

In addition to leading local organisations, this year highlights extensive international participation from a range of esteemed academic and humanitarian institutions, such as the UN Global Compact, Unesco, and International Labour Organisation. **To Page 2**

Municipality ministry observes Earth Hour

The Ministry of Municipality participated in the global event Earth Hour by turning off the lights in its main buildings from 8:30pm to 9:30pm yesterday evening. The ministry's participation in this global event comes as part of its engagement with community initiatives and in support of efforts to reduce carbon emissions, aiming to safeguard the environment and address the phenomenon of climate change, in line with the objectives of the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030 within Qatar National Vision 2030.



Lights off at LuLu



LuLu Hypermarket in Qatar demonstrated its commitment to environmental sustainability by participating in the Earth Hour initiative. Yesterday, the LuLu outlets across Qatar turned off their external lights, including the D-Ring Road location. This symbolic gesture underscores LuLu's dedication to energy conservation and raising awareness about climate change. LuLu Hypermarket continues to advocate for eco-friendly practices, encouraging communities to take action for a greener future.

QRCS to implement 14 water, sanitation projects in 2024

Marking World Water Day, Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has developed a plan to implement 14 water and sanitation projects during 2024.

These include the digging and rehabilitation of surface water wells and boreholes, installation of water tanks and solar-powered pumps, provision of water coolers at public places, and deployment of tanker trucks to distribute drinking water to affected people in areas with scarce water resources.

The total number of beneficiaries of these projects is 411,000 people in Palestine (Gaza), Yemen, Niger, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Iraq. The total cost is QR21,959,547. Potable water is one of the basics of life, a public health requirement, and a key Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). However, many communities around the world meet multiple, considerable challenges to obtain safe water, including contamination, inadequate infrastructure, climate change, and natural disasters.

The worst impact of these challenges is the spread of water-borne diseases, such as diarrhoea, typhoid, and cholera, especially among children and vulnerable/underserved groups. QRCS attaches overriding importance to the provision of clean drinking water during its disaster response operations, by digging and reha-



bilitating water wells/irrigation canals, providing purified water, and distributing personal and family hygiene materials to affected communities.

During 2023, QRCS carried out numerous activities to secure water and sewage facilities, including the distribution of hygiene kits, water bottles, water containers, and mosquito nets; deployment of drinking water tankers; digging and equipment of water wells; hy-

giene awareness-raising; rainwater harvesting; maintenance and rehabilitation of water stations and water supply systems; and construction of toilets.

The total cost of these projects amounted to QR12,325,539 (6% of the foreign aid provided last year), and they helped improve the lives of 419,439 beneficiaries in Vanuatu, Somalia, Yemen, Niger, Bangladesh, Iraq, Palestine, and Jordan. (QNA)

Official

Amir congratulates Pakistani president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari on his country's National Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. (QNA)

Sheikh Al Qaqa conveys Amir's condolences to personal representative of UAE president



HE Sheikh Al Qaqa bin Hamad al-Thani conveyed yesterday the condolences of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani to the children of Ahmed bin Khalifa al-Suwaidi, the Personal Representative of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan on the death of Mohamed Khalifa Ahmed al-Suwaidi in Abu Dhabi. (QNA)

Qatar CSR Summit to be held from April 30-May 2

From Page 1

The conference also features MENA Business Schools Alliance for Sustainability (MEBAS) as the academic partner.

Launched by Qatar University's College of Business and Economics in October of the preceding year, MEBAS boasts 15 accredited business schools from the region, bringing valuable academic insight and expertise to the event."

Sobh commented, "The conference agenda promises to be packed with thought-provoking panel discussions, informative in-

terventions, and interactive workshops covering various aspects of the circular economy, sustainability, and human rights. These sessions will be led by esteemed experts and academics from top business schools and participating international organisations.

The conference will also host over 15 international speakers during its sessions and accompanying workshops."

Dr Saif Ali al-Hajri, president, Mubadara for Social Impact and CEO of the National CSR Programme, said: "The remarkable success of last year's event has

captured the interest of numerous regional and international stakeholders in corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and social development. We are excited about the extensive international participation anticipated this year."

He added: "This event brings together key players in the field of corporate social responsibility from all over the world, promising to promote engaging discussions, facilitate the exchange of experiences and expertise, and embrace CSR global best practices and impactful initiatives in Qatar."

Health ministry, partners vow to eradicate TB

The Ministry of Public Health and its partners highlight their continuous efforts to combat tuberculosis and have renewed their commitment to eradicate it. This comes in observance of World Tuberculosis Day, and this year's theme, "Yes! We can eliminate tuberculosis."

According to WHO, national TB programmes should prioritise improving the quality and sustainability of TB services. In Qatar, the Ministry of Public Health, Hamad Medical Corp, Primary Health Care Corp, and other healthcare partners are steadfast in ensuring equitable access to high-quality TB services, with appropriate and timely screening, testing, treatment, and referral protocols in place, in addition to a robust surveillance system.

Manager of Qatar's National Tuberculosis Program Dr Abdullatif al-Khal said, "In alignment with

the WHO End TB Strategy, we are well on track to achieve the global targets for 2027, which were set at the second high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on the fight against tuberculosis. High-quality services for TB are accessible to everyone in the country, without fear of stigma or discrimination."

Dr Hamad Eid al-Romaihi, Director of Health Protection and Communicable Disease Control Department, Ministry of Public Health, emphasized the importance of TB prevention stating, "Community members play a vital role in TB elimination. We urge the public to be informed about the symptoms of TB and its prevention."

Seeking timely medical care is crucial for effective treatment for the individual, as well as to prevent transmission among close contacts and therefore the community

as a whole." Moving forward, Qatar is invested in enhancing preventive and curative services to achieve TB elimination and other diseases Within the framework of Qatar's Vision 2030.

Dr Muna al-Maslamani, CEO and Medical Director of the Communicable Disease Center, HMC, said: "Our TB services are provided free of charge to all. As treatment compliance is of paramount importance to combat TB, we have dedicated personnel to support our patients in adhering to their treatment regimens."

Providing TB preventive treatment is a critical component of the WHO End TB Strategy; in Qatar, there was an increase in the number of persons receiving TB preventive treatment in 2022 as compared to the previous year, which contributes substantially to our TB elimination efforts." (QNA)

Shura attends 148th IPU Assembly

QNA
Geneva

The Shura Council is taking part in the 148th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly, which kicked off in Geneva yesterday, and will run until March 27. It is held under the theme "Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding."

Shura Council Members Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabab al-Dosari, Ahmad bin Ebrahim al-Malki, and Ali bin Ahmad al-Kaabi are representing the Council at the IPU Assembly. The activities of the 148th the IPU Assembly will also include the convening of the 213th session of the Governing Council, the election of the Assembly's president and vice-presidents, in addition to holding a hearing on emergency item requests.

All IPU parliamentary bodies



will meet, such as its four thematic Standing Committees, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, to discuss IPU priority topics, including climate change and clean energy, sustainability, and the social and humanitarian impact of artificial intelligence, among others.

The Shura Council delegation participated in the co-ordination meetings of the Arab, Islamic, and Asian parliamentary groups, during

which an exchange of views took place regarding emergency item requests, in addition to agreeing on the three groups' candidates for the vacant posts on the standing and sub-committees.

Moreover, the Shura Council delegation met with IPU President Tullia Ackson. The meeting discussed various topics relating to inter-parliamentary co-operation, in addition to the most prominent items on the IPU Assembly's agenda.

Pakistan National Day celebrated

Pakistan National Day was celebrated in Qatar with zeal and enthusiasm. A large number of members of the Pakistani community from all walks of life attended the flag-hoisting ceremony at the Embassy of Pakistan. Ambassador Muhemmed Aejaaz hoisted the national flag and a military contingent from Pakistan gave salute to the national flag during the National Anthem. National Day messages of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Mohamed Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Mohamed Ishaq Dar were read out on the occasion. Addressing the community on the occasion, ambassador Aejaaz recalled the great sacrifices rendered by the forefathers in the struggle to achieve Pakistan. He paid rich tributes to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Muhammad Iqbal and other leaders of the independence movement of Pakistan. The ambassador highlighted that bilateral relations between Pakistan and Qatar are based



on historical bonds of a shared faith, heritage and culture. He also expressed the hope that bilateral relations would be further strengthened in the years ahead. Ambassador Aejaaz thanked and appreciated the people and government of Qatar especially His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani for his continued support and hospitality extended to Pakistani community and to Pakistan. He also expressed pride in the contribution of the Pakistani community in the remarkable progress and prosperity of Qatar.



Successful IVF at Al Wakra Hospital results in birth of quadruplets

The medical team at the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at Al Wakra Hospital (AWH) at Hamad Medical Corporation succeeded in helping a couple who had been suffering from infertility for more than 14 years. After receiving treatment, the wife, gave birth to quadruplets in perfect health, despite facing immune system problems that had previously prevented pregnancy throughout their 14-year marriage. Dr Lolwa al-Ansari, senior consultant and head of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at AWH, explained: "This case is one of many in which we have been blessed by Allah to achieve pregnancy after patients have attempted at other centres. What's unique about this case is that it's the first quadruplet pregnancy since the

establishment of the Assisted Reproduction Unit in February 2022. The patient came for follow-up complaining of delayed conception for 14 years, during which she underwent two cycles of in vitro fertilisation outside HMC, but without success." Dr Lolwa added: "Based on that, the medical team conducted all the necessary tests and examinations, and it was found that the problem was with the mother's immune system. Therefore, a treatment plan was devised for the patient, which included undergoing the IVF procedure and transferring two embryos to the uterus. Two weeks after the procedure, during regular follow-ups, it was discovered that there were not only two but three sacs in the mother's uterus. The mother then continued with immunotherapy, and



Al Wakra Hospital

during routine pregnancy check-ups in the twelfth week, the surprise came when a fourth sac was detected. The mother continued with follow-ups throughout the

pregnancy until a successful caesarean delivery was performed in the 31st week of pregnancy, and all the newborns were in good health." Dr Lolwa noted that the As-

sisted Reproduction Unit at AWH is a significant addition, as it has helped accommodate more cases of delayed conception. Since its opening, the unit has received ap-

proximately 446 patients, and during this period, over 100 IVF attempts have been made, resulting in a pregnancy rate of up to 65%. The unit receives referrals from private and governmental centres, as well as HMC hospitals or from infertility clinics. These referrals are reviewed by specialised doctors, sorted, and appointments are scheduled accordingly. Based on the results of the tests and examinations conducted, a treatment plan is formulated, which may involve undergoing the IVF procedure or other interventions. Dr Lolwa emphasised the medical team's commitment at the Assisted Reproduction Unit at AWH to provide necessary psychological support to patients undergoing the IVF experience throughout the treatment period.



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Green Tent highlights AI role in improving quality of life

The Green Tent of the “A Flower Each Spring” programme held a symposium to discuss the utilisation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its contributions to improving quality of life, its technologies and historic dimensions and the dangers it poses to the Arabic identity, individuals’ rights and the types of cybercrimes and combating mechanisms.

Held under the theme “AI: curse or blessing”, the event brought together a number of experts, academics and professionals in smart technologies and biotechnology.

Head of the “Flower Each Spring” programme Dr Saif Ali al-Hajri emphasised that AI is like many contemporary topics that has pros and cons, noting the tremendous role AI performs in the modern age in all life aspects.

He highlighted multiple pros of AI, chiefly its role in increasing the industrial productivity and efficiency, entering, and analysing the data, answering a flurry of

inquiries raised by customs, predicting the customs’ traits, leveraging AI in the security institutions to detect fraud cases, in addition to the fact that AI has dramatically revolutionised the early treatment and optimised the clinical operation and disease forecasting.

AI has revolutionised the automobile industry and helped reduce car accidents through leveraging AI in regulating and alleviating traffic gridlock in major cities. It has also entered the field of e-commerce, and helped figure out customer trends and behaviour, al-Hajri underlined, affirming the importance of buttressing digital systems and avoiding electronic threats so as to protect social and economic systems.

He stressed the importance of enacting legislations that overtly regulate the AI function to be utilised ethically as versatile technology, particularly the smart phones and desktop computers, pointing out that it is critically essen-



A number of experts, academics and professionals in smart technologies took part in the event.

tial for scientists to create mechanisms that outperform this technology and hackers through offering the opportunity to the scientific and technological innovation.

It is highly important to combine the efforts of workers in all sectors so as to ensure control of AI within the framework of protecting the human privacy and help contribute to human advancement and civilisation without any adverse impacts, he noted.

The participants in the symposium underscored the useful uses of AI in the food security area, emphasising

that AI utilisation has become very critical in the agricultural sector, given the steadfast growth of population worldwide, prompting the need for providing adequate food and more products, in addition to mitigating the environmental effects arising from the agricultural activities and facilitating the active utilisation of natural resources.

The participants highlighted the revolutionary changes AI might make through generating essential information about crop health, soil conditions, weather patterns, along with AI intervention in seed

production through scanning the seeds to determine their type, quality, and viability.

As for healthcare, the participants stated that AI can largely be utilised in diagnosing the diseases and providing the suitable treatment for each case through the massive potential of AI in analysing the medical data and giving swift and thorough prognosis and prediction. (QNA)

Contests of Ministry of Environment ‘Ikbis 2024’ conclude

The second edition of the Ramadan Beach Volleyball Championship of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (Ikbis 2024) wrapped up with the participation of 14 teams that were distributed to four groups.

Held on the sand court in Aspire Park, the information challenge team was crowned with the title of the current edition after defeating the ministry’s team 2-1 in the final match.

The closing day matches were attended by HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie.

The final match was very powerful which ended with crowning the winner.

The organising committee honoured the winners and coaches, alongside the Qatar legendary captain Hassan al-Haydos who had retired from international football after winning the 2023 AFC Asian Cup Qatar title.

The committee allocated financial awards worth QR100,000 for first-place winners. The champion received QR50,000, the runner-up QR30,000 and the third-place winner QR20,000.

Chairman of the Championship Organising Committee Faisal Khalid al-Otaibi lauded the incredible success of the current edition, in terms of the huge turnout since the first day of the event, pointing out that the technical level was superb.

He added that alongside the tournament there were many events held with the organising bodies, noting the efforts of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and its keenness to support community sports activity and publicise the importance of practising sports. (QNA)

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QSC to launch ‘website design’ contest

Qatar Scientific Club (QSC) of the Ministry of Sports and Youth is to launch today the ‘website design’ competition for the young people aged between 15 and 25 within QSC-sponsored events during the holy month of Ramadan.

The contest is intended to imbue the participants with the powerful competition spirit and advance their innovation to design a practical website design, QSC said in a statement.

Software Engineer at QSC Shamma al-Buainain said the competition helps the participants demonstrate their talents in designing websites in a competitive and enthusiastic atmosphere. It also enables QSC to discover young scientific talents that can be utilised in its future activities.

The contest is intended to imbue the participants with the powerful competition spirit and advance their innovation to design a practical website design, QSC

The technical committee of the competition has set conditions for participation, including adherence to punctuality and attend the event with the personal computer (PC), in addition to complying with the visual identity regulations that will be presented to the competitors. The design should be practical and easy to use.

QSC has offered multiple scientific events that drew a host of talented people during Ramadan. The activities offer the opportunity for competition between the participants through many programmes, such as car repair challenge programme.

The club also organised a lecture on cybersecurity and digital privacy in collaboration with the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA), which tackled the ways to protect personal and professional accounts and underscored the significance of augmenting the devices with powerful tools that would never display loopholes for hackers. (QNA)

End of the Liquidation Announcement

The Liquidator

Rami Mohammad Ali Qudah

Deloitte & Touche - Qatar Branch


declares finalizing the procedures of the Liquidation of

Ready Mix Beton Qatar W.L.L.

(the "Company")

Commercial Registry No. (27008)

In accordance with the provisions of the law, and accordingly, he disclaims his responsibility from the Company, and its commercial registration was cancelled from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.



The Transport Company MOWASALAT (KARWA)

Mowasalat (Karwa) announces the following tender:

| Tender Ref. No. | Tender Title | Tender Fee | Electronic Tender Fee Payment Dates | Tender Bond | Bid Closing Date |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| TC/011/EGS/2024 | Upgradation of Security and Access Control Systems at MOWASALAT Premises | QAR 1,000 | 24 March to 31 March 2024 | QAR 22,000 | 29 April 2024 |
| AUC-01-EGS- 2024 | Leasing of Shops (Grocery & Cafeteria) at Mowasalat Locations for 3 years | QAR 1,000 | 24 March to 31 March 2024 | N/A | 16 April 2024 |

CONDITIONS:

► Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:

► Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: tenders@mowasalat.com

► Tender / Auction documents will be released via email on the respective day after the tender fee payment due dates to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested.

► Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond (if Applicable): Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents. **Bids without Tender Bond shall not be considered.**

► Tender validity: Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.


► Tender documents submission (Sr. No. 1): Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (IN RED WAX) envelopes addressed to Secretary - Tender Committee clearly highlighting the Tender / Auction Ref. No. & Tender / Auction Title:

- Envelope 1# must include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
- Envelope 2# must include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
- Envelope 3# must include the Tender Bond (1 Original)


► For Auction (Sr. No. 2):

- Envelope 1# must include Techno-Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB + Valid Legal Documents including the Relative Experience)





Bid Closing Date: Bid submission deadline is **12.00 noon Doha Local Time** as on the Bid closing date shown above. The envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary-Tenders Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.




Supplier Registration



Mowasalat Location





QATAR FUEL ADDITIVES COMPANY LIMITED QAFAC

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Tender Committee of QAFAC invites qualified local suppliers to participate in the following Tenders in accordance with QAFAC tendering procedures:

| No. | Tender No. | Description | Collection Fees | Tender Bond | Bid Closing Date |
|-----|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | QTC/027/24 | Website Re-implementation | Qrs. 300/- | Qrs. 15,000/- | 28 th April 2024 |

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

- Collection Date** : From **Sunday, 24th March, 2024** (QAFAC working days from Sunday to Thursday only)
- Collection Time** : 08:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
- Location** : The Gate, Bay Tower 2, 13th Floor, West Bay, QAFAC
- Tender Fees** : As shown above, (**non-refundable**) can be paid at QAFAC Doha Office
- Validity** : Offers must be valid for 120 days from closing date.
- Bid Bond** : Offers must include a Bid bond issued from a local bank and valid for 120 Days from closing date.
- Authorization** : Tenders will be issued to authorized company personnel with the following:
 - Official authorization on Company Letter Head
 - Proper Identification
 - Copy of Company's Commercial Registration
 - Focal Point of Contact (Name, Telephone, Mobile & Email)

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

Qatar Charity campaign aims to construct wells, houses and mosques

Qatar Charity has launched its 'Double Your Ajir' campaign. To run in the second ten days of Ramadan, the campaign, according to an official statement, aims to provide clean drinking water and housing for needy families, as well as build mosques at minimal cost. The drive comes as part of Qatar Charity's current Ramadan campaign 'Endless Giving'. More than a million people are expected to benefit from the campaign across the world with the support of benefactors in Qatar.

The campaign aims, through these projects, to create a developmental impact on the targeted poor and needy communities. This is achieved by providing them with clean drinking water and contributing to alleviating the suffering of drought. It also aims to provide suitable safe housing that ensures a dignified life for poor families, as well as mosques that enable worshippers to pray with humbleness and tranquillity. Furthermore,



the campaign offers opportunities for learning the Qur'an and Islam.

It also provides an opportunity for benefactors in this blessed month to multiply their rewards, by donating to the projects that make a difference in the lives of the targeted individuals.

The campaign seeks to dig and equip many wells, build homes for the poor and construct mosques at minimal cost.

The campaign covers 12 Asian and African countries, which are Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, India, Nepal, Chad, Togo, Nigeria, Ni-

ger, Ivory Coast, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Qatar Charity has urged the benefactors in Qatar to support the campaign by sponsoring the cost of an entire project, a package of charitable projects, or a share that serves as a continuous charity in multiple projects across different countries at minimal cost.

The contributions of the donors will bring joy to those in need, quench the thirst of the thirsty, build homes for needy families or construct mosques for worshippers.

Donations can be made to the campaign through the following link: <https://www.qcharity.org/en/qa/campaign?campaignId=621&UTMMid=0>

To make contributions, a "Home Collector" can be requested through the app (qch.qa/appen), in addition to dialling 44920000 for this purpose. Furthermore, benefactors can donate at Qatar Charity's branches, as well as at its collection points in the commercial complexes.

MG Qatar launches new SUV Whale Coupe

Auto Class Cars, the authorised general distributor for MG in Qatar, launched the MG Whale, its latest sporty mid-size SUV coupe model, designed to cater to the travel requirements of younger buyers, ambitious professionals and families who reside in urban environments but are always aspiring to add a dash of adventure into their lives.

The futuristic design and the daring coupe-like silhouette of the MG Whale embody the youthful and progressive spirit of the people who live and work in the vibrant cities of the region. The Whale-inspired details like its signature front grille and Baleen daytime running lamps help convey the playfulness, intelligence and grace of its namesake.

Additionally, traits like the two-tone glossy black roof, matte gold bumper accents, chrome dual exhaust pipes and silver decoration add to the visual appeal of the SUV Coupe. The car also rides on stylish alloy wheels which have a large 19-inch diameter indicating its stylistic dominance over its competitors.

The SUV Coupe offers a well-laid-out, premium quality cabin



MG Whale Coupe SUV.

that will ensure daily commutes and long journeys are quiet, hassle-free, and comfortable thanks to features like electric seat adjustments with memory seats, dual-zone air conditioning, and a power-operated panoramic sunroof.

Passengers will also be entertained and remain connected thanks to the superlative technologies and features like the 9-speaker BOSE sound system, 256-colour ambient lighting setup, and the seamlessly integrated dual 12.3-inch Curved Panoramic Screen.

The safety features include an HD 360 degrees surround view system and a host of active and passive safety features,

electronic aids to make the journey incident-free as well as comfortable. Moreover, the MG Whale is built on a chassis with a high-strength structure that is rated for high levels of torsional stiffness, which will provide maximum protection and a dynamic advantage.

The SUV Coupe is driven by a powerful 2.0L turbocharged engine producing 231HP and 370Nm torque which is coupled to a reliable 8-speed automatic gearbox.

The MG Whale and the full line up of MG models are available at Auto Class Cars showroom on Salwa Road and Lusail. All the cars have six-year/200,000km warranty.

Municipality campaign in Al Khor and Al Thakhira clears abandoned vehicles



Abdulaziz Ahmed BuHashim al-Sayyid, director of the Municipal Control Department at Al Khor and Al Thakhira Municipality.



The Municipal Control Department at Al Khor and Al Thakhira Municipality has accomplished its campaign to remove abandoned vehicles across the municipality.

The discarded vehicles and equipment that used to spoil the good public outlook of the place were removed.

Speaking to local Arabic daily *Arrayah*, Abdulaziz Ahmed BuHashim al-Sayyid, director of the Municipal Control Department, stressed that the cargo transport vehicles are closely monitored to avoid any spillage on public roads and violations issued to those who break the related regulations. Further, over the past few days intensive campaigns have been

conducted to spot and address any encroachments on state property. In case any violations are spotted, the necessary procedures would be taken in co-operation with the entities concerned to remove such violations or encroachments. Further, there are regular inspection campaigns to ensure that the buildings within the municipality are compliant with the building license issued to them according to the engineering design.

He said the department has been carrying out regular campaigns to spot any violations of the law that bans workers' camps within family residential areas,

and to deal with them accordingly.

Regarding the inspection efforts during the holy month of Ramadan to control the local market, he said that a comprehensive work plan was adopted ahead of the holy month of Ramadan aimed at monitoring the work at slaughterhouses, fish market, meat shops and for carrying out inspection campaigns on all food outlets and establishments around the clock. He pointed out that the billboards of commercial shops, complexes and villas with commercial license have been inspected as well, to ensure compliance with the law and its regulations in this regard.

MoPH, HMC, PHCC host Ramadan Suhoor for media

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) held a Ramadan Suhoor (Ghabga) in honour of local media outlets, leading media figures and professionals.

Ali Abdullah al-Khater, adviser to the Minister of Public Health for Communication Affairs and chairman of the Supreme Communication Committee for Healthcare, welcomed the attendees, thanking all media professionals for their great efforts over the past years in supporting the development and progress of

the health sector in Qatar and in highlighting the various health services and achievements aimed at improving the health of the Qatari community.

Al-Khater praised the effective and distinguishing partnership between the health sector and the media in spreading health awareness by delivering sound health messages to the public, and working to achieve the common goal of ensuring better health for the current and future generations.

At the end of the ceremony, al-Khater honoured the local media representatives.

GU-Q event explores basketball's evolution in region

The Centre for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at Georgetown University Qatar (GU-Q) held an insightful panel discussion to launch its newest research initiative, America's Game in the Middle East: The 2027 Qatar Basketball World Cup.

The CIRS project will examine US political and cultural engagements in

the Middle East through the lens of basketball and the development of the sport in the region more broadly, explained Prof Danyel Reiche, visiting associate professor at GU-Q, who leads the initiative.

The men's 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup in Qatar is set to engage fans and national teams from across the region and the world. While it is widely

known as "America's game," originating in Springfield, Massachusetts in the late 19th century, it is the second most popular global sport after football.

Introducing the project during the public launch, Prof Reiche said: "The Basketball World Cup has never been staged by an Arab country before, and this also shows that sport remains an important policy tool for Qatar, and this did not end with hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022."

In the panel discussion that followed, Yaseen Ismail Musa, head of the Qatar Basketball Federation, Claudia Kozman, assistant professor at Northwestern University in Qatar, and Joseph John, programme editor at Al Jazeera English, delved further into how basketball has spread in the Middle East region, amid its globalisation, including Ameri-

ca's role in this process.

Musa, a former professional basketball player, highlighted Qatar's national aspirations and the tournament's significance for fans across the Middle East and the country's young generation.

In turn, Dr Kozman pointed to how the game transcends political, religious and ethnic divisions in her home country Lebanon, bringing people together. A former sports journalist, she is currently researching media coverage of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 versus other global sporting events.

Comparing the game's historical development in two of its biggest markets, China and India, John discussed the NBA's role in the game's exponential rise in China and the backlash for the NBA when navigating political issues.



The CIRS project will examine US political and cultural engagements in the Middle East.

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ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

| No. | Document No. | Description | Tender Bond | Bid Closing Date |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | QC/TC/P/23/24 | TAWTEEN OPPORTUNITY: NEW MANUFACTURING FACILITY SETUP FOR CP4/CP4B PALLETS IN QATAR FIVE YEARS OFF-TAKE AGREEMENT FOR SUPPLY OF CP4/CP4B PALLETS FOR RLP | Not required | 12:00 hrs on 28th April 2024 |
| Brief Scope: Supplier is expected to establish a new manufacturing facility in Qatar for the production of CP4/CP4b Pallets required for RLP as part of Qatar Energy Tawteen Initiative | | | | |

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

A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email

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

B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email

Tender documents issuance from **from 24th March 2024 to 28th March 2024, 8am-12noon.**

C. Proposal details

Proposals 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.



Ramadan’s 3D training

Before a marathon runner competes in the Olympics, he undergoes years of intense training—both physical and mental [2D- two-dimensional]. He must maintain a healthy diet and exercise to make sure his body is fit. He must also become mentally prepared to ward off all sense of fatigue and failure during the race.

After every practice, his sport becomes easier to him until he is ready to compete. Then after he competes, he trains for years again, preparing for the next Olympics.

Similarly, our Lord, The Most Exalted, has given us Ramadan as a holy month of training. Unlike the runner, our training is three-fold: physical, mental, and spiritual [3D- three-dimensional]. Ramadan trains us for life, which is our means to Paradise. In Arabic, the word “Ramadan” means “scorching and burning”. The name highlights the intensity of the training since, according to scholars; we physically and mentally scorch and burn our sins and faults. By the month’s end, if our intentions were pure, we have bathed ourselves in a pool of spirituality.

Most people think first of the physical aspect of fasting, which for Muslims is a foundation for the mental and spiritual benefits. Hunger and thirst physically remind us of Allah’s blessings, which before the fast we had a tendency to take for granted. Fasting also provides us with numerous health benefits.

The Prophet, sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam, said: “The son of Aadam never fills a container worse than his stomach.” [Ahmad and others]

When we deprive the stomach of food and drink from dawn till dusk, we improve our digestion and blood pressure, to name a few of the many physical benefits. The acts of physical restraint during Ramadan improve our self-control for the rest of the year. We must not resume eating gluttonously and wastefully. We must maintain physical consciousness to appreciate Allah’s favours and make acts of worship easier for us.

Ramadan’s mental aspect is more difficult, but the strong physical foundation also helps to sharpen our focus and strengthen our will. This training is an



example of striving with one’s inner desires. It exposes our flaws and can help eliminate or reduce them.

Mental restraint is especially important now, when Islam is being maligned and we must respond with that which is better. Patience and mercy are among the virtues we strengthen during Ramadan. With the combined physical and mental training we get in Ramadan, we can improve our relations with Muslims and non-Muslims as we strive for perfection.

A three-dimensional consciousness: physical, mental, and spiritual that Muslims throughout history attest it enhances one’s relationship with Allah, wipes clean our slate of sins and allows us to reap great reward. The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, stated that Allah declared: “All deeds of the son of Aadam are for him except for fasting, it is for Me. And I will reward him for it.” [Muslim] But we need to remember again the concept of training.

The heightened spiritual consciousness that we gain during Ramadan ameliorates our life to a three dimensional level: every action we make transforms from being a habit (physical and mental components of what we do) to becoming an act of worship when under the umbrella of spirituality.

It is true, some may say, that spirituality always has that effect—Ramadan or not. But in Ramadan, this spirituality is more

conscious, deliberate and intense. A time for spiritual nourishment and self-introspection, Ramadan heralds a classic opportunity to draw closer to Allah and to bask in the many blessings that accompany the month. Commitments ranging from the recitation and study of the Qur’an to increased charity to regular Taraweeh attendance are commonly made to reap the rewards of the fasting month.

To this effect, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, once said: “By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell coming out from the mouth of a person observing fast is better with Allah Almighty than the smell of musk. (Allah says about the fasting person): ‘He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.’” [Al-Bukhari]

Further, with Satan chained and the gates of Paradise thrown open, the race for good deeds begins in every Ramadan. Yet, as people dive into the anxiously awaited month of spiritual gains, they realise that it comes with its own set of challenges. Indeed, just as our everyday test is to practice Islam while living in the world, this annual retreat-of-sorts is all about maximising our worship while juggling the demands of our daily lives.

So, along with the fasting and all the plans, chores need to be taken care of, work must be attended to, and children’s needs have to be fulfilled. In order to avoid frustration due to neglecting one’s Ramadan goals or hardship caused by abandoning certain tasks and routines, a happy medium must be strived for. Striking this balance will not always be easy since it entails re-scheduled days, little sleep, and a shift in priorities.

However, the results far outweigh the struggle, a feeling of contentment that we made our very best effort to capture the true essence of Ramadan. Allah Almighty says (what means): “O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.” [Qur’an 2:183]

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



Awqaf ministry opens new mosque in Al Kharaitiyat



The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened a new mosque in Al Kharaitiyat area, according to a statement from the ministry.

The mosque can accommodate 378 male and female worshippers. Spread over 2,602sq m, the mosque has houses for imam and muezzin.

With number M.S. 1396, the mosque has a main prayer hall that can accommodate 312 worshippers while the women’s hall that can accommodate 66 worshippers. Besides a spacious ablution place, the mosque has a large public parking lot. Parking is also allocated for people with disabilities. The entrances and exits are specially abled people-friendly.

The opening of the new mosque, the statement said, comes within the framework of the ministry’s plan aimed at expanding the number of mosques and developing them in all regions of the country. Also, it aims to keep pace with urban growth and population increase in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

The Department of Engineering Affairs at the ministry is concerned with fulfilling the needs of the regions in the country for mosques and prayer grounds

while providing temporary mosques and supervising their preservation as well as preparing the annual plan for the maintenance of mosques and imams’ residences. These are in co-ordination with the competent authorities.

In mosque designs, the department takes into account the requirements of different areas along with the guidelines for green and sustainable buildings. Also, the department focuses on the conditions for sustainability in the use of electricity and water, and preserving the aesthetics of heritage in designs that reflect the authenticity of Qatari and Islamic heritage by the highest standards.

The ministry’s plans to build mosques also take into account the population density map along with engineering, architectural specifications and the heritage aspect within the framework of caring for the mosques to perform worship and to serve the worshippers.

Awqaf’s website provides the facility to search for mosque locations geographically, according to the global navigation system, through accurate and specific maps that facilitate access to mosque locations in all cities across the country.



Auto Class Cars launches its Ramadan offer on Maxus D60 and D90 SUVs



Celebrating the holy month of Ramadan, Auto Class Cars, the authorised general distributor of Maxus in Qatar, has launched a special offer on the Maxus D60 and D90 SUVs.

The vehicles are available at Auto Class Cars in its showroom on Salwa Road in Doha. Valid until April 30, 2024, the offer allows customers to buy the Maxus D60 or D90 from a starting price of QR65,000 and leverage a package of benefits including free registration and comprehensive insurance for the first year, free service for 2 years or 40,000km, and 5 years warranty or 200,000km (whichever comes first). All Maxus vehicles can be purchased with 0 down payment and the option of in-house financing with special rate interest through NBK Financial Services (Terms and conditions apply), in addition to the trade-in option.

The Maxus D90

The Maxus D90 has accomplished five stars in the ANCAP safety rating making it one of the safest cars in its SUV category. Apart from features such as diamond-shaped stitching, 21-inch wheels, a 3D dashboard and 12.3-inch screen, all seats of Maxus D90 except the driver’s seat are now

movable — offering a more flexible interior of the vehicle for passengers.

In addition, the intelligent-connected system enables functions such as auto payments, online music, online navigation, remote control and voice interaction.

The model will be equipped with a 2.0T turbo-supercharged engine with the maximum power of 224 horsepower. It will also be equipped with a 6-speed automatic transmission and 4WD system.

D90 uses the popular bigmouth style, with aggressive lattice grid and a fashionable LED source in front headlight group. Besides, the new model also equips with a six-spoke wheel, showing a sporting style. It adopts a Maxus family-style in interior decoration, with a simple central console and fashionable independent LCD screen. Besides, it also adopts a dashboard design equipped with a large-size display screen. It is also equipped with a lane-departure warning system, a 360-degree camera system, a reversing camera and LED headlights.

All-new Maxus D60

Maxus D60 is an all-new SUV launched by SAIC-Maxus. The new car is positioned in a medium-sized SUV and offers 7-seat layout. The D60 made its global debut with

a 1.5-litre turbocharged engine mated to a seven-speed DCT under its hood. This setup generates a decent 159hp and 250Nm of torque.

Its massive octagonal grille up front features a honeycomb-like design. This is flanked by aggressive-looking swept-back headlamps as well as a pair of sporty fog lamps

The D60 also gets a gigantic 8-inch infotainment display up front, complemented by a 12.3-inch full LCD digital instrument panel. As a mid-sized SUV for the family, it’s considered more practicality in interior design. A large area of soft material is used above the centre console to highlight the good texture.

Formerly known as Leyland DAF Vans (LDV), Maxus is part of Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation (SAIC); it is among the most respected companies producing light passenger and cargo vehicles.

It embodies a century of experience and unmatched technical prowess in commercial vehicle development.

The Maxus D60 and the full range of Maxus vehicles are available now in Auto Class Showroom on Salwa Road.

Violence casts long shadow over fasting month in West Bank

AFP
Jenin

Normally festive Ramadan nights have become rife with danger in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, said hospital director Wisam Bakr, as surging violence casts a long shadow over the Muslim fasting month.

His hospital in the northern West Bank city of Jenin has been on the front line of the spike in violence since Hamas’ unprecedented October first week storming of Israel triggered the war that is still raging in the Gaza Strip.

Instead of breaking the daily Ramadan fast with family and friends, “at night we try not to go outside... because the night is not safe,” said Bakr. “At any hour there may be a raid” by Israeli forces, he said. As Israel pursues its withering military campaign to eliminate Hamas in Gaza, violence in the West Bank involving Israeli forces or settlers — already rising before the war — has spiked to levels unseen in two decades.

Since October first week, the Jenin Government Hospital has received 44 people killed and 264 people wounded in Israeli raids, said the director Bakr.

Beyond the casualties and damage the frequent military operations have caused, residents of Jenin — a stronghold of Palestinian fighter groups — said the violence has translated into quiet streets, subdued celebrations and anxiety.

“There are no people” on the streets, said Mohamed Omar, a sweets vendor who has spent his whole life in Jenin refugee camp, one of the West Bank’s most crowded and impoverished, and the site of repeated Israeli raids.

According to Omar, the heavy atmosphere of this year’s Ramadan can be felt not just in the immediate aftermath of raids and

strikes, but also on relatively quiet days. “People are staying in their homes, afraid of the bombing, and they don’t have money to spend,” he said.

Even if they did, they would likely have some trouble getting around, as many streets have been damaged and some rendered impassable by Israeli bulldozers carrying out demolitions.

Israel routinely demolishes the homes of Palestinians accused of carrying out attacks, arguing that such measures act as a deterrent, while critics say this policy amounts to collective punishment. Bakr said the violence and fear had taken a toll on the hospital’s staff and made for a much more reserved Ramadan.

Their work is high-pressure, with casualties often arriving at night and overwhelming emergency medics.

“Nowadays I hurry up” to get home after the daily fast ends at sunset, “because I’m afraid not only for me, but for my children too,” Bakr said.

Last week Israeli forces killed two men inside the hospital, in what the military described as “activity” against “suspects”.

In footage stored on Bakr’s phone, one of the men, Mahmud Abu al-Haija, wearing jeans and a black sweater, is gunned down just outside the emergency ward, leaving a bright red streak of blood on the floor as others drag him away.

The man’s aunt, Farha Abu al-Haija, said that he was “neither a resistance fighter nor a weapon bearer”, and that he had run to the hospital seeking safety.

Both of the slain men’s bodies were draped in green Hamas flags and adorned with headbands of the group’s armed wing for their funeral, AFP footage showed.

Farha Abu al-Haija said she usually looks forward to Ramadan, but now her family and others’ “are missing a member”.



Qatar Charity organizes Iftar events for “Future’s Leaders”

Qatar Charity (QC), in collaboration with Quest, a theme park, and Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Mushaireb, organized two group Iftar events dedicated to those, both male and female, sponsored under its “Future’s Leaders” program. This came in an atmosphere filled with hope, happiness, and joy, and as part of Qatar Charity’s Ramadan campaign “Endless Giving”.

The two Iftar events witnessed the participation of 250 individuals sponsored

by Qatar Charity within Qatar, along with their mothers. The Iftar event held at Quest included a variety of entertainment activities and games.

These events aim to promote the values of compassion among the sponsored by organizing group Iftar events for them during Ramadan. Additionally, they seek to activate the role of community partnership by collaborating with institutions and companies to support these activities.

Qatar Charity extends its sincere gratitude to Quest and Mandarin Oriental Hotel Mushaireb for their valuable cooperation in organizing these two Iftar events, which created a distinctive atmosphere enjoyed by the “Future’s Leaders”.

The Iftar events contributed to bringing joy and happiness into the hearts of the sponsored, providing them with an opportunity to spend enjoyable and activity-filled time in a special Ramadan atmosphere. Additionally, they served to



make the public acquainted with the programs and activities of Qatar Charity and its positive role in supporting those in need within society.

The Iftar events contributed to bringing joy and happiness into the hearts of the sponsored, providing them with an opportunity to spend enjoyable and activity-filled time in a special Ramadan atmosphere.

On this occasion, the children expressed their happiness at participating in Qatar Charity’s Iftar. Ahmed Mohamed Al-Hariri described the Iftar event as extremely wonderful, expressing his hope to take part in such events in the future. Meanwhile, Haya said, “I am very happy to attend Qatar Charity’s Iftar, which provided us with delicious Ramadan meals.”

Thamer Khalid, aged 10, also expressed his heartfelt wishes for Qatar Charity and looked forward to participating in its other

events during the holy month and Eids. Meanwhile, the young girl Rataj expressed her joy at having the Ramadan Iftar meal and conveyed her sincere gratitude to Qatar Charity for organizing the amazing Iftar event that she thoroughly enjoyed.

It is worth mentioning that Qatar Charity organizes the group Iftar event for these children annually. Additionally, it is preparing to host a Ramadan banquet for those sponsored under the “Future’s Leaders” program in the upcoming days.

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qcharity.org/en/qa/gift





Palestinians assess the destruction of a house hit by Israeli bombardment in the northern part of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday, amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Hamas group.

UN chief at Gaza crossing urges end to ‘nightmare’ of war

AFP
Gaza Strip

UN chief Antonio Guterres, on a visit to the doorstep of Gaza yesterday, appealed for a ceasefire to allow in more aid, saying the world has “seen enough” horrors in the Israel-Hamas war.

As Israeli forces pressed on with a multi-day raid on the territory’s biggest hospital, Palestinian officials reported 19 deaths at an aid distribution point on the outskirts of Gaza City.

Gaza’s Hamas authorities said at least 19 people were killed and dozens wounded by Israeli “tank fire and shells” as they were waiting for desperately needed supplies.

The Israeli army denied it had fired on the crowd. “Preliminary findings have determined that there was no aerial strike against the convoy, nor were there incidents found of (Israeli) forces firing at the people at the aid convoy,” it said.

Nearly six months of fighting, triggered by Hamas’ October first week storming of southern Israel, have led to dire humanitarian conditions in the besieged territory.

“Palestinians in Gaza — children, women, men — remain stuck in a non-stop nightmare,” Guterres said at the Egyptian side of Rafah border crossing with Gaza, the main entry point for aid.

Most of the territory’s 2.4mn people have sought refuge on the Gaza side of Rafah, where Israel has vowed to send in ground troops in its war against Hamas.

“I carry the voices of the vast majority of the world who have seen enough,” Guterres said, deploring “communities obliterated, homes demolished, entire families and generations wiped out.”



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaks to the media at El-Arish International Airport in Egypt’s northeastern province of North Sinai, yesterday.

HOSPITAL RAID

He said “nothing justifies” the October first week storming of the “collective punishment” of Palestinians, and asked Israel to commit to “total, unfettered access for humanitarian goods throughout Gaza”.

“A long line of blocked relief trucks on one side of the gates — the long shadow of starvation on the other” were “a moral outrage”, Guterres said.

Foreign Minister Israel Katz responded on social media platform X, saying that the UN under Guterres had become an “anti-Israeli body.”

On the sixth day of Israel’s operation in and around Gaza City’s Al-Shifa hospital complex, the army’s Southern Command chief Major General Yaron Finkelman vowed to keep on until “the last fighter is in our hands, alive or dead”.

Gaza City resident Mohamed, 59, who lives a short walk from Al-Shifa, said he had seen “many bodies” in the streets, buildings on fire and tanks blocking the roads.

The army has said more than 170 fighters have been killed during the “precise” operation targeting senior Hamas operatives it alleges have been using the hospital as a base.

Hamas has repeatedly denied its fighters were operating from Al-Shifa, already raided by Israeli troops in November.

The army said the current operation avoided harm to civilians or medical personnel, but the UN humanitarian office OCHA said “health workers have been among those reported arrested and detained”.

The Israeli government is under growing international pressure to ease its bombardment and

ground offensive, which the Gaza health ministry says has killed at least 32,142 people, most of them women and children.

Israel has vowed to destroy the fighters.

‘NOTHING TO EAT’

Despite warnings that a Rafah operation would cause mass civilian casualties, Israeli officials said the military would press ahead with a threatened assault on the city, arguing it was necessary to eliminate Hamas.

“If we need to, we will do it alone,” without US support, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said after a Friday meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was on a regional tour to push for a truce.

Large parts of the territory have been reduced to rubble and the World Food Programme (WFP) has said Gazans were already “starving to death”, with famine projected by May in northern Gaza without urgent intervention.

In Gaza City, in the north, Belal Hziilah said his nephew was among those killed at the aid distribution point as he was waiting to collect food for his two-month-old baby and other relatives. “They have nothing to eat,” Hziilah said. “He went to the Kuwait roundabout to get flour and food... He lost his life for nothing”.

Israel’s staunchest ally the US, which provides it with billions of dollars in military aid, has become increasingly vocal about the war’s impact on civilians.

On Friday, Washington failed to pass a UN Security Council resolution mentioning an “immediate ceasefire as part of a hostage deal”.

Russia and China, which vetoed the US text, said it was too soft on Israel. Diplomatic sources said another draft was expected to be put to a vote tomorrow.

Gazans reveal ordeal after hospital raid

AFP
Gaza Strip

Around the Gaza Strip’s besieged largest hospital, Palestinians have witnessed constant bombardment, mass arrests, tanks and corpses littering the streets during a multi-day Israeli raid, with no end in sight.

Israeli forces battling Hamas fighters launched the operation in and around Gaza City’s Al-Shifa hospital on Monday, saying senior operatives were based at the sprawling compound.

Since then, according to the military, about 150 Palestinian fighters have been killed and hundreds more have been arrested or questioned.

And after five days, Israeli forces have shown no signs of pulling back.

“Everyone is afraid of being executed or arrested,” said 59-year-old Mohamed, who lives about 500 metres from Al-Shifa and gave only his first name.

“I feel that Gaza has become worse than the fires of hell,” he said.

“I saw many bodies on Al-Shifa Street and tanks blocking the roads leading to the hospital. I saw fires in a house next to Al-Shifa.” The surrounding areas, the Al-Rimal neighbourhood and Al-Shati refugee camp, are like “ghost towns”, with only few residents remaining, said Mohamed.

Many Palestinians in the territory’s north, where Gaza City is located, fled south earlier in the war, which began in the first week of October with Hamas fighters’ storming of southern Israel.

The latest raid on Al-Shifa — following a military operation there in November that sparked international outrage — has sent more seeking safety elsewhere.

AFP footage showed streams of people fleeing south along Gaza’s coast to escape the hospital onslaught on Thursday.

Mahmoud Abu Amra, 50, who lives in Al-Rimal, said Israeli troops forced “women and children to go west to Al-Rashid road on the coast, and then to the south of the Gaza Strip”.

Those who remain in the north, about 300,000 people according to the UN, face dire conditions and crippling shortages of basic supplies.

Israel’s military campaign against Hamas has killed at least 32,070 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory.

On Friday at dawn Abu Amra said he saw Israeli forces raiding homes and residential buildings in Gaza City’s west.

“These forces evacuated all residents from their homes, and forced all men over the age of 16 to strip completely except for their underwear,” he said.

“They tied them up, beat them with rifle butts, insulted them and took them to a school near Al-Shifa hospital for interrogation and detention.” Israel has maintained that its actions were in accordance with international law.

The Israeli military said it was “often necessary for suspects to hand over their clothes... to ensure that they are not concealing explosive vests or other weaponry”.

“Detainees are given back their clothes when it’s possible to do so,” it added.

Israel had long said the sprawling Al-Shifa complex, where displaced Palestinians have taken refuge alongside patients and staff, sat atop an underground Hamas command centre.

Hamas has denied using the hospital for military purposes. The Israeli army said Friday that troops were “continuing to conduct precise operational activity in the Al-Shifa Hospital area while preventing harm to civilians, patients, medical teams and medical equipment”.

Oil tanker crew tackle fire after projectile strike off Yemen

Reuters
Cairo

A Panama-flagged crude oil tanker caught fire after being struck by an unidentified projectile off Yemen yesterday, in the latest attack on commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

The incident happened 23 nautical miles northwest of the Red Sea port of Al-Mukha, British maritime security firm Ambrey said.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) agency also reported the incident, saying the fire was extinguished by the crew.

“Vessel and crew reported safe. Vessel continuing to next port of call,” UKMTO added in an advisory note. Ambrey said the tanker was registered under Union Maritime Ltd, a UK company, in 2019

before changing its registration details, including name and operator, last month.

“At the time of writing, she had changed course to starboard and continued on her journey to New Mangalore, India,” the Ambrey statement said.

Months of attacks in the Red Sea by Yemen’s Houthi fighters following the Israel-Hamas war have disrupted global shipping, forcing firms to re-route to longer and more expensive journeys around southern Africa, and stoked fears that the war could spread to destabilise the wider Middle East.

The Houthis say their attacks are in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza and they will not stop until Israel ends the war and withdraws from the enclave.

The United States and Britain have launched strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen and redesignated the militia as a fighter group.

17 dead after militant group attack on military base in Somalia

Reuters
Mogadishu

At least 17 people were killed in Somalia yesterday after the Al Shebaab group attacked a military base.

The Busley base, in the Lower Shabelle region in the country’s southwest, was briefly occupied by the attackers, security officials and the group said.

Armed fighters from Al Shebaab battled their way to the facility using suicide car bombs, a Somalia military officer told Reuters. He declined to be named because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

“Several suicide car bombs attacked the base after fierce fighting... Al Shebaab briefly captured the base,” the officer said.

“Then, government reinforcement fiercely battled and drove

out Al Shebaab.” Seven Somalia soldiers, including the commander of the base, and 10 Al Shebaab fighters were killed in the fighting, he said.

Some residents in the area told Reuters Al Shebaab also burned military vehicles and took others during the assault.

Al Shebaab issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack. It said it had killed 57 government soldiers.

The group frequently gives casualty figures that are higher than those of the government.

Somalia government officials could not be reached for comment.

The Al Qaeda-allied group has been fighting for nearly two decades, aiming to topple Somalia’s central government and establish its own rule based on its strict interpretation of Shariah law.

CRIME

Nigerian troops rescue 16 kidnapped students: army

Nigeria’s army said yesterday it had rescued 16 students kidnapped in the northwest of the country which has been rocked by large-scale abductions, AFP reported from Abuja. Gunmen seized the students just days after the separate kidnapping of around 280 children in the region, where criminal gangs target schools to extract ransom payments. The army said it had freed 16 pupils and a woman on Thursday. The group were abducted in Sokoto state on March 9. “The rescued hostages have been handed over to the Sokoto state government for further action,” said spokesman Major General Edward Buba. He did not provide details on the operation. At the time of the attack on a religious seminary in Gada district, staff said the gunmen rounded up pupils as they slept outdoors. The woman was abducted in another part of the district. The Sokoto kidnapping followed the mass abduction of about 280 pupils by a gang in Kuriga, Kaduna state, on March 7, which prompted a national outcry over insecurity.

Manifesto launch



Supporters of ActionSA, a South African political party established by Johannesburg’s former mayor Herman Mashaba, arrive for the party’s manifesto launch at Ellis Park Arena in Johannesburg, South Africa, yesterday.



Britain in shock after Princess Kate's cancer announcement

AFP
London

After weeks of wild speculation, British people yesterday digested the shock news that Catherine, Princess of Wales, has cancer, with many praising her courage while others criticised the conspiracies that spread over her absence.

Catherine revealed the news in a highly personal video released Friday, just weeks after King Charles III said he too is battling cancer. The candid disclosure leaves the British monarchy in crisis with two of its most senior members simultaneously fighting serious illness.

Charles — 17 months into his reign when Buckingham Palace announced in February that he would be cancelling all public engagements — led tributes to his “beloved daughter-in-law”. The ailing 75-year-old monarch spoke of his pride in “her courage in speaking as she did”.

Following other warm words from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and the White House, British newspapers hailed the courage of the 42-year-old wife of Prince William, heir to the throne. “Kate, you are not alone” read the front of *The Sun*.

The tabloid said it was “hugely comforting” to hear Kate say she was getting stronger, and that “perhaps the world will now appreciate why so much secrecy surrounded her surgery in January”. Others hoped it would end the frenzied rumours. *The Daily Mail* tabloid took aim at the “social media trolls who have been peddling disgusting conspiracy theories to explain her absence from public life”.

The public also condemned media coverage of the princess however. Stood outside Kensington Palace in London, Nathaniel Taylor, a 24-year-old government worker, said: “I think it’s really damning what happened to them, what the media has done, how they’ve reacted over these past couple of months.”

“I think some speculation is inevitable but the lengths people were going to try and make things up it’s just (too much). Hopefully people take a look in the mirror”.

At Tower Bridge, Sofia, a 19-year-old student who did not give her family name, said she had seen “weird accusations” about the absence and that the true reason was “sad”. “Obviously it was a much (more) serious matter”,

Harry Meghan ‘wish health and healing to Kate and family’

Estranged British royal Prince Harry and his American wife Meghan said they wished “health and healing” to Catherine, Princess of Wales, after she revealed she has cancer. The statement came after Catherine — known widely as Kate — announced Friday that she has cancer and is in the early stages of chemotherapy.

“We wish health and healing for Kate and the family, and hope they are able to do so privately and in peace,” said the California-based couple. The news of Kate’s diagnosis comes at a tumultuous time for relations inside Britain’s royal family. Harry and Meghan, known formally as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, are no longer working royals, having stepped back from duties amid recriminations over the way they say they were treated.

They moved to California in 2020, where they live in an exclusive enclave outside Santa Barbara, and are now forging their own businesses, after being cut off from the royal purse. Harry, who married former actress Meghan in a fairytale wedding in 2018, was at one time very close to his brother William, but relations have soured in recent years. The brothers have reportedly not spoken in months after Harry’s high-profile public criticism of his family. — **AFP**

she said. In her statement Kate, as the princess is widely known, admitted the diagnosis was a “huge shock” and asked for “time, space and privacy” as she completes chemotherapy. In the video — recorded Wednesday in Windsor, west of London, where the future queen and king live with their three young children — she insisted she was “well”.

She said it had taken them time to explain the situation to Prince George, aged 10, Princess Charlotte, eight, and five-year-old Prince Louis, “and to reassure them that I am going to be OK”. “William and I have been doing everything we can to process and manage this privately for the sake of our young family,” Kate added.

Commentators commended its frank nature, with the princess speaking directly to the camera



Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales and King Charles III in a file photograph.



while sitting on a garden bench. “So many people will have been so moved by the way that she conducted herself during that two minute plus broadcast,” royal expert Richard Fitzwilliams told AFP. “But there’s no doubt at all that it’s a very, very difficult time for the institution of monarchy,” he added.

Buckingham Palace announced on February 5 that tests had identified Charles had “a form of cancer” without giving further details. He has cancelled all public engagements except audiences with the prime minister and ambassadors, and worked on official papers while receiving treatment.

He has been photographed several times since then, and seen attending church. Kate was last seen at a public engagement on December 25.

Kensington Palace announced on January 17 that she faced up to two weeks in hospital and several months’ recuperation following abdominal surgery. She was not expected to be ready to return to public duties until after Easter on March 31, a statement at the time



Members of the media work outside Windsor Castle, the day after the news of cancer diagnosis.

said. But Kate disclosed tests after the operation “found cancer had been present” and that she was now undergoing “preventative chemotherapy”. Kensington Palace said she would return to official duties “when she is cleared to do so by her medical team”. “Preventive chemotherapy after surgery is given to reduce the risk of the cancer coming back in the future,” Andrew Beggs, a senior clinical fellow and consultant colorectal surgeon at the University of Birmingham, said.

He added it was “a bit like mopping a floor with bleach when you’ve spilt something on it,” noting chemotherapy “kills any spilt cells”.

“Sometimes it becomes very difficult,” he said. “I have to balance a lot because, being a Muslim, the party sends me to the community to convince them to vote for us and join the party. I am scared and I walk with personal security whenever I go to any public event or programme.”

The BJP’s Tripathi responded that Muslim BJP leaders had no reason to fear because their community equally benefits from various government welfare programmes. “I am Hindu and I visit the Muslim community often and get good support from them,” he

Charles, Catherine's diagnoses: key dates

January 17: Kensington Palace announces that Catherine, the 42-year-old wife of heir to the throne Prince William, is facing up to two weeks in hospital after undergoing successful abdominal surgery. The palace says the issue is not cancer-related, but she faces several months’ recuperation from the operation. Less than 90 minutes later, Buckingham Palace says that British head of state Charles, 75, will attend hospital the following week for a corrective procedure to treat a benign enlarged prostate.

January 26: Charles has surgery at The London Clinic, the same private clinic where Kate, as she is widely known, is also recovering from her operation. British media reports quote unnamed sources as saying the king was “doing well” after the treatment, and that he had visited Kate before his surgery.

January 29: The monarch, dressed in a suit and a black overcoat, waves to crowds as he is discharged from the clinic in central London and gets into a waiting car. Hours earlier, Kensington Palace had announced that Catherine had also returned home, without specifying exactly when she had left the facility.

February 5: Buckingham Palace announces that Charles has been diagnosed with a form of cancer and has begun treatment. The palace says the cancer was detected during his recent hospital procedure. It does not specify the type of cancer. The king takes an indefinite break from public duties.

February 6: The king’s estranged son Prince Harry jets in from California for a brief visit with his father. Charles is seen for the first time in public since his diagnosis when he is photographed smiling and waving from a car.

February 10: Charles expresses his “heartfelt thanks” to well-wishers in a statement.

February 27: William pulls out of attending a memorial service for his late godfather, King Constantine II of Greece, citing a “personal matter”. Kensington Palace declines to elaborate but says Catherine continues to be “doing well”. British media later report that this is likely the day Catherine found out about her cancer.

March 10: Kensington Palace releases the first official photo of Kate since her abdominal surgery nearly two months beforehand. It shows her posing with her three children. But it sparks a storm after major news agencies including AFP withdraw the photo saying it had been manipulated. Catherine apologises the next day for making alterations to the Mother’s Day image.

March 22: In an emotional video message, Kate says she has cancer and has begun chemotherapy. She says she is “well and getting stronger every day” but asks for “time, space and privacy” as she completes her treatment. — **AFP**

India court effectively bans madrasas in big state before election

Reuters
New Delhi

A court in India essentially banned Islamic schools in the country’s most populous state, a move that could further distance many Muslims from Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu-nationalist government ahead of national elections. The Friday ruling scraps a 2004 law governing madrasas in Uttar Pradesh, saying it violates India’s constitutional secularism and ordering that students be moved to conventional schools.

The Allahabad High Court order affects 2.7mn students and 10,000 teachers in 25,000 madrasas, said Iftikhar Ahmed Javed, head of the board of madrasa education in

the state, where one-fifth of the 240mn people are Muslims. “The state government shall also ensure that children between the ages of 6 to 14 years are not left without admission in duly recognised institutions,” Judges Subhash Vidyarthi and Vivek Chaudhary wrote in their order, which was made on the basis of an appeal by lawyer Anshuman Singh Rathore.

Reuters could not contact Rathore or determine if he is connected to any political group. India holds a general election between April and June that Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is widely expected to win. Muslims and rights groups have accused some BJP members and affiliates of promoting anti-Islamic hate speech and vigilantism, and demolishing Muslim-owned properties. Modi

denies religious discrimination exists in India.

The BJP says the government is undoing historical wrongs, including by recently inaugurating a Hindu temple on the site of a 16th-century mosque razed in 1992. Many Hindus believe the mosque was built where God-king Ram was born and over a temple demolished under the Mughal ruler Babur.

Rakesh Tripathi, a spokesperson for Uttar Pradesh BJP, which runs the state government, said it was not against madrasas and was concerned about the education of Muslim students. “We are not against any madrasa but we are against discriminatory practices. We are against illegal funding, and the government will decide on further actions after going through

the court’s order.” Modi’s office did not immediately respond to an e-mail yesterday seeking comment on the court ruling.

Arguing for the federal government, which was a respondent in the case, Sudhanshu Chauhan told the court that “religious education and religious instructions of a single religion cannot be included in school education and the state government has no power to create statutory education boards permitting religious education”.

He said the government was not planning to revive a federal policy stopped in March 2022 that had provided funds to madrasas to teach subjects like mathematics and science. Madrasa official Javed, national secretary of the BJP’s minority wing, said that as a Muslim he is often caught between

the priorities of his party and members of his community. He said he has been fielding numerous calls from fellow Muslims since Friday’s order, which came during the holy month of Ramadan.

“Sometimes it becomes very difficult,” he said. “I have to balance a lot because, being a Muslim, the party sends me to the community to convince them to vote for us and join the party. I am scared and I walk with personal security whenever I go to any public event or programme.”

The BJP’s Tripathi responded that Muslim BJP leaders had no reason to fear because their community equally benefits from various government welfare programmes. “I am Hindu and I visit the Muslim community often and get good support from them,” he

said. “The fact is that the BJP and the government is very serious about education and it’s doing its best.”

The BJP’s de facto parent organisation has been installing Muslims loyal to it in leadership positions at India’s Muslim universities as part of a push to garner Muslim votes. The Uttar Pradesh government halted a funding programme for madrasas in January, making 21,000 teachers jobless. Friday’s order applies to all madrasas in the state, whether funded privately or by the government, Javed said.

The court did not give a timeline for its order, but Javed said madrasas are unlikely to be closed right away. The northeastern state of Assam, also ruled by the BJP, has been converting hundreds of madrasas into conventional schools.

Hong Kong’s new national security law comes into force

AFP
Hong Kong

Hong Kong’s new national security law came into force yesterday, putting into immediate effect tough penalties of up to life imprisonment for crimes including treason and insurrection. The law — commonly referred to as Article 23 — targets five categories of national security crimes and was swiftly passed by Hong Kong’s opposition-free legislature on Tuesday.

The United States, the European Union, Japan and Britain have been among the law’s strongest critics, with UK Foreign Minister David Cameron saying it would “further damage the rights and

freedoms” of those in the city. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken on Friday expressed “deep concern” that the law could be used to undermine rights and curb dissent, adding it could damage Hong Kong’s reputation as an international finance hub.

But Hong Kong leader John Lee has called the passage of the “Safeguarding National Security Ordinance” a “historic moment”. He has often cited Hong Kong’s “constitutional responsibility” to create the new legislation as required by the Basic Law, the city’s mini-constitution since its handover from Britain to China in 1997.

Lee also said the law was necessary to “prevent black-clad violence”, a reference to Hong

Kong’s massive and at times violent pro-democracy protests in 2019, which brought hundreds of thousands to the streets demanding greater autonomy from Beijing’s grip. In response, authorities cracked down on protesters, and Beijing imposed a national security law in 2020 — targeting secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces — which has effectively silenced opposition voices among Hong Kong’s once-vibrant civil society.

Nearly 300 people have been arrested under the 2020 law so far. But Lee — sanctioned by the United States for his role as security chief during the 2019 protests — has said Article 23 was still needed to “plug” the legislative gaps of Beijing’s law.

Under the new law, penalties run up to life in prison for sabotage endangering national security, treason and insurrection; 20 years for espionage and sabotage; and 14 years for external interference.

It has also expanded the British colonial-era offence of “sedition” to include inciting hatred against China’s Communist Party leadership, with an aggravated sentence of up to 10 years in jail.

City leader Lee is now empowered to create new offences carrying jail terms of up to seven years through subsidiary legislation, while the security minister can impose punitive measures on activists who are overseas, including cancelling their passports.



A protester holds a placard during a rally in solidarity with Hong Kong residents, as the Article 23 national security laws come into force, in London.

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GULF TIMES

Comprehensive global strategy must to attract more private capital into climate financing

Global temperatures are set to surpass the critical 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold above pre-industrial levels. Efforts to halve 2019 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 fall alarmingly short, targeting only an 11%, IMF experts said on climate finance. Without stronger action, our warming planet imperils homes, health, and food security. Mobilising more climate finance is vital not only for mitigating emissions but to build adaptive capacity through investments in climate resilient infrastructure. This, IMF noted, is especially important for Asia, which is home to several of the largest emitters and a region acutely vulnerable to climate change due to high population density and geography. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region face a shortfall of at least \$800bn in climate financing. With public finances depleted by the pandemic, policymakers must unlock the vast potential of private capital to join the fight more effectively against global warming.

Doing so will demand a co-ordinated and multi-faceted approach by actors on all sides, from governments and central banks to financial supervisors and multilateral institutions. Important strategies include phasing out fossil-fuel subsidies, which have reached a record \$1.3tn. It will also be key to expand carbon pricing, bridge critical data gaps, and promote innovative financing along with public-private partnerships.

China leads in attracting climate finance, making major strides in renewable energy adoption

The region's transition to greater sustainability has global implications. Asia contributed about two-thirds of global growth last year, and will again in 2024, but its heavy reliance on burning coal for energy means that it contributes more than half of harmful global greenhouse gas emissions. Asia's economies recognise how climate hazards directly impact lives and livelihoods, and have made deeper commitments, as their revised Nationally Determined Contributions under the 2015 Paris Agreement show.

Asia can aid the climate fight by demonstrating how to balance economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Asia's emerging market and developing economies need investment of at least \$1.1tn annually to meet mitigation and adaptation needs. But they're only getting \$333bn, mostly from sustainable debt instruments like green bonds, and public sources contribute more than half.

Such a shortfall leaves these economies with a funding gap of at least \$815bn. China leads in attracting climate finance, making major strides in renewable energy adoption, and its collaborations with the EU have yielded crucial frameworks for sustainable finance, such as the Common Ground Taxonomy and stricter China Green Bond Principles, noted IMF's Ritu Basu, Cheng Hoon Lim.

Pacific island countries and other small economies often have trouble accessing international capital markets or obtaining financing via global climate funds. In particular, they find it hard to meet stringent accreditation requirements of global climate funds as their capacity is already stretched thin and public investment management is challenging.

For larger countries, IMF noted green bonds may be as costly as conventional securities because investors appear to be less trusting of green characteristics in Asia's sustainable debt instruments. These issues underscore the broader challenges for the region's funding aspirations.

Experts suggest that governments, central banks, financial supervisors, and multilateral institutions must coordinate and develop a comprehensive strategy to attract more private capital to aid climate financing.

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A network-based approach to health in Ukraine

By Anne-Marie Slaughter and Kelly Saldana Berlin

Ukraine's allies are delivering arms, munitions, intelligence, and digital assistance to support the country's fight against Russia. Another kind of support is just as important but has gotten far less attention: aid aimed at strengthening Ukraine's healthcare system.

The capacity to treat soldiers and civilians directly injured in Russian attacks is clearly vital to Ukraine's resilience. But effective, accessible healthcare is also essential to build and sustain national morale. Healthcare is a critical link between citizens and their governments, and trust in a country's health system often translates into confidence in government and other public institutions.

Ukraine's government has adopted a series of important healthcare reforms since 2017. Still, the country must go further to modernise care, meet European standards, and respond effectively to the complex demands of a conflict environment. For example, while recent reforms entitle citizens to receive many free healthcare services at their local health facilities, with the costs covered by the National Health Service of Ukraine (NHSU), displaced people confront uncertain access to care.

In a war-ravaged environment, the healthcare system must be built on a set of strategically designed networks. Ukraine's leaders seem to recognise this necessity, at least to some extent: the country recently developed a "capable hospital network," which organises specialty hospitals into clusters. But the NHSU still lacks the ability to contract with the

network, rather than individual facilities, and the network's creation has not yet led to consolidation of hospitals.

Strategic network design begins with an analysis of who and what needs to be connected, with those results then guiding the construction of new links and the structure of the overall network. Policies and regulations, digital connectivity, and formal and informal collaboration can all support the development of resilient and sustainable networks.

Such a strategic approach would go a long way toward improving the efficiency of Ukraine's healthcare system. More than 90% of the health services a person receives during their lifetime are likely to occur at the primary-care level, where acute and minor illnesses and injuries are diagnosed and treated. In Ukraine, however, excess capacity at secondary and tertiary levels risks undermining delivery of primary care.

A strong primary-care system supports better health outcomes and more efficient service. To this end, policymakers should build on past reforms to spur the development of mesh-type primary-care networks, with clinics spread over as much of the country as possible. Beyond boosting resilience in the face of the current conflict, such a structure would prove valuable in the event of another pandemic, as it would enable people to avoid congregating at a central site.

Secondary care (the management of specified conditions such as hypertension, pregnancy, or HIV) and tertiary care (which requires hospitalisation) require a different network structure, organised around decentralised hubs that encourage the consolidation of expertise and economies of

scale. Primary-care clinics would funnel patients to these hubs as needed, without forcing patients to undergo repeated tests and diagnoses at each level.

With such networks in place, a patient with a war-related injury could move from hospital care to secondary-level rehabilitation, while continuing to meet their basic health-care needs (including mental-health and social services) at the primary level, all with minimal friction or barriers to access. Flexible alternative solutions, such as telemedicine, can provide added redundancy, so that people with limited access to their usual providers can still receive care.

The establishment of well-connected groups of providers, patients, facility owners, and others, which are linked to others at the local, provincial, national, regional, and international levels, would support a shared sense of ownership of the health system, enabling faster adoption of reforms and best practices. Such networks could even evolve into healthcare governance mechanisms in their own right, performing functions such as licensing providers, accrediting facilities, and holding providers and facilities accountable for the care they deliver.

Ukraine's digital "e-health" system can buttress this strategy. Already, Ukraine has made great strides in building digital systems for telehealth, electronic records, payment processing, and procurement. But the e-health system is far from complete. For example, Ukraine still needs an overall digital-governance framework to enable the e-health system to track contracts, record services provided, and maintain patient records - all critical to efficient allocation of resources.

The e-health system could also

offer a mechanism for providing feedback on service provision, and it could help to integrate the now-separate military, government, and public healthcare systems. Moreover, it could play a central role in strengthening systemic resilience by providing redundancies through cloud-based data storage. And the development of Ukraine's e-health system would give a boost to "e-government" more broadly - an area where Ukraine is already a global leader.

In fact, health-related network activities would yield many benefits beyond healthcare. Governance improves when local facilities are adequately funded and providing quality services. Investment and collaboration on health-related needs, such as physical rehabilitation, can galvanise and engage the private sector. The networks Ukraine builds now, in healthcare and elsewhere, can be connected to larger European Union networks as Ukraine moves closer to membership.

Upgrading Ukraine's health infrastructure, policies, and processes would strengthen the country's ability to hold Russia at bay. In the longer term, such an effort could enable Ukraine to leapfrog over other countries in the region when it comes to provision of public goods and services. - Project Syndicate

For all their fortitude and tenacity, Ukrainians have paid an incalculably high price for Russia's war. It is only appropriate that they also secure some long-term benefits.

• Anne-Marie Slaughter is CEO of New America. Kelly Saldana is Vice-President for the Resilient Health Systems portfolio at Abt Global and a former director of the Office of Health Systems at USAID.



Ukrainians have paid an incalculably high price for Russia's war. It is only appropriate that they also secure some long-term benefits

People take shelter inside a metro station during a Russian missile strike in Kyiv over the weekend. (Reuters)

World mourns deadly Moscow hall shooting

Reaction from around the world to the shooting rampage at a concert hall near Moscow on Friday, in which more than 100 people were killed, in an attack claimed by Islamic State militants.

UNSC
“The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack at a concert hall in Krasnogorsk, Moscow Region, the Russian Federation, on 22 March 2024.
“The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice.”

Secretary of state Antony Blinken
“We send our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those killed and all affected by this heinous crime. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and stand in solidarity with the people of Russia in grieving the loss of life from this horrific event.”

Russian spokeswoman Maria Zakharova
“The entire world community is obliged to condemn this monstrous crime. All efforts are being thrown at saving people.”

Ukrainian presidential adviser



A woman reacts in front of a makeshift memorial to the victims of a shooting attack set up outside the Crocus City Hall concert venue in the Moscow Region yesterday. (Reuters)

“Let’s be straight about this: Ukraine had absolutely nothing to do with these events.
“We have a full-scale, all-out war with the Russian regular army and with the Russian Federation as a country. And regardless of everything, everything will be decided on the battlefield.”
Yulia Navalnaya, widow of Navalny

“All those involved in this crime must be found and brought to justice.”

Italian PM Giorgia Meloni
“The horror of the massacre of innocent civilians in Moscow is unacceptable. Firm and total condemnation of the Italian government for this heinous act of terrorism.”

French foreign ministry
“The images coming out of Moscow are terrible. Our thoughts go out to the victims and injured and to the Russian people.
“Light must be shed on these odious acts.”

German foreign ministry
“The images of the horrific attack on innocent people at Crocus City Hall near Moscow are horrific. The background must be clarified quickly. Our deepest condolences go out to the families of the victims.”

Polish minister
“In connection with the shooting near Moscow, we are constantly monitoring the situation. I am in contact with the General Staff of the Polish Army, all services and our allies. We are analysing this situation in terms of its possible impact on Poland’s security.”
Dutch prime minister
“The images from Moscow where a terrorist act claimed by Islamic State has

caused many victims are absolutely horrendous. My thoughts are with them, their loved ones and the Russian people.”

Turkish president
“We strongly condemn this nefarious terror attack that targeted innocent civilians. No matter who the source is, terrorism is unacceptable. As a country who well knows the bloody and treacherous face of terrorism, we share the pain of the Russian people as a nation and as a state. We will continue our fight against terrorism.”

Indian prime minister
“We strongly condemn the heinous terrorist attack in Moscow. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims. India stands in solidarity with the government and the people of the Russian Federation in this hour of grief.”

Venezuelan foreign minister
“We express our strongest condemnation of the armed attack that has been carried out against civilians today in Moscow in the exhibition centre Crocus City Hall. We send our condolences to the families of the victims and we stand in solidarity with the Russian government.”

Cuban president
“Cuba condemns the atrocious terrorist act that occurred in Moscow. Our sincerest condolences to the government and people of Russia.”

Europe’s far-right vows hard line on immigration, but cracks emerge

Reuters
Rome

European far-right parties met in Italy yesterday vowing to curb immigration to the continent and to oppose a second five-year term for European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The parties gathered in Rome, galvanised by polls suggesting nationalist and far-right parties are likely to make strong gains in elections to the European Parliament in June.

But beyond agreement on toughening immigration rules, faultlines have become apparent in Europe’s far-right camp.

The meeting of the Identity and Democracy (ID) group included delegations from Italy’s League, France’s Rassemblement National (RN), Austria’s Freedom Party (FPÖ), Portugal’s Chega and Belgium’s Vlaams Belang.

“A country that does not defend its borders, a European Union that does not defend its borders commits murder against its people,” said Italy’s League leader Matteo Salvini.

Salvini is deputy prime minister in Giorgia Meloni’s government but has failed to include her in the ID group.

The ID group is now the



Italy’s deputy Prime Minister and leader of Italian far-right party “Lega” Matteo Salvini (centre) smiles as he poses on stage at the end of a rally of Identity and Democracy (ID), a right-wing to far-right group at the European Parliament, organised by Lega in Rome yesterday. (AFP)

sixth-largest in the EU assembly, but current polling data place it in fourth position. Meloni’s Brothers of Italy party is part of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR).

While the ECR is firmly on the Ukrainian side in its fight against Russia, ambiguities lie within the ID’s ranks.

Salvini, who in the past has been a staunch admirer of Russian President Vladimir Putin, said “warmongers” like French President Emmanuel Macron were a problem for Europe, af-

ter Paris opened the door to European nations sending troops to Ukraine. French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who addressed the rally via video link, taunted Meloni suggesting she would support EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for a second mandate.

“Giorgia ... will you support a second von der Leyen term or not? I believe so. And so you will contribute to worsening the policies that the people of Europe are suffering from so much,” she said, noting her ally Salvini would oppose this.

Biden signs \$1.2tn US spending bill

Reuters
Washington

President Joe Biden yesterday signed into law a \$1.2tn spending package, keeping the US government funded through a fiscal year that began six months ago.

Biden described the package, which Congress overwhelmingly passed in the early hours of yesterday, as investing in Americans as well as strengthening the economy and national security. The Democratic president urged Congress to pass other bills stuck in the legislative chambers.

“The House must pass the bipartisan national security supplemental to advance our national security interests,” Biden said in a statement. “And Congress must pass the bipartisan border security agreement, the toughest and fairest reforms in decades, to ensure we have the policies and funding needed to secure the border. It’s time to get this done.”

The Democratic-majority Senate passed the spending bill with a 74-24 vote. Key federal agencies including the departments of Homeland Security, Justice, State and Treasury, which houses the Internal Revenue Service, will remain funded through September 30.

But the measure did not include funding for mostly military aid to

Ukraine, Taiwan or Israel, which are included in a different Senate-passed bill that the Republican-led House of Representatives has ignored.

The business community welcomed the passage of the spending bill and committed to continue working with policymakers to advance legislation that would enhance tax breaks for businesses and low-income families.

“A fully operational US government provides important stability for American businesses, workers and families,” Business Roundtable CEO Joshua Bolten said in a statement. “We look forward to continuing to work with Members of Congress to advance sound policies, including the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act.”

Senate leaders spent hours on Friday negotiating a number of amendments to the budget bill that ultimately were defeated. The delay pushed passage beyond a Friday midnight deadline.

But the White House Office of Management and Budget issued a statement saying agencies would not be ordered to shut, expressing confidence the Senate would promptly pass the bill, which it did.

While Congress got the job done, deep partisan divides were on display again, as well as bitter disagreement within the House’s narrow and fractious Republican

majority. Conservative firebrand Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene threatened to force a vote to remove Speaker Mike Johnson, a fellow Republican, for allowing the measure to pass.

The 1,012-page bill provides \$886 billion in funding for the Defense Department, including a raise for US troops.

Johnson, as he has done more than 60 times since succeeding his ousted predecessor Kevin McCarthy in October, relied on a parliamentary manoeuvre on Friday to bypass hardliners within his own party, allowing the measure to pass by a 286-134 vote that had substantially more Democratic support than Republican.

For most of the past six months, the government was funded with four short-term stopgap measures, a sign of the repeated brinkmanship that ratings agencies have warned could hurt the creditworthiness of a federal government that has nearly \$34.6tn in debt.

“This legislation is truly a national security bill – 70% of the funding in this package is for our national defence, including investments that strengthen our military readiness and industrial base, provide pay and benefit increases for our brave service-members and support our closest allies,” said Republican Senator Susan Collins, one of the main negotiators.



Slovakia votes for president

Slovaks voted yesterday in the first round of a tight presidential election pitting the Russia-leaning ruling camp against a pro-Ukraine candidate amid deep divisions on the war between the neighbouring rivals.

Parliament speaker and former prime minister Peter Pellegrini and liberal ex-foreign minister Ivan Korcok, who is backed by the opposition, are the clear frontrunners among nine contenders. Pellegrini is supported by populist Prime Minister Robert Fico, who has questioned Ukraine’s sovereignty. Korcok is staunchly pro-Ukraine like outgoing president Zuzana Caputova, a government critic who chose not to seek a second term. After casting his ballot, Pellegrini said Slovakia would stay anchored in the European Union and Nato after the election, despite Fico’s remarks.

Veteran Italian pianist Maurizio Pollini dies at 82

Italian pianist Maurizio Pollini (pictured), a virtuoso of Chopin and Beethoven who enjoyed a decades-long collaboration with La Scala, died yesterday age 82, the Milan opera house announced. He had been in poor health in recent years and obliged to cancel some concerts. La Scala called the pianist “one of the great musicians of our time

and a fundamental reference in the artistic life of the theatre for over 50 years”. From 1958 to his last recital in February 2023, Pollini played La Scala 168 times, it said, not including countless workshops with students and conferences. “Pollini was an interpreter capable of revolutionising the perception of composers such as Chopin,

Debussy and Beethoven himself, and of promoting ... listening to the historical avant-gardes, above all Schönberg, and the music of today,” said La Scala. Born January 5, 1942 in Milan into a family of artists, Pollini stormed the classical music scene in 1960 where, aged 18 and the youngest person in the contest, he won the Warsaw Chopin Competition.

Arthur Rubinstein, president of the jury, was famously to have said that the young prodigy “already plays better than any of us”. Half a century later Pollini corrected Rubinstein’s quote, saying “I played ‘technically’ better than any member of the jury.” “I always thought he said that to make fun of the colleagues on the jury. Someone

doctored that statement by removing the ‘technically’ and it became an exaggerated compliment,” Pollini said in a 2014 documentary. Instead of embarking straight onto the concert scene, Pollini put his career on hold to study, explaining that performing right away would have been “a little premature for me”.

Canada bids farewell to Mulroney

Canada’s dignitaries, political elite, and other well-wishers gathered at Montreal’s Notre-Dame Basilica yesterday to pay final respects at the state funeral of former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney, who died on February 29 at age 84.

Mulroney’s casket, draped in the Canadian flag, arrived at the Notre-Dame Basilica in a procession that included members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the armed forces, and the Mulroney family. His body had laid in repose at the nearby Saint Patrick’s Basilica for public visitation since Thursday. Born on March 20, 1939, in Baie-Comeau, Quebec, Mulroney became Canada’s 18th prime minister when he led the centre-right Progressive Conservatives to a historic win in 1984 and served for almost nine years in that post. Highlights of his tenure included a free trade deal with the United States and the introduction of a goods and services tax,

which although unpopular helped fix the government’s finances. In attendance at yesterday’s ceremony were Canada’s Governor General Mary Simon, current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Quebec Premier Francois Legault, business mogul Pierre Karl Peladeau, as well as actor Ryan Reynolds. “It’s the end of the evening for a giant but the music continues in his memory,” Trudeau told the gathering. A corporate lawyer turned businessman, Mulroney had a broad smile and booming voice, and was known for his charm. He and his wife Mila had four children. “My dad held an audience in the palm of his hand. Speeches were such a major part of his life that he told us that when it was his turn to go up to what he called – that great political rally in the sky – he wanted us to bury him with his podium,” his daughter Caroline Mulroney said in an eulogy. Mulroney will be buried in a private ceremony in Montreal.



Mila and Caroline Mulroney close their eyes during prayer at a state funeral of their husband and father, late former prime minister Brian Mulroney at the Notre-Dame Basilica of Montreal, Quebec, yesterday. (Reuters)

Garangao celebrations at Al Shaqab



Al Shaqab, world-class facility built on Qatar's Arabian horse heritage and a leading global centre for equine professionals continued with its Ramadan Nights programme and Garangao celebrations yesterday. The programme featured fun heritage activities, including Arabian Horse shows, lantern workshops, traditional games, Medoud, and many more activities including traditional food and beverages. The Garangao celebration was an opportunity for children to decorate and customise their Garangao bags. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

Specially adorned Garangao bags are the favourites at Souq Waqif

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

Special goody bags for kids with glamorous traditional artistic touches have turned out to be favourites of Garangao purchases at Souq Waqif. The bags, painted with images of festivities, draw the kids who flock to the Souq to grab their Garangao gifts.

"This year, the special bags with gifts in them, are the favourites of kids. The bags have nuts, sweets, toys, chocolates, toffees and lights that are gifted during the festival," said one of the shop owners Mohamed Ali. The price for the bags ranges between QR70 and QR140 at Souq.

Garangao, which falls on the night of Ramadan 15, is an occasion for children to celebrate. Wearing traditional clothes, children take to the streets and they are received in houses with gifts. House premises are lit up with lights and decorated with Garangao decors while sweets, nuts, gifts and toys are given to each other after Maghrib prayer. The idea behind the festival is to gift the children for their efforts while fasting during the first half of Ramadan and encour-

age them to continue the spirit during the second half.

Merchants at Souq Waqif are available at QR65 for five kg and QR130 for 10kg. Garangao kits are available from QR50 to QR600, according to the features and quantity. There are special toys that sing special Garangao songs. Children use these during Garangao celebrations while walking on the streets.

Souq Waqif is recording a huge turnout from Qatar families that flock to the market to buy sweets and gifts for their children. The sales have gone up manifold for the past few days with preparations going on to welcome the festival. Souq receives huge crowds after Iftar.

To suit the options of the buyers, shops at Souq Waqif offer a wide range of gift kits. "Customised kits are available for buyers to meet their budget and requirements," said another merchant, adding that sales had gone up. "Due to this, we offer kits at reduced prices," he said.

Also, Garangao clothes are displayed from the beginning of Ramadan until the middle of the night. Some opt to make pre-orders for the dresses and they are prepared as per the requirements and size of the children. Children's dresses are available from QR50.

