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Expo 2023 Doha attracts over 4.2mn visitors

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

After attracting more than 4.2mn visitors, setting new records and hosting a slew of exciting events and activities, Expo 2023 Doha concluded yesterday at Al Bidda Park.

The valedictory ceremony was held in the presence of HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiah and other dignitaries including Expo 2023 Doha commissioner general ambassador Bader Omar al-Dafa, Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) president Alain Berger, International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH) president Leonardo Capitano, ambassadors of various countries and representatives of various government entities.

HE the Minister of Municipality noted that Expo 2023 Doha marked a historic milestone at the international level to be the first AI-generated expo while receiving the largest number of visitors and sponsors. HE the Minister noted that the event attracted more than 4,200,000 visitors throughout 179 days with participation of countries from across the world.

“Expo 2023 Doha has set a new record while surpassing the figures of such previous events. The exhibition discussed the innovations and the ways to combat desertification and the threat being posed by climate change,” HE al-Attiah

Successful end to six-month long International Horticultural exhibition

The flag of the BIE is handed over by Qatar to the organisers of Expo 2027 Yokohama, the next horticultural expo, at the closing ceremony of Expo 2023 Doha yesterday.

said noting that the successful organisation of the expo has underscored Qatar's commitment to support the efforts to preserve the environment and achieve the objective of becoming a sustainable country.

Berger noted that Expo 2023 Doha was successful in organising and showing the world

innovations. Capitano hailed Qatar for its efforts to host a successful event. The ceremony also marked a cultural gala and fireworks.

Under the theme ‘Green Desert, Better Environment’, Expo 2023 Doha focused on modern agriculture, technology and innovation, environmen-

tal awareness and sustainability. The event promoted sustainable innovations and ways to combat desertification through activities and celebrations.

In addition to introducing innovative new products to global markets and sports events, the expo hosted workshops, educational activities and discussions

with leading experts to concerts and theatrical performances at its International, Cultural and Family zones.

The Doha Expo 2023 was not just a showcase of horticultural wonders; it was a testament to Qatar's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. The Expo site itself was a marvel of

green design, featuring sustainable architecture, renewable energy solutions, and innovative water management systems.

Visitors were not only treated to breathtaking displays of flora from every corner of the world but also educated on the importance of preserving our planet for future generations.

Palestinian PM forms cabinet

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohamed Mustafa formed a new cabinet yesterday in which he will also serve as foreign minister, making an immediate ceasefire and Israeli withdrawal from Gaza a priority. Mustafa was appointed premier this month with a mandate to help reform the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Bus plunges off bridge killing 45 in S Africa

A bus plunged off a bridge into a ravine and caught fire yesterday in South Africa, killing 45 of the 46 people on board, the transport ministry said. An eight-year-old child was the sole survivor and had been taken to hospital with serious injuries.

Bankman-Fried gets 25yrs in jail for fraud

Sam Bankman-Fried was sentenced to 25 years in prison by a judge yesterday for stealing \$8bn from customers of the now-bankrupt FTX cryptocurrency exchange he founded. **Page 8**



Whatever of good reaches you, is from Allah, but whatever of evil befalls you, is from yourself. And We have sent you (O Muhammad) as a Messenger to mankind, and Allah is Sufficient as a Witness. (Qur'an 4:79)

Prayer times

Fajr...4.11; Juma...10.59; Asr...3.07; Maghrib...5.52; Isha...7.22

Fasting times

Iftar today.....5.52pm
Imsak tomorrow.....4.00am

COMMUNITY
See Page 5

World Court orders Israel to halt Gaza famine

Reuters/AFP
The Hague/Cairo

The World Court yesterday unanimously ordered Israel, accused by South Africa of genocide in Gaza, to take all necessary and effective action to ensure basic food supplies to the enclave's Palestinian population and halt spreading famine.

“Israel shall... take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay... the unhindered provision... of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance,” in Gaza, the International Court of Justice said.

The order came as Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters battled in close combat around Gaza's Al Shifa Hospital.

Judges at the World Court, also known as the International Court of Justice, said the Palestinians in Gaza face worsening conditions and famine and starvation were spreading.

“The court observes that Palestinians in Gaza are no longer facing only a risk of famine (...) but that famine is setting in,” the judges said in their order.

The new measures were requested by South Africa as part of its ongoing case that accuses Israel of state-led genocide in Gaza.

There was no immediate comment from Israel's Foreign Ministry on the ruling. Israel has said it was making efforts to expand access from humanitarian to Gaza overland, through air drops and by ship to the enclave's Mediterranean coast.

Gaza massacre toll goes up to 32,552

The Ministry of Health in Gaza revealed yesterday that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip has risen to 32,552 martyrs and 74,980 injured.

An aerial view of a mural made by street artists Auberi Chen, Core 246 and Captain Kris depicting Palestinian photographers Mohamed al-Masri (L), Ali Jadallah (2nd L), Abdelhakim Abu Riash (R) and Palestinian journalist Hind Khoudary (2nd R) in Ilford, east London, as part of a project launched by the art platform Creative Debuts called “Heroes of Palestine”.

“Israel shall... take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay... the unhindered provision... of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance,” in Gaza

The Israeli army said it continued to operate around the Al Shifa Hospital complex in Gaza City after storming it more than a week ago.

Gaza's health ministry said wounded people and patients were being held inside an administration building in Al Shifa that was not equipped to provide them with healthcare. Five patients had died since the Israeli raid began due to shortages of food, water and medical care, the Hamas-run ministry said.

Al Shifa, the Gaza Strip's biggest

hospital before the war, had been one of the few healthcare facilities even partially operational in north Gaza before the latest fighting. It had also been housing displaced civilians.

At least 32,552 Palestinians have been killed and 74,980 wounded in Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, the territory's health ministry said yesterday.

Israeli forces continued to blockade Al-Amal and Nasser hospitals in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, while several other areas came under Israeli fire, residents said.

In Rafah, where more than a million people have been sheltering, health officials said an Israeli airstrike on a house killed eight people and wounded others.

Israel says it plans a ground offensive into Rafah, where it believes most Hamas fighters are now sheltering. Its closest ally and main arms supplier the United States opposes such an assault, arguing it would cause too much harm to civilians who have sought refuge there.

Mada-Jusour accord to boost employment opportunities of PWD

QNA
Doha

Qatar Assistive Technology Center (Mada), of the Ministry of Social Development and Family, signed a co-operation agreement with the Qatari Manpower Solutions Company (Jusour), to improve the opportunities for integrating persons with disabilities (PWD) into the labour market as active persons.

The agreement aims to develop the capabilities of human resources officials in the private sector on how to deal with employees with disabilities, and build their basic skills to be effective individuals in the work environment, in addition to assessing their needs and referring them to the Mada Center, especially with regard to needs related to assistive technology in terms of devices and programmes.

The agreement also included providing a series of training programmes and workshops that would raise the awareness of employees in the private sector about the importance of digital access and the concept of assistive technology, which would ensure the independence of PWDs within the work environment and make their employment more inclusive, by enabling them to perform their daily job tasks through providing the necessary technological support.

Commenting on the agreement, acting CEO of Mada Amani al-Tamimi, said that signing this agreement would help employ PWDs and enable them to better serve their community and country.

For his part, the CEO of Jusour, Abdulhadi Bakhit Barqan, said that the agreement aims to provide integrated solutions to provide comprehensive job opportunities for persons with disabilities, pointing to the “Saheem” programme, which allows them to submit an employment application on the Jusour website, where a specialised team will process their applications.

From this standpoint, and in accordance with its specialisation, Mada will work, as a centre of excellence in digital accessibility in the Arabic language, in co-operation with Jusour, according to a specific action plan, to ensure inclusion, digital access, and the participation of persons with disabilities to work in the private sector, by applying best practices and digital accessibility standards.



93 schools attend remembrance event

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education organised the second edition of remembrance competition for first and second grade students in all government schools.

The competition aims to develop the spiritual aspect among students, instil the virtue of remembrance in their souls, encourage them to compete and excel, as well as strengthen their connection to the noble prophetic tradition and Islamic values by acquainting them with the supplications recited by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and encouraging them to follow

his example in both words and actions.

As many as 93 schools participated in the competition, and the first stage was organised internally within the schools to select the best students to represent them in the final qualifiers, with a total of 370 male and female students, 50% of whom are Qatari nationals. The announcement of the winning schools in the top positions is scheduled to take place during the ceremony organised by the ministry in May, to honour the winners from various competitions of the Early Education Administration.

Zubeida al-Khalifi, who is the director of the early education administration at the Ministry of Education and Higher Educa-

tion, highlighted the impact of the competition on the students' souls and the role of their families.

She added that the remembrance competition had a positive impact in instilling the value of love for remembrance, memorisation, and daily recitation, reflecting the Early Education Administration's commitment to nurturing the emotional and spiritual aspects of students from an early age, to ensure comprehensive development integrating skills, behaviours, and emotions, by fostering a spirit of competition, and enriching the learning community, which will benefit our country's future by establishing a generation capable of influencing with their skills and values.

Qatar participates in meeting of regional body on polio eradication

QNA
Doha

Qatar participated in the 10th meeting of the Regional Subcommittee on Polio Eradication and Outbreaks at the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean of the World Health Organisation, which was held via videoconferencing.

HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari, who is the co-chair of the Regional Subcommittee concerned with the eradication of polio and addressing its outbreaks, represented Qatar in the meeting.

In her address, HE Dr al-Kuwari emphasised the importance of concerted efforts within the Eastern Mediterranean region to eradicate polio, prevent future outbreaks, and ensure that no child is overlooked.

She added, "Our commitment to surveillance must remain steadfast, with efforts towards early detection and accelerating the pace of response, in addition to fulfilling our duty to ensure effective and efficient co-operation and synergy across borders."

She said, "The epidemiological data reveal that only one genetic



HE Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari

group of the wild poliovirus is prevalent in a limited number of countries in the region in 2023 and 2024. These countries undertook rigorous vaccination campaigns last year."

She went on to clarify that "our goal to halt the spread of the infection has not been achieved, as two children were paralysed this year due to the wild poliovirus - both from the aforementioned countries. Environmental surveillance for the detection of the poliovirus continues in areas outside those where the disease is endemic, and outbreaks of mutated poliovirus strains are ongoing in our region, some of which arise from the expansion of conflict and insecurity. This requires us to

take swift and decisive action."

HE Dr al-Kuwari stressed the importance of focusing on the quality and effectiveness of vaccination campaigns, enhancing coverage, and developing innovative campaign strategies "to achieve our common vision of a world free of polio."

She further affirmed her continued support for the call to guarantee the right of every child to enjoy a future free of polio.

The meeting also served as a platform to discuss the latest developments and strategies in the fight against polio, reflecting a unified commitment across the Eastern Mediterranean to eradicate this disease.

Qatar supports ICRC operations in South Sudan



With funding from Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) signed a grant agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to support the latter's relief aid for people fleeing the conflict in Sudan and seeking refuge or relocation in South Sudan.

The main areas of assistance include helping the Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees to restore and maintain contact with their loved ones, as



well as improving their access to essential healthcare services, clean drinking water, household items, and food supplies.

"The signing of this agreement signifies the vital efforts made by ICRC, QFFD, and QRCS to support humanitarian action worldwide," Basma Tabaja, head of ICRC delegation in Qatar, said in a press statement.

Faisal Mohamed al-Emadi, secretary-general of QRCS, stressed the importance of meeting the basic needs of people displaced from Sudan to South Sudan. "This agreement is part of QRCS' continued humanitarian projects for vulnerable people in Sudan and many other countries, which were possible only with the contributions by our partners and donors, mainly QFFD," he added.

Since the outbreak of violence in Sudan in April 2023, more than 600,000 people have crossed the borders to South Sudan. ICRC has

been working to respond to the urgent needs of both the refugees and returnees, by providing phone call services for separated families to get reconnected, as well as providing water purification materials and food and nonfood items (NFIs).

The joint venture with QRCS and QFFD builds on strategic discussions between ICRC and the Qatar government, which focus on strengthening collaboration in areas of mutual interest to address the evolving humanitarian needs of conflict-affected communities.

UNSC lauds Qatar's diplomatic efforts for achieving Gaza truce

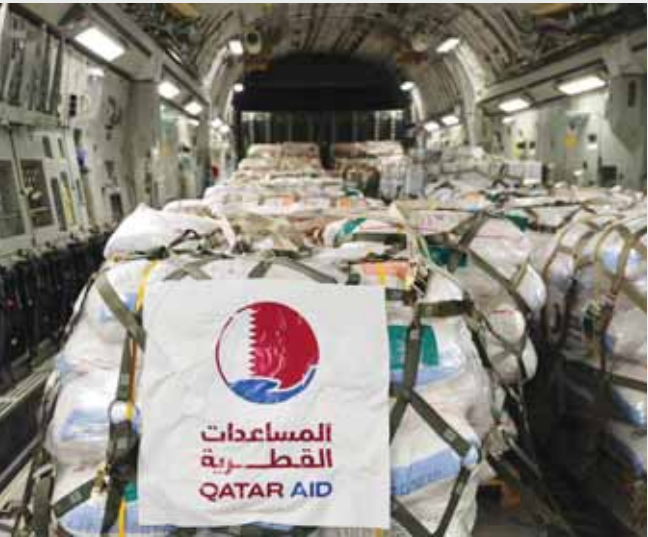
HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikhha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani said that the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) praise of Qatar's diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip reflects Qatar's prestigious position, as well as the international community's appreciation for its successful diplomacy and its contribution to promoting regional and international peace and stability.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE the Permanent Representative renewed Qatar's keenness to continue co-ordination with the UN and its relevant agencies at all levels to alleviate the suffering of civilians in Gaza. (QNA)

88th Qatari aircraft carrying assistance for Gaza arrives in El Arish



A Qatar Armed Forces aircraft arrived in the city of El Arish in the Arab Republic of Egypt, carrying 57 tonnes of aid, including food supplies provided by the Qatar Charity, in preparation to be delivered to Gaza, bringing the total number of aid planes to 88. HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater received the aircraft at El Arish Airport. This aid comes within the framework of Qatar's assistance to the brotherly Palestinian people during the difficult humanitarian conditions they are currently exposed to. (QNA)



Former Qatar resident dies in India

Jaison Chacko (74), a former long-time resident of Qatar, passed away in India yesterday. Chacko had worked with Al Balagh Trading and Contracting Company from 1984 and retired as general manager in 2014.

Chacko is survived by his wife, Geetha Jaison, and sons Vinay Jaison and Vishal Jaison. Chacko's funeral will take place tomorrow noon at Salem Marthoma Church, Convent Road, Kochi.

'Ramadan valuable opportunity to spread culture of volunteer work'

QNA
Doha

According to preachers and experts in the field of volunteer work, the holy month of Ramadan represents a valuable opportunity to spread and enhance volunteerism in society. In statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), they mentioned that volunteer work is a key aspect of strengthening social cohesion, especially during Ramadan as Muslims aim to do good deeds including volunteer work.

Islamic preacher Dr Ayesh al-Qahtani, a member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), told QNA that Islam placed volunteer work in high regard because of the great benefit it brings to the individual and society

and it also brings the person closer to Allah. Dr al-Qahtani said that interest in volunteering increases at certain periods notably during Ramadan in which reward for good deeds doubles.

Volunteering also increases in times of conflict, disasters, and crises due to the urgent need for it. Volunteer work leads to the cohesion and strengthening of society, assists the country with some of the duties and reduces problems resulting from poverty and need.

Director of Volunteering and Local Development Sector at Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) Hussein Aman al-Ali told QNA that QRCS's volunteer database includes more than 29,000 people.

Al-Ali added that there is a great demand during Ramadan to volunteer and participate in QRCS's events and activities. The holy

month represents an opportunity to expand volunteer work in Qatar since there is an increased sense of compassion and willingness to do good.

Volunteering is a valuable opportunity to help people in need and society as a whole. It also promotes social solidarity, instils positive values, develops new skills for volunteers and achieves self-satisfaction. He explained that the QRCS works to draw both men and women into volunteer work. It has training programmes that meet their skills, competencies, and educational and leadership levels. It also aims to spread the culture of volunteering in society by organising courses throughout the year and provides various opportunities through its community initiatives and activities that meet the interests of individuals thus

further engaging and encouraging them to partake in volunteer work.

The Director of Development and Local Development Sector at QRCS said that the disaster and crisis camp is one of the most notable programmes that receive volunteers. Uniquely organised by the QRCS, the programme provides specialised courses under the supervision of a group of qualified trainers and experts specialised in the field of disaster management.

Al-Ali pointed out the role of volunteers during the holy month of Ramadan in contributing to the service of individuals and society, as they work to distribute food baskets and meals to break the fast to workers in several places in the country, and they also respond effectively to support the efforts of the internal departments of QRCS and various government agencies.

A proactive plan was developed in preparation for the holy month by training a number of volunteers and providing them with logistical support, al-Ali pointed out, adding that QRCS creates its activities from the standpoint of being part of Qatari society, aiming for its good, its advancement, and meeting the needs of its citizens and residents, through co-operation with governmental and non-governmental institutions, and with the donation of people of goodness and benevolence, in order to achieve its humanitarian mission, and contribute to achieving Qatar National Vision 2030.

With the advent of the month of Ramadan, QRCS Ramadan campaign is launched, which began its implementation more than two decades ago, to include several projects and programmes, includ-

ing supporting the families most cared for within the country, and strengthening the bonds of solidarity and brotherhood between the able and the unable, al-Ali added.

For her part, Head of Initiatives and Volunteering Fatima al-Ali said that the holy month of Ramadan is a great opportunity to promote and spread the culture of volunteer work, confirming the increasing demand for volunteering during the holy month. She explained that volunteering during Ramadan enhances community cohesion and positive spirit, and also contributes to providing assistance to those in need, noting the diversity of volunteer opportunities during the month of Ramadan, from distributing food, supervising tables, helping in mosques to recreational activities for children.

Doha College enhances education through onscreen pilot exams

Doha College, one of the oldest international schools in Qatar, has taken a significant step towards the future of high-stakes examinations by continuing to be involved in the Pearson Edexcel onscreen examination pilot since its inception in 2020. Spearheaded by the English Department at Doha College, this commitment showcases the school's dedication to embracing ever-evolving assessment practices, a statement said yesterday.

In the summer of 2022, Year 11 students at Doha College completed their first official onscreen IGCSE English Language examination. The subsequent summer of 2023 witnessed both English Language and Literature IGCSE examinations transition to onscreen format, reflecting Doha

College's proactive approach to evolving assessment practices. For the first time this year, Doha College is offering Year 12 exams onscreen for both English Language and Literature, as Pearson Edexcel have expanded their onscreen offering for the summer 2024 series. Although the traditional written paper method remains an option, most of the cohort is anticipated to embrace the onscreen format.

The benefits of onscreen exams for Doha College students are vast. It is easier to proofread and edit onscreen than on paper. Typing speed for students tend to be superior to writing speed. Onscreen exams allow for different ways of thinking about answers e.g. writing all ideas first and then going back and expanding these into a full essay.

The ability to modify ideas, which is not possible on paper, can boost students' confidence. If an idea is crossed through on a written paper, an examiner will still see it which can be intimidating for some students. The onscreen exams ensure alignment with the current English curriculum as in classrooms there is an emphasis on technology integration to support learning.

Mock exams sat in the onscreen mode of entry are marked by the exam board, giving teachers and students verified feedback from the board prior to their final exams. The onscreen exams also facilitate better preparations for final exams. Exam board marking and feedback from mocks are utilised by teachers to enable students to make progress towards the final exams, the statement added.



QU NSPP winner presents research, shares experience to international audiences

As part of continuous efforts to distinguish its graduates and enhance their research and scientific skills, the Qatar University (QU) Young Scientists Center (YSC) provided student Sarah Abu Al-Ela the opportunity to share her research experience at the Saudi International Pharmaceutical Sciences Conference (SIPHA) 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Sarah Abu Al-Ela was nominated, after winning first place in the second cycle of the National Science Research Promotion Program (NSPP). The NSPP is one of the most important programmes offered by the YSC in co-operation with the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies.

The aim is to provide an opportunity for high school and undergraduate students to explore the world of research and innovation and to strengthen their creative and leadership skills, in addition to supporting and empowering youth in STEM.

Through the SIPHA conference, Sarah Abu Al-Ela presented a research poster on a research project entitled "A novel treatment for sepsis-induced cardiac



inflammation," under the supervision of Dr Zaid Hussein Hasan Alma'ayah from QU's College of Pharmacy.

The research focused on developing a new treatment for cardiac inflammation resulting from sepsis, a critical medical condition that is one of the world's biggest health challenges due to the limitation of

available treatment options. Her participation in the conference is evidence to the distinguished level of scientific research presented by researchers at QU.

The conference was also an opportunity to present her research results at the international level and to learn about the latest developments and medical solu-

tions that help in the growth of the health care sector. Sarah said: "My participation in this event was an enriching experience where I had the opportunity to present our research project and discuss the scientific procedures and results we have reached, in addition to learning about scientific developments and valuable information shared by experts in the field of pharmacy. This would not have been possible without the continuous support of the NSPP team, which qualified me to participate in this conference."

Prof Noora Jabor al-Thani, director of QU-YSC, emphasised the centre's continuous commitment to cultivating in students the essential qualities of creativity, research, lifelong learning, and awareness of national and international issues using various modern methodologies.

She highlighted the critical role that continuous learning and diverse experiences, encompassing research, seminars, and conferences, play in nurturing the skills that empower students to realise their aspirations and elevate their ideas to a level of sophistication that exerts a tangible impact on society and the world.

MoI cautions against exiting car with engine on



The Ministry of Interior has cautioned motorists against exiting their vehicle, while leaving the engine running, even for a short time. This is contrary to safety rules and may lead to theft or traffic accidents, a post on X said.

GCC affirms firm positions against all racial discrimination forms

The Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) affirmed its firm positions against all racial discrimination forms as grave violations that rip the fabric of societies, and influence the individuals' rights, public health, and capacities to grow, prosper, and effectively engage within their societies.

This came in a GCC statement during the celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as part of the 55th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar in Geneva, Jawhara bint Abdulaziz al-Suwaidi, delivered the statement on behalf of the GCC, currently chaired by the State of Qatar.

The GCC countries said that they are observing with concern the ongoing racial discrimination waves across many countries, expressing their regret at the constant grave violations against people of African descent. These

violations included hate crimes, harassment, and racial profiling committed by law enforcement authorities, and discrimination in employment, housing, and within educational institutions, which triggers an early school leaving. Highlighting the GCC's many national laws and legislation battling racial discrimination, the statement noted the GCC Human Rights Declaration, adopted in 2014, which stipulates in Article 2 that there is no distinction between people for reasons of origin, gender, religion, language, colour, or any other form of distinction. While tackling the tragedies due to racial discrimination, the GCC statement stressed the need to pay attention to the tragedy of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation forces' apartheid policies, based on domination, imposing restrictions, deprivation and discrimination, calling on the international community to put an urgent end to these grave violations. — QNA

Qatar embassies, QC, hold Iftar projects across the world

Several Qatari embassies abroad supervised the establishment of Ramadan projects and events in co-operation with Qatar Charity (QC), which include collective Iftar tables for fasting people and the distribution of Ramadan food baskets within the framework of the Iftar Project for Fasting People. This project is expected to take place in each of the Qatar embassies in Vietnam, Kosovo, Albania, Ghana, Mauritania, Djibouti, Malaysia, Somalia, Bangladesh, Morocco, Tunisia, Nepal, Kenya, the US, Croatia, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Argentina, Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Ecuador, South Korea, Japan, Malta, Russia, Venezuela, Canada, Georgia, and Benin.

So far, the Qatar embassies in Jordan, Gambia, Croatia, Rwanda, Lebanon, and Azerbaijan have supervised these projects and events.

The Qatar embassy in Croatia held an Iftar at the Islamic Centre in the capital,

Zagreb, in co-operation with QC. Ambassador Asma bint Naji al-Ameri was present. The embassy also held an Iftar for those who are fasting at the Islamic Centre in the city of Ribka in the presence of the Mufti of Croatia, Dr Azizhasanovic and more than 150 fasting people.

In Gambia, Qatar's ambassador Mohamed bin Ali al-Kuwari, participated in a ceremony held by QC to distribute school bags in Arab and Islamic schools in Gambia. In Jordan, the Qatar embassy, in co-operation with QC, distributed 874 food baskets, with support from the Qatar Fund for Development. Distributions were carried out in Mafraq, Zarqa, Jerash and Amman, and the number of beneficiaries was estimated at more than 3,500 people.

In Azerbaijan, the Qatar embassy supervised the provision of 8,400 Iftar

Qatar Airways 'Garden pavilion' welcomes over 250,000 visitors

Qatar Airways 'Garden pavilion' at Expo 2023 Doha Qatar welcomed more than 250,000 visitors during the international event, the national airline said yesterday. In a statement, Qatar Airways, which was the 'Official Strategic Partner' of Expo 2023 Doha Qatar, said it "closed an eventful six months at Expo 2023 Doha with resounding success."

This edition of the Mena region's largest horticultural exhibition raised climate and desertification awareness through various exhibition stands, panel discussions and public activities. The airline collaborated on a joint venture with Hamad International Airport (HIA) to design and build the impressive Qatar Airways Garden. Qatar Airways and HIA played a significant role in bringing people from nearly 170 global destinations to Expo 2023 Doha.

Visitors were greeted by a giant yellow teddy bear – an iconic reference to Lamp Bear located at the HIA, as well as significant landmarks from across the continents served by Qatar Airways, emphasising Qatar's pivotal role as a global hub. Qatar Airways Group CEO Badr Mohamed al-Meer said, "With the successful conclusion of Expo 2023 Doha Qatar, the country is solidifying its role in hosting large-scale global events. Qatar Airways and Hamad International Airport

are proud to have contributed to the initiative, allowing us to welcome visitors from all around the world to experience Qatar's warm hospitality and be a part of its promising future."

Qatar Airways set the stage for this landmark event by welcoming the Expo 2023 Doha livery into its fleet and commemorating its role as the Official Strategic Partner. Throughout the six months, the Qatar Airways Garden hosted various activities, engaging experiences and cultural performances highlighting the diverse traditions of the world. The airline also hosted familiarisation trips to spotlight the largest horticultural exhibition in the region. Onboard Qatar Airways flights, the airline celebrated Expo 2023 Doha Qatar with organic beverages by the renowned Qatari vegan restaurant, Evergreen Organics. Additionally, Qatar Airways partnered with local farms and Evergreen Organics to introduce an Expo 2023 Doha Qatar a la carte onboard menu. The airline also ran insightful gardening shows and videos as part of its in-flight entertainment, OryxOne.

The pavilion further offered its visitors an exceptional opportunity to experience Qatar's cultural and sports landscape. The Qatar Airways Garden observed significant cultural moments, including the Chinese New Year and commemo-



Qatar Airways 'Garden pavilion' at Expo 2023 Doha Qatar welcomed more than 250,000 visitors during the international event, the national airline said yesterday.

rated its inaugural flight to Medan, Indonesia with Qatar's Indonesian community at its exhibition stand, coinciding with the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture. In addition to this, during Qatar's National Sport Day, nearly 17,000 visitors enjoyed engaging sports activations at the Garden, making the pavilion a destination catering to individuals of diverse ages and generations. Qatar Airways also welcomed football icons David Beckham and Ronaldinho to its pavilion to raise awareness for sustainability initiatives in Qatar and beyond.

Doha Institute for Graduate studies hosts Cultural Day

QNA
Doha

Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI) held its annual Cultural Day event during the holy month of Ramadan to celebrate the cultural, social, and linguistic diversity that characterizes the institute's atmosphere. Students from many nationalities participated in the event, presenting various activities that reflected their countries' cultural heritage, customs, and traditions. These included traditional foods, clothing, history, languages, and dialects. The event also featured traditional crafts, poetry recitals, folklore performances, and competitions.

The institute also organized its first alumni gathering, which aimed to build bridges of communication, strengthen social ties between alumni, and deepen their connection with the institute. During the gathering, membership cards were printed and distributed, and alumni initiatives were discussed to enhance their role.

DI established a dedicated Alumni Office in 2021. The office is responsible for strengthening communication with all alumni inside and outside Qatar and facilitating their participation in various educational and community activities to enhance their contributions on the local and international levels.

The institute also supports the Alumni Association and helps create a network for social, professional, and academic exchange among them.

M7 and Fashion Trust Arabia join forces to empower Qatar's designers

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

A unique partnership between M7 and Fashion Trust Arabia (FTA) provides an opportunity for aspiring designers to join the prestigious FTA London Mentorship Programme, it was announced. According to M7, the latest initiative aims to nurture talent and creativity in Qatar's growing fashion scene and foster innovation and entrepreneurship in design, fashion, and technology.

The call welcomes applications from local and Qatar-based designer brands, with the deadline set until April 3, M7 noted.

This exclusive programme offers participants a chance to immerse themselves in the global fashion community in London, UK while receiving tailored mentorship from M7 and industry experts.

M7, known for its commitment to nurturing talent, empowers designers to explore, collaborate, and develop successful businesses.

With a focus on responding to the evolving demands of Qatar's flourishing fashion and design industries, M7 provides designers with the necessary tools and expertise to bring their ideas from concept to market.

The invitation extends across diverse categories, including ready-to-wear (for both



M7 collaborates with FTA to nurture talent and creativity in Qatar's growing fashion scene.

women and men), eveningwear (ranging from haute couture to ready-made), and accessories (including footwear, bags, and eyewear). The selection process prioritises key factors such as brand identity, past experiences, readiness, engagement, and commitment to sustainability.

M7 said applicants must submit brand profile and business plan to be eligible for the programme, it is learnt. Additionally, they should have presented and produced a minimum of three cohesive collections within the same category.

Designers with a distinct

brand identity and compelling storytelling, as well as those incorporating sustainable practices into their work, are particularly encouraged to apply. Following the application process, M7 noted that designers who meet the criteria will undergo screening and contact.

Selected designers will then be invited for a one-on-one interview and will work closely with M7 to prepare for the mentorship programme in London. Selected participants are expected to commit to both local and international mentorship programmes.

talabat, QRCS launch #ForPalestine charity campaign

American Cuisine: Cheat Burger, Dindan Restaurant, Cric Crac Restaurant, kavo, Blue Box, Juicy Bite Burger.

Italian cuisine: Rosso Pizzeria, Cube Restaurant, Wabel.

Bakeries: Cannelle Patisserie, Magnolia Bakery, Catharei Bakery and Sweets, Umm Salal Mohammed Modern Bakery, Blanche Pastry and Bakery, FNP Cakes, Zain, Khor Shqiq Bakery.

Cafes and Desserts: Ambes Thursday Cafe, Ground Coffee Shop, Hi Cream, Okashi, Mania, Bread World, Cannelle, Alassi, Pure Sweet, Cardi Cafe & Bakery, Salsabeel Cafeteria.

Here is how to donate: 1. Open the talabat app, 2. Select "Food", 3. Select "For Palestine" collection, 4. Choose your favourite restaurant and place your order.

Commenting on the initiative, Francisco Miguel Condeco Ca-



etano De Sousa, managing director of talabat Qatar, stated: "We are delighted to launch this Ramadan charity campaign, allowing customers to play a direct role in giving back to those in need with a click of a button. At talabat, we believe in the power of collective action, and this campaign provides an opportunity for everyone to contribute and make a positive difference while enjoying the con-

venience of food delivery".

Regionally, talabat will also be contributing 1mn hot iftar meals to the World Food Programme's emergency response in Gaza, as part of the month of Ramadan. This is to address the immediate food needs of 33,000 people mainly women and children in informal and congested shelters during Ramadan. These hot meals will be distributed by WFP - who are on the ground in Gaza - to displaced people residing in Rafah, Gaza Strip & North Gaza.

Such campaigns align with talabat's mission to leverage its platform for good and promote a culture of giving back. By harnessing the collective efforts of its customers and restaurant partners, talabat aims to provide essential assistance for vulnerable communities and spread the spirit of generosity throughout Ramadan.

'Shop & Win gold up to QR50,000' at Al Asmakh Mall, Barwa Plaza Mall



Al Asmakh Mall and Barwa Plaza Mall has launched a Ramadan campaign for customers to 'Shop and win Gold up to QR50,000', a statement said. The gold partner is Malabar Gold & Diamonds. Customers shopping for QR500 and above at Centrepoint, Home Centre, Max, Home Box, E-Max and Shoexpress in Al Asmakh Mall and Barwa Plaza Mall will automatically qualify for the e-Raffle draw. A total of 50 winners will be selected through a randomiser by a ministry official at Al Asmakh Mall, with each getting a 4gm (22k) gold coin. The campaign will end on April 13, the statement added.

IPU Assembly calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza in closing session

QNA
Geneva

The Shura Council concluded its participation in the 148th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and related meetings, which were held over five days in Geneva, Switzerland. The Shura Council was represented during the IPU Assembly by Council Members: Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabet al-Dosari, Ahmad bin Ibrahim al-Malki, and Ali bin Ahmad al-Kaabi.

The Council delegation participated in the closing session of the 213th session of the IPU's Governing Council, where the Council approved the formation of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti was chosen to represent the Arab Geopolitical Group in the committee.

On the other hand, the Shura Council delegation participated in the closing session of the 148th Assembly of the IPU, which discussed the topics on its agenda, including the main topic entitled "Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding".

The closing session also discussed a number of topics, including the social and humanitarian impacts of autonomous weapons

systems and artificial intelligence; the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, and sustainable measures to improve the conditions of persons with disabilities, as well as reviewing the reports of the standing committees of the IPU.

At the conclusion of the session, President of the IPU Tulia Ackson and Secretary-General of the IPU Martin Chungong issued a statement urging the international community to take urgent measures to alleviate the suffering of the residents of the Gaza Strip, including women, children, and the elderly who were affected by the fighting, given the worsening situation in Gaza.

On behalf of the global parliamentary community, the statement called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The statement also reiterated the demand for the release of the hostages. The statement called for expanding the flow of essential humanitarian aid to reach those in need in Gaza, reiterating the utter condemnation of any violence against civilians and stressing the need for respect for international humanitarian law.

Concluding its work, the 148th Assembly of the IPU issued the "Geneva Declaration," which reaffirmed parliamentarians' commitment to parliamentary diplomacy to address the challenges facing global peace and security. The par-

liamentarians stressed their commitment to building bridges of communication and understanding between countries and bringing viewpoints closer together to overcome common obstacles.

They reiterated their commitment to supporting the rule of law at the local and international levels, as it is the basic pillar of preventing the outbreak of conflicts and wars, affirming their belief in diplomacy as a tool to achieve lasting peace. The declaration urged all States, especially those parties to an armed conflict, to adhere strictly to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Additionally, the declaration advocated for increased recourse to the International Court of Justice and other international judicial institutions as essential mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes between nations. The attendees condemned the recent surge in identity-based hatred around the world, particularly religious hatred, and regret the political polarisation that is helping to drive this phenomenon.

The declaration indicated the parliamentarians' commitment to enhancing the participation of women and youths in politics and leadership, stressing the importance of restoring confidence in multilateralism by strengthening international co-operation and supporting the rule of law to address the growing risks.

Ramadan 'Stamps and Coins' auction



The Qatar Philatelic and Coin Collectors Center affiliated with the Ministry of Culture (MoC) organised the 25th edition of the Ramadan auction of stamps and coins, featuring more than 270 items, with the participation of the Gulf Co-operation Council countries (GCC) and Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, reported local daily Arabic *Arrayah*, quoting director Hussein Rajab al-Ismail.

Police College claims Universities Futsal Tournament 2024 title



The Police College team won the first place in the Qatar Universities' Futsal Tournament 2024, organised from March 16 to 27 at the Qatar University (QU) Sports & Events Complex. University of Doha for Science and Technology team (UDST) won the second place, while the third place went to QU. The winners were crowned by Qatar Collegiate Sports Federation (QCSF) president Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Naimi, the Police Academy president Brigadier General Abdul Rahman Majid al-Sulaiti, UDST president Dr Salem Al-Naemi and vice-president for student life and services Dr Mohamed Diab. QCSF secretary-general Rashid Saeed Adiba honoured the referees, tournament's best player, best goalkeeper and best scorer. The tournament brought together eight teams distributed into two groups. Group A comprised the Police College, GSI with Arkansas State University-Qatar, QU and Lusail University, while Group B featured Ahmed Bin Mohamed Military College, UDST, Police Institute and Hamad Bin Khalifa University. QCSF board member Rashid al-Tamimi thanked the organising committee.

ICBF holds blood donation camp



More than 120 donors participated in a blood donation camp organised by the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF) in commemoration of its 40th anniversary and in association with Hamad Medical Corporation and Safari Group, at Safari Mall Abu Hamour.

Indian embassy deputy chief of mission Sandeep Kumar, who was

the chief guest, lauded the community's spirit of benevolence. He emphasised the profound impact of blood donation, noting that each contribution has the potential to save up to three lives.

ICBF president Shanavas Bava, in his address, highlighted the significance of donating blood during the holy month of Ramadan, aligning with the forum's four-decade-long commitment

to humanitarian endeavours. Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) president A P Manikantan, Indian Sports Centre (ISC) president E P Abdulrahman and Safari Group managing director Shaheen Backer echoed similar sentiments, underscoring the crucial role of blood donations in saving lives.

ICBF general secretary Varkey Boban, who co-ordinated the proceedings, and reaffirmed



ICBF's commitment, mentioning that the blood donation camp marked the fourth event of the day for ICBF, with the other three being a consular camp in Al Khor and food distribution at two locations in Doha.

ICBF secretary and in-charge of blood donation camps Mo-

hamed Kunhi welcomed the gathering and vice-president Deepak Shetty proposed a vote of thanks. Apex body members including ICC general secretary Mohankumar, secretary Abraham Joseph, ISC secretary Pradeep Pillai and many other senior community leaders were present.

The successful execution of the camp was made possible through the co-ordination of ICBF treasurer Kuldeep Kour Bahl, managing committee members Sameer Ahmed, Zareena Ahad, Shankar Goud, Abdul Raoof Kondotty, Kulwinder Singh and advisory council member T Ramaselvam.

New principal for BPS



Birla Public School (BPS) has announced the appointment of Dr Anand R Nair (pictured) as its new principal. "Hailing from Mumbai, India, Dr Nair is a dynamic educational administrator with a passion for refining pedagogy while ensuring qualitative and effective academic processes," a statement said. "He holds a postgraduate degree in commerce, along with a PhD from the University of Mumbai. Nair brings over 20 years of leadership experience from reputable educational institutions in the Middle East and India. He has demonstrated a proven track record of team management excellence and student achievement. "Nair's commitment to academic research and innovation is exemplified by his role as an editorial board member for RICERCA, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation. His profound knowledge will ensure that Birla Public School continues to remain at the forefront of educational achievement," the statement said. The school management, led by chairman Gope Shahani, wished Nair a successful tenure with BPS.

Cultural Forum rebranded as PWCF



Celebrating a decade of social-cultural activities, the Cultural Forum has been rebranded as Pravasi Welfare & Cultural Forum (PWCF). Indian embassy deputy chief of mission Sandeep Kumar officially announced the renaming at a function at the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC). First secretary Sachin Dinkar Shankpal was the chief guest.

PWCF president R Chandramohan presided. Advisory committee chairman Dr Taj Aluva explained the transition

process. ICC president A P Manikantan, Indian Community Benevolent Forum president Shanavas Bawa, Indian Sports Centre president E P Abdulrahman, ICC general secretary Mohan Kumar, ICBF secretary Mohamed Kunhi, PWCF vice-presidents Rasheed Ali, Sadiq Chennadan, Majeed Ali, Najla Najeeb, general secretaries Shafi Moozhikal, Ahmed Shafi, Tazeen Amin, secretary Sharif Chirakal and Sasidhara Panicker, Rasheed Ahmed, Thomas Zakaria and Mohamed Rafi and other leaders were present.



Garangao celebrated at Mesis



In a vibrant display of Qatari tradition and community spirit, students of MES Indian School, Abu Hamour (Mesis) came together to celebrate Garangao, a festival celebrated on the 14th evening of the holy month of Ramadan. The school grounds buzzed with excitement as children adorned in traditional Qatari attire exchanged gifts, embodying the essence of sharing and camaraderie. Principal Pramila Kannan inaugurated the Garangao rally. The air was filled with laughter and cheer as the young participants engaged in cultural activities, performances, fun games, face painting and henna designing. Behind the scenes, the Qatar History department co-ordinated the festivities.

MES art teacher wins prize



MES Indian School's art teacher Suresh has bagged the first prize in an inter-school art competition. The event was recently conducted by the Skills Development Centre for art teachers of various expatriate schools. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated him for his significant achievement.

Rajagiri Public School's Kindergarten graduation



Rajagiri Public School's Kindergarten bid farewell to its graduating class with a heartwarming ceremony. Lower KG students gave a special dance performance, sending their well wishes for a bright future to their graduating seniors. Board member Vimala Jacob was the chief guest. Administrative director Jinsu Aju and principal Joshy Abraham congratulated the graduating class.

SPACE

Japan’s moon lander survives second lunar night

Katie Forster Japan’s moon lander woke up after unexpectedly surviving a second frigid, two-week lunar night and transmitted new images back to Earth, the country’s space agency said. The unmanned Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) probe touched down in January. But the lightweight spacecraft landed at a wonky angle that left its solar panels facing the wrong way. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency announced the probe’s latest surprise awakening in a post on X. “We received a response from SLIM last night and confirmed that SLIM had successfully completed its second overnight,” it said.

CRIME

Sembcorp Marine ex-staffers accused in corruption case

Authorities in Singapore yesterday charged two former officials of Sembcorp Marine with handing bribes to Brazilian officials to advance the company’s interests in the South American nation. Sembcorp Marine and Keppel Offshore and Marine merged in 2023 to form Seatrium, which is in talks to pay \$110mn in a deferred prosecution agreement regarding the bribery case in Brazil, they said in a statement. Former CEO Wong Weng Sun and ex-manager Lee Fook Kang face five charges of conspiring to offer a middleman inducements to aid Sembcorp Marine’s Brazilian subsidiaries, according to the city-state’s statement.

HEALTH

Thailand sounds alarm after anthrax outbreak in Laos

Thailand ordered a close watch on livestock yesterday after an outbreak of anthrax in neighbouring Laos, where more than 50 suspected human cases have been reported. Anthrax, which spreads through bacteria in soil, commonly infects grazing livestock and wild animals but can infect humans and be deadly in some cases. Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has ordered officials to closely monitor the disease and to “protect the public”. Humans can become infected by breathing in the spores, eating contaminated food or touching bacteria with broken skin, for instance when handling diseased animals.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Malaysia open to extending rail project to Thai border

Malaysia’s government has said it would consider extending a \$10bn China-led rail project to its border with Thailand to boost economic ties between the Southeast Asian neighbours. Part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the 665km, 50.27bn ringgit (\$10.63bn) railway is on track to connect the east and west coasts of peninsular Malaysia by the end of 2026. Malaysia’s Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the government was open to proposals to extend the track to the border with Thailand, for further integration into existing railway networks or future infrastructure developments. He did not provide further details.

Japan drugmaker reports two more deaths in supplement scare

AFP
Tokyo

Japanese drugmaker whose dietary supplements are at the centre of a growing health scare reported yesterday two more deaths potentially related to its tablets. Last week, Kobayashi Pharmaceutical recalled three supplement brands – “Beni Koji Cholestele Help” and two others – after customer complaints of kidney problems. The over-the-counter products contain an ingredient called red yeast rice, or “beni koji”, which is supposed to help lower cholesterol. Yesterday’s announcement brings the total number of deaths under investigation by the company and health ministry to four, with more than 100 other people hospitalised. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said in parliament that “after the cause is identified, the government will examine what measures are necessary to prevent similar incidents”. “We will clarify the causes and, if necessary, I think we need to consider all possible measures,” he said. Kishida was responding to an opposition politician who had urged him to revise safety frameworks that were relaxed under former prime minister Shinzo Abe. Kobayashi Pharmaceutical sells a wide range of health products marketed through television adverts in Japan. Medical studies describe red yeast rice as an alternative to statins

for lowering high cholesterol, but also warn of a risk of organ damage depending on its chemical make-up. The Osaka-based company says it has also supplied red yeast rice to around 50 other firms in Japan and two in Taiwan. “We were told yesterday by a bereaved family that a person who had been using Cholestele Help had passed away due to kidney disease,” the drugmaker said in a statement. It added it had been told separately that another person who had used Cholestele Help in recent years had died. “We are in the process of confirming the facts and causal relationships in both of these cases,” the statement said. “However, we decided to make this report public from the viewpoint of prompt disclosure.” The government has ordered several health-food makers to review their products, while informing foreign countries about the issue through Japan’s embassies, chief cabinet secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said. Dozens of Japanese firms that used beni koji provided by Kobayashi Pharmaceutical have separately announced recalls. The affected products include health tablets as well as salad dressing, bread and miso paste used in many traditional dishes. Kobayashi Pharmaceutical has said analysis had found a possibility that the products contained “ingredients we had not intended to include”

Xiaomi enters car market with new electric vehicle



Chinese consumer tech giant Xiaomi launched its first electric vehicle in Beijing yesterday, injecting itself into a fiercely competitive sector in the world’s largest car market. Xiaomi is known for its affordable smartphones and home appliances, and CEO Lei Jun says he is now putting his “reputation on the line” with the SU7 EV, challenging Chinese car giant BYD and Elon Musk’s Tesla. A basic SU7 model will cost 215,900 yuan (\$29,868). Lei told a glitzy launch news conference in Beijing yesterday evening. The sleek and sporty SU7 will be available in nine colours and includes “sound simulation”, Lei said, “to recreate the thrill of driving a sports car”. It also offers plenty of other gimmicks, such as karaoke equipment and a mini-fridge. Xiaomi has promised it will be “the best-looking, best-driving and smartest car” priced under 500,000 yuan.

Philippines ups stakes in growing row with China

Reuters
Manila/Beijing

The Philippines will implement countermeasures against “illegal, coercive, aggressive, and dangerous attacks” by China’s coastguard, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said yesterday, upping the stakes in an escalating row in the South China Sea. The Philippines is furious over what it calls repeated hostilities by Chinese vessels around disputed features inside Manila’s 200-mile exclusive economic zone. The US has weighed in with moral support for its former colony and military ally. Marcos did not specify what the

countermeasures would entail, but said they would come in succeeding weeks and be proportionate, deliberate and reasonable in response to what he called open and unabating attacks. “We seek no conflict with any nation, more so nations that purport and claim to be our friends but we will not be cowed into silence, submission, or subservience,” Marcos said yesterday. The deterioration in relations with China comes as Marcos seeks to deepen defence ties with the US, increasing US access to Philippine military bases and expanding joint exercises to include sea and air patrols over the South China Sea, frustrating Beijing. Chinese defence ministry spokesperson Wu Qian yesterday said the Philippines was to blame

for the breakdown and was counting on support from external forces while peddling misinformation and infringing on China’s sovereignty. “It is straying further down a dangerous path. The Chinese side will not allow the Philippines to act wilfully,” Wu said. “We have responded with legitimate, resolute and restrained actions. The Philippine side should realise that provocations will only do themselves more harm than good, and soliciting foreign support will lead nowhere.” The latest flare-up occurred last week, when China used water cannon to disrupt another Philippine resupply mission to the Second Thomas Shoal for soldiers posted to guard a warship intentionally grounded on a reef 25 years ago.

Seoul bus drivers end strike after wage hike deal

Bus drivers in the South Korean capital of Seoul ended an hours-long strike yesterday after a deal was reached between the city’s bus union and its employers over a wage hike, easing the commute for the city of more than 9mn people. The Seoul Bus Labor Union and their employers agreed to a 4.48% wage hike after negotiations, Seoul’s city government said, with public transport operations returning to normal right after the deal was agreed. The unions had originally asked for an almost 13% wage increase. The full-scale strike by the city’s bus drivers was the first in 12 years. Their last strike lasted for around 20 minutes. Buses in Seoul are operated on a quasi-public system in which private companies manage the buses while it’s heavily subsidised and regulated by Seoul’s city government to ensure accessibility of services.

South Korea poll campaign



South Korea’s main opposition Democratic Party of Korea leader Lee Jae-myung (centre right) takes a selfie with a supporter during a campaign event for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Seoul yesterday. South Koreans will go to the polls on April 10 for the nationwide national assembly elections.

China ships glacier water to Maldives

AFP
Male, Maldives

China has sent more than a million bottles of water from melting Tibetan glaciers to the Maldives, officials said yesterday, a gift from the world’s highest mountains to a low-lying archipelago threatened by rising seas. The Indian Ocean nation of 1,192 tiny coral islands is on the frontlines of the climate crisis, with salt levels seeping into the land and corrupting potable water, leaving it dependent on desalination plants. Scientists say glaciers in the Himalayas are melting faster than ever due to climate change. The Maldives foreign ministry said the water was a gift from Yan Jinhai, the chairman of the Xizang Autonomous Region, or Tibet, lying more than 3,385kms

away on the far side of the world’s highest mountain range. The consignment of mineral water packed into 90 sea containers arrived last week and had been unloaded in the capital Male, a port authority official said. “The chairman of Xizang Autonomous Region announced his wish to donate 1,500 tonnes of drinking water... during his official visit to the country in November,” the Maldives foreign ministry said in a statement. The ministry rejected allegations on social media that the imported water was for the consumption of pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu, who came to power last year on an anti-Indian platform. “The government of Maldives has decided to utilise the water to provide assistance to islands in case of water shortage,” it said.

Maori king calls for whales to be given personhood

AFP
Wellington

The king of New Zealand’s Indigenous Maori people made an impassioned call yesterday for whales to be granted the same legal rights as people in a bid to protect the hallowed yet vulnerable species. Kingi Tuheitia Potatua te Wherowhero VII said the majestic marine mammals should be given inherent human rights, such as having a healthy environment, to allow the restoration of their populations.

“The sound of our ancestor’s song has grown weaker, and her habitat is under threat, which is why we must act now,” Kingi Tuheitia said in a rare public statement. New Zealand has previously passed laws granting legal status to natural features such as rivers and mountains that are important to the Maori people. The Mount Taranaki volcano and Whanganui River, both in New Zealand’s North Island, are seen by the Maori as both ancestors and of spiritual importance. They were both granted personhood in 2017. The status has since been in-

voked to slow or overturn development projects and to force consultation with local groups. “Whales play a vital role in the health of our entire ocean ecosystem. Their decline disrupts the delicate balance that sustains all life in Te Moana (the sea)” Kingi Tuheitia said granting whales the same status would act as “a cloak of protection for our taonga (treasure), our ancestor – the whales” The statement was jointly issued

with the high chief of the neighbouring Cook Islands, Travel Tou Ariki. The leaders are advocating for Indigenous knowledge to be combined with science for a “more holistic approach” to whale conservation. Establishing protected marine areas would be a “crucial” step, they added. The leaders want Polynesian nations who share “a love for the vast Pacific Ocean” to help. “We can no longer turn a blind eye,” high chief Travel Tou Ariki said. “Whales play a vital role in the health of our entire ocean eco-

system. Their decline disrupts the delicate balance that sustains all life in Te Moana (the sea).” “We must act with urgency to protect these magnificent creatures before it’s too late.” Whales are some of the largest mammals on earth, with blue whales measuring up to 100 feet and weighing up to 200 tonnes, the same as roughly 33 elephants. Yet their size doesn’t protect them. Six of the 13 great whale species are classified as endangered or vulnerable, according to conservation group the World Wildlife Fund. The Maori, like other Polynesian

groups, are believed to have originated from islands around modern-day Tahiti, but currently make up about 17% of New Zealand’s population, or about 900,000 people. The arrival of Europeans to New Zealand in 1642 brought colonisation, anti-Maori discrimination and pitched warfare that was eventually stopped through the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. The treaty, signed between the British and hundreds of Maori chiefs, is seen as the founding document of New Zealand and established British control over the country.

OFFICIAL

Ukraine minister in India to build support for peace plan

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba arrived in New Delhi yesterday to advance Kyiv's vision of the path to peace in Ukraine and to strengthen ties with India. "Building on the dialogue between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we will pay specific attention to the peace formula," Kuleba wrote on social media platform X. Ukraine hopes to hold a summit of world leaders without Russian participation in the coming months to advance its blueprint for peace, a "formula" that calls among other things for the withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory.

DATA

UK greenhouse gas emissions 'fell 5.4% in 2023'

UK greenhouse gas emissions fell by 5.4% in 2023, largely due to a reduction in the amount of gas used in power stations, according to official data published yesterday. Net emissions of all greenhouse gases were estimated to have been 384.2mn tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2023, compared to 406.2mn tonnes in 2022, the government's provisional figures showed. Carbon dioxide emissions decreased by 6.6% annually to 302.8mn tonnes, part of a 52.7% decrease in total greenhouse gas emissions since 1990. High energy prices are also likely to have been a factor, with less fuel being used to heat buildings and by industry, said the report.

APPEAL

UK urged to drop plan to deport refugees to Rwanda

The United Nations Human Rights Committee yesterday urged Britain to abandon a contentious bill to deport refugees to Rwanda, which could become law next month. In its review of the United Kingdom, the committee said it regretted the arrangements made with some with third countries, particularly Rwanda, to transfer asylum seekers, as well as "efforts to adopt the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill despite the UK Supreme Court's ruling that the arrangement would not be compliant with international law". The committee said it was calling on the British government to withdraw the bill or repeal it if it passed.

APPOINTMENT

British Museum names new director

The British Museum yesterday said it had appointed Nicholas Cullinan as its new director, taking over from Hartwig Fischer. Cullinan, 46, moves to the museum in the coming months from the National Portrait Gallery, where he has been director since April 2015. The art historian, who was previously a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and London's Tate Modern described it as "an honour" to lead "one of the greatest museums in the world". Fischer stepped down in August last year, shortly after it was revealed that thousands of artefacts from its collection were found to be "missing, stolen or damaged".

India's March gold imports 'set to drop 90% as prices surge'

Reuters
Mumbai

India's gold imports are set to plunge by more than 90% in March from the previous month to hit their lowest level since the Covid pandemic as banks cut imports after record-high prices hit demand, a government official and two bank dealers said.

Lower imports by India, the world's second biggest consumer of the precious metal, could limit a rally in global prices that hit a record high earlier this month on expectations that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates this year.

The drop in imports could also help India narrow its trade deficit and support the rupee.

India's gold imports are likely to fall to 10 to 11 metric tonnes in March from 110 metric tonnes in February, said a government official, who declined to be named as he was not authorised to talk to the media.

Gold imports in March 2024 are expected to be the lowest since the Covid pandemic, when air traffic restrictions limited imports and lockdowns led to the closure of jewellery shops.

"A negligible quantity of gold is being cleared from customs this month after paying duty. There has been a sharp drop in gold imports compared to last month," the government official said.

Two Mumbai-based bullion dealers from two leading gold-importing banks said they imported very little gold in March due to weak demand.

"Jewellers weren't buying even with a discount exceeding \$35 per ounce. No reason to import the metal at a record high price and wait for demand," one of the bullion dealers said.

The Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index, the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, is due on tomorrow when the stock market will be closed.

In India, domestic prices rose to a record Rs66,943 per 10 grams earlier this month.

This prompted dealers to offer discounts of about \$38 an ounce over official domestic prices, including 15% import tax and 3% sales levies, the highest since March 2023.

Gold demand usually stays strong in March as jewellers stock up for the Indian wedding season which is already in full swing and where gold is an intrinsic part.

Also, customers are exchanging old jewellery for new because of the high prices, so jewellers have stopped buying gold from banks, the dealer said.

Refiners have almost stopped imports of gold dore, a semi-pure alloy, because of their inability to offer steep discounts, said Harshad Ajmera, the proprietor of JJ Gold House, a wholesaler in the eastern city of Kolkata.



Police officers escort Delhi chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal as he leaves court after a hearing in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

Court extends Delhi chief minister's custody

Reuters
New Delhi

An Indian court yesterday extended the custody of opposition leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal until April 1 in a graft case, local media said.

India's financial crime-fighting agency arrested Kejriwal last week in connection with corruption allegations related to a licence policy and he was remanded to its custody until yesterday, weeks before India begins voting in general elections on April 19.

Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) says the case is fabricated and politically motivated. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government and his Bharatiya Janata Party deny political interference and say law enforcement agencies are doing their job.

All the main leaders of AAP were already

imprisoned in the case before Kejriwal was arrested.

Termining his arrest a "political conspiracy", Kejriwal, 55, told reporters outside court yesterday that "the public will respond to this".

Speaking in court later, he said the enforcement directorate (ED), which has arrested him, aims to crush AAP.

Enforcement directorate lawyers told the court that they needed Kejriwal in custody for another seven days as he was "deliberately not co-operating" and needed to be interrogated further.

Kejriwal's arrest has sparked protests in the national capital and the nearby northern state of Punjab, which is also governed by AAP, over the last few days.

Dozens of Aam Aadmi Party supporters were detained on Tuesday as they attempted to march to Modi's residence to demand his release.

Some AAP workers protesting and distributing leaflets to commuters outside a busy metro station in central Delhi were also detained yesterday.

"This is the time when we campaign (for elections), our leaders are being put in prison, arrested ... they (federal government) are stopping us from campaigning, (but) nobody can stop us from winning," a protester told news agency ANI.

A joint rally of the 'INDIA' alliance, consisting of more than two dozen political parties including AAP, is planned in the capital on Sunday to protest against the arrest.

The issue has also drawn international attention with the US and Germany calling for a "fair" and "impartial" trial in the case, causing New Delhi to tell Washington and Berlin that India's legal processes are based on an independent judiciary and that they should stay away from its internal affairs.

One in five teachers in England 'hit by pupil' in past year: survey

Nearly one in five teachers in England says they have been hit by a pupil in the past year, a poll revealed yesterday, as schools grapple with a post-pandemic slide in behaviour.

The findings come after education chief Amanda Spielman last year blamed a national increase in disruptive classroom behaviour on the loss of "socialisation" caused by Covid lockdowns. The outgoing head of the UK's school inspection agency Ofsted said the problem would take years to resolve and was taking up "disproportionate" amounts of headteachers' time. The poll of around 9,000 staff in February and March, carried out by the BBC using the Teacher Tapp survey tool, also found that 30% of teachers said they had seen pupils fighting in the previous week. The NASUWT teaching union is currently mulling fresh strike action over what it has described as "dystopian levels" of stress faced by staff.

Pro-Palestine protest in London



Protesters try to enter the department for business and trade, during a protest in support of Palestinians in Gaza, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in London, Britain, yesterday.

New rules on Indian pilots' rest, duty times deferred

Reuters
Bengaluru

India's aviation watchdog has deferred a June 1 deadline for airlines to adopt new rules on rest and duty times for pilots, a notice on its website showed, but without stating a reason or a new target date. The news followed a warning from a key airline lobby group, reported last month by the *Economic Times* newspaper, that the scramble to meet the new rules could force cancellation of up to one-fifth of flights.

Announced in January, the rules increased flight crews' weekly rest periods to 48 hours from 36 and cut pilots' night flight duty times to a maximum of 10 hours from 13.

In this week's revised website notice, however, the directorate general of civil aviation (DGCA) allowed airlines to

retain the older norms for the time being. The rule changes followed a review of data on pilot fatigue drawn from spot checks and airline surveillance after a pilot for budget carrier IndiGo collapsed and died in August before his flight. The Federation of Indian Airlines warned of the cancellation risk as the watchdog's deadline left too little time to hire and train the 25% more pilots required to satisfy the new rules, the *Economic Times* said.

The revised notice drew criticism from some pilots and aviation safety experts who took to social media platform X to post their outrage. "A bunch of much-awaited reforms in Indian Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) to address pilots fatigue had come through...However, now the new Indian FDTL rules mysteriously finds itself gone in abeyance for perpetuity?," an airline pilot posted.

India's biggest election loser ready to fight again

AFP
Mettur, India

Despite failing 238 times in his bid for public office in India, K Padmarajan is unperturbed as he prepares, yet again, to contest elections in the world's largest democracy.

The 65-year-old tyre repair shop owner began fighting elections in 1988 from his home town of Mettur in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

People laughed when he threw his hat into the ring, but he said he wanted to prove that an ordinary man can take part.

"All candidates seek victory in elections," said Padmarajan, sporting a bright shawl draped over his shoulder and an imposing walrus moustache. "Not me."

For him, the victory is in participating, and when his defeat inevitably comes, he is "happy losing", he said.

This year, in India's six-week-long general elections that begin on April 19, he is contesting a parliamentary seat in Tamil Nadu's Dharmapuri district.

Popularly dubbed the "Election King", Padmarajan has competed across the country in elections ranging from presidential to local polls.

Over the years he has lost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former premiers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, and Congress party scion Rahul Gandhi.

"Victory is secondary," he said. "Who is the opposite candidate? I do not care."

Padmarajan's main preoccupation now is extending his losing streak.

It has not come cheap - he estimates he has spent thousands of dollars in more than three decades of nomination fees.

That includes a security deposit of Rs25,000 (\$300) for his latest tilt, which will not be refunded

unless he wins more than 16% of the vote.

His one victory has been to earn a place as India's most unsuccessful candidate in the Limca Book of Records, the country's archive of records held by Indians.

Padmarajan's best performance was in 2011, when he stood for the assembly elections in Mettur. He won 6,273 votes - compared to more than 75,000 for the eventual victor.

"I did not even expect one vote," he said. "But it showed that people are accepting me."

In addition to his tyre repair shop, Padmarajan provides homeopathic remedies and works as

an editor for local media.

But among all his jobs, fighting elections was the most important, he said.

"It is about involvement," he said. "People hesitate to put in their nominations. So I want to be a role model, to create awareness."

Padmarajan maintains detailed records of the nomination papers and identity cards from each of his failed bids for statesmanship, all laminated for safekeeping.

Each bears the multitude of campaign symbols he has used; a fish, ring, hat, telephone and, this time, tyres.

Once the subject of ridicule, Padmarajan is now asked to ad-

dress students about resilience, using his campaigns to explain how to bounce back from defeat.

"I do not think of winning - failure is best," he said. "If we are in that frame of mind, we do not get stressed."

Padmarajan's lesson in democracy comes at a time when public support for India's clamorous democratic process appears to be waning.

A February survey by the Pew Research Centre found 67% of Indians thought that a strong leader unencumbered by parliament or the courts was a better system of government than representative democracy - up from 55% in 2017.



Bankman-Fried gets 25 years for FTX fraud

Reuters
New York

Sam Bankman-Fried was sentenced to 25 years in prison by a judge yesterday for stealing \$8bn from customers of the now-bankrupt FTX cryptocurrency exchange he founded, the last step in the former billionaire wunderkind's dramatic downfall.

US District Judge Lewis Kaplan handed down the sentence at a Manhattan court hearing after rejecting Bankman-Fried's claim that FTX customers did not actually lose money and finding that he lied during his trial testimony. A jury found Bankman-Fried, 32, guilty on November 2 on seven fraud and conspiracy counts stemming from FTX's 2022 collapse in what prosecutors have called one of the biggest financial frauds in US history.

Kaplan said Bankman-Fried has shown no remorse.

"He knew it was wrong," Kaplan said. "He knew it was criminal. He regrets that he made a very bad bet about the likelihood of getting caught. But he is not going to admit a thing, as is his right."

Bankman-Fried, wearing a beige short-sleeve jail T-shirt, acknowledged during 20 minutes

of remarks to the judge that FTX customers had suffered and he offered an apology to his former FTX colleagues — but did not admit criminal wrongdoing.

He has vowed to appeal his conviction and sentence.

Bankman-Fried stood with his hands clasped before him as Kaplan read the sentence. He then spoke with his defence lawyer Marc Mukasey briefly before being led out of the courtroom by members of the US Marshals Service.

The sentence marked the culmination of Bankman-Fried's plunge from an ultra-wealthy entrepreneur and major political donor to the biggest trophy to date in a crackdown by US authorities on malfeasance in cryptocurrency markets.

"There are serious consequences for defrauding customers and investors," US Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. "Anyone who believes they can hide their financial crimes behind wealth and power, or behind a shiny new thing they claim no one else is smart enough to understand, should think twice."

Kaplan found that FTX customers lost \$8bn, FTX's equity investors lost \$1.7bn, and that lenders to the Alameda Research hedge fund Bankman-Fried founded lost \$1.3bn. He imposed an \$11bn forfeiture order and authorized the government to repay victims with seized assets.



Sam Bankman-Fried

feture order and authorized the government to repay victims with seized assets.

Federal prosecutors had sought a sentence of 40 to 50 years. Mukasey had argued for a sentence of less than 5-1/4 years.

Addressing the judge, Bankman-Fried said, "Customers have been suffering ... I didn't at all mean to minimise that. I also think that's something that was missing from what I've said over the course of this process, and I'm sorry for that."

Referring to his FTX colleagues, Bankman-Fried added, "They put a lot of themselves into it, and I threw that all away. It haunts me every day."

Three former close associates testified as prosecution witnesses that Bankman-Fried had directed them to use FTX customer



Bankman-Fried's mother Barbara and father Joseph leave Manhattan Federal Court after his sentencing at Manhattan Federal Court in New York City yesterday. (AFP)

funds to plug losses at Alameda Research. All three have pleaded guilty to fraud.

Kaplan said Bankman-Fried lied when testified that he did not know Alameda Research had spent customer deposits taken from FTX.

Mukasey sought to distance Bankman-Fried from notorious fraudsters like Bernie Madoff, saying he was "not a ruthless financial serial killer" but rather an "awkward math nerd" who tried to get customers their money back after FTX's collapse.

"Sam Bankman-Fried doesn't

make decisions with malice in his heart," Mukasey added. "He makes decisions with math in his head."

Bankman-Fried's eyes turned red as he appeared to hold back tears while Mukasey spoke.

His parents, Stanford University law professors Joseph Bankman and Barbara Fried, attended the sentencing. Bankman held a green umbrella as they exited the courthouse into a rainy New York afternoon, their arms around each other.

"We are heartbroken and will continue to fight for our son," they

said in a statement.

A Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate, Bankman-Fried rode a boom in the values of bitcoin and other digital assets to a net worth of \$26bn, according to *Forbes* magazine, before he turned 30.

Bankman-Fried became known for his mop of unkempt curly hair and commitment to a movement called effective altruism, which encourages talented young people to focus on earning money and giving it away to worthy causes.

He was one of the biggest contributors to Democratic candidates and causes before the 2022 US midterm elections. Kaplan pointed to trial evidence showing Bankman-Fried also donated to Republicans through "straw" donors to hide his involvement.

The judge called Bankman-Fried's efforts to present himself as a "good guy" an act, adding, "The goal was power and influence."

Bankman-Fried has been detained at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn since August 2023, when Kaplan revoked his bail after finding he likely tampered with witnesses at least twice. Kaplan said he would recommend Bankman-Fried be sent to a prison close to San Francisco.

Pope washes feet of 12 women prisoners

AFP
Vatican City

Pope Francis, who often pleads for compassion to prisoners, washed the feet of 12 incarcerated women in Rome yesterday in a rite before Easter.

The Argentinian Jesuit visited the Rebibbia women's prison in the northeastern outskirts of the Italian capital, where he performed the same rite in 2015.

Yesterday, however, was the first time the 87-year-old pontiff had dedicated his annual ritual solely to women.

Seated in a wheelchair, the Pope washed the feet of each of the prisoners, some of them in tears, before drying them off with a towel and kissing them.

"We all have small failures, big



Pope Francis washing the feet of an inmate during a private visit at the Rebibbia prison for women in Rome yesterday. (AFP)

failures," said the Pope in an impromptu homily during a mass held in the courtyard of the prison that holds some 370 women.

"But the Lord is always waiting for us, with open arms, and he never tires of forgiving," he added.

The washing of feet is "a gesture that draws our attention

to the vocation of service," said Francis, who as a priest in Buenos Aires had already begun visiting prisoners.

A few minutes earlier, the pontiff was all smiles as he shook hands with the inmates.

Last month, the Pope caught a flu that caused him to cancel some public meetings. During his

subsequent recovery, he has on several occasions asked others to read his speeches.

Since becoming Pope in 2013, the head of the Catholic Church has often visited prisons and refugee centres, including last year when he visited a juvenile detention centre and washed the feet of 12 young men.

Pakistan to probe army meddling in the judiciary

Reuters
Islamabad

Pakistan will set up an inquiry commission to investigate accusations by six High Court judges of interference and intimidation by the country's powerful intelligence agencies in judicial decisions, the law minister said yesterday.

Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar made the announcement at a news conference in Islamabad, saying the decision was taken at a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa.

Their meeting took place after a letter written by six judges of the Islamabad High Court was sent to Isa's office. It alleged that the country's top spy agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), had been intimidating them to seek favourable decisions in political cases.

The Pakistani Army's media office did not respond to a Reuters request for a comment.

"We believe it is imperative to inquire into and determine whether there exists a continuing policy on part of the executive branch of the state, implemented by intelligence operatives who report to the executive branch, to intimidate judges, under threat of coercion or blackmail, to engineer judicial outcomes in politically consequential matters," said the letter, addressed to the Supreme Judicial Council headed by Justice Isa and seen by Reuters.

France outlaws hair style discrimination

France's lower house of parliament approved legislation yesterday to outlaw discrimination against dreadlocks, braids, afros and any other hair style, colour or texture, defeating opponents who called the bill an unnecessary import of US ideas. Olivier Serva, a Black lawmaker from the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, who drafted the bill, said it would help victims of such discrimination, in the workplace and beyond, make their voices heard and win court cases.

Valrhona's key competitor in the world of professional-grade chocolate, Swiss giant Barry Callebaut, launched a marketing campaign in 2017 for its own fourth type: this one bright pink and derived from Ruby cocoa beans grown in Ecuador, Brazil and Ivory Coast.

Barry Callebaut calls its Ruby chocolate "the biggest innovation in chocolate in 80 years".

The company was diplomatic when asked about the rivalry by AFP, saying in a statement: "The best chocolate in the world is the one that gives you a moment of indulgence — no matter where it was produced and no matter the colour."

Obama, Clinton to join Biden to raise \$25mn

President Joe Biden will get a boost from Democratic predecessors Barack Obama and Bill Clinton yesterday at a fundraiser in New York slated to raise more than \$25mn and add some oomph to Biden's 2024 reelection campaign. Biden and the two former commanders-in-chief will take part in a discussion moderated by *The Late Show* host Stephen Colbert at Radio City Music Hall in front of thousands of guests at what Biden's reelection campaign said would be the most successful political fundraiser in history. Musicians Queen Latifah, Lizzo, Ben Platt, Cynthia Erivo and Lea Michele are slated to perform, and some high-paying attendees will get their pictures with the three presidents taken by star photographer Annie Leibovitz. Biden, 81, has faced concerns about his age and fitness for a second four-year term.

Poland raids Russian spy network targeting EU

Polish security services said yesterday they had raided a Russian spy network in co-operation with Czech intelligence, which a day earlier had busted a major Russian propaganda network. The services said their operations were linked to charges filed earlier this year against a Polish citizen suspected of spying for Russia. "The Internal Security Agency is conducting activities as part of an investigation into espionage activities for Russia directed against European Union countries and institutions," agency spokesman Jacek Dobrzynski said on social media. He added in a statement that the agency had carried out raids in the capital Warsaw and the southern city of Tychy and interrogations in connection with the case. He said the spy network's "goal was to implement the Kremlin's foreign policy objectives, including weakening Poland's position on the world stage, discrediting Ukraine as well as the image of EU organs". "The operations carried out are the result of the agency's international co-operation with a number of European services, co-ordinated in particular with Czech partners." Dobrzynski added that the security agency's operations began from an investigation that in

January resulted in charges against a Polish citizen suspected of Russian espionage.

"The man, embedded in Polish and EU parliament circles, carried out tasks commissioned and financed by colleagues from Russian intelligence," he said in the statement.

These tasks notably included "propaganda activity, disinformation as well as political provocation. Their objective was to build Russian spheres of influence in Europe."

The security agency has not revealed the man's identity. The Czech Republic announced on Wednesday that it had busted a Moscow-financed network that spread Russian propaganda and wielded influence across Europe, including in the European Parliament.

Prague said the group used the Prague-based Voice of Europe news site to spread information seeking to discourage the European Union from sending aid to Ukraine, which has been battling a Russian invasion since February 2022.

The Czech government has added the Voice of Europe and two pro-Kremlin Ukrainian politicians — Viktor Medvedchuk and Artem Marchevsky — to its sanctions list in relation to the network's activities.

Blond vs pink: French-Swiss battle for 'fourth' chocolate



AFP
Paris

A fourth chocolate — "blond" — has been slowly making inroads into French confectionary, but has failed to win official recognition and faces competition from a pink Swiss variety.

Blond choccy was born from an accident.

French pastry chef Frederic Bau was demonstrating his skills at an exhibition in Japan, and left his white chocolate warming a little too long in a bain-marie... four days, to be precise.

"By chance, by magic... it be-

came blond! This chocolate appeared with an incredible colour and smell", recalls Bau, who is creative director for chocolatier Valrhona.

Bau immediately smelled the commercial potential of this happy blunder, but it took seven years of testing to perfect its unique aromatic qualities and consistency.

The recipe remains a secret but has been officially registered by Valrhona, and is sold under the name Dulcey since 2012.

However, the basic chemistry is well-understood. It is the "Maillard reaction", a sequence of chemical reactions between amino acids and reducing sugars, causing

browning and aromas that are close to toasting.

To taste, blond chocolate has the milky fattiness of white chocolate but is much less sweet, with a soft caramel flavour and an aftertaste of roasted coffee.

French pastry chefs tend to snub white chocolate, associating it with the big slabs they gobbled as children.

But blond opens up new possibilities. "It's very different from other chocolates. It gives a very biscuity, very delicious taste," Nice-based pastry chef Philippe Tayac told AFP, who combines it with hazelnuts for a tartlet.

Bau combines it as a pure fon-

dant dessert with freshly roasted apples and a Tahitian vanilla cream, and he also recommends "breaking it up" with more distinct fruity combinations, such as citrus or red fruit.

Despite efforts, Valrhona has not managed to convince French lawmakers to reopen its legal definitions.

So blond remains formally just another type of white chocolate, which was the last to be legally recognised — after dark and milk chocolate — after its invention in the 1930s by Switzerland's Nestle.

And France's Alpine neighbours are not waiting to be beaten to the punch on a fourth variety.

The virtue of the last ten days of Ramadan and Laylat Al-Qadr

The last ten days of Ramadan are blessed by Allah with unique virtues. Among such virtues is that *Laylat Al-Qadr* (the Night of Decree) is among them. About this Night, Allah, The Most Exalted, Says (what means): “Ha, Meem. By the clear Book. Indeed, We sent it down during a blessed night. Indeed, We were to warn [mankind]. On that night is made distinct every precise matter - [Every] matter [proceeding] from Us. Indeed, We were to send [a messenger]. As mercy from your Lord. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.” [Qur'an 44:1-6] Allah sent down the Qur'an on this Night which He, The Most Exalted, described as blessed. It was reported from a group of the Salaf (righteous predecessors) – including Ibn ‘Abbaas, Qataadah, Sa’eed ibn Jubayr, ‘Ikrimah, Mujaahid and others , may Allah be pleased with them- that the night on which the Qur’an was sent down was *Laylat Al-Qadr*.

The phrase (which means): “On that night is made distinct every precise matter,” indicates that on this night the destiny of all creatures for the coming year is decreed. On that night it is written who will live, who will die, who will be saved, who will be doomed, who will be destined for Paradise, who will be destined for Hell, who will be granted honour, who will be humiliated, where drought and famine will occur, and everything else that Allah Wills in that year. Ibn ‘Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “You may see a man furnishing his home or plowing his field, and he is one of those who are going to die,” i.e., it has been decreed on *Laylat Al-Qadr* that he is one of those who are going to die (in the coming year). And it was said that on this night, the destiny of people is shown to the angels. The meaning of “*Qadr*” is veneration or honor, i.e. it is a night that is venerated because of its special characteristics, and because the one who stays up during this night becomes a person of honor. And it was said that *Qadr* means constriction, in the sense that the knowl-



edge of precisely when this night is, is hidden. Al-Khaleel ibn Ahmad, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “It was called *Laylat Al-Qadr* because the earth is constricted by the great numbers of angels on that night, and *Qadr* means constriction.” It was also said that *Qadr* means *Qadar* (decree), i.e., that on this night the decrees for the coming year are ordained, as Allah Says (what means): “On that night is made distinct every precise matter.” [Qur'an 44:4]and because the decrees of Allah are decided and written down on this night. So Allah has called it *Laylat Al-Qadr*, because of its great value and high status with Allah, and because so many sins are forgiven and so many faults are concealed during this night. For it is the night of forgiveness, as it was reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam, said: “Whoever stays up during *Laylat Al-Qadr* out of faith and in the hope of earning the reward of Allah, all his previous sins will be forgiven.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Allah has given this night special characteristics which make it unique, such as:

1. It is the night on which the Qur'an was sent down, as we have stated above. Ibn ‘Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Allah sent down the Qur'an at one time from *Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooth* (the Preserved Tablet in the Seventh Heaven) to Bayt Al-'Izzah (House of Pride) in the first Heaven, then it was revealed to the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, in stages according to events over 23 years.” [Ibn Katheer]
2. Allah described it as being better than a thousand months, as He Says (what means): “The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.” [Qur'an 97:3]
3. Allah described it as being blessed, as He Says (what means): “Indeed, We sent it down during a blessed night.” [Qur'an 44: 3]
4. On this night, the angels and the Spirit [Jibreel (Angel Gabriel)] descend, “i.e., many angels descend on this night because it is so blessed, and the angels come down

when the blessings and mercy of Allah come down, just as they come down when the Qur'an is recited, and they surround the circles of *Thikr* (gatherings where Allah is mentioned), and they spread their wings for the one who sincerely seeks knowledge, out of respect for him.” [Ibn Katheer] Jibreel is specifically mentioned as a sign of respect for him.- 5. This night is described as peace, i.e., it is safe, for the devils cannot do any evil or cause any harm on this night, as Mujaahid, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “On this night, many people are saved from punishment because of what they do to worship Allah, The Most Exalted.”
- 6. Allah Says (what means): “On that night is made distinct every precise matter.” [Qur'an 44:4], the affairs of that year are dispatched from the Preserved Tablet to the angels who record the decrees: who will live, who will die, what provision people will be given, what will happen until the end of that year, every matter of ordainments is decreed, and it cannot be altered or

changed. [Ibn Katheer] All of this is already known to Allah before it is even written down, but He makes known to the angels what is to happen, and commands them to do whatever they are enjoined to do.

7. Allah revealed a Chapter concerning this night which will be recited until the Day of Resurrection, in which He mentions the honour and great value of this night. This is the Chapter in which Almighty Allah Says (what means): “Indeed, We sent the Qur'an down during the Night of Decree. And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter. Peace it is until the emergence of dawn.” [Qur'an 97:1-5]

The verse (which means): “And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree?” [Qur'an 97:2] serves to draw attention to the importance and great significance of this night.

The verse (which means): “The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.” Means that worship during it is better than worship during a thousand months (which means over eighty three years). This is a great virtue, the value of which no one can fully understand except The Lord of the Worlds, The Most Exalted.

Laylat Al-Qadr is in the last ten days of Ramadan, as stated in the narration of Ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam, said: “Seek *Laylat Al-Qadr* in the last ten days of Ramadan.” [Muslim]

It is more likely to be one of the odd-numbered nights, because of the narration of ‘Aa’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, who said that the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, had said: “Seek *Laylat Al-Qadr* in the odd-numbered nights of the last ten nights.” [Al-Bukhari]

We should seek it especially in the odd-numbered nights, i.e., on the 21st, the 23rd, the 25th, the 27th

and the 29th. It was also reported that the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Seek it in the last ten nights, on the odd-numbered nights.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

It is most likely to be on the night of the 27th. This is according to the saying of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*: “*Laylat Al-Qadr* is the night of the 27th.” [Ahmad and Abu Daawood] The view that it is the night of the 27th is the opinion of most of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and the majority of scholars. Ubayy ibn Ka'b, may Allah be pleased with him, used to assert, without saying “Insha Allah - God willing” that: “...it was the night of the twenty-seventh. Zurr ibn Hubaysh, may Allah be pleased with him, said to Ubayy, may Allah be pleased with him: ‘I said: What makes you say that, O Abu'l-Munthir (i.e. Ubayy)?’ He, may Allah be pleased with him, said: ‘By the signs of which the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, told us: that the sun rises that morning with no visible rays.’” [Muslim]

The fact that it is more likely the night of the 27th –Allah knows best – does not mean that this is always the case. It could be any of the other odd-numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramadan. Some of the scholars ruled that it is more likely that it moves and does not come on a specific night each year. Allah has concealed this night so that His slaves will strive to seek it, and will strive hard in worship, just as He has concealed the blessed hour of Friday.

Therefore, we should strive hard during the days and nights of these ten days, seeking *Laylat Al-Qadr* and following the example of our Prophet, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, and we should strive in supplication and seeking to draw close to Allah Almighty.

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



The night prayer of our Salaf

Jaabir, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, say: “There is an hour during the night in which no Muslim individual will ask Allah for good in this world and the next without His giving it to him - and this applies to every night.” [Muslim]

A servant of Abu Rayhaan, may Allah be pleased with him, who was one of the companions of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Once Abu Rayhaan, may Allah be pleased with him, returned from a battle and had dinner with his family and then requested water so that he could perform ablution. He then entered his praying area and started praying the optional night prayer (*Qiyaam*) and continued to pray until the call for the Fajr prayer was made. His wife then came to him and said: ‘You were exhausted fighting and immediately after that you spent the entire night praying. Do I not have any rights over you?’ He, may Allah be pleased with him, replied: ‘Indeed you do, but I was so overwhelmed that I did not realise that the night had finished.’ She asked: ‘What was it that preoccupied your mind all night long?’ He, may Allah be pleased with him, replied: ‘I was thinking about the pleasures of Paradise and its description until I heard the call for the Fajr prayer.’”

Is'haaq ibn Ibraheem At-Tabari, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “I never saw anyone fearing for himself the punishment (of the Hereafter) or having the hope of being amongst those who would be rewarded more than Al-Fudhayl, may Allah have mercy upon him. His recitation during the prayer was slow and he sounded gloomy - as if he was conversing with someone by his recitation. Whenever he read a verse that mentioned Paradise, he would repeat it and supplicate to Allah to admit him into it. His night prayer was very long and he had a mat in the mosque to sleep on whenever he felt sleepy. He would begin praying and whenever he felt sleepy he would lie down for a while, then wake up and resume praying. If he again felt drained, he would lie down again. This continued all night long until it was time for the Fajr prayer.”

Rajaa' ibn Muslim Al-'Abdi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “We used to spend the night in the house of ‘Ajradah Al-'Amiyyah, may Allah have mercy upon her, and she would pray all night long. In the last part of the night, we would hear her say (aloud) in an extremely heartrending tone: ‘O Allah! The devout worshippers have spent all night praying to please You in the hope of being worthy of Your Mercy and Forgiveness, so I ask You to make me among those who rush towards You in obedience and to make my rank (in the Hereafter) among those who are near to You, and to make me among your righteous slaves. Indeed, You are the Greatest, the Most Merciful, and You are indeed

the Most Generous.’ She would then prostrate and cry and supplicate until it was time to pray the Fajr prayer. She did this for thirty consecutive years.”

Moosa ibn Tareef, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “The servant of ‘Ali ibn Bakkaar, may Allah have mercy upon him, would lay down a mat for him to sleep on, touch it with his hand, and say: ‘I swear by Allah that you are soft and comfortable, but also I swear by Allah that I will not sleep on you tonight!’ Having prayed all night long, he would pray the Fajr prayer with the same ablution as that of his ‘Ishaa’ Prayer.”

Ibn Sa'd, may Allah have mercy upon him, said describing Sulaymaan At-Taymi, may Allah have mercy upon him: “He was one of the most devout worshippers. He was a scholar in the science of *Hadith* and was a trustworthy and honest man. He would pray all night long with the same ablution of the ‘Ishaa’ prayer. He and his son would go around to the different mosques praying in each one of them until it was time to pray the Fajr prayer.”

Al-Hasan Al-Karaabeesi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “I spent many nights at the house of Imaam Ash-Shaafi'i, may Allah have mercy upon him, and he would pray one third of the night. However, he never recited more than fifty verses during his prayer, because whenever he would recite a verse that mentions the Mercy of Allah, he would ask Allah to be merciful with him, and whenever he would recite a verse that mentions the punishment of Allah, he would ask Allah to protect him from such punishment.”

Umm Sa'eed, may Allah have mercy upon her, said: “We had a short fence separating our house from that of Daawood At-Taa'i's, and I used to hear a constant droning all night long. At times he would sit to recite parts of the Qur'an just before the time of the Fajr prayer, and I felt as if he enjoyed all the pleasures of the world by his recitation.”

Sa'eed ibn 'Aamir, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “Ayyoob As-Sikhtiyaani, may Allah have mercy upon him, used to pray all night long and would conceal this from people. When it was close to the time of the Fajr prayer, he would raise his voice as if he had just woken up.”

Ibn Shubrumah, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “Zubayd, may Allah have mercy upon him, used to divide the night into three parts between him and his two sons. He would pray the first third of the night and then wake his first son up to pray, and if his son was sluggish or sleepy and could not wake up, he would pray his share. When it was time for his second son to pray, he would wake him up, and if he was sluggish or sleepy and could not wake up, he would pray his share as well.”

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

17 benefits of Zakat (poor due)

Benefits and wisdom of the individual and social *Zakat* are as follows:

- 1- Perfecting and completing the Islam of a slave because it is one of the pillars of Islam. So, if one does it, his Islam will be complete and perfect. There is absolutely no doubt that this is a great aim for every Muslim individual. Actually, every Muslim individual seeks to complete his religion.
- 2- It is proof of the truthfulness of the faith of he who gives *Zakat*. This is because money is loved by souls and what is loved cannot be sacrificed except in return for something similar to or more beloved than it. Therefore, it is called *Sadaqah* (charity) for it indicates the truthfulness of the request of its payer for the Pleasure of Allah The Almighty.
- 3- It purifies the morals of the payer of *Zakat*. It disassociates him from the group of misers and includes him in the group of the generous. This is because if one used to give, be it knowledge, money or honor, then giving will become natural for him to the extent that he may feel sad on a day in which he does not give anything. Such as the hunter who used to hunt. If he delays his hunt on a specific day, he feels sad. The same thing applies to the one who gets himself accustomed to being generous. He feels sad when a day passes by without giving out money, honor or benefit.
- 4- It expands the breast with assurance and gladdens the heart. This is because if one gives something, especially money, he will feel an assurance in his breast. This is something that is tested and tried, providing that his giving should be done with complete generosity and pleasure. His sacrifice should not dwell in his heart (with regret and displeasure).
- Sheykh Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, mentioned in his renowned book *Zad Al-Ma'ad* that giving and generosity are included in the causes of expanding the heart with assurance. However, no one can achieve this benefit except one who gives with generosity and pleasure. The money leaves his heart before it leaves his hand. However, the one whose money leaves his hand while his heart is still attached to it will not benefit from giving.
- 5- It makes one reach the rank of the perfect believer. The Prophet, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said: “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” [Muslim] So, as one loves to be given money to satisfy his needs, he should also love to give it to his brother. By doing so, one will have perfect faith.
- 6- It is one of the causes of entering Paradise. This is because Paradise is for “those who use soft speech, spread the greeting of Islam, feed people and spend the night in voluntary prayer while the people are asleep.” [Ahmad and At-Tirmithi] All of us earnestly seek to enter Paradise.
- 7- It makes the Islamic society a single family in which the strong helps the weak and the rich helps the poor. One will feel that he has brothers to whom he has to do good as Allah The Almighty has done good to him. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And do good as Allah has done good to you.} [Qur'an 28: 77] Thus, the Islamic nation will be as one family. This is what the later scholars called social solidarity. *Zakat* is the best thing that can achieve this because one fulfils with it an obligation and benefits his fellows.

- 8- It extinguishes the fire of the revolution of the poor. This is because the poor are vexed to find someone who rides in whatever he desires (of luxurious modes of transportation), lives in whatever palace he wishes and eats whatever he likes. All this, while (the poor bystander) can only use his (own) legs, does not sleep except on the ground and the like. There is no doubt that he will find something (of an ill feeling) in his heart. However, if the rich give to the poor, this will extinguish their feeling for revolution, calm down their anger and make them say: “We have brothers that take care of us in difficult times” and thus they will love the rich.”
- 9- It prevents financial crimes such as robbery and stealing. This is because the poor will receive what satisfies their needs and so they will excuse the rich for they give them from their wealth. They give them one quarter of one-tenth (2.5%) on gold, silver and trade goods, one-tenth or one-half of one-tenth on grains and fruits and a great percentage on flocks. Thus, they will see that they are treating them well and will not transgress against them.
- 10- Salvation from the intense heat of the Day of Resurrection. The Prophet, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Every man will be in the shade of his charity on the Day of Resurrection.” [Ahmad]
- Furthermore, he, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, said regarding the seven categories of people whom Allah The Almighty will shade with the shade He Creates on the day when there will be no shade but His: “A man who gives in charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand spends;” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]
- 11- It makes one know the limits and rulings of Allah The Almighty because one will not fulfil *Zakat* unless he knows its rulings, properties, Nisab (the minimum limits of sum or quantity liable for *Zakat*), its recipients and other such matters that the need calls for.
- 12- It purifies and increases wealth, meaning that, if one gives charity on his wealth, then this will protect it from blight and Allah The Almighty may increase his provision due to this charity. Therefore, it is mentioned in the Hadith: “Wealth does not decrease because of charity.” [Muslim]
- It is clearly witnessed that the wealth of a miser may be afflicted with what may destroy it or the most of it due to fire, a great loss or diseases that force him to seek treatment that consume great amounts of his wealth.
- 13- It is one of the causes of the downfall of goodness. It is mentioned in the Hadith: “No people ever withhold the *Zakat* of their wealth but rain is withheld from the sky.” [Ibn Majah and Al-Hakim]
- 14- “Charity given in secret extinguishes the wrath of The Lord,” as was authentically narrated from the Messenger, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*. [At-Tirmithi and Ibn Hibban]
- 15- “It wards off an unpleasant death.” [At-Tirmithi and Ahmad]
- 16- “It wrestles with a calamity that comes down from the heavens and prevents it from reaching earth.” [At-Tabarani]
- 17- It expiates sins. The Messenger, *sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Charity extinguishes sins as water extinguishes fire.” [Ahmad, At-Tirmithi and An-Nasa'ee]

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CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- editor@gulf-times.com
- 44350478 (News),
- 44466404 (Sport),
- 44466636 (Home delivery)
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GULF TIMES

What can stop the shortening of American lives?

Even as Covid-19 recedes into the background of everyday life, the broader decline in US life expectancy is still with us, because too many elected officials refuse to take its causes seriously. Covid-19 has killed nearly 1.2mn Americans, making it the main reason that US life expectancy fell by 2.4 years between 2019 and 2021. But while life expectancy has started to tick back up, it is still 1.3 years lower than it was in 2019, according to the latest data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Every racial and ethnic group now has a lower life expectancy than before the pandemic, with American Indian and Alaska Native, Black, and Hispanic people suffering the largest setbacks. Meanwhile, other countries – including Sweden, Belgium, and Denmark – have returned or nearly returned to pre-pandemic life expectancy.

The main reasons that the United States lags many other rich countries can be summed up in three words: guns and drugs. The US far outpaces other high-income countries in overdose and gun deaths, and both problems have worsened since 2019. In fact, they have reached record levels. At the same time, chronic illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes are among the leading causes of death in the US. Obesity is a major risk factor for all these conditions, and America's obesity rate is the highest among large, developed countries.

Despite having the world's largest economy and the world's most advanced health-care facilities, the US ranked 40th in global life expectancy, according to the most recent available data. And that data was released in 2019, before Covid pushed the US even further behind. Given the cascading challenges of the past five years, it probably still ranks at the bottom of the Western world.

Change starts with listening to public-health experts and developing practical, data-driven responses

This is a national disgrace, but it isn't inevitable. Americans don't have to live and die like this. We can use public health – the science of protecting as many people as possible from diseases and injuries – to preempt threats every day. Change starts with listening to public-health experts and developing practical, data-driven responses. Unfortunately, the pandemic's path of destruction did not spare the field of public health. Scientists and doctors were

subjected to relentless attacks from partisans trying to score political points, and public trust in their views declined as a result. Of course, scientists and doctors are fallible like the rest of us. But ignoring their warnings and guidance is deadly. We saw that during the pandemic and during the vaccine rollout, and we are still seeing it today.

Even before the pandemic, public health was undervalued, because its power is so often hidden. Patients leaving a hospital after receiving emergency surgery are almost always grateful, and they know exactly whom to thank for saving their lives. By contrast, public-health interventions save lives every day, but those who are saved rarely even know it. Such interventions – whether it's a seatbelt or an airbag, a smoke-free workplace or a trigger lock – do not produce grateful patients (or grateful policymakers, who could better fund them), because they keep people out of hospitals (and the morgue).

Strengthening trust in those who work in public health begins with raising awareness of what they do and how they do it. That is why the new four-part documentary series The Invisible Shield (produced by RadicalMedia, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, and airing in the US on PBS) aims to shine a spotlight on public health and the historic gains it has made possible.

From 1900 to 2000, US life expectancy increased by more than 30 years, and child mortality plummeted as measles and diphtheria were nearly eliminated. By 1980, the world had eradicated smallpox. Polio could be next. These extraordinary successes, once unimaginable, show what is possible when societies commit to keeping children safe and extending all our lives. But the political courage to take the steps necessary to save and extend lives – from enacting stronger gun laws to taxing tobacco – seems to be in shorter supply than ever before.

To push life expectancy back to its pre-pandemic highs – and then higher – the elected officials need to be braver and bolder in deploying the "invisible shield." And for that, there is a need for voters who recognise the stakes and hold their representatives' feet to the fire. – Project Syndicate

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America's lithium laws fail to keep up with growth

By Ernest Scheyder
Washington

Washington's drive to make the United States a major global lithium producer is being held back by a confusing mix of state regulations that are deterring developers and hampering efforts to break China's control of the critical minerals sector.

Across Texas, Louisiana and other mineral-rich states, it's unclear who owns the millions of metric tonnes of lithium locked in salty brines underneath US soils, how the battery metal should be valued by regulators and who ultimately should pay to process it into a form usable by manufacturers.

These legal ambiguities are the latest impediment – alongside technical challenges and sagging commodity prices – to America's plans to produce more of its own lithium and wean the country off foreign supplies, according to interviews with regulators from seven US states, legal experts, politicians, landowners, investors, royalty firms, industry executives and consultants.

US federal officials in Washington are largely powerless to force states to change regulations, leaving the Biden administration's aggressive electrification targets beholden to the pace at which local officials update outdated statutes.

Global lithium demand is expected to outpace supply by 500,000 metric tonnes annually by 2030. Unless the United States boosts its own production, the country's manufacturers will find themselves reliant on China and others for supply as the end of the decade approaches, analysts warn.

The Texas legislature, for example, last year approved a law – supported by Standard

Lithium and Chevron – that instructed the state's oilfield regulator to craft regulations for lithium extraction from brines. But the regulator, known as the Railroad Commission of Texas, told Reuters it has no timeline for when it will finish that task.

"I don't even know where to start in terms of working with the local authorities to get brine mineral rights in Texas. It's confusing," said Brady Murphy, CEO of Tetra Technologies, which aims to produce lithium with partner Exxon Mobil.

The Railroad Commission of Texas told Reuters it plans to release its rules for public comment once they are formulated, and then the three commissioners will vote on them.

While the 1972 US Clean Water Act gives Washington regulatory power over water extraction and reinjection across the country, state officials have autonomy to govern other parts of the process.

Tetra, which also produces chemicals for water treatment and recycling, has tested more than 200 brine samples from Texas, but so far has opted not to do business in the Lone Star State due to legal uncertainty, Murphy said.

Koch Industries-backed Standard Lithium said last October it had drilled a Texas brine well with lithium concentrations nearly as high as those found in parts of Chile, which has the world's largest lithium reserves. But Standard can't touch that lithium until regulations are set.

"We're taking a measured approach to Texas," said Robert Mintak, Standard's CEO.

In Oklahoma, which has several brine deposits, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission – which oversees oil and gas development – said it has no jurisdiction over lithium production and royalties, and referred comment to the state's

Department of Mines, which said it also does not oversee lithium.

In Utah, the state legislature and governor approved a bill last year aimed at preventing water levels from dropping in the lithium-rich Great Salt Lake. That led Compass Minerals to abandon plans last month to produce lithium for Ford in the imperilled lake and disband its entire lithium team, saying "regulatory risks have increased significantly around this project."

And in Louisiana, the lack of state guidelines is fuelling concerns from legal experts that producers could trespass on neighbouring land when they reinject brine after filtering out lithium. Reinjection is a key step to preserve underground water table levels.

"There'll likely need to be a court fight about whether they have the right to do that," said Keith Hall, director of the Louisiana State University's Mineral Law Institute.

The Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources told Reuters it does not have existing statutes related to lithium.

The path is even murkier for water that is extracted alongside crude oil. Oil companies for decades have paid to dispose of that produced water, which contains lithium that could be sold for a profit.

With lithium demand now on the rise, landowners, oil producers, and companies that oversee water disposal are tussling over ownership.

A Texas state appeals court last year ruled that COG Operating controls such water that it extracts alongside crude oil, but the ruling only applied to that specific case. And not all oilfield leases include clauses for who owns other minerals extracted alongside oil, sparking questions as to whether lithium is covered by existing leases or if companies

need to negotiate new contracts with landowners.

"That is going to have a chilling effect on capital investments until it's resolved," said Jamie Rhymes, an attorney specialising in minerals contracts at the Liskow & Lewis law firm.

Legal experts told Reuters that it's unclear how lithium will be valued for royalty payouts given the cost for equipment to filter the battery metal from brine, which unlike oil typically has no market value itself.

In Arkansas, where Tetra, Exxon, Albemarle and Standard Lithium hope to produce the battery metal within a few years, state officials have been debating a royalty structure to compensate landowners since 2018.

Shane Khoury, who oversees the body that will set the royalty rate in his role as secretary of the Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment, said the state may charge different rates depending how much lithium is in a brine deposit.

Albemarle, the world's largest lithium producer with operations in the United States, Chile, Australia, China and elsewhere, plans to open a pilot facility in Arkansas by the end of the year and said it has chosen not to – for now – submit a royalty proposal while it watches Standard's royalty review process.

"We're waiting to see how (the Arkansas royalty situation) evolves," said Netha Johnson, the Albemarle executive overseeing the company's Arkansas lithium project. "There's a couple of fundamental differences between the way that brine royalties could be calculated."

Exxon also has not submitted a royalty proposal despite spending more than \$100mn in Arkansas and on a Houston test facility as part of an aggressive move into lithium, but said it hopes the state's royalty will be uniform across the state.

California, which has giant lithium reserves in its Salton Sea region east of Los Angeles, last year imposed a flat-rate tax for each metric tonne of lithium. The move has pushed back development of projects slated to supply General Motors and Stellantis. California's governor and legislators have defended the tax as a necessary way to ensure all residents benefit from the energy transition.

Nevada, which has the only commercial US lithium operation – a small mine operated by Albemarle – has taxed minerals for more than 100 years, but at a rate based on each facility's revenue.

Industry analysts expect regulations to be eventually set in various states, but predicting when is anyone's guess.

"The uncertainty is the scariest part," said the owner of lithium-rich acreage across several states who declined to be named so as not to offend regulators. "How do you develop these projects and muster financial support without a regulatory structure in place?" – Reuters



Brine pools at Albemarle lithium mine are pictured at the Atacama salt flat, in Antofagasta region, Chile. (Reuters)



Racial tensions costing Germany Inc. skilled foreign labour



Five medium-sized companies say their foreign staff recently moved on or switched locations due to xenophobia

By **Christoph Steitz** and **Sarah Marsh**
Chemnitz

Manager Joerg Engelmann says he has pulled out all the stops to attract skilled foreign workers to his chemical engineering company in Chemnitz, east Germany. But once they arrived, the racial slurs and exclusion they experienced in the town have driven some of them away.

His firm is one of five German medium-sized companies that told Reuters their foreign staff recently moved on or switched locations due to xenophobia, even as Europe's biggest economy suffers a shortage of skilled labour.

Many large companies in Germany and The Netherlands have expressed concern about the difficulty of hiring due to anti-immigrant sentiment. Some employers go a step further, saying they are actually losing staff because of it.

CAC Engineering GmbH, the family-owned company Engelmann runs, has lost around five of its 40 foreign employees over the past 12 months because of discrimination, he told Reuters. The company declined to make its former staff available to Reuters.

"We do what we can. But we can't become bodyguards," said Engelmann, 57. "There are parts of the population who don't realise that these are foreign skilled workers who want to make a real contribution in Germany."

CAC did not give details, but xenophobic hate crime cases recorded across Germany by the interior ministry more than tripled between 2013 and 2022 to more than 10,000. Overall, Engelmann said, high energy costs pose a bigger challenge.

Official German estimates suggest the country as a whole will be short of seven million skilled workers by 2035, compared with a labour force of around 46 million.

The climate is more hostile in eastern Germany, where after the fall of communism plant closures and layoffs saw an exodus of young people and a lower birth rate.

Chemnitz, in the state of Saxony near the Czech border, is trying to attract skilled workers – Engelmann's firm says it helps arrange temporary housing, language and even driving lessons to encourage foreign employees to settle.

But Chemnitz has become a focus of anti-immigrant feelings since 2018 when anti-migrant protests in the city turned to riots.

Largely destroyed during World War Two and rebuilt under Communism as Karl-Marx-Stadt, it was one of Germany's richest cities at the turn of the 20th century.

Since reunification in 1990, its population has shrunk by around 20% to just over 250,000. Foreigners have



Protesters carry national flags of Germany and the ultra far-right party Freie Sachsen (Free Saxony) during a demonstration in Chemnitz. (Reuters)

jumped to nearly 14% of inhabitants from just over 2% in 2000, according to data from Chemnitz-based FOG Institute for Market and Social Research.

On Monday evenings at around 6pm, around 250 people march through the town in a regular "Monday demonstration" promoted by one of the far-right parties that make up a quarter of the city council's members. Marchers at a recent event sang nationalist songs, beat drums and waved the flags of Saxony, Germany and Russia.

Resident Farid Mokbil, 31, an Egyptian who came to Germany to teach German to foreigners, said he is happy in the town overall: He experiences racism often but doesn't take it personally.

"In the first week here I went shopping at the supermarket and an elderly woman just looked at me – I'm not sure if it was my appearance – but she just started shouting," he said. "Such weird situations happen ... A few days ago in the tram, a boy said loudly, 'here there are only Afghans who want to steal!'"

Christine Willauer, 84, a lifelong Chemnitz resident, said she felt asylum-seekers in Germany got financial benefits that the elderly did not.

"When I am in the city, some days I feel there are not many people speaking my own mother tongue anymore," she said. "I also miss the old manners."

City spokesman Matthias Nowak said the majority of people in Chemnitz are against extremism, adding that Chemnitz would "fall apart" without immigrants – for instance, 40% of staff at the hospital are foreigners.

Channelling the anti-immigrant mood are political parties including Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD), which is on track to win three regional state elections in September this year including in Saxony.

The AfD has said it wants to reverse mass migration that occurred in 2015, create asylum centres outside the

European Union, introduce strict controls on German borders, sanction migrants who do not integrate fully and create incentives for economic migrants to return home.

Germany's domestic intelligence agency, which has said it is monitoring the AfD on suspicion of extremism, says AfD party officials propagate racist theories such as the "Great Replacement," which holds that political elites are deliberately engineering the replacement of Europe's white population with non-white immigrants.

The party's Chemnitz chapter this month shared an article on its Facebook page about an alleged rape by migrants entitled "population replacement makes girls and women fair game."

In one post, Ulrich Oehme, deputy leader of AfD Chemnitz, comments that "life for our women and girls has become much harder in public spaces and worries about group rape and knife attacks are on the rise."

Oehme told Reuters his post was not xenophobic, but was addressing "issues felt massively by the local population." The AfD said it agreed with his observations, adding: "Immigration-related crime is very difficult to combat because it is often embedded in family or clan structures and because of cultural and language barriers."

Facebook owner Meta did not respond to a request for comment.

The AfD says its policies would not damage the economy.

"Here the government and state-owned companies are clearly and obviously distracting from the home-made problems and using the AfD as a scapegoat," it said in a statement to Reuters, citing the high energy prices worsened by Germany's nuclear exit and renewables drive.

But Germany's corporate executives took to the media to warn about the risks



Farid Mokbil, an Egyptian who lives in the East German city of Chemnitz, poses for a photo following a Reuters interview in Chemnitz. (Reuters)

of anti-immigrant sentiment, following a January report by investigative portal Correctiv of a fundraising meeting in Potsdam where a "masterplan" for deportations of people of foreign origin – dubbed "remigration" – was discussed.

Attended by four senior AfD officials, the meeting was organised by a group called the Duesseldorfer Forum, which said on the invitation it is an "exclusive network of ... personalities who are ready to make significant contributions to ... stop the destruction of our country"

On a microsite created after the event, organiser Gernot Moerig said remigration was only one topic discussed. He could not be reached for comment.

Martin Sellner, an Austrian leader of the Identitarian Movement, which says it wants to preserve European identity and opposes immigration from outside the continent, told Reuters he had spoken at the meeting.

"Unassimilated citizens like Islamists, gangsters and welfare cheats should be pushed to adapt through a policy of standards and assimilation," he said, saying that could include incentives for voluntary return.

"In the long-term, a German remigration policy sets the course for ... Germany to become more German every day and not the opposite."

The hardening climate extends beyond Chemnitz, and does not only target people from outside Europe.

"Two of our foreign employees have left Germany because they said that they no longer feel comfortable and safe here," said Detlef Neuhaus, CEO of solar firm SolarWatt, based in the east German city of Dresden. He said one had moved back to England.

"These are direct consequences of the changing mood in the country."

The company declined to make its former staff available to Reuters.

Chemnitz-based Community4you, which supplies fleet and leasing software to corporate heavyweights such as Lufthansa, BMW and Commerzbank, said it has had employees move away because they no longer feel welcome.

Its Chief Operating Officer Lavinio Cerquetti, an Italian, moved northwest to Leipzig in 2021, saying the atmosphere was more cosmopolitan there.

"In Chemnitz, I sometimes had the feeling that the fact that I had to be careful was also related to the fact that I was a foreigner," he said.

Autonomous driving software maker FDTech, also based in Chemnitz, has also lost workers over xenophobia, its managing director Karsten Schulze said.

"Yes, we do have a problem with xenophobia here. But it's not limited to Saxony, to Chemnitz, we have it all across Germany. And by the way, all across Europe, too," he said.

Germany's economy shrank by 0.3% in 2023, the weakest performance globally among large countries.

A survey carried out over 2022 and 2023 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has highlighted that while Germany remains very attractive to foreign workers, discrimination is a problem.

Tracking the careers of 30,000 highly qualified people who wanted to come to Germany as migrant workers since August 2022, the survey found that people who had already moved to Germany experienced more discrimination compared to the expectations of those still abroad.

Essen-based Deniz Ates, 30, who runs recruitment agency Who Moves that focuses on foreign IT workers, said he first noticed at an event in India late last year that people were worried about the political mood in Germany, with some saying the country was no longer an option for them.

"The most important factor in deciding where to apply for a job is: Do I feel safe? Do I feel welcome?" Ates said.

New Delhi-based lawyer Romy Kumar said he has put on hold efforts to relocate to Europe, where he spends several months a year, citing a rise in xenophobia.

"This limits your risk-taking abilities to jump on the next plane and go there and set up something," he said. "So that is why I'm taking it slow and trying to assess where is it going"

Chemnitz city spokesman Nowak said it had increased funds for anti-racism and pro-democracy projects since 2018 and wants to use plans for its coming role as a European Capital of Culture in 2025 to activate the "silent middle," addressing the issue of racism head-on.

Far-right parties have said they will protest this. One, Pro Chemnitz, has suggested the city should instead be the "capital of remigration."

"We have had enough of the kind of culture that has flooded Germany since 2015 – all you need to do is check the city centre," the party said in post on Telegram. The party did not respond to a request for comment from Reuters.

Japan tees up Abe's ex-interpreter to help chart course with Trump

By **Tim Kelly** and **John Geddie**
Tokyo

Sunao Takao was the loyal interpreter at Shinzo Abe's side, helping Japan's then-leader to understand Donald Trump as they navigated contentious issues while riding around in golf carts. Now, as a second Trump presidency becomes a real prospect, Japanese officials are preparing to deploy the Harvard-educated Takao to bolster engagement with the Republican candidate's campaign ahead of the November 5 US election, hoping to forestall any policy shocks for Tokyo.

Six people with knowledge of the matter said Takao, who is nearing the end of a posting to Japan's embassy in Beijing, is likely to move to a US-focused role, enabling Tokyo to leverage his knowledge of and familiarity with Trump. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the matter publicly.

Four of the sources said some officials want Takao sent to Japan's embassy in Washington, though two said he might do the job from Tokyo. Talks are ongoing and decisions on location and timing have not been finalised, four of the people said.

Takao did not address questions from Reuters about potential roles. Japan's foreign ministry said it was watching the US election "with great interest" but would not comment on specific personnel.

The high-level discussions about the future of a mid-ranking bureaucrat underscore what analysts say are feverish attempts by Japanese officials to prepare for a US election outcome that they worry could stoke trade and geopolitical tensions. America's closest ally in Asia is concerned Trump may seek a deal

with China, revive protectionist trade measures and demand more money for the upkeep of US forces in Japan, Reuters reported last month.

A new phrase, "hobotora", meaning "likely Trump", has gained popularity in Japanese political and media speak in recent weeks, supplanting "moshitora", or "possibly Trump".

Joshua Walker, president of Japan Society, a New York-based non-profit that promotes US-Japan relations, said efforts by Japanese officials to connect with people they consider close to Trump had reached a "fever pitch".

"They know the Biden people: it's a pretty easy and small group of people they need to stay in touch with. So they basically have focused all their effort on the Trump side," he said. "This is a full court press."

The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Takao has worked previously with Japan's ambassador to the US, Shigeo Yamada, who took up the post late last year with instructions to connect with the Trump campaign, Reuters reported in February.

In addition to talks about Takao, officials in Japan's US embassy in recent months have met with Trump's former chief of staff Mark Meadows and ex-national security adviser Robert O'Brien, according to one of the sources and an additional person familiar with the matter.

Those talks were aimed at trying to understand Trump's foreign policy plans and the make-up of a future administration.

Meadows and O'Brien did not respond to requests for comment. A spokesperson for Japan's embassy in Washington said he could not comment on specific personnel.



Sunao Takao (centre) helps with translation as Japan's then-prime minister Shinzo Abe and US president Donald Trump talk prior to a working lunch at the Group of 20 summit in Osaka, Japan, on June 28, 2019. (Reuters)

Meanwhile, Taro Aso, a senior member of Japan's ruling party who was deputy prime minister during Trump's presidency, is weighing another visit to the US in coming months to meet Republican lawmakers close to Trump and prepare for a possible Trump administration, two of the six people said. Japan has made such a pre-emptive push before. Abe was the first foreign leader to meet then president-elect Trump in 2016, and the pair went on to form close ties. Abe was assassinated in 2022. The current outreach is occurring at a sensitive time for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who is scheduled to visit the US next month at the invitation of

Trump's Democratic rival, President Joe Biden. The US and Japanese leaders are expected to agree to strengthen bilateral military co-operation, Reuters reported this week.

Takao interpreted for Abe in dozens of meetings with Trump between 2016 and 2020, including at Trump Tower, in the presidential car nicknamed "The Beast", at a sumo match in Japan, and during the pair's golf outings. The civil servant, who was raised in the US and returned to Japan as a teenager, spent hours studying footage of Trump – and the rules of golf – ahead of those meetings, according to one of the six sources and another person with knowledge of the matter.

That research smoothed the leaders' exchanges in a way that caught the attention of Trump and his aides.

Takao "rendered the Japanese leader's upbeat staccato into resonant English, even while clinging to the back of a racing golf cart", Matt Pottinger, Trump's former deputy national security adviser, wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed in July 2022.

Pottinger told Reuters that Takao "is a superb diplomat and was very effective as the English-language 'voice' of Prime Minister Abe".

"He will be an asset to Japan in whatever role he is assigned," he added.

After one of his golf outings with Abe in 2019, Trump jokingly referred to Takao as junior prime minister, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Despite lacking fluency in Mandarin, Takao in 2021 was appointed political counsellor in Japan's embassy in Beijing, where he became well-known among Western diplomats.

Takao, who also served previously as second secretary in Japan's US embassy early in his career, is a workaholic regarded by some as a superstar in Japan's foreign service, according to two people who know him.

His credentials aside, however, other officials voiced reservations about what Takao could achieve given the rigid hierarchy in Japan's bureaucracy and Trump's predilection for dealing directly with foreign leaders.

"Donald J Trump is well acquainted with Takao-san, who may remind him of the joyful times spent with his late friend, Prime Minister Abe," said Tomohiko Taniguchi, a former special adviser to Abe.

"Yet, Trump's preference for direct dealings with a country's leader means that Mr Kishida will need to put in significant effort to garner friendship and trust from Mr Trump." – Reuters



Expo 2023 Doha honours award winners of outstanding pavilions

QNA
Doha

The International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha honoured the winning pavilions in recognition of their outstanding contributions and efforts throughout the months of the expo. The winning pavilions were selected by a jury of 10 specialised experts from Qatar, the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), and the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH).

The event was attended by HE the Minister of Municipality and Chairman of Expo 2023 Doha Organising Committee Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah; President of BIE Alain Berger; President of AIPH Leonardo Capitanio; and a number of officials, heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Qatar, and pavilion commissioners.

Commenting on the award ceremony, HE Expo 2023 Doha Commissioner General Ambassador Bader bin Omar al-Dafa indicated that the event celebrates 6 consecutive months of concerted efforts by all participating countries, adding: “We were pleased to meet the representatives of all countries that have graced Expo 2023 Doha with their effective and positive participation.

“We offer sincere congratulations to the winners for the well-deserved awards, and express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all participating countries, institutions, organisations, and entities whose combined efforts helped us attract millions of visitors and added a unique touch to this world-class event which brings us closer than ever to delivering the objectives stated in the Qatar National Vision 2030, which we have made sure to include in the Expo’s mission statement and main themes given their importance to our wise leadership and future generations in Qatar and the world.”

Secretary-General of Expo 2023 Doha Organising Committee, Dr Faiqa Ashkanani, affirmed that the success achieved by this edition in terms of participation, visitor numbers, workshops, entertainment programmes, innovative initiatives, and Guinness World Records achievements was not coincidental but rather the result of years of work, efforts, and preparations that continued during the exhibition. She pointed out that behind these efforts was a harmonious team keen on delivering this major event in a manner befitting Qatar and astounding all who participated in it.

She added that after six months of continuous successes, Thursday marks the conclusion of Expo 2023 Doha, which has surpassed expectations by achieving all its objectives. She noted that this success prompted some countries to participate in the exhibition’s final weeks and contributed to forging partnerships with various countries, enabling the exploration of their cultures, tourism potentials, and investment and commercial opportunities. She emphasised that these relationships will continue beyond the exhibition.

Dr Ashkanani further stated that a committee will be formed



A moment from the valedictory ceremony of Expo 2023 Doha

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to evaluate the exhibition and build on it in the future, developing a plan to utilise some of the existing structures in organising events and enhancing environmental awareness across different segments of society as a sustainable legacy of the exhibition. She expressed her appreciation for the Expo team and the organising committee for their valued efforts, which have led to this great success.

The ceremony highlighted the Expo 2023 Doha Organising Committee’s appreciation of all participating countries that spared no effort to take part in the event and introduce visitors to their initiatives and innovations in sustainability, environmental conservation, traditional and modern agriculture, and environmental

stewardship. The event presented an optimal opportunity to celebrate participants from all over the world, and praise the effort they dedicated to make their countries proud and leave a permanent mark on our collective journey of sustainability and concerted environmental efforts.

HE the Minister of Municipality and Chairman of Expo 2023 Doha Organising Committee Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah handed over the awards, which covered various categories and segments, including the award for self-constructed pavilions, which went to the UAE, as well as the large pavilion award which was swept up by the Republic of Korea and the mid-sized pavilion award that was garnered by Senegal. The gold medal for interior design went to the Japan pavilion, while the programming award went to Italy, Angola, and Mexico for self-constructed, large, and mid-sized pavilions respectively.

The Organising Committee also celebrated the most educational exhibitions, with a special nod to Kuwait, the Arab League, and Cuba, as well as hospitality, where the medals were swept up by the GCC, Yemen, and Algeria. Additionally, Turkiye was the recipient of the AIPH award, while Japan was chosen for the best product category. An award was also dedicated to pavilions that highlighted the main theme of Expo 2023 Doha, and Cabo Verde, Sudan, and Oman shared the spoils.

Kuwait Pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha wins ‘Most Educational Award’



The Kuwait Pavilion at the Expo 2023 Doha, which concluded yesterday (Thursday) won the ‘Most Educational’ award. Engineer Samira al-Kandari, director-general of the Environment Public Authority and acting commissioner-general of the Kuwait Pavilion, expressed her happiness at the award in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

Al-Kandari explained that winning this award reflects the role of the Kuwaiti pavilion, which offered many courses, lectures and events related to the environment and environmental sustainability. The pavilion succeeded in attracting many visitors, specialists and those interested in the environment to enjoy and follow the lectures that enhanced environmental awareness in addition to

knowing the role of the Environment Public Authority in this regard. Al-Kandari extended her thanks and appreciation to those in charge of Expo 2023 Doha and to all the pavilion workers throughout the six-month exhibition period. The Kuwaiti pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha had several sections: the interactive area, the cylindrical museum, the Kuwait Oasis, in addition to the children’s area. The exhibition was based on modern agricultural techniques, technology, innovation, environmental awareness and environmental sustainability, as well as providing programmes to encourage, inspire and inform the public about innovative solutions aimed at reducing the phenomenon of desertification.

GWC participates in QPC Ramadan tournaments

Gulf Warehousing Company attended Qatar Paralympic Committee (QPC) ‘Ramadan Wheelchair Basketball Championship’ finals. The event, organised by the Qatar Federation for Special Needs Sports, was held over two days in the Federation Hall, with the participation of 20 players representing four teams.

Helping local talents grow is an integral part of GWC’s mission, which is why its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives – focusing on youth, education, sports, culture, knowledge creation, and entrepreneurship – help create sustainable ecosystems that benefit the community and allow talents to thrive, a statement said.

Supporting the QPC is an integral part of the company’s CSR programme and is a testament to GWC’s unwavering commitment to create more inclusive and tolerant societies. QPC was founded in 1995 and has since been



shining a positive light on the formidable athletic contributions that people of determination have made to Qatari society,

working to break stigmas and shatter misconceptions around this topic, the statement added.

