



BRAND NEW BUILDING FOR RENT

Ready To Occupy

HABARI REAL ESTATE

Call Now!
+974 3030 0880
+974 3341 9475

• 8 Shops
• 2 Units - 2 BHK
• 1 Unit - 3 BHK

Al Murra, Doha www.habari realestate.com

Now on **talabat**

ALIF

DOG MAN
UNO

Sky Vision Real Estate Offer

Labour Room 1,250/- per room @ Industrial Area, Street-38,43,44,47

Lounge & Club / Studio Room / Men Salon for rent inside a 4 star hotel

Warehouse 300sqm - Qr.12,500/-
Call: 33598672, 52038746, 50576993

LOW SODIUM FOR BETTER HEALTH

Amwaj

1500ml/600ml
350ml/200ml

DOHA JUICE & FOOD FACTORY
+974 30454443/+974 31100277

Amir arrives to a warm welcome in Manila



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived yesterday in Manila on a state visit to the Philippines.

HH the Amir was welcomed upon arrival at the Maharlika Presidential Airport (Villamor Airbase) by Secretary of Energy Raphael Perpetuo Lotilla, Qatar's ambassador to the Philippines Ahmed bin Saad al-Hamidi, and Philippines' ambassador to Qatar Lillibeth Velasco Pono, along with senior Philippine officials and the staff of the Qatari embassy in Manila.

HH the Amir is accompanied by an official delegation. His visit

to the Philippines coincides with the 43rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1981. The embassy of Philippines was opened in Doha in 1992, while Qatar's embassy was opened in Manila in 1994.

The relations between Qatar and the Philippines are based on principles of partnership and mutual co-operation in many vital fields, including labour, trade, investment, tourism, and others. The two friendly countries share convergent views on many international issues, and many bilateral agreements in various fields, such

Highest level visit to further boost bilateral relations in various fields

as economy, trade, labour, culture, media, health, education, technical and vocational training, investment protection, avoidance of double taxation and others.

These relations have seen remarkable growth and expansion at all levels over the past four decades, and have been strengthened through mutual visits at various levels.

The visit of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin

Khalifa al-Thani to the Philippines on April 10, 2012 served as a cornerstone for consolidating the relations and promoting them to the highest levels. This visit marked the beginning of a new era for strengthening the Qatari-Philippine ties in various fields, and was the first visit of its kind by an Arab leader to the Philippines in more than three decades, which gave it a great significance in opening new horizons.

In December 2008, former

president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo paid an official visit to Qatar followed by another former president Rodrigo Roa Duterte's visit in April 2017.

The high-level mutual visits include the visit of HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani to the Philippines in August 2018.

In the context of continuous communication and consultation between the two countries, Undersecretary of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs for Bilateral Relations and Asean Affairs, Maria Theresa Lazaro,

visited Doha in August 2022. In statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), she stressed the importance of the visit in strengthening and developing the bilateral relations between Doha and Manila.

She described the Qatar-Philippine Joint Committee meeting as a "milestone event", being the first political consultation between the two countries to discuss a wide range of topics of common interest, especially political and economic co-operation, immigration issues, climate change, and various regional and international issues. (QNA)

See pages 4,5,6,10

Qatar hails Azerbaijan, Armenia agreement

Qatar welcomed the agreement reached by Azerbaijan and Armenia regarding the demarcation of borders in the lands belonging to four villages, and the continuation of border demarcation work between the two countries. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's hope that the initial agreement will pave the way for resolving the unresolved issues between the two sides through dialogue and peaceful means, in an effort to achieve the interest of the two countries, as well as the aspirations of the two peoples for development and prosperity. The ministry affirmed the Qatar's support for international efforts aimed at restoring security, stability and peace in the region. (QNA)

Syria 'has held meetings with US'

US-sanctioned President Bashar al-Assad said in an interview published yesterday Syria has held meetings "from time to time" with Washington, as it seeks openings after over a decade of isolation. The US was among the first to cut ties with Assad over the repression of anti-government protests that sparked war in 2011, and many Western and Arab states also severed relations. However last year Syria returned to the Arab fold, seeking better ties with wealthy US-allied Gulf states.

Rockets fired towards US base in Syria

At least five rockets were launched from Iraq's town of Zummar towards a US military base in northeastern Syria yesterday, two Iraqi security sources told Reuters. The attack against US forces is the first since early February when fighter groups in Iraq stopped their attacks against US troops.

Israel hits new low as dozens of bodies found at Gaza hospital

AFP
Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories)

Gaza's civil defence said yesterday dozens of bodies had been found buried at a hospital complex previously raided by Israel, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to ramp up military pressure on Hamas.

Netanyahu, who threatened action "in the coming days" without elaborating, has repeatedly said the Israeli army will launch a ground assault on Rafah despite international concern for civilians who have taken refuge in the southern Gaza city.

Gaza's civil defence agency said its teams had discovered 50 bodies since Saturday buried in the courtyard of the Nasser Medical Complex in Gaza's main southern city of Khan Yunis.

"We... are waiting for all graves to be exhumed in order to give a final number of martyrs," Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the civil defence agency, told AFP.

"There were no clothes on some bodies, which certainly indicates (the victims) faced torture and abuse," Bassal said. Israel's military said it was checking the reports.

Hamas in a statement said the 50 bodies were exhumed from what it called a "mass grave" in the hospital's courtyard. Israel pulled its ground forces from Khan Yunis on April 7 after carrying out what it called a "precise and limited operation" at the hospital, one of Gaza's biggest.

Hospitals in Gaza have faced the brunt of the Israeli assault.

Yesterday, an AFP photographer saw civil defence crews exhuming human remains from the courtyard, while grieving relatives collected bodies wrapped in white.

Netanyahu, in a video statement on the eve of the Jewish holiday of Passover, said Israel "will deliver additional and painful blows". "In the coming



People work to move into a cemetery bodies of Palestinians found buried at Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. (Reuters)



Palestinians grieving over the bodies of relatives killed in Israeli bombardment, at the Al-Najar hospital in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. (AFP)

days we will increase the military and political pressure on Hamas," he said.

Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said in a televised statement that "the chief of staff has approved the next steps for

the war," without offering details.

Earlier this week, the G7 group of developed economies said that it opposed a "full-scale military operation" in Rafah, fearing "catastrophic consequences" for civilians.

Qatar Central Bank issues regulations on cloud computing

Qatar Central Bank has issued regulations on cloud computing in line with its Financial Sector Strategy, Fintech Strategy and QCB's "constant endeavour to regulate and develop the financial sector in the country and stimulate innovation in the field of Fintech."



QCB aims to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for the country's financial institutions.

Qatar Central Bank said it affirms the importance of complying with cloud computing regulations in the financial sector.

This is in order to enforce compliance with information security and data protection requirements through a secure and risk-based approach for cloud adoption by defining the requirements that manage risks stemming from the usage of cloud computing.

These requirements address the governance of cloud usage, the cloud computing lifecycle and the operational security controls.

By issuing these regulations, Qatar Central Bank aims to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for the country's financial institutions and Fintech companies to develop and improve smart solutions in the financial sector.

Cloud computing contributes to the development of financial services, using modern technology in accordance with the international standards and best practices.

These regulations are also in line with Qatar's Third National Development Strategy, deemed to be the final stage towards achieving Qatar National Vision 2030, which aims to build a digital economy, while stimulating the widespread adoption of technology and accelerating and encouraging technological innovations in various areas, including the financial sector.

The regulations can be viewed on Qatar Central Bank's official website.

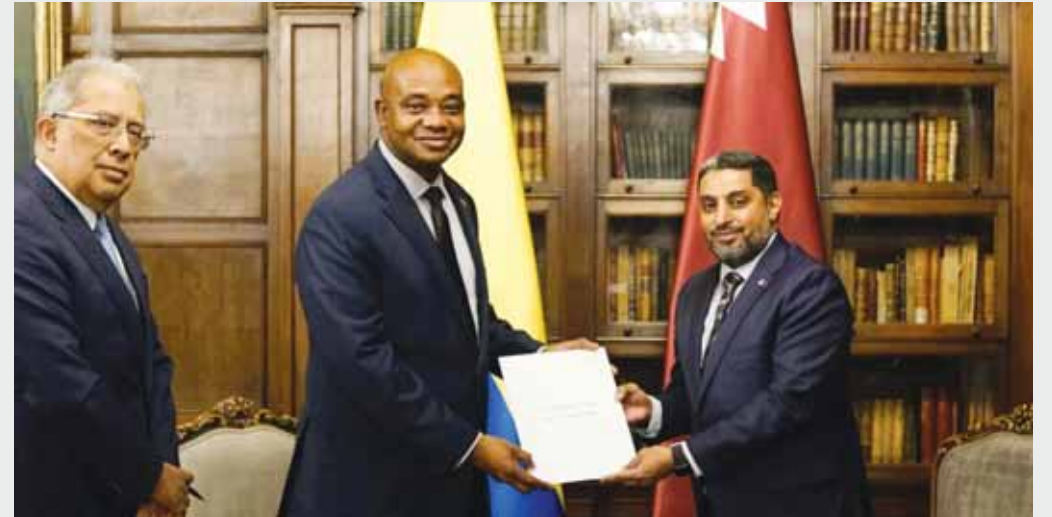
Qatar, Libya update air services pact



Qatar and Libya yesterday initialled an update of a bilateral air services agreement formerly inked on April 28, 2004 with the aim of further liberalising the agreement provisions in line with the developments of the civil aviation industry. The two sides also sealed a bilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU), allowing the two countries' national carriers to operate an unlimited and restriction-free number of weekly passenger and cargo flights weekly with any types of airplanes. In charge of managing the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), Mohamed Faleh Alhajri, and Head of the Libyan Civil Aviation Authority Dr Mohamed Shalibak signed

the two pacts with the attendance of HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti. The agreement update and the MoU come in the context of connecting Qatar with more air services agreements, allowing the Qatari national carrier to expand its network and to fly to more destinations worldwide. Following the signing ceremony, HE al-Sulaiti met with Dr Shalibak and discussed Qatari-Libyan relations in the fields of civil aviation, and ways to further enhance them. Libya ambassador to Qatar Mohamed Mustafa al-Saghir al-Lafi attended the signing ceremonies and the meeting. (QNA)

Amir sends written message to Colombia president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a written message to President of Colombia Gustavo Petro, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. Qatar's ambassador to Colombia Issa bin Jaber al-Kuwari delivered the message during his meeting in Bogota yesterday with Colombian Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Luis Gilberto Murillo. (QNA)

Qatar Charity boosts food security in northern Syria

Qatar Charity (QC) has set up an automated bread production line in Maabatli in the Afrin district of northern Syria, as part of Qatar Charity's Support the Wheat Value Chain project for the fifth consecutive year.

The bread production line aims to enhance food security in northern Syria, improve self-sufficiency, and to support the local community. The production capacity of this production line reaches 15,000 loaves of bread per day to meet the needs of more than 50,000 people, especially internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in camps.

These efforts come within the framework of Qatar Charity's projects for early recovery, development, and sustainability in the region.

In its fifth consecutive year, the project has succeeded in supporting 120 farmers who benefited from agricultural input support such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and the cost of fuel for irrigation. Qatar Charity purchased 1,200 tonnes of wheat from farmers in the area, and 925 tonnes of flour were processed and distributed to bakeries in the region, to be sold at subsidised prices. The number of beneficiaries exceeded 25,000 IDPs living in camps. Additionally, the project distributes free bread to



IDPs in several camps, benefiting around 5,000 individuals.

In this context, Director of Services and member of the Local Council in Maabatli, Aref Mohamed Ali extended thanks to Qatar Charity for its vital role in improving living conditions in

the camps through this project, especially since the automated bread production line plays a pivotal role in providing subsidised and free bread, reducing financial burdens on the population and enhancing food security in the region. (QNA)

Labour ministry partners with QCDC to qualify national cadres

Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC), founded by Qatar Foundation (QF), and the Ministry of Labour (MoL), signed a working document yesterday to frame co-operation between the two entities in the fields of training, employment, and career rehabilitation for people with disabilities.

The signing ceremony was attended by teams from both entities led by Saad al-Kharji, career programmes and services manager at QCDC, and Mohamed Salem al-Khulaifi, assistant director of the Rehabilitation and Skills Development in the Private Sector Department at MoL, at QCDC's headquarters in Education City.

The document outlines the co-operation between QCDC and MoL to train and provide career development services to Qatari nationals with disabilities. This aims to integrate them into official state programmes and events in line with their abilities and career aspirations.

Abdulrahman Telfat, director of the MoL's Rehabilitation and Skills Development Department emphasised that this agreement is part of efforts to rehabilitate the national workforce for the private sector. "The Ministry seeks to en-



able people with disabilities to obtain suitable job opportunities, ensuring their independence and integration into society," he said. He added that there is ongoing communication with institutions and major companies in the private sector to provide job opportunities or training for individuals with disabilities.

The newly signed document enables the Ministry and QCDC to further collaborate on implementing programmes aimed at integrating people with disabilities into the workforce. QCDC executive director Abdulla al-Mansoori expressed his satisfaction with the partnership. "This frames our shared commitment to enhancing the skills and opportunities of people with disabilities in Qatar. I personally believe that this step and

the long legacy of collaboration between our two organisations are the best ways for us to continue contributing to the prosperity of our society and the sustainable development of our nation."

The growing partnership builds on the success of QCDC's "EmpowerAbility" programme, which involved major national institutions including the MoL, QF, Qatar University, and others. It provided career development services to 14 participants with disabilities, engaging them in various work environments to enhance their ability to integrate into the labour market. The impact of "EmpowerAbility" was showcased by the participants' contributions in organising National Sport Day activations in 10 locations across the state.

16th School Robotics Competition sees participation of 200 schools

The 16th School Robotics Competition kicked off yesterday with the participation of over 700 teams representing more than 200 public and private schools nationwide with an increase of 35% participation compared to 2023.

The event is organised by the Qatar Scientific Club (QSC) of the Ministry of Sports and Youth in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and supported by the Social & Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM).

The inauguration ceremony was attended by HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at MoEHE Maha Zayed al-Ruwaili, alongside a host of officials and departments' directors.

HE the Minister toured the sections of the 7th scientific exhibition associated with the competition which showcases the creative innovations of the participating students. The event includes tra-



ditional contests such as robotics (explore and discover) and others with their elementary and advanced sections.

Challenge and competition tracks are the best way to exhibit the participants' capabilities and hone their skills. The school

championship is considered the most important event given the fact that previous editions have demonstrated the superb capabilities of students, and this gathering underscores the clearest indication of a promising future for optimism, said al-Ruwaili. (QNA)

Education ministry initiates registration for new students

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) initiated yesterday the registration process for new students as well as those wishing to transfer to other academic stages, with the process continuing until next academic year 2024-2025. The ministry stated that early electronic registration of students starts from April 21 to June 20, 2024, with priority given to Qataris, children of Qatari women and children of GCC citizens in the same school where their brothers are admitted. Registration for Qatari students, children of Qatari women and GCC citizens begins on April 28 and ends on June 20, 2024.

Early registration for all nationalities kicks off from May 26 to June 20, 2024 through the ministry's "Maaref" portal. Director of School and Student Affairs Department at MoEHE, Maryam Ali al-Nesef

al-Boainain had revealed to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the expected number of new students to be registered this year is approximately 16,584 boys and girls. She also stated that the number of students in public schools currently stands at 137,070 boys and girls from kindergarten to the 12th grade for the academic year 2023-2024.

She said that the number of government schools in all stages is 214 schools for boys and girls, including 89 for elementary, 46 for preparatory, 49 for secondary, 26 combined schools (more than one educational level in the same school), and four mixed schools, in addition to 64 kindergarten schools. Regarding integration schools, she said that their number reached 93 schools, and the number of integrated students in all stages amounted to 3,446 boys and girls. (QNA)

UDST launches Amiri Scholarship Programme to promote excellence

The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) announced the availability of the Amiri Scholarship programme designed to support outstanding students from Qatar and around the globe.

This distinguished scholarship embodies the vision and ongoing commitment of the wise leadership to foster educational excellence in Qatar and beyond.

The Amiri Scholarship stands as the most prestigious award designed to support outstanding students from Qatar and around the globe. It aims to enable them to pursue degrees in applied STEM fields of study, thus nurturing creativity and innovation. Moreover, the scholarship encourages inter-

national beneficiaries to immerse themselves in Qatar's rich and multicultural society.

The Scholarship offers many benefits to the students including a full tuition fee waiver for a bachelor's degree programme, comprehensive health insurance coverage, a monthly stipend, a complete waiver of textbook fees, provision of accommodation and transportation, and visa processing fee coverage for international students. In addition, international students will avail of an annual economy class round-trip ticket.

President of UDST Dr Salem Al-Naemi said: "It is a privilege and an honour for us, as a national university, to be one of the selected universities that of-

fer this esteemed scholarship. Aligned with the Qatar National Vision 2030, UDST is dedicated to offering equal educational opportunities to all students. This effort highlights our commitment to fostering a knowledgeable and innovative workforce, capable of contributing to the future of Qatar and the world at large." To qualify for the scholarship, candidates must meet a set of criteria, with the key requirements focusing on a high school graduation certificate or equivalent, approved by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, with a minimum average of 90%, successful completion of final year math, science (chemistry/biology/physics), and any other programme-specific entry

requirements with at least a 90% score.

Applicants must be recent high school graduates, either in the same year or the year prior to the scholarship application. Prospective students from government, private and international schools, both within and outside Qatar, are invited to apply. Detailed information about test requirements, the application process, scholarship award maintenance requirements, and more can be found on UDST's official website: udst.edu.qa

UDST has encouraged all eligible students to seize the unparalleled opportunity to further their education, noting that the deadline for the scholarship applications is May 30, 2024. (QNA)





Qatari students get top rankings in Arab AI Olympiad contest

A coterie of students from Qatar achieved advanced places in the 3rd edition of the Arab Artificial Intelligence (AI) Olympiad contest held in Jordan with the participation of 350 Arab students at the school and college levels.

Organised by the Arab Robotics Association in partnership with STEAM Center, the competition was intended to employ the skills of secondary school students and imbue them with global talents, as the 21st century witnesses a rapid evolution in the world of technology, particularly in the areas of algorithms, mathematics, programming, computer vision, cybersecurity, data

analysis and embedded systems.

The event brought together students from five Qatari secondary schools, 14 technology track students, three trainers, alongside the team supervisor and senior guidance expert in the Information Technology Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Aisha al-Mansouri.

Omar Bin Khattab Secondary School ranked first at the level of the Arab region in computer vision, with Musab Bin Amir Independent Secondary School for Boys and the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys being ranked second in cybersecurity at the level of

the Arab region. Additionally, the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys ranked third in the embedded systems at the level of the Arab region, with the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys winning the Arab championship title in all contests.

The participation of the Qatari team came under the supervision of MoEHE, represented by the Information Technology Department, in pursuit of conducting enhanced activities that broadly support the technology track students and to upgrade their skills in robotics and AI. (QNA)

Awqaf's QR21.7mn aid benefits 3,161 families

The Zakat Affairs Department at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs distributed aid totalling QR21.7mn in March, benefiting 3,161 eligible families inside Qatar, an official statement said.

Mohamed Hassan al-Tamimi, head of the Zakat Banking Department, said the Zakat Affairs Department is keen to provide assistance to deserving families within Qatar. The assistance provided during March, was divided into periodic, lumpsum aid and Ramadan aid.

The periodic aid, provided on a monthly basis to eligible families amounted to QR7,660,394.

The lumpsum aid, disbursed once as needed was with a value of QR14,083,967. Ramadan aid of QR8,197,800 was distributed to 2,625 families.

The official stated that those eligible can submit a request for assistance through the Zakat Affairs Department app or the website www.zakat.gov.qa, supported by the required documents.

The applicants are informed of the status of the requests via text messages. Individuals and companies can also pay their obligatory Zakat through the Zakat Affairs Department's website or collection offices and points across the country.



Mohamed Hassan al-Tamimi

QRCS provides winter supplies in northwest Syria

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has successfully concluded the project of seasonal assistance for non-food items to mitigate the impact of winter on the most vulnerable displaced people in northwest Syria.

Funded by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), the project was primarily intended to provide essential winter aid to 10,000 displaced families living in camps, in addition to distributing e-vouchers to beneficiaries which helped them purchase winter requirements from sales centres and it was distributed to multiple regions based on their desire, conditions and needs.

The items included heating fuel, carpets, blankets, and tent insulation kits which strikingly helped improve the life of roughly 53,000 displaced people and enabled them to surmount their suffering during chilly weather and to mitigate its impacts on them and their children.

The project culminated in a productive co-operation between QFFD and QRCS and was among a series of humanitarian projects funded by QFFD and carried out by QRCS in several countries around the globe, particularly in the impoverished countries that grapple with humanitarian crises, conflicts and disasters. (QNA)

RACA to attend aid development conference in Dubai

The Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities (RACA) will take part in the 20th Dubai International Humanitarian and Aid Development Conference & Exhibition (DIHAD), which will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre in the United Arab Emirates from April 23-25.

The event is organised under the theme "DIHAD 2004-2024: Humanitarian Diplomacy and a Journey to the Future." RACA will dedicate a special pavilion to review the accomplishments of the Qatari charitable sector.

DIHAD is one of the major humanitarian events at the level of charitable and humanitarian levels, which gathers a contingent of decision-makers from a variety of humanitarian actors. In addition, the event will see the participation of more than 900 non-governmental organisations, humanitarian associations, and global trade brands to shine a spotlight on humanitarian issues and to strengthen co-operation to build a better future. The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) will participate in the RACA pavilion in DIHAD. (QNA)

GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre sets registration rules for arbitrators, experts

Dr Kamal al-Hamad, Secretary-General, GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre, emphasised the centre's dedication to stringent and cutting-edge standards by outlining the procedures for registering arbitrators and experts.

This includes a requirement for applicants to register electronically on the centre's website and submit all necessary documents.

These documents should include an academic certificate, evidence of a minimum of 10 years of practical experience for arbitrators and seven years for experts in their specialised field, completion of the International Fellowship Programme in Arbitration, and the Arbitrators Qualification Programme.

Additionally, arbitrators must have issued at least five institutional arbitration awards, while experts must provide three expert reports in their field of expertise. Furthermore, applicants must present a university statement verifying the validity of



Dr Kamal al-Hamad, Secretary-General, GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre.

their certificate, acknowledge the authenticity of their submitted documents, and provide any additional evidence demonstrating the centre's commitment to aligning with the latest international practices in commercial arbitration.

This process is part of the centre's strategic plan to rank among the world's top ten commercial arbitration Centres.

Al-Hamad emphasised that arbitrators and experts associated with the GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre must possess a comprehensive set of skills and attributes. These include a solid

foundation in legal knowledge, adept analytical abilities, effective communication skills, proficiency in managing intricate situations, impartiality, and a profound comprehension of arbitration principles along with the pertinent laws and regulations governing the disputes they handle.

He stated that the GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre recently turned down over 60 applications due to failure to meet these rigorous criteria.

"We view these exacting standards as fundamental to upholding the reputation and sustained success of the GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre," al-Hamad commented.

"Arbitrators and experts we appoint play a pivotal role in establishing our standing as a premier institution in commercial arbitration. Their possession of requisite professional skills, experience, qualifications, and professional licenses reflects the efficiency and quality of the services we deliver."



Shura Council attends plenary session of Arab Parliament

The Shura Council participated in the third plenary session of the fourth session of the third legislative term of the Arab Parliament that was held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo on Saturday.

The Council was represented at the session by its members: Shaikha bint Yousuf al-Jufairi, Essa bin Ahmad al-Nassr, Salem bin Rashid al-Muraikhi, and Hamad bin Abdulla al-Mulla, who are also members of the Arab Parliament.

The session discussed Arab developments and issues, the latest developments in the occupied Palestinian territories and the recent aggression against Gaza and the brotherly Palestinian people, as well as a number of topics related to strengthening joint Arab action.

The attendees reviewed the reports of the permanent committees of the Arab Parliament, and the report of the Palestine Committee, which included the actions taken by the Arab Parliament since the beginning of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, where members of Parliament condemned the brutal aggression, comprehensive genocidal war, and ethnic

cleansing against the Palestinians carried out by the Israeli forces. The session adopted a draft resolution on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, with a number of measures.

Speaking during the session, Essa bin Ahmad al-Nassr condemned the failure of the international community to stop the ongoing aggression against the Gaza Strip, denouncing the inability of the international system to establish international law and the application of double standards in dealing with the Israeli aggression.

On the other hand, the attendees adopted the vision of the Arab Parliament regarding empowering Arab youth to contribute effectively to the development process.

Speaking during the discussion, Shaikha bint Yousuf al-Jufairi stressed the importance of this document in addressing unemployment among Arab youth. She also pointed out that Qatar's support for youth extended to include the youth of the entire world, pointing to the initiatives launched by Her Highness the Chairperson of Qatar Foundation Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. (QNA)

More women needed at the foreign policy table: GU-Q conference

A global dialogue hosted by Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) emphasised the role of gender-informed strategies and gender diversity within international institutions to drive better and more equitable foreign policy and outcomes, a statement said.

GU-Q's "Gender in Foreign Policy" Hiwaraat conference on Thursday engaged the diverse perspectives of distinguished women leaders with pioneering careers in politics and international diplomacy, including Dalia Grybauskaitė, the first female president of Lithuania, who held the office from 2009 to 2019.

"It's important for the world that women assume greater leadership roles in the diplomatic and political arenas because it is the natural thing and the right thing to happen," said Dr Safwan Masri, dean of GU-Q. "More than ever, we need more women at the foreign policy table. And I can think

of no better expression of GU-Q's mission and values than today's discussion on gender in foreign policy," he said highlighting that seven in ten students in the foreign service degree programme at GU-Q are women, with the potential to bring a new gender balance to the diplomatic field.

Ambassador Androulla Kaminara, inaugural Distinguished-Diplomat-in-Residence at GU-Q, said that a "business as usual" approach in foreign policy is no longer adequate. "The UN Secretary-General has stressed that, despite evidence that women's full participation makes peace-building much more effective, the number of women in decision-making roles is falling," she said. At the current rate of change, she said, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will take 170 years, including SDG 5 - gender equality, integral to all SDGs. "Having this conference in a region where the rate of change



The conference engaged the diverse perspectives of distinguished women leaders with pioneering careers in politics and international diplomacy. PICTURE: Thajudheen

concerning gender empowerment is one of the fastest in the world is important," she noted.

In her video message, HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN, pointed to Qatar's global leadership in cham-

pioning women's rights yet acknowledged the work still ahead. "The role of women in international relations and diplomacy has undergone a significant transformation. Historically, women were largely absent from the decision-making tables of international

diplomacy. However, over the decades, the persistent efforts of countless women and advocates for gender equality have dramatically shifted this landscape," HE Sheikha Alya said. She highlighted Qatar's ongoing efforts, especially through the Group of Friends on Gender Parity, to create more opportunities for women at senior levels within the UN.

The conference's four thematic sessions connected perspectives from the Global North and Global South and highlighted positive examples of countries actively striving to achieve a gender balance in diplomatic postings, including Lithuania, South Africa and the European Union.

Seasoned women diplomats reflected on the challenges they have faced in their careers in the foreign service, the importance of diversity in decision-making processes, and the role of women in advocating for better policy outcomes. They pointed to the potential role

of quota systems, education, and mentoring in creating more access for women at the decision-making level.

Another session highlighted artificial intelligence's opportunities for diplomacy, its value in facilitating decision-making, and the dangers of inherent biases and its weaponisation. The concluding session focused on the devastating, disproportionate impact of conflict on the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Gaza, and the urgency of amplifying the voices of women in peace-building and conflict-resolution processes.

The conference, moderated by GU-Q student Moza al-Hajri, created unique learning opportunities for GU-Q students. An exclusive engagement with Grybauskaitė on the sidelines of the conference offered students firsthand insights into international diplomacy and leadership, the statement added.

Amir's visit to Philippines 'offers chance to strengthen co-operation, ties'

Deputy Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives Raymond Mendoza has affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Philippines represents a significant opportunity to strengthen bonds of friendship and co-operation between Qatar and Philippines, noting that this visit opens new horizons for parliamentary co-operation between the legislative bodies of the two countries.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he explained that the Qatari Shura Council and the Philippine Parliament can play an important role in strengthening bilateral relations and opening official and popular channels of communication through parliamentary diplomacy, legislative initiatives, and community outreach, and both institutions can enhance understanding and joint action, identify challenges, and examine common opportunities.

He said this includes organising the Philippines-Qatar Parliamentary Friendship Group, facilitating high-level parliamentary visits, organising cultural exchanges, and promoting dialogue on issues of common interest.

He added that through parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy, it is possible to strengthen common cultural ties and bring different viewpoints closer

together in a way that reflects the aspirations and interests of the two countries. The Deputy Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives called for regional co-operation and co-ordination among Asian parliaments to find solutions and play a greater role in pressing issues, including climate change, conflicts, disasters, poverty, human rights, the ability to withstand disasters, and promoting peace and stability in the region, noting that through legislative initiatives, political dialogue and international partnerships, it is possible to enhance the contribution of these parliaments. He said Asian countries can co-ordinate their parliamentary positions in international forums, including through the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), to serve the interests of the people of Asia at various levels. The APA provides a platform for Asian parliamentarians to exchange views, share experiences and co-ordinate their efforts on regional and global issues of common concern. He pointed out that by fostering dialogue and collaboration among member states, the APA can contribute to promoting peace, security, and development in the region, including advocating for the interests of Asian countries in international organisations and forums, strengthening regional co-operation mechanisms, and addressing shared challenges through collective action. (QNA)

Amir's visit underlines close labour ties

Undersecretary for Foreign Employment and Welfare Services of Philippines, Hans Leo Caddac has said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Manila will strengthen the existing relations between the two countries, and will give greater momentum to co-operation in the field of labour.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), he stated: "The visit of His Highness the Amir to our country will shed further light on our long-standing and close relations, and will underscore to the Filipino people the importance of this relationship that began over 40 years ago."

President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines acknowledges the importance of the relationship between the two countries and is keen on developing it, especially in the field of labour and workers, considering the role of thousands of Filipino workers in the Philippine's economy and in Qatar's developmental journey, Hans Leo Caddac added. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1981, Filipino labour has been an integral part of the construction and development scene in Qatar. Most of them are skilled professionals and workers who developed and built their careers in Qatar while providing a stable income to support their families, he said.

He emphasised that the co-operation between the two countries in the field of labour is close, with Doha attracting a significant number of Filipino workers. This has made the Filipino community one of the largest and most socially active communities in Qatar, enabling them to contribute to enhancing communication between the two countries. Additionally, they share common values and visions with the host country. Qatar is the third in the Middle East and fifth globally in terms of the number of Filipino workers employed in the country, he said.

He said that the remittance value of Filipino workers in Qatar, numbering more than 250,000, ranged



between \$830mn and \$930mn over the past three years, according to data from the Philippine Central Bank. He stated, "These financial remittances by the workers significantly contribute to the growth of the Philippine economy. Moreover, these workers have an impact on the labour sector and the Qatari economy as a whole."

Undersecretary for Foreign Employment and Welfare Services of Philippines expressed his country's appreciation for the positive developments and significant reforms implemented by Qatar to protect workers' rights, especially regarding raising the minimum wage, ensuring its protection, allowing for job mobility, and establishing other mechanisms to address any imbalances while safeguarding workers' rights. He stated, "Qatar has become attractive to Filipino workers, and its favourable work environment encourages workers to bring their families to live there." (QNA)



Qatar's heritage diversity earns Unesco experts' praise

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Culture's (MoC) participation in Unesco's celebration of the 20th anniversary of the 2003 Convention for the Preservation and Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, through a cultural heritage exhibition held from April 15 to 19 in Paris, provided an opportunity for visitors to learn about Qatari heritage.

In this context, Simona Mirella Micoleso, president of the Unesco General Conference, said: "In our celebration of the cultural heritage of Qatar, we also pay tribute to the richness of the cultural heritage of other member states from the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, which participate in these multinational nominations, as evidence of their common roots and human value." She thanked the Qatari MoC and the Permanent Delegation of Qatar to Unesco for the opportunity to share these touching moments.

Vera al-Khouri, president of the Executive Board

of Unesco, said: "Qatar displays its cultural assets and thriving arts to visitors who come from all over the world, through museums, monuments, markets and mosques. They experience this wonderful mixture of heritage, tradition and modernity."

Lazar Assoumou, director of World Heritage at Unesco, said: "Unesco welcomes this opportunity to shed light on the richness and diversity of Qatar's cultural heritage, which some of us have previously had the pleasure of knowing and visiting. Qatar, with its history spanning thousands of years, and its living culture, offers a rich and vibrant heritage that emerges from ancestral traditions, through art and knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation." The exhibition expressed the distinguished position that Qatar attaches to intangible cultural heritage, and its tireless work in preserving its heritage, as Qatar has hastened to register "The Majlis" and "Arabic Coffee," in the Representative List of the World Human Heritage by Unesco, and the MoC has been working with a group of countries for months to prepare the "Bisht" file to register it on the list as well.

PCCI president says business sector aims for true partnership with Qatar

President of Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) Enumina Mangio affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Manila, is extremely important for the business sector in her country, pointing out that the Filipino business sector aspires to create a true partnership with its counterpart in Qatar, to serve the development goals of the two countries.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), President Mangio said that the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Manila is a significant event for the Philippine business sector, as it represents Qatar's sincere interest in contributing to the Philippine's development goals.

This visit by His Highness the Amir strengthens the steps towards commercial partnership through PCCI and Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), considering that the two chambers are channels for business ventures, she added.

She pointed out several activities through which communication can be encouraged, such as round-table meetings, international expositions, conferences, summits, exchange of trade and investment missions, roadshows, and other similar activities that would spark interest between Philippine and Qatari entrepreneurs.

She affirmed that these various activities will encourage communication and co-ordination between businesspersons in both countries, leading to



the establishment of a Philippines/Qatar Business Center to serve as a venue for business interactions.

She indicated that the partnership between PCCI and QCCI began in 2008 with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen trade and investment relations between the two business communities, adding that, to achieve this, PCCI formed a core group to liaise its programmes and activities with QCCI. (QNA)



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/FMD/6593/24 HIRING OF VEHICLES WITH DRIVERS ON CALL-OFF BASIS FOR VIP TRANSPORTATION	17/04/2024 to 25/04/2024	0	0	01/05/2024

Scope of Work:
QatarEnergy LNG invites bids from competent local vendors for the Scope, "HIRING OF VEHICLES WITH DRIVERS ON CALL-OFF BASIS FOR VIP TRANSPORTATION" The duration of the awarded Contract shall be five (05) years with an option to extend it further two (02) years.

Bid Validity: Bid should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

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

Philippine Red Cross chief praises Qatar's humanitarian efforts

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Philippine Red Cross (PRC), Richard Gordon, praised the humanitarian initiatives of Qatar in his country and various countries of the world and its efforts in promoting stability and global peace.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he confirmed that the Philippines is looking forward to the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, pointing out that His Highness's visit will enhance the level of existing relations between the two countries and open the way for broader relations in the humanitarian fields. He praised the role of Qatari humanitarian institutions, including the Qatar Red Crescent Society, saying that it carries out distinguished humanitarian efforts as the main humanitarian institution in the state of Qatar. He also praised the pioneering role of the Qatar Red Crescent Society in the Philippines, noting its humanitarian initiatives over the past years, including the construction of hundreds of homes that were destroyed or damaged due to disasters, as well as various relief aid. He stressed that the humanitarian contributions of Qatar are very important for the Philippines which is one of the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters, adding that there is a strong partnership and compassion to help people and improve their lives. (QNA)



TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

ORYX GTL Limited is pleased to announce the following tender(s):

S. No.	Tender Ref.	Tender Title:	Tender Bond QAR	Bid Closing Date & Tender Bond Validity Period
1	STC-CN-011-24-BP	Business Impact Analysis	N/A	19 May 2024 at 12.00 noon & 180 days

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

Tender Registration Fee	QAR 500/- (Non-refundable) per Tender
Payable to	ORYX GTL Limited
IBAN (29 Digits)	QA23QNBAA00000000013010705001
Bank	Qatar National Bank - HQ or any branch (cash only)
Registration Dates	From 22 nd April 2024 to 29 th April 2024 8:00 am to 1:00 pm
Registration Process and Requirements:	Write an e-mail to oryxgltenders@oryxglt.com.qa with the following attachments: 1. Copy of Commercial Registration (CR) 2. Copy of bank deposit slip of the Tender Registration Fee. 3. Copy of ICV Certificate

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

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

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

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

Amir's Philippines visit reflects interest in promoting ties, co-operation: Qatar envoy

QNA
Manila

Qatar's ambassador to the Philippines, Ahmed Saad al-Hamidi, underlined that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Manila reflects the common interest in strengthening the bilateral relations and consolidating the bonds of friendship between the two nations and peoples. Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said His Highness the Amir's visit to the Philippines would certainly enhance relations and friendship between the two countries, and open broad horizons for co-operation in various fields. The visit also acquires a regional dimension in light of the Philippines' status and its role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) as a country that enjoys economic weight and future importance in shaping the regional and global economy, the ambassador stressed.

Qatar attaches great importance to the Philippines as an important friend and partner, and there has been a keenness on developing the relations between the two countries over the past four decades in various fields of economy, trade and politics, the ambassador stressed. In this context, he pointed to His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani's visit to the Philippines in 2012, which contributed to increasing the rapprochement between the two friendly countries, and laid the first building blocks for cooperation both at the Philippine level and the region as a whole. Al-Hamidi spoke on current areas of interest to both countries, such as trade, investment, tourism, sports and youth, defence, diplomatic training, agriculture, environment and climate change, and others fields that would push the relations to broader horizons. He pointed to 31 agreements and memorandums of understanding signed between the two countries; adding that new agreements will be signed during

His Highness the Amir's visit covering several areas, including sports, youth, tourism, agriculture and climate change. The envoy underlined that the two countries aspire to enhance trade and investment cooperation; expecting the coming period to see an increase in the volume of trade exchange, in light of the endeavours to activate the Qatar-Philippines Joint Business Council, and the signing of agreements between Qatar Chamber and its counterpart in the Philippines. He pointed to a large number of Filipino companies operating in various sectors in Qatar, and foresaw promising future prospects for establishing new partnerships in various vital sectors of priority for both countries. The ambassador stressed that the visit of His Highness the Amir to the Philippines will be a milestone in the relations and cooperation between the two countries, pushing the ties to broader horizons for the benefit of the two friendly countries and peoples. **(QNA)**



Amir's visit a strong indication of flourishing relations between two nations: Philippines envoy

QNA
Doha

The Philippines ambassador to Qatar, Lilibeth Velasco Pono, stressed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Manila is a strong indication of the flourishing relations between the two countries. In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said: "The high-level visit is a strong indication of flourishing relations between our two countries. It also provides an excellent opportunity for the two sides to have a personal exchange of views on bilateral issues and foster greater engagement arising from a shared sense of responsibility as regional and global actors." She stressed that His Highness the Amir's visit is a great opportunity to broaden the scope of the two nations' existing fields of cooperation beyond people-to-people relations to encompass trade and investment, agriculture, defence, education, energy, and culture. The ambassador noted that the Philippines and Qatar enjoy excellent relations, bound by 43 years of formal diplomatic ties and enduring bonds of friendship that have gone from strength to strength over time. "Manila is resolute in keeping cordial ties with Doha and is keen to broaden the scope of the two nations' existing fields of cooperation beyond people-to-people relations to encompass trade and investment, agriculture, defence, education, energy, and culture. The Philippines also intends to enhance co-operation with Qatar before regional and multilateral spaces on issues of relevance to both sides."

able and just response to challenges such as public health emergencies, humanitarian crises, and climate change. The ambassador noted that enhancing the already robust people-to-people ties between the Philippines and Qatar is a priority area for the two countries, and they are looking at strengthening engagement in two sectors: culture and labour. Regarding cultural co-operation, she said discussions are on for a possible conclusion of a MoU for co-operation in the field of culture between Philippines' National Commission for Culture and the Arts and Qatar's Ministry of Culture. To further deepen understanding between the two countries, the Philippines is also keen to take part in Qatar's Year of Culture initiative, among other cultural programmes, to foster intercultural exchange and strengthen ties between nations and their peoples, she added.

deeper and longer engagement between the two nations. The ambassador stressed that both countries are also working closely to deepen economic co-operation since the full potential of this area of cooperation has yet to be fully tapped. She pointed out that maritime governance is an area of common action, as both the Philippines and Qatar are States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets out the legal framework for the governance of the world's oceans and seas. She noted that the Philippines, which is an archipelagic maritime nation, and Qatar, which is a peninsula, can celebrate shared maritime heritage and develop stronger co-operation to keep seas safe, marine ecosystems healthy, and strategic maritime waterways secure, free, and open. Ambassador Lilibeth Velasco Pono said the trade volume between

adding Philippines also serves as a gateway to broader markets in the geo-strategic Indo-Pacific region. Noting that an economic briefing by a ministerial-level delegation from the Philippines was successfully held in Doha last September, she said the event served as an excellent opportunity for the Philippine side to meet potential partners from Qatar and provide pathways for greater engagement across a wide range of sectors. The ambassador hailed Qatar's efforts to preserve and strengthen a rule-based international order, which resonate with the Philippines. This boils down to the recognition that a rule-based global order is vital in guaranteeing peace and stability, she said. The Philippines also recognizes the pivotal role Qatar plays in addressing issues of importance in the Gulf region and beyond, the ambassador stressed, noting Doha has a demonstrated history of promoting preventive diplomacy and taking part in mediation efforts for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. She expressed her country's appreciation for Qatar's efforts to facilitate the release of two Filipino held captives in Gaza in the previous year, stressing that Philippines and Qatar share the mutual objective of seeing an immediate cessation of hostilities in the region and the establishment of a pathway for durable and lasting peace. "Like Qatar, the Philippines has played a bridging and moderating role in many multilateral settings where polarities have threatened consensus, and it intends to continue discharging this role," the ambassador stressed. She noted Qatar's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2022, which acknowledges the primary role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in the regional architecture. As such, the Philippines looks forward to Doha's closer engagement with Asean in the coming years, she said. Qatar's economic policies and openness have elevated the country towards its current position as one of the region's strongest economies, and one of the world's richest, the ambassador pointed out, adding: "I agree with many observers that Qatar's legislative and administrative system is an enabler that promotes and attracts business and investments, propelling the peninsula's vibrant economy. Qatar's economic diversification blueprint forming part of the National Vision 2030 ensures that the social and economic well-being of the nation is secured in the years to come." She expressed her pride in the contributions of the Filipino community to the development process in Qatar, adding the Philippines recognises the various progressive initiatives undertaken by the Qatar government in recent years to ensure the protection and welfare of Filipinos working in the country. The ambassador concluded by stressing that "the Philippines regards Qatar as a trusted friend and a reliable partner. As such, we are keen to undertake the necessary steps to draw our nations even closer and underscore our shared commitment to prosperity and peace. As both nations navigate their paths to progress and development in a world increasingly fraught with profound challenges, His Highness the Amir's historic visit to the Philippines is a demonstration of efforts to galvanise the action needed to elevate our bilateral relations to new heights," the ambassador said. **(QNA)**

Amir's visit 'a platform for Qatar-Philippines discussions in areas of mutual interests'

QNA
Doha

The Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo said the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Manila will serve as a platform for the leaders to discuss matters of mutual interest, as well as ways of increasing political and economic co-operation. In an interview to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Manalo said: "This is an opportune time to engage in meaningful conversations. We will be celebrating the 43rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries next month in May."

He added: "Our countries' labour relations are premised on trust. At both the official and popular levels, shared values enable stakeholders to effectively engage with each other, guided by mutual confidence and respect." He appreciated all efforts that help safeguard the rights of overseas Filipino workers, pointing out that his country is in close co-ordination with Qatar's government in this regard. "We are hopeful that reforms across the region continue to evolve to encompass the more vulnerable sectors of the labour market. We welcome initiatives that contribute to enhancing labour mobility," he said. Manalo hailed Qatar's mediation efforts amidst the dispute in the Middle East. "We acknowledge Doha's crucial role in working towards the cessation of hostilities, and in the continuing search for lasting peace in the region," he said, adding: "Manila yearns for a Middle East where peoples who have lived in insecurity for several generations will finally be able to live together in peace and stability."

He welcomed Qatar's signing of the instrument of accession to the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (TAC), which is a foundational document of Asean, adding Qatar's accession to TAC is a manifestation of their commitment to contribute to the maintenance of peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. On relations with the Gulf Co-operation Council, Manalo emphasised the importance of the relations between his country and Gulf nations, saying, "approximately 2mn Filipinos consider the Gulf their home away from home. This number speaks volumes about the importance of the GCC to the Philippines." "Amidst the ongoing economic diversification within the GCC, we reaffirm our commitment to engage cooperatively in the economic, labour, and socio-cultural sectors," he said. Manalo concluded by stressing he is positive that "Philippines and the GCC countries can work together in mapping out ways on how our sovereign wealth funds can become more beneficial for our nations and peoples." **(QNA)**



She expressed her interest in the convening of the Philippines-Qatar Joint Economic, Commercial, and Technical Committee. "Once operationalised, this mechanism will serve as a critical platform that will allow various government bodies and institutions from both sides to achieve shared objectives by drawing up relevant action plans and identifying concrete measures to facilitate the conduct of business," she explained. The Philippines and Qatar have concluded over 20 agreements covering a broad range of thematic areas, including agreements on investments, taxation, air services, labour, establishment of a political consultation mechanism, agriculture, as well as economic, commercial, and technical cooperation. The ambassador added "we are hopeful that during the visit of His Highness the Amir, we can conclude more MoUs in other key areas of co-operation, particularly in the field of trade, climate change, consular matters, sports, and youth."

Having one of the biggest expatriate communities in Qatar, the Philippines seeks to create a more visible platform through which it can share its history and culture through arts, sports, food, and education to the public. The ambassador stressed her country's desire to strengthen co-operation in labour matters so that both sides can continue productive engagement. The envoy said she is looking forward to the reconvening of the Joint Committee Meeting on Labour Matters in the second quarter of 2024. "We are in constant dialogue with different stakeholders in the Philippines and Qatar, especially the Ministry of Labour, in order to strengthen our mechanisms for cooperation. To this end, we look forward to the convening of the Joint Committee Meeting on Labour Matters to discuss labour issues and other issues of mutual concern," she said. The ambassador also expressed appreciation for Qatar's active support for the promotion of Philippines culture through the provision of space that allows for the articulation of Philippine artistry, heritage, and creativity, adding Manila hopes this cultural cooperation and partnership will blossom through the formalisation of mechanisms for

the Philippines and Qatar amounting close to \$600mn with Qatar's exports to the Philippines totalling close to \$540mn. "We are optimistic that bilateral trade will reach its full potential through engagements between the private sector businesses of both countries, which the governments of the Philippines and Qatar are fully supportive of. "I am happy to note that the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) have initiated partnerships that would ensure growth in bilateral economic ties," she said. Both countries are also working closely to foster stronger investment relations she said expressing Manila's interest in having Qatari investors become part of the Philippine economic growth trajectory through participation in the Philippines' investment priority areas, such as in digital and physical connectivity, health, power and energy, agriculture, and water supply. The Philippines has what it takes to become the next great investment destination with its sound macroeconomic fundamentals, an agile and skilled workforce, and friendly business climate, she said,

The Philippines looks forward to collaborating with Qatar in both traditional and non-traditional areas, he said, adding that "while labour relations remain to be a vital pillar, we aspire to broaden our partnership in other fields, such as renewable energy, tourism, and development of the Philippines' halal industry?" Manalo stressed that the Philippines also seeks to enhance cooperation with Qatar in regional and multilateral spaces, on issues of mutual concern. He touched upon the role of the Filipino community in Doha in strengthening the ties between Qatar and the Philippines, noting that approximately 260,000 Filipinos consider Qatar their second home. "We are proud of their achievements and their contributions to both our economies. Their welfare remains a top priority," he said, ac-



'Qatar eager to enhance regional, international co-operation to face climate change'

HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie has stressed Qatar's eagerness to enhance its bilateral relations with regards to protecting the environment and countering the repercussions of climate change in a manner that promotes mutual benefit, co-operation, and complementary action.

The minister told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the occasion of the tour of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal that thanks to the leadership of His Highness the Amir, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) succeeded in enhancing joint co-operation with regional and international partners, particularly those facing very similar environmental and climatic challenges.

HE Dr al-Subaie said that Qatar plays a strategic role in unifying counter-climate change and environmental sustainability enhancement efforts.

He cited the Doha Declaration of the 16th Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Co-operation Dialogue, held in Doha in 2019, which highlighted the importance of regional co-operation as the main mechanism to accelerate achieving the three sustainable development pillars: social and economic developments and the protection of the

environment, along with the Asian region's stability, in its diverse and vast natural and human resources, along with its rich historical heritage, and its economic and social capabilities.

The minister said that the Doha Declaration stressed the importance of co-operation to counter the repercussions of climate change and natural disaster, as well as the need to take appropriate measures to deal with water and food shortages, in addition to supporting research and development activities related to green energy and agricultural technologies.

He also touched upon the participation of the Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal in the Expo 2023 Doha, saying that their participation played a role in the development of co-operation and the exchange of expertise with Qatar in the field of environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

HE Dr al-Subaie noted that Asian countries possess extensive expertise in various fields, including in natural resource management, agriculture, and climate change adaptation and protecting the environment.

He said that the wise leadership attaches a lot of importance to the environment and climate change, setting them as issues that call for international action to prevent their catastrophic impacts on world populations.

HE Dr al-Subaie added Qatar's contribution in this field is multifaceted, with the country effectively participating in dialogue and initiatives prioritising the environment and climate action, discussing the framework for joint action on regional and global challenges, and enhancing regional co-operation to ensure collective action for a more sustainable and resilient future.

The minister cited Qatar's active participation in the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), which was hosted by the United Arab Emirates, by establishing a special pavilion for the accompanying exhibition to introduce the international community to Qatar's efforts in issues related to climate change and sustainability.

HE Dr al-Subaie said that the pavilion also hosted a number of seminars and dialogue sessions that highlighted Qatar's experience in combating the effects of climate change, protecting the environment, enhancing aspects of environmental sustainability, and discussing and proposing solutions aimed at reducing its impact on the environment.

The minister stated that the MoECC is working on a wide range of environmental measures, projects, and programmes, including on the preservation of the wild environment which included promoting



interest in development of meadows, replanting them, preventing encroachments and overgrazing, as well as preventing the dumping of waste and bulldozing the soil.

HE Dr al-Subaie said that cleaning and development campaigns are conducted with the participation of all segments of society, preserving the sea and the coast,

preventing dredging, filling and marine pollution, protecting endangered animals, striving to multiply them and preserving their genetic imprint.

The minister added that the joint environmental and climate action between Qatar and the countries of the region and the world is consistent in goals and vision with the plans and strategies launched by the MoECC (Qatar National Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and the National Climate Change Action Plan 2030), which laid out a clear road map for how the country can fulfil its obligations to mitigate the effects of climate change.

HE Dr al-Subaie stated that these moves came within the environmental sustainability axis of the third national development strategy, which comes in implementation of the Qatar National Vision 2030 that placed environmental development among its four pillars.

The minister added that the National Action Plan for Climate Change, which is considered a qualitative leap at the local level to confront the phenomenon of climate change, includes more than 35 initiatives to reduce emissions, and more than 300 initiatives to adapt to its effects, ensuring that emissions and greenhouse gases are reduced by 25% from all sectors by the year 2030. - QNA



talabat app preloaded on Xiaomi phones

Xiaomi's Internet Business Department has announced a partnership with talabat, the region's leading platform for everyday deliveries, a joint statement said yesterday.

The talabat app will now come preloaded on Xiaomi phones in certain markets in the Middle East, a partnership that spans Qatar, the UAE, Egypt and Iraq.

"The launch of the Air Preload Solution in UAE, Qatar, Egypt and Iraq represents a strategic milestone for talabat and Xiaomi's Internet Business Department as they continue to explore opportunities in other markets," said George Zhang, head of Xiaomi's Internet Business Department (Southeast Asia).

Stefano Vecchio, vice-president for Strategy & Innovation at talabat, said: "We're continuously looking at ways to create engaging and relevant partnerships with industry leaders. (This) proves our commitment to simplify the everyday life of customers in the region, by delivering food, groceries and more to their doorstep."

US hints at sanctioning Israeli unit

The United States appears close to sanctioning an Israeli military unit over alleged human rights violations in the West Bank, a move the Israeli prime minister angrily denounced as "the height of absurdity".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hinted at such steps when asked by a reporter in Italy about reports that his department had recommended cuts in military aid to an Israeli unit involved in violent incidents in the West Bank.

The allegations preceded the deadly October 7 attacks by Hamas on southern Israel.

Blinken, without providing details, said that his department is conducting investigations under a law that prohibits sending military aid to foreign security units that violate human rights with impunity.

He then added: "I think it's fair to say that you'll see results very soon. I've made determinations; you can expect to see them in the days ahead."

In late 2022 the State Department directed embassy staff in Israel to investigate alleged abuses in the West Bank by the army's ultra-Orthodox Netzah Yehuda battalion.

That included a January 2022 incident which a 78-year-old Palestinian American died of a heart attack after being detained.

Although the allegations precede the Hamas attacks and Israel's retaliatory war in Gaza, the suggestion of any sanctions against Israeli forces drew an angry response from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"In recent weeks, I have been working against the imposition of sanctions on Israeli citizens, including in my con-



Mourners are seen as people rebury the bodies of Palestinians killed during Israel's military offensive and buried earlier at Nasser hospital, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

versations with senior American government officials," he posted late on Saturday on social media platform X.

"If anyone thinks they can impose sanctions on a unit of the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) - I will fight it with all my strength," he said.

Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz, a centrist former armed forces chief, said in a statement yesterday that he spoke with Blinken and asked him to reconsider the matter.

Gantz said any such sanctions would be a mistake because they would harm Israel's legitimacy during a time of war and that they were unjustified because Israel has an independent justice system and a military that keeps international law.

The Axios website, citing three US sources with knowledge of the matter, reported on Saturday that Blinken is expected to announce sanctions against the battalion "within days."

It said the sanctions would ban the unit from receiving any US military aid or training.

An earlier report from ProPublica said a special State Department panel had recommended in December that Blinken disqualify several military and police units serving in the West Bank from receiving any US aid.

Before the war in Gaza, violence had already been on the rise in the West Bank, land that the Palestinians seek for a state, and it has risen since with frequent Israeli raids, Palestinian street attacks and settler rampages in Palestinian villages.

The Israeli military said the Netzah Yehuda battalion is an active combat unit that operates according to the principles of international law.

"Following publications about sanctions against the battalion, the IDF is not aware of the issue," the military said. "If a decision is made on the matter it will be reviewed. The IDF works and will continue to work to investigate any unusual event in a practical manner and according to law." - AFP

ANNHRI chief affirms international system's inability to halt aggression on Gaza

Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRI) Secretary-General Sultan bin Hassan al-Jamali has said that the international human rights system has been unable to stop the unceasing aggression of the Israeli occupation on the Gaza Strip since October.

Al-Jamali called for exploring effective mechanisms to halt the violations and hold the perpetrators to account.

This came in his remarks before the first

phase of the inaugural session of "Anabtawi 34", held virtually under the theme of *Future of human rights for universal justice*.

The second phase of the session is due to be held in person in collaboration with the Doha-based ANNHRI and the Tunisia-based Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR).

Al-Jamali underscored the importance of implementing the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2030 as the key towards promoting societies that respect and uphold individual rights, as well as the right to privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

He added that throughout the past years and within the implementation of the shared memorandum of understanding with the AIHR, the ANNHRI has been engaging the AIHR to organise the "Anabtawi" session to hone the capabilities of human rights activists in the Arab region.

The "Anabtawi 34" aims to broaden the knowledge of male and female actors within civil society, human rights and development organisations, and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to bolster their capabilities in countering the contemporary challenges facing human rights, justice, and sustainable development, by critically analysing current variables, relevant legislation, agreements, and international mechanisms. - QNA

Recall order issued for Mercedes-Benz models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khaled and Sons Automobiles, has announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz C-Class, E-Class, GLC, S-Class, and EQE, 2023-2024 models, as it is possible that the ignition switch computer does not meet the factory requirements. This issue may lead to the stopping the vehicles' feature of "hands free trunk opening" by moving the

foot under the rear bumper. The MoCI urged all customers to report any violation to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, X (formerly Twitter) - @MOCIQATAR, Instagram - MOCIQATAR. The MoCI mobile application, MOCI_QATAR, is available on iPhone and Android devices.

Maliens struggle to cope following deadly heatwave earlier this month

In Mali's capital Bamako, Aboubacar Pamateck runs a scarf under a trickle of water and wraps it around his head to cope with the West African nation's soaring heat.

Africa's Sahel region experienced a deadly heatwave in early April, exceptional both in terms of duration and intensity.

"I drink a lot of water and wear my turban, which I often get wet," Pamateck said. "I even avoid wearing nylon boubous. I prefer to wear small cotton boubous to avoid the heat."

From April 1-5, temperatures in Mali exceeded 45° Celsius (113° Fahrenheit) and peaked at a record 48.5C in the western city of Kayes.

A few days later, the thermometer fell back to a more familiar but still difficult 43C at midday in the shade in Bamako.

As the sun beats down on the capital's streets, residents suffocate in airborne dust.

"It is very difficult in this heat," said a motorbike taxi driver, Ousmane Diarra. "But we have to work like this."

Ranked among the poorest countries in the world, Mali is ill-equipped to cope with heatwaves, let alone climate change.

April's blast would not have occurred without human-induced climate change, according to a World Weather Attribution (WWA) study.

And such episodes are set to intensify because of climate change, caused by greenhouse gas emissions, the report added.

Mali frequently suffers from electricity cuts due to run-down power stations and the heavy debt the national energy company carries - making it hard to rely on fans or air conditioners.

"At night, I sleep on the roof with my family," Pamateck said.

"I have even bought (handheld) fans that I give to my family so that they can ventilate themselves frequently. It is necessary."

As well as being difficult to live and work in, heatwaves are amongst the "deadliest natural disasters", according to the WWA.

A lack of data in the Sahel region made it impossible to know the exact number of deaths, the WWA said, adding there were likely hundreds, if not thousands, of other heat-related casualties.

"This year, especially in recent months, we have come across many cases of people with high fever and dehydration," Dr Ibrahim Fall, head of a medical unit in Bamako's commune three, told AFP.

"We are therefore obliged to admit them to hospital, but unfortunately there is a very high mortality rate, of up to 50%, due to dehydration and fever," the official said.

Power cuts also complicate the treatment of patients.

In early April, Bamako's national blood transfusion centre asked medical establishments to "suspend all non-essential transfusions" because of "daily power cuts lasting more than 12 hours" a day.

Scientists estimate that a heatwave like the one that hit Mali and Burkina Faso would be 10 times more frequent than in the current climate if global warming reaches 2C, which could happen between 2040 and 2050.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, LUKMAN IMRAN ABDUL RAZZAK HURZUK

holder of

Indian Passport No. L6649159
QID No. 29535600819

hereby change my name

from

LUKMAN IMRAN ABDUL RAZZAK HURZUK

to

LUKMAN IMRAN HURZUK

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

Niger protesters want US troops out

Hundreds protested yesterday against the US troop presence in military-ruled Niger where a delegation from Washington is expected within days to arrange an orderly withdrawal.

The United States had on Friday agreed to withdraw its more than 1,000 soldiers from the African nation where Washington built a \$100mn base to fly a fleet of drones.

The demonstration in the northern desert town of Agadez, home to a US air base, was called by a group of 24 civil society associations that have backed the regime since last year's coup.

"This is Agadez, not Washington, US army go home," read a banner held up by protesters.

Issouf Emoud, who fronts the M62 Movement in the town, told AFP: "Our message is clear: American soldiers pack your bags and go home."

Niger has long been a linchpin in the US and French strategy to combat religious militants in West Africa.

The Nigerien military announced last month it was breaking off a defence agreement with the United States, claiming it had been imposed and the US troop presence was illegal. - AFP

Taiwan set to discuss new funding with US

Reuters
Taipei

Taiwan's military yesterday said it will discuss with the US how to use funding for Taipei included in a \$95bn legislative package mostly providing assistance to Ukraine and Israel, as

Chinese warplanes again got close to the island. The US is Taiwan's most important international supporter and arms supplier despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties.

Taiwan has faced increased military pressure from China, which views the island as its own territory. Taiwan's government rejects those claims. The defence ministry

expressed thanks to the US House of Representatives for passing the package on Saturday, saying it demonstrated the "rock solid" US support for Taiwan.

The ministry added it "will co-ordinate the relevant budget uses with the US through existing exchange mechanisms, and work hard to strengthen combat readiness ca-

pabilities to ensure national security and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait". Taiwan has since 2022 complained of delays in deliveries of US weapons such as Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, as manufacturers focussed on supplying Ukraine to help the country battle invading Russian forces. Underscoring the pressure Taiwan faces from China,

the ministry said yesterday morning that over the previous 24 hours 14 Chinese military aircraft had crossed the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait.

The median line once served as an unofficial border between the two sides over which neither sides' military crossed, but China's air force now regularly sends aircraft

over it. China says it does not recognise the line's existence.

Some Chinese aircraft on Saturday got as close as 40 nautical miles from the northern and southern parts of Taiwan, according to a map the Taiwanese ministry provided, though that remains outside its contiguous zone, which is 24 nautical miles from Taiwan's coast.

Massive river flooding expected in Guangdong, threatening millions

Reuters
Beijing

Major rivers, waterways and reservoirs in China's Guangdong province are threatening to unleash dangerous floods, forcing the government yesterday to enact emergency response plans to protect more than 127mn people.

Calling the situation "grim", local weather officials said sections of rivers and tributaries at the Xijiang and Beijiang river basins are hitting water levels in a rare spike that only has a one-in-50 chance of happening in any given year, state broadcaster CCTV news said yesterday.

China's water resource ministry issued an emergency advisory, CCTV reported.

Guangdong officials urged departments in all localities and municipalities to begin emergency planning to avert natural disasters and promptly disperse disaster relief funds and materials to ensure affected people have food, clothing, water and somewhere to stay.

The province, a major exporter and one of China's main commercial and trading centres, has seen major downpours and strong winds for several days, in a weather pattern which has also affected other parts of China.

A 12-hour spell of heavy rain, starting from 8pm (1200GMT)

Saturday, battered the central and northern parts of the province including the cities of Zhaoqing, Shaoguan, Qingyuan and Jiangmen where rescue workers have been dispatched.

More than 45,000 people have been evacuated in Qingyuan, according to state media, and some power facilities in Zhaoqing were damaged, cutting power to some places.

Overall in Guangdong, 1.16mn households lost power due to the heavy rains, according to state-backed media.

About 1,103 schools in Zhaoqing, Shaoguan and Qingyuan will suspend classes today, Chinese state radio said.

"Please look at Zhaoqing's Huaiji county, which has become a water town. The elderly and children at the countryside don't know what to do with power outages and no signal," said one user on the popular social media site Weibo.

Raging flood waters swept one vehicle down a narrow street in Zhaoqing, a video released by Hongxing News showed.

"It rained like a waterfall for an hour-and-a-half on the highway driving home last night," said another Weibo user. "I couldn't see the road at all!"

Authorities in Qingyuan and Shaoguan also suspended ships from travelling through several rivers, with maritime departments

dispatching forces to be on duty and co-ordinate emergency tugboats and emergency rescue vessels.

Many hydrological stations in the province are exceeding water levels, weather officials warned, and in the provincial capital Guangzhou, a city of 18mn, reservoirs have reached flood limits, city officials announced yesterday.

Data showed 2,609 hydrological stations with daily rainfall greater than 1.97 inches, accounting for about 59% of all observation stations. At 8am yesterday, 27 hydrological stations in Guangdong were on alert.

In neighbouring Guangxi, west of Guangdong, violent hurricane-like winds whipped the region, destroying buildings state media video footage showed. Some places have also experienced hailstones and major flooding, CCTV said.

In another video, rescuers could be seen trying to save an elderly person clinging to a tree half-submerged in flood waters.

As of 10am (0200GMT), 65 landslides were recorded in the city of Hezhou located in Guangxi, state media reported.

Weather forecasters are expecting heavy rain through today in Guangxi region, Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces.

Landslides in southern China injured at least six people and trapped others, state media reported yesterday.



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Waverley council mayor Paula Mussells attend the community candlelight vigil, recognising the victims of a fatal stabbing attack at Bondi Junction Westfield shopping centre, in Sydney, Australia, yesterday.

Crowds join memorial for mall stabbing victims

AFP
Sydney

Crowds gathered at Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach yesterday for a candlelight memorial to the six people killed by a knife-wielding assailant at a nearby shopping mall.

Many hundreds sat on the grass in a beachside park to grieve for the five women and a Pakistani male security guard who died in the April 13 attack at the Westfield Bondi Junction shopping complex.

The killings stunned many Australians who are largely unaccustomed to such violent crime.

"When I heard this I cried. Because it is new to us. We don't have this happen often. It's a shock," said 56-year-old local

cafe owner Daniela Pontidas.

"I know a lot of people that were impacted in some way," she said.

"I feel like this has burst Australia's bubble a bit."

Paul Inggall, 50, said he had been at Bondi Junction in the morning hours before the attack. "These things don't happen often in Australia but when they do I think they have a profound impact," he said.

"I think it really moves the community, so I want to be a part of it."

The mentally ill knifeman, 40-year-old Joel Cauchi, was tracked down, shot and killed by police inspector Amy Scott, who attended the service.

As waves crashed into the beach at dusk, a choir sang the hymn *Keep Your Loving Arms Around Me*.

An Indigenous didgeridoo was played as people lit candles in the breezy evening.

"Bondi is tough and this is a strong community, and we will get through this," said New South Wales Premier Chris Minns.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese offered the condolences of the nation for the six lives "snatched away on that hardest of Saturday afternoons".

"We mourn for all the joy they should have known," he said.

Cauchi's parents say he was diagnosed with schizophrenia at 17 but stopped taking medication, later leaving their Queensland home and dropping out of treatment.

His women victims were a designer, a volunteer surf lifesaver, the daughter of an entrepreneur, a Chinese university student, and a new mother.

Seven killed, 21 hurt at Lanka motor race

At least seven people were killed and another 21 wounded when a race car ploughed into spectators at a packed motorsport event hosted by Sri Lanka's army yesterday, police said.

A driver crashed into the crowd on an unprotected stretch of the track at the Fox Hill circuit, which is maintained by the Sri Lankan army.

A video shared widely on social media showed track marshals waving yellow flags to warn other drivers to slow down after a car overturned on the track. The drivers are seen speeding past in clouds of orange dust until a red car slams into the crowd, and people are heard screaming.

"A total of 27 people were taken to hospital and seven of them succumbed to their injuries," spokesman Nihal Thalduwa said, adding that an eight-year-old girl was among the dead. Shortly before the crash, army chief Vikum Liyanage announced that the gates had been opened to spectators free of charge to promote motorsports, with the event being held for the first time in five years due to the Covid pandemic and the island's economic crisis.



Officials look to push the car at the Fox Hill motor cross racing circuit in Diyatalawa yesterday.

One dead, seven missing as two helicopters crash

AFP
Tokyo

One died and seven people were missing yesterday after an accident overnight in which two Japanese military helicopters apparently collided before crashing into the sea, officials said.

A spokesman for Japan's Self-Defence Force (SDF) confirmed the late Saturday incident and said that one person was rescued but later confirmed dead.

Defence Minister Minoru Kihara said rescuers "spotted what are believed to be part of the aircraft in the sea, and we believe that the two helicopters crashed."

"At this point the cause is unknown, but firstly we do our best to save lives," Kihara told reporters. Hours later, Kihara told reporters that the crew member

who was rescued "was confirmed dead." He also said the ministry "discovered the flight recorders in places close to each other," and so "possibility is high that (the two helicopters) collided."

The helicopters appear to have crashed during night-time training of countering submarines off the Izu Islands in the Pacific Ocean, officials said.

The Mitsubishi SH-60K helicopters from the MSDF are mainly based on and operate from naval destroyers. The MSDF said as there were no other aircraft nor vessels in nearby waters, involvement of another country in the incident is unlikely, NHK added.

Japan is boosting defence spending and deepening cooperation with the US and other countries in Asia in response to growing Chinese assertiveness in the region and an unpredictable North Korea.

Huge win for pro-China leader's party in Maldives vote

AFP
Male, Maldives

The party of Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu won control of parliament in an election landslide, results yesterday showed, with voters backing his tilt towards China and away from regional powerhouse and traditional benefactor India.

Muizzu's People's National Congress (PNC) won 66 of the first 86 seats declared, according to the Elections Commission of Maldives results, already more than enough for a super-majority in the 93-member majlis, or parliament.

The vote was seen as a crucial test for Muizzu's plan to press ahead with closer economic co-operation with China, including building thousands of apartments on controversially reclaimed land.

The PNC and its allies had only eight seats in the outgoing parliament, with the lack of a majority stymieing Muizzu after his presidential election victory in September.

The main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) - which had previously had a super-majority of its own - was headed for a humiliating defeat with just a dozen seats.

Muizzu, 45, had been among the first to vote yesterday, casting his ballot at a school in the capital Male

- where he was previously mayor - and urging Maldivians to turn out in high numbers.

"All citizens should come out and exercise their right to vote as soon as possible," Muizzu told reporters.

The Maldives, a low-lying nation of some 1,192 tiny coral islands scattered some 800kms across the equator, is one of the countries most vulnerable to sea level rises caused by global warming.

Muizzu, a former construction minister, has promised he will beat back the waves through ambitious land reclamation and building islands higher, a policy which environmentalists argue could even exacerbate flooding risks.

The Maldives is known as a top luxury holiday destination thanks to its pristine white beaches and secluded resorts.

But in recent years it has also become a geopolitical hotspot in the Indian Ocean, where global east-west shipping lanes pass the archipelago.

Muizzu won last September's presidential poll as a proxy for pro-China ex-president Abdulla Yameen, freed last week after a court set aside his 11-year jail term for corruption.

This month, as campaigning for the parliamentary elections was in full swing, Muizzu awarded high-profile infrastructure contracts to

Chinese state-owned companies.

His administration is also in the process of sending home a garrison of 89 Indian troops who operate reconnaissance aircraft gifted by New Delhi to patrol the Maldives' vast maritime borders.

The outgoing parliament, dominated by the pro-India MDP of Muizzu's immediate predecessor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, has sought to disrupt his efforts to realign Maldivian diplomacy.

Since Muizzu came to power, lawmakers blocked three of his nominees to the cabinet and refused some of his spending proposals.

"Geopolitics is very much in the background as parties campaign

for votes," a senior Muizzu aide said ahead of the poll, asking not to be named.

"He came to power on a promise to send back Indian troops and he is working on it. The parliament has not been co-operating with him since he came to power."

Solih was also among those voting early and expressed confidence his party would emerge victorious. There was no immediate reaction from his party to their poor showing in yesterday's vote.

Election chief Fuad Thaufeeq said after polls closed that turnout had already reached 73% of the 284,663 electorate when half an hour of voting remained.

US firm aims to start electric air taxi trials in India

Reuters
New Delhi

Archer Aviation, backed by Stellantis and Boeing aims to begin trials of its electric air taxi in India next year, ahead of a planned commercial launch in 2026, the company's chief executive said.

US-based Archer last year partnered with InterGlobe Enterprises, which backs India's top airline

IndiGo, to launch the air taxis to help people avoid ground traffic in congested cities.

"Hopefully for next year, we will be able to bring planes here at the very least from a demonstrations perspective and fly them around. The goal is to help prepare the public for a new form of transportation," Adam Goldstein, who also founded Archer, said in New Delhi.

Archer is working with India's aviation watchdog to get the "ap-

propriate regulatory approvals" before it can begin trials in the country, its chief commercial officer Nikhil Goel said, adding it is already conducting trials in California.

For commercial operations, Archer is in final stages of getting approvals from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the US, which it expects will come through next year, after which it will seek clearances in India.

It will first launch in New York

and India will be its first international market, Goel said.

For a trip costing \$12-\$18 in a premium rideshare product, a seat in the air taxi will cost \$36-\$48

Electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft (eVTOL), also known as flying taxis, have been touted as the future of urban air mobility. The low-altitude aircraft

would travel between cities and airports avoiding traffic, but face a number of challenges before they can become a reality.

Archer and InterGlobe will, in a joint venture, own and operate 200 of the 'Midnight' aircraft, valued at \$1bn. It will launch services in India's capital New Delhi, and Mumbai and Bengaluru.

The aircraft can carry four passengers and a pilot for up to 16kms, and cover in seven minutes the same distance that would

take 60-90 minutes in a car in New Delhi. For a trip costing \$12-\$18 in a premium rideshare product, a seat in the air taxi will cost \$36-\$48, Goldstein said.

Archer will begin manufacturing the plane at its factory in Georgia this year and is working with carmaker Stellantis to scale manufacturing globally and possibly in India.

"India will be the biggest market in the world for us. It's a very important market," he said.

Myanmar instability hampers India's attempt to send home refugees

Reuters
Imphal, India

Fighting between Myanmar's rebel forces and the ruling junta has delayed India's effort to send home undocumented refugees from its neighbour who entered the northeastern border state of Manipur, Indian security officials said.

Thousands of civilians and hundreds of troops from Myanmar have fled to India after the February 2021 military coup against Aung San Suu Kyi's elected civilian government, drawn across the border by shared ethnic and family ties.

Last month, authorities in Manipur said they would deport at least 77 refugees who had entered without documents through the Indian border town of Moreh after the coup.

"Thirty-eight were taken (from Imphal, the state capital) to Moreh but we are waiting for communication from Myanmar authorities to take them back," a senior police official said on condition of anonymity as the matter is a sensitive one.

A junta spokesperson did not immediately respond to a telephone call from Reuters to seek comment.

India's foreign ministry and Manipur state authorities also did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Prime Minister Narendra Mo-

di's government has blamed the refugee influx as one reason for violence that has roiled Manipur, killing at least 220 people since ethnic clashes broke out in May last year.

India has vowed to end a decades-old policy of visa-free movement for those living along the porous 1,650km border, which it aims to fence.

A group of 77 refugees was to be sent back to Myanmar in batches between March 8 and 11, according to a Manipur state government document dated March 5 and independently verified by Reuters.

Although 38 of them made it to Moreh by March 10, they have been stuck there since in Indian custody.

"This is because the Myanmar government is not stable, especially at the Tamu area," said another senior police official, referring to a region in Myanmar.

The refugees might be forcibly returned if Myanmar did not take them back, he added.

Simmering anger against the junta over its 2021 coup turned into a nationwide armed resistance movement now increasingly operating in co-ordination with established ethnic rebel groups to challenge the military across large parts of Myanmar.

As the junta has battled the insurgencies, it has lost control of tracts bordering Bangladesh, China and India after a series of defeats in frontier areas since last October.

River runs dry



Men walk across the dry bed of a lake at Boklung village near Kathiatoli town in Nagaon district, Assam.

Elections to be rerun at 11 places in Manipur

Reuters
New Delhi

India, staging the world's biggest election, will rerun voting at 11 polling stations in the northeastern state of Manipur today after reports of violence and damage to voting machines in the state torn by months of ethnic clashes.

The election authorities declared the voting void at the 11 locations and ordered the fresh poll, the chief electoral officer of Ma-

nipur said in a statement. Friday marked the start of voting by nearly 1bn people in the world's most-populous country, in an election running through June 1.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is forecast to win a rare third term on the back of issues such as growth, welfare and Hindu nationalism.

The main opposition Congress party had demanded a rerun at 47 Manipur polling stations, alleging that booths were captured and elections were rigged.

There were scattered incidents of vio-

lence on Friday in the state, including clashes among armed groups and attempts to take over polling stations under heavy security. Voters turned out in large numbers, despite the threat of clashes that have killed at least 220 people in the past year.

Manipur has been roiled by fighting between the majority Meitei and tribal Kuki-Zo people since May. It remains divided between a valley controlled by Meiteis and Kuki-dominated hills, separated by a stretch of no-man's land monitored by federal paramilitary forces.

Post-Brexit checks on UK-bound EU food imports 'delayed again'

Britain will avoid implementing most post-Brexit checks on EU food imports due to start this month so as to prevent major disruption at ports, the *Financial Times* reported. The European Union introduced strengthened checks on goods coming from the UK since the country's departure from the bloc entered into force in January 2021. But London has already delayed implementing some checks and formalities on five occasions amid fears the measures would harm the economy and stoke inflation. According to a confidential presentation sent by the UK government to port authorities and seen by the *FT*, the department for environment, food and rural affairs said carrying out all the health and safety checks from April 30 could trigger "significant disruption". The checks will initially only apply to high-risk goods such as meat to ward off the prospect of huge queues of lorries and delays at ports, the newspaper reported.

Sunak visits Timpson in London



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks to branch manager Jack Randall and Terry Schwarz during a visit to a branch of retailer Timpson in central London.

India's wheat stocks at record 16-year low

Reuters
New Delhi/Mumbai

Indian wheat stocks held in government warehouses dropped to their lowest level in 16 years after two straight years of reduced crop yields prompted New Delhi to sell record volumes to boost domestic supplies and bring down local prices.

Wheat reserves in state stores totalled 7.5mn metric tonnes at the start of April, down from 8.35mn tonnes a year ago, according to data compiled by the state-run Food Corporation of India. Over the past decade, wheat stocks on April 1 averaged 16.7mn tonnes.

"The stocks came down as we sold a record 10mn tonnes last year to stabilise prices," a senior government official said.

Despite the tight supply, New

Delhi has resisted calls to encourage imports by cutting or removing the current 40% tax, or by buying directly from top suppliers such as Russia.

Instead, it has dipped into state reserves to sell wheat to bulk consumers, such as flour millers and biscuit-makers, to try to curb domestic prices that have been above the state-fixed minimum buying price since the last crop was harvested.

"Even after selling a massive quantity, we managed to ensure that the stock level didn't fall below the buffer norm. Going forward, the government is keen to ensure that wheat stocks do not fall below 10mn tonnes," the government official said.

The government has buffer and strategic reserve norms that mandate holding wheat stocks at or above 7.46mn tonnes on April 1.

Beach saunas make waves in Ireland

AFP
Dungarvan, Ireland

For Sharon Fidgeon, a regular visitor to Ireland's increasingly popular beach saunas, her weekend sessions "have become a healthy addiction" that tap into a centuries-old Irish tradition of toning up by getting sweaty.

On sandy Clonea beach on Ireland's wind-battered Atlantic coast, the 52-year-old artist said that alternating between the sauna and freezing seawater makes her feel "so incredibly alive".

"Once you get down in the sea up to your neck, it really sets off the

endorphins in your body," said Fidgeon after a dunk in the 2km-long bay near Dungarvan in County Waterford.

"And having the sauna here lets me stay in the sea that bit longer," she said, putting on a dry robe and sandals before briskly stepping into the barrel-shaped structure on wheels above the beach.

In Ireland the Covid-19 pandemic launched a surge in sea-swimming as a bracing escape from lockdowns.

Mobile saunas became a post-Covid "add-on", according to Deirdre Flavin, who operates several along the Waterford coast, towing them to beaches by car.

"The market is growing and

steadily increasing, awareness is spreading, and people are enjoying the experience and coming back for more," she said as she fired up one of her saunas.

Aside from their health benefits, Flavin, 40, said the cosy boltholes are ideal havens in Ireland's wild and often wet and chilly weather.

"People can more comfortably sea-swim all-year-round now as they can warm their body cores up after the dip," she said while packing wooden logs into the sauna's stove.

Further along the southern coast in County Cork, customers at another sauna lauded the activity for stress relief as well as aiding recovery after strenuous sports.

"A lot of the lads in the hurling team would like to get into the water and the sauna, it's become a thing to do for teams," said 20-year-old student Rory O'Callaghan, referring to the combative Irish field sport played with sticks.

Sauna owner Bronwyn Connolly suffers from arthritis and when indoor public spaces were shuttered during the pandemic she bought a small barrel sauna and towed it to Garretstown beach.

"I was struggling a lot with pain, and the sauna and the cold water just eased it, a plunge in the sea after building up a sweat just seems to wash away all the worries," she said.

As sports teams and corporate

groups began showing more interest she set about designing a bigger one, relying on books and YouTube videos for know-how.

With a large window on one side and gently curved tiered seating with a fire, a group sat chatting and marvelling at the view of ocean waves crashing below on the beach.

"It's really becoming a social thing, where friends or even strangers can meet. Irish people are shifting to less alcohol-driven things and more wellness-driven things," Connolly said.

Back in 2021 her first mobile sauna was one of the first in the country but now "they are on every beach in Cork", she said.

According to the new wave of operators, the trend harks back to an ancient Irish sauna culture dating from the 1600s that went out of fashion early in the last century: the "sweathouse".

Remains of hundreds of sweathouses - igloo-shaped stone structures heated by turf fires and used for sweating out colds and fevers, and battling rheumatism and arthritic pain - are dotted around the Irish countryside.

Yoga instructor Carol Ni Stasaigh and her husband Dara Kissane, an exercise physiologist, called their sea sauna on the county Wexford coast "Sweathouse" in a nod to the old ways.



CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
- 📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
- 🐦 twitter.com/gulftimes_Qatar
- 📷 instagram.com/gulftimes
- 📺 youtube.com/GulftimesVideos



Microsoft's VASA-1: Innovation amid deepfake concerns

Microsoft's new AI tool VASA-1, an AI image-to-video model that can generate videos from just one photo and a speech audio clip, has every potential of turning into a deepfake nightmare machine as feared by Daniel John, senior news editor at Creative Bloq in an article late last week. Precisely this realisation seems to have prompted Microsoft to state that "Our research focuses on generating visual affective skills for virtual AI avatars, aiming for positive applications. It is not intended to create content that is used to mislead or deceive. However, like other related content generation techniques, it could still potentially be misused for impersonating humans."

Critics might term that as anticipatory bail or standard disclaimer, but peering into the distant horizon where AI's evolution is headed to, the IT leviathan has no option but to keep innovating, lest fall behind. VASA-1 is described by Microsoft as a framework for generating lifelike talking faces of virtual characters with appealing visual affective skills (VAS), given a single static image and a speech audio clip.

The premiere model, VASA-1, "is capable of not only producing lip movements that are exquisitely synchronised with the audio, but also capturing a large spectrum of facial nuances and natural head motions that contribute to the perception of authenticity and liveliness."

"The core innovations include a holistic facial dynamics and head movement generation model that works in a face latent space, and the development of such an expressive and disentangled face latent space using videos. Through extensive experiments including evaluation on a set of new metrics, we show that our method significantly outperforms previous methods along various dimensions comprehensively. Our method not only delivers high video quality with realistic facial and head dynamics but also supports the online generation of 512x512 videos at up to 40 FPS with negligible starting latency. It paves the way for real-time engagements with lifelike avatars that emulate human conversational behaviours."

'AI's imperfections are actually the fault of its human creators. But what happens when most of those imperfections are ironed out?'

Perusal of a sample of VASA-1 creations, based on virtual portrait images, prove it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell apart between fake and real pictures and videos. Hence

Microsoft is saying that "We are opposed to any behaviour to create misleading or harmful contents of real persons, and are interested in applying our technique for advancing forgery detection. Currently, the videos generated by this method still contain identifiable artifacts, and the numerical analysis shows that there's still a gap to achieve the authenticity of real videos."

"While acknowledging the possibility of misuse, it's imperative to recognise the substantial positive potential of our technique. The benefits - such as enhancing educational equity, improving accessibility for individuals with communication challenges, offering companionship or therapeutic support to those in need, among many others - underscore the importance of our research and other related explorations. We are dedicated to developing AI responsibly, with the goal of advancing human well-being. Given such context, we have no plans to release an online demo, API (Application Programming Interface), product, additional implementation details, or any related offerings until we are certain that the technology will be used responsibly and in accordance with proper regulations."

Coincidentally, TBD co-founder and COO Emily Chiu has said it's going to get more and more difficult to tell the difference between AI and man-made content: "Now we have face and voice and video that's mixed reality. ... It's going to be increasingly hard for us to detect what's real; what's not; what's fraudulent." Speaking on Web Summit Rio's Center Stage, also late last week, the investment banker turned entrepreneur said that AI's imperfections are actually the fault of its human creators. But what happens when most of those imperfections are ironed out?



Qatar's Asian depth: Effective, outstanding co-operation

Qatar's relationship with its Asian depth has been cemented over the past years through joining the Asian entities and blocs. Also, Qatar has been playing an effective role in lockstep with regional and global organisations in Asia which helped bolstering its standing and influence in the region, as well as the global arena by virtue of an effective bilateral co-operation with some of the most prominent and major Asian blocs and bodies.

The Reach Out To Asia (ROTA), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), marks the Qatari flagship initiatives directed towards the communities and countries in Asia whose population suffers either from low income levels or lives in unstable social conditions engendered by crises, wars, and climate change.

Since the launch of such an initiative in September 2005, ROTA has provided education and training for over two million children and young people in 20 countries in collaboration with partners, volunteers, and local societies to help build their capacities in the quest for a viable role in a sustainable future. Also, ROTA has bolstered Qatar's efforts towards humanitarian co-operation and development in Asia and the entire region.

The Initiative underscored Qatar's ironclad commitment to significantly support bilateral relations and co-operation with the countries in Asia in multiple fields, including education, culture, health, economic development, providing humanitarian assistance in times of disaster and crises, and upgrading the infrastructure.

By utilising this initiative, Qatar has succeeded in forging a robust partnership with the countries in Asia through supporting the shared development projects, essentially enhancing the sustainable development, and optimising the life quality of the population in the region.

Through its membership in the Asia Co-operation Dialogue (ACD) that was established in Thailand in 2002, Qatar launched its vision to achieve effective and sustainable development in Asia. Also, Doha hosted numerous ministerial meetings of ACD countries, the last one was the 16th ministerial meeting held in 2019 and left a footprint of co-operation that advances the countries in Asia, affirming that Asia possesses all opportunities of forging an eventual integration that ultimately makes the continent a groundbreaking economic zone thanks to the geographical, human, and civilisational potential of success and booming development and creates peace and security in the world, announcing from Doha that the inter-Asian partnership is a critical method of achieving the aspirations of the continent's nations.

During its hosting of the meeting, per se, Qatar announced an initiative to teach the Arabic language among member states, since education is the only means that bridges the gaps between cultures of wide diversity of peoples all over the world.

Qatar's hosting of the ACD ministerial meeting in 2019 earned strong commendation as it was a critical event because it witnessed the convention of the first meeting after being postponed for two and a half years. Thereafter, Qatar made massive efforts to revive the ACD and rebuild the confidence of the member states, especially that the event was deferred multiple times leading to confusion and uncertainty about the future of this bloc.

There was a new transition for Qatar's relationship with the Asian entities and bodies to a new phase after it joined the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), the second-largest parliamentary group in the world after the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Qatar's admission to the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) came during the first meeting of APA Executive Council held in Türkiye on October 26, 2019. The presence of Qatar in this regional bloc was a qualitative addition to enhance the shared parliamentary action in Asia.

In confirmation of Qatar's tremendous role in the field of parliamentary diplomacy, along with its unwavering efforts devoted to bolstering the parliamentary co-operation and contributions to



creating interconnection and people-to-people communication, Qatar has won the position of vice-president of the APA for the period of 2024-2025 following the elections that were held within the agendas of the APA Executive Council meetings hosted by the city of Antalya, Türkiye last year.

Established in 2006, APA primarily aims to strengthen the parliamentary co-operation and share expertise among the member states in Asia. Its primary objective is to promote democracy and upgrade the legislation in the Asian region.

The assembly holds periodical events to discuss issues of shared interest and encourages the exchange of information and experiences among national parliaments in Asia. It plays a significant role in promoting understanding and co-operation among the countries in Asia, in addition to deepening the principles of democracy and human rights in the region.

In its new quest for strengthening the Asian horizons, Qatar has signed the instrument of accession to the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia (TAC) of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) on the margins of the 55th Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in August 2022.

Qatar's accession to the treaty stems from the common desire to create a safe and stable area for societies to achieve sustainable economic development and shared prosperity, in addition to creating a common unity among peoples based on diversity and acceptance of the other.

Qatar's relationships with the Asean countries earn utmost significance to consolidate co-operation in multiple fields, in addition to supporting all efforts to enhance regional and international peace and security, giving foremost priority to upgrading relations and co-operation with the Asian continent in general, and with the Asean in particular. The treaty was signed in 1976 among the five Asean founding countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, as well as the rest of the member states.

The treaty was amended in 1987 to allow for accession by states outside Southeast Asia. It primarily aims to accomplish a number of principles that promote peace and co-operation among countries, along with shared respect for independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all countries.

In the context of Qatar's relations with the Asean group and under the umbrella of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani participated last year with his brothers, Their Majesties and Highnesses, leaders of the GCC countries, and Their Excellencies heads of state of the Asian countries and heads of delegations, at the maiden summit of the GCC countries and the Asean, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The participation of HH the Amir in this event reflected the foremost priority Qatar gives to strengthening the interconnection between the GCC countries and the Asean member states in a variety of fields, along with Qatar's ironclad commitment to strengthening and deepening its partnership with the Gulf countries and other Asean member countries.

The relationships between the GCC countries and the Asean member states have been thriving in various fields, especially in the economic and trade areas, which made the Asean one of the most vital trade partners of the GCC countries in areas of shared interest, such as co-operation in the maritime field, communications, sustainable development goals, the economic field, as well as other possible and appropriate areas of co-operation.

In 2014, Qatar joined the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and became a member of the conference after it had observer status.

Additionally, CICA is an international forum aimed at promoting understanding and building confidence among countries in Asia. The idea of organising the conference came as an initiative put forward, for the first time, by the first President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev on October 5, 1992, during the 47th session of the United Nations General Assembly, and officially remained operational in March 1993.

CICA includes 27 countries as permanent members, representing nearly 90% of Asia's territory and population, as well as 13 observers from countries and international organisations. Also, its name reflects its philosophy of operation, as it primarily focuses on interaction between member states, in addition to sharing confidence-building measures to strengthen security and stability in the region and strives to enhance bilateral and multilateral co-operation in areas, such as combating terrorism and organised crime, in addition to de-escalating regional conflicts.

Being an important platform for dialogue and co-operation in the region, CICA seeks to achieve balance, stability, and constructive co-operation among countries in Asia.

Since joining the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia during the fourth CICA Summit held in Shanghai, China in 2014, Qatar has regularly participated in all CICA activities and strives to strengthen cooperative relationships with the member states.

On September 14, 2022, Qatar signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the margins of the organisation's summit held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The MoU was a new step towards boosting the Qatari-Asian co-operation regarding its accession to the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) as a dialogue partner.

SCO is considered an intergovernmental organisation founded on June 15, 2001, and currently includes China, Russia, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan as members, with Iran being accepted as a permanent member, after it was an observer member.

The countries that hold observer status in the organisation are namely, Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia, with the list of countries with the status of dialogue partner including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Nepal, before Qatar was accepted to join the organisation. Also, the countries' admission to SCO requires obtaining the consent of all member states, as does the transition from one status to another.

Stemming from Qatar's conviction of the tremendous goals for which SCO was established, along with SCO's leading role in resolving urgent and pivotal issues considering the major evolutions happening in the world, Qatar shares the SCO countries' endeavours to strengthen stability and security in the territories of its members, in addition to combating terrorism, extremism and crime, drug trafficking, and advancing co-operation in the fields of economy, energy, culture, and science. (QNA)

To Advertise

✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

Display

☎ 44466621 📠 44418811

Classified

☎ 44466609 📠 44418811

✉ gtcad@gulf-times.com

Subscription

✉ circulation@gulf-times.com

Kahramaa launches Innovation Week 2024



By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

The Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa), represented by the Creativity, Innovation and Scientific Research Incubator, launched Innovation Week 2024 yesterday.

The ceremony was held in the presence of Kahramaa president engineer Essa bin Hilal al-Kuwari, other dignitaries and representatives from the Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI) and global companies such as Microsoft and Google.

Under the theme of *Digital Creativity and Its Applications in the Fields of Electricity and Water*, Innovation Week 2024 is held until April 24 to coincide with World Creativity and Innovation Day.

The objective is to promote a culture of creativity and innovation among Kahramaa's employees, encouraging them to adopt and develop innovations that enhance work efficiency and performance across all departments.

In his opening address, engineer Rashid al-Rahimi, head of the Creativity, Innovation and Scientific Research Incubator, said that over four years, the incubator will explore new opportunities together, learn from past experiences and seek ways to collaborate with partners in the field of digital technologies, Microsoft Qatar and Google Qatar.

"We will focus on how to apply these technologies to enhance our electricity and water services, ensuring the highest quality for our subscribers while preserving the environment and achieving sus-



The opening ceremony was held in the presence of Kahramaa president engineer Essa bin Hilal al-Kuwari, other dignitaries and representatives from the QRDI and global companies such as Microsoft and Google.

PICTURES: Thajudheen

tainability," he said. "We live in an era full of challenges and opportunities, and innovation is the key to success in facing these challenges, especially concerning business development."

The Creativity, Innovation and Scientific Research Incubator at Kahramaa aspires to play a significant role in supporting the state's strategy in scientific research.

It aims to be a supportive destination for all innovators and researchers within the corporation's specialised fields.

The four-day Innovation Week programme is diverse.

Yesterday, employees had the opportunity to hear from speakers including representatives from Kahramaa, other institutions, and key partners such as the QRDI, Microsoft Qatar, and Google Qatar and supporting partners such as Siemens, Schneider, EY, Deloitte, and Elev 8.

There was a presentation on Qatar's Innovation Strategy, as well as discussions on the utilisation of artificial intelligence (AI) in



the fields of electricity and water, along with insights into modern technologies.



The second and third days of the Innovation Week, dedicated to pre-selected employees, will include workshops conducted by Microsoft and Google focusing on digital innovation, linking it to operational processes in Kahramaa.

The fourth day features the Hackathon Competition, aimed at fostering a culture of creativity and innovation among 100 Kahramaa employees representing various departments.

The participants will collaborate in teams to propose tangible ideas that can be applied across different operational processes.

A panel of expert judges will select the top three ideas, and the winning teams honoured.

The Creativity, Innovation, and Scientific Research Incubator, es-

established by Kahramaa in 2017 and restructured in September 2021, now integrates both innovation and scientific research under one umbrella, previously separate entities.

The accomplishments include conducting 42 scientific research projects within the corporation and collaborating with universities and various research institutes, adopting seven new creative ideas, which were transformed into impactful and distinguished projects in collaboration with the QRDI and other institutional partners, executing initiatives with different institutions across the country and organising competitions to inspire school and university students, in partnership with active business accelerators.



Katara to launch antiques exhibition on April 25, featuring firms from 10 nations

Katara Publishing House has announced that the 2024 Katara Exhibition for Antiques will launch on April 25 and run until April 30.

The exhibition will be held in Katara Hall Building 12 with the participation of local and international companies from 10 countries.

The 2024 Katara Exhibition for Antiques will include an open auction for antiques and old collectibles of historical value, in co-operation with AlBahie Auction House.

Valuable and rare collectibles from the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani Museum (FBQ) will be displayed, in addition to other antique collectibles from individuals and institutions, as well as a special showcase of classic cars.

Katara Publishing House director Amira Ahmed al-Muhammad said that the public is interested in acquiring antiques for their aesthetic value.

Meanwhile, she said, enthusiasts pay attention to which period the piece dates back to as well as its rarity since these aspects determine the value of the piece and its cost in auctions.

The participation of AlBahie Auction House includes displaying various and unique collections of rare art pieces, al-Muhammad said. - QNA

Campaign to support baby's treatment gains momentum

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

A fundraising drive for QR11.65mn, under the aegis of Qatar Charity (QC), for the treatment of four-month-old Malkha Rouhi has taken an active turn, with organisations, institutions and individuals stepping in to support.

Malkha, an Indian national, has been diagnosed with Type 1 Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), an inherited disease that affects nerves and muscles, causing muscles to become increasingly weak.

Daughter of Risal Abdul Rashied and Nihala Nizam, Malkha is undergoing treatment at Sidra Medicine.

Doctors have suggested a gene replacement therapy and certain drugs which, according to Rashied, are expensive and beyond the family's reach.

The QC has urged all to donate for the treatment of Malkha.

"Our campaign has started to evoke response from benefactors. Active support from organisations and individuals can help us achieve the goal. We are calling for all to participate in the campaign to help the ailing kid," Khalid Ab-

dulla al-Yafie, director of the Customer Service Department at QC, told *Gulf Times*, adding that joint efforts can make an impact.

The QC, on its website, has set a goal of QR11,654,028.75 with case number 206863 under licence: LC2023QTCH07-000032.

Contributions can be made through the official website www.qch.qa/Malkha

"Our daughter needs urgent care as doctors have suggested the treatment at the earliest," Risal said pinning hopes on the kind-hearted.

Type 1 SMA is severe and causes respiratory muscle weakness and respiratory failure.

Community organisations and collectives have joined hands to support the cause.

Convened by Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), a recent meeting of organisations and institutions across Qatar decided to launch a slew of measures to support the QC initiative.

"In co-operation with various organisations, we are taking up efforts to support this humanitarian initiative. Our efforts are yielding results and we see many organisations and kindhearted persons stepping in while announcing donations," ICBF secretary Mo-

Urgent Medical Appeal for Baby Malkha Rouhi
4 months old baby girl affected by rare disease
SMA type1 for treatment she needs Gene Therapy (Zolgensma) which cost QR 11.65 million
Kindly support through Qatar Charity
For Donation please Use qch.qa/malkha

Qatar Charity Case No: 206863
License: LC2023QTCH07-000032



SHE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Donate Now

QATAR CHARITY REFERENCE NUMBER: 206863
LICENSE : LC2023QTCH07-000032
FUND REQUIRED: 11,654,028.75 QAR



hamed Kunhi T K said, expressing his confidence in achieving the goal soon.

Qatar Malayalees, a Facebook collective of Malayalees, is planning to launch a "Biriyani Challenge" campaign to support the QC drive. To be held on May 10, the aim of the campaign is to reach more than 5,000 benefactors across Qatar.

The idea, according to Qatar Malayalees functionaries, is to distribute biriyanis on pre-order to the benefactors who will make donations to the drive.

"We plan to cook biriyanis with the help of sponsors," said one of the functionaries of Qatar Malayalees.

"Volunteers are all set to help us distribute them," he added.