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## Amir arrives in Bangladesh

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

HH the Amir was welcomed upon arrival at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by Bangladesh President Mohamed Shahabuddin.

Among those who welcomed HH the Amir were Minister for Liberation War Affairs Mozammel Haque, Minister of Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud, Minister of State for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Shofiqur Rahman Choudhury, ambassador of Qatar to Bangladesh Saree Ali Mahdi Saeed al-Qahntani, ambassador of Bangladesh to Qatar Mohamed Nazrul Islam, alongside several high-ranking officials in the Bangladeshi government, a number of ambassadors of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation countries, and members of the Qatari embassy.

HH the Amir was accorded an official reception upon arrival and is accompanied by an official delegation. Four warplanes of the Bangladesh Air Force escorted HH the Amir's plane as it entered Bangladesh's airspace to welcome His Highness. (QNA) See Pages 4, 5, 8, 9



### Bangladesh PM hails 'landmark visit'

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed has said her country warmly welcomes the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, describing the visit as a landmark in the path of strengthening bilateral relations and taking them to new horizons.

In an interview with QNA, the PM said: "The government and people of Bangladesh are looking forward to welcome His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh. I hope the visit will



represent a landmark in the path of strengthening relations." See page 9

## PM leads Qatar at GCC-EU meeting



Qatar participated in the high-level forum between the Gulf Co-operation Council countries and the European Union on regional security, held yesterday in Luxembourg. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired Qatar's delegation to the forum. The forum discussed developments in the region and ways for de-escalation, particularly in ending the war in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, the forum addressed the developments in the Russia-Ukraine crisis, maritime security, and freedom of navigation. (QNA) Page 2

## 200 bodies exhumed at Gaza hospital so far

Gaza's Civil Defence agency said yesterday that health workers had uncovered around 200 bodies over the past three days of people killed and buried by Israeli forces at a hospital in Khan Yunis. When asked for comment, the Israeli military said: "We will come back to you on the matter." Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for Gaza's Civil Defence, told AFP that "civil defence crews

are still recovering bodies from inside Nasser Medical Complex, and since Saturday bodies of nearly 200 martyrs have been retrieved". Bassal said several of the recovered bodies had decomposed. "There is difficulty in the process of identifying them but civil defence efforts are ongoing," he said. On Sunday, Bassal told AFP that

some of those killed had been tortured. Ismail al-Thawabta, head of the Hamas government media office in the Palestinian territory, gave a higher figure of 283 bodies found at the hospital. "We discovered mass graves inside Nasser Medical Complex" of people killed by "the occupation (Israeli) army", Thawabta told AFP.

## Amir, Philippine president hold talks



### Amir praises Filipino community's role in Qatar's development

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. held a session of official talks at the Malacanang Palace in Manila yesterday.

At the outset of the session, the president welcomed HH the Amir and the accompanying delegation, stressing the significance of HH the Amir's first visit to the Philippines and its role in bolstering the bilateral relations and broadening their horizons.

The president said the two countries share a 43-year-old friendship, praising the talks with HH the Amir, which covered all areas and ways of promoting relations between the two friendly countries.

HH the Amir expressed his happiness at visiting the Philippines, at the invitation of the president, praising the warm reception and hospitality accorded to His Highness and the accompanying delegation.

HH the Amir highlighted the distinguished relations between the two friendly countries, noting that the talks with the Philippines president will contribute to promoting and developing co-operation between the two friendly countries in various fields and at all levels, through increased coordination and communication between businessmen and the joint committees concerned with trade and economic co-operation, in order to fulfil the aspirations of both friendly peoples for the desired integration in all areas. To Page 11 See page 3

### Leaders witness agreements, MoUs



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. witnessed yesterday the exchange of several agreements and memoranda of understanding and co-operation between the governments of both countries.

HH the Amir and the president witnessed the exchange of a visa exemption agreement for holders of diplomatic, private and official passports, a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of sports, a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of youth, a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of combating human trafficking, a memorandum of understanding on technical co-operation and capacity-building in the field of climate change, and a memorandum of understanding in the fields of tourism and business events.

They also witnessed the exchange of a memorandum of understanding on mutual recognition of seafarers' certificates, a memorandum of understanding between Qatar Chamber and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and a memorandum of understanding between Qatar Chamber and the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The exchange ceremony, which took place at the presidential palace in Manila, was attended by Their Excellencies members of the official delegation. On the Philippine side, it was attended by a number of ministers and senior officials. (QNA)

## Philippines records 10,438 visitor arrivals from Qatar in 2023

By Peter Alagos  
Business Reporter

The Philippines received 10,438 visitor arrivals from Qatar in 2023 and 3,784 from January 1 to April 20 this year, according to current Department of Tourism (DoT) data.

These figures were revealed following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DoT Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Philippine President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr during HH the Amir's two-day state visit to the Southeast Asian nation.

The MoU is among the nine other agreements signed between both nations to further strengthen bilateral ties.

Frasco said in a message: "Fortifying tourism co-operation between the Philippines and Qatar by way of signing this Memorandum of Co-operation forges a strong partnership for increased tourism exchanges between our nations."

"With this significant step forward, we unlock the wealth of opportunities for growth as we explore new avenues for collaboration, particularly on the aspect of tourism and business events."

She added: "Under the Marcos administration, we are re-introducing the Philippines to the world on the strength of our Filipino culture, heritage, and identity, and we view our partnership with Qatar as being an important part of this movement."

In its Facebook page, the DoT stated that the renewal of the MoU between the Philippines and Qatar, "aim[s] to strengthen their co-operation, particularly in the

aspects of mutual development and growth of tourism and business events."

"Under the agreement, the Philippines and Qatar agreed to jointly work towards encouraging tourist flows into each country; promoting co-operation between travel and tourism agencies and other establishments to increase tourist exchange and promotion; and creating favourable conditions for movements and communications for the visiting tourists."

"The MoU also solidifies the two countries' intent to encourage tourism investments; undertake exchange of organisational expertise, knowledge, statistics, and best practices; promote familiarisation visits for media and tourism experts, and further skills development of operators, employees, and specialists in tourism through seminars and specialised trainings," the DoT post also stated. To Page 11



## PM in Luxembourg meetings



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday in Luxembourg with Prime Minister of Luxembourg Luc Frieden. During the meeting, they discussed ties between the two countries and ways to strengthen them, in addition to the developments in the region and means of de-escalation and calm, especially ending the war in the Gaza Strip. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's grave concern over the developments in the region, calling on all parties to resort to calm and to maximise restraint. He stressed the need for joint action to reduce escalation in the region and resolve differences peacefully. His Excellency reiterated that Qatar is committed to supporting all regional and global efforts aimed at achieving security and stability at the regional and global levels. **(QNA)**



Duke Henri, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, met yesterday in Luxembourg with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani. At the outset of the meeting, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, as well as His Highness' wishes of good health and happiness to His Royal Highness, and continued progress and prosperity to the people of Luxembourg. The Grand Duke of Luxembourg entrusted the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs with his greetings to His Highness the Amir, his wishes for His Highness of good health and happiness and for the Qatari people further development and growth. **(QNA)**



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Minister for Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Affairs of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel, on the sidelines of the High-Level Forum on Security and Regional Co-operation between the European Union and the GCC, held in Luxembourg. During the meeting, they discussed relations between the two countries and ways to develop them in various fields, in addition to the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. **(QNA)**



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met separately yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland Michael Martin, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Italy Antonio Tajani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Hanke Bruins, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain Jose Manuel Albares, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden Tobias Billstrom and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell. The meetings took place on the sidelines of the high-level forum between the Gulf Co-operation Council countries and the European Union on regional security, which took place in Luxembourg. **(QNA)**

# Shura Council session stresses control over use of technology

The Shura Council held its regular weekly meeting at Tamim bin Hamad Hall yesterday, under the chairpersonship of HE Speaker of the Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem.

At the outset of the meeting, HE the Secretary-General of Shura Council Nayef bin Mohamed al-Mahmoud read out the session's agenda, and the minutes of the previous session were approved.

During the session, the Council reviewed the report of the Cultural Affairs and Media Committee on the request for general discussion submitted by a number of Council members related to the 'disadvantages of using technology'.

In the context of discussing the report, HE Speaker of the Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem pointed out that technology has become an integral part of the lives of individuals in society. Therefore, rationalising and controlling its use have become inevitable as technology has taken on a global dimension in the face of open space, making the task of supervising it difficult. His Excellency stressed that the lack of control over modern technological means or weakness of these means leads to health, psychological and social damage that casts a shadow on society, pointing in this context to what is mentioned in the country's constitution that it is necessary to care for the younger generation, protect it from the causes of corruption and protect it from exploitation, as well as to what is mentioned in the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030 in one of its pillars in relation to keenness on creat-



ing a cohesive society in terms of preserving authentic values and strong family ties as well as promoting responsible citizenship.

During his review of the report, the Chairman of the Cultural Affairs and Media Committee Mubarak bin Mohamed al-Kuwari referred to the meetings held by the committee to discuss the issue by inviting a number of officials and specialists from the relevant authorities and taking note of the experiences of countries in dealing with the openness of cyberspace along with their measures to protect young people from the negatives resulting from the misuse of modern technology. He stressed the need to unify and integrate the efforts of the concerned authorities related to issuing licences, operating and monitoring technology means and programmes, preserving societal values and national identity, protecting society and young people from the misuse of technology, ensuring its proper use in the correct ways and continuous awareness of the disadvantages of its use.

The chairman of the committee pointed out that the rapid development of modern technology requires continuous awareness of the disadvantages of its use, pointing out in this context the centrality of the fam-

ily role, as family control represents an important axis in efforts to rationalise the use of modern technology.

After extensive discussions of the report's findings and exchanging views and opinions about it, the Council decided to submit a proposal in the desire to the esteemed government on the 'disadvantages of using technology'.

The proposal in the desire offered a number of views that would contribute to reducing the negative effects of modern technology, ensuring its proper use and raising awareness of the dangers of mishandling it, including: forming a joint committee of concerned parties to monitor and review applications and digital platforms used by young people, evaluating the content of these applications and platforms and ensuring their compliance with safety, security and privacy protection standards.

During the session, the Council reviewed a draft law amending some provisions of the Tenders and Auctions Regulation Law promulgated by Law No 24 of 2015 referred to it by the esteemed government, and decided to refer it to the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee to study it and submit its report to the Council. **(QNA)**

## Shura Speaker meets defence course attendees

HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met with a group of attendees in the fourth National Defence Course at the Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies. The attendees included senior officials from ministries, state institutions, and various security agencies. They visited the Shura Council and attended its weekly session held yesterday. During the meeting, His Excellency the Speaker discussed the history of the council and highlighted key developments in its journey from the appointment phase to the first elections of the Shura Council. His Excellency also emphasised the important role of the Shura Council in legislation and oversight, affirming the Council's commitment to the national interest and meeting the aspirations of citizens. HE Speaker of the Shura

Council also praised the role of the academy in preparing leaders and providing them with essential knowledge in critical and vital areas. For their part, the attendees commended the Council's role in achieving popular participation and the importance of the topics discussed during its deliberations, reflecting the concerns of the Qatari society. During the visit, the attendees listened to a presentation that covered the establishment and evolution of the Shura Council, its different bodies, and its main constitutional mandates, including legislation, oversight, and approval of the general budget. Additionally, the academy's staff toured an exhibition at the Shura Council, which showcased a collection of lectures, speeches, and memorabilia illustrating the history of the Shura Council since its establishment in 1972. **(QNA)**

## Shura Speaker meets Swiss ambassador



HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met yesterday with Switzerland ambassador to Qatar Florence Tinguely Mattli. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between Qatar and Switzerland, particularly the areas of parliamentary co-operation and ways to support and enhance them. The meeting was attended by HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, Ahmed bin Ibrahim al-Maliki, a member of the Council, and HE the Secretary-General of Shura Council Nayef bin Mohamed al-Mahmoud. **(QNA)**

## Municipality minister chairs IOFS general assembly meeting

HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah chaired the First Extraordinary General Assembly for the Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS), held through teleconferencing, to appoint a new director general of the organisation, following the nomination submitted by Kazakhstan to appoint ambassador Berik Aryn instead of the former director general. During the meeting, HE the minister emphasised Qatar's continued support for the IOFS and for all efforts made to improve the reality of food security in Islamic countries. The meeting was attended by ministers of agriculture from 27 member states, along with representatives of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC). **(QNA)**



## Al-Marri meets UAE minister



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri met yesterday with Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation of the United Arab Emirates Dr Abdulrahman al-Awar. During the meeting, they discussed enhancing bilateral relations in the field of labour, particularly concerning the national workforce and ways to support and develop it. **(QNA)**



# Qatar Foundation to host Akhlaquna awards ceremony tomorrow

Qatar Foundation (QF) will host the annual Akhlaquna awards ceremony tomorrow at its seventh season. The award ceremony will take place at Qatar National Library, honouring this year's winners whose personalities exemplify ethical traits and contribute to initiatives and projects that positively impact society. The ceremony will include the honouring of several categories and age groups. There will be one award for children aged 7-14, another for youth aged between 15-18 years. Nominees in both categories will be residing in Qatar. Additionally, for the first time,

finalists from GCC countries will be recognised in a category for individual contributions. The number of applicants has significantly increased this year, with a total of 230 submissions across the three categories, reflecting growing interest and interaction with the award, expanding the reach and impact of this initiative. In this regard, Sheikha Noof Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, who is the Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships in Pre-University Education at Qatar Foundation, emphasised that the Akhlaquna awards aims to highlight the importance of embody-

ing ethical virtues derived from the Prophet's (PBUH) approach in, as well as the manifestations of striving to enhance them within society. She expressed her happiness with the increase in submissions for the annual award, particularly from GCC countries this year, noting that this growing engagement not only enriches society but also opens doors for further expansion and outreach. During a press conference held to announce the details of the event, director of the award Ahmed Youssef al-Malki outlined several objectives of the award, including spreading awareness related to religious values in so-

ciety and urging individuals to participate in ethical initiatives inspired by the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Moreover, al-Malki mentioned that in 2023, the institution launched several awareness campaigns, and this year it launched a campaign on humility which targeted a group of schools and collaborated with more than 20 entities, implementing over 100 activities and reaching approximately 1,000 participants. He confirmed that the competition received 230 participants this year, and 23 of them will be honoured at the Akhlaquna awards ceremony, accompanied

by an interactive exhibition where each entity presents its efforts in the ethical aspect, with about 15 entities participating. The day following the ceremony will feature interactive activities. The Director of the award also noted that the individual contributions category addresses citizens and residents of Qatar, with one of the main application requirements being an individual contribution project spanning two years, closely linked to ethics. He emphasised that the award focuses on all aspects of prophetic ethics and that the Gulf submissions reached 30 participants. (QNA)

## Amir affirms key role of Philippines co-operation

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani underlined that the visit to Philippines stems from the keen interest in developing co-operation and elevating the bilateral relations to the optimal level. His Highness the Amir said the visit will contribute to enhancing mutual trade and investment initiatives. "My visit to the Philippines comes within the framework of our keen interest in developing co-operation with this friendly country and elevating our bilateral relations to the optimal level. The outcome of the fruitful discussions I had today with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr will contribute to enhancing the mutual trade and investment initiatives and serving the common interests of our two countries," His Highness the Amir said on his official "X" account. (QNA)

## QC supports Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

Qatar Charity (QC) continues to implement the agricultural 'Livelihood' project, launched in June 2023, aiming to support 200 Rohingya refugees on the Bhasan Char Island of Bangladesh. The project has enabled the refugees to grow various vegetables at no expense, helping them fulfil their food needs while allowing them to sell the surplus produce to meet other requirements. Currently, 40 refugee families benefit from this project, cultivating an area of 2.86 acres of land. Throughout the year, refugee families are able to produce a diverse range of vegetables. Jamila Khatun, one of the farmers involved in the project, said: "Accessing fresh vegetables was challenging in our camp due to limited supply and high prices. However, we have now overcome this obstacle and can meet our family's nutritional needs, enhancing our food security." Another beneficiary, Mohamed Rafiq, stated: "We're delighted to be able to sell our surplus produce to fellow refugees and NGO workers on the Bhasan Char Island, generating



income to purchase essential items for our families." Rahima Khatun expressed gratitude towards QC for providing them with land, agricultural resources, and technical assistance. She hopes that its support will extend to other refugees in need. The local authorities also expressed their appreciation for the project benefiting the refugees. Mahfuzur Rahman, a high official of the Rohingya camp in Bhasanchar, said: "It is a very good initiative of Qatar Charity. The project ensures the food security of the beneficiaries." QC's various interventions for Rohingya refugees on Bhasan Char benefited 550,000 individuals in the last three years. It provided food and non-food aid to meet their essential needs.

## QLC celebrates 11th batch graduation



The Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC) celebrated the graduation of its 11th batch (Class of 2023), which included 128 male and female graduates of promising leaders, including 101 graduates, from national leadership programs, and 27 graduates from the Executive Master's Programme in Leadership. The ceremony was attended by HE the Chairperson of Qatar Leadership Centre Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE Managing Director and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors Sheikh Dr Abdullah bin Ali bin Saoud al-

Thani, HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem, a number of ministers and state senior officials, and a number members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the state, faculty members, and families of graduates. Marking the ceremony, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani said that investing in the people of Qatar with a long-term vision is what drives the development and growth that the country is witnessing. Her Excellency added that being a leader means maintaining values, principles, and integrity

to initiate, inspire, influence, and share success. The leader is the one who gives value to the position, and not the opposite, whatever that position might be. Her Excellency extended her greetings and appreciation to the graduates, saying that they see the great and rapid transformation that Qatar is witnessing towards self-reliance and achieving growth in various fields, and this makes them all required to continuously research and develop ideas to support the country in all creative and innovative fields. In her speech, Her Excellency recommended that the gradu-

ates be, in their positions and their leadership, an example and a role model, and that they be up to the responsibility of carrying the trust, "and the trust is Qatar." For his part, HE the Managing Director and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors Sheikh Dr Abdullah bin Ali bin Saoud al-Thani said that he would like to congratulate all the new graduates of promising leaders on the occasion of their graduation from the QLC. It is with great pride to see tomorrow's leaders prepared to contribute to the development and advancement of the country. (QNA)

## MoI workshop focuses on combating human trafficking



A two-day training workshop on combating human trafficking began yesterday in the presence of officers of various departments from the Ministry of Interior (MoI), a statement said. The workshop organised by the Police Academy's Officers Institute in collaboration with MoI Human Rights Department and the US Department of Homeland Security's Human Trafficking

Centre (Regional Training in the Middle East) is attended by 50 MoI officers. Brigadier Abdullah Saqr al-Muhannadi, director of the Human Rights Department at MoI, Col Naif Mohamed al-Mana'i, director of the Police Officers Institute at the Police Academy and Col Nawaf Mohamed al-Otaibi, director of the Criminal Investigation Department at the General Directorate of Criminal

Investigation, attended the opening session of the workshop along with lecturers from the US side. The workshop covers various topics, including strategies and techniques for combating human trafficking, investigating suspected cases of human trafficking, basics of victim assistance, intelligence resources and capabilities and the use of digital evidence to support investigations.

## Top experts to attend ministry's AEMOB forum

The Autonomous e-Mobility (AEMOB) Forum will host more than 40 speakers from 20 countries, at Qatar National Convention Centre from April 30-May 2. The event, under the patronage of HE the Minister of Transport Jassim Saif Ahmed al-Sulaiti, is featuring policymakers, representatives of government agencies, academics, industry experts, engineers, consultants. "The world faces a critical turning point in fulfilling the pressing need for sustainable transportation solutions. Autonomous e-vehicles are among the promising alternatives in this field," said MoT's acting assistant undersecretary of Land Transport Affairs engineer Hamad Essa Abdulla. In step with that global trend, he added, Qatar has gone a long way in implementing the strategy of the gradual transitioning to e-vehicles and expanding their use. "More than 70% of the public bus fleet has been transitioned to electric and the plan is to increase that gradually to 100% by 2030," he said. The forum will include keynote speeches, presentations and panel



Officials announce details of the Autonomous e-Mobility Forum yesterday. PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

discussions with the participation of a group of experts, in addition to an accompanying exhibition highlighting the innovations of international and regional companies involved in the field. "We look forward to participating in discussions and exchanging knowledge with many experts in this field during the forum. It's a great honour for us to contribute to this event, which is considered a platform for developing sustainable transportation concepts," Ahmad Hassan al-Obaidly, Mowasalat (Karwa) CEO, said. "Our participation in the Autonomous e-Mobility Forum provides us with an opportunity to

showcase Qatar Rail's initiatives and contributions in the field of sustainable transportation through our Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks and highlight the company's prominent sustainable practices across its various projects," said Abdulla Ali al-Mawlawi, communication and public relations director at Qatar Rail. "The inaugural AEMOB Forum, will provide a comprehensive platform for experts and industry leaders to discuss driverless e-mobility and how these technologies can be brought to life in real-world settings," said Ahmad al-Ansari, executive committee member.

## Jamavar Doha launches new summer menu

Jamavar Doha, the popular pan-Indian restaurant located at Sheraton Grand Doha, has launched its new summer menu, a culinary journey curated by the renowned culinary director and executive chef Surender Mohan. Drawing from his nearly three decades of culinary expertise and inspired by India's rich royal heritage, Jamavar Doha presents a menu that celebrates the essence of summer while embracing sustainability and locally sourced ingredients, a statement said yesterday. His culinary philosophy, deeply rooted in heritage, health, and happiness, pays homage to the colourful history and splendour of Indian cuisine. "Our summer menu reflects our commitment to offering innovative and sustainable dining experiences," said Chef Surender Mohan. "Each dish is



meticulously crafted to preserve the purity and essence of seasonal produce while enhancing them with a light touch of refinement." The summer menu offers an array of dishes highlighting the best summer flavours. From appetisers to main courses and desserts, guests can expect to embark on a culinary journey that captures the vibrancy of Indian cuisine and the

freshness of summer ingredients, the statement explained. Jamavar Doha's summer menu will be available starting April 25. Guests who dine in Jamavar between April 25-May 2, 2024, will get a chance to win a one-night full-board staycation for two at Sheraton Grand Doha. Jamavar Doha is open daily from 12:30pm until midnight.

## Jungle Zone conducts Ramadan charity drive

In a demonstration of its commitment to community welfare, Jungle Zone Theme Park, in collaboration with Qatar Charity (QC), embarked on multiple charity initiatives throughout the holy month of Ramadan and Eid. Jungle Zone launched a donation campaign to collect children's clothes and accessories, which will be distributed to destitute children through QC, a statement said yesterday. The community and corporates donated to the campaign. Apparel Qatar contributed more than 500 branded clothes and Golden Baby Trading, Qatar's leading toy distributors, donated generously. "Bringing joy to children's



hearts" is at the core of our mission at Jungle Zone Theme Park. Through our charity campaigns, we're not just providing support; we're igniting hope and creating brighter futures for destitute children in various parts of the world," said Manas Kumar Ganguly, head of operations at Jungle Zone Theme Park.

Jungle Zone also donated 10% of its sales proceeds throughout Ramadan to support children, particularly orphans, from the first day of the holy month to the last 10 days of Eid. "Jungle Zone's 'You Play, We Donate' campaign embodies our strong belief that success isn't just measured in profits, but in the positive impact we make on the world around us. By channelling the joy of play into tangible support for those in need, we're demonstrating our unwavering commitment to uplifting communities and fostering a brighter tomorrow for all. We would like to thank our customers and the whole community who came forward to donate and support our cause," the statement added.



# Amir's visit strengthens bilateral relations: Qatar's ambassador

Qatar's ambassador to Bangladesh Saree bin Ali al-Qahtani has affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Dhaka represents a significant milestone in bilateral relations between the countries, which extends for half a century, and embodies the mutual aspiration to move towards developing the ties in various fields.

In a statement, he told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh coincides with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries, which have reached a distinguished level of co-operation and partnership in many fields, prompting more communication and building on the achievements achieved during this journey.

The visit reflects the insight and sound vision of Qatar's wise leadership, which is keen to strengthen the bonds of co-operation between Qatar and various countries of the world, in a way that enhances mutual interests and advances efforts for development, peace and

global stability, al-Qahtani added. He stressed that the visit of His Highness the Amir opens broad horizons of co-operation and partnership in the economic, trade and investment fields, especially in sectors that represent a priority for the two countries, thus pushing their relations towards more close and sustainable co-operation.

He said that several agreements and memoranda of understanding are expected to be signed in several fields significant to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

He pointed out that Qatar and Bangladesh have witnessed many prosperous milestones, as well as steady development over half a century in light of the mutual keenness to push them forward to reach the level of co-operation and partnership they have achieved in many fields.

He noted the many areas of co-operation that have witnessed great momentum over the past years, including the energy field, indicating that Qatar is the largest supplier of liquefied natural gas to Bangladesh, which is the backbone of the economy, as it contributes to

meeting its energy needs, and supports its development plans.

Co-operation in the field of labour has also witnessed growth over the past years, he said, explaining that Qatar has attracted and provided job opportunities for thousands of workers from Bangladesh. The total of Bangladesh workers approximates 400,000 and they receive great attention and care, he said, commending their contribution to the development process that the State of Qatar has been witnessing. In a related context, he said that the volume of trade exchange between Qatar and Bangladesh reached more than \$2bn in 2023, which reflects the continuous growth of trade exchanges.

Qatar's ambassador to Bangladesh concluded his statements by emphasising that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Dhaka will inaugurate a new phase in the process of bilateral relations, in which existing co-operation in many fields will deepen, as well as open doors for co-operation and partnership in new fields that serve mutual interests. (QNA)

**Qatar's Ambassador to Bangladesh: HH the Amir's Visit to Dhaka Represents Significant Milestone in Process of Bilateral Relations**

Exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency |

HE Saree bin Ali Al Qahtani  
Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the People's Republic of Bangladesh

“The visit opens broad horizons of cooperation and partnership in the economic, trade and investment fields, especially in sectors that represent a priority for the two countries.”

“The visit coincides with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.”

“Several agreements and memoranda of understanding are expected to be signed.”

“Qatar and Bangladesh have witnessed many prosperous milestones, as well as steady development over half a century.”

“The State of Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to Bangladesh, which is the backbone of the economy.”

“The volume of trade exchange between the State of Qatar and Bangladesh reached more than USD 2 billion in 2023.”

# Amir's visit 'affirms shared interest to develop historical ties'

Bangladesh ambassador to Qatar Mohamed Nazrul Islam affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh is very significant and emphasises the mutual keenness to develop the existing historical relations to higher levels, serving the people of the two friendly countries.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said Bangladesh and Qatar have been maintaining exemplary bilateral relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974. He added that the relations have been strengthened further due to the commonness between the two countries, regular bilateral visits, increase of manpower export, and common position on regional and international issues.

He pointed out that the visit of His Highness the Amir to Dhaka comes nearly 20 years after the visit of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in 2005. It also coincides with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

He added that the visit of His Highness the Amir represents an opportunity to sign a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding, and to hold in-depth discussions on various areas of bilateral co-operation, in addition to exchanging views on the most prominent regional and international issues, including the Palestinian cause, as well as some other international crises.

Ambassador Mohamed Nazrul Islam stressed the significance of the two visits of Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina Wazed in 2023, saying that the two visits indicate the extent of mutual respect.

He noted the partnership between the two countries in the field of energy and the relations in the field of labour, and its

**Ambassador of Bangladesh to Qatar: HH the Amir's Visit to Dhaka Stresses Two Countries' Keenness to Develop Their Relations**

Exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency |

HE Mohammed Nazrul Islam  
Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the State of Qatar

“The relations have been strengthened further due to the commonness between the two countries and regular bilateral visits.”

“The visit represents an opportunity to sign a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding, and to hold in-depth discussions on various areas of bilateral cooperation.”

Bangladesh has one of the most open investment regimes in the region, which allows Qatari investors to benefit from the best investment opportunities.

The State of Qatar can further extend its engagement in the energy sector by investing in the storage and distribution of LNG.

The coming period is expected to witness the revitalization of tourism and the exchange of cultural delegations to enjoy the cultural treasures of the two countries.

Qatar has very good relations not only with all other countries but also enjoys a respectable position at all international organizations.

continued employment of more Bangladeshi workers. He emphasised that all these factors show the extent of the two sides' keenness to develop existing relations to the highest levels.

Bangladesh ambassador to Qatar addressed the trade co-operation between the two countries and future opportunities to develop trade exchanges and further expand Bangladesh's exports to Qatar, especially non-traditional products.

Regarding investment, he said that his country has one of the most open investment regimes in the region, which allows Qatari investors to benefit from the best investment opportunities available in a large number of promising sectors. He stressed that Bangladesh may allocate an exclusive economic zone for Qatari investors.

Bangladesh ambassador also pointed out Qatar can further extend their engagement in the energy sector by investing in the storage and distribution of LNG. Qatar can also invest in the infra-

structure and real estate sector. He pointed out that a huge number of Bangladeshi businesspersons have already invested in different businesses in Qatar, and want to expand more in the future.

He noted that one important sector of Bangladeshi investment in Qatar could be agriculture, which promotes mutual investment.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in Bangladesh Shofiqur Rahman Choudhury stressed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh marks a significant milestone in the dynamic relations between the two friendly countries.

He indicated that co-operation with regards to employment has experienced a qualitative leap in the last few years, with the Bangladeshi community becoming one of Qatar's largest, playing a crucial role in strengthening bilateral ties. (QNA)

# QF partner Tamuq picks 'Alumnus of the Year'

Ali Dashti from the Class of 2008 has been named the 2024 'Alumnus of the Year' by Texas A&M University at Qatar (Tamuq), a Qatar Foundation partner university.

The award was presented to Dashti during the university's annual alumni reunion.

Dashti is the ninth Alumnus of the Year named by Tamuq. Previous recipients are Muna al-Mohannadi '10, Yousef al-Jaber '07, Mariam al-Meer '12, Dr Nayef Alyafei '09, Mariam al-Bishri '12, Bassam Ahmad '11, Abeer Abuhelaiqa '11, and Azhar Khan '13.

Dashti said: "As an Aggie, I've always cherished the values of excellence, integrity, and leadership instilled in me while at Texas A&M University at Qatar. Winning the Alumnus of the Year Award is not just an honour, but a testament to the enduring impact of Aggie Spirit in shaping individuals and communities."

Since graduating from Texas A&M with a degree in chemical engineering in 2008, Dashti quickly climbed the industry ladder. In RasGas, he started his career as a process engineer and was



then promoted to production engineering specialist followed by head of maintenance, then head of operations and finally operations excellence manager. In 2021, he became asset manager at QatarEnergy LNG, becoming one of the youngest people to assume this position, demonstrating resilience and exceptional leadership in the highly competitive environment of QatarEnergy LNG.

Dashti also obtained a master of science in data science and engineering from Hamad Bin Khalifa University in 2020. For several years, Dashti has also served as a member of Tamuq's Chemical Engineering Industrial Advisory Board. Dr Cesar Octavio Malave, dean of Tamuq, said Dashti has served as a great ambassador for the university.

# Int'l SDG conference from April 24

The Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University (QU) hosted a press conference to announce the Economic, Social and Cultural Transformation for Sustainable Development Conference (SDG) to be held this week on April 24-25.

This conference envisions bringing together experts, scholars, policymakers, industry leaders, and community stakeholders to discuss the intricate challenges and opportunities of SDGs inherent in the region. Within the interconnected nature of economic, social, and cultural dynamics, the conference aims to foster knowledge exchange, display best practices, and generate actionable insights.

Director of the Social & Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) Prof Kaltham Ali al-Ghanim said during the press conference: "Through this conference, we seek to exchange knowledge to build flexible and adaptable communities to various challenges and transformations, to promote general stability, achieve social justice and basic services, and find suitable implementable solutions through a shared developmental roadmap that ensures international co-operation

and strong partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society."

She added: "Through the participation of youth, local communities, and active participants, we hope to enrich this conference by hosting global and local developmental experts to issue recommendations to enhance integration and strengthen common efforts towards achieving the SDGs by highlighting the most important challenges, especially educational, economic, and cultural. The conference will conclude by disseminating recommendations in a comprehensive report contributing to guiding policies and initiatives aimed at implementing the SDGs and development in local communities. We look forward to building a successful community contributing to building a more sustainable and prosperous future for our region." Attendees at the conference will present, discuss and inspire other academic institutions, experts, as well as policy makers, businesses and youth, to achieve the SDGs. The report will be published in digital format and widely shared through SESRI and QU website and social media platforms, to serve as a guidance for individuals and institutions alike to inspire their programmes and initiatives. (QNA)

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# Sidra leads largest research on rare genetic disease risk in Mideast

A study by Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, on rare genetic diseases in a wide-ranging and diverse Middle Eastern cohort from Qatar, has been published in the prestigious *Genome Medicine* journal, a statement said yesterday.

'Burden of Mendelian Disorders in a Middle Eastern Biobank', provides key insights into the distribution of risk for genetic diseases in Qatar, which will help with public health planning for the country's population and that of the wider region.

Led by Dr Khalid Fakhro and Dr Younes Mokrab from Sidra Medicine and in collaboration with the Qatar Genome Programme (QGP), Qatar Biobank (QBB), and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) the study analysed more than 6,000 whole genomes and corresponding health data from Qatar.

Dr Khalid Fakhro, chief research officer at Sidra Medicine and principal investigator of the study, said: "Collectively rare diseases impact up to 5.9% of the world's population, and many of these remain under-studied and lack



effective treatments. In addition, rare diseases are elevated across the Mena and GCC populations, and studies like this help us understand the genetic architecture driving these conditions, which speeds up diagnosis times and allows us to explore avenues for personalised therapies in the future."

The study established a comprehensive catalogue of disease mutations stratified by genetic ancestries, includ-

ing the major groups of Peninsular Arabs, General Arabs, Persian Arabs and African Arabs; making it the largest such collection of genomes and clinical data to be investigated in a Middle Eastern population to date.

Co-first authors and postdoctoral fellows, Dr Waleed Aamer and Dr Al-jazi al-Maraghi from Sidra Medicine said: "The study represents a big step forward as it provides a comprehensive

assessment of genetic diseases among the Qatari population. This is also the first time we have looked into the impact of consanguinity at such scale which showed variations between Qataris with regard to risk of genetic diseases."

Dr Younes Mokrab, director of Population and Genomics Medicine and a joint corresponding author added: "Using genetic variation patterns, we were able to delineate clusters of sub-populations having common ancestry, representing the wider region of the Middle East. This technique allowed us to study the well characterised cohort from Qatar Biobank and make the findings in terms of markers of genetic risk and founder mutations actionable for millions of people in the region and beyond."

Dr Hamdi Mbarek, manager of Qatar Genome Research Consortium, commented: "This research underscores the crucial role of genetic insights in informing tailored therapies and effective public health planning, not only for Qatar but also for the wider region?"



# Qatar-Bangladesh ties based on co-operation, fruitful partnerships

Bilateral relations between Qatar and Bangladesh are progressing at a steady pace with co-operation and fruitful partnerships.

The two countries are linked by deep ties, with a common history, culture, religion, and values.

The official visit carried out by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh comes as part of His Highness the Amir's Asian tour.

During the visit, His Highness the Amir will meet with Bangladesh President Mohamed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed to discuss bilateral relations.

Diplomatic relations between Qatar and Bangladesh date back to the 1970s, with Qatar opening its embassy in Dhaka on January 15, 1980, while Bangladesh opened its embassy in Doha on December 29, 1981.

Co-operation between the two countries takes place in a wide range of fields, including economic, artistic, commercial, investment, and the employment of the Bangladeshi workforce in Qatar, in addition to co-operation in the fields of education, tourism, culture, sports, and human resources development.

To achieve greater co-operation between the two countries, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Doha in May last year to participate in the 3rd Qatar Economic Forum (QEF), where she was received at the Amiri Diwan by His Highness the Amir.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of

Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also held a meeting with Sheikh Hasina on the sidelines of the 3rd QEF.

In her speech before the Potential of Trade and Investment in Bangladesh Forum, held in Doha in March last year with the participation of the Qatar Chamber (QC), the Qatari Businessmen Association (QBA), and the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC), Sheikh Hasina called on Qatari businesspersons and investors to invest in her country.

She indicated that Bangladesh offers tremendous incentives and facilities for investors, affirming the strong performance of the Bangladeshi economy and the significant growth of the GDP despite the effects of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic on the global economy.

HE the QBA Chairman Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani said that the forum represented an opportunity to learn about the investment opportunities available in Bangladesh.

In March last year the QFC took part in the Bangladesh Investment Summit on *Trade and Investment potentials in Bangladesh*, held in Doha, which showcased potential investment opportunities in Bangladesh.

In his keynote speech, QFC chief executive Yousef Mohamed al-Jaida said: "Bangladesh and Qatar have been enjoying a healthy economic relationship for over four decades, which has significantly grown in recent years."

"This is evidenced in the exponential

growth of the two nations' trade volume rising from QR948mn in 2017 to more than QR10bn in 2022," he said.

In September 2018, the QFC officially welcomed the Bangladesh Forum Qatar (BFQ) as a registered business council on the QFC platform.

As a business council, the BFQ will play a key role in facilitating bilateral investment between Qatar and Bangladesh.

The BFQ is a non-profit business council aimed at promoting the continued growth and development of trade and investment between the two countries.

Within the context of the economic relations between the two countries, the "Made in Bangladesh" exhibition organised by the BFQ kicked off in January 2020 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

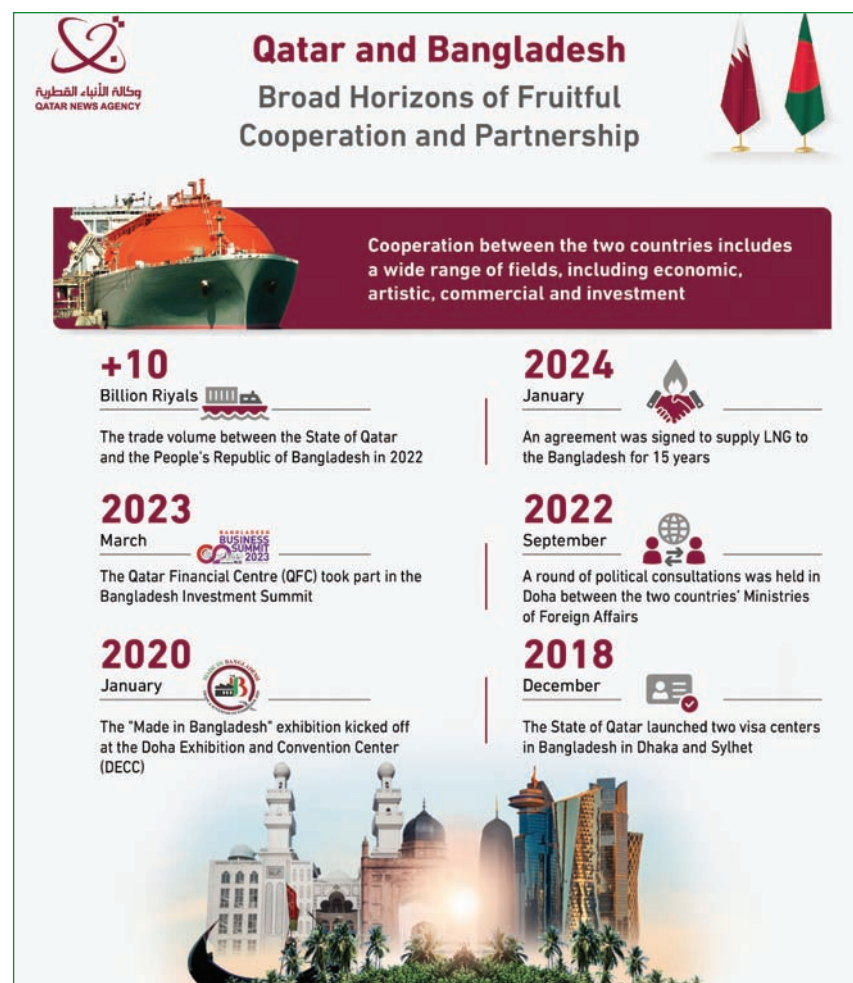
The three-day exhibition brought together 100 companies covering 18 major sectors in Bangladesh.

Qatar is the largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Bangladesh.

There are a number of agreements between the two parties in this regard, the most recent of which was signed in January between QatarEnergy and Excelerate Energy to supply Bangladesh with LNG for 15 years from January 2026.

There is also an agreement between the two parties signed in June last year to supply LNG to the Bangladesh Oil, Gas & Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla), to be delivered to the ports of Bangladesh as of January 2026, for 15 years.

Within the context of the interest in



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Cooperation between the two countries includes a wide range of fields, including economic, artistic, commercial and investment

- +10** Billion Riyats  
The trade volume between the State of Qatar and the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 2022
- 2024** January  
An agreement was signed to supply LNG to the Bangladesh for 15 years
- 2023** March  
The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) took part in the Bangladesh Investment Summit
- 2022** September  
A round of political consultations was held in Doha between the two countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs
- 2020** January  
The "Made in Bangladesh" exhibition kicked off at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC)
- 2018** December  
The State of Qatar launched two visa centers in Bangladesh in Dhaka and Sylhet

labour affairs, in December 2018, Qatar launched two visa centres in Bangladesh, in the capital Dhaka and in the city of Sylhet, as part of Qatar's efforts to facilitate and simplify the procedures for bringing workers to work in Qatar.

Bangladesh is located in the southeast of Asia and is bordered by India on all sides except the far southeast, where Myanmar borders it.

It has an area of more than 147,000sq km and a population exceeding 174mn. It is called the land of rivers because it is home to more than 57 transboundary rivers.

In recent years, Bangladesh has succeeded in rising as an economic power.

In 2019, Sheikh Hasina wrote an article in which she said that in addition to self-sufficiency, Bangladesh is now the fourth-largest producer of rice, the second-largest producer of jute, the fourth-largest producer of mangoes, the fifth-largest producer of vegetables, and the fourth-largest producer of inbound fisheries.

Bangladesh aims to become a developed country by 2040 and has established around 100 economic zones to attract foreign investment. - QNA

## NHRC chairperson affirms robust relationships with Asia

Qatar National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Chairperson Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah has said that the NHRC shares robust relationships with its counterparts in the labour-exporting countries, including the Philippines, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

She said that such relationships would promote confidence in Qatar's labour market.

Al-Attiyah said the independence of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) from governments is a factor in fostering the strong labour

market, as such institutions monitor the states' obligations to respect and protect human rights.

She pointed out that there must be an integrated system in all labour markets to access justice and that Qatar possesses administrations and commissions that support and enhance this system.

The NHRC, al-Attiyah said, is one of the key mechanisms that help workers access equity and justice, as it receives appeals and complaints and works to address them in collaboration with the competent authorities.

The official stressed that this mission helps promote confidence in the labour market, adding that since its inception, the NHRC has been engaging representatives of various communities to provide legal information to workers.

Al-Attiyah added that the NHRC's recent visits to the labour-exporting countries were aimed at engaging with counterpart institutions, civil society institutions and labour unions in those countries to further discuss issues of shared concern. - QNA



NHRC Chairperson Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah during the interview with the QNA.



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# Amir's Bangladesh visit 'of utmost significance'

QNA  
Dhaka

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Bangladesh is all-important and comes "at a time when Bangladesh and Qatar are experiencing one of the best times of their bilateral relations", said Bangladesh Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Hasan Mahmud.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the minister added that Bangladesh views the visit with utmost significance, especially since this is His Highness the Amir's first state visit to Dhaka.

Officials are keen for it to be successful by all standards, Mahmud said adding: "We are confident this visit will bring Bangladesh and Qatar closer than ever."

"We regard our relations with Qatar as a key one. There has been a steady growth of bilateral, manpower, energy, aviation, trade and defence co-operation between our countries," Mahmud said, hailing Qatar's great contribution to the energy sector by being the biggest supplier of LNG for Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh and Qatar enjoy visa free regimes in Diplomatic and Official passports, which demonstrate the level of warmth and trust between the countries," he said adding "our relations with Qatar are friendly and growing steadily."

The field of manpower is one of the most important areas of bilateral co-operation since the seventies of the last century, Mahmud said. "Qatar has attracted more than 800,000 Bangladeshi workers since 1970s and become the fifth largest destination for Bangladeshi workers," he said adding Doha now hosts around 350,000

Bangladeshi expatriate workers who boost the economic prosperity in the homeland through remittance earnings.

Mahmud expressed his pride in Bangladeshi citizens' contribution to the growth and development of Qatar through their "hard work and dedication", extending thanks to the Qatar for its care for the Bangladeshi community and its appreciation for its continued contributions to development.

Commenting on the huge prospects for boosting bilateral relations given the fast growing co-operation in areas of trade and defence, Mahmud said Dhaka aspires to "elevate the status of the relationship to Comprehensive Economic Partnership".

"Our other priorities are food security, environment, health, legal and consular matters. We see that we can embark into mutually beneficial collaborations in those field and we are in the process of signing a number of agreements/MoUs aimed at this," he said.

Bangladesh's strong desire and willingness to upgrade multi-sector bilateral ties with Qatar is clearly manifested in the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's two consecutive visits to Qatar in 2023 and her bilateral meetings with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassem al-Thani.

"The highest-level visits always create opportunities to advance Bangladesh-Qatar relations. This is the principal mechanism where both countries can participate in varied conversation on multiple sectors," Mahmud said.

He added the two countries are capitalising on effective mechanisms like the Foreign Office Con-

sultations (FOC), Joint working Group (JWG) on Manpower and the Joint Committee on Investment. These mechanisms serve as "long-term frameworks of greater co-operation in political, economic, energy, security, and human resource fields," he added.

All these mechanisms support bilateral co-operation in areas of manpower, trade, energy and food security, and boost Qatari investment in SEZs and hi-tech parks of Bangladesh, leading to a true partnership, especially at the economic level, Mahmud said.

Commenting on Qatar's proac-

tive and globally-recognised mediation efforts, Mahmud said "Doha has always demonstrated its soft power and proved its presence as a major and important player in the Middle East region".

"It has always used its regional influence and diplomatic leverage by mediating in conflicts and has been globally recognised and widely appreciated. We all are aware of Qatar's successful track record of mediations.

"The war in Gaza has spotlighted the high-profile efforts of Qatar to mediate a truce between Israel and Hamas and to negotiate deals

to free hostages as well as evacuate foreign nationals from Gaza".

Mahmud expressed his country's appreciation for Qatar's pragmatic and practical approach to global politics and its efforts and influence in mediating the Palestine cause. "We will be following closely and hoping for progress in this intensified diplomacy."

Mahmud expressed his country's appreciation to Qatar for assuming its responsibilities towards better development in the world and for its positive role and influence in global politics, saying: "Doha has become the hub of international conferences which reflects the Qatari decision makers will to make substantial contribution towards global peace and stability."

He added that this role played by Doha in the field of global politics shows the confidence of all other countries in Qatar and in its directions to achieve global harmony.

"It has become the hub of global negotiations and peaceful exchanges. We are very happy that a friendly state like Qatar is the centre of reaching common global understandings."

Mahmud hailed Qatar's investment of its resources for internal and global development and developing countries, especially the LDCs.

He also commended Doha's strong advocacy for strengthening the Islamic ummah.

On Bangladesh's strategies to achieve its Vision 2041, the minister noted the efforts of the incumbent government led by Sheikh Hasina to build an equality and justice-based democratic country through public welfare-oriented and well-coordinated activities in the existing reality.

"For achieving this, our prior-

ity lies with increased remittances from our overseas workers, ensuring energy security and shift to renewable energy, more trade with foreign countries and attracting increased foreign investments and cooperation for the emerging areas of Blue Economy, ICT, food security and combating adverse impacts of climate change," he said.

Dhaka has the closest relations with GCC countries thanks to the shared religious traditions, long historical bond and people-to-people ties, he said.

"This region is the preferred destination of our people with 55% of our total overseas workforce employed in GCC countries, generating 60% of our remittance inflow exceeding \$11bn-\$12bn annually.

"We have traded around \$6.96bn with GCC countries in FY 2022-23. A significant percentage of our energy imports come from the GCC countries, which has kept the economy running," he stressed.

Mahmud stressed that his country's historical and religious connection with the Middle East prompts it to strengthen its relations with the region. "I feel that our future is intertwined with this region of the world," he said.

Speaking on the ongoing unrest in the Middle East region, he highlighted Israel's genocidal war against Gaza, ignoring global consensus and condemnation.

The region will not know peace and stability without the Palestinians obtaining their rights, and there will be no peace in the world without peace in the Middle East, he said.

The minister called on the international community to rein in the Middle East conflict and create a violence-free common future in the region.

Chopard

## Ice Cube Ethical chic



With Ice Cube, Chopard offers a contemporary vision of jewellery through pure lines and minimalist, almost architectural shapes drawing on the aesthetic perfection of the cube to sculpt the silhouette. Bringing a sparkle to everyday life, this gender-blending talisman jewellery can be taken anywhere and is lit up by the slightest sunbeam. It also embodies Chopard's perpetual quest for responsible luxury, as ethical gold shines on these models through the work of specialised artisans who enhance every surface of the material. The collection now welcomes original ring, earring and pendant variations in all three gold colours: jewels to collect like tiny treasures!

With Ice Cube, Chopard invented a jewellery design based on the volumes of the cube. By aligning small ice cubes with reinvented facets, the Manufacture thus successfully appropriated a motif featuring perfect geometry and graphic lines to create rings, bracelets, earrings and pendants that are as beautiful to look at as they are pleasant to wear.

### Minimalist aesthetics

Ice Cube offers jewellery that is pared-down, easy to wear and match. With its interplay of parallel and perpendicular lines, the collection takes on an architectural dimension, as the jewellery moves beyond its ornamental status to become an integral part of the wearer's look. Its square shapes endow it with an androgynous identity easily lending itself to feminine or masculine wear. That's what Ice Cube is all about: precious objects playing on jewellery-making norms.

The collection's design interprets the cube through a series of varied alignments. Until now, the rings in the collection consisted of bands formed by a succession of small gold cubes, sometimes polished and sometimes paved with diamonds. Worn solo or stacked, they shone on every finger of the hand. Rows of cubes are now lined up on the same finger, with several bands either joined or spaced apart and linked by a crossbar of cubes that preserve the jewellery's light feel.

The same process guides the shape of a pendant available in two sizes: while the smaller model is adorned with a central line of diamonds between the two rows of cubes, the larger one leaves room for a polished gadroon and sparkles just as smoothly and brightly on both men's and women's necks.

The collection also welcomes



earrings bringing an infinitely glamorous touch in three sizes ranging from large hoops to small clips.

### Jewellery expertise

Beneath the collection's apparent minimalism lies a wealth of carefully cultivated jewellery-making expertise. After almost ten years of research and development, Chopard has succeeded in perfecting the tools capable of tracing the grooves between the cubes using a diamond-tipped graver. Thanks to the intervention of a specialised artisan, the jewellery is then given chamfered corners resulting in lines that are clean-cut yet not sharp.

Ice Cube jewellery creations draw on their analogy with ice cubes through their unique way of reflecting light. Already featuring a peerless sparkle thanks to the sharp cut of the diamond, the surface of each timepiece is polished until artisans can see their own reflection: this perfectionist approach is known as 'mirror polishing'. By dint of patient, meticulous care and using different tools - felt brushes, cotton wheels, polishing lathes and burnishers - the polishing artisan hones the surface of the gold to remove any roughness or residue, until the result is perfect. Exuding ultra-contemporary charm, this collection is a testament to the Maison's attention to detail.

Dotted with diamonds hand-set in the Manufacture's workshops, the collection's cubes take on a frosted appearance. The brilliant facets of the polished gold cubes are complemented by those of the diamonds, embracing every ray of light and creating an infinite play on reflections - like tiny crystals gently caressed by sunbeams.

### Ethical chic

A pioneer in responsible luxury, Chopard was among the first watchmakers and jewellers to commit to improving social and environmental practices for sourcing its raw materials. As early as 2017, as part of its Journey to Sustainable Luxury, it made Ice Cube its first fine jewellery collection exclusively crafted from ethical gold, paving the way for the use of ethical gold across all the Manufacture's watch and jewellery creations from the following year onwards. One of the rare Maisons to have had its own precious metals smelting workshop for several decades, Chopard is able to control its value chain in order to offer creations that reflect a more sustainable approach to our stewardship of the Earth. The Ice Cube collection offers vivid proof that it is possible to combine ethics and aesthetics in meaningful jewellery.



# Amir's landmark visit to strengthen bilateral ties, says Bangladesh premier

QNA  
Dhaka

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed stressed her country warmly welcomes the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

She described the visit as a landmark in strengthening bilateral relations and taking them to a new horizon.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), the prime minister said: "The government and people of Bangladesh are looking forward to welcoming His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh. I hope the visit of His Highness the Amir will represent a landmark in the path of strengthening relations between the two brotherly countries and will also open-up new areas of co-operation between the two nations."

She added the visit of His Highness the Amir this year to Bangladesh would be very significant as both countries are celebrating the anniversary of 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations.

"The 50th anniversary of establishing Bangladesh-Qatar ties is a milestone event in our bilateral relations," she said pointing out that the two countries should work more closely to undertake mutually beneficial programmes, actions, and initiatives on this occasion "not only to exhibit the strength of our relations but also to advance this important partnership."

She stated that during the visit of His Highness the Amir, the two countries will discuss a broad range of areas and sectors, including economic and technical co-operation, trade and investment, defence co-operation, energy co-operation, employment of Bangladeshi skilled workforce in Qatar, climate change, education, charitable engagements, immigration, tourism, culture and sports, ports, and human resource development.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed said some agreements and MoUs will be signed during the visit which would pave the way to take the relations between the two countries to a new horizon, in addition to exchanging views on the most important regional and international developments of common concern, with a focus on issues such as the Palestinian cause.

She praised the dynamic and visionary leadership of His Highness the Amir for providing a high standard of living for Qatari people, achieving one of the highest per capita incomes and launching the Qatar National Vision-2030 to

transform the country into an advanced society capable of sustaining its development.

"Under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, Qatar has witnessed exemplary success in development, diplomacy, sports, international and regional peace and stability," she said.

The Bangladesh premier hailed Qatar's continued successes in hosting international events, including sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup 2022, the most distinguished edition in history, and the Asian Football Cup 2023.

She also pointed to Doha's hosting of the International Horticultural Exhibition (Expo 2023 Doha), considering it "another strong evidence of Qatar's success story".

She expressed happiness at her country's contribution, through manpower, to Qatar's journey towards the World Cup 2022 and other sporting tournaments and international events.

"Bangladeshi workers made significant contributions to the construction of state-of-the-art stadiums and other infrastructure, in addition to the participation of a good number of Bangladeshi volunteers during tournaments particularly the World Cup and the Asian Cup," she said stressing "We will continue our co-operation and contribution to sport events that Doha will host in the future."

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974, Bangladesh and Qatar have been maintaining excellent bilateral ties, she said, adding relations have witnessed visible progress in recent years through regular bilateral visits, an increase in manpower export, substantive engagements, a common position on regional and international issues, and close co-operation in the international arena to promote peace, stability, and development.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed pointed to her visits to Doha in 2023 and her meeting with His Highness the Amir, saying: "Existing friendly relations have strengthened further after my two successive visits in March and May 2023, during which I met His Highness the Amir and discussed many important issues of common interest."

"Qatar and Bangladesh consider each other as friendly countries and important development partners in materialising Dhaka's Vision 2041 and Qatar's Vision 2030", she said noting Bangladesh's opening up to the region through newer forms of connectivity and co-operation matrix is leading to newer economics.

She stressed that the ultimate objective is to strengthen the bonds of fraternity and friendship

between the two friendly countries and the peoples further. This would elevate bilateral relations to greater heights, she said adding the exchange of visits creates an opportunity to take the relations to a new height.

The prime minister drew attention to the areas of bilateral co-operation that witnessed growth over the past years. These included co-operation in labour, energy, defence, trade, culture, education, and other, many of which were framed in memorandums of understanding and joint co-operation agreements.

"Bilateral trade exceeded \$2bn during the FY 2021-2022 and is on the rise. The relationship is fast moving towards an economic partnership," the prime minister said adding "I will say we have achieved a lot bilaterally but the better part of co-operation is still to come."

She pointed out that despite the diverse levels of economic development, there is yet room and opportunities in areas like trade and commerce, investment, education, agriculture, and climate change "where both countries can engage through so many new forms and modalities".

Co-operation with Qatar in the field of energy is another milestone in the process of strong bilateral relations between the two countries, she said adding: "Qatar remains our top priority for LNG imports. We expect that through a working environment based on good faith and effective communication, our co-operation and support will continue to grow, not only in the LNG sector but also in other areas."

"As a relatively cleaner fuel source, LNG is a priority to meet the increasing energy demand. Importing LNG will help fulfil

the national gas grid network established across the country," she stressed.

"We hope to overcome the upcoming challenges in meeting our energy needs with the support of QatarEnergy, especially as the world faces an energy crisis in the volatile situation arising from the Russia-Ukraine war," the prime minister said.

She praised Qatar's commitment to international co-operation and its active membership in a number of international and regional bodies such as the United Nations, the Arab League, the Gulf Co-operation Council, the OIC, and other organisations.

"This keenness in enhancing international co-operation is visible and clear in Qatar's National Vision 2030 which highlights the role of Qatar on the economic, political, and cultural levels especially within the framework of the Gulf Co-operation Council, the Arab League, and the OIC," she said.

The prime minister also praised Qatar's eminent position in the region for its political, economic, and cultural openness, which contributes significantly to strengthening relations with various countries in the region and beyond.

She stressed the common values and principles of Qatar and Bangladesh in their international relations, saying: "Both Bangladesh and Qatar focus on the consolidation of peace and stability, as prescribed by their respective constitutions. It is based on the principles of encouraging the settlement of international disputes through peaceful means, supporting the right of people to self-determination, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and co-operation with peace-loving nations."

She added the two countries



Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed speaks to QNA during an interview yesterday.

remain deeply committed to the UN charter and the principles of the OIC in their common pursuit of peace, development, and justice globally.

"Both Bangladesh and Qatar share common values on many issues. Both Bangladesh and Qatar contribute significantly to UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding operations/activities and act as mediators to bridge differences among the conflicting groups to establish peace, security, and well-being of the people."

She continued: "With these similarities, I would say that Qatar has established itself as the world's main mediator, leaving a clear imprint on the map of negotiations and peace talks, and settling crises and disputes. Qatar has played decisive roles in strengthening international peace and security through successful mediations on many issues that had a significant impact on world peace, including its efforts in reaching a humanitarian pause between Israel and Hamas which resulted in the release of a number of hostages."

The premier also expressed her high appreciation for Qatar's support to Dhaka on the Rohingya refugee issue. She hoped this support would continue for the early return of the refugees to their homeland.

She pointed out that Bangladesh had achieved robust economic growth between 6% and 7% over the past two decades and this has been one of the highest in the world.

Bangladesh is on the right track to graduate from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in 2026 and become a model of development for other countries, she said.

Bangladesh's export volume is around \$55bn and the country received foreign direct investments of \$2.8bn in 2022, she said adding it is among the worlds top 10 remittance-earning countries.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed said Bangladesh is now the world's 35th largest economy "with a GDP of \$460bn. "We are projected to become the 24th largest by the first half of the 2030s."

The prime minister pointed to government plans to make Bangladesh a fully technologically smart nation by 2041, as well as efforts to promote trade and business for the foreign private sector and develop investment systems as "Bangladesh offers one of the

most liberal investment regimes in the region."

The incentives being offered include tax holidays, concessionary duty on machinery import, allowing 100% foreign equity, profit repatriation, among others.

She added the government is setting up 100 special economic zones with co-ordinated facilities. There are so far five country-specific economic zones in the making, she said while calling on Qatari businessmen and investors to invest in Bangladesh.

She stressed the government's openness to investment proposals in the country's infrastructure and logistics sectors.

The prime minister also expressed her country's desire for Qatari investments in the energy sector, including renewable energy and to benefit from Qatar's expertise in offshore gas exploration systems, and co-operation in the field of agriculture and agricultural manufacturing.

"We have plans to set up three special tourism zones, where Qatar can engage in both real estate and hospitality sectors," she said.

Speaking on developments in the Middle East, she stressed that Bangladesh and Qatar share the same position on the Palestine issue, condemn the genocide and urge for an immediate ceasefire and quick delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Bangladesh premier hailed Qatar efforts to bring peace to Gaza.

Qatar "has been highly lauded by the international community," she said.

The premier stressed Dhaka's firm position rejecting the Israeli occupation and calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"As a party to the Genocide Convention, Bangladesh calls on all states to respect their obligations under the convention to prevent and punish the crime of genocide," she said.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed concluded by reiterating the importance of the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to advancing relations, enhancing areas of co-operation between the two countries, and facilitating the exchange of views on the latest developments at the regional and international levels, in addition to discussing issues and topics of common interest.

# Amir visit to step up co-operation, stresses Parliament Speaker

The speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, stressed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh represents a milestone in close relations between the two friendly countries, which extend to 50 years.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Chaudhury said the visit of His Highness the Amir will be a landmark in the path of strengthening ties between the two countries and will step up the existing bilateral co-operation and open new areas, including parliamentary affairs.

"Bangladesh and Qatar have been enjoying excellent bilateral relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974. We are delighted that we are welcoming His Highness the Amir at a time when the two friendly countries are celebrating 50 years of diplomatic ties," she said.

"As the bilateral relations between the two countries are based on mutual respect, shared values, common religious ground, shared culture and tradition, the parliament will boost these shared values; the upcoming visit of His Highness the Amir is expected to contribute towards further accelerating the pace of co-operation between the two legislatures as well," she added.

Chaudhury pointed out that bilateral relations had progressed remarkably in recent years, thanks to the bilateral visits, including that of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed's two visits to Doha in 2023. This gave a impetus to the existing friendly rela-

tions, she said adding the growing number of Bangladeshi workforce in Qatar, convergent stances on regional and international issues, and close co-operation to promote global peace, stability and development also helped boost ties.

"We are gradually advancing to increase bilateral trade and investments by identifying sectors where we have comparative advantage. We are encouraging private sectors, businessmen from both countries to increase their business contacts and thus explore areas whether they can do business or invest," she said.

Chaudhury highlighted the keenness of the Bangladesh par-

liament to develop and strengthen relations with Qatar by enacting legislation and laws that facilitate communication and co-operation between the two nations.

"The constitution of Bangladesh gives the parliament powers to enact laws. To elevate the bilateral relations between the two countries to a newer heights and to strengthen people to people contact, the parliament may adopt laws which facilitates such achievements," Chaudhury said.

More interaction and visits between lawmakers of both countries will pave the way for a better understanding of the existing bilateral relations, she said add-

ing multi-level contacts between policy makers would bear positive impacts on boosting people-to-people relations.

Qatar and Bangladesh consider each other as friendly countries and important development partners in materialising their future visions; it's high time that they can formulate a mechanism to enhance bilateral cooperation in areas of parliamentary affairs, Chaudhury said.

She added the two countries should aim to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in this field to achieve tangible outcomes through activities such as thematic conferences and co-operation on topics and issues of interest to the parliament of Bangladesh and Qatar's Shura Council.

She highlighted the importance of launching a joint committee for parliamentary affairs to enhance appropriate co-ordination both at regional and international forums between the two institutions in light of both countries' mutual interest in achieving global peace, transparency and development.

She indicated that the cooperation between the two countries have witnessed progress in the fields of culture and sports, as well as in energy and defence.

Doha and Dhaka continue to co-operate in several areas at the level of multilateral relations, she pointed out.

Conducting regular seminars, conferences in areas of mutual interest and regular bilateral visits under a concrete framework will eventually create regular and trusted channels for new commu-

nications between the two countries, she added.

Chaudhury pointed to the parliamentary co-operation between the two nations at the international level in light of their common vision of global issues. "Bangladesh believes in peaceful settlement of international disputes, supporting the right of people to self-determination, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and co-operation with peace-loving nations," she said, stressing the paramount role of the parliament in these issues.

She highlighted Bangladesh's deep commitment to the UN charter and the principles of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in their common pursuit of peace, development, and justice in the world.

Chaudhury called for a just international position on the issues of Palestine and Rohingya, stressing that Bangladesh and Qatar have convergent views on terrorism and militancy, climate change, disarmament and proliferation, gender parity and welfare of the Muslim nation.

Chaudhury congratulated Qatar for its nomination as Vice President of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) for 2024-2025.

She said that with the strong leadership of Qatar, APA can play a more effective role in international platforms, being the second largest parliamentary group in the world after the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

She urged the APA to advocate the rule of law and judicial empowerment, harmonious devel-

opment through democracy and shoulder its responsibilities in battling challenges facing Asia.

Chaudhury pointed out that Bangladesh believes that under the leadership of Qatar, APA would concentrate on addressing issues regarding climate change, corruption, and crimes against humanity in various regions in Asia, as is the case in Gaza, Myanmar, and other volatile areas, as well as continue working on promoting and for the protection of rights of migrant workers in Asia, poverty eradication, and green finance.

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of climate change and has been a forerunner in climate change adaptation and disaster risk preparedness, she said adding "the Bangladesh parliament had passed a motion declaring a "planetary emergency" and calling for quick action by the international community, including the United Nations, to tackle the effects of climate change."

Chaudhury underscored the role of parliamentarians in facing political, economic, security, and climate global challenges, adding she believes that the role of the parliamentarians is extremely crucial to ensure peace and stability globally.

She urged parliaments across Asia to take a strong stand on addressing existing challenges unequivocally and advocate for tangible action against climate change poverty, terrorism, international financial instability, political interference, drugs, and human trafficking among other challenges plaguing the continent. (QNA)





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**GULF TIMES**

# AI a 'fundamental change in the news ecosystem'

Artificial intelligence (AI) is shaking up journalism and in the short term will cause "a fundamental change in the news ecosystem", media expert David Caswell told AFP.

A former employee at Yahoo! and BBC News Labs, the British broadcaster's innovation wing, Caswell spoke as industry leaders gathered in the Italian city of Perugia to discuss the biggest questions facing their trade.

**How do you see the journalism of the future?**

"We don't know. But what we are trying to do is to understand all of the possibilities or as many of the possibilities as we can. But I think there are some things that are becoming clearer: one is the fact that more media will probably be created and originated and sourced by machines. So machines will do more gathering in a lot of journalism, will do more of the producing, the audio, the video and the text, and will create the kind of experiences of consumption that consumers have.

That is a very fundamental change in the information ecosystem in general, and the news ecosystem in particular. This is structurally different than the one that we're in now. We don't know how long it's going to take - it may be two, four, seven years. I think it's going to be faster because there is very little friction.

People don't need news devices, new hardware, they don't need a lot of money as producers, they don't need technical expertise. All those things that were barriers in the previous generation of AI are no longer barriers, thanks to generative AI?

**What are the latest developments underway in newsrooms?**

"One class of development is in new tools that enables AI workflow, for example JP Politikens in Denmark focused on making their existing products and activities more efficient. But it is also a basis for transitioning their products, their workforce, the activities into this new AI world. There is a tool that Google has built - the code name is 'Genesis' - that they are testing with publishers. Some publishers are building their own. There will be platform versions of these tools.

**'+AI is unignorable force that journalism will have to organise itself around'**

These are tools, you bring your news gathering on the left side: your PDF, transcripts, audios, videos...roughly. It helps you do things like analysis, summaries, turn into scripts, audios. They're orchestrated by the tool. What the journalist is doing is coordinating the tool, verifying the content all the way through to the end, and editing. The job becomes using the tool, like an editorial manager of this AI tool.

It technically works. But that's a different thing than putting it in a newsroom in a large operation and use it day in day out, months in, months out. That's a big question: is it going to be enthusiastically adopted, to be used in a way that isn't very productive in the long run or will that enhance the productivity of newsroom dramatically?"

**What is the cost?**

"In the last decade it was very expensive. It was very difficult: You need the data, you had to build a data warehouse, have an enterprise deal with Amazon or Google cloud, you had to hire data scientists, to have a team of data engineers, it was a major investment. Only the BBC, the New York Times, this level of organisations could really afford it.

That's not true with generative AI. You can run news workflow through interfaces that you pay 20 dollars a month. You don't need to be a coder. All you need is motivation, enthusiasm and curiosity.

There's lots of people in news organisations that would not have been involved in AI in the past because they did not have the technical background and now they can just use it. It's a much more open form of AI: both smaller newsrooms can do a lot with, and more junior individuals in more established newsrooms can do a lot with. I think it's a good thing, but it's also a disruptive thing. Often the internal politics in newsrooms are disrupted by that?"

**At what stage of AI are we at?**

"AI has been around since the 1950s. But AI for practical purposes appeared with ChatGPT. It's going to be quite a while - years - before we really understand how to use them for valuable things. There are so many things that you can do with them. The risk to journalism is that other organisations, start-ups, tech companies will do things in news faster than the news world itself. Lots of start ups have no editorial component at all. They are swiping the content of news organisations, some are covering niches: they are monitoring press releases, social media channels, PDF from reports?"

**What are the risks?**

"Journalism has not been doing well for the last 10 or 15 years, there hasn't really been a credible vision of the future for how this is going to play out just in the social media world. What AI does (is) it gives news organisations a chance to change that situation, to participate in a new ecosystem. It's good to be optimistic, getting engaged, exploring, having projects, experiments, maybe changing your mindset, that's positive.

As Jelani Cobb, Dean of Columbia School of Journalism, says: '+AI is unignorable force that journalism will have to organise itself around! It's not going to adapt itself to journalism. - AFP

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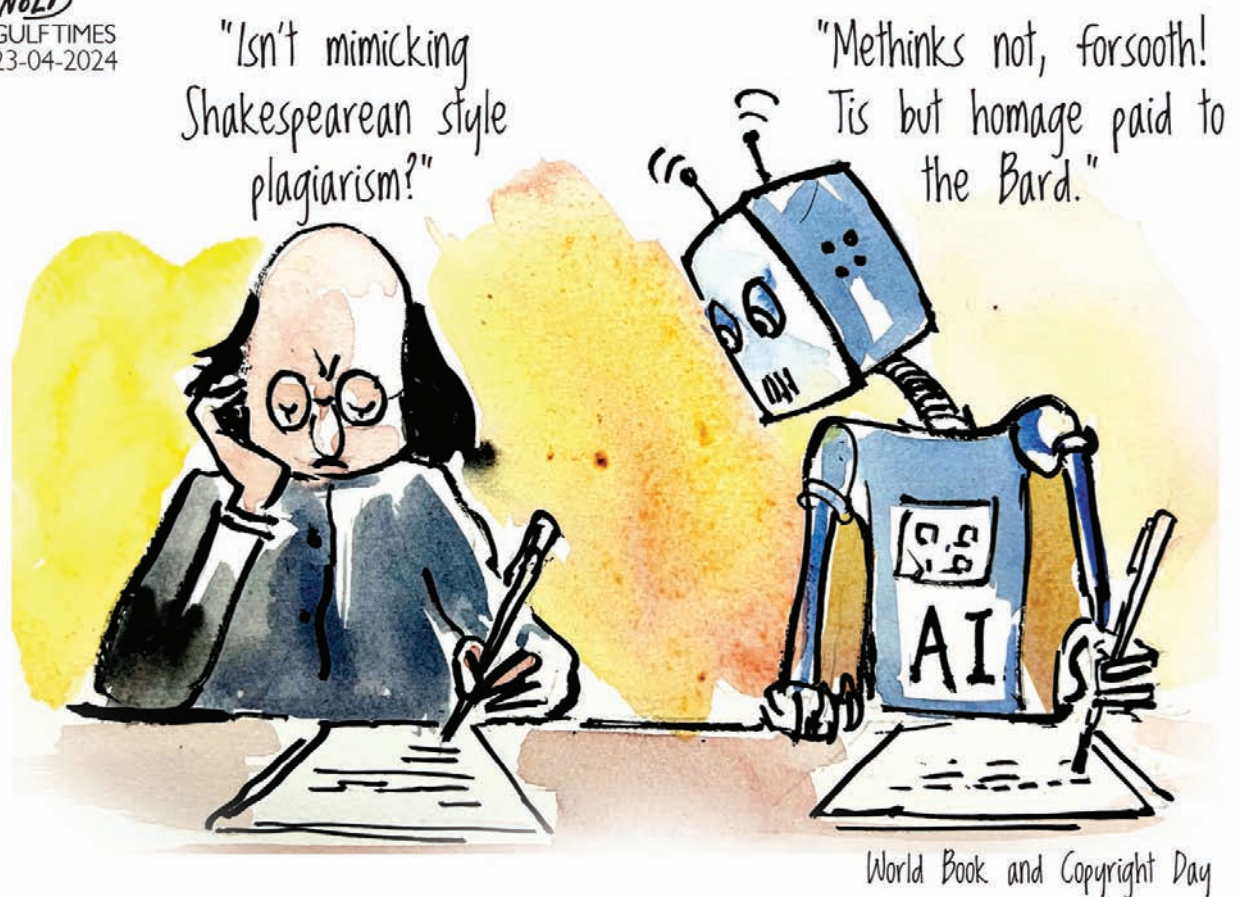
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World Book and Copyright Day

# Gender-neutral fintech isn't working for women

By Emmanuel Nyirinkindi and Jessica Schnabel  
Washington, DC

Financial technology (fintech) has often been touted as a powerful enabler of financial inclusion. And over the past several years, the fintech industry has enabled important advances in access to financial services - including digital savings, credit, insurance, payments, and remittances - for previously underserved populations. But when it comes to women's inclusion, we have a long way to go.

To find out how fintech firms are delivering on the promise of women's financial inclusion, and which practices work, we asked industry experts. A new study by the International Finance Corporation, based on a survey of 114 fintech firms from 17 countries, captures what they had to say. The findings are telling.

Although 59% of the fintech firms included in the study collect sex-disaggregated customer data, only 32% of firms use this information to tailor the design and delivery of financial services for women. Instead, firms tend to take a "gender-neutral" approach, which does not directly address how to reach women at scale. Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that for a majority of fintech lenders, women constitute less than 25% of their business customers.

Paradoxically, the report also found that executives in the majority of fintech firms considered women to be valuable customers: more loyal, less risky, and with better repayment rates compared to men. The IFC study results affirm this assessment: while only a small percentage of the surveyed fintech firms tailor products and services to women, most of those who do (63%) said that women customers generate higher customer lifetime value than men.



These firms can offer valuable models for others. Consider the Colombian digital lender Juancho Te Presta: recognising that women have higher loan-approval rates and lower delinquent-loan rates, the company began using data analysis to tailor products and credit conditions to meet women's needs and preferences. For example, it piloted women-only credit products that cut instalment costs by about 15%.

Similarly, mfarmPay - a fintech firm operating in Ghana and Kenya - noticed that women farmers display better loan-repayment patterns, and that their involvement in agriculture over time tends to be more consistent than that of men, who might switch to other activities. So, the company began to consider gender-related factors alongside geodata in credit scoring, thereby narrowing the lending gap between financial institutions and smallholder farmers. The strong presence of women in mfarmPay's management team helps the firm to identify gender-related constraints and informs product design and features.

The India-based firm Indifi developed

short-term small loans to help women-led micro, small, and medium-size enterprises to build credit histories. An Egyptian fintech firm has developed a mobile wallet solution that enables the secure and instant delivery of monthly social transfers, thereby helping women to save time and travel costs - and avoid possible harassment.

There are also fintech firms that use alternate data sources to generate credit histories for women customers. Others are providing digital literacy and business training to women alongside financial services, hiring gender-diverse cohorts of agents, and working with telecoms companies to provide targeted financial services to women farmers. And yet, overall, the fintech industry is still missing the opportunity to accelerate financial inclusion for women.

The business case for action is clear. Women comprise an enormous market segment with growing economic and social power. Moreover, they tend to show higher customer loyalty, more financial discipline, better loan performance, and stickier deposits. Women's financial inclusion leads to job creation, higher productivity, and faster GDP growth. There are even links between women's inclusion and climate-conscious business and investment decisions.

When it comes to understanding, valuing, and investing in women's inclusion, the fintech industry is not moving fast enough. And speed is essential: without drastic acceleration of women's financial inclusion, gender bias may become hard-coded into the digital financial-services industry.

The good news is that, as a relatively nascent industry, fintech can still build gender inclusion into its design and delivery. As our study shows, a number of fintechs have already discovered the potential of gender-inclusive design. That must become the norm, not the exception.

- Project Syndicate

# Social (In)Equality



By Professor Dr Khalid al-Jufairi

Can there exist a society without social inequality? The answer lies in understanding the causes of the unequal positioning of society's members. Sociology, as a discipline of study alone, lacks a single universal explanation for this phenomenon. There are varying methodological schools and theories that interpret social inequality differently. For example, social functionalism explains inequality based on the diverse social roles played by the different layers, classes, and communities. Functioning: the development of society is possible only through

division of labour, where each social group provides a solution for the corresponding critical and integral path of the asked tasks - some members are engaged in the production of material goods, others create spiritual values, the third controls...etc. Essentially, a functioning society requires an optimal management of all kinds of human activity. As some tasks are deemed more important than others, the social hierarchy is invariably with those who provide overall

direction and management of society. Only they can maintain and ensure social unity by creating the necessary conditions for the successful implementation of other functions.

The discourse of social inequality in the principal functionality is fraught with seriously dangerous subjectivist interpretation. In its economic context, the root cause of social inequality lies within the unequal relation to the distribution of wealth and property - very much aligned with Marxism.

Accordingly, the emergence of private property has led to social stratification, creating antagonistic classes. The exaggeration of private property's

role in the social stratification of society has pushed Marx and his followers to the conclusion that the only possibility to eliminate social inequality would be by establishing public ownership of the means of production.

Written history does not know of societies without social inequality. The struggle of people, parties, groups, and classes - it is a struggle for the possession of great social features, advantages and benefits.

As society evolves, its social groups develop invariably, ensuring access to the privileged and providing unequal distribution of social benefits. In other words, all societies throughout history have had a social dogma of inequality. The ancient philosopher Plato once argued that any city, no matter how small it was, is, in fact, divided into two halves - one for the poor, another for the rich, and those two halves quarrel among themselves. In essence, the unequal division of the two halves creates stratification.

Karl Marx linked social inequality with the advent of private property and the conflict

of interests within different classes and social groups. Ralf Dahrendorf similarly argued that economic and social inequalities, underlying the ongoing conflict of groups and classes along with the struggle for the redistribution of power and status, is formed as a result of the market mechanism of supply and demand regulation. Pitirim Sorokin explained the inevitability of social inequality to key factors including internal bio-psychical differences between and among people; the environment (natural and social), objectively puts individuals at a disadvantage; collective life of individuals, which requires the development of attitudes and behaviours that lead to social stratification. Therefore, social stratification translates into a hierarchy of social values, while social inequality is inevitable and reflects a historical process of societal development.

• The author is co-founder and chairman, American Center for Strategic and International Affairs, Associate Professor of International Relations and Diplomacy, and an Abshire-Inamori International Fellow. Social media platforms @khalid.aljufairi (instagram) and @khalidaljufairi (X platform)



**Amir, Marcos Jr hold meeting**

From Page 1

His Highness the Amir praised the Filipino community in Qatar and its effective contribution to the development process in the country.

During the session, the two sides discussed aspects of co-operation between the countries and ways of promoting and developing them, in addition to the most prominent regional and international issues of common concern.

The session was attended by HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, and members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir.

On the Philippine side, the session was attended by Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo, Executive Secretary of the President of the Philippines Lucas Bersamin, Secretary of Trade Alfredo Pascual, Secretary of Tourism Maria Esperanza Christina Frasco, Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga, Secretary of Energy Raphael Perpetuo Lotilla, Secretary of Presidential Communications Cheloy Garafil, and high-ranking officials.

His Highness the Amir and the president earlier held a bilateral meeting to discuss issues of common concern.

Marcos Jr hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of His Highness the Amir and the accompanying delegation.

His Highness the Amir was accorded an official reception ceremony upon arrival at the presidential palace earlier. - QNA

**Philippines sees 10,438 visitor arrivals from Qatar in 2023**

From Page 1

Aside from tourism and business events, the Philippines and Qatar also signed deals in the following areas: climate change, combating human trafficking, seafarers' welfare, sports, youth, and waiver of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and special/official passports.

Private sector leader Qatar Chamber also signed MoUs with the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

On its website, the Philippines' Presidential Communications Office reported that His Highness the Amir praised the Filipino community in Qatar, citing their "unwavering support" and "effective contribution" to the development and progress of Qatar.

In an earlier statement to the Philippine News Agency, Philippine ambassador to Qatar Lillibeth Pono said His Highness the Amir's state visit is "a strong indication of flourishing relations between our two countries".

She added: "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."

According to Pono, "the Philippines and Qatar have concluded over 20 agreements, including on investments, taxation, air services, labour, establishment of a political consultation mechanism, agriculture, as well as economic, commercial, and technical co-operation".

**Prosecution lays out 'criminal conspiracy' in historic Trump trial**AFP/Reuters  
New York

Donald Trump engaged in "election fraud" by paying hush money to an adult entertainment actress just days before the 2016 White House vote, prosecutors said yesterday at the first criminal trial of a former US president.

"This case is about a criminal conspiracy and a cover-up," Assistant District Attorney Matthew Colangelo said. "He orchestrated a criminal scheme to corrupt the 2016 presidential election."

Laying out the prosecution's case for the jury, Colangelo said Trump falsified business records to buy the silence of the actress over a 2006 encounter that could have impacted his presidential bid.

"It was election fraud, pure and simple," he said. Trump sat at the defence table with his lawyers as the prosecutor delivered his opening remarks.

The case poses substantial risks to the Republican presidential candidate, coming less than seven months before his November election rematch with

**Qatar signs MoU for road and port project with Iraq, UAE and Turkiye**

Qatar signed in Baghdad yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for joint co-operation on the Development Road Project and that for Al Faw Port between the governments of Iraq, the UAE and Turkiye, a statement from the Ministry of Transport (MoT) said.

The signing ceremony was attended by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The MoU was signed by Qatar's Minister of Transport HE Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti, Iraqi Minister of Transport Razaq Muhaibas al-Saadawi, the UAE's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Suhail Mohamed al-Mazrouei, and Turkish Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Abdulkadir Uraloglu.

The MoU is aimed at supporting economic integration among these countries, connecting the East with the West, and enhancing global trade between the countries and world countries, the statement explained.

The Development Road is a comprehensive strategic project to promote ties through the commercial exchange, industrial projects, and multiple and diverse transport lines.

The project is to create a land route and



Snapshots from the signing ceremony.

railway extending from Iraq to Turkiye and its ports.

The road and the railway within Iraq are 1,200km long for the transport of goods between Europe and the Gulf countries.

The project's investment budget stands at roughly \$17bn.

The project is to be carried out in three phases; the first to be completed in 2028, the second in 2033, and the third in 2050, the MoT statement added.

**'No ifs, no buts': Sunak vows to start Rwanda flights**Reuters/AFP  
London

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has promised to start sending asylum-seekers to Rwanda within 10-12 weeks, telling the upper house of parliament that he will force the new legislation through despite its opposition to the plan.

Sunak said the government had booked commercial charter planes and trained staff to take migrants to Rwanda, a policy he hopes will boost his Conservative Party's flagging fortunes before an election later this year.

After weeks of opposition in the House of Lords upper house which wants to introduce safeguards to the divisive legislation, Sunak said the government would force parliament to sit late into the night if necessary to get it passed.

"No ifs, no buts. These flights are going to Rwanda," Sunak told a news conference. "Enough is enough. No more prevarication. No more delay."

Tens of thousands of migrants - many fleeing wars and poverty in Africa, the Middle East and Asia - have reached Britain in recent years by crossing the English Channel in small boats on risky journeys organised by people-smuggling gangs.

Stopping the flow is a prime goal for the government, but critics say the plan to deport people to Rwanda is inhumane and that

the East African country is not a safe place.

Other European countries, including Austria and Germany, are also looking at agreements to process asylum seekers abroad.

In Britain, the move has been held up repeatedly by the unelected House of Lords.

The legislation was due yesterday to return to the House of Commons - the elected lower house - where lawmakers are expected to remove changes proposed by the Lords and then it will return to the upper chamber.

Some Labour and cross-party peers want the legislation to include safeguards for Afghans who previously helped British troops and to set up a committee to monitor asylum-seekers' safety in Rwanda.

Sunak said the government was ready to move fast as soon as the legislation was passed.

An airfield was on standby, slots were booked for flights and 500 staff were ready to escort migrants "all the way to Rwanda".

"Plans are in place. And these flights will go, come what may," he said.

Under the policy formulated two years ago, any asylum-seeker who arrives illegally in Britain will be sent to Rwanda in a scheme the government says will deter Channel crossings and smash the people smugglers' business model.

Sunak's team hope the pre-election pledge will help turn around his electoral fortunes, particularly among wavering voters who want to see a reduction in immigration.

Polls suggest his Conservative Party will be badly beaten in this year's election by Labour, which has said it will scrap the scheme if it wins power.

Labour says it will pursue a deal with the European Union to return some arrivals to mainland Europe.

Even if Sunak is successful in stopping the Lords from blocking the legislation, he may still face legal challenges.

Charities and rights groups say they would try to stop individual deportations and the trade union which represents border force staff is promising to argue the new legislation is unlawful "within days" of the first asylum-seekers being informed they will be sent to Rwanda.

"We urgently need the UK government to start treating refugees with decency and stop trying to send them away to an unsafe future in Rwanda," Lucy Gregg, acting head of Advocacy at Freedom from Torture, said in a statement. "Along with survivors of torture and the support of thousands of caring people up and down the country, we will unite to show airlines that we won't tolerate them flying in the face of human decency."

Care4Calais, a charity that supports asylum-seekers, called the plan an unworkable and cruel "gimmick".

The National Audit Office, a public spending watchdog, has estimated it will cost the UK £540m (\$665m) to deport the first 300 migrants - nearly £2m per person.

**Russia takes out TV tower in Ukraine's Kharkiv**Reuters/AFP  
Kyiv

A Russian missile strike that broke in half a 240m television tower in Kharkiv yesterday is part of a deliberate effort by Moscow to make Ukraine's second largest city uninhabitable, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Footage obtained by Reuters showed the main mast of the television tower breaking off and falling to the ground in the city that has been pounded by missile and drone strikes for weeks.

The Ukrainian leader said he told US President Joe Biden about the airstrike that was carried out several minutes before they spoke by telephone.



Police officers are seen near a part of a television tower partially destroyed by a Russian missile strike in Kharkiv.

"It is Russia's clear intention to make the city uninhabitable," he said in a readout of the call published on the Telegram messaging app.

An AFP journalist in Kharkiv saw the red-and-white spire of

the structure toppled a barrage by Russian forces.

The northeastern city of Kharkiv, with a population of 1.3mn, lies just 30km from the Russian border, making it an easy target for ballistic missiles

and other weapons as Ukraine's air defences have dwindled.

"At the moment there are interruptions to the digital television signal," regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov said.

There had been no casualties because its workers had taken shelter, he added.

Russia first attacked Kharkiv's television tower several times in early March 2022 soon after it launched its full-scale invasion.

Moscow has recently stepped up its attacks, while Ukraine is suffering a shortage of air defence capabilities.

Zelensky has warned that Moscow would try to score battlefield victories before May 9 - a patriotic Russian holiday celebrating the defeat of Nazi Germany - "regardless of its losses".

**Iran vows to boost trade with Pakistan**

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed yesterday to boost trade between the neighbouring nations to \$10bn a year, as Raisi commenced a three-day visit amid tight security in the Pakistani capital.

The visit comes as the two Muslim neighbours seek to mend ties after unprecedented tit-for-tat military strikes this year.

"Both sides agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade to \$10bn in the next five years," Sharif's office said in a statement after a joint news briefing. "They also agreed to co-operate in developing joint approaches to confront common challenges including the threat of terrorism."

Official figures for current annual trade were not available. Local media outlet Business Recorder, citing Iran's then-ambassador to Pakistan, last year reported bilateral trade worth over \$2bn. - Reuters

**Ecuador approves anti-gang measures**

A solid majority of Ecuadoran voters have approved the extradition to the United States of organised crime bosses in a referendum on measures against drug trafficking and gangs, the electoral council said. The "yes" vote in favour of extradition received 65% of valid ballots, while "no" received 25%, according to a quick count of results, the electoral council said at a news conference.

Nearly 13.6mn of the country's 17.7mn inhabitants were eligible to cast a "Yes" or "No" on 11 referendum questions on the ballot.

"We have defended the country, now we will have more tools to fight crime and restore peace to Ecuadoran families," President Daniel Noboa said earlier after the release of an exit poll. - AFP

**Gaza war negatively impacted human rights, says US report**

The war between Israel and Hamas that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza and resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis has had "a significant negative impact" on the human rights situation in the country, the US State Department said in its annual report yesterday.

Significant human rights issues include credible reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings, enforced disappearance, torture and unjustified arrests of journalists among others, said the State Department's 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

The report added that the Israeli government has taken some credible steps to identify and punish the officials who may have been involved in those abuses.

Israel's military conduct has come under increasing scrutiny as its forces have killed 34,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the enclave's health authorities, many of them civilians and children.

The Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip has been reduced to a wasteland, and extreme food shortages have prompted fears of famine.

Israel launched its assault in response to a Hamas attack on October 7, in which Israel says 1,200 people were killed.

Rights groups have flagged numerous incidents of civilian harm during the Israeli army's offensive in Gaza, as well as raised alarm about rising violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where Palestinian Health Ministry records show Israeli forces or settlers have killed at least 460 Palestinians since October 7.

However, so far the Biden administration has said it has not found Israel in breach of international law.

Washington gives \$3.8bn in annual military assistance to its longtime ally.

Leftist Democrats and Arab American groups have criticised the Biden administration's steadfast support for Israel, which they say provides it with a sense of impunity.

However, this month, President Joe Biden for the first time threatened to condition support for Israel, and insisted that it take concrete steps to protect humanitarian aid workers and civilians. - Reuters

**Israeli military spy chief resigns**

Israel's military intelligence chief has resigned after taking responsibility for failures leading to the Hamas attack on October 7, the military said, as Israel carried out more shelling in war-battered Gaza. Major-General Aharon Haliva is the first top Israeli official to step down for failing to prevent the Hamas attack, which triggered the Gaza war now in its seventh month, and brought intense scrutiny to Israel's government and military.

"The intelligence division under my command did not live up to the task we were entrusted with," Haliva said in his resignation letter. "I carry that black day with me ever since." - AFP





The Cornell Stars event brings together faculty, students, staff, and their children.

## WCM-Q's Cornell Stars event connects trainee doctors with young patients

Students at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) had the opportunity to develop their core physicianship skills of communication, interaction, and performing basic clinical examinations for children during the annual Cornell Stars event.

A highlight of the WCM-Q calendar, the event is part of the Introductory Clerkship Course, during which third-year students in the WCM-Q medical programme attend a clinical orientation week to prepare them for their full-time clinical courses.

The Cornell Stars event allows trainee doctors to examine babies, toddlers, and children up to six years old under the supervision of qualified and experienced paediatricians and family physicians from the WCM-Q, the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), and Sidra Medicine.

As part of the Cornell Stars course, WCM-Q faculty and staff members invite their own children so that the students can learn the best techniques for interacting with and examining youngsters in a simulated clinical setting.

The medical students performed basic clinical skills, including physical examinations of the youngsters at the WCM-Q's Clinical Skills & Simulation Lab (CSSL), which features several practical examination rooms that mimic a clinic.

This year, 24 children participated in the event, along with 48 WCM-Q medical students and 13 physicians.

Attending paediatric consultants from the HMC included Dr Anas AbdulKayoum, Dr Sohair Elsiddig, Dr Sara Hamad, Dr Suzan Nassar, and Dr Khalid Zahradin.

WCM-Q faculty and family physician Dr Stella Major, WCM-Q alumni Dr Moza al-Sulaiti, Dr Saleha Abbasi and Dr Mohamed al-Hajjaji, with Sidra Medicine's paediatric fellow Dr Khadija KhudaBakhsh and paediatric residents Dr Hadeel Ali Alzoubi, Dr Aya Kojan, and Dr Samer Ali, also took part.

Dr Amal Khidir, associate professor of paediatrics at the WCM-Q and organiser of the Cornell Stars programme, said: "We are very grateful to all the physicians who shared their expertise with our students and the families and children who volunteered their valuable time."

"We sincerely appreciate the overwhelming support we continue to receive in ensuring the success of the Cornell Stars event and in teaching our students the art of paediatrics," she said.

Student Mohamed al-Ansari said: "This was my first time working with paediatrics in a medical setting, and the experience was both enjoyable and fruitful."

"The session provided us with the opportunity to understand the differences in conducting physical examinations between adult and paediatric patients," he said. "This platform has given me valuable insight into paediatrics, and I may consider it one of my career options."

Fellow student Jassim Taimour said: "The experience was enlightening in terms of paediatric care."

"We learned to conduct general, neurology, pulmonary, and cardiology examinations, he added. "By observing experienced doctors, we gained insight into how to handle paediatric patients effectively."

Misty Laudato, a WCM-Q employee who brought her two-year-old daughter to the event, said: "The experience was really good and very interactive."

"I know it's not just the students who learn but also us as parents, because we can ask questions and contribute to our students' knowledge," she said. "I have been participating in this activity for three years now, and each year, I see improvements in how the activity is organised and see students ask more and deeper questions."

"The activity offers a really good opportunity for our students to learn more from the experts in the field," Laudato added.



## Ektashif participants heading to Morocco

Ektashif: Morocco is taking seven Qatari artists on a special educational trip to Morocco as part of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture.

The annual programme, organised in partnership with the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), aims to support artists and provide them with new skills in traditional and Islamic arts.

During this trip, artists visit cities and historical sites to see Islamic architecture and participate in art workshops to learn traditional arts at the hands of expert craftsmen.

The resulting exhibition of works by participating artists will open at the MIA on October 22.

This year's group comprises photographer Abdulhadi al-Marri, painter and ceramics artist Aljazi Almaadeed, fashion designer Dana al-Mulla, calligrapher Fatima al-Sharshani, jewellery designer Hamad al-Mohamed, visual artist Huda al-Yafiy, and business owner and fashion designer Mariam al-Muttawa.

The focus for Ektashif: Morocco takes inspiration from the "Art of Islamic Pattern".

The journey will begin in Marrakesh, an authentic mediaeval medina (city) from the 12th century.

The artists will also participate in workshops to master the traditional arts like geometric design and drawing, plaster carving, zouaq tile making, and a ceramic workshop.

MIA deputy director Salem Abdulla al-Aswad, who is also director of learning and outreach at the QM, said: "The annual educational initiative is an opportunity for emerging and established Qatari artists to discover the enduring beauty and influence of Islamic art across the globe."

"The enriching cultural journey inspires the artists to craft artworks that enrich Qatar's vibrant cultural scene," he said.



The journey will begin in Marrakesh, where the artists will explore the city and the splendour of Moroccan architecture.

## Earthna Prize launched

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

The Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future unveiled a one-of-its-kind initiative yesterday at Education City, aimed at recognising and promoting the vital role of ancestral wisdom in addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

Described as "Earthna Prize", the project was launched to mark International Earth Day in Qatar, highlighting the importance of traditional knowledge in shaping effective sustainability strategies.

In a press statement, Qatar Foundation Vice-Chairperson and Chief Executive HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani said: "The Earthna Prize is a call to honour and learn from the deep ecological wisdom of Indigenous peoples. These invaluable traditions provide us with time-tested institutions and precepts that truly work."

The Earthna Prize seeks to support projects and organisations dedicated to preserving, integrating, and applying traditional knowledge and cultural heritage to tackle pressing sustainability issues.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a press conference during the launch, Earthna executive director Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata underlined the unique focus of the prize on traditional



Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata and Dr Mona Matar al-Kuwari at the press conference yesterday at Education City. PICTURE: Thajudheen

wisdom, noting that it aims to acknowledge and study the relevance of community practices accumulated over generations.

"Usually 'environmental prizes' try to recognise initiatives to solve environmental problems of today," he said. "But here, we're really looking at the knowledge that has been accumulated in communities around the world and the relevance of that knowledge to solutions to today's problems."

"So for example, there are many community practices for good water management that these communities are still practising around the world, and this has been going on for hundreds of years, many generations, and we don't want that knowledge to be lost," he said.

"On the contrary, we want to recognise it and we want to study the extent to which these solutions are still relevant today," the official added.

De la Mata, joined by Earthna Content Development Lead Dr Mona Matar al-Kuwari, said the prize will be awarded every two years across four categories, with a total prize pool of \$1mn.

Each category will receive \$250,000, empowering winners to further develop and scale their initiatives.

The Earthna Prize will award outstanding contributions in water resource management, food security, sustainable urbanism, and land stewardship.

Prize winners will be selected based on their alignment with these themes and their innova-

tion, effectiveness, and scalability.

To ensure the long-term impact of winning projects, Dela Mata said Earthna plans to monitor and evaluate their progress, adding that recipients must demonstrate how they will utilise the prize money to sustain and expand their efforts.

Application for the Earthna Prize is open until June 30, welcoming submissions from non-governmental organisations, community groups, and businesses worldwide.

A diverse panel of experts in sustainability, traditional knowledge, and cultural heritage will rigorously evaluate the applications, with winners set to be announced at the Earthna Summit in 2025.

## QM announces Trashboom Project at Al Zubarah Unesco World Heritage Site

Qatar Museums (QM)'s Cultural Heritage Protection department has unveiled Al Zubarah Trashboom Project, an environmental initiative aimed at combating ocean pollution.

Launched in alignment with International Earth Day, this project marks a step forward in safeguarding Qatar's Unesco World Heritage Site.

QM Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayasa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani said: "Al Zubarah Trashboom Project exemplifies our commitment to preserving Qatar's history while embracing innovative solutions for environmental challenges."

"Through such initiatives, we aim to foster a deeper appreciation for our heritage and a stronger awareness of sustainable practices among the public to ensure that the cultural significance of each site is not only clearly communicated but also accessible, relatable, and enjoyable to visitors, both now and in the future," she said.

Al Zubarah Trashboom Project, supported by Ras Laffan Industrial City Community Outreach Programme (RLIC-COP), introduces the strategic deployment of Trash Booms, a measure designed to curb the effects of ocean pollution on this archaeological site and lessen the need for frequent beach cleanups.

These Trash Booms, buoyant and linked together like a chain, are set up along rivers, sea streams, beaches, and gulfs.

Their primary function is to deflect, contain, and collect various pollutants - ranging from floating debris and marine waste to plastics and seaweed - preventing them from reaching the shores or contaminating terrestrial environments.



The Al Zubarah Trashboom Project, supported by Ras Laffan Industrial City Community Outreach Programme, introduces the strategic deployment of Trash Booms, a measure designed to curb the effects of ocean pollution on this archaeological site and lessen the need for frequent beach cleanups.

Beyond their immediate purpose, Trash Booms also play a crucial role in waterway management and stormwater overflow control.

Depending on the site's specific requirements and conditions, these systems can be implemented either temporarily or permanently.

In the context of Al Zubarah, the project takes a step further by repurposing the collected waste material, transforming it into fittings or installations at the site.

The anchors of these Trash Booms also

serve a dual purpose by acting as artificial reefs, enriching the marine biodiversity of Al Zubarah Bay.

This multifaceted approach addresses environmental concerns and contributes to the preservation and enhancement of the site's ecological footprint.

Abdullatif al-Jasmi, director of Cultural Heritage Protection at the QM, said: "By deploying Trash Booms, we aim to tackle the influx of marine debris in a manner that aligns with our dedication to the long-term sustainability of Qatar's cultur-



al treasures, and we plan to recycle all the collected waste for other functions that endow the site and benefit marine life."

Sheikha Dana Rashid A M al-Thani, lead at RLIC-COP, said: "Al Zubarah offshore trash boom installation project, initiated by the QM and proudly supported by the RLIC-COP, is quite a unique project as it is addressing the plastic marine pollution at one of the most significant archaeological sites in-country recognised by the Unesco."

"It is hugely rewarding to see how our collective efforts with our partner QM have maximised the value gained from this project contributing to enhancing the quality of Al Zubarah beach and protecting the marine biodiversity," she said.

Al Zubarah was named a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2013 and is the best-preserved example of an 18th-19th century trading and pearl fishing town in the Gulf region, making it Qatar's largest archaeological heritage site.