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### Amir, Cote d'Ivoire president review ties

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire Alassane Ouattara, the relations between the two countries and ways to strengthen them. This came during a phone call His Highness the Amir received yesterday from the President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire. During the call, they discussed several regional and international issues of common interest. (QNA)

### 4 UN staff wounded in Lebanon blast

United Nations peacekeepers said three military observers and a translator were wounded yesterday in a blast in southern Lebanon, where Israel and the Hezbollah movement trade frequent cross-border fire. Three UNTSO "military observers and one Lebanese language assistant on a foot patrol along the Blue Line were injured when an explosion occurred near their location", UNIFIL spokesperson Andrea Tenenti said in a statement.

### Peruvian president's home raided

Peruvian authorities raided President Dina Boluarte's home and the government palace early yesterday as part of an ongoing corruption investigation related to undisclosed luxury watches. The search was carried out "according to the court order," Colonel Harvey Colchado of the police told reporters. Sources said the police were searching for Rolex watches that Boluarte had not publicly declared. The embattled president was at the palace at the time, officials said. Page 11

### Fire at Indonesian ammunition depot

Indonesian firefighters were battling to put out a massive fire that broke out yesterday at a military ammunition depot just outside the capital, causing a series of explosions and sending flames and smoke into the night sky. No one was reported to have died or been injured in the incident. The fire had started in a part of the facility that was used to store expired ammunition. Loud explosions could be heard from several kilometres away. Page 9

RAMADAN THOUGHT

Whoever established prayers on the Night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven. [Al-Bukhari]

Prayer times

Fajr....4.09; Zuhr....11.38; Asr....3.07; Maghrib....5.53; Isha....7.23

Fasting times

Iftar today .....5.53pm  
Imsak tomorrow.....3.58am

The Open Arms, a rescue vessel owned by a Spanish NGO, and a tugboat towing a barge depart with humanitarian aid for Gaza from Larnaca, Cyprus, yesterday.

## Gaza truce talks resume today

Reuters  
Cairo

Truce talks between Israel and Hamas will resume today in Cairo, the latest attempt to bring about a pause after nearly six months of war in the Gaza Strip, Egypt's Al Qahera News TV reported yesterday, citing a security source.

An Israeli official told Reuters that Israel will send a delegation to Cairo on Sunday. A Hamas official however told Reuters the group would wait to hear from Cairo mediators on the outcome of their talks with Israel first.

The warring sides have stepped up negotiations, mediated by Qatar and Egypt, on a six-week suspension of Israel's offensive in return for the proposed release of 40 of the

### Massacre toll rises to 32,705

The number of casualties due to the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023 has risen to 32,705 martyrs in addition to 75,190 wounded, the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported yesterday. The Israeli occupation committed eight massacres against families in the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours. (QNA)

130 hostages still held by the Palestinian resistance group in Gaza.

Hamas has sought to parlay any deal into an end to the fighting and withdrawal of Israeli forces. Israel has ruled this

out, saying it would eventually resume efforts to dismantle the governance and military capabilities of Hamas.

Hamas also wants hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled Gaza City and surrounding areas southward during the first stage of the war to be allowed back north. One Israeli official said his country was open to discussing allowing back only "some" of the displaced.

### Deadly chaos at aid centre

An aid delivery in Gaza descended into chaos yesterday with shots fired and a Red Crescent paramedic reporting five people killed, as almost six months of Israeli bombardment has left hundreds of thousands in the Palestinian territory in desperate need.

## QCB launches 'Himyan' debit card today

Country's 'first national e-card with registered Qatari brand' marks a qualitative addition to e-payment solutions

Qatar Central Bank has announced that 'Himyan', the country's "first national e-card with registered Qatari brand" will be officially launched today.

The launch of Himyan is in line with the Third Financial Sector Strategy, and in the framework of developing the country's digital payments infrastructure, Qatar Central Bank said yesterday.

The launch marks a qualitative addition to e-payment solutions available in Qatar and enriches offerings for local bank customers while contributing to the promotion of financial inclusion in the country, and bringing progress toward its transition to a cashless society.

The Third Financial Sector Strategy aims to build a financial market that leads regionally in innovation, efficiency, and investor protection while enabling the country to unleash its full economic potential in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Himyan is the first national e-card with a registered Qatari brand owned by QCB. The card embodies one of the bank's pioneering national initiatives and comes as part of its ongoing endeavour to develop the digital payments infrastructure that can be leveraged to introduce new products to meet the growing demand for fintech services.

In addition, Himyan promotes Qatari brands in the local market with a design that is based on international standards and best practices while utilising the latest technologies.

Himyan has several unique advantages over those offered by similar local cards in other countries. In addition to being a registered Qatari brand, the card is linked to its holder's personal accounts at local banks with lower transaction costs for card issuers, collectors, and merchants. To Page 4

## Qatar urges Israel to comply with ICJ order

Qatar welcomed the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stating that Israel must take all necessary and effective measures to ensure the entry of essential food supplies to the population of Gaza without delay.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that the war in the Gaza Strip has created a tragic humanitarian situation that continues to worsen day by day due to obstacles imposed on the entry of relief aid and the targeting of civilians, including children and women, in aid distribution areas. The ministry emphasised the necessity of ensuring compliance with the order, including the opening of crossings, to avoid the famine threatening the Strip, as well as to prevent the risks of genocide.

The ministry also stressed that the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including the threat to the lives of civilians, requires the firm alignment of the international community to per-

Pro-Palestinian activists wave flags during a protest in central London yesterday.

manently cease fire in the strip and prevent the spread of the catastrophic effects of the war to the region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated Qatar's steadfast position on the justice of the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of their independent state on the 1967 borders with its capital in East Jerusalem. (QNA)

## 'First day of Eid al-Fitr on April 10'

According to accurate astronomical calculations carried out by professionals, the first day of the month of Shawwal and the first day of the blessed Eid al-Fitr of this year will be on Wednesday, April 10 (astronomically), according to a statement of Qatar Calendar House and the Kuwaiti Al-Ojairi Scientific Center.

The crescent of the month of Shawwal will be born on Monday evening, corresponding to April

8, 2024, (the Crescent sighting day), at 9.22pm, Doha local time and Kuwait time (06:22 GMT), the statement reads.

Based on astronomical calculations the sighting of Shawwal crescent will be impossible on the evening of sighting day whether in Qatar or in the Islamic and Arab countries because the crescent will not have been born at sunset on this day.

Qatar Calendar House underlined that the time for Eid al-

Fitr prayer will be on April 10 at 5.32am based on Doha local time. Also, the decision of the crescent sighting confirmation based on the Islamic Sharia will be fully under the discretion of the Crescent Sighting Committee at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs.

Qatar Calendar House and the Kuwaiti Al-Ojairi Scientific Center are among the most ancient centres in the region specialised in astronomy and space. (QNA)



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**Essay topic: Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies aimed at the healthcare sector have exploded exponentially in recent years. New AI technologies include chatbots to diagnose patients based on symptom algorithms, software to analyze unstructured medical data and give doctors real-time insight into their patients' conditions, and predictive analytical tools that scan complex datasets to identify new drugs. These technologies hold great promise, but some have cautioned the healthcare policymakers about adopting untested technologies without deeply considering potential ethical problems.

For this year's essay, identify a specific AI technology and analyze its significance for healthcare. How can this technology enhance the experiences of doctors and patients? Should we embrace this technology, or should we be more cautious? What are some of the ethical problems we should consider?

Write an 800-word essay in English to explore this topic. Please note that the submission deadline is: **April 30, 2024.**

**For terms & conditions and submission of essay please check our website at: [www.qatar-weill.cornell.edu/](http://www.qatar-weill.cornell.edu/)**

For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Outreach and Educational Development at: [healinghands@qatar-med.cornell.edu](mailto:healinghands@qatar-med.cornell.edu) or call 4492 8521

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# Qatar Charity’s Iftar tents host safety lectures for workers

In collaboration with the General Directorate for Drug Control, General Directorate of Civil Defence and the Community Police Department of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Qatar Charity continues to organise a series of awareness lectures on vital topics that concern the community in its numerous Iftar tents.

The lectures, according to an official statement from MoI, are organised as part of Qatar Charity’s campaign ‘Endless Giving’. They aim to spread awareness among workers, providing them with guidance on safety procedures and measures essential for various aspects of their daily lives.

These lectures are part of Qatar Charity’s ongoing efforts to disseminate awareness and knowledge within the community. They aim to promote a culture of safety and personal development among all segments of society.

Qatar Charity extended its gratitude to the General Directorate for Drug Control, the General Directorate of Civil Defence and the Community Police Department for their collaboration in spreading awareness among workers. “Qatar Charity expresses its hope for the continuation of this co-operation in all endeavours beneficial to the local community,” the statement said.

So far, these lectures have been given during Iftar gatherings for workers at Al



Murra (West), Al Hilal, and Al Najma. Similar lectures will be held at other locations until the end of Ramadan. The lectures are expected to benefit more than 7,000 labourers. The lectures cover several general topics such as drug prevention, fire safety, and community policing, aiming to teach the participants how to handle potential situations and risks in both the workplace and daily life.

**Fire prevention**  
During an informative lecture on the dangers of fires, Lt Khalil Rashid al-Nuaimi from the General Directorate of Civil Defence explained safety and security procedures to prevent household fires. He provided information related to safety measures, first aid, fire extinguishers, their types and how to use them. He emphasised the importance of fire prevention, its causes, handling methods, safe actions in case of fire outbreaks, communication with civil defence and evacuation procedures.

**Drug control**  
Lt Abdullah Saleh al-Shammari from the General Directorate of Drug Control



spoke about the risks associated with drugs, highlighting the dangers of the belongings of others from and to Qatar. He also touched on the dispensing and misuse of medications and medical drugs, as well as the negative effects resulting from addiction. He emphasised the dangers of covering up crimes and the importance of reporting drug-related activities.

**Community police**  
Regarding community policing, Ft Lt Shahab Munir al-Shammari from the Community Police Department provided an overview of community policing, its role and its main specialities, which involve resolving all problems amicably, whether they are personal, financial, or familial. He explained how to communicate with the department and emphasised the importance of promoting community



The lectures by MoI officials are organised as part of Qatar Charity’s campaign ‘Endless Giving’.

values and principles among workers and acquainting them with Qatari customs, traditions and culture as they are integral parts of the local community.

# Akasa Air commences operations between Mumbai and Doha

Akasa Air began operations to and from Doha, connecting Mumbai, with four non-stop flights a week. The inaugural flight on Thursday from Mumbai’s Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport received a warm welcome at Hamad International Airport.

Dignitaries at the ceremony included Indian ambassador Vipul, Qatar’s ambassador to India, Mohamed Hassan Jabir al-Jabir, and senior executives from HIA and Akasa Air.

According to Qatar’s National Tourism Strategy 2030, the country aims to attract 6mn visitors every year. The route, launched in response to the growing demand for air travel between India and Qatar, will provide enhanced connectivity and cargo capacity facilitating trade and tourism between the two countries.

Commenting on the occasion, Neelu Khatri, co-founder and senior vice-president (International) Akasa Air said: “The commencement of operations from Doha marks a milestone moment in Akasa’s journey as we enter a phase of rapid global expansion. The launch of direct flights connecting Doha with Mumbai, will provide momentum to the growing demand for air travel between India and Qatar. Enhanced cargo capacity will also support the growth of bilateral trade between the two countries.”

“We are thankful to Hamad International Airport for their support in establishing this connection,” she added.

Praveen Iyer, co-founder and chief commercial officer, Akasa Air, also said: “We are thrilled to bring the Akasa experience to Doha, a city that offers a myriad of cultures and tourist attractions.



Dignitaries at the ceremony at Hamad International Airport to welcome the inaugural Akasa Air flight from Mumbai to Doha.

With a laser sharp focus on service excellence, Akasa Air is on a journey to redefine air travel with its category defining and customer friendly offerings.”

Commenting on the occasion, Sujata Suri, senior vice-president (Finance and Procurement) at HIA, said: “We are thrilled to extend a

warm welcome to Akasa Air as they embark on their inaugural international journey to Doha. Their decision highlights the robust partnership between our nations and underscores the prowess of Qatar’s aviation sector, with Hamad International Airport serving as a premier hub in the region.

“With the vast potential of the Indian market, Akasa Air’s entry not only fulfils existing demand but also expands passenger choices significantly.

“The new route between Doha and Mumbai holds immense promise, appealing to both the sizeable Indian community residing in Qatar and Indian travellers visiting the nation. We are fully committed to ensuring a seamless launch of operations and providing Akasa Air’s passengers with a welcoming and exceptional travel experience.”



**JAISON CHACKO**  
Ex-General Manager

Al Balagh extends its heartfelt condolences to the family of our former General Manager, who served from 1984 to 2014, we fondly remember his leadership and contributions to the Al Balagh family, and he will always be missed.

May his soul rest in eternal peace, and we wish his family comfort and peace during these difficult times.





## Human rights attorney discusses steps to achieve accountability for Palestinians

During a public talk at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), Palestinian-American human rights attorney Noura Erakat presented a critical analysis of international law's potential and limitations as a tool for change, focusing on the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s interim decision in the case against Israel.

Prof Erakat is an associate professor at Rutgers University, co-founding editor of Jadaliyyah with Dr Bassam Haddad, and the author of Justice For Some: Law and the Question of Palestine, scholarly work and advocacy that has made her a critical voice to Palestinians and the struggle for liberation.

Dr Noha Aboueldahab, assistant professor of International Law, moderated the discussion. In her talk, Prof Erakat acknowledged disappointment that the ICJ decision did not impose a ceasefire, but said there has been too little emphasis on the impact that it did have, arguing, "The ICJ provided a tool to agitate for a ceasefire."

The court rejected every single one of Israel's arguments, including that this was a legitimate war of self-defence. This has prompted individual countries to impose weapons sanctions, sever diplomatic ties, and initiate criminal cases



Prof Noura Erakat in conversation with Dr Noha Aboueldahab.

under universal jurisdiction. In Prof Erakat's perspective as a critical legal scholar, the ICJ's conclusions also rejected Israel's long-standing "exception legal framework," based on sui generis (Latin for unlike anything else), which has been used to justify new laws that not only shrink who can be counted as a civilian but perpetuate the use of lethal military force.

"There's this idea that the law is not doing its work," said Erakat, who went on to show that the law doesn't take ac-

tion, it is merely a tool, the effectiveness of which is determined by the balance of economic, military, and social power, historical circumstances, leadership, and who brings the matter forward.

Her exchange with Dr Aboueldahab focused on the meaning of accountability for Palestinians, emphasising universalised, collective responsibility and ethical solidarity. She also highlighted the overriding need for recognition in order to guarantee the right to life and dignity for Palestinians.

## Amir congratulates Senegal's president-elect

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Bassirou Diomaye Faye on his victory in the Senegalese presidential elections, wishing him success and the Senegalese people further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani also sent a cable of congratulations to Faye on his victory. (QNA)

## QU, QF alumni community marks decade of achievements in Qatar

Alumni organisation, Campus & Student Life in Qatar, is commemorating a decade of fostering community, sharing stories, and celebrating achievements this March. Founded by Vahid Suljic, an alumnus of Qatar Foundation and Qatar University, this online community has evolved from a simple idea in 2014 into a cornerstone of student life in Qatar.

Campus & Student Life in Qatar was born from a desire to create a community for current and prospective students.

"I have been raised to be of service to my community wherever I am, and I felt the need to give back to this beautiful country and to do my small part in helping it, by helping its students," Suljic said. "My motivation was to create a community that would be useful to any student, who was interested in joining our educational community here."


Beyond being a valuable resource for the student community in Qatar, Suljic's platforms also showcase Qatar's positive contributions to the world. He believes in sharing the groundbreaking progress and world-class research happening here with the global community. "We are blessed to have access to the official information



Vahid Suljic

issued by the universities, government entities, and student bodies but what really sets us apart is that we complement this with untold stories from many of the alumnae and current students themselves. One thing is to hear that a course is available, but it is so much better to hear from someone who has taken the course already and pick their brains. It helps prospective students make better-informed decisions," explained Suljic.

Over the past decade, Campus & Student Life in Qatar has reached large number of people in Qatar and across the world. They have showcased the educational landscape of Qatar and presented it in the best light.



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**Mowasalat (Karwa) announces the following tender:**

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**CONDITIONS:**

- Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:
- Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: [tenders@mowasalat.com](mailto:tenders@mowasalat.com)
- Tender documents will be released via email on the next working day after the tender fee payment date to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested (i.e., 7 April 2024)
- Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond:** Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents. *Bids without Tender Bond shall not be considered.*
- Tender validity:** Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.
- Tender documents submission:** Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (**IN RED WAX**) envelopes addressed to **Secretary - Tender Committee** clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
  - Envelope 1# must** include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
  - Envelope 2# must** include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
  - Envelope 3# must** include the Tender Bond (1 Original)
- Bid Closing Date:** Bid submission deadline is **12.00 noon Doha Local Time** as on the Bid closing date shown above. The 3 envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary - Tender Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Tel.: 4458 8724 Fax: 4458 8850

Supplier RegistrationMowasalat Location



## QCB launches 'Himyan' debit card today

From Page 1

It also supports contactless transactions with all transactions made locally via the national network NAPS.

Himyan also uses smart chip technology and PIN codes. As a result, it provides flexibility for customers and enhances protection and security. This is in line with one of QCB's key strategic objectives: preserving customers' data and protecting their financial information.

Using Himyan, local bank customers can also withdraw funds locally from all ATMs in the country, along with the possibility of depositing money through ATMs that support deposit services for cash and cheques. It also enables local bank customers to make payments at all points of sale across the country as well as through local online shopping sites 24x7 without interruption, via QPAY's payment portal.

Local banks will issue Himyan cards to all their bank account holders.

Customers can apply for Himyan directly through the bank's card-issuing channels. The first-time issuance of the card to local bank customers is offered free of charge.

The following banks will offer Himyan to their customers: QNB, Doha Bank, Masraf Al Rayan, Qatar Islamic Bank, Dukhan Bank, Qatar International Islamic Bank, and Commercial Bank.

It is worth mentioning that Qatar has consolidated its position as a regional financial hub owing to the sound financial policies and frameworks it has put in place. The Third National Development Strategy, the final phase toward achieving the Qatar National Vision 2030, aims to accelerate and promote technological innovations across sectors and fields, including expanding electronic payment channels.


## Ramadan padel tournament held

Following the success of the second edition of The Pearl Island Ramadan Football Tournament 2024, United Development Company (UDC), master developer of The Pearl and Gewan islands, organised the inaugural edition of The Pearl Island Ramadan Padel Tournament. The new tournament for male residents was held at the Fanar Feyrouz Padel Court on The Pearl Island. The Ramadan Padel Tournament is part of UDC's ongoing efforts to create a vibrant and inclusive community on The Pearl Island, a statement said.

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**Limited Tender Committee announces the following tender:**

Sr. No.	Tender Ref. No.	Description	Tender Bond (QAR)	Tender Fee Non-Refundable (QAR)	Bid Closing Date and Time
1	LTC007-24	SUPPLY OF STATIONERY ITEMS FOR 3 YEARS - CALL OFF AGREEMENT	-	1,000	28April2024 (13:00 Hrs)

- Tender documents can be collected from Procurement & Contracts Directorate Building, behind Al Jazeera Media Institute Building, TV Intersection Area, beside Al Yarmouk Petrol Station, Doha by submitting an authorization letter showing the tender number and ID number of collecting person under the company letterhead, after paying the tender fee at QIB Branch inside Al Jazeera Support Services building.

- Tender documents are to be collected from 31Mar2024 to 04April2024, between 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

- The offer must be valid for a period of 180 days from the Bid Closing Date.

- The Technical and Commercial offers shall be submitted as per the instructions in the tender documents which shall bear the tender number and bid closing date.

- The last date for accepting the Tender offers shall be 1:00 PM of the bid closing date and any offer submitted after this date will not be accepted.

- For more information, please call 44897131.

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S. No.	Tender Ref.	Tender Title:	Tender Bond QAR	Bid Closing Date & Tender Bond Validity Period
1	TC-CN-010-24-HS	Call-off Contract for Waste Management Services	45,500/-	08 May 2024 at 12.00 noon & 180 days

Companies wishing to register their interest and obtain Tender Document(s) for the above Tender(s) must pay a non-refundable registration fee and register with ORYX GTL as detailed below:

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Registration Dates	From 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024 to 04 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 8:00 am to 1:00 pm
Registration Process and Requirements:	Write an e-mail to <a href="mailto:oryxgtltenders@oryxgtl.com.qa">oryxgtltenders@oryxgtl.com.qa</a> with the following attachments: 1.Copy of Commercial Registration (CR) 2.Copy of bank deposit slip of the Tender Registration Fee. 3. Copy of ICV Certificate

COMPANIES WHO HAVE PAID THE NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE BUT FAILED TO FORMALLY REGISTER AT THE DATE AND TIME STATED ABOVE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED AS ACCEPTABLE TENDERER.

TENDER BOND SHALL BE ISSUED BY A BANK REGISTERED IN THE STATE OF QATAR.

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

For more information about ORYX GTL and its tenders, please visit our website: <http://www.oryxgtl.com.qa>



# Alfardan Luxury Motors unveils Aston Martin Vantage in Qatar

Alfardan Luxury Motors, the official dealer for Aston Martin in Qatar, unveiled the newest of the esteemed British marque's next generation of sports cars: Vantage.

The iconic model made its debut in Qatar in a series of viewings at the state-of-the-art Aston Martin showroom in Alfardan Towers, West Bay, Doha.

The latest in an iconic bloodline, the new Vantage is as an authentic, unadulterated celebration of pure performance, engineered to deliver maximum thrills with maximum confidence, a statement said.

"We're delighted to present the all-new Vantage in Qatar. Engineered for real drivers, Vantage has immaculate style, unforgettable performance and inimitable character; it embodies the sporting qualities the line has become synonymous with since 1964. With class-leading outputs and razor-sharp handling, I have no doubt the motoring enthusiasts here will be thrilled by the new generation model," said Samer Bou Dargham, general manager of Alfardan Luxury Motors.

Powered by a heavily reworked, hand-built 4.0 Twin-Turbo V8 engine the new Vantage is the fastest in the nameplate's history. With peaks of 665PS and 800Nm of torque it also makes the biggest-ever jump in power and torque compared to the model it succeeds, those increases of 155PS and 115Nm equating to gains of 30% and 15% respectively. Mated to an 8-speed ZF automatic transmission this is enough to propel the two-seater sports car to a top speed of 325km/h and punch it from a standstill to 100km/h in just 3.4sec.

The new generation Vantage is a game-changer. A body standing 30mm wider with a more muscular stance is accentuated by a completely redesigned front-end featuring a 38% larger recontoured veined grille aperture, offering 29% increase in



mass airflow for additional cooling. Further cooling intakes set into the bumper either side of the grille sharpen the front-end's

features, while the new integrated splitter, with a wider and lower stance, adds drama as well as aerodynamic function, providing

high speed stability through lift reduction.



round sound system developed by audio partner, Bowers & Wilkins.

It is the second model to feature Aston Martin's next-generation infotainment.

The second of Aston Martin's Next Generation of sports cars, new Vantage sets a new benchmark of driving purity, for drivers who relish in a challenge a fast sports car represents. Aston Martin Vantage, Engineered for Real Drivers.

For customers looking to further enhance the exclusive nature of the new Vantage and create something truly unique, Q by Aston Martin, the brand's bespoke service delivers the ultimate in personalisation. Offering an extensive palette of options, from unique graphics through to tinted carbons and bespoke materials on both the interior and exterior, each 'Q by Aston Martin - Commission' car can push the boundaries of desire and is completely tailored to the customer, the statement added.

high speed stability through lift reduction.

This distinctive front-end treatment is completed by all-new Matrix LED headlamp design with integrated DRLs, featuring Aston Martin's new light signature. Elsewhere the new Vantage sees a return of the iconic Aston Martin side strake, which now forms the sharp focal point of revised vents in each flank. Standard-fit 21in forged alloy wheels fill the wider wheel arches to perfection. Frameless door mirrors and presenting door handles are also new to Vantage, while a wider rear bumper incorporating side vents and larger diameter quad exhaust tailpipes ensure the Vantage looks as dramatic from the rear as it does from the front.

Vantage is a hardcore sports car at heart, with an all-new ultra-luxury interior defined by flawless architectural lines, swathed in the finest materials and packed with state-of-the-art connected technology and a stunning sur-

# Mannai Travel Recognized as Qatar's Best MICE Organizer & Middle East's Best MICE Organizer

Mannai Travel a premier Travel Agency in the State of Qatar is proud to announce that it has been honored with the esteemed World Travel Award in recognition of its outstanding achievements in the field of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) at a Grand Gala Event held at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Berlin on 6th March 2024. This prestigious accolade serves as a testament to Mannai Travel's commitment to excellence, innovation and dedication to its customers.

World Travel Awards recently unveiled the top-notch MICE brands globally at the glamorous 4th annual World MICE Awards Gala ceremony held at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Berlin. These awards widely recognized as the ultimate symbol of excellence and is considered as the Oscars of the Travel Industry.

Through its unparalleled service and innovative approaches, Mannai Travel has clinched distinction in



two award categories, solidifying its leadership position in the travel industry. N.M. Shafiq, General Manager, Mannai Travel Group said "We are incredibly honored to receive this award. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team, as well as our unwavering commitment

impact on the communities it serves.

This recognition from the World Travel Awards serves as motivation for Mannai Travel to continue innovating and delivering unparalleled service in the travel industry. The company remains committed to its mission of providing unforgettable travel experiences that

**"We are incredibly honored to receive this award. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team, as well as our unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional travel experiences to our clients"**

N.M. Shafiq,  
General Manager,  
Mannai Travel Group



to delivering exceptional travel experiences to our clients."

Winners in Qatar includes Qatar Airways who won the World's Best MICE Airline Award while Qatar Tourism won World's Best Mice Destination and Mannai Travel was awarded Qatar's and Middle East Best MICE Organizer. Tourism royalty convened for the spectacular World Travel Awards (WTA) Europe Gala Ceremony 2024 at the Ritz-Carlton, Berlin to find out who amongst them had been voted the continent's best of the best.

Mannai Travel has distinguished itself through its quality of MICE events that has been organized recently, that has helped Mannai travel to winning this award. These efforts have not only set Mannai Travel apart as a leader in the industry. But have also had a positive

inspire and delight clients around the globe. Having already received more than 100 awards since its inception from various airlines, hotels, tourism boards, and corporate clients. Mannai Travel continues to uphold its reputation for excellence.

Graham Cooke, Founder, WTA, says: "It has been a privilege to host the opening ceremony of our 2024 Grand Tour in Berlin for an incredible evening acknowledging the pinnacle of Europe's travel and tourism economy. I congratulate each and every one of our winners for helping to raise the collective benchmark to even greater heights."

Find more information and a full list of winners on the official WTA website.





# Green Tent ends Ramadan activities with focus on charitable efforts

QNA  
Doha

The ‘Flower Each Spring’ programme officially concluded the Green Tent activities during the month of Ramadan by holding a symposium that addressed the contributions made by the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in the Arab states, along with the charitable societies during the humanitarian crises.

The symposium highlighted the accomplishments made by those charitable societies whose history abounds with giving and dedication to helping people in the Gaza Strip. The event conducted a comparative study between the Arab charitable societies and their Western counterparts.

In the closing statement, head of the ‘Flower Each Spring’ programme Dr Saif Ali al-Hajri emphasised that humanitarian and relief organisations play incredible roles in conflict, war and disaster-stricken regions, and it is imperative to understand the functions of those organisations.

He said that QRCS undertakes the responsibility of monitoring the enforcement of the international humanitarian law, receiving complaints relevant to violations, and contributing to upgrading and disseminating the humanitarian law, in addition to protecting the victims of war and providing relief in times of disasters through the determined functions granted by the Geneva convention and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

There are a myriad of challenges that face charitable organisations when performing humanitarian duties, al-Hajri underlined, stating that the participants in the Green Tent underscored the importance of addressing an array of challenges that face the operation of charitable organisations, such as the perilous consequences of operation in conflict, war and disaster-hit zones, along with the challenges of limited funding facing humanitarian and relief organisations.

The participants stressed the importance of overcoming the regulatory and co-ordinative impediments, such as administrative challenges, such as bureaucratic procedures, and funding mechanisms that hamper the effective work of charitable organisations, propagating awareness of the importance of the humanitarian sectors and their roles, in addition to addressing the diverging political visions and emphasising that interests do not prevail over the humanitarian side.

They pointed out that it is critically essential to address the challenges based on sustainable projects and increase the financial support through a whole-of-government approach with the participation of civil society and the private sector, streamlining the regulations, fostering community engagement, and optimising the operational efficiency and co-ordinating at the local, regional and global levels.

Notwithstanding the invaluable initiatives made by QRCS in the Arab states and the operation of charitable organisations in helping the Gaza residents, the hurdles and intransigence put by the Israeli entity in a clear breach of international law and humanitarian law prevented the relief from

reaching the indomitable Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, primarily due to the constant airstrikes and restrictions imposed on the access of humanitarian assistance, forced displacement and shortage of fuel and relief equipment, as well as devastation of critical infrastructure and killing of relief personnel, the participants highlighted.

Dean of the College of Sharia and Law at Omdurman Islamic University Dr Ibrahim Ahmed al-Sadiq identified international humanitarian law as a combination of international laws composed of conventional treaties and rules primarily intended to alleviate the war-induced tribulation in times of armed conflict through protecting non-combatant people. For his part, Dr Zaid Abdel Wahab Jaradat, a doctor from Jordan, focused on his personal experiences in helping the medical personnel in Gaza where he volunteered during the war currently raging in Gaza to provide support and to back the medical practitioners in hospitals. He added that Gaza is plagued with many challenges and convoluted situations, emphasising that medical personnel are suffering there after they have come from Arab states as volunteers.

QRCS representative Dr Mahjouba Daoudi talked about the internal efforts of QRCS which are based on the fact that it is part of the Qatari community and primarily aims to promote and advance goodness, in addition to meeting the equal needs of citizens and residents by massive expertise and resources it possesses, in addition to forging co-operation with the public and private institutions in pursuit of achieving the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030. Daoudi highlighted the relief efforts of QRCS in multiple countries of the world, including its response to humanitarian crises and disasters that broke out during 2023, with the QRCS Disaster Information Management Centre being activated 14 times throughout the year, primarily the disasters and crises such as the earthquake in Syria and Türkiye, the conflict in Sudan, Hurricane Daniel in Libya, the earthquake in Morocco and the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

Additionally, QRCS has launched numerous medical convoys to treat patients in a wide diversity of medical specialisations in collaboration with a host of physicians and technicians from Hamad Medical Corporation and Sidra Medicine.

Mohamed Eddour from Qatar Charity (QC) highlighted the QC relief efforts, adding that QC was established in 1992 and has evolved over the past decades. He indicated that QC currently operates in 70 countries worldwide and has 33 field offices in Africa, Asia, and some European countries.

Relief operators in the Gaza Strip encounter massive challenges concerning access to some areas, the availability of relief items, and their costs, Eddour said, adding that those operators sometimes are pressed to purchase the items with double prices, given the pressing need for them.

Co-ordinator of Green Tent activities Mohamed Hashim al-Sharif said the 18th edition of the Green Tent was full of a wide diversity of topics which helped host dozens of experts and scientists to lay out relevant issues. He added that the Tent had been keen to capitalise on ideas laid out by the participants, along with their solutions and conclusions.

## ‘Nissan Patrol 8 Adventures’ series launched in Qatar



All-new Nissan Patrol 8 Adventures series.

Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co, the exclusive agent of Nissan in Qatar partnered with Khalifa al-Haroon, a prominent local media figure and the founder of the ILQNet-work, to embark on a cultural journey across Qatar aboard the Nissan Patrol as part of the “Nissan Patrol 8 Adventures” series.

Al-Haroon embarked on a journey, unveiling Qatar’s essence through its revered landmarks. His exploration shed light on the diverse tapestry of Qatar’s terrain, beginning from Souq Waqif, a vibrant bastion of tradition in the city’s heart. His voyage traversed the sleek contours of Msheireb, a burgeoning urban landscape adorned with quintessential Qatari architecture. Guiding his path towards the iconic skyline of West Bay, where skyscrapers ascend to the clouds, al-Haroon’s expedition then wandered into the tranquil embrace of Katara’s hills. He anchored at The Pearl, crafted to honour Qatar’s rich pearl diving heritage.

Al-Haroon’s journey pressed forward to Lusail Boulevard, a vibrant thoroughfare for festivals, culminating at the grandeur of Lusail Stadium. Yet, the adventure beckoned beyond city limits, as Khalifa embraced

the desert’s vast expanse, effortlessly guiding the Nissan Patrol through undulating sand dunes. With each challenge overcome, the unwavering spirit of the Nissan Patrol empowered al-Haroon, enabling him to immerse himself fully in the magnificence of Qatar’s landscapes.

Since its introduction in 1957, the Patrol has woven itself into the local culture of the region, creating unforgettable memories passed down through generations. Combining refinement, innovation, and connectivity, the 2024 Nissan Patrol continues to defy ordinary with sheer off-road prowess and a variety of cutting-edge technologies.

Thierry Sabbagh, president, Nissan Saudi Arabia, INFINTI Middle East, and managing director, Nissan Middle East, said: “Nissan Patrol 8 Adventures underscores Nissan’s commitment to inspiring our audience to explore the great outdoors with the legendary Patrol. This cross-market initiative required seamlessly weaving eight unique experiences into a cohesive narrative, underlining the Patrol’s terrain-conquering legacy, and the Middle East’s long-standing love for exploration.”

Nassim Mourani, general manager of the Automotive Group at Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co, stated: “We aimed to spotlight Qatar’s remarkable attractions by teaming up with Khalifa al-Haroon to showcase his preferred destinations in our flagship SUV, The Nissan Patrol. Equipped with cutting-edge technology connectivity and driving modes, the Nissan Patrol demonstrates its versatility and capability, effortlessly navigating both urban streets and rugged desert landscapes, enabling you to discover more of your surroundings.”

The Nissan Patrol 8 Adventures series is now available to watch on the Nissan Middle East YouTube channel.

The hero of the series, the iconic 2024 Nissan Patrol, is available in a variety of trims and with the added choice of a 4.0-litre V6 or a 5.6-litre V8. In addition to this, the Patrol line-up includes Middle East exclusive models, the race-inspired Patrol NISMO and the legendary Patrol Super Safari.

All Patrol models are available at Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co - the exclusive agent of Nissan in Qatar at its showrooms on Salwa Road, The Pearl, Al Sadd, Bin Omran, Barwa and Al Khor.

## VCUarts Qatar students create Ramadan feast out of paper

A total of 40 Art Foundation students from Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) each has contributed a dish for an Iftar, made entirely out of paper!

The ‘Ramadan Feast’ is on display in the main foyer of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, in Education City until April 10.

The collaborative sculpture was the culmination of a class project in their Surface and Space Research Studios module, part of their Art Foundation year. At its core, it presents a project of material exploration, highlighting the idea that a collection of individual creations can form a co-



hesive whole greater than the sum of its parts—a moment captured at a Ramadan sunset. The module is taught by Art Foundation as-

sociate professors, Nathan Davis and Maysaa Almunim, along with teaching assistants, Amira Mohamed and Karmina Asaad.

## QRCS set to implement 49 health projects this year across 10 nations

To ensure good health for vulnerable individuals and communities around the world, Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) is focusing on providing basic, emergency and mental healthcare for poor people in affected areas; building the capacity of the local health sector; and supplying the necessary medications, medical equipment, and consumables.

QRCS aims to implement 49 health projects in 2024 costing QR41,479,958 to treat 175,638 patients in 10 countries – Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank), Syria, Yemen, Niger, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

These projects focus on the provision of medications, medical equipment, consumables and ambulance vehicles; surgeries of various specialisations; dialysis sessions; hearing aids; wheelchairs and other mobility aids; deployment of mobile clinics/pharmacies to remote areas; and installation of solar panels at medical facilities.

QRCS has a year-round medical convoys programme that involves deploying volunteer doctors and nurses, with all the necessary medical equipment and supplies, to perform medical examinations and surgeries for poor patients in many countries. They provide compre-



QRCS will carry out several medical initiatives this year.

hensive healthcare services. This year, the programme comprises 22 medical convoys to treat 9,160 patients, at a cost of QR15,539,200. Many specialisations are covered, including general surgery, urology, cochlear implants, cardiac catheterisation/surgery, laparoscopic surgery, neurosurgery, cataract surgery, obstetrics, and paediatrics.

The target countries include Palestine (the West Bank), Syria, Yemen, Niger, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Jordan, Iraq, and Chad.

QRCS has implemented 57 health interventions in 2023. At a cost of QR58,336,279 (28% of total international spending), these activities helped 3,580,836 patients in Somalia, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bangladesh, Niger, Syria and Mauritania. Among the health

interventions undertaken by QRCS during 2023 are the provision of medications, consumables, medical equipment and ambulance vehicles; emergency epidemic response; health education campaigns; rehabilitation and physiotherapy; mental health; prosthetic implants; dialysis; surgery; development/operation of health facilities; mobile clinics; medical convoys; eye treatment camps; treatment for patients with cancer; preventive and therapeutic nutrition and disability services.

As for medical convoys, QRCS carried out 11 medical convoys for the benefit of 11,803 patients in Sudan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Mauritania, and Somalia. The medical and surgical interventions covered paediatric cardiac catheterisation, general surgery, urology, and ophthalmology.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SUJITHTHA PULENDRAN

holder of

Srilankan Passport No. N3327687  
QID No. 28914414768

hereby change my name

from

SUJITHTHA PULENDRAN

to

SUJEETHTHA RAJEEPAN

Any objection, please contact  
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SHERYL MATALOG LAGMAN

holder of

Philippines Passport No. P5378415B  
QID No. 28060803671

hereby change my name

from

SHERYL MATALOG LAGMAN

to

SHERYL MATALOG YOUSSEF

Any objection, please contact  
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.



# Winners honoured at Ramadan basketball and volleyball competition



The inaugural Ramadan Basketball and Volleyball Championship, organised by the Establishments and Authorities Security Department at the department's courts, has concluded, according to a statement by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) on its X account.

The closing ceremony was attended by Maj Gen Dr Ali Khajim al-Adhbi, director of the Establishments and Authorities Security Department. The final day had a basketball match, with the Sports Security Section team emerging victorious against the ministrie's Security Section team. In the volleyball match, the Authorities Security Section team triumphed over the Logistics Section team.

Maj Gen Dr al-Adhbi honoured the winners and runners-up of each game.

# Indonesian community in Qatar holds diverse Ramadan activities

Throughout the month of Ramadan, Indonesian community in Qatar with support from the Indonesian embassy held various activities such as the Nuzulul Qur'an on 17 of Ramadan (March 27), and also Iftar Jama'i with the Indonesian community (March 29).

The activities were held in several areas of Doha and Al Khor. The activity also involved various entities of Indonesian society in Qatar, such as the Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama Special Branch, Indonesian Community Association in Al Khor and the Indonesian Moslem Society in Qatar.

The activities mainly aim to strengthen familyhood among the Indonesian community. It is estimated that around 23,000 Indonesian citizens currently reside in Qatar. They work in various sectors ranging from oil and gas, hospitality, education, banking, aviation, domestic workers etc. Ambassador of Indonesia, Ridwan Hassan expressed his appreciation to the Indonesian community for all the initiatives that have been carried out throughout the month of Ramadan.



# Team Al-Kharsaa triumphs in Katara Ramadan beach volleyball tourney

The competitions of Katara Ramadan Beach Volleyball Championship 2024 concluded on Friday night.

The championship, organised by Katara – the Cultural Village Foundation in collaboration with Qatar Volleyball Association (QVA), took place during March 18-29. The concluding ceremony was attended by Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, general manager of Katara and Ali Ghanem al-Kuwari, the president of QVA and the West Asian Volleyball Federation, alongside a large number of fans.

Accordingly, the results were announced as Team Al-Kharsaa won the first place at the championship, followed by Team Izghawa in the second place, while Team Al Ghariya secured the third place. The final night of the Championship kicked off with a match to determine the third-place winner between Hal Sharq and Al-Ghariya. Al-Ghariya secured a provisional victory (2-0) over Hal Sharq, confirming their right to step onto the podium.

Team Al-Kharsaa sealed the championship title after winning an intense and thrilling match against Team Izghawa (2-0). Besides, Team Al-Kharsaa defeated Hal Sharq by two sets to claim victory, while Team Izghawa defeated Al-Ghariya by the same score in the semi-final matches.

In the first group, Team Al-Kharsaa topped with six points, having achieved a provisional victory over Wadi Al Duhoul in the final match of the third and last round of the group. Al-Ghariya secured the second place in the group with five points, while Team Fit Up came third with four points, bidding farewell to the competition alongside Wadi Al Duhoul, who finished fourth and last with two points.

In the second group, Team Izghawa led the ranking with six points, followed by Hal Sharq with five points. Simaisma and Al Khor tied for third place with two points each, resulting in both teams exiting the competition.

Further, the conclusion ceremony of Katara Ramadan Beach Volleyball Championship saw the honouring of referees, organisers, and sponsors, along with the distribution of cash and in-kind prizes on the audience, sponsored by Oscar Gumbo Electronics, the Grand Regency Hotel and Barzan Perfumes, through a raffle draw on the free tickets.

In the meantime, Katara Electronic Games Championship concluded on Friday evening as well. It was organised by Katara as part of its Ramadan activities in collaboration with Al Taawun Group. Saif Saad al-Dosari, deputy general manager of Katara and director of Katara Human Resources Department, honoured the winners of the championship.



# Alfardan Automobiles makes a mark at Qatar Motorcycle Grand Prix (MotoGP) with stunning display of BMW vehicles

Alfardan Automobiles, the official importer of BMW vehicles in Qatar, showcased an array of high-performance BMW vehicles at the 2024 MotoGP™ Qatar Airways Grand Prix, including the luxurious 7 Series fleet for transporting guests and VIPs around the circuit, providing a unique and exciting experience for visitors at the event.

Alfardan Automobiles head-turning lineup of BMW vehicles included the BMW M2 Coupe, BMW M4 Convertible, BMW X5M and BMW X6M. BMW Motorrad high-performance motorcycles were also on show including the BMW S 1000 RR, BMW M 1000 R, and BMW M 1000 RR. Together, these models showed off the best of BMW's advanced technology and design – in addition to speed and precision.

BMW also made its presence felt with a number of safety vehicles on the track, including the M3 Touring Safety Car, BMW M3 Safety Car and the BMW XM Safety Car. These models reinforced the critical role of safety vehicles in motorcycle racing, while also emphasising BMW's dedication in incorporating cutting-edge safety technology integrated in all its models.

Alfardan Automobiles continues to enhance its distinguished presence at the Lusail



Speed Fest, following the conclusion of the Qatar Airways - Qatar 1812 km race, which took place as part of the World Endurance Championship (WEC), by showcasing BMW vehicles at the MotoGP event for this season.

The Lusail Speed Fest has indeed set the stage for an exciting motorsport season, with Alfardan Automobiles taking the charge in offering memorable experiences and showcasing the latest in sporty vehicles to the community. Alfardan Automobiles also provided an exceptional luxurious transportation experience to its guests and VIPs around the circuit using the BMW 7 Series fleet.

MotoGP, the Grand Prix motorcycle racing event, is among the highest class of motorcycle racing events held on road circuits, as sanctioned by the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme.

As the official importer for BMW Group in Qatar, Alfardan Automobiles continues to raise the standards of excellence and innovation as a leader in the automotive sector in the State of Qatar.





# Awqaf opens new mosque at Bu Sidra

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened its new mosque at Bu Sidra. Spread over a total area of 2,667sq m, the Mohamed Musaad al-Ghawas al-Marri mosque can accommodate 270 male and female worshippers. According to an official statement from Awqaf, the mosque has an Imam's house and a tall minaret.

The opening of the new mosque comes within Awqaf's plan to expand the number of mosques and develop them in all regions of the country while keeping pace with urban and population growth. This is in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

With its number MS 1397, the mosque has a main prayer hall with space for 230 male worshippers in addition to a women's hall

that can accommodate 40 worshippers. The mosque also includes a spacious ablution place in addition to a large number of public parking lots, including those for persons with disabilities. The entrances and exits of the mosque are disabled-friendly.

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

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



# The channels of Zakat

Allah Almighty classifies the eligible recipients of Zakat under eight categories. He, Almighty Says (what means): "Zakat expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [Zakat] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler – an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise." [Qur'an 9:60]

The following is the list of the eight categories of eligible people with a brief definition of each one:

- 1. The poor:**  
The poor is a person who does not have sufficient wealth to fulfill his needs and the needs of his dependents, such as food, drink, clothing and housing. He may be considered poor (according to his situation) even though he may possess the minimum amount required for payment of Zakat (i.e. *Nisab*).
- 2. The needy:**  
The needy (*Miskeen*) may be someone whose level of poverty is more than the poor or less than him. However, their ruling is the same in all matters. These poor and needy can have decent houses and clothes and yet be considered poor and needy if they do not possess their basic essential needs. The Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), defined the *Miskeen* in some narrations as: "The *Miskeen* is not the one who goes around among the people (begging) maybe receiving a morsel or two, and a date or two. Rather, the *Miskeen* is the one who does not have enough wealth to suffice him, however he does not let others know about it in order to be given charity and he does not stand and beg people." [Al-Bukhari]
- 3. The Zakat employees (or those who are involved with its work):**  
Those are the Muslims who are employed to collect Zakat, either through persuasion or force – from those who are not willing to give it. They are given their salaries from the Zakat collection.
- 4. Reconciliation of hearts (Al-Mu'allafati Quloobuhom):**  
They are those new Muslims whose faith is weak and may sometimes have a strong influence among their people. Thus, they are given from Zakat in order to appease their hearts, strengthen their faith and make them attach wholeheartedly to Islam. This in hopes that comprehensive benefit may be gained from them or their evil be restrained.  
Zakat may also be given to non-Muslims in hopes that they may accept Islam or that their people may become Muslims. Thus, such people



ple are given from Zakat in order to encourage them to accept Islam and endear it to them.

- 5. The slaves:**  
The intent of this category is that the Muslim who is a slave be purchased from Zakat (funds) and freed (solely for the sake of pleasing Allah). It also applies to the Muslim who is an indentured servant (i.e. he has a contract with his owner to be freed upon paying a sum of money). Such a person may be given from Zakat that which will help him fulfil the contract and thus become a freeman after that.
- 6. The indebted:**  
He is a person who owes a debt that he did not acquire through disobedience to Allah and His Messenger, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, and it has become impossible for him to pay it off. Such a person is given the amount which will allow him to pay off his debt from Zakat. This is due to the statement of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*: "Begging is not permissible, except for three: For the person who is extremely poor, or the person who has severe debt, or the person who owes a (debt of) blood (money)." [At-Tirmithi and Abu Dawood] If one decides to pay Zakat due on him in the form of repaying debts for someone,

he should inform him. Otherwise, it will not be considered as Zakat. Rather will count as charity, and he would still have to pay out the Zakat due on him.

- 7. In the way of Allah:**  
This is paid for Jihad (fighting) in order to elevate the Word of Allah, the Most High, or anything that assists in it in any form. Hence, the one who goes out to fight in the way of Allah is given (from Zakat), even if he is wealthy. According to the opinion of Imam Ahmad, may Allah have mercy upon him, this also applies to assisting a person who is too poor to perform Haj.
- 8. The wayfarer:**  
He is the traveller who spent all his money outside his hometown or city during his travel. Therefore, he is given from Zakat that which will fulfil his needs as a stranger, even if he is a wealthy man in his homeland. This is due to the poverty he is experiencing in his journey and being cut off from his resources. This is the case when there is no one who can give him a loan that will be of assistance to him in fulfilling his needs. If there is someone who can give him a loan, then he is obligated to take the loan and he is not given Zakat as long as he is considered a wealthy man in his own land (this is according to the Maliki school of jurisprudence). This only applies if his travel is for a permissible cause (i.e. did not travel to commit a sin).

- General guidelines:**
- If a Muslim pays Zakat of his wealth to any one of the eight categories of (eligible) recipients, then that is sufficient. However, he should give precedence to those recipients who are most important and have a greater need.
  - Zakat is not paid to those whom it is obligatory upon the Muslim to spend on, like the parents, the children, and the wife, because it is obligatory upon him to spend on them whenever they are in need.
  - Zakat is not acceptable except with its intention. If a person pays it without having the intention of paying the obligatory Zakat, it will not be considered Zakat. This is due to the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, informing us that deeds are judged by their intentions, and that every person will get what he intended. [Al-Bukhari]
- Therefore, the one who pays it must do so with the intention of paying his due Zakat that is obligatory upon him to pay. He should also make his intention to pay it solely for the sake of Allah, as sincere intention is a condition for the acceptance of every act or worship.

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

# Create unforgettable memories this Ramadan with Lexus

## Al Abdulghani Motors, the exclusive distributor of Lexus in Qatar, invites you to embark on a journey of driving delight this Ramadan

This Ramadan, Al Abdulghani Motors (AAM), the distributor for Lexus in the State of Qatar has put together an exceptional package of benefits for Lexus 2024 YM vehicles to make this holy month truly unforgettable. Whether you are looking for a Sedan or an SUV for family gatherings or personal journeys, Lexus has the perfect model to meet your needs.

**Ramadan benefits include:**

- 1. Comprehensive Insurance:** Customers who purchase a 2024 YM Lexus vehicle from AAM will benefit from 3 years of comprehensive insurance coverage. This coverage provides financial protection for the vehicle, ensuring that customers can drive with confidence.
- 2. Periodic Maintenance:** AAM Lexus is providing 5 years/100,000 km (whichever comes first) of periodic maintenance for their 2024 YM vehicles. This service ensures that the vehicle is properly serviced and maintained, helping to prolong the life of the vehicle and minimize the need for costly repairs.
- 3. Roadside Assistance:** AAM Lexus provides 5 years/100,000 kms (whichever comes first) of roadside assistance. This service provides support in case of emergencies such as breakdowns or accidents, giving customers peace of mind and added security on the road.
- 4. Warranty:** This warranty covers repairs and replacements for any manufacturing defects, providing customers with added protection and peace of mind.
- 5. Free 3M Tinting:** Customers who purchase a 2024 YM Lexus vehicle from AAM will receive complimentary 3M tinting for their vehicle. This service enhances privacy and reduces heat inside the car, providing customers with added comfort and convenience.

Al Abdulghani Motors are offering an exclusive package for the Lexus LX models which provides an opportunity to own the



LX with 50% Down Payment and balance 50% can be paid in 4 equal installments at 0% profit rate.

AAM Lexus is also offering in-house financing options for their 2024 YM vehicles, with a down payment starting at 15%. Financing is available for up to 60 months for Qatari nationals

and 48 months for expatriates. This exclusive offer provides customers with a hassle-free financing process and peace of mind.

Overall, AAM Lexus provides their customers with exceptional benefits and services. With their exclusive 2024

YM vehicle package, customers can enjoy peace of mind and convenience, making this Ramadan truly unforgettable. This special offer is valid until 30th April 2024.

Furthermore, Lexus owners benefit from AAM's extensive after-sales facilities, including a network of 17 service centers across the country. AAM's service centers are staffed by highly trained technicians who use the latest diagnostic and repair equipment to ensure that your Lexus is maintained to the highest standards. Regular maintenance services, such as oil changes and brake inspections, are performed efficiently and quickly, while more complex repairs are handled with the utmost care and attention to detail.

For added convenience, AAM Lexus offers mobile service vans, allowing customers to have their vehicles serviced at their homes or offices by appointment. The mobile service vans are equipped with the same state-of-the-art diagnostic and repair equipment as AAM's service centers, and the technicians who staff them are highly trained and experienced. Whether you need an oil change, a brake inspection, or a minor repair, AAM's mobile service vans can provide the same high-quality service as their service centers.

Visit the AAM Lexus Showroom on the C Ring Road, open 7 days a week for your convenience. During Ramadan, Lexus showroom operate from 09:00 a.m. to 02:00 p.m. and 08:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight from Saturday to Thursday, and from 08:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight on Fridays. Customers can visit the showroom during these timings to explore the range of Lexus vehicles and take advantage of the special Ramadan offer.





# Thousands gather for pro-Palestinian rally in London

AFP  
London

Thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters rallied in London yesterday, in the latest demonstration in the British capital demanding a ceasefire in Gaza and more aid for the war-ravaged territory. The event, organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, began at Russell Square in the city centre before attendees marched to Trafalgar Square for a mid-afternoon rally.

A smaller number of demonstrators also turned out for a counter-protest in support of Israel, with lines of police separating the two gatherings. London has seen numerous large-scale pro-Palestinian protests since Israel mounted its military attack to Hamas, as

well as smaller pro-Israel counter-demonstrations. The rallies for Palestinians have proved contentious, attracting criticism for fuelling a hostile environment. But organisers insist they are exercising their democratic rights and that law-breakers are a tiny minority of the sometimes tens of thousands of people who turned out. Sally Worgan, 65, a retired social worker, had travelled from Gloucestershire in western England to attend. "I think it's important for the Palestinian people to know that people do support them, that they're not just on their own," she told AFP. "We will keep marching," Ben Jamal, one of the organisers, told Sky News yesterday, adding attendees wanted "a permanent ceasefire" and more aid to be de-

livered to Palestinians in Gaza. "We already know that 70 per cent of the British public according to opinion polls support the demands that we're making." By mid-afternoon, London's Metropolitan Police said officers had arrested one man "on suspicion of a terrorism-related offence in relation to inviting support for a proscribed organisation". The force had said in the build-up to Saturday that it had "a robust policing plan in place", including requiring marchers keep to a pre-approved route and disperse by 5pm. "Anyone who fails to comply with the conditions will be dealt with by officers," the force had added on social media. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak earlier this month called for officers to take tougher action against protesters at such events.



Pro-Palestinian activists and supporters wave flags as they gather for a protest in Trafalgar Square in central London yesterday.

# China reaffirms financial support for Sri Lanka

AFP  
Beijing

China has said it would continue to support Sri Lanka, as the crisis-hit island nation's prime minister yesterday wrapped up a visit to Beijing to try to finalise a debt restructuring deal. Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena arrived in China on Monday for a visit that included meeting President Xi Jinping and an appearance at the Boao Forum, a high-profile international meeting. Sri Lanka's years-long economic crisis was high on the agenda during Gunawardena's trip, with China accounting for around 10 per cent of the South Asian country's total foreign debt. China is willing to "continue supporting its financial institutions to actively negotiate with Sri Lanka, maintain friendly

communication with other creditors, play a positive role in the International Monetary Fund, assist Sri Lanka in financial relief," Beijing's foreign ministry said in the Chinese version of a joint bilateral statement released on Friday. The two sides agreed to "make every effort to promote the Port City Colombo and Hambantota Development Project, turning them into flagship projects of the Sino-Sri Lankan joint construction of the 'Belt and Road'", the statement said, referring to Xi's massive Belt and Road global infrastructure initiative. The southern sea port of Hambantota was considered among the white-elephant projects launched by former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ruled the country for a decade until 2015. Rajapaksa borrowed heavily from China for projects that many criticised as a debt trap that led to the worst economic

crisis in Sri Lanka's history. Unable to repay a huge loan taken from China in 2017 to build Hambantota port, Sri Lanka handed it over to the state-owned China Merchants Group for \$1.12 billion on a 99-year lease. Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46bn external debt in April 2022 after it ran out of foreign exchange to finance even essential imports such as food, fuel and medicine. It secured a \$2.9bn International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout last year, with the programme conditional on a debt deal that satisfies foreign creditors. China had agreed "in principle" to restructure Sri Lanka's debt in December, but neither Colombo nor Beijing had given details and the two are yet to finalise an agreement. Sri Lanka's government said in January that a foreign debt restructure would be finalised by the beginning of April.

# Iranian TV journalist stabbed in London in stable condition

AFP  
London

A UK-based journalist for independent Iranian media who was attacked outside his London home, prompting a counter-terrorism police probe, is "doing very well", his news channel said yesterday. Pouria Zeraati, a presenter for Persian-language outlet Iran International was in stable condition, the channel's spokesman Adam Baillie said. "He's doing very well actually. He's in the hospital recover-

ing from the attack," Baillie told BBC radio, calling Friday's attack "a shocking, shocking incident whatever the outcome of (the) investigation reveals". London's Metropolitan Police has said its counter-terrorism unit is investigating the stabbing. The force said the motive was unclear and officers were keeping "an open mind", but that "the victim's occupation as a journalist at a Persian-language media organisation based in the UK" was being considered. Iran's charge d'affaires in the UK Mehdi Hosseini Matin said yesterday that Tehran "deny any link" to

the incident. Zeraati, in his 30s, sustained injuries to his leg in the mid-afternoon attack outside his home in Wimbledon, southwest London. An Austrian national was convicted last December of spying for a group that may have been preparing to attack Iran International. The Iranian government has declared the outlet a terrorist organisation after it reported on protests sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini. She died in 2022 after her arrest in Tehran for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

# Malaysia arrests three suspected of supplying Israeli man with firearms

Reuters  
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian authorities have arrested three people suspected of supplying firearms to a 36-year-old man carrying an Israeli passport, who was detained this week at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur, police said yesterday. The man, arrested with a bag containing six handguns and 200 bullets, had arrived at Kuala Lumpur International Airport from the United Arab Emirates on March 12 using what authorities believed to be a fake French passport, Inspector-General of Police Razarudin Husain told a press conference late on Friday. The suspect turned over an Israeli passport upon questioning by police, Razarudin said, adding that the man, who has not been publicly identified, had ordered the weapons after arriving in Malaysia and paid for them with cryptocurrency. The Israeli embassy in Singapore did not immediately respond to an e-mailed request for comment. Malaysia and Israel do not have diplomatic relations. Police did not rule out the possibility that the man could be a member of Israeli intelligence, though the suspect told authorities he had entered Malaysia to hunt down another Israeli citi-



Malaysian Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Razarudin Husain speaks during a press conference in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.

zen due to a family dispute. "We do not fully trust this narrative as we suspect there may be another agenda," Razarudin said, adding that the man had stayed at several hotels while in Malaysia. Three Malaysians, including a married couple, were arrested on Friday and have been remanded for seven days on suspicion of supplying weapons and acting as a driver to the Israeli suspect, Razarudin told Reuters yesterday. A pistol was retrieved from a car belonging to the couple, he said. Authorities have been put on

high alert following the man's arrest, with security beefed up for Malaysia's king, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and other high-level figures. Malaysia is a staunch supporter of the Palestinians and has criticised Israel's actions in the Gaza war. Malaysia is home to around 600 Palestinian refugees, according to the UN refugee agency. In 2018, a Palestinian scientist was shot dead in the Malaysian capital by two unidentified men in a killing that the Hamas group suggested was carried out by Israel's Mossad intelligence service. Israel denied the allegations.

# Factory searched over deaths possibly linked to supplements

Japanese health officials searched a Kobayashi Pharmaceutical factory yesterday after the drugmaker reported five deaths possibly linked to dietary supplements using red yeast rice, an official said. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the City of Osaka jointly inspected the factory in Osaka that had

made the supplements containing "Beni-Koji" red yeast, suspected of having caused health damage, the ministry official said. News footage showed officials entering the factory, and the official said the ministry could search other related locations. The factory, which made the product until December, had been

closed due to ageing facilities, Japanese media said. The Osaka-based company could not immediately be reached for comment. Yuko Tomiyama, head of Kobayashi's investor relations, told public broadcaster NHK the firm intends to sincerely deal with the matter and fully co-operate with the investigation.

# Farmer in despair



A farmer looks at flattened wheat crops following heavy rain and strong wind, at a field on the outskirts of Amritsar yesterday.

# Massive fire erupts at Indonesian ammunition depot, no casualties

Reuters  
Jakarta

Indonesian firefighters were struggling to put out a massive fire that broke out on Saturday at a military ammunition facility just outside the capital, causing a series of explosions and sending clouds of smoke into the night sky. No one was reported to have died in the incident, military official Mohamed Hasan told reporters at the scene, saying the fire had broken out in a part of the facility that was used to store expired ammunition. "We've checked the location, perimeters, there are no fatalities," Hasan told a press conference near the site in Bekasi, on the outskirts of Jakarta. "The expired ammunition contains chemicals that can be unstable...There could have been some frictions that sparked the fire," he said. Footage broadcast by local network KompasTV showed orange flames and billowing clouds of smoke rising into the night sky, while loud explosions could be heard from several kilometres (miles) away. Teams of firefighters and paramedics could be seen near the site, but could not approach as the fire raged on, according to local media reports. They said the blaze had started at 6.30pm. Local resident Arga



People watch a fire in the distance from a street in Bogor, West Java. Multiple explosions ripped through a military ammunition warehouse on the outskirts of the Indonesian capital Jakarta, the army said, with no casualties immediately reported.

Nanda told KompasTV he had heard a loud explosion that shook doors and windows. People ran out into the streets thinking it was an earthquake, he said. Army official Kristomei Sianturi told the channel authorities were evacuating

people from nearby neighbourhoods. Firefighters could not yet extinguish the blaze, he said, adding its cause was unknown. He also warned residents not to touch any objects that may be been "thrown" outwards by explosions.



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GULF TIMES

Gold benefits from resurgence in demand due to global uncertainties

Gold prices are gaining and have hit a record high last week propelled by major geopolitical tensions and expectations of interest rate cut in the world’s largest economy, the United States.

These, analysts say, push global investors to turn to gold as a neutral reserve asset. Gold’s role in the economic and investment landscape has long been a subject of considerable debate.

“Historically, gold has served as a store of value, safe haven and internationally convertible asset for millennia,” QNB said in a recent research note.

In fact, gold has even underpinned the global monetary system during the Gold Standard (1871-1914) and the Bretton Woods System (1945-1971), when major currencies had to be pegged to the yellow metal in order to be considered “convertible” or a true reserve currency.

Despite its non-income-generating nature and the expenses involved in its extraction, gold continues to be held in high regard by investors, including households, sovereign states, and corporations. Its enduring appeal lies in its proven ability to act as a reliable store of wealth, safeguarding assets against periods of significant economic distress and systemic macroeconomic challenges, such as the Great Financial Crisis of 2008-09 or the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-22.

With its proven track record as an inflation hedge, gold has reaffirmed its position as a cornerstone of alternative investments

Importantly, after a significant slide from the pandemic highs, gold has recently benefited from a resurgence in demand. Spot gold gained 1.2% to \$2,220.85 per ounce on March 28, logging its best month since July 2020, at a 9% increase, and a second straight quarterly rise. Bullion hit a record high of \$2,225.09 per ounce earlier. Gold could rise further if the markets start to expect a deeper Fed cutting cycle, and has the potential to “hold on to these highs, but we do see signs of buying exhaustion emerging in the very near term,” said Daniel Ghali, commodity strategist at TD Securities.

According to QNB, gold has recently demonstrated again its enduring value as a safeguard against inflation. In the aftermath of the pandemic, monetary authorities in advanced economies faced significant challenges due to a surge in inflation.

This created concerns about the rapid pace of decline in the “real value of money,” as more units of currency would be needed to buy the same baskets of goods and services.

Not surprisingly, during this period of higher inflation, gold prices reached all-time highs. This offered a compelling affirmation of the long-held belief that gold is an effective hedge against inflationary pressures.

Second, the monetary policy cycle in the US and Europe should soon become a tailwind for gold prices. While nominal yields are now much higher than they were in the recent past in most advanced economies, this dynamic is set to change significantly in short order.

Third, the current global economic climate is beset with geopolitical uncertainties, such as the Russo-Ukrainian War, ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, and increasing US-China tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

“These factors can contribute to a heightened risk premium on traditional assets, steering investors to hedge with alternative safe havens,” QNB noted.

With its proven track record as an inflation hedge, gold has reaffirmed its position as a cornerstone of alternative investments.

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Why did Baltimore bridge collapse; what’s the toll?

By Lisa Shumaker

The biggest operational crane on the US Eastern Seaboard will begin clearing the wreckage of Baltimore’s Francis Scott Key Bridge days after a cargo ship crashed into it, sending the span crashing into the harbour and killing six construction workers. Replacing the bridge will likely take years, but the port could reopen within weeks if debris is rapidly removed, according to a Moody’s report.

What is the death toll so far?

The six victims of the bridge collapse were all immigrants from Mexico and Central America who were fixing potholes on the bridge. Divers recovered the bodies of two men on Wednesday. They were identified as Alejandro Hernandez Fuentes, 35, of Baltimore, originally from Mexico, and Dorlian Castillo, 26, of nearby Dundalk, originally from Guatemala.

Authorities are still trying to recover the bodies of the other four men in the 50-foot-deep waters surrounding the twisted ruins due to treacherous conditions. They are Maynor Suazo from Honduras; Jose Lopez from Guatemala; Miguel Luna from El Salvador; and another whose name has not been released. Two other workers were rescued.

Authorities saved lives by stopping vehicles from using the bridge after the ship sent out a mayday call.

The ship also dropped its anchors to slow down, buying time to clear the bridge.

When did the Baltimore bridge collapse?

Shortly after 1am EDT on Tuesday, a container ship named the Dali was travelling down the Patapsco River on its way to Sri Lanka. At 1:24am, it suffered

a total power failure and all its lights went out.

Three minutes later, at 1:27am, the container ship struck a pylon of the bridge, crumpling almost the entire structure into the water.

Less than a minute before impact, a first responder on emergency radio responded to the crew’s mayday call by sending officers to halt traffic onto the bridge.

Without their fast work, the scale of the disaster may have been far greater, even during the early morning hours when vehicular traffic is relatively light.

Tuesday’s disaster may be the worst US bridge collapse since 2007, when a design error caused the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis to plunge into the Mississippi River, killing 13 people.

Why did the bridge collapse?

Bridges such as the one in Baltimore are classified as “fracture critical” by the federal government — meaning that if one portion of the bridge collapses, the rest of the structure falls. There are more than 16,800 such spans in the US, according to the Federal Highway Administration. The head of the National Transportation Safety Board said the bridge lacked structural engineering redundancies common to newer spans, making it more vulnerable to catastrophic collapse.

The Key Bridge opened in 1977 — three years before a similar vessel collision of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge in Tampa Bay, Florida, killed 35 people, and prompted bridge designers to implement better protections for foundation piers.

Who will pay for the damage and how much will the bridge cost?

President Joe Biden promised to visit Baltimore soon and said he wanted the federal government to pay to rebuild the bridge. The

Transportation Department on Thursday awarded \$60mn in “quick release” emergency relief funds to aid in clearing debris and begin the process of rebuilding. To replace the bridge, Congress would need to approve funding. After the bridge collapse in 2007 in Minnesota, Congress allocated \$250mn.

Initial estimates put the cost of rebuilding the bridge at \$600mn, according to economic analysis company IMPLAN.

Federal officials have told Maryland lawmakers the final cost of rebuilding the bridge could soar to at least \$2bn, Roll Call reported, citing a source familiar with the discussions. Insurers could face billions of dollars in claims, analysts said, with one putting the cost at as much as \$4bn, which would make the tragedy a record shipping insurance loss.

How long will it take to rebuild the bridge?

Rebuilding could be a lengthy process and will depend on whether any of the remaining structure can be salvaged. It took five years to construct the original bridge from 1972-1977.

The closure of the port for just one month would cost Maryland \$28 million in lost business, according to IMPLAN.

What ship hit the Baltimore bridge?

The Dali was leaving Baltimore en route to Colombo, Sri Lanka, with 21 crew and two pilots on board.

The ship measures 948 feet — as long as three football fields. It was stacked high with containers but capable of carrying twice as much cargo. Safety investigators recovered the ship’s black box, which can give them the vessel’s position, speed, heading, radar, bridge audio, and radio communications as well as alarms.

The same ship was involved in an incident in the port of

Antwerp, Belgium, in 2016, when it hit a quay as it tried to exit the North Sea container terminal.

A later inspection in June 2023 carried out in San Antonio, Chile, found the vessel had “propulsion and auxiliary machinery” deficiencies, according to data on the public Equasis website, which provides information on ships.

The registered owner of the Singapore-flagged ship is Grace Ocean Pte Ltd, LSEG data show. Synergy Marine Group managed the ship, and Maersk chartered the vessel.

What do we know about the bridge that collapsed?

The Francis Scott Key Bridge was one of three ways to cross the Baltimore Harbour and handled 31,000 cars per day or 11.3mn vehicles a year.

The steel structure was four lanes wide and rose 185 feet above the river.

It opened in 1977 and crosses the Patapsco River, where U.S. national anthem author Francis Scott Key wrote the “Star Spangled Banner” in 1814 after witnessing the British defeat at the Battle of Baltimore and the British bombing of Fort McHenry.

How will the bridge collapse impact the Baltimore port?

Traffic was suspended at the port, the 17th largest in the country, and the jobs of 15,000 people are on hold. The flow of containers to Baltimore can likely be redistributed to bigger ports. However, there could be major disruptions in shipping cars, coal and sugar.

It is the busiest US port for car shipments, handling at least 750,000 vehicles in 2023, according to data from the Maryland Port Administration.

In 2023, the port was the second busiest for coal exports.

It is also the largest US port by volume for handling farm and construction machinery, as well as agricultural products such as sugar and salt. — Reuters



Cranes begin the clean-up of the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge and the container ship Dali in Baltimore, Maryland, yesterday. (AFP)



# Dutch hostage drama over; armed suspect arrested

AFP  
Ede (Netherlands)

A hostage drama in The Netherlands that lasted several hours ended without bloodshed yesterday as all four hostages were freed and police took the suspect into custody.

Authorities said there was no reason to suspect a “terrorist motive” for the ordeal, which took place at a night spot popular with young people in the central Dutch town of Ede.

Police said they received reports of a potential hostage situation at 5:15am at the Cafe Petticoat, with local media saying a “confused” man burst in as staff were clearing up after a party.

The man was armed with “several knives” that he showed to the hostages, prosecutor Marthyne Kunst told reporters at a news conference in the town hall.

Police are also investigating a black backpack he was carrying with him, amid reports that the hostage-taker had threatened to use explosives.

Authorities later confirmed there were in fact no explosives in the backpack.

Police spokesman Anne Jan Oosterheert said officers were on the scene within

minutes, immediately opening negotiations with the man.

“Luckily that all went well,” he said, declining to offer details of the negotiations.

The suspect is known to the police and has a previous conviction for threatening behaviour. Investigations are under way as to his motive and psychological state, Kunst said.

“Great respect and appreciation for police, emergency services and special forces who brought the hostage situation... to a successful conclusion,” said outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

“I wish everyone affected a great deal of strength to deal with these intense and dramatic events,” he added.

The incident sparked a major deployment including riot police and explosives experts.

Police cleared the town centre and evacuated the residents of some 150 buildings near the cafe. Trains were diverted away from the town as a precaution.

Hours after the ordeal began, an initial group of three people was released, pictures from public broadcaster NOS showing them exiting the building with their hands in the air.

The fourth hostage was freed shortly



Three hostages (faces obscured) leave after being held in the cafe Petticoat in Ede yesterday. (AFP)

afterwards, with the suspected hostage-taker then arrested.

NOS images showed a man kneeling on the ground with his hands behind his back, as officers restrained him with handcuffs.

“A terrible situation for all these people. My concern and thoughts go out to them and their loved ones. I hope that the situation is now resolved quickly and safely,” said Ede mayor Rene Verhulst.

“Emotions are high” in the town, said the mayor, saying it had been “a very intense Saturday morning.”

He said he would soon be visiting the hostages, who were employees of the cafe.

“They were confronted by a man who said he had explosives in his bag and threatened them with knives. They are completely shocked,” Verhulst said.

The Netherlands has seen a series of terror attacks and plots but not on the scale of other European countries, such as France or Britain.

In 2019, the country was stunned by a shooting spree on a tram in the city of Utrecht that claimed four lives.

In the most serious incident involving a terror attack, outspoken Dutch anti-Islam film director Theo van Gogh was shot and stabbed to death in 2004 in Amsterdam by a man with ties to a Dutch Islamist terror network.

Last year, a 27-year-old man armed with two guns held several people hostage at an Apple store in Amsterdam, sparking a tense five-hour ordeal.

That stand-off ended when the suspect was hit by a police car as he chased his last hostage who made a desperate break for freedom and ran out of the store.

He later died in hospital from his injuries.

## Trudeau on back foot over carbon tax

Polluters should pay up, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau insists. But pressure is mounting to scrap his signature climate policy, a federal levy on CO2 emissions, as ordinary Canadians see the law increase their own cost of living.

The levy, applied to a myriad of fossil fuels used by both industry and consumers, is scheduled to rise from Can\$64 to Can\$80 (US\$48 to US\$59) per metric ton of carbon on April 1, in a bid to see Canadians slash their total carbon emissions by 40-45 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

But it's adding to household costs at the same time that people are feeling the bite from inflation. Seven provinces have asked the government to pause or cancel the increase, which would add about three cents per liter (quarter gallon) to the price of gasoline.

Newfoundland Premier Andrew Furey — a liberal from Trudeau's own party — was the latest this month to join his conservative peers in seeking a reprieve “at least until inflation stabilises.”

Saskatchewan, meanwhile, is refusing to collect and remit the tax to Ottawa.

In some ways Trudeau has already caved to pressure, issuing in October a three-year exemption of the tax on home heating oil. The Atlantic region, where 24 Liberal House of Commons seats are at stake, benefits the most from the change.

In parliament recently, a mushroom farmer's hefty gas bill became the focal point of sparring match between Trudeau and his main rival, conservative leader Pierre Poilievre — who vowed to “axe the tax” if he defeats the Liberals in elections next year.

Mike Medeiros paid Can\$16,668.39 for the federal carbon tax on his February natural gas bill that hit a total of Can\$62,441.95.

His Osgoode, Ontario, farm employs 160 workers producing 200,000 pounds of mushrooms per week, and uses 1.3mn cubic meters of natural gas per year to sterilise and control the heat and humidity in 50 growing rooms.

By contrast, the average Canadian home uses 2,400 cubic meters of gas.

By the time the carbon tax increases to \$170, set for 2030, “our carbon tax costs for heating alone will be half a million dollars,” Medeiros told AFP. “I can't absorb that cost.”

Ottawa has rolled out more than 10 climate plans since 1990 but all have failed to achieve their goals, making Canada an outlier among G7 nations, with its greenhouse gas emissions rising 13.9% to 670 megatonnes from 1990 to 2021.

The environment commissioner in November said its latest efforts could also fall short of the 2030 target, despite government assurances.

According to the Angus Reid Institute, a public opinion research group, Canada's soaring cost of living is the top concern for 56% of Canadians, outweighing climate change, which polls as the top concern for 31% of respondents.

And 40% of those polled want the carbon tax abolished versus only 27% percent who say it should increase as planned.

Ottawa waitress Rima Sab, 54, said she doesn't like paying the federal levy, but supports it.

“The carbon tax sucks. But climate change sucks more,” she said. “If we don't do something now, what will be left for my kids?”

# Peru president's home raided in luxury watch investigation

AFP  
Lima

Peruvian authorities raided President Dina Boluarte's home and the government palace early yesterday as part of an ongoing corruption investigation related to undisclosed luxury watches.

The search was carried out “according to the court order,” Colonel Harvey Colchado of the police told reporters. He would not say whether anything suspect had been found.

According to a police document obtained by AFP, about 40 agents and prosecutors were involved in the house raid, which was searching for Rolex watches that Boluarte had not publicly declared.

The raid “is for the purpose of search and seizure,” police said.

The embattled president was at the palace at the time, officials said. In a brief message on X, the presidency said the search was carried out “normally and without any incident.”

Prime Minister Gustavo Adrianzen slammed the raid as an “intolerable outrage” and “disproportionate and unconstitutional.”

He added, however, that Boluarte would “co-operate with the prosecution” and provide a statement when summoned.

Authorities launched an investigation into Boluarte this month after a news outlet drew attention to pictures of her sporting luxury watches at public events.

Rolex watches can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Yesterday's raid, a joint opera-



Police officers walk outside the Government Palace (right) after prosecutors raided home of President Dina Boluarte (left) as part of inquiries into possible illicit enrichment and failure to declare ownership of luxury watches in Lima yesterday. (Reuters)

tion between the police and the prosecutor's office, was broadcast on local television channel Latina.

Government agents could be seen surrounding the house in the Surquillo District of the capital Lima while officers blocked oncoming traffic.

The surprise, early-morning raid was requested by the public prosecutor and authorised by the Supreme Court of Preparatory Investigation.

It came after prosecutors refused Boluarte's request for more time to respond to a subpoena demanding she furnish proof of purchase for her watches.

Already facing declining approval ratings — currently around 10% — she was plunged into a fresh political crisis by the probe into whether she has illegally en-

riched herself while in office.

If she is indicted in the case, a trial could not take place until after her term ends in July 2026 or she is impeached, according to the constitution.

Congress potentially could seek her dismissal on grounds of “moral incapacity,” but that would require the unlikely co-operation of the right-leaning groups that control the parliament — and are Boluarte's main support — with their left-wing rivals.

The scandal erupted after local news outlet La Encerrona reported in mid-March that Boluarte had worn various Rolex timepieces at official events.

The outlet drew attention to the watches with pictures dating from December 2022, when Boluarte took office.

The government comptroller later announced it would review Boluarte's asset declarations from the past two years to search for any irregularities.

Boluarte, 61, has staunchly defended herself.

“I entered the Government Palace with clean hands, and I will leave it with clean hands,” she said last week.

Responding to questions about how she could afford such expensive timepieces on a public salary, she said they were a product of working hard since she was 18 years old.

The lawyer and former vice president became Peru's first woman president after leftist leader Pedro Castillo tried to dissolve Congress and rule by decree, leading to his quick ouster and arrest.

## Bulgaria, Romania take first steps into Europe's vast visa-free zone

After 13 years of waiting, Bulgaria and Romania are to partially join the Europe's vast Schengen area of free movement today, opening up travel by air and sea without border checks in a “historic” move. Land border controls will however remain in place due to Austria's opposition to the eastern European countries becoming full members of

the Schengen zone for fear of an influx of asylum seekers. Despite the partial membership, the lifting of controls at the two countries' air and sea borders is of significant symbolic value. Admission to Schengen is an “important milestone” for Bulgaria and Romania, symbolising a “question of dignity, of belonging to the European Union,” according to foreign

policy analyst Stefan Popescu. “Any Romanian who had to walk down a lane separate from other European citizens felt being treated differently,” he told AFP.

Ivan Petrov, a 35-year-old Bulgarian marketing executive who lives in France, said he was enthusiastic about less stressful travelling and the time he would be able to save. “This is a great success

for both countries. And a historic moment for the Schengen area — the largest area of free movement in the world. Together, we are building a stronger, more united Europe for all our citizens,” EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement yesterday. With Bulgaria and Romania joining from today, the Schengen zone will comprise 29 members — 25 of the

27 European Union member states, as well as Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

According to the Romanian government, Schengen rules will apply to four sea ports and 17 airports, with the country's Otopeni airport near the capital Bucharest serving as the biggest hub for Schengen flights.

## ‘Harassed’ pop star Lizzo says ‘I quit’

Pop star Lizzo (**pictured**), who built her brand on being a poster girl for self-love but has been hit by employee harassment suits, said she is quitting, tired of being targeted for her looks and character.

It was not immediately clear if the 35-year-old Grammy-winner meant the music industry, social media, or something else.

Her statement came in an Instagram post on Friday, a day after she appeared at a Democratic campaign event for President Joe Biden.

“I'm getting tired of putting up with being dragged by everyone in my life and on the Internet,” Lizzo, born Melissa Viviane Jefferson, wrote.

“All I want is to make music and make people happy and help the world be a little better than how I found it,” she continued.

“But I'm starting to feel like the world doesn't want me in it.”

“I didn't sign up for this shit,” she wrote, adding in all capital letters: “I QUIT.”

Lizzo, whose self-love message has resonated around the globe, was sued by three of her former dancers last year after they alleged



sexual, religious and racial harassment, among other accusations.

Last month a judge dismissed some of the claims, but denied Lizzo's motion to toss out the lawsuit, according to Billboard.

Earlier this month she appeared to be enthusiastic about her career, posting: “I'm writing some of the best music and I'm so

excited for y'all to hear.”

On Thursday night she helped warm up the crowd before Biden, along with former Democratic presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, appeared at a fundraiser in New York City that raised a record \$25 million.

“It's shameful that Lizzo would be chosen to headline an event like this amid such egregious allegations,” a lawyer for her former dancers, Ron Zambrano, was quoted as telling NewsNation.

In her Instagram post, Lizzo said she was “constantly up against lies being told about me for clout & views,” and that she was “the butt of the joke every single time because of how I look.”

Her character was “being picked apart by people who don't know me,” the singer said.

Many of the responses were cruel jibes epitomising what the singer was complaining about.

But many were supportive — including from fans who also know a thing or two about being in the public eye.

“We love you Queen,” reality star and businesswoman Paris Hilton wrote.

## Protesters arrested in Pakistan for setting KFC joint on fire

More than 50 men have been arrested in Pakistan after a crowd chanting anti-Israel slogans picketed and set fire to a restaurant belonging to American fast food chain KFC, police said yesterday.

The incident took place on Friday evening in the northeastern town of Mirpur, in the Pakistan-administered region of Kashmir, after protesters gathered on the town's main thoroughfare after Ramadan evening prayers.

Videos circulating on social media show men chanting anti-Israel slogans, carrying a banner inscribed with “Free Palestine”.

Nearly 400 protesters gathered at the height of the demonstration and clashes broke out with the police, Mirpur police chief Kamran Mughal told AFP. “We had told them that they can only protest in a certain area. But, when their numbers started growing, they made their way over to KFC,” said police superintendent Mughal.

Other videos from inside the restaurant show smashed windows, broken furniture and damaged equipment.

The crowd set fire to the building, but it did not completely burn down.

Nine police officers were injured by stones thrown by the demonstrators and more than 50 men were arrested, said Mughal.

Restaurant owner Chaudhary Saeed told AFP that a week ago he had sent the administration a video showing a group of around 10 mostly young men planning the attack.

“We are here because our mission is to shut down KFC next Friday. Our brothers and sisters (in Gaza) are being subjected to cruelty,” one of the men could be heard declaring in the video.

Another loudly chimed in, saying “No Israeli products, no Coke” to loud applause.



# Awqaf honours winners of Qur'an competition

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has honoured winners of various categories of the 29th Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohamed Bin Thani Holy Qur'an contest.

According to an official statement from Awqaf, a total of 1,836 male and female winners were honoured.

These included Qataris and residents. The ceremony of honouring the male winners was held at the Grand Mosque where certificates of appreciation and rewards were distributed in the presence of scholars and dignitaries.

The female winners received the certificates and rewards at the headquarters of the Women's Memorisation Division at Al Waab.

Sheikh Dr Ahmed Abdul Qadir al-Farjawi gave a speech during the ceremony, during which he noted that the greatest knowl-



edge that God bestows upon his servants is teaching the holy Qur'an.

He thanked every father, every mother, and every guardian who

was keen to urge his children to learn the Qur'an, memorise its verses and contemplate its meanings.

Imam Muhammad bin Abdul

Wahhab Mosque and the headquarters of the Women's Memorisation Division at Al Waab hosted the competition and various accompanying activities.

As part of the competition, various Qur'an-learning sessions were held in the presence of reciters and scholars, including Abdul Hamid al-Khedar al-

Hatmi, Saleh al-Ansari and Abdul Basit Abdullah Abu al-Azm.

The activities were aimed at encouraging memorisation and contemplation of the Qur'an.

## Ramadan rituals inspire visual arts, say Qatari artists

The atmosphere of the holy month of Ramadan serves as a source of inspiration for Qatari artists, including visual artists and photographers, due to the blending of spiritual dimensions and social heritage in people's relationship with their religion and daily lives.

Qatari creatives celebrate the aesthetics of heritage and cultural identity in their artistic works, drawing inspiration from various dimensions of tradition. They present these ideas in different artistic formats and diverse styles in photography, sculpture, composition, and graphics.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), prominent photographers and visual artists highlighted the inspirational aspects of Ramadan rituals and its atmosphere in their artistic experiences.

Renowned visual artist Hassan al-Mulla, a pioneer in artistic creativity and visual arts, emphasised in a statement to QNA that the environment, nature, traditional architecture, and places, with their markets, have always been a constant source of artistic inspiration for him. He noted that cultural and social heritage, with its stories and lifestyle in the past, provided him with a rich reservoir of visions and projects embodied in his paintings, distinguishing his artistic works and persona as an artist.

Al-Mulla explained that the atmosphere of the holy month of Ramadan has been etched in his memory since childhood, with its spiritual details, rituals, and social dimensions. He highlighted many scenes in his works, some of which are recalled from childhood memories, such as the preparation of traditional Qatari households to welcome the month by preparing their special meals.

Al-Mulla added that his paintings and artistic works are rich with scenes derived from the atmosphere of Ramadan. He explained that these scenes

form a spiritual and cultural asset for the artist, shaping his memory and imagination, pointing out that his artistic experience represents a celebration of the beauty of this heritage, its traditions, and the spiritual and social atmospheres associated with it.

On his part, visual artist Hassan Bujassum explained that the atmosphere of Ramadan, with its rituals and fasting-related practices, provides the artist with spiritual enrichment and motivates them to document these moments in their works. The social aspects associated with this month embody authentic moments of the community's customs and traditions, in terms of communication, giving, mercy, and filial piety. He stated that his artistic experience is inspired by society and the meanings of harmony, socialising, giving, and familial ties, all of which are evident during the holy month, where everyone competes to do good and fulfil religious and social duties to the best of their abilities.

Bujassum emphasised that the pursuit of excellence is the general characteristic of people's behaviour during Ramadan, as everyone strives in worship and work, and everyone is keen to offer their best during this blessed month. Therefore, visual artists strive to highlight their perspectives on the atmosphere of Ramadan in the best possible ways and styles, affirming that their works inspired by Ramadan celebrate identity, community, traditions, customs, and distinguished cultural heritage.

Jassim al-Muhannadi, an award-winning photographer locally, regionally, and internationally, affirmed that visual arts in general, and photography in particular, have creatively contributed to documenting elements of national identity, cultural heritage, and contemporary Qatari renaissance in its various dimensions. (QNA)

## Msheireb Museums celebrates Ramadan with cultural immersion for residents



The programme provided a warm introduction to the nation's cherished traditions...

Msheireb Downtown Doha is sharing in the spirit of Ramadan by offering residents a unique opportunity to explore and experience Qatar's rich heritage and traditions through the Msheireb Museums' Ramadan events and programmes.

During the second half of Ramadan, Msheireb Museums hosted a series of Iftars and interactive workshops for Msheireb residents to delve into the cultural and spiritual significance of the holy month. A highlight of the experience was witnessing the traditional Ramadan cannon firing at the Msheireb Eid Prayer ground, marking the end of the daily fast at sunset.

"Ramadan is a time for reflection and an opportunity to share wonderful traditions and customs that are integral to Qatari identity," said Msheireb

Museums Exhibitions and Programmes manager Fahad al-Turky. "Through this initiative, we wanted to nurture a deeper appreciation for our cultural heritage while strengthening the bonds within our diverse community. We believe that cultural immersion plays a crucial role in bridging gaps and creating a welcoming environment for expats and visitors."

"Engaging our residents in the local traditions adds unique layers to their living experience and helps build communities," added Abdulla al-Emadi, acting lead - residential leasing at Msheireb Properties. "We are always keen to host such initiatives at Msheireb Museums, allowing our residents to gain a deeper exposure to Qatar's vibrant culture and history." Participants had the opportunity to savour the flavours of Ramadan with a



...It helped residents to connect with Qatar's artistic legacy through interactive experiences.

traditional Qatari Iftar, featuring mouthwatering local cuisine. The evenings concluded with a cultural quiz, allowing attendees to showcase their knowledge and engage in lively discussions.

Additionally, hands-on workshops displayed traditional handicrafts and arts, enabling residents to connect with Qatar's artistic legacy through interactive experiences.

For those new to Msheireb Downtown Doha, the programme provided a warm introduction to the nation's cherished traditions, strengthening a sense of belonging and appreciation for the country's multicultural community.

Participating in the Ramadan programme has been an eye-opening experience," shared Msheireb Downtown Doha resident, Eleni Michaloutsou. "It has allowed me and my family

to really connect with my new home and neighbours in Qatar by learning about the local culture.

The programme was created in collaboration with Embrace Doha, an initiative dedicated to celebrating and preserving cultural heritage and traditions through workshops and intimate community experiences.

"Cultural exchange is the bedrock of inclusivity," emphasised, Amal al-Shammari, founder of Embrace Doha. "By inviting Msheireb Downtown Doha residents to immerse themselves in local traditions, we contribute to a deeper appreciation for the diversity that enriches our country. Our heartfelt Ramadan Iftar experience not only celebrates shared values but also builds connections that transcend boundaries, cultivating a harmonious and interconnected community."

## HMC paediatric care centre observes World Down Syndrome Day

To commemorate World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) 2024, Al Maha Specialised Paediatric Care Centre, Al Wakra Hospital at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) raised awareness among the public to connect with individuals affected by Down Syndrome to promote their optimal quality of life and protect their rights.

WDSD, marked on March, 21 is a global awareness day which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012. The date for WDSD being the 21st day of March, was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome.

On WDSD 2024, educational and awareness leaflets, posters, and roll-ups about Down Syndrome were on display in the awareness booths at the lobby of Al Maha Specialised Paediatric Care Centre and the child development centre to raise awareness of the condition among hospital visitors.

Dr Ammar Abou Shaheen, deputy head of the Child Development Services, explains that the theme for this year's WDSD is "End the Stereotypes" aiming to advo-



Educational and awareness leaflets, posters, and roll-ups about Down Syndrome were on display.

cate for the rights, inclusion, and well-being of people with Down syndrome. Dr Shaheen said: "This year's theme signals the importance of understanding that individuals affected with Down Syndrome have rights like all people, that are based on shared values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect, and independence. Each person with Down Syndrome is different.

They don't all act the same way or like the same things. Each has an individual identity, interests, likes and dislikes, gifts and talents, just like everyone else."

"For World Down Syndrome Day 2024, we call for people to 'End the Stereotypes'. A stereotype is a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like. They are often inaccurate, or

simply wrong. Stereotypes can stop us from treating individuals with Down Syndrome like other people," Dr Shaheen noted.

He emphasised that advocacy can change the way that people think, work, and behave. "By taking action together, we can ensure that the rights of individuals having Down syndrome are protected, warranting their inclusion, par-

ticipation and integration into the community and society as a whole." Dr Shaheen explained further that HMC provides children with Down Syndrome with a variety of programmes and services, including developmental screening and evaluations and early intervention programme at the Al Maha Specialised Paediatric Care Centre and the Child Development

Centre. According to him, now the centre provides services to around 122 children with Down Syndrome who receive therapeutic interventions and family training programs conducted by highly qualified multi-disciplinary teams of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, special education experts and paediatric psychology specialists.



HMC raised awareness among the public to connect with individuals affected by Down Syndrome.