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**800 excluded from Paris Olympics**

Around 800 people who “did not have good intentions” have been excluded from the Paris Olympics over security fears, French interior minister Gerald Darmanin said. The list includes 15 deemed to represent the most serious threat to national security. “The French people must know that we absolutely check everyone who approaches the Olympic Games ...There are a million checks to be done; we have already carried out 180,000 checks. We have excluded 800 people including 15 on ‘Fiches S’ (the dossier of the most serious threats).”

**Peru president told to present ‘watches’**

Peru’s prosecutor’s office yesterday ordered President Dina Boluarte to present any Rolex watches in her possession, after a raid on her home and office as part of a corruption probe. Boluarte, 61, is being investigated for alleged illegal enrichment and failing to declare several luxury watches which she has been spotted wearing since coming to power in 2022, following her predecessor’s arrest. The statement from the prosecutor’s office said that officers had not found the luxury watches during a dawn raid on Saturday. **Page 11**

**Israeli strike kills Hezbollah fighter**

An air strike in Lebanon “eliminated” a Hezbollah missile unit commander yesterday, Israel’s military said, with Israel and the Iran-backed group exchanging near-daily cross-border fire for months. The Israeli Air Force “struck a vehicle in the area of Kunin in Lebanon in which Ismail al-Zin was located,” the military said.

**‘Israel breached humanitarian law’**

The Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the United Kingdom Parliament Alicia Kearns revealed that the government has received legal advice that Israel had violated international humanitarian law in Gaza. Kearns said that she is convinced that Israel has not adhered to international humanitarian law.

**Opposition makes gains in Turkiye**

The main Turkish opposition party yesterday claimed victory in the mayoral race in the capital Ankara as the party built a solid lead in the count for control of Istanbul, according to partial results from local elections. In Ankara, mayor Mansur Yavas of the Republican People’s Party (CHP) said “the elections are over, we will continue to serve Ankara”. Yavas was leading with 58.6% of the vote to 33.5% for his opponent from the country’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), from 46.4% of ballot boxes opened. In Istanbul, current mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, had 50.4% of the vote to his AKP rival’s 40.9%. **Page 11**

RAMADAN THOUGHT

*Surely! Allah wrongs not even of the weight of an atom (or a small ant), but if there is any good (done), He doubles it, and gives from Him a great reward. (Qur’an 4: 40)*

Prayer times

Fajr...4.08; Zuhr...11.38; Asr...3.06; Maghrib...5.53; Isha...7.23

Fasting times

Iftar today .....5.53pm

Imsak tomorrow.....3.57am

# QatarEnergy charts 19 new LNG vessels

## ● ‘Historic’ expansion takes number of conventional LNG vessels to 104

**By Pratap John**  
Business Editor

QatarEnergy’s “historic” fleet expansion programme now totals 104 conventional LNG vessels with yesterday’s long-term time charter party (TCP) agreements with four international shipowners for the operation of some 19 LNG vessels. The agreements were signed with top executives of the four international shipowners by HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, also the President and CEO of QatarEnergy at the company’s headquarters.

Yesterday’s long-term time charter party (TCP) agreements with four international shipowners for the operation of 19 new, ultra-modern conventional size LNG vessels were part of the second ship-owner tender under QatarEnergy’s LNG fleet expansion programme.

The agreements cater for the operation of six vessels by CMES LNG Carrier Investment Inc., six vessels by Shandong Marine Energy (Singapore) Pte Ltd., and



HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi with top executives of the four international shipowners besides senior QatarEnergy executives following the agreement signing yesterday. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

three vessels by MISC Berhad; all of which are being constructed at Samsung Heavy Industries in South Korea.

The remaining four vessels will be operated by a joint venture of Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha Ltd. (K-Line) and Hyundai Glovis Co. Ltd. and are being constructed at Hanwha Ocean (formerly Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering) also in South Korea.

Al-Kaabi signed four separate sets of agreements with Wang Yongxin, president & CEO of CMES LNG Carrier Investment, Li Maozhong, chairman, Shandong Marine Energy, Satoshi Kanamori, managing executive officer, K Line and Jungsuk Kim, vice-president,

Hyundai Glovis and Captain Rajalingam Subramaniam, president & CEO, MISC Berhad.

Commenting on the occasion, al-Kaabi said: “Today’s signings form a significant milestone in QatarEnergy’s LNG fleet expansion programme, as it marks the conclusion of the conventional sizes vessels portion of programme,

bringing the total number of ships for which we have signed TCPs to 104 vessels, a massive undertaking that is the largest shipbuilding and leasing programme ever in the history of the industry.

“These ships will support our expanded LNG production capacity from the North Field in Qatar and Golden Pass in the US, while also meeting our long-term fleet replacement requirements. The careful shipowner selection process followed a detailed and rigorous global tender, signifying QatarEnergy’s commitment to expanding its fleet of modern LNG carriers in collaboration with world-class shipowners and in an open and transparent manner.”

Al-Kaabi added, “We are very proud to strengthen our collaboration with these esteemed shipowners. And, we have full confidence that the 19 vessels will be operated with the latest and most advanced safety, technical and environmental standards. This is an important undertaking that will enable QatarEnergy to continue delivering cleaner energy to the world safely and reliably. **To Page 4**

# Fighting rages across Gaza amid revival of truce talks

**Reuters**  
Cairo

Israeli strikes killed 77 Palestinians in Gaza in the past 24 hours, health authorities said yesterday, as Egypt hosted an Israeli delegation for a new round of talks in a bid to secure a truce with Gaza’s Hamas rulers.

Palestinian health officials and Hamas media said a strike hit several tents inside the Al-Aqsa Hospital, killing four people and wounding several, including five journalists.

More than 32,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel’s military offensive in Gaza since Oct. 7, according to the health authorities. Health officials say most of the fatalities are civilians, while Israel says at least a third are fighters.

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



Palestinians check the damage at a makeshift camp for displaced people in front of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

A Hamas official voiced pessimism that a new round of hostage and truce talks would lead to any breakthrough because the gap between the two sides’ positions was too wide.

“I doubt that there will be any progress in these negotiations because the positions are too far apart. Netanyahu is not serious and not interested,” the official,

who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

**Massacre toll 32,782**

The number of deaths due to the persistent Israeli aggression on Gaza has risen to 32,782 martyrs and 75,298 wounded since October, the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported in a statement yesterday.

# Vodafone Qatar achieves record 10+Gbps speed

Vodafone Qatar has reached a significant milestone in its quest to provide the next generation of 5G technologies having successfully tested 10+Gbps peak speed on a 5.5G high band network.

During the landmark trial, Vodafone Qatar showcased the remarkable speed of 10+Gbps, achieving unprecedented data speeds, as it continues to push the boundaries of innovation.

Providing network speeds up to ten times faster than 5G and leveraging the power of more spectrum bandwidth could be transformational for consumers, households, and industries, including immersive virtual reality experiences, holographic video communication, autonomous driving vehicles, smart home, smart cities, smart manufacturing, ushering in a future defined by seamless connectivity and unparalleled innovation for different industries.

Ramy Bector, chief technology officer at Vodafone Qatar, said: “As Vodafone Qatar continues to push the boundaries of technological innovation, the journey towards a fully connected world accelerates. Vodafone Qatar’s achievement in this trial marks a significant milestone in the evolution of telecommunications.

“Through pioneering spirit, relentless dedication, and unwavering commitment to innovation, Vodafone Qatar reaffirms its position as one of the leaders in the telecommunications industry regionally and globally.”

5.5G technology is set to emerge as a game changer for mobile users across the world, featuring a user speed 10 times that of 5G which could reshape the future of the sector, revolutionising connectivity beyond conventional limits.



# Largest touring Lego shows in Qatar for Eid al-Fitr

THE ULTIMATE LEGO® ADVENTURE  
IS COMING TO QATAR!



Families across the region and beyond will have the opportunity to experience the largest touring Lego shows event in Qatar this Eid al-Fitr, taking place at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) from April 10 to 25.

Organised by Visit Qatar, this inaugural event promises to be a memorable occasion for Lego enthusiasts and families seeking unique holiday experiences.

Lego Shows Qatar 2024 is all set to transform the QNCC into a vibrant Lego universe, sprawling over 10,000sq m and featuring 26 creatively themed areas and exciting activities for the whole family.

The event is designed to cater to visitors of all ages, offering a mul-

titude of interactive zones, life-size Lego Minifigure characters, and an extensive range of food and hospitality options.

Highlights of the event include impressive Lego themes, interactive zones, life-size Lego figures, inflatable bricks and bounce park, and culinary delights.

Fans can immerse themselves in popular Lego themes such as Ninjago, City, Duplo, and Friends. Each theme features intricate models and engaging activities tailored to both young fans and adult aficionados alike.

With 26 distinct themed areas, the event offers a rich variety of interactive and educational fun activities. From building challenges to creative workshops,

there’s something for everyone.

Wandering life-size Lego Minifigures will be a sight to behold, offering unique photo opportunities and interactions. Covering an area of 1,700sq m, this first-of-its-kind inflatable park adds an exciting dimension to the Lego adventure, combining physical activity with imaginative play.

A variety of food options will be available, catering to the tastes of a diverse audience and enhancing the overall event experience.

The event will be open daily from 1pm to 11pm. The admission categories: General Day Pass | for individuals, Family Day Pass | Admits 5, VIP Pass – Entitles Access to VIP Hospitality Lounge | for individuals.



# Awqaf opens new mosque at Rawdat Al-Hamamah

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened a new mosque in the Rawdat Al-Hamamah area, according to a statement from Awqaf. The mosque can accommodate 575 male and female worshippers. Spread over an area of 4,453sq m, the mosque has houses for the imam and the muezzin.

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 1392, the mosque has a main prayer hall that can accommodate 500 worshippers in addition to a women's hall for 75. The mosque also includes a spacious ablution place in addition to a large number of public parking lots. Several of these have been allocated to persons with disabilities. The entrances and exits of the mosque are disabled-friendly.

The ministry's plans to build mosques also take into account the population density map along with engineering, architectural specifications and the heritage aspect within the framework of caring for the mosques to per-



form 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.



# UDC approves distribution of 5.5% cash dividend worth QR194.7mn



UDC chairman Ahmed bin Ali al-Hammadi presiding over the annual ordinary and extraordinary general assembly meeting yesterday.

United Development Company's (UDC) annual general assembly approved yesterday the distribution of 5.5% (5.5 Qatari dirhams per share) cash dividends amounting to QR194.7mn.

The annual ordinary and extraordinary general assembly meeting was presided over by UDC chairman Ahmed bin Ali al-Hammadi in the presence of the company's board of directors, representatives of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and shareholders, amongst others.

Al-Hammadi said: "The company has achieved a net profit of QR401.7mn and total revenues of QR2.1bn. The net profit attributable to equity shareholders stood at QR402mn with basic earnings per share of QR0.114."

He added: "The proposed dividends for the year 2023 are in line with the value of the real estate projects that the company is continuing to develop. Looking forward to 2024, UDC renews its commitment to completing development projects on Gewan Island, attracting investors, buyers, and tenants, and actively contributing to the Qatari economy and tourism sector.

"Emphasis will continue on technological advancements and sustainability measures to enrich the stakeholder experience. UDC also plans to reactivate the operations of some of its key subsidiaries, with the aim of diversifying revenue sources, aligning with the evolving needs of the company as it transitions towards managing communities and exploring new revenue streams."

Ibrahim Jassim al-Othman, UDC president, CEO, and member of the board, stated: "In 2023, our overarching vision was to position The Pearl Island and Gewan Island prominently on the global investment map. Through a series of targeted roadshows and meticulously planned marketing initiatives, we successfully attracted attention from international investors seeking to benefit from Qatar's residency scheme, making UDC a preferred choice for both resident and non-resident foreign investors."

"Looking specifically at residential projects on The Pearl Island, we successfully met our annual targets for residential sales and leasing. The high tenant occupancy for both residential and

retail spaces reflects the growing demand for our unique offerings and demonstrates our commitment to providing value and sustainable growth."

Al-Othman said the achievements further encompassed Gewan Island which witnessed significant progress in the completion of development and infrastructure works, as well as utility networks.

The handover of retail units to tenants for fit-out preparations also contributes to accelerating the pace of completing Crystal Residence and Crystal Walkway, setting the stage for the island's operation in 2024, he noted.

Highlighting the company's plans and prospects for 2024, al-Othman added: "The inauguration of The Pearl International Hospital and continued efforts to attract foreign investments are among our strategic goals. Sustainability and community management will remain pivotal in maintaining The Pearl Island's reputation as a preferred living and leisure destination. In Gewan Island, we anticipate the handover of Crystal Residence units and the launch of retail activity, marking a significant milestone."

# The Night of Decree

If one cannot draw spiritual benefit during this month (Ramadan), then in what other month can he find benefit? If one does not turn in repentance to his Lord during this month, then at what other time will he do so? If one slackens from doing good deeds now, then when will he do them? You should hasten to seize the opportunity in this month, before it is too late! You should preserve your souls from the ways of misery and destruction.

The blessed month is waning; its precious days and nights are approaching their end. So try to utilise the remaining period by doing good deeds and repenting to Allah. All is well that ends well. So, you have to make your deeds at the end of this month as good as you can. Two-thirds of the month of Ramadan is over and one-third, which is the best of all the three parts, still remains. Exert your efforts during these ten days by spending in charity, doing righteous deeds and offering optional night prayer, submitting yourselves to Allah, hoping for His good reward and seeking protection from His punishment. Allah Says (what means): "And when My slaves ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me (by obedience) and believe in Me that they may be rightly guided." [Qur'an 2: 186]

Our Lord descends each night to the sky of the earth when the final third of the night remains. He offers His slaves out of His generosity, saying: "Who is saying a prayer to Me, that I may answer it? Who is asking something of Me, that I may give it to him? Who is asking forgiveness of Me, that I may forgive him?" (Bukhari & Muslim)

In the last ten days of Ramadan, there is Laylat Al-Qadr (the Night of Decree) in which every precise matter of wisdom is made distinct and all events of the coming year are decreed. It is on this night that angels descend from the heavens and blessings become abundant. Whoever prays its nights, believing in it, and hoping for its reward from Allah, Allah will forgive all his previous sins. Whoever misses



this night and deprives himself of its good; he is to blame. Allah did not specify its order among the ten nights so that people may exert their utmost efforts during all ten days in worship, performing optional night prayer, reciting the Noble Qur'an and doing righteous deeds. This is also a means of distinction between those who are active in devotion and those who are not. If Laylat Al-Qadr were identified, many people would have limited themselves to devotion on that night only, neglecting other nights. There would also be no criteria for evaluation between the hardworking people and the lazy ones.

So, seek the reward of Laylat Al-Qadr by doing good deeds consistently and sincerely. Ask Allah for a share of His reward and to protect you from coming out of Ramadan empty-handed.

If you hear or recite a Qur'anic verse that mentions His mercy, ask Allah to provide you from His bounties. When you hear or recite a Qur'anic verse that contains a warning, ask Allah's protection from His punishment. Utter glorifications of Allah many times in your Rukoo' (bowing) and make many supplications in your Sajdah (prostration), as a Muslim is nearest to Allah when he is in prostration. A person may supplicate Allah for himself, his parents, children, relatives and all those who are dear to him from among the Muslims. Prolong the Qiyaam (standing) after rising from Rukoo' (bowing) and the Jalsah (sitting) after rising from Sajdah (prostra-

tion), so that you may maintain an equilibrium among all the positions of Salaah. The standing after the rising from Rukoo' (bowing) is a stance of praising Allah, so utter many greetings, praises and ex-tolments of Allah in it. The sitting position that is between the two Sajdah (prostrations) is a stance of supplicating Allah for forgiveness, so ask Allah's forgiveness therein.

You may start your Qiyaam (the optional night Prayers) with two short Rak'ahs, because Shaytaan (Satan) ties three knots at the back of your head when you sleep, and he seals each of them saying, 'You have a long night ahead, so sleep! If you wake up and remember Allah, a knot is untied. If you purify yourself then another knot is undone and if you pray, the third one also gets unknotted.

If any one of you goes to the mosque and the prayer has commenced, he should join the congregation with the Imam rather than praying two Rak'ahs ahead of the congregation, as joining the congregation takes priority in this case.

Allah Says (what means): "Indeed, We sent it (i.e. the Qur'an) down in the Night of Decree. And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit (i.e. Gabriel) descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter. Peace it is until the emergence of dawn." [Qur'an 97: 1-5]

Article source: <http://www.is-lamweb.net/emainpage/>

# HMC calls on public to benefit from urgent phone consultation service

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) has urged the public to benefit from the urgent telephone consultation service for prescription renewal and medical consultation in various available specialties, including prescription of non-urgent medications.

Local Arabic daily Arrayah reported that HMC pointed out that this service currently covers 14 specialties and handled over 11,700 calls in February, according to the latest report on the activities at HMC hospitals and services.

The report indicated that the telephone urgent consultation service allows patients to speak to healthcare specialists for appropriate diagnosis. Patients can access the service by calling the number 16000, selecting option 3, then 1, between 8am and 3pm from Sunday to Thursday.

Calls are screened by a doctor to determine the specialty to which the patient should be referred. If the doctor finds that the condition requires medication, they will issue an e-prescription, and the patient can

visit any hospital or health centre of HMC to collect the prescribed medication.

Doctors can also review the patient's medical condition and laboratory reports when they do not have a close appointment in the clinic to obtain a sick leave certificate.

The report highlighted that the urgent consultation service was launched in 2020 to ensure that patients receive essential services during the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides quick and easy access to basic healthcare services for patients.

Through its social media platforms, HMC has encouraged the public to request the service when needed, noting that it has received positive feedback from patients who benefited from this service as they found the urgent consultation service more convenient for them.

HMC pointed out that the current specialties covered by the telephone urgent consultation service include general medicine, geriatrics, neurology, cardiology, urology, dermatology, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, otolaryngology (ENT), pain management,

neurosurgery, vascular surgery, haematology, oncology, and nutrition specialist.

The report further stated that in addition to the urgent consultation services provided by HMC, there are 13 emergency care units provided by the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) and the Qatar Red Crescent Society throughout Qatar, providing medical services for urgent cases and ensuring that patients receive the appropriate level of care immediately.

The PHCC provides 11 emergency care centres, five of which are dedicated to children. The emergency care centres provide medical support around the clock, seven days a week, for non-life-threatening conditions such as respiratory diseases, minor burns, sprains, severe headaches or ear pain, and high fever.

Further, the PHCC provides urgent telephone consultation service throughout the week from 7am to 1pm by calling the number 16000, then selecting the Primary Health Care Corporation, followed by the second option.

# PHCC health centres start new students check-ups from today

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) will start the new students check-up procedures from today.

This is in parallel to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MoEHE) announcement regarding the enrolment of new students in government schools for the academic year 2024/2025.

The check-up procedures are outlined as follows: First a parent should call the hotline (107) and select the option for medical check-ups for school students to book an appointment. The competent staff will

then proceed to electronically schedule all required appointments for the student including both dental and family medicine clinics.

The second step is attending the appointment by both the student and parent at the registered health centre, considering arriving one hour ahead and bringing the required documents (identity card, valid health card, birth certificate and vaccination card).

During the visit, a series of sequential procedures will take place: The check-in procedure at the reception, the nursing assessment, the conduct of neces-

sary laboratory tests and social worker assessment. Then they have to attend the dental appointment followed by the appointment with the family physician for clinical examination, view all test results and issuance of the health certificate electronically.

The parent then collects the student's e-file from the reception before leaving the health centre to submit it to the relevant authorities. An electronic link is established with the MoEHE, allowing their access to the student's medical check-up results electronically, a PHCC statement added.





# ‘Qatar a fastest-growing business events hub’

**Q**atar has emerged as one of the fastest-growing business events hubs in the world, IFP Qatar general manager Haidar Meshaimesh told the company's annual Iftar recently.

“We aim to bolster our market presence in Qatar’s exhibition industry through developing and implementing effective growth strategies,” he said, according to a statement.

“Over the course of nearly two decades, IFP has achieved numerous milestones while solidifying its brand identity to build trust with clients,” he explained.

“The company has played a major role in promoting the local events industry, with a track record of over 100 exhibitions and conferences since its inception, positioning it among leading private sector organisations within

Qatar’s exhibitions and conferences landscape.

“IFP’s 2024 Exhibition calendar promises a rich array of diverse events, offering added value to both clients and Qatari economy. Through international high-profile trade shows, IFP aims at meeting clients’ needs and adapting to market shifts, while fostering strategic partnerships and collaborations between local and international organisations.

“IFP’s events are especially curated to stimulate business growth for exhibitors while also enhancing opportunities for collaborations and trade exchange. Beyond merely bringing companies together under one roof, these exhibitions offer a holistic experience that includes insightful conferences, tailored workshops, engaging competitions and exclusive

offerings. We provide a dynamic platform for businesses to expand their reach, honour outstanding companies and organisations, whilst showcasing cutting-edge innovations, products and services across diverse sectors.

“Exhibitions and conferences form a vital industry that contributes to driving growth across various economic sectors, offering networking opportunities, business promotion, and crucial follow-ups. IFP’s mission goes way beyond bringing companies together under one roof, as we take great care in selecting participants, ensuring that each one adds unique value to the event whether they are budding start-ups or well-established businesses.

“IFP plays a pivotal role in driving the exhibition and events industry in Qatar, as it is currently

implementing plans to cater for the nation’s needs in this sector. Operating in five countries as part of IFP Group which has representative offices across the world, IFP Qatar stands as an international business events hub with a clear vision to support local industry and enhance Qatar’s global presence as a premier destination for events and conferences.

“Qatar has solidified its position as one of the world’s fastest-growing destinations for business events, hosting a myriad of exhibitions and conferences across various key sectors. The remarkable success of the 2022 FIFA World Cup has significantly enhanced Qatar’s appeal as a host for major sporting events and championships, further solidifying its position in the global events industry.

“Thanks to the advanced in-

frastructure, strategic location, luxurious hotels, and exceptional transportation network, including Qatar Airways’ extensive flight routes spanning 170 destinations worldwide and ongoing expansion of Hamad International Airport, the country is well-equipped to cater to the evolving needs of the business events sector.

“Qatar Tourism’s commitment to diversify its offerings and host year-round events has contributed to the surge in tourist arrivals, exceeding 4mn visitors in 2023, the highest in five years. Qatar Tourism aims to attract 6mn tourists by 2030, a goal that significantly impacts business events, as tourism plays a pivotal role in enhancing Qatar’s presence as an international hub for exhibitions, conferences and business tourism,” Meshaimesh

said. The IFP Qatar general manager lauded Qatar Tourism’s efforts to enhance business events, highlighting the recent renewal of the Diamond Sponsorship agreement between Visit Qatar and the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) in February, reaffirming Visit Qatar’s commitment to the global exhibitions industry.

As part of the Diamond Sponsorship agreement, Visit Qatar will gain visibility across all UFI events and activities, while allowing the destination to create more business opportunities for its stakeholders.

The recent partnership extension will further develop the vibrant Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibitions industry within Qatar, Meshaimesh added.

# Qatar Charity’s ‘Khair Homes’ expo fosters entrepreneurship



**A**s part of the continuation of the activities of the ‘Khair Homes’ programme’s fifth edition, Qatar Charity (QC) organised for the first time the ‘Khair Homes’ exhibition for the

products of participating families, in co-operation with Katara - the Cultural Village over two days.

The objectives were strengthening family relationships and spreading the culture of entre-

preneurship and sustainability, and providing families with the opportunity to share their experience with society and market their products, a QC statement said.

The exhibition featured pavil-



ions for various products, ranging from clothing, food, paintings, ceramics, and incense, in addition to organising artistic workshops for the patrons.

QC’s Programmes and Community Development director Abdul Rahman al-Hajri, said the programme seeks to achieve several goals, the most important of which is encouraging families to support humanitarian work, consolidating the foundations of social solidarity and developing their skills in entrepreneurship and linking them to humanitarian work.

Katara’s Events and Cultural Affairs Department director Khaled Abdel Rahim al-Sayed said hosting the exhibition comes within the

framework of Katara’s social responsibility to promote and spread charitable and humanitarian work among all members of society, especially in Ramadan, the month of giving and solidarity, stressing their keenness to host various events, programmes and activities that supports charitable and volunteer work.

The participating families expressed their happiness with the programme and the exhibition, as they said that the idea of the exhibition was wonderful and provided the opportunity to market their products more widely. Wadha al-Nabit said she was keen to contribute recycled products, lauding the idea of the exhibition.

Umm Fahd al-Hajri pointed out that the idea of the programme is motivating for many family members, especially children, as it instils in them the value of giving. This was her debut as a participant and she is keen to participate in the coming years.

The programme’s activities also included organising ‘family evenings’ for participating families, during which QC presented several workshops and activities for families and all age groups. The workshops aimed to motivate families and their guests to enter the world of entrepreneurship and to benefit from the tools at home and recycle them to invest time and develop skills.

# Msheireb Properties holds partner appreciation event

**M**sheireb Properties, Qatar’s leading sustainable property developer, hosted a Ramadan event to pay tribute to the support shown to the company by its many stakeholders.

In a press statement, Msheireb Properties CEO, Engineer Ali Mohamed al-Kuwari, said: “Without the support of partners and stakeholders, we would not have succeeded in making our flagship development Msheireb Downtown Doha into the thriving hub of creativity, entrepreneurship and business it is today. Our Ramadan event was an opportunity to thank our community, and to wish them blessings for a happy and prosperous year ahead.”

Msheireb Properties is focused on creating a community atmosphere within its MDD project, and this has been at the forefront of the

company’s recent results. At the same time, a core focus is on maintaining the exceptionally high 80% visitor satisfaction rate.

Al-Kuwari added: “We want every person who comes to MDD, to have a positive experience, and while much of that is within our control, there is a lot that relies on our partners. In my address at our Ramadan event, I made sure to thank every person for the vital role they play in providing an exceptional customer experience to our visitors. Improving on this and becoming a destination for social interaction is one of our core goals, so it was important to me that I was able to share this vision with our stakeholders.”

In 2024, Msheireb Properties has the transformative vision to become a local and international destination for innovative tech

companies and entrepreneurs and to undertake further engagement with the public, including by playing host to international events such as the region’s first Innovation by Design Summit in collaboration with Fast Company Middle East.

Al-Kuwari said: “2024 is set to be an exciting year for us at Msheireb Properties, and we are looking forward to playing host to even more visitors – with our ambition to reach 10mn visitors in this financial year. We will only be able to reach this milestone with the combined efforts of our stakeholders all working to achieve the same goals. Our Ramadan event was an important moment to reconnect and realign to ensure we are all pulling in the same direction – and it was so pleasing to see that we were.”







# QNL to spotlight richness of Arabic language, Holy Qur'an during April events

**QNA**  
Doha

**Q**atar National Library (QNL) is set to offer the opportunity for visitors during April to delve into the richness of the Arabic language and gain further insights into the Holy Qur'an, among other activities it will be hosting during the remainder of the holy month.

On April 3, QNL kicks off its activities with the children-oriented series, 'Stories from the Qur'an'. The series, which was unveiled last month to mark the beginning of Ramadan, introduces children to the wisdom behind the Qur'an stories.

On April 7, QNL resumes its second initiative for the holy month under the title, 'Fiqh and Beauty'. The series aims to familiarise young people with the important role that Islam awarded to women and the principles of purity, prayer and ethics.

Non-native speakers will have the opportunity



to learn the basics of the Arabic language on April 14, during a workshop organised by QNL in co-operation with the Tomouh Initiative. The session, which targets beginners, will be followed by an advanced level workshop.

Then, on April 16, QNL will hold the 'Najem Es'hail Book Club', an educational and fun series in English designed to encourage children to read. On April 20, QNL will shift its focus to gaming with the launch of the first part of a workshop on the principles of designing a video game. The workshop will take participants on a thrilling

journey into the world of game design, offering insights into the diverse career paths within the industry, from independent game creation to studio positions, distribution paths and marketing trends.

Technology will be the focus of another workshop on the same day dedicated to utilising AI tools in research. The workshop will focus on adherence to academic integrity and the ethical standards of scientific research when using modern technologies in academic writing. On April 23, QNL will be hosting a three-day intensive masterclass on historical non-fiction to empower young authors to leverage its archives and support them in writing about the Gulf region.

Also, on April 23, QNL shifts its focus back to linguistics with another insightful lecture that delves into comparisons between Arabic and English. Dr Ahmed al-Janabi, a renowned linguist with a PhD in the Philosophy of Arabic Language and Literature, will explore connections between both languages using the lens of comparative linguistics.

On April 25, QNL will host the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra for an enchanting evening that fuses culture and art with the timeless notes of Brahms' String Quintet.

QNL resumes its literature-oriented activities on April 27

with the 'Talk of Pens Club' series, which creates a space for aspiring writers to exchange experiences, as well as to brainstorm and discuss writing ideas while learning how to describe characters and plot to formulate a story in Arabic.

The event will be followed by the second instalment of the Principles of Game Design.

On the same day, QNL will also hold the "Our Children Matter" series with coach Ghaya Salah, a family counselor and certified practitioner in nurturing talents, who will discuss the stages of language development in children and how the brain acquires language skills.

QNL will wrap up the day with the latest session of its Career Launchpad programme, which equips jobseekers with the essential tools and expertise needed to craft impressive resumes and excel in interviews. Participants will delve into the art of constructing compelling resumes that capture attention and highlight their unique skills and experiences.

Finally, on April 30, QNL will conclude the month's activities with "Academic Integrity and Plagiarism" which will introduce students to the concept of academic integrity, its standards, and its importance in academic research, as well as the useful techniques on ways to avoid plagiarism.

# QatarEnergy charts 19 new LNG vessels

From Page 1

"I would like to thank the shipowners present with us today, and to extend my thanks and gratitude to the team leaders and members from QatarEnergy and QatarEnergy LNG, who were entrusted with the acquisition and leasing of these vessels, for their dedicated work throughout the past few years.

"I am also honoured to express my most sincere thanks and gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar for his wise leadership and guidance, and the unlimited support of the energy sector of the State of Qatar."

Since 2022, QatarEnergy has signed a series of TCPs for the long-term charter and operation of 104 conventional LNG vessels, as part of its historic LNG fleet expansion programme. This initiative will support QatarEnergy's expanding LNG production capacity from the North Field LNG expansion and Golden Pass LNG export projects, as well as meeting its long-term fleet replacement requirements.



HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, also the President and CEO of QatarEnergy, speaking at the long-term time charter party agreement ceremony yesterday.

As many as 43 ships out of the 104 will be chartered by QatarEnergy's affiliate 'QatarEnergy Trading', marking it the single largest one-step ship acquisition programme of any single entity in the history of the LNG industry, and placing QatarEnergy and consequently QatarEnergy Trading firmly on the road to becoming

a leading global LNG trader.

The 19 conventional LNG vessels, part of latest agreements, have a capacity of 174,000 cubic metres each and will be equipped with the latest LNG shipping technologies.

These embody QatarEnergy's ongoing endeavour to achieve optimal fuel efficiency and to reduce carbon emissions.

# PHCC urges patients not to miss pre-booked dental appointments

**P**atients missing pre-booked appointments at the Primary Health Care Corporation's (PHCC) dental clinics continue to be a major obstacle in delivering effective care, a senior official has pointed out.

"PHCC dental clinics therefore recommend patients to either attend their appointments on time or cancel the appointment if they are unable to attend," urged Dr Rami Assad, senior oral and dental surgery consultant and director of dentistry.

"This ensures that other patients can receive the necessary timely care without delay, ultimately enhancing oral and dental health in the community and reducing the prevalence of tooth decay and other oral diseases," he explained in a statement.

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and PHCC have joined forces to organise awareness campaigns focused on the importance of oral disease prevention including tooth decay and gum infections, highlighting the role of oral health in improving the overall health and quality of life, Dr Assad pointed out.

These campaigns also focus on encouraging the consumption of healthy low-sugar food



Dr Rami Assad

and avoiding smoking and tobacco chewing as they show the positive impact of a healthy diet on oral health and raise awareness about the harmful effects of smoking.

The campaigns also seek to promote a culture of regular oral check-up at dental clinics for the early preventive screening of any oral health problems and taking the necessary measures. In addition, PHCC has developed preventive and curative programmes targeting all age groups starting from newborns, pregnant mothers and extending to the elderly.

PHCC dental clinics consist of general dentistry and specialised ones. The specialised clinics comprise of oral surgery clinics which provides services such as

extracting worn teeth and wisdom teeth. The paediatric dental clinics provide treatment for primary and permanent tooth and raises the awareness of parents on the importance of maintaining healthy teeth and the impact on their children's quality of life. Root canal and conservative treatment clinics provide services for back teeth and some complex cases, while gum disease clinics cater to conditions that affect the periodontium.

PHCC has urged all patients to maintain daily dental hygiene and brushing at least twice a day. It is also recommended to schedule regular visits to dental clinics twice a year for preventive treatments and to adopt healthy diets. It is strongly advised to refrain from smoking and consuming tobacco derivatives, including suika.

"According to the latest statistics of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the ratio of dentists to population in Qatar is 6.2 dentists per 10,000 persons, which is significantly higher than the global average. In light of this, the government of Qatar has provided all services aimed at improving oral and dental health in the community," Dr Assad added.

## FOR SALE

**We have a collection of high end pre used furniture and carefully chosen accessories from a renowned five-star hotel that are now available for sale due to replacements.**

**Perfect for those seeking to furnish or refurbish apartments, we are inviting bulk quotations from interested buyers.**

**Please note that we are not selling individual units; only buyers interested in bulk quantities should reach out. The materials can be inspected on weekdays between 2:00 PM and 3:00 PM.**

**For further inquiries, please contact us at +974 5518 8850 between 9.00 am – 3.00 pm**

**QAFCO**  
شركة قطر للأسمدة  
QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY

## QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY

### INVITATION TO TENDER

#### QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000000118	COMPUTER BASED TRAINING FOR QAFCO – (2 YEARS CONTRACT)	500/- (Non-refundable)	-	01.04.2024 02.04.2024 03.04.2024 04.04.2024	08.04.2024

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
  - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
  - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
  - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA00000000013025828058**
  - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to [purchase@qafco.com.qa](mailto:purchase@qafco.com.qa) on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date, you may contact at 'purchase@qafco.com.qa' or on 44227797
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Tender Office, between 0930 – 1100 hours during the Holy month of Ramadan and 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".

## MoI cancels event for violating social and Islamic values

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced through its X account that it had cancelled an event, organised by a company, which included activities that practice rituals claiming to be spiritual and therapeutic, and considered a violation of the social principles and values and breaks with the Islamic Shariah Law. The organisers were legally prosecuted and the issue was referred to the Public Prosecution to take necessary legal measures, the post explained. The MoI also urged the organisers of activities and events to abide by applicable laws and regulations of the country and work to implement them in a way that preserves order and respects the teaching of the Islamic religion and values of Qatari society. Besides, they should obtain the necessary licences and permits for organising any event through official channels, MoI said. The ministry stressed that its departments concerned will not hesitate to take all necessary measures to maintain the values of society and its traditions inspired by Islam and its teachings. On Thursday, the MoI posted on X that some social media platforms had said some men and women had organised a mixed challenge in a sports game and named winners. Accordingly, the Economic and Cybercrimes Combating Department at MoI summoned the persons concerned for breaching values, principles of the society. They were eventually referred to the Public Prosecution to take necessary measures in this regard.

## Liquidation Announcement

### "١"

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution

To Liquidate

**Medi Q Life Trading L.L.C. (the "Company")**  
(under Voluntary Liquidation)

**The Liquidator**  
**Rami Mohammad Ali Qudah**

**Deloitte & Touche**  
**Qatar Branch**

Announce the commencement of the liquidation of

**Medi Q Life Trading L.L.C.**  
**Commercial Registration No. (132298)**

Any party who has any claims from this Company should send a registered letter, including all supporting documents, to P.O. Box 431, Doha – Qatar, within 45 days from the date of this publication.





Your Endless Giving  
Resonates Globally  
qcharity.org



Qatar Charity's Ramadan  
Page in Cooperation with  
Gulf Times



# Qatar Charity urges support for the largest multi-service city for orphans



Alongside the onset of the last ten days of Ramadan, Qatar Charity (QC) calls on benefactors in Qatar to support Al Hayah City, the largest multi-service city for orphans, aiming to provide an ideal educational environment and a safe and suitable living for orphans, while meeting all their living requirements.

The city will be a residential educational city for orphans. It is to be established in Istanbul, Türkiye, providing basic education for 2000 students, including 1200 resident orphans from various countries around the world, as well as 800 non-resident orphans who will benefit from its diverse educational and health services.

The city aims to provide a social educational environment dedicated to caring for orphans by offering the necessary support to ensure essential services, especially education. It seeks to facilitate learning under favorable conditions, and to provide services that help in developing the capabilities, talents, skills of young people and adolescents.

The city also facilitates collaborative learning among orphans, enabling them to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds



and gain insight into the unique challenges faced in different countries. Moreover, it offers a range of essential social and recreational services within its premises to enhance the overall well-being and development of its residents.

The city will span over 88,000 square

meters. It will have a school, two student dormitories, a dining hall, workshop and training buildings, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, a swimming pool, a mosque, a garden, and green spaces, as well as administrative, guest, and reception buildings and a big meeting hall.

## How to Donate

People can donate through Qatar Charity's website and app to build the world's largest orphan city.

Website: [qcharity.org/en/qa](https://qcharity.org/en/qa)  
App: [qch.qa/appen](https://qch.qa/appen)

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

## Endless Giving

Ramadan 1445 - 2024

Feed a Fasting Muslim									
Country	Cost of an Ifar meal	Target	Number of Beneficiaries	Total Cost	Country	Cost of an Ifar meal	Target	Number of Beneficiaries	Total Cost
Bosnia	350 QR	501	2,505	175,350 QR	Ghana	20 QR	37,958	37,958	759,160 QR
Montenegro	350 QR	252	1,260	88,200 QR	Tunisia	25 QR	22,120	22,120	553,000 QR
Sudan	350 QR	1,659	8,295	580,650 QR	Turkey	35 QR	56,000	56,000	1,960,000 QR
Somalia	350 QR	3,476	17,380	1,216,600 QR	Turkey Northern Syria	35 QR	31,500	31,500	1,102,500 QR
Niger	350 QR	812	4,060	284,200 QR	Indonesia	275 QR	949	4,745	260,975 QR
India	350 QR	1,201	6,005	420,350 QR	Ethiopia	275 QR	889	4,445	244,475 QR
Yemen	350 QR	6,300	31,500	2,205,000 QR	Jordan	275 QR	763	3,815	209,825 QR
Pakistan	350 QR	1,285	6,425	449,750 QR	Senegal	275 QR	987	4,935	271,425 QR
Burkina Faso	350 QR	889	4,445	311,150 QR	Philippines	275 QR	372	1,860	102,300 QR
Burundi	350 QR	501	2,505	175,350 QR	Bangladesh	275 QR	3,462	17,310	952,050 QR
Tanzania	350 QR	179	895	62,650 QR	Benin	275 QR	720	3,600	198,000 QR
Djibouti	350 QR	333	1,665	116,550 QR	Chad	275 QR	1,554	7,770	427,350 QR
Sri Lanka	350 QR	252	1,260	88,200 QR	Togo	275 QR	616	3,080	169,400 QR
Palestine	350 QR	3,871	19,355	1,354,850 QR	Gambia	275 QR	204	1,020	56,100 QR
Kyrgyzstan	350 QR	1,038	5,190	363,300 QR	Malaysia	275 QR	458	2,290	125,950 QR
Kosovo	350 QR	452	2,260	158,200 QR	Mauritania	275 QR	434	2,170	119,350 QR
Kenya	350 QR	1,502	7,510	525,700 QR	Nigeria	275 QR	679	3,395	186,725 QR
Lebanon	350 QR	3,150	15,750	1,102,500 QR	South Africa	275 QR	592	2,960	162,800 QR
Nepal	350 QR	203	1,015	71,050 QR	Mali	350 QR	1,250	6,250	437,500 QR
Morocco	350 QR	662	3,310	231,700 QR	Albania	350 QR	501	2,505	175,350 QR

Your endless giving feeds a fasting Muslim

Licensed by RACA

[qch.qa/iftar](https://qch.qa/iftar)

[qch.qa/App](https://qch.qa/App)

Home collection service



Donation Points



44290000





# Alfardan Sports Motors granted ‘Best Improvement Award’ by Ferrari Middle East

Alfardan Sports Motors, Ferrari Official Importer in Qatar, has been granted the ‘Best Improvement Award’ for 2023 by Ferrari Middle East, a statement said yesterday.

“This recognition is a testament to Alfardan Sports Motors’ unwavering dedication to continuous innovation across all touch points with Ferrari clients, and for providing the Prancing Horse enthusiasts in Qatar the ultimate ownership journey.

“The award acknowledges Alfardan Sports Motors continuous efforts to enhance the Ferrari ownership experience through exceptional initiatives and innovative approaches.



The award was announced as Alfardan Sports Motors celebrates its silver jubilee as Ferrari Official Importer in Qatar, a commemoration of 25 years of excellence in the automotive industry.

“Situated on The Pearl Island,

Qatar’s premier luxury destination, Alfardan Sports Motors boasts state-of-the-art showroom and service centre that caters to the discerning needs of Ferrari enthusiasts. With a commitment to delivering peerless customer service

quality, Alfardan Sports Motors has established itself as a trusted partner for luxury automotive aficionados across the region.”

Tarek al-Hammoud, general manager at Alfardan Sports Motors expressed gratitude to Ferrari Regional Office, stating:



“We are deeply honoured to receive the Best Improvement Award from Ferrari Middle East. This recognition underscores our relentless pursuit of excellence and our dedication to exceeding the expectations of Ferrari enthusiasts. As we

embark on the next chapter of our journey, we remain committed to delivering unparalleled service and experiences to our valued customers, always aiming at exceeding and redefining the luxury automotive standards”

## QIB launches Himyan national debit card

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has announced the launch of the Himyan debit card, a national initiative by the Qatar Central Bank (QCB) designed to foster a cashless society and facilitate seamless and secure local transactions.

This strategic initiative aligns with the goal of further advancing electronic payment services, building upon the success of the Himyan prepaid card launch last year, a statement said yesterday.

Specifically designed for local transactions, the Himyan debit card is linked to the holder’s personal account at QIB and features widespread acceptance at ATMs and POS terminals via the national network NAPS, and online merchants via QPAY’s payment portal throughout Qatar, ensuring enhanced security, convenience and hassle-free shopping experience.

The Himyan debit card supports contactless transactions and first-time issuance is offered free of charge. QIB customers can get the Himyan debit card instantly via



the QIB mobile app or can apply by visiting a branch and filling out the required application form.

D Anand, QIB general manager – Personal Banking Group, said: “We are proud to support Qatar Central Bank’s vision for a cashless society, aiming to develop an electronic payments system in Qatar and enhance financial inclusion in the country in line with the Third Financial Sector Strategy.

“The Himyan debit card, a new

addition to our diversified card lineup, offers numerous advantages. It can be issued to existing or new customers, enhancing financial inclusion in Qatar. With its contactless features and enhanced security for local transactions, the card marks a significant stride in modern banking.”

For more information and to learn how to apply for the Himyan debit card, visit [www.qib.com.qa/en-HimyanDebit](http://www.qib.com.qa/en-HimyanDebit)

## UDST distributes Iftar meals to workers in collaboration with QC

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) in collaboration with its Qatari Student Association and Qatar Charity recently undertook an initiative to serve 500 Iftar meals to workers on the university campus.

This endeavour aimed to express gratitude to the hardworking individuals across various campus divisions such as safety and security, housekeeping, maintenance, civil, and more.

Taking place within the University cafeterias, the students organised the packing and distribution of meals to the workers. This initiative offered students and the UDST community a profound opportunity to grasp the essence of Ramadan, emphasising the values of kindness, thoughtfulness and giving back.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president of UDST, highlighted: “The education our students receive extends beyond academics; we endeavour to cultivate within them a sense of camaraderie, community, and philanthropy, preparing them to positively impact society upon graduation. During the Holy Month of Ramadan in particular, we encour-



The initiative served 500 Iftar meals to workers on the university campus.

age them to engage in community work and actively contribute to the collective well-being to better understand the great impact of solidarity within our society. We also extend our appreciation to Qatar Charity and our student volunteers who made this event possible.”

During Ramadan, Iftar poses a challenge for many shift workers who are unable to join their families for this traditional meal. UDST sought to show its appreciation for all individuals contributing to campus life, affirming their

place within the UDST family.

Abdulahman Mohamed al-Hajri, director of programmes and community development at Qatar Charity, said: “Iftar holds deep significance for Muslims during the month of Ramadan, symbolising solidarity and community spirit. We are pleased to collaborate with University of Doha for Science and Technology because it is committed to social issues and continuously supports a culture of volunteering and charitable initiatives among its students.”

## Ashghal completes Semaisma West project works



Engineer Essa al-Hillabi



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has completed the main works of the first package of the Roads and Infrastructure Development Project in Semaisma West.

The project, according to an official statement, is part of Ashghal’s efforts to develop roads and infrastructure to serve citizens’ plots and residential lands in various areas of the country.

The project area is located east of Al Khor Road, bordered to the east by Semaisma West Street and to the south by Semaisma Road.

Engineer Essa Sultan al-Hillabi, project engineer, Northern Areas Projects Department at the Roads Projects Department, said the project serves 539 plots in citizens’ subdivisions in West Semaisma, where infrastruc-

ture services, roads and internal streets were provided to enhance traffic flow and provide connectivity with schools, mosques, commercial complexes and youth centres.

He added that a 21.7km-long road network has been developed and constructed, with traffic safety elements provided, such as street lighting systems and poles, directional signs and road markings. Pedestrian and cycle paths with a length of 17.5km have also been constructed.

The completed works include the installation of sewage network lines with a length of 19.5km, the construction of a surface and groundwater drainage network with a length of 36km, and a treated water network with a length of 12.5km, in addition to 18km of potable water lines and extending new drainage pipes and connecting them to the sewage network.

This is in addition to implementing a stormwater storage lagoon for emergency purposes with a capacity of 263,000 cubic m to reduce water accumulation during the rainy season.

Some remaining works are being completed at the project site. These include cable connection work to electricity substations. These works are scheduled to be completed in June 2024.

Local materials were used in most of the project work.

Qatari manufactured lighting poles and lamps, drainage pipes, pre-cast manholes, electrical cables, directional signs and interlocks were used. This comes as part of Ashghal’s “Taheel” initiative.



**ANNOUNCEMENT**

I, **LYDIA BATONG AO AS**  
holder of  
**Philippines Passport No. P8719625B**  
**QID No. 27660801303**  
  
hereby change my name  
  
From:  
**LYDIA BATONG AO AS**  
  
To:  
**LYDIA AO AS DAGUISONAN**  
  
Any objection, please contact  
**PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
within 3 days from the  
publication of this notice.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

I, **RAHIM NOOR MOHAMMED SHAH SHAH**  
holder of  
**PAKISTAN Passport No. 9159513**  
**QID No. 30458600158**  
  
hereby change my name  
  
from  
**RAHIM NOOR MOHAMMED SHAH SHAH**  
  
to  
**RAHIM MOLA JAN**  
  
Any objection, please contact  
**THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS**  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

I, **ZINOBIA RUSI BOOCHA**  
holder of  
**Indian Passport No. Z5719672**  
**QID No. 28135601003**  
  
hereby change my name  
  
from  
**ZINOBIA RUSI BOOCHA**  
  
to  
**ZINOBIA RUI EDUARDO BOOCHA DRUMOND**  
  
Any objection, please contact  
**THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS**  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.





# Workers remove first chunk of destroyed Baltimore bridge

AFP  
Baltimore

Workers have lifted out the first, 200-tonne chunk of Baltimore's collapsed bridge, officials said yesterday, as efforts get underway to clear the harbour of the steel structure destroyed by an out-of-control ship.

Demolition crews using blow torches sliced through the upper part of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, which crumbled when the Dali cargo vessel lost power and struck it on Tuesday, killing six people.

Authorities hope that removing the bridge — by cutting it into smaller sections and lifting them out — will help rescuers recover all the victims' bodies as well as reopen the crucial shipping lane.

"The first lift was made last night after the cutting of the top portion of one of the northern sections of the Key Bridge was completed," said US Coast Guard spokeswoman Kimberly Reaves in a statement.

"The piece removed last night was approximately 200 tonnes," she said, adding it would be moved to a barge that, once filled with additional pieces, would be taken to a debris-holding site on land.

As salvage operations continued yesterday, Maryland Governor Wes Moore said that "progress is beginning to happen despite the fact that it's an incredibly complicated situation." He said adverse weather



Debris is cleared from the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge as efforts begin to reopen the Port of Baltimore yesterday.

conditions and underwater debris meant divers were unable to assist.

Moore told CNN that a huge crane — the Chesapeake 1,000 that can lift 1,000 pounds — was being used in the salvage operation.

Video footage shared on Saturday by the Unified Command — the overall response team that includes the US Coast Guard — showed sparks flying as crews suspended in cages cut through an

upper section of bridge.

Moore said the recovery would be a "long road," adding "but movement is happening." The difficult conditions have hampered efforts to recover the bodies of the road workers — all Latino immigrants — who died when the bridge collapsed, with just two of six bodies recovered so far.

Shipping in and out of Baltimore — one of the United States' busiest ports — has been halted, with the waterway impassable due to the sprawling wreckage.

Moore told MSNBC yesterday that his priorities were recovering the victims' bodies before reopening the channel.

"It's impacting the nation's economy. It's the largest port for new cars, heavy trucks, agricultural equipment. It's impacting people all over the country," he said.

The ship veered towards the bridge due to power trouble, with the pilot issuing a Mayday call that allowed some road traffic to be stopped just before the collision at 1:30am after which the structure collapsed in seconds.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told "Face the Nation" on CBS that there was no timeline to clear the harbour and reopen the port.

"It takes a lot to make sure that it can be dismantled safely, to make sure that the vessel stays where it is supposed to be and doesn't swing out into the channel, but it has to be done," he said.

## Governor urges Congress to pass funding for rebuilding bridge

Reuters  
Washington

With efforts underway to clean up thousands of tonnes of steel debris from the collapsed bridge in Baltimore's harbour, Maryland Governor Wes Moore yesterday urged Republicans to work with Democrats to approve the federal funding needed for rebuilding the bridge and to get the port economy back on its feet.

Baltimore's Francis Scott Key bridge collapsed early on Tuesday morning, killing six road workers, when a container ship nearly the size of the Eiffel Tower lost power and crashed into a support pylon. Much of the span crashed into the Patapsco River, blocking the Port of Baltimore's shipping channel.

The Biden administration released \$60mn in initial emergency aid on Thursday to assist in cleaning up the bridge debris and reopening the port, which is the largest in the US for "roll-on, roll-off" vehicle imports and exports of farm and construction equipment.

The port has been closed since Tuesday, leaving in limbo the jobs of some 15,000 people who rely on its daily operations.

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.

Democratic President Joe Biden

has pledged that the federal government will cover the cost, but that will depend on passage of legislation authorising the funds by both the Republican-led House of Representatives and Democratic-led Senate.

The divided Congress has been repeatedly riven by partisan battles over funding, with hardline Republicans often at odds even with members of their own party.

Moore, a Democrat, said Republicans should be willing to approve the funding for the sake of not just the city of Baltimore, but for the national economy.

"The reason that we need people to move in a bipartisan basis... is not because we need you to do Maryland a favour," Moore told CNN yesterday. "We need to make sure that we're actually moving quickly to get the American economy going again, because the Port of Baltimore is instrumental in our larger economic growth."

Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg expressed optimism on Sunday that Congress would approve the funds necessary for the cleanup and rebuild, noting that the divided legislative body had passed Biden's \$1tn infrastructure package in 2021.

"If there's anything left in this country that is more bipartisan than infrastructure, it should be emergency response. This is both, and I hope that Congress will be willing if and when we turn to them," Buttigieg told CBS's "Face the Nation." Biden was expected to visit the bridge collapse site this week.

## Mayor killed in Mexico region plagued by organised crime

A mayor was shot dead at a restaurant in Mexico on Saturday, the regional prosecutor's office said, the latest politically related killing in the country plagued by violence and organised crime.

Guillermo Torres, 39, and his 14-year-old son were attacked at a restaurant in Morelia, the capital of western Michoacan state, the prosecutor's office said in a statement. His son survived.

He was elected mayor of Michoacan's Churumuco municipality as a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in 2022, but recently quit the party and publicly voiced sympathy for the ruling

Morena, according to local media.

Torres is the latest politician to be murdered in Mexico in the run-up to the presidential elections on June 2, in which 20,000 local and federal positions and the entire Congress will be voted on.

Two mayoral candidates were murdered on February 26: Miguel Angel Zavala Reyes and Armando Perez Luna of the Morena and National Action Party, respectively.

Between June 4, 2023, and March 26 this year, 50 people have been murdered in "episodes of electoral violence", 26 of them aiming for popular seats. — **AFP**

## At least eight killed in new Ecuador attack: police

At least eight people were killed and eight others wounded after an armed attack in southwestern Ecuador on Saturday, police said, the latest escalation of violence in the country.

"Several armed subjects aboard a vehicle" opened fire on a group of people in the port city of Guayaquil at around 6:55pm (2355 GMT), police said in a statement.

"Two people died instantly" and several others died "due to the severity of their injuries" after being taken to health centres, the statement said.

The eight wounded are under police protection, it added.

It is the second mass killing Ecuador has suffered in two days. Five tourists in the seaside resort of Ayampe were kidnapped and killed on Friday by drug traffickers who mistook them for members of a rival gang, according to police reports.

President Daniel Noboa expressed his "solidarity with the families" of the Ayampe victims on Saturday. "This is a sign that narcoterrorism and its allies are looking for spaces to terrorise us, but they will not succeed," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Also on Friday, four people, including a military officer, were shot dead in the city of Manta, 100km (60 miles) from Ayampe. — **AFP**

# Al Abdulghani Motors Unveils Unbeatable Ramadan Package for Select 2024 Toyota Models

Al Abdulghani Motors (AAM), the distributor for Toyota vehicles in the State of Qatar are offering unbeatable Ramadan package for select 2024 YM models as part of their 60th Anniversary celebration of their partnership with Toyota Motor Corporation.

The Ramadan package offered by AAM Toyota includes a range of benefits aimed at providing customers with peace of mind and convenience. Here's a summary of the package:

**1. Comprehensive Insurance:** AAM Toyota offers 3 years of comprehensive insurance coverage, providing financial protection for the vehicle.

**2. Periodic Maintenance:** Customers receive 3 years/60,000 kms (whichever comes first) of periodic maintenance, ensuring that their vehicles are properly serviced and maintained during this period.

**3. Roadside Assistance:** AAM Toyota provides 3 years/60,000 kms (whichever comes first) of roadside assistance, offering support in case of emergencies such as breakdowns or accidents.



**4. Registration:** The package includes 3 years of vehicle registration, saving customers the hassle of renewing their registration annually.

**5. Free 3M Tinting:** Customers also receive free 3M tinting for their vehicles, enhancing privacy and reducing heat inside the car.

**In addition, AAM is providing exclusive In-House Financing:** Customers can benefit from in-house financing offers with a 15% down payment and financing available for up to 60 months (for Qatari nationals). For expatriates, the financing period is 48 months.

Al Abdulghani Motors also provide exclusive packages for Land Cruiser Turbo models as well as on Toyota Crown. For Land Cruiser Turbo models, the benefits include 5 years Periodic Maintenance, 5 years Warranty and 5 years Roadside Assistance in addition to the exclusive Finance Offer which offers customers

to pay 50% down payment and balance 50% to be paid over 2 years in 4 equal installments at 0% Profit Rate. For Toyota Crown, the benefits include 3 years Comprehensive Insurance, 3 years Periodic Maintenance, 3 years Road side assistance, 3 years registration and free 3M Tinting. In addition, the finance package for Crown includes 35% Down Payment and Balance to be paid in 2 years at 0% profit rate in 4 equal installments.

The offer is valid until 18th April 2024. Additionally, Toyota owners are supported by AAM's extensive after-sales facilities, including a network of 18 service centers across the country.

AAM Toyota also offers mobile service vans for added convenience, allowing customers to have their vehicles serviced at their homes or offices by appointment.

For showroom visits, AAM Toyota's showrooms located at Al Abdulghani Tower, C Ring Road, and City Center are open 7 days a week. During Ramadan, both the showrooms 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.





# Calls for more Jordan protests against Gaza war

AFP  
Amman

Activists in Jordan called for further protests yesterday after days of demonstrations against the war in Gaza that have brought thousands onto the streets.

Jordan, where nearly half the population is of Palestinian origin, has seen regular rallies in Amman and elsewhere in solidarity with Gaza since Israel's military onslaught in response to Hamas' unprecedented October first week storming of Israel.

Recent protests have seen rare clashes between demonstrators and security forces in the capital

and in Jordan's largest Palestinian refugee camp.

The group Jordanian Youth Gathering urged people to return later to the Israeli embassy in Amman "to support the resistance in Gaza".

People have gathered every evening since the holy month of Ramadan began more than two weeks ago.

Security forces said yesterday they had arrested a number of protesters 20 kilometres north of Amman at the Beqaa refugee camp.

Public security spokesman Amer al-Sartaawi said in a statement a "number of rioters" were arrested after "acts of rioting and vandalism, setting fires, and

hurling stones at vehicles on the public road". Beqaa camp, home to more than 100,000 Palestinians, is one of six camps set up to house the influx of refugees fleeing the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the Arab-Israeli war of 1967.

Jordan has 2.2mn people who have been registered by UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

Many have been granted Jordanian citizenship.

Israel has responded to Hamas fighters' storming into Israel with a relentless military campaign that has so far killed 32,782 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza.



Children take part in organised activities at a camp for displaced Palestinians in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Hamas group.

# Clowns try to put smiles back on faces of Gaza children

AFP  
Nuseirat

The children of Gaza have little to eat, have had to flee their homes and have survived nearly six months of terrifying Israeli bombardment.

But for a few precious minutes children in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the centre of the Gaza Strip laughed and yelped with joy.

Clowns and acrobats performed for them in the courtyard of a school where their displaced families have been sheltering the bombing.

The unrelenting war has taken a terrible toll on Gaza's children. Most of the more than 32,782 people killed in the besieged territory since the October first week storming of Israel by Hamas fighters have been women and children.

But for once they could forget all that horror as performers in rabbit costumes led them in a conga, pushing one injured boy in a wheelchair.

Then it was then the turn of clown Omar al-Saidi

to tickle their funny bones with zany antics at the expense of another jester.

Wassim Lobed, whose support group organised the show and who acted as compere, said: "Traumas are beginning to appear on children so we are trying to provide psychological relief.

"We hope to God that this war will end for the sake of our children in Gaza," he added.

So deep is the mental suffering of Gaza's children that some hope to die quickly to escape the "nightmare", a spokesman for the UN child welfare agency said on Tuesday.

"The unspeakable is regularly said in Gaza" now, said Unicef spokesman James Elder, who is in the territory. After meeting young people, he said several teenagers said they were "so desperate for this nightmare to end that they hoped to be killed".

But Saidi, whose clown name is Uncle Zaatara, said he hoped the show had lifted some of that "burden" from the children's shoulders.

As the children clapped and cheered at the end, he said he hoped the "smile will remain on their faces forever".

# WHO says 9,000 patients need emergency evacuation from Gaza

AFP  
Geneva

Some 9,000 patients in the Gaza Strip require evacuation for emergency care, with the war-torn Palestinian territory down to just 10 barely functioning hospitals, the head of the WHO said.

"With only 10 hospitals minimally functional across the whole of #Gaza, thousands of patients continue to be deprived of health care," World Health Organisation Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X.

Before the war, Gaza had 36 hospitals, according to the WHO.

"Around 9,000 patients urgently need to be evacuated abroad for lifesaving health services, including treatment for cancer, injuries from bombardments, kidney dialysis and other chronic conditions," he said.

That is up from 8,000 in the WHO's previous assessment at the beginning of March.

Israel vowed to eliminate Hamas after the group's unprecedented October first week storming of Israel, and has been bombing Gaza without respite, damaging many healthcare facilities.

Violent ground combat has also been underway for weeks, sometimes around Gaza's hospitals, which are also providing refuge for thousands who have lost their



A man assists another to carry an intravenous solution bag for him as they walk outside the Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City, amid the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas.

homes or fled the fighting.

Gaza is subject to an almost complete blockade, and NGOs and the United Nations accuse Israel of preventing the delivery of humanitarian aid needed by the 2.4mn inhabitants who are mostly massed in Rafah at the territory's southern tip. Israel has defended its policies as it pursues its stated goal of destroying Hamas, saying the UN should send more aid to Gaza, pushing back on reports by the UN and NGOs that cumbersome Israeli inspections are blocking food and other essentials. Israel's retaliatory campaign

has killed at least 32,705 people, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry.

Tedros said that "so far, over 3,400 patients have been referred abroad through Rafah, including 2,198 wounded and 1,215 ill. But many more need to be evacuated.

"We urge Israel to speed up approvals for evacuations, so that critical patients can be treated. Every moment matters."

Before the war, 50-100 patients a day were transferred to East Jerusalem or the West Bank, half of them for cancer treatment.

# Eight dead in car bomb at Syria market

AFP  
Azaz

A bomb exploded in a shopping area in a northern Syrian city held by pro-Turkish forces yesterday, killing eight people and wounding more than 20, a war monitor said.

The blast in Azaz, Aleppo province, occurred not long after midnight as crowds were out shopping late during the holy fasting month of Ramadan, an AFP correspondent said. The group Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that "eight people were killed and 23 others wounded" when "a car bomb exploded in the middle of a popular market".

The Britain-based Observatory, which has a network of sources inside Syria, said the blast caused "significant damage" and sparked a fire. Bombings and other security incidents are common in areas held by pro-Turkish forces



A crowd gathers as emergency services respond, at the site of a car blast in the rebel-held city of Azaz, Syria, yesterday, in this drone image obtained from social media.

in northern Syria, where rivalries among armed factions and the risk of attacks by Islamic State group fighters exacerbate an already tenuous security situation after years of war. The AFP correspondent saw emergency responders working at the scene and the remains of a mangled vehicle. Khaled al-Nowmeh, 36, who has a pharmacy in Azaz, said he, his wife and children had gone to the market to buy clothes when the blast struck.

"We heard the sound and we

ran...my son started crying," he said, lamenting the recurring security incidents in the region.

Thaer Hafar, 34, who works at a store in Azaz, said he and his family were on their way to the market when the explosion hit.

"All we heard was the blast," he said, adding that people were terrified there could be a second car bomb.

"There's no security or safety," he said, adding that "even if we're at home, we're afraid".

# Israeli strike on Lebanon car kills one

AFP  
Beirut

A Lebanese military source said an Israeli strike yesterday killed one person in the country's south, where Israel and the Hezbollah group have been exchanging near-daily cross-border fire for months.

The hostilities began after Hezbollah ally Hamas carried out an unprecedented storming of southern Israel in the first week of October.

"An Israeli drone targeted a

car in Kunin and killed a person who was in the car," a military official said, referring to a village about 10 kilometres from the border.

The source, who requested anonymity because they are not allowed to speak to the media, did not mention whether the person was a civilian or a fighter.

Lebanon's state-run media also said a drone strike had hit a car. "An Israeli enemy drone carried out an air strike," the National News Agency said, adding that it targeted a car on the road to Kunin.

# SA fires kill two, leave hundreds homeless

Two people died and almost 2,000 were left homeless when fires engulfed hundreds of shacks in three separate incidents in South Africa's Cape Town during the weekend, emergency services said yesterday, AFP reported from Johannesburg.

Two of the fires occurred on Saturday evening and one in the early hours of yesterday morning, they said. "An adult male and female sustained fatal burn wounds and were declared deceased by medics" at one of the informal settlements.

# IMALCO celebrates Ramadan with Corporate Iftar



Ibrahim Mohd. Al-Khulaifi Trdg. Co. (IMALCO), successfully hosted their 12th Annual Corporate Iftar on Friday, 29th March 2024 at the Radisson Blu Hotel. The event was glittered by the attendance of the entire staff of IMALCO. The gathering was addressed by Mr. Abou Backer Bavu, CEO of IMALCO, who spoke about Iftar and the holy month of Ramadan. This Iftar event is organized annually for the betterment and the welfare of the staff on this auspicious month of Ramadan.



# Second Kobayashi Pharma plant inspected after deaths

**Reuters**  
Tokyo

Health authorities searched a second Kobayashi Pharmaceutical factory in western Japan yesterday after the company reported five deaths possibly tied to dietary supplements, an official said.

The inspection in Wakayama prefecture follows one on Saturday in Osaka, expanding the investigation into the drugmaker's use of "Beni-Koji" red yeast materials. Osaka-based Kobayashi said it found what appeared to be potentially toxic puberulic acid that could have been produced by blue mould penicillium in Beni-Koji materials produced between last April and October at the Osaka factory.

As of Friday, 114 people had been hospitalised and five had died after taking the supplements, which were marketed as helping lower cholesterol levels, the company said.

The cause of the deaths has not been confirmed, the official at Japan's health and welfare ministry said. But "it is suspected that Beni-Koji may be the cause, so we have inspected two factories in two days," Kobayashi said on Friday it was investigating a suspected link between the products and their effects on the kidney since it received reports of kidney disease linked to the products.

"We will fully co-operate with the investigation so that we can resolve the problems as early as possible," the head of Kobayashi's investor relations, Yuko Tomiyama, told reporters yesterday in footage shown by public broadcaster NHK.

The health official said the ministry "would join hands with other ministries concerned to do our utmost to resolve the ongoing case while asking Kobayashi Pharma to co-operate as needed in looking into the case".

# Manila boosts maritime security as tension with China increases

**Reuters**  
Manila

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr has ordered his government to strengthen its co-ordination on maritime security to confront "a range of serious challenges" to territorial integrity and peace, as a dispute with China escalates.

**"Despite efforts to promote stability and security in our maritime domain, the Philippines continues to confront a range of serious challenges that threaten territorial integrity, but also the peaceful existence of Filipinos"**

The order, signed on Monday and made public yesterday, does not mention China but follows a series of bilateral maritime confrontations and mutual accusations over a disputed area of the South China Sea.

China's ministry of foreign affairs did not respond to a request for comment yesterday.

Beijing claims almost all of the South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3tn of annual ship-borne commerce.

China's claims overlap those of the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China's claims had no legal basis.

The latest flare-up occurred last weekend, when China used water cannon to disrupt a Philippine re-supply mission to the Second Thomas Shoal for soldiers guarding a warship intentionally grounded on a reef 25 years ago.

"Despite efforts to promote stability and security in our maritime domain, the Philippines continues to confront a range of serious challenges that threaten territorial integrity, but also the peaceful existence of Filipinos," Marcos said in the order.

The president vowed on Thursday to implement countermeasures against "illegal, coercive, aggressive and dangerous attacks" by China's coastguard.

His order expands and reorganises the government's maritime council, adding the national security adviser, solicitor general, National Intelligence Co-ordinating Agency chief and the South China Sea task force.

The order appears to expand the role of the military by naming the Armed Forces of the Philippines, not just the navy, among the agencies supporting the council.

The renamed National Maritime Council will be the central body to formulate strategies to ensure a "unified, co-ordinated and effective" framework for the Philippines' maritime security and domain awareness.

Marcos increased the number of agencies supporting the council to 13 from nine, including the space agency and the University of the Philippines' Institute for Maritime Affairs and the Law of the Sea.



India's Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi waves towards supporters during a rally organised by India's opposition coalition comprising of various political parties named 'INDIA' or Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, in New Delhi yesterday.

# Indian opposition protests Kejriwal arrest ahead of polls

**AFP**  
New Delhi

Top leaders of India's opposition coalition and thousands of supporters rallied in the capital yesterday, decrying "autocracy" in protest at the arrest of a senior colleague ahead of general elections.

Arvind Kejriwal, chief minister of Delhi and a key leader in an opposition alliance formed to compete against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was detained this month in connection with a long-running corruption probe.

Kejriwal's government is accused of receiving kickbacks while handing out licences to private companies. Kejriwal, 55, denies the charges.

"The country is headed towards autocracy," Shiv Sena party leader Uddhav Thackeray, a former chief minister of Maharashtra state, told cheering crowds yesterday. "This one-man government is taking the country to ruin."

Nearly a billion Indians will vote to elect a new government in six-week-long parliamentary elections starting on April 19, the largest democratic exercise in the world.

Many analysts see Modi's re-election under his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) banner as a foregone conclusion, partly due to the resonance of his assertive Hindu-nationalist politics with members of India's majority faith.

Several leaders of the two dozen political parties of the INDIA opposition alliance – the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance – addressed the crowd.

"This is a fight to save India," Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi said. "If the BJP comes back to power, they will discard the constitution." Kejriwal's wife Sunita read out what she said was a message from the arrested leader.

"I want us together to build a new India where there is justice for everyone," she read.

India's main financial investigation agency, the enforcement directorate, which arrested Kejriwal, has launched probes into at least four other state chief ministers or their family members. While Modi enjoys high levels of support, critics accuse him of using law enforcement agencies to intimidate opposition leaders.

All the investigations involve political opponents of Modi's ruling BJP.

Many in the flag-waving crowd were supporters of Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) who donned yellow tops with the image of their leader in jail.

"We are here to express our support for Kejriwal, who has been arrested under a conspiracy," said Sandeep Singh, 45, who drove overnight from Punjab, the Sikh-majority state north of Delhi that AAP controls.

## India rescuing citizens forced into cyber fraud schemes in Cambodia

The Indian government said it was rescuing its citizens who were lured into employment in Cambodia and were being forced to participate in cyber fraud schemes. The Indian embassy in Cambodia is working with Cambodian authorities and has rescued and repatriated about 250 Indians, including 75 in the last three months, India's ministry of external affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. Jaiswal was responding to Indian news reports that stated more than 5,000 Indians are trapped in Cambodia and being forced to carry out cyber frauds. The reports claimed individuals were coerced into scamming people in India and, at times, extorting money by impersonating law enforcement officials and claiming to have discovered suspicious items in parcels "We are also working with Cambodian authorities and with agencies in India to crack down on those responsible for these fraudulent schemes," Jaiswal said.

## Nature's fury



Lightning illuminates the night sky during a storm in Guwahati, Assam, India, yesterday. Sudden heavy rainfall and stormy winds also lashed parts of India's eastern state of West Bengal yesterday, killing four and injuring several others, as per a local official, prompting evacuation efforts.

# India's highest civilian award for Advani

**AFP**  
New Delhi

India's prime minister yesterday praised the "pivotal role" of the firebrand leader credited with propelling Hindu nationalism into a dominant political force, after he was awarded the top civilian honour.

Lal Krishna Advani, 96, a co-founder of the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – which hopes to win a third term in general elections beginning April 19 – was accorded India's Bharat Ratna medal.

"His honour is a recognition of his enduring contributions to our nation's progress," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on X.

Advani was the lodestar of a movement dedicated to championing the rights of the majority religion in the officially secular country, and his stewardship carried it from society's fringes to the levers of state power.

In 1990, he was a key figure in the campaign to build Ram temple in the northern city of Ayodhya, which opened in January. The temple was built on the site of the centuries-old Babri mosque whose destruction by Hindu zealots in 1992 sparked sectarian riots.

"His dedication to public service and his pivotal role in shaping modern India have left an indelible mark on our history," Modi added.

President Droupadi Murmu, who awarded the medal, called Advani a "doyen of Indian politics" and praised him for his "long and tireless struggle for India's cultural regeneration".

# Busker aims to play at every London Tube stop

**AFP**  
London

Strumming his acoustic steel string guitar on a busy street in east London, 27-year-old Australian singer-songwriter Dan Tredget is a man on a mission.

Tredget, originally from Perth, Western Australia, is aiming to become the first person to busk at every London Underground station.

With 272 stops on the network, it is a daunting task.

"It's pretty overwhelming when I look at the map some-

times, seeing how many stations I've got left to complete," he said shortly after ticking off his 124th stop, Upton Park.

"But it's also quite uplifting to know that I'm pretty close to the halfway mark."

Tredget's journey began in April 2023, after a guitar student of his cancelled a lesson.

Wondering what to do with the free time, Tredget made a first foray into London busking.

Self-filmed clips of the session did well on social media and he decided to take the online "content game" more seriously, devising a way to boost his profile as a musician.

The initial plan was to play at "iconic" spots in the British capital, such as the London Eye and Big Ben.

But he soon realised that "the Underground itself is pretty iconic. And it'd be a great way to just get out to all corners of the city."

Busking inside stations is not as simple as many would imagine, with an official licencing system and fierce competition for official "pitches" to perform at.

Because of that, Tredget mainly busks on the street immediately outside the stations, playing songs by the likes of Oasis, Cold-

play and Ed Sheeran. Twenty to 30 stops in, and with earnings steadily building, he decided to turn the endeavour into a fundraiser for London homelessness charity Glass Door.

He expected the footfall around central stations like Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus would make "Zone 1" stops the most lucrative.

But in reality, he has had more luck at stops further from the centre.

"People are a bit more relaxed, maybe. They're not rushing around in the outer zones and they've got a bit more time to hang around and watch for a bit,

have a chat," he said. The most successful stop was south London's Tooting Broadway, on the Northern Line, generating £52 (\$66).

But that has since been overtaken by Highbury and Islington on the Victoria Line, where Tredget made £57.29.

On the day AFP caught up with him, he was busy making his way along the District Line, the network's largest by number of stops.

A slow trickle of passers-by paused to offer a coin or tap a bank card outside Upton Park and Plaistow stations.

Many were curious about the

task of the easy-going Australian, who admits there is still a long way to go to meet his goal of raising £10,000 (\$12,600).

With a combination of street and online donations, he recently broke the £1,000 mark.

"It'll be quite a push to get to the 10k mark but I'll still make that the goal. And we'll see how far we can get," he said.

Tredget is already envisioning future challenges, including the possibility of extending beyond the Underground to include the Docklands Light Railway in east London.

That would add a further 158 stations to his playlist.



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GULF TIMES

Canadian schools sue Big Tech over student learning, mental health harms

A campaign launched against social media platforms by local education authorities in the US in recent months has been replicated last week by four of Canada's largest school boards, echoing increasing awareness about apps including Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok 'disrupting student learning'. The four district boards – Ottawa-Carleton, Toronto, Peel and Toronto Catholic – filed four separate statements of claim seeking at least Can\$4bn (US\$3bn) in Ontario's superior court of justice on Wednesday.

The lawsuit accuses Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta as well as TikTok parent company ByteDance of acting in a "high-handed, reckless, malicious, and reprehensible manner" with products the boards claim harm student learning and "rewire" how children think. This is the first such suit in Canada. In the US, the lawsuits, included one from a Maryland school district that sued Meta and ByteDance for their role in a "mental health crisis" among young people.

The Canadian district boards have also urged the companies to redesign their apps to be less addictive. The Toronto District School Board accused the companies of having "negligently designed and marketed addictive products" that are "rewiring the way that (students) think, act, behave and learn." It cited significant problems with student attention and focus. Educators also lamented that social media use has led to students' social withdrawal and increased cyberbullying and aggressive behaviours.

The lawsuit accuses Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta as well as TikTok parent company ByteDance of acting in a "high-handed, reckless, malicious, and reprehensible manner"

"Students are experiencing an attention, learning and mental health crisis because of prolific and compulsive use of social media products," the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board said in a statement. This "is causing massive strains on the four school boards' finite resources, including additional needs for in-school mental health programming and personnel, increased IT costs and additional administrative resources," it said. None of the allegations have been proven in court.

The lawsuits in Canada come a day after Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed a law restricting social media access for minors under 16 on Monday, in part citing increasing concerns over the platforms' effects on teen mental health. But the law has also sparked worry that it sets a dangerous precedent for restricting free speech online. The Canadian lawsuits also claim that social media products, negligently designed for compulsive use, are leaving educators and schools to manage the fallout. The boards accuse the social media companies in question of using "exploitative business practices" and chose to "maximise profits" instead of focusing on the mental health and wellbeing of students.

In recent years, educators have spent a growing share of their time in the classroom attempting to get students to focus, the boards said. They blame the addictive nature of social media and apps like Instagram, TikTok and SnapChat which they say have also led to a spike in cyberbullying and mental health issues. In a statement Snap said the platform was "intentionally designed to be different from traditional social media" so that users could communicate with friends. "While we will always have more work to do, we feel good about the role Snapchat plays in helping close friends feel connected, happy and prepared as they face the many challenges of adolescence," the company said. Meta and ByteDance are yet to comment.

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Moving past the tragedy



This aerial view shows the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge lying on top of the container ship Dali in Baltimore, Maryland, yesterday, as clean-up work begins. Workers have lifted out the first, 200-tonne chunk of Baltimore's collapsed bridge, officials said yesterday, as efforts get underway to clear the harbour of the steel structure destroyed by an out-of-control ship. (AFP)

America must lead on crypto regulation

By Dante Alighieri Disparte

Washington, DC

In contrast to 2022, a disastrous year for digital-asset markets, 2023 was characterised by aggressive regulatory action and positive market developments. The recent settlement between US regulators and Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, is poised to improve trust, transparency, and accountability throughout the market. Meanwhile, most global financial centres have introduced clear regulations for the crypto industry.

Despite this progress, the United States risks becoming an outlier if it does not establish new rules in 2024. Policymakers can choose among three potential paths to managing risks and opportunities in the crypto market: regulation, legislation, and designation.

Two years ago, US President Joe Biden took a huge step toward providing regulatory clarity by issuing his Executive Order on Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets. Since then, however, legislative attempts have stalled, and the US has fallen behind other countries in regulating the sector, despite the fact that virtually all digital assets are priced in dollars.

The irony is that US-led bodies such as the Financial Stability Board, the President's Working Group on Financial Markets, and the Financial Stability Oversight Council have been at the forefront of global efforts to regulate the crypto market. As chair of the FSOC,

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has also urged Congress to advance legislation to regulate dollar-denominated stablecoins. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has echoed these calls.

These calls for legislation, amplified by global regulatory bodies, underscore the potential risks associated with crypto. While some economists advocate drastic measures, such as allowing the industry to collapse or imposing stringent rules, a preferable approach would be to harness blockchain and other emerging technologies to ensure that financial services can meet market demand beyond conventional banking hours, a challenge that especially affects global payments. Given that nearly every major bank, asset manager, fintech, and payment-services company around the world has already developed digital-asset strategies, it is time for US policymakers to catch up and establish technology-neutral, principled regulations that foster competition in financial markets.

To this end, Congress must empower federal regulatory agencies to set rules for the market. This involves exploring central bank digital currencies, despite opposition from politicians like former US president Donald Trump, the Republican Party's presumptive nominee in November's presidential election. It also includes establishing regulations for digital wallets and streamlining state and federal banking and payment systems. These actions are crucial to averting a potential fintech "constitutional crisis" and maintaining America's

competitive edge.

The Treasury Department has also emphasised the need for decisive action. In November, Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo called on Congress to address the risks posed by crypto-financed illicit activities, pointing to the opacity of certain crypto products and the lack of regulatory oversight. These products are, at best, financial alchemy; at worst, they are financial fantasy.

The absence of a US regulatory framework for dollar-referenced stablecoins – increasingly licensed in jurisdictions like the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, and Hong Kong – represents a threat to American interests. This vacuum could incentivise the creation of products that exploit trust in the dollar while bypassing US regulations, potentially becoming a refuge for illicit actors.

At the very least, the US must ensure that foreign issuers of dollar-referenced stablecoins comply with the Bank Secrecy Act, anti-money laundering and counterterrorism laws, and sanctions regimes. Otherwise, digital dollars could undermine international security, rather than combat technology risks associated with dollar primacy.

But before the US designates crypto firms or technologies as threats, it must establish new rules. While there is already a precedent for labelling open-source technologies as national-security risks, major token issuers or exchanges have not yet been classified as systemically important financial institutions, which would mark them as too big to fail. Instead of allowing

offshore or near-shore crypto activities to proliferate unchecked or letting other countries set the standards for a market that is as inherently American as the internet once was, US policymakers must regard 2024 as a watershed moment.

The stablecoin bill advanced by the House Financial Services Committee in July 2023 has generated significant policy momentum. Bipartisan Congressional approval of this bill would offer the best legislative opportunity to tackle the surge in crypto dollar counterfeiting. Moreover, it could be America's last chance to maintain its dominance in digital-asset markets.

To be sure, forging ahead will be difficult during a contentious presidential election campaign. But advancing digital-asset policy is crucial to ensuring that the US remains a rule-maker, rather than becoming a rule-taker. This is particularly critical now, given that the European Union's Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA) framework is set to enter into effect later this year, potentially causing a transatlantic rift in digital-asset regulation.

To prevent such an outcome, the US policy agenda for digital assets this year must go beyond regulation, legislation, and designation, and focus on advancing global regulatory harmonisation. But these efforts are bound to fail without regulatory clarity and American leadership in the crypto market. – Project Syndicate

● Dante Alighieri Disparte is Chief Strategy Officer and Head of Global Policy at Circle.





## Turkish opposition ahead in mayor race

AFP  
Istanbul

Turkiye's opposition took an early lead in the battle to control Istanbul and Ankara, according to partial results after elections yesterday.

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) had launched an all-out campaign to win back Istanbul.

With rampant inflation and economic crisis hitting households, city mayor Ekrem Imamoglu expressed confidence of a new victory and a partial result put the CHP ahead in Istanbul and the capital Ankara.

With 49% of ballot boxes opened, Imamoglu led with 50.05% of the vote against 41.2% for the AKP candidate Murat Kuram. In Ankara, with 29.2% of ballot boxes opened, the CHP mayor Mansur Yavas led with 58.2% against 34.1% for the Erdogan-backed candidate.

The CHP was also ahead in Izmir, Türkiye's third city, and a party stronghold.

"Based on the data we have obtained, I can say that our citizens' faith in us has been rewarded," Imamoglu told reporters at the CHP's Istanbul headquarters.

"The picture we have seen now pleases us greatly, but no election is finalised before it is over," he added. "I would like to thank all of us, our citizens, from the bottom of my heart for fulfilling this sacred duty."

After casting his vote with his family, Imamoglu emerged to applause and chants of "Everything will be fine", his 2019 election slogan. "Everyone is worried about the day to day," said 43-year-old Istanbul inhabitant Guler Kaya as she voted.

"The crisis is swallowing up the middle class, we have had to change all our habits," she said.

Vote change happens "when we cannot afford a living, when we cannot eat", Ali Faik Demir, a political scientist at Galatasaray University, told AFP.

An Imamoglu victory would make him the likely main opponent to Erdogan's ruling AKP in the next presidential election in 2028. Erdogan has been president since 2014 and won a new term in May last year. He had called Istanbul the national "treasure" when launching his campaign to retake the city.

If Erdogan won back Istanbul and Ankara, he would have an incentive to "amend" the constitution to stand for re-election for a fourth term, warned Bayram Balci, political scientist at Sciences Po university in France.

## Russia seeks, Ukraine rejects extradition of security head

Russia is demanding that Ukraine hand over all people connected with terrorist acts committed in Russia, including the head of the country's SBU Security Service, the foreign ministry said yesterday. The SBU immediately dismissed the Russian demand as "pointless" and said the Russian ministry had "forgotten" that Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin was the subject of an international arrest warrant. A Russian Foreign Ministry statement listed violent incidents that have occurred in Russia since the Kremlin's forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022, including bombings that killed the daughter of a prominent nationalist and a war blogger, and an incident in which a writer was seriously hurt. The ministry said investigation of these incidents showed that "the traces of these crimes lead to Ukraine." "Russia has turned over to Ukrainian authorities its demands... for the immediate arrest and extradition of all those connected to the terrorist acts in question," the statement said. Among those listed in the statement to be handed over are SBU head Vasyl Maliuk, who has acknowledged his service was behind attacks on the bridge linking Crimea to the Russian mainland since the Kremlin's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

# Bulgaria, Romania join free Schengen movement club



Flight attendants walk next to a banner reading "Welcome to Schengen!" in Romania a few minutes after midnight, just after Romania's official entry into the European area of free circulation at Otopeni's "Henri Coanda" international airport yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Sofia

Bulgaria and Romania joined Europe's vast Schengen area of free movement yesterday, opening up travel by air and sea without border checks after a 13-year wait.

A veto by Austria however means the new status will not apply to land routes, after Vienna expressed concerns over a potential 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.

"I travel often and this really eases things", Kristina Markova, 35, said as she readied to fly out of the Sofia airport yesterday morning.

"We got to the terminal in less than three minutes, including baggage check," she said. "It's a real improvement".

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.

"This is a great success for both countries, and a historic moment for the Schengen area — the large-

est area of free movement in the world," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement Saturday.

"Together, we are building a stronger, more united Europe for all our citizens."

With Bulgaria and Romania, the Schengen zone now comprises 29 members — 25 of the 27 European Union member states as well as Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

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

More staff including border police and immigration officers will be deployed to airports to "support passengers and detect those who want to take advantage to leave Romania illegally", it added.

Random checks will also be carried out to catch people with false documents and to combat human trafficking.

Bulgaria and Romania both hope to fully integrate into Schengen by the end of the year, but Austria has so far relented only on air and sea routes.

Croatia, which joined the EU after Romania and Bulgaria, beat them to becoming Schengen's 27th member in January 2023.

Created in 1985, the Schengen area allows more than 400mn people to travel freely without internal border controls.

While some have reason to celebrate, truck drivers, faced with endless queues at the borders with their European neighbours, feel left out.

One of Romania's main road transport unions the UNTRR has called for "urgent measures" to get full Schengen integration, deploing the huge financial losses caused by the long waits.

"Romanian hauliers have lost billions of euros every year, just because of long waiting times at borders," secretary general Radu Dinescu said.

According to the union, truckers usually wait eight to 16 hours at the border with Hungary, and from 20 to 30 hours at the Bulgarian border, with peaks of three days. Bulgarian businesses have also voiced their anger over the slow progress.

"Only three percent of Bulgarian goods are transported by air and sea, the remaining 97% by land," said Vasil Vele, president of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA).

"So we're at three percent in Schengen and we don't know when we'll be there with the other 97%," he told AFP.

Bucharest and Sofia have both said there will be no going back.

"There is no doubt that this process is irreversible," Romanian Interior Minister Catalin Predoiu said this month, adding it "must be completed by 2024 with the extension to land borders".

## France police find 'bones' of toddler missing in the Alps

French investigators have found the "bones" of a toddler who went missing last summer in a tiny Alpine village and are working to determine how he died, a prosecutor said yesterday. The discovery is the first major breakthrough in the case of two-and-a-half-year-old Emile, who vanished on July 8 last year while staying with his grandparents.

Two neighbours last saw him in the late afternoon walking alone on a street in Le Vernet, at an altitude of 1,200m in the French Alps. "On Saturday, the police was informed of the discovery of bones near the hamlet of Le Vernet," prosecutor Jean-Luc Blachon said. Genetic testing allowed them "to conclude yesterday that they were the bones of the child Emile," he added. The prosecutor did not give a cause of death, but said that forensic investigators were continuing to analyse the bones.

"The police is deploying means to carry out additional searches in the area where they were found," he added. A source close to the case said a walker had spotted the remains.

When he disappeared, Emile had just arrived the day before to stay with his maternal grandparents in their secondary home for the holidays. The little boy, barely 90cm tall, was wearing a yellow T-shirt, white shorts and tiny hiking shoes, a call for witnesses at the time said. A massive on-the-ground search involving dozens of police officers and soldiers, sniffer dogs, a helicopter and drones failed to find the little boy in July. A prosecutor said after several days it was unlikely such a young child would have survived in the summer heat.

An initial probe into a missing person soon became a criminal investigation into a possible abduction. The possibilities of an accident or a fall have also remained open. Police on Thursday returned to the village, cordoning off the area and summoning 17 people including family members, neighbours and witnesses to re-enact the last moments before he went missing to try to solve the mystery. Drones flew overhead in the drizzle to capture footage of the re-enactment, but there was no news of any major discovery after the exercise. Emile's mother and father, devout Catholics, were absent on the day of his disappearance. Until now some media had focused on the boy's grandfather. Emile's grandfather was questioned in a 1990s case into alleged violence and sexual aggression at a private Catholic school. But a source close to the case said his possible involvement in the disappearance had always been examined to "the same degree" as other hypotheses. In late November, a day before Emile would have turned three, his parents published a call for answers in a Christian weekly. "Tell us where he is," they wrote.



This handout picture obtained on July 9, 2023 from French "Gendarmerie Nationale" twitter account shows a portrait of Emile. (AFP)

## Peruvian president must present Rolex watches: prosecutor

AFP  
Lima

Peru's prosecutor's office yesterday ordered President Dina Boluarte (pictured) to present any Rolex watches in her possession, after a raid on her home and office as part of a corruption probe.

Boluarte, 61, is being investigated for illegal enrichment and failing to declare several luxury watches which she has been spotted wearing since coming to power in 2022, following her predecessor's arrest.

"The president of the republic has been formally summoned to exhibit the Rolex watches," when she gives her sworn statement on April 5, the prosecutor's office said.

The statement from the prosecutor's office said that officers had not found the luxury watches during a dawn raid on Saturday, in which agents were shown breaking down the door of Boluarte's home in dramatic television footage.

However, "other elements of interest for the investigation were obtained." Local media indicated that documents were found showing when one of the watches was obtained.

Boluarte's lawyer Mateo Castaneda told journalists on Saturday that police had found some watches during their operation.

"They did not take them away. They were noted and photographed. There were around 10, and among them were some nice ones but I cannot say if they were Rolex," Castaneda told radio station RPP.

In an address to the nation, Boluarte slammed the raids as "arbitrary, disproportionate and abusive".

The raid came after prosecutors refused Boluarte's request for more time to respond to a subpoena demanding she fur-



nish proof of purchase for her watches.

Prosecutors also want to know if she has reported the Rolex watches on her income statements.

Boluarte came to power in December 2022 after former president Pedro Castillo tried to dissolve Congress and rule by decree, leading to his arrest and violent protests demanding she step down, and that fresh elections be held.

She is also facing constitutional complaint over a crack-down on those protests which led to the deaths of more than 50 people.

Boluarte, whose approval ratings hover around 10%, said Saturday the raids were "an attack on democracy and the state of government, generating political, social and economic instability".

She has previously said that the watches were the product of working hard since she was 18 years old. 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.



Pope Francis waves to the crowd from the popemobile after the Easter Mass at St Peter's square in the Vatican yesterday. (AFP)

## Pope pleads for peace in Easter message

Pope Francis urged the world to resist "the logic of weapons" in his Easter message at the Vatican yesterday, easing growing health fears as he greeted thousands of Catholics.

The 87-year-old's "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) blessing came after he led Easter Mass in front of 60,000 worshippers at Saint Peter's Square while appearing in good spirits.

In his traditional speech broadcasted worldwide, Francis condemned war as "always an absurdity and a defeat", raising conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar and beyond. He renewed appeals for a ceasefire in Gaza, calling for greater aid deliveries to the devastated territory and the release of hostages. The civilian population is "now at the limit of its endurance", he said, lamenting the impact on children especially. "Let us not allow the strengthening winds of war to blow on Europe and the Mediterranean. Let us not yield to the logic of weapons and rearming," he added. The pope proposed a "general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine" as the war between the two countries grinds through its third year.

Francis also urged world leaders to "spare no efforts in combatting the scourge of human trafficking" to free its victims. Moments before the blessing, Francis passed through the adoring crowd on his "popemobile" as pilgrims shouted "Long live the pope!", waved flags and strained to take pictures. The pope on Saturday presided over the Easter Vigil at the Vatican in front of some 6,000 people from around the world, a day after his last-minute cancellation at a major Good Friday procession revived questions about his health.

He delivered a 10-minute homily in Italian, speaking without any undue difficulty and condemning "the walls of selfishness and indifference" in the world. At the end of the two-and-a-half-hour service he showed little sign of fatigue, taking time to greet and bless some of the worshippers.

In a brief statement Friday, the Vatican had said that "to preserve his health ahead of tomorrow's vigil and the Easter Sunday mass, Pope Francis will this evening follow the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum from the Santa Marta Residence", where he lives.



# New ‘Gold Souq’ opens at City Center Doha



GM: Murat Kayman

City Center Doha, one of the largest and most prominent malls in Qatar, has announced the launch of the all-new Gold Souq Square, in a traditionally themed opening ceremony. “The new shopping area is fully dedicated to jewellery lovers who can enjoy shopping for their favourite luxurious pieces of gold and diamond from over 20 newly opened outlets,” a statement said yesterday. HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani cut a ribbon to open the Gold Souq, accompanied by members of the management of both Aamal and City Center



A view of a section of the Gold Souq at City Center Doha.

Doha, as well as a number of guests. The word ‘souq’ means ‘market’ in Arabic, inspired by the traditional Arabian gold markets. Increasingly occupied by a range of sellers from the

Gulf region, the Gold Souq is located on the east side of the mall, on the second floor under the newly opened food court. All these shops are listed on the mall’s website [www.citycenterdoha.com](http://www.citycenterdoha.com).



HE Shaikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani opening the Gold Souq at City Center Doha.

Murat Kayman, general manager of City Center Doha, commented: “It is with pleasure that I witness the opening of the new Gold Souq. This marks a significant occasion as we expand our

diverse community of retail offerings. As we embark on this exciting journey, we are pleased to welcome this new addition to our tenant mix, which aims to enrich the shopping experience of

our visitors. This addition not only enhances our retail landscape but also reinforces our commitment to providing a dynamic destination where every visit promises satisfaction and delight.”



The collaboration aims to boost student participation, especially among women and girls.

## Qatar Foundation partners with International School Sport Federation

Qatar Foundation (QF) has teamed up with the International School Sport Federation (ISF), a non-profit organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee, to evaluate the sporting landscape within its schools and universities, to boost student participation, especially among women and girls. Under the agreement with ISF, a thorough analysis will be carried out on the sports programmes across QF’s 13 Pre-University Education (PUE) schools and seven of its universities. This includes assessing both curricular and extracurricular sports activities. ISF will compile the results, comparing them with local and international schools, and develop a list of recommendations to advance the schools and

universities towards global best practices. The analysis and recommendations are expected to be finalised by July 2024. Abeer al-Khalifa, president, PUE said: “Qatar Foundation is committed to fostering interest and enthusiasm for sports among the local community, especially young people, recognizing how it can serve as a pathway to healthy lifestyles. “It is for this reason that we have partnered with ISF to evaluate our sporting systems. We aim to serve as a role model within the region and beyond, leading by example, and to achieve this, we must prioritise innovation, inclusivity, and excellence in all our endeavours.” Laurent Petrynska, ISF president and member of the International Olympic

Committee’s Olympic Education Commission, said: “We would like to thank Qatar Foundation for choosing the ISF and the ISF Academy to conduct this important mission. We hope that the outcomes of our work will contribute ultimately to support the increase of sport participation of the QF school students, and girls in particular. “In the framework of this Olympic year, I am convinced that the bold vision of HE Sheikh Hamad al-Thani, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation, will inspire other government decision makers worldwide to invest in sport at school, whether it’s for developing grassroots or elite sport strategy. Everything starts at school.”

# Qatar Museums honours renowned artist Serra



Richard Serra’s ‘7’ at MIA Park. **PICTURES:** QM

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Qatar Museums (QM) is honouring renowned American artist Richard Serra posthumously, following his passing on March 26 in New York at the age of 85. In a statement shared on its social media platforms, QM expressed its profound condolences to Serra’s family and the wider artistic community, mourning the loss of an influential figure. QM highlighted its collaboration with Serra, celebrated globally for his monumental sculptures, as it cited the significance of his contributions to Qatar’s cultural landscape. QM had worked closely with Serra on several projects, including the crea-

tion of “7”, a large-scale steel sculpture situated at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) Park. Unveiled in 2011, “7” marked Serra’s inaugural public artwork in the Middle East, showcasing his mastery of form and space. In 2014, QM unveiled another monumental installation by Serra titled “East-West/West-East”, located near Zekreet in western Qatar. Coinciding with the opening was Serra’s first solo exhibition in the Middle East, titled “Richard Serra”, held at the Al Riwaq Doha Exhibition Space and QM Gallery at Katara. Stretching for more than a kilometre, the awe-inspiring artwork at Brouq Nature Reserve is composed of four steel plates, each standing tall at over 14m in height. Serra meticulously studied the to-

pography of the land to ensure flawless alignment, skillfully enhancing the vast, desolate space within the desert’s heart. QM described the outcome as “The result is spectacular and although contemporary, timeless”. “East-West/West-East” captures the essence of Serra’s five-decade-long career, showcasing his evolution as an artist. According to QM, the legacy of Serra in Qatar’s cultural scene is profound, with his sculptures joining other iconic artworks like Louise Bourgeois’ “Maman” and eL Seed’s Calligraffiti project. QM chairperson HE Sheikh Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani acknowledged Serra’s significant contributions, portraying him as a “true giant of the art world” whose lasting influence will endure through his works across Qatar’s landscape.

# Al Wakra Iftar tent hosts more than 30,000



The Iftar tent at Al Wakra has hosted more than 30,000 fasting persons during this Ramadan, the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has said. The tent by the General Directorate of Endowments, according to an official statement

from Awqaf, receives more than 1,000 guests every day. The tent is set up as part of the Iftar Endowment project by Awqaf’s Endowment Bank for Righteousness and Piety with contributions from donors and philanthropists. The General Administration of

Endowments has set up tents at Ain Khaled (Thursday and Friday Market), Al Saliya (New Central Market), Industrial Area (Eid Musalla, Street 23 Al-Attayah) Industrial Zone Street 38, Al Rayyan (Eid Prayer Hall), Al Montazah, Umm Salal Mohamed, Al Wakra (opposite the old Al



Wakra Market), Al Khor (Othman Mosque), Bin Omran (Eid Prayer Hall), Al Aziziyah (Eid Prayer Hall), Souq Al-Ali, Al Sulaimi (North Farms Area), Muraikh, next to Mosque No 879 and Al Thumama. Iftar kits are distributed at Old Airport (behind Family Shopping Centre), Umm Ghuwailana

(Council Co-operation Traffic Signals), Bin Mahmoud (Jaidah Bridge), Souq Al Faleh (near Al-Qubab Mosque) and Salwa Road (Azab Abu Nakhla Complex). According to the statement, the administration has chosen the best restaurants to prepare meals. It is ensured that

restaurants adhere to health measures, the meals are diverse and the materials used for food distribution are environmentally friendly and recyclable. The administration supervises the preparation of meals in these restaurants to ensure compliance with requirements.