Loy told the news conference.

However, “we can’t really guarantee their chances of survival” after 48 hours, he said, adding that 474 rescuers were deployed at the Masara landslide. Military rescuers were set to employ specialised equipment, their commander, Brigadier-General Ronnie Babac, told the news conference.

That included thermal scanners that can detect signs of life beneath the rubble as well as specialised “snake cameras”, also known as borescopes, designed to peek into confined spaces.

Landslides are a frequent hazard across much of the archipelago nation due to the mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, and widespread deforestation from mining, slash-and-burn farming and illegal logging.

Rain has pounded parts of Mindanao on and off for weeks, triggering dozens of landslides and flooding that have forced tens of thousands of people into emergency shelters.

Massive earthquakes have also destabilised the region in recent months.

Floral tributes



Punjab Police personnel pay tribute to Sikh warrior General Sardar Sham Singh Attari on the occasion of his 178th Martyrdom Day at India Gate on the outskirts of Amritsar yesterday.

Myanmar junta enforces military service law

Myanmar’s junta is enforcing a law allowing the military to summon all men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27 to serve for at least two years, it said yesterday, as it struggles to crush opposition to its 2021 coup. The southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since the military takeover in February of that year, which ended a 10-year experiment with democracy and sparked mass protests and a crackdown on

dissent. Three years on, the junta is struggling to crush widespread armed opposition to its rule and recently suffered a series of stunning losses to an alliance of ethnic minority armed groups. The junta “issued the notification of the effectiveness of People’s Military Service Law starting from February 10th, 2024,” the junta’s information team said in a statement.

The law was authored by a previous junta in 2010 but was never brought into force. Yesterday’s statement did not give further details but said the junta’s defence ministry would “release necessary bylaws, procedures, announcements orders, notifications and instructions.” It did not give details on how those called up would be expected to serve.

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GULF TIMES

IMF hails reforms in Qatar's Third National Development Strategy

International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised Qatar's Third National Development Strategy and noted the upcoming NDS3 is expected to provide an ambitious reform agenda to guide the transformation toward a private sector-led, knowledge-based, more diversified and greener economy, as envisaged under QNV 2030. Qatar's NDS3, which was unveiled last month, outlines a transformative vision for the nation from 2024 to 2030, aiming at economic diversification, sustainable fiscal practices, and the development of a future-ready workforce. The strategy focuses on seven key outcomes: economic diversification, fiscal sustainability, future-ready workforce, cohesive society, quality of life, environmental sustainability and government excellence. In its recent assessment of Qatar's economy, IMF said the country's structural reforms continue to progress, including to enhance protection and mobility of expatriate labour, improve the business environment, promote public-private partnerships, and further attract private investment through the residency programme and broadened foreign ownership provisions. The pension scheme has been expanded to more Qataris in the private sector to promote private sector employment. Digitalisation has continued to advance, and many climate initiatives guided by the National Environment and Climate Change Strategy and the Climate Change Action Plan are being implemented.

Maintaining prudent macroeconomic policy and intensifying reform efforts will support Qatar's resilience to shocks and accelerate its economic transformation

by significant LNG production expansion and initial reform gains from implementing NDS3. Qatar's banks are well-capitalised, liquid, and profitable, with the capital adequacy ratio and return on equity at 19 and 14.6%, respectively, in the second quarter of 2023. Banks' nonresident deposits fell by more than one-third from the recent peak, partially replaced by higher public sector domestic deposits, reducing vulnerabilities amid tight global financial conditions. The NPL ratio continued to edge up to 3.8% but the provisioning coverage ratio is relatively high, close to 80%. Banks were resilient to the financial market turmoil from advanced economies in early-2023. IMF concluded that Qatar has remained resilient to the recent global shocks and its economic outlook is favourable. Output growth is normalising as expected from the 2022 WC-driven boom. The nation's favourable medium-term outlook is supported by the significant expansion of LNG production in North Field and expected gains from the implementation of NDS3. Risks are broadly balanced. Maintaining prudent macroeconomic policy and intensifying reform efforts will support Qatar's resilience to shocks and accelerate its economic transformation. The fiscal strategy should balance discipline with growth in the near term and facilitate the transition to more diversified, private sector-led growth over the medium term. If downside risks to growth materialise and the ongoing growth slowdown sharpens, some fiscal space could be deployed through productive and efficient spending while maintaining broad fiscal prudence.

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Qatar and Rwanda: A model for partnership and expanding ties

President Kagame cites Qatar's development model as exemplary and Rwanda as one of the fastest growing economies in Africa

QNA
Doha

Qatar pursues the policy of openness, co-operation, and engagement with many sisterly and friendly countries and people, primarily the African nations which have close strategic ties with the state based on co-operation and solidarity towards global and continental issues. Qatar also strives to upgrade its investment programmes to serve the mutual interests with several nations. Notwithstanding the modernity of the Qatar-Rwanda relations, the shared visits at the level of the leaderships of the two nations did not stop, but rather witnessed a remarkable increase in the recent years. In line with this remarkable increase and in the context of the robust and outstanding relationships between the friendly countries and people comes the visit of Rwandan President Paul Kagame to Doha, who was welcomed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at his Lusail Palace office yesterday. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and avenues for enhancing them in multiple areas of co-operation, in addition to regional and global issues of common concern, especially the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. Qatar is a strategic partner for Rwanda, as the relations between them have been steadily growing since the establishment of the diplomatic ties in 2017. Since then, the leaders of the two countries have been holding meetings regularly. The high-level shared visits between the

two sides have given impetus to co-operation in numerous critical fields and shored up partnership between the two nations. In this context, His Highness the Amir visited Rwanda in April 2019 and June 2022 to participate in the 26th Commonwealth heads of government meeting held in Kigali, while the Rwandan president paid visits to Doha in March 2023, February 2022, October 2021, October 2019, December 2019 and November 2018. Qatar and Rwanda have ambitious and promising relations that underscore their resolve to reinforce and upgrade them for the sake of the two countries and friendly peoples, as the two nations constantly work to forge a model partnership and co-operate in numerous matters to serve their interests, as well as the interests of others. President Kagame had emphasised the importance of the strategic partnership between his country and Qatar, especially that the Gulf region is booming and abounds with numerous vital opportunities, noting the significance of investing the economic growth. During a panel discussion within the Qatar Economic Forum 2023, powered by Bloomberg, he said there is no country capable of achieving economic growth alone, especially a small country like Rwanda, highlighting the need to build partnerships with market leaders. He pointed out that negotiations have been completed and moved to the stage of achieving what was agreed upon with Qatar, noting that the country continues to build partnerships with Qatar Airways, with work underway to build Kigali Airport. The two nations have an array of agreements and

memorandums of understanding that cover political, diplomatic, economic, trade, agricultural, cultural and sports fields, in addition to investment and co-operation sectors in aviation and double taxation avoidance. The two countries signed an agreement to acquire 60% of the share of the Rwandan Bugesera International Airport, and Qatar Airways signed two agreements with the Rwandan tourism air transport company and one agreement with the Aviation, Travel and Logistics Holding Limited in Rwanda, along with a memorandum of understanding for defence co-operation. In November 2023, Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MoCIT), signed a memorandum of understanding in communications and information technology with Rwanda. The memorandum was signed during an official visit made by a delegation from MoCIT to Kigali within Qatar's efforts to boost co-operation in communication and information technology with Africa. On the sidelines of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Air Services Negotiation Event (ICAN2023) that took place in Riyadh last December, the civil aviation authorities of Qatar and Rwanda held bilateral talks that culminated in the signing of an MoU that allows the concerned airlines of both countries to enter into commercial co-operation agreements. Considered as Qatar's investment arm in food and agribusiness sectors, Hassad Food signed an MoU with the government of Rwanda on enhancing bilateral food and agricultural co-operation and investment.

Qatar Financial Centre (QFC), a leading onshore financial and business centre in the region, signed an MoU with Rwanda Finance Limited (RFL) to facilitate initiatives that will promote the international development of both QFC and Kigali International Financial Centre. Moreover, RwandAir and Qatar Airways have signed a comprehensive codeshare agreement to offer travellers more choice, enhanced service, and greater connectivity to more than 65 destinations across Africa and the rest of the world. President Kagame had expressed his country's interest in strengthen its relations and economic partnership with Qatar, citing Qatar's development model as being exemplary and Rwanda as being one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. He highlighted Rwanda's possession of a prosperous and stable investment environment in industries such as: textiles, clothing, leather, agriculture, livestock, industry, tourism, information and communications technology, pharmaceuticals, and the services sector. Located south of the equator in the Great Lakes region of central Africa, Rwanda is a landlocked country that connects to the outer world through its neighbours, especially via the ports of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Mombasa in Kenya. The country has a population of about 12mn. In the early 1990s, Rwanda witnessed one of the bloodiest ethnic clashes in history. Despite that, it was able to make a comeback as united, prosperous, and globally competitive state. Rwanda's success story is deemed as a case-study example for transformation and advancement.



Rwandan President Paul Kagame arrived in Doha yesterday for a working visit. He and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Hamad International Airport by Director of the Department of Protocol Ibrahim bin Yousif Fakhro, Qatar's ambassador to Rwanda Misfer bin Faisal al-Shahwani and Rwandan ambassador to Qatar Igor Marara Kainamura. (QNA)

Khan's party aims to form govt in Centre

Reuters/AFP
Islamabad

Candidates backed by the party of jailed Pakistani opposition leader Imran Khan plan to form a government, a senior aide to the former prime minister said yesterday, urging supporters to peacefully protest if final election results are not released.

The nation of 241mn people voted on Thursday in a general election, as the country struggles to recover from an economic crisis and battles militant violence in a deeply polarised political environment.

Both Khan and his main rival, three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, declared victory on Friday, increasing uncertainty over who will form the next government at a time when swift policy action is needed to address multiple challenges.

Gohar Khan, the chairman of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party who also acts as the former prime minister's lawyer, called on "all institutions" in Pakistan to respect his party's mandate.

At a press conference, he said if complete results of the polls were not released by yesterday night, the party would hold peaceful protests today outside government offices returning election results around the country.

Hundreds of Khan's supporters rallied in the northwestern city of Peshawar led by two of his aides who said they had been declared losers despite having won the polls.

"We never expected it would happen to us," said Taimur Khan Jhagra, one of Khan's former provincial ministers.

The protesters chanted slogans against what they called a vote fraud.

Sharif said on Friday his party had emerged as the single largest group and would talk to other groups to form a coalition govern-

● **PTI-backed independents won most seats in the national election**
● **Army chief hails 'successful polls'** ● **Global criticism rejected**



Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's chief Gohar Khan gestures during a press conference in Islamabad yesterday. **Right:** A supporter of PTI holds a placard during a protest outside an Election Commission office in Karachi amid claims the election result delay is allowing authorities to rig the vote-counting. (AFP)



ment. By 5pm yesterday, results were still not in for 10 of the 265 seats contested in the election – 48 hours after the polls closed.

The latest tally, posted on the Election Commission's website, showed independent candidates had won 100 seats, with Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) taking 72 seats and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) 54.

Khan's supporters were running as independents because they had been barred from contesting the polls under his party's electoral symbol by the Election Commission under flimsy pretext of not complying with electoral laws.

Despite the ban and Khan's imprisonment for convictions on charges ranging from "leaking state secrets to corruption to an unlawful marriage", millions of the former cricketer's supporters came out to vote for him, even

though he cannot be part of any government while he remains in prison.

However, under Pakistan's electoral laws, independent candidates are not eligible to be allocated reserved seats, 70 of which are meant to be distributed according to party strength. Sharif's party could get up to 20 of these seats.

Khan's close aide and media adviser, Zulfi Bukhari, told Reuters the party would announce within the next day the party banner they will ask independents to join. In Pakistan, independent candidates cannot form a government on their own and need to join a party.

"And we have no fear of independents going anywhere, because these are the people who have struggled for the last 18 months and endured all kinds of torture and oppression," Bukhari

told Reuters in a WhatsApp voice message.

Whoever seeks to form the next government would need support from other parties with no-one close to the seat threshold for a simple majority in parliament.

"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," former three-time premier Nawaz Sharif said at his party headquarters in the city.

In an AI-generated video produced by PTI, Khan was credited as claiming victory for the party.

"According to independent sources, we were winning 150 National Assembly seats before the rigging started," said the message posted on his X account, which featured a genuine video clip of him from a year ago and an AI-

generated voice-over.

Most of the seats won by Khan loyalists were in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where police said at least two PTI supporters were killed Friday and more than 20 wounded when they protested against alleged vote-rigging in Shangla district – the first serious post-election violence reported.

Several small, scattered protests by PTI supporters were reported across the country yesterday.

A nationwide election-day mobile telephone blackout and the slow counting of results led to suspicions the military establishment was influencing the process to ensure Sharif's success.

"PTI as a party and political group, despite significant efforts by the civilian and military establishment, has held on to its vote bank," said Bilal Gilani, executive director of polling group Gallup

Pakistan. "It shows that the military does not always get their way – that is the silver lining," he told AFP.

The PPP, whose popularity is largely limited to its Sindh heartland, also did better than expected.

The PML-N and PPP joined forces with minor parties to controversially remove Khan from office in April 2022 after his PTI 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.

"No-one can form a government without us," Bhutto-Zardari told local Geo TV.

Pakistan's army chief congratulated the country yesterday for the "successful conduct" of the election, saying the nation needed "stable hands" to move on from the politics of "anarchy and polarisation".

The military remains the country's most powerful institution and has for decades had a huge role in making and breaking governments. Khan accuses the military of a brutal crackdown on him and his party.

The United States, Britain and the European Union on Friday each expressed concerns about the electoral process, urging a probe into reported irregularities.

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron cited "serious concerns" that raised questions "about the fairness and lack of inclusivity of the elections".

Pakistan's Foreign Office responded to the comments yesterday, saying they ignored the "undeniable fact" that the election had been successfully conducted.

"It is our hope that the process will be concluded effectively and it will reflect the will of the people," said former Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan, who is leading the Commonwealth team to observe the voting.

Family of five die in Russian drone attack

A Ukrainian prosecutor, her husband, and their three small children were among seven people killed after a Russian drone attack on the northeastern city of Kharkiv hit an oil depot, triggering blazes that burned half a street to the ground, officials said yesterday. The regional prosecutor's office named the local prosecutor who died along with her children Oleksiy, 7, Mykhailo, 3, and 10-month-old Pavlo as Olha Putyatina and added: "The family was held hostage by a fire inside their own home." Putyatina, 35, was on maternity leave and had worked in the Kharkiv regional office since June 2012, according to a message on its official Telegram channel. An elderly couple living in the same street were also killed in the attack that Mayor Ihor Terekhov said injured 57 people and razed 15 homes. President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly video address yesterday that "Russian terrorists" would be held accountable. "It should be noted that in history, the perpetrators of such murders did not go unpunished," he said. Terekhov called a day of mourning for today. All of those killed had lived on Kotelnia Street, Serhii Bolvinov, head of the investigative department of the National Police in the region, told reporters on the ruined street.

Hungarian president quits over abuse case pardon

Hungarian President Katalin Novak resigned yesterday after coming under mounting pressure for pardoning a man convicted of helping to cover up sexual abuse in a children's home.

Novak, a close ally of conservative Prime Minister Viktor Orban, resigned a week after her presidential pardon was first reported by local news site 444.hu

The revelation caused a public uproar and demands from the opposition for her and former justice minister Judit Varga to quit. Varga, who has been a rising star in Orban's ruling Fidesz party, resigned as a lawmaker yesterday.

The scandal was a rare setback for Orban, who has been in power since 2010, and who faces European parliament elections just as the country emerges from an inflation crisis. Orban has for years campaigned to protect children from activists roaming the nation's schools. This has been one of several issues over which Orban has clashed with the European Commission. "I made a mistake...Today is the last day that I address you as a president," Novak, whose role as president is largely ceremonial, said as she announced her resignation on state television. She cut short an official visit to Qatar and returned to Budapest unexpectedly yesterday.



A handout picture shows President Katalin Novak as she announces her resignation in the presidential palace of Budapest yesterday. (AFP)

"I made a decision to grant a pardon last April believing that the convict did not abuse the vulnerability of children whom he had overseen. I made a mistake as the pardon and the lack of reasoning was suitable to trigger doubts over the zero tolerance that applies to paedophilia," she said. This week, Hungarian opposition parties had demanded Novak's resignation over the case and on Friday a thousand demonstrators rallied at Novak's office calling for her to quit. In a bid to contain the political damage, Orban personally submitted a constitutional amendment to parliament late on Thursday depriving the president of

the right to pardon crimes committed against children. Some political analysts had interpreted that move as a clear message to Novak. Yesterday, Judit Varga – who was expected to lead Fidesz's list for the elections, and who also signed off on the pardon – said on Facebook she would step down as a Fidesz MP, taking responsibility for her decision. "I resign from public life, I resign my mandate as a lawmaker and also the top position on the European party list," Varga said. The head of Fidesz's parliamentary group, Mate Kocsis, said Novak and Varga made "responsible" decisions which the party would respect.

Researchers find clues on long Covid trail

AFP
Paris

Tens of millions of people across the world are thought to suffer from long Covid, but four years after the pandemic was declared this elusive condition still cannot be tested for – let alone treated.

However research could be finally starting to find early clues on the trail of long Covid, raising hopes of future breakthroughs that may also illuminate other stubbornly ambiguous chronic syndromes.

Long Covid is the name given to a wide variety of symptoms still being suffered by people weeks and months after they first contracted the Sars-CoV-2 virus.

The most common are fatigue, shortness of breath, muscle pain and brain fog.

One notable study released last month showed there were significant differences in the proteins of the blood of more than 110 long Covid patients. Onur Boyman, a Swiss researcher and senior author of the *Science* study, told AFP he believes this is a "central puzzle piece" in what keeps Covid raging for so long in the bodies of some people.

Part of the body's immune system called the complement system, which normally fights off infection by killing infected cells, remains active in people with long Covid, continuing to attack healthy targets and causing tissue damage, the researchers said.

Boyman said that when people recovered from long Covid, their complement system also improved, suggesting a strong link between the two.

"It shows that long Covid is a disease and you can actually measure it," Boyman said, adding the team hopes this could lead to a future test.

Researchers not involved in the study cautioned that this complement system "dysregulation" could not explain all the different ways that long Covid seems to attack patients.

Still, it is "great to see papers coming out now showing signals which might start to explain long Covid", said Claire Steves, professor of ageing and health at King's College London. Lucia, a US-based long Covid sufferer who preferred not to give her last name, told AFP that "studies like these bring us a lot closer to understanding" the condition.

White House fights back against age comments in Biden probe

The White House launched a fierce pushback on Friday against a brutal special counsel report portraying Joe Biden as elderly and forgetful, describing it as a political hit-job on the president in an election year. US Vice-President Kamala Harris called the stinging report "politically motivated" while White House spokesman Ian Sams branded it "gratuitous and inappropriate" as they sought to call its impartiality into question. Biden refused to answer questions on the report as he hosted German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the Oval Office for talks on Ukraine on Friday, but the night before he responded furiously to the report's findings. The investigation cleared the 81-year-old Democrat of illegally retaining classified documents in his home and garage – but damningly branded him as a "well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory." Biden's supporters and aides rushed to defend him on Friday on an issue

he's long been vulnerable on as he bids for re-election in November, most likely against Republican Donald Trump.

"The way that the president's demeanour in that report was characterised could not be more wrong on the facts and (was) clearly politically motivated," Harris said when asked about the report. In a rambling address Friday to a National Rifle Association event, the 77-year-old Trump said of Biden's mental state: "I don't think he knows he's alive."

With questions swirling about Biden's mental acuity, the spotlight is also on Harris as she would be first in line to succeed as president should he resign or be incapacitated. Both Biden and Harris are suffering from low approval ratings as they campaign for another four years in the White House. The White House strategy appeared to be to start directly targeting special counsel



US President Joe Biden embraces his sister Valerie Biden Owens as they leave Mrs Robino's Italian Restaurant in Wilmington, Delaware, yesterday. (AFP)

Robert Hur, a Republican who was appointed by then-president Trump to be US attorney for the District of Maryland in 2017. But it was Biden's own attorney

general Merrick Garland who named Hur as special counsel in the documents case. Democratic Senator John Fetterman, who won a high-profile

victory in the key swing state of Pennsylvania in the 2022 midterms, nevertheless said Hur had an agenda as a "Trump appointee." "It was just a smear and cheap shot," he said of the report.

Facing a barrage of questions from reporters, Sams, spokesman for the White House Counsel's Office, said that the report contained "gratuitous and inappropriate criticisms." He stopped short of saying Hur was partisan but suggested the investigator felt under pressure to "go beyond his remit" because of the polarised US political scene. "We're in a very pressurised political environment. And when you are the first special counsel in history not to indict anybody, there is pressure to criticise," he said. Other allies also rushed to defend the president. Biden's Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the criticisms of Biden as old and feeble-minded did not "live

in reality." Describing him as a "mentor," she added: "No-one in this building would say that what we saw in this report about his memory."

Republicans have called on Biden to resign. Trump, who faces criminal charges over his retention of classified documents and then refusal to cooperate with investigators, has accused the Department of Justice of double standards.

Biden gave his own furious response from the White House on Thursday night, particularly lambasting the special counsel for claiming that he was unable to remember when his son Beau had died. "To suggest that he couldn't remember when his son died is really out of bounds," added Sams. But the president added to his woes by mixing up the presidents of Egypt and Mexico, while speaking sharply to reporters who challenged him about the report.

Rwanda holds business forum; celebrates National Day at Expo 2023 Doha

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

The Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha (Expo 2023 Doha) has provided Rwanda with an opportunity to engage with “new, like-minded partners” who champion the “green agenda”, according to the country’s Agriculture and Animal Resources Minister Dr Ildephonse Musafiri.

The minister, who made the statement during the “Rwanda National Day & Business Forum” held recently at Expo 2023 Doha, added: “Together, we will forge pathways that are resilient to climate change, strive for carbon neutrality, and encourage innovation in green economics.”

In a speech, Expo 2023 Doha commissioner-general Bader bin Omar al-Dafa



Dr Musafiri: Together, we will forge pathways that are resilient to climate change, strive for carbon neutrality, and encourage innovation in green economics.

said that Rwanda’s participation in the expo will foster mutual relationships in fields like agricultural and trade invest-

ment, civil, aviation, logistic services, and financial services, as well as opportunities to explore other areas of co-operation.

“On a multilateral framework level, Expo 2023 Doha provides the public-private sector a platform for advertisement and marketing of Rwanda’s investment opportunities like mining, real estate development, touristic facilities, technologies, and communication,” he said. “I hope that Rwanda will reach its goals by participating in Expo 2023 Doha because its distinctive, brilliant pavilion is a message of strong unwavering message for its milestones.”

The forum was graced by the presence of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah, the Director



Expo 2023 Doha Commissioner-General Bader bin Omar al-Dafa.

of the Department of Protocol Ibrahim Yousif Fakhro, Expo 2023 Doha secretary-general Mohamed Ali al-Khouri, and

Rwandan ambassador Igor Marara.

Highlights of the event included a panel discussion on *A Conversation on Sustainable Resilient Food Systems & Sustainable Production*, featuring the speakers Torba Market & Torba Farm co-founder Fatma Ali al-Khater, LuLu Group International operations manager Simon Alexander, Rwanda National Agricultural Export Development Board chief executive Claude Bizimana, and Baladna head of communications and sustainability Francis Higgins.

It was moderated by Food Action Alliance executive director Adam Gerstenmier.

Presentations were delivered by Snoonu founder and chief executive Hamad al-Hajri, who spoke on *Technology & Agribusiness: A fruitful enabler* and Khalid al-Rayes, who discussed *Spotlight: My Rwanda Journey*.

International honey exhibition opens

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Souq Waqif management launched yesterday the 15th edition of Souq Waqif International Honey Exhibition at the eastern square of the souq.

The working hours of the exhibition, which will be open to the public daily until February 19, are from 9am to 12 noon, and 3.30pm to 9pm, except on Friday, when the exhibition will be open from 3.30pm to 9pm.

The festival enjoys participation from various countries that include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Libya, Spain, and New Zealand.

Participating companies number 100 local and international firms that specialise in natural honey and related products, including 55 based in Qatar.

Exhibition general supervisor Khalid Saif al-Suwaiddi said that this exhibition is the largest and most significant exhibition specialising in honey in the country,



and that more than 23 countries are taking part at its activities.

A new clinic was introduced to this edition where a kind of apitherapy – utilising bee venom therapy – is used.

The laboratory to qualify and assess the quality of honey and analyse its components will continue to provide its services for the third year on row.

Aziz Lakhdari from Algeria, who is displaying Manuka honey from

New Zealand, said that the exhibition is one of the best worldwide in its category, adding that he had taken part in 16 international exhibitions for honey products.

He said that he expects sales to be spike during the last few days of the exhibition, as some customers prefer to wait until the conclusion of the event to get better deals.

Thamir al-Saadi from Saudi Arabia praised the organisation of the exhibition, saying that it is



Snapshots from the Souq Waqif International Honey Exhibition.





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