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Amir, Macron hold talks to bolster ties



● Co-operation in the fields of politics, security, economy, investment, technology, health and education to be enhanced

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held an official talks session with President of the friendly French Republic Emmanuel Macron, at the Elysee Palace in Paris, yesterday.

At the beginning of the session, the French president welcomed His Highness the Amir, praising the close relations between the two countries, and looking forward to the visit contributing to strengthening co-operation relations and expanding its horizons to include various fields.

His Highness the Amir expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to President Macron for the warm reception, noting the growth witnessed by the strategic relations between the two countries, and expressing his hope for more partnership and co-operation in various fields to achieve the common interests of the two friendly countries.

During the session, the existing friendship and co-operation relations between the two countries

were discussed, as well as ways to strengthen and develop them at all levels, especially in the fields of politics, security, economy, investment, technology, health and education.

The session also dealt with developments in issues on the regional and international arenas, most notably developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

His Highness the Amir and the French president witnessed the signing ceremony of a declaration of intent for co-operation in the fields of humanitarian assistance and emergency intervention.

The session and signing ceremony were attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Minister

Amir accorded official reception ceremony in Paris

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was accorded an official reception ceremony yesterday upon his arrival at the Invalides Palace in Paris, France.

Minister of the Armed Forces of France Sebastien Lecornu led well-wishers to welcome His Highness the Amir. The reception ceremony started with playing the Qatari and French national anthems before His Highness the Amir reviewed the Guard of Honour, consisting of the

land forces, air forces, and national Gendarmerie. His Highness the Amir then shook hands with members of the French official delegation and senior officials.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived in Paris yesterday on a two-day state visit to the friendly French Republic, where His Highness the Amir will meet with President Emmanuel Macron and several senior officials. His Highness was welcomed, upon his arrival at Orly

International Airport, by Minister of Economy, Finance, Industrial and Digital Sovereignty Bruno Le Maire, ambassador of Qatar to France Sheikh Ali bin Jassim al-Thani, ambassador of the French Republic to Qatar Jean-Baptiste Faivre, and members of Qatar's embassy.

His Highness the Amir is accompanied by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and an official delegation. (QNA)

Qatar-France initiative for aid delivery to Gaza

On the sidelines of the current visit to France by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Qatar and France launched an initiative for co-operation in the field of humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians besieged in the Gaza Strip. In implementation of the initiative, three aircraft belonging to the Qatari Armed Forces arrived yesterday in the city of El Arish in Egypt, carrying 75 tonnes of humanitarian aid, including 10 ambulances, shelter supplies, and food items, provided by Qatar and France, in preparation for their transfer to Gaza. (QNA)

of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, and HE the Minister of State at

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, and a number of members of the official delegation accompanying the Amir.

It was attended from the French side by Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Stephane Sejourne, Minister of Economy, Finance, Industrial and Dig-

ital Sovereignty Bruno Le Maire, Minister of the Interior and Overseas Territories Gerald Darmanin, Minister of Defence Sebastien Lecornu, and Minister of Culture Rachida Dati, Minister of Sports and Olympic Games Amelie Oudea-Castera, and a number of senior officials.

His Highness the Amir and the

French president held a bilateral meeting in which they discussed co-operation relations between the two friendly countries, in addition to discussing a number of issues of mutual interest.

An official reception ceremony was held for His Highness the Amir upon his arrival at the Elysee Palace. (QNA) Page 12

Qatar hopeful of Gaza truce before Holy Ramadan



Dr al-Ansari briefing the media yesterday.

QNA
Doha

Qatar, in collaboration with its partners, seeks to stop the fighting in Gaza before the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Majed bin Mohamed al-Ansari said, stressing that the pressure is continuing to reach a deal. He added that he is hopeful of reaching the deal soon to be declared before the Holy Ramadan, but the situation on the ground is fraught with numerous hitches and problems, pointing out that any development in this aspect would be announced once a deal was reached.

Dr al-Ansari said that what is happening to the brotherly Palestinian people by intentionally starving them in the north of Gaza and the strip in general, is a real catastrophe that cannot be tolerated, pointing out that the international community must clearly stand against this matter. To Page 3

1,043 startups from 81 countries attending Web Summit Qatar

The ongoing Web Summit Qatar 2024 has welcomed 15,435 attendees from 118 countries to its inaugural event in the Middle East. With as many as 1,043 startups from 81 countries – the largest gathering of startups ever in the region, the historic event runs until tomorrow (Thursday) at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

The event that will serve as a pivotal force for innovation in the region, enabling the people who are reshaping the world to connect, is being attended by 401 investors from 46 countries, 380 speakers and 148 partners exhibiting on the event floor, including Microsoft, Meta, TikTok, Snap, and Qatar Investment Authority.

A salient feature of Web Summit Qatar 2024 is that 37% are women attendees, 30% are women speakers, 31% are women-founded startups. The startups showcasing their vision on the event floor were selected out of nearly 10,000 applicants.

Among the attending startups, 10% come from Qatar, 20% from Africa and 50% from the wider Mena region.

A highlight is that 10% of startups have joined through Web Summit Qatar's Impact programme, which focuses on tech for good. A total of 358 startups will take part in 42 Mentor Hours ses-



A session in progress at the centre stage of Web Summit Qatar 2024 yesterday. PICTURE: Bonnie James

sions during the event, learning from and connecting with leading entrepreneurs in the industry.

Participating startups will also have the opportunity to take part in Web Summit Qatar's PITCH competition, powered by Jussour, which brings together the world's leading early-stage startups to go head-to-head on stage in front of globally-renowned investors. To Page 8

MCIT's Digital Agenda 2030 aims at QR40bn ripple effect, 26,000 jobs

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) unveiled the ambitious Digital Agenda 2030 yesterday (Tuesday), aiming to unleash a ripple effect valued at around QR40bn and generate more than 26,000 new job opportunities by 2030.

Speaking at the event, HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai, said: "Digital Agenda 2030 will serve as our guiding compass towards establishing a robust digital economy and shaping a future brimming with innovation and progress."

"This future will lay the basis for a knowledge-based society and set an inspiring example for generations to come," he stressed.

The debut of Digital Agenda 2030, under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, marks a crucial step in Qatar's comprehensive digital evolution.

The Minister highlighted the initiative's six strategic pillars: Digital Infrastructure, Digital Government, Digital Technology, Digital Innovation, Digital Economy, and Digital Society. Com-



HE Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai speaks at the launch event. PICTURE: Thajudheen

prising 23 strategic programmes, it aims to transition towards a novel, diversified, and sustainable economic model.

Al-Mannai noted that these programmes are expected to strengthen the compound annual growth rate of the existing GDP to 7.8%, while enhancing the contribution of the ICT sector to the gross product, potentially achieving a rate of up to 3.5% in non-oil GDP.

"The programmes and initiatives shaped by the Digital Agenda 2030 carry the potential to generate comprehensive positive impacts across various sectors of the national economy, spanning from industry to energy, tourism, logistics, financial services, and education," the Minister said.

HE al-Mannai underlined MCIT's commitment to shaping Qatar's digital landscape aimed at keeping pace with global digital advancements. He said: "With the introduction of our Digital Agenda 2030, we are actively

positioning ourselves to lead the digital age. Success hinges on ensuring our digital society is poised to adapt to the rapid changes in the digital sphere."

With its deployment, MCIT expects that its latest initiative will boost the efficiency of both the digital economy and society, expediting economic transformation and competitive efficiency. This is facilitated by embracing innovative digital strategies that prioritise inclusivity and foster sustainable prosperity in the digital age.

"The Digital Agenda 2030 is an integral part of the Third National Development Strategy and the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030. This agenda seeks to lead a comprehensive shift, continue the ambitious digital transformation process, contribute to achieving sustainable national development goals, and ensure the continuation of decent living for the people of Qatar, generation after generation," the Minister said.

According to MCIT, the Digital Agenda 2030 also aims to transform Qatar into a formidable digital player across various domains such as smart cities, e-government, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, metaverse technology, and the Internet of Things. This transformation is poised to yield substantial economic dividends.

QCAA chief meets Cuba's IACC president



Mohamed Falah al-Hajri, in-charge of managing Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), and President of the Institute of Aeronautics and Civil Aviation (IACC) of the Republic of Cuba Armando Luis Daniel Lopez, discussed areas of mutual co-operation in civil aviation. During the meeting, they discussed various issues related to civil aviation, safety, security, environmental protection, and enhancing sustainable development in line with the ICAO strategic objectives. They also explored ways to develop mechanisms for exchanging support and expertise between the two countries to address all current and future challenges in the aviation sector and achieve further growth and development in this field. (QNA)

Al-Muraikhi meets Djibouti envoy



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met with ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti to Qatar Tayeb Dbd Robleh. The meeting discussed aspects of bilateral co-operation. (QNA)

Significant increase in HMC's Home Healthcare Service visits to patients

QNA
Doha

Home healthcare services are among the most important medical services provided by Hamad Medical Corp (HMC), aiming to deliver healthcare and assistance to patients in a comfortable and familiar environment, ultimately reducing the need for visits to hospitals or healthcare facilities.

The services include a wide range of medical and support services, ensuring comprehensive care for patients and their families within the comfort of their homes. Dr Feras Haddad, Senior Consultant and Head of the Home Healthcare Services Department at HMC, emphasised that home healthcare services are available to patients of all ages in Qatar. They are provided by a team of specialised doctors,

nurses, and healthcare providers, enabling patients to benefit from care tailored to their individual needs and health conditions, thereby enhancing the patient's sense of individualised care and ensuring continuous medical support.

According to a 2023 report prepared by HMC's Home Healthcare Services, 73% of patients receiving treatment at home are over the age of 65 years, while children receiving home care services, primarily referred by Sidra Medicine, represent approximately 8% of the total number of home care patients.

The report also indicates an increase in the number of patients referred to the home healthcare service in 2023 to 3,964 cases, which is 772 more cases than in 2022.

"Home Healthcare Service receives referrals from various healthcare facilities affiliated with

HMC and beyond, with 888 cases referred from Hamad General Hospital, followed by 759 cases from Rumailah Hospital, 468 cases from Heart Hospital, and 115 cases from Sidra Medicine in 2023," said Dr Haddad.

Home care services provided by HMC under the supervision of Dr Hanadi al-Hamad, Deputy Chief for Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation, and Geriatrics; and Dr Issa al-Sulaiti, Medical Director of Home Healthcare Services, encompass a variety of medical and nursing care services delivered at patients' homes.

These services include regular medical check-ups, medication management, wound care, administering injections, respiratory therapy, and specialist dietician services.

During home care visits, patients are also provided with nursing care, which includes general

health monitoring, wound dressing changes, post-surgical care, as well as nursing assistance for patients with chronic diseases. Home care services also encompass physical therapy and occupational therapy, involving physical exercises aimed at improving mobility and enhancing daily functioning.

Moreover, home healthcare services encompass psychological care, providing emotional and psychological support for patients and their families, as well as counselling for patients dealing with depression, anxiety, or dementia.

According to the 2023 statistics released by HMC's Home Healthcare Services, the number of visits made by home healthcare teams to patients reached approximately 79,000, reflecting an increase of 5,000 visits compared to 2022. This increase underscores the intensified efforts of the home healthcare team at HMC.

DIFI addresses digital changes and impact on families in changing world

The rapid pace of digitalisation was highlighted at a side event organised by Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) a member of Qatar Foundation on the occasion of the 62nd Session of the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD62), at the UN Headquarters in New York. Under the theme 'Navigating the Digital Landscape: Fostering Resilient Families in a Transforming World', the event was held ahead of the conference commemorating the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024 (IYF+30) in partnership with Qatar's Permanent Mission to the UN.

HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN, Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani said: "The State of Qatar believes that navigating the digital landscape and its impact on families requires a multidimensional approach that puts the best interests of the family at the forefront in terms of policies and strategies related to technology, but also includes government, tech companies, and families working together to ensure a safe and empowering digital environment." Dr Sharifa al-Emadi, Executive Director of DIFI, highlighted the importance of addressing the overarching trends and their implications on family policies globally, saying: "According to a study conducted by DIFI on 'Assessing marital relationships in the first five years of marriage across the Arab countries' in partnership with the League of Arab States, it was found that technology plays a role in connecting people.

"It also contributes to the increase of what is called 'Electronic Marriage Phenomenon', especially among Arab Mashreq Countries," she continued. "Yet, the same study found out that 'Digital Infidelity' is one of the contributing factors to early divorce by 7.6% from a sample of 1,184 respondents across the Arab world."

Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), said: "If we are to harness the transformative power of digital technologies to create inclusive and just societies, we need to bridge the digital divide, foster resilient families and promote the responsible use of digital technologies." (QNA)

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MoI and Ras Laffan COP launch 'Bedar 3' initiative

In collaboration with the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the Ras Laffan Community Outreach Programme (Ras Laffan COP) recently launched the third edition of the "Bedar3" community outreach initiative at Barwa Workers Recreation Complex in Al Khor with various programmes.



The activities included football, basketball, volleyball, tug of war and pushup competitions. Workers of 13 companies participating in the "Bedar3" initiative, attended the events. There were awareness presentations by six MoI departments handling Cyber Crimes, Criminal Investigation, Civil Defence, Community Policing, Human Rights and Drug Prevention.

Also, the sessions covered various laws, rules and services rendered to the communities through MoI departments.

The event marked the partici-

participation of more than 1,000 workers while an e-awareness campaign was launched to target the workers in the northern area of Qatar through social media platforms. The campaign is aimed at enhancing awareness of security, safety, social culture, physical fitness and health and hygiene.

Sheikha Al Anoud al-Thani, head of the Media Studies Sec-

tion at the Public Relations Department of MoI, emphasised the importance of the Bedar3 initiative, which comes in line with the MoI's strategic directions aimed at raising awareness among all residents in Qatar about the means of security and safety by promoting healthy communication between resident workers and the community.

Sheikha Dana al-Thani, senior official at the Ras Laffan COP, highlighted the programme's continuous support for sports and community activities in line with Qatar National Vision 2030, which primarily focuses on sports and its contribution to human development.

Saad al-Humaidi, community outreach officer of the Ras Laffan COP, said that the diverse events organised as part of Bedar3 reflect its significant interest in social responsibility.

Qatar hopeful of Gaza truce before Ramadan

From Page 1

During the weekly press briefing organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr al-Ansari highlighted that what is broadcast on television reflect the bitter humanitarian tribulation and the cataclysmic situation unfolding in the north of Gaza with over 300,000 people living there without food, medicine, water, electricity, and all forms of natural human life.

Any assistance provided to the Gaza Strip is an extremely small portion of what the population needs, and that there are 2.5mn people living in a complete shortage of health and emergency services, with more than one million people living in tents in the south of the strip.

He stressed the importance of unhindered and open access of humanitarian assistance to the brothers in Gaza. Dr al-Ansari pointed out that the air bridge that has been initiated by Qatar in Al Arish city of Egypt to deliver aid to Gaza witnessed over 80 aircraft. The international community must seriously stand up against this conspicuous violation of

international law and handle it more clearly, because there has not been any real pressure on the part of the international community to allow the full and unconditional flow of aid, he stressed.

It is painful to have the issue of getting the humanitarian assistance being laid out on the negotiating table, Dr al-Ansari noted, affirming that what is happening in the Strip is a real contravention of humanitarian law and a flagrant violation of all international norms and charters pertaining to sparing the civilians the scourges of wars.

The official spokesperson reviewed the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its officials concerning their meetings and participations in the regional and global events, including the scheduled joint meeting of the Qatari-Egyptian supreme committee co-chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry that will be held on Saturday. With Qatar currently presiding over

the 44th session of the GCC, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs will chair the regular ministerial meeting of the 159th session of Supreme Council of the GCC on Sunday in Riyadh, where he will deliver the inaugural speech. Dr al-Ansari added that the joint ministerial meetings between the GCC states, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt will be held on Sunday in Riyadh.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs will head to Washington on Monday to chair Qatar's delegation in the inauguration of the 6th Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue.

This year, the dialogue includes numerous sessions in new fields, including international co-operation, economy, counter-terrorism, security, law enforcement, defence, sport, strategic planning, consular affairs, human rights, employment, strategic communication, emerging technology and humanitarian assistance. Dr al-Ansari noted, highlighting that HE Sheikh Mohamed will meet a number of US officials, including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

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Labour minister chairs board meeting of workers' support and insurance fund



The Board of Directors of the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund held its first meeting for 2024 yesterday under the chairmanship of HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri. The meeting discussed several files on its agenda and made a series of decisions and recommendations aimed at improving the fund's performance, contributing to enhancing the work environment. The fund, established under Law No 17 of 2018, aims to support, insure, and care for workers. (QNA)

Qatar, Indian ministers discuss rail transport



HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti met yesterday with Indian Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics, and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw. The two ministers reviewed bilateral relations in the areas of railways and their infrastructure, and discussed ways to enhance co-operation in various aspects of environmentally-friendly railway transport. (QNA)

Dy speaker, Andean parliament president discuss co-operation

HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti met yesterday via videoconferencing with President of the Andean Parliament Cristina Reyes. The meeting discussed ways to enhance co-ordination and develop relations between the Gulf councils and the Andean Parliament. The two sides stressed the necessity of exchanging visits and experiences and co-ordinating stances and visions in parliamentary forums. (QNA)



Qatar's role in disseminating Arab, Islamic culture lauded

QNA
Paris

President of the Arab World Institute in Paris Jack Lang has praised the cultural role played by Qatar domestically and internationally, highlighting its cultural openness to the world and its role in radiating Arab and Islamic culture in France and Europe.

On the occasion of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to France, Lang commended Qatar's pivotal and significant role in promoting the teaching and dissemination of the Arabic language in France through the agreement signed between Qatar and the institute.

Lang also praised Qatar's pivotal contribution to supporting culture and encouraging learning of the Arabic language at the Institute and in France, through the Qatari embassy in Paris, describing the institute's partnership with Qatari diplomatic bodies in France to support the language centre as "valuable."

He pointed to the growing role of Qatar's cultural diplomacy in strengthening the friendship ties between Doha and Paris, while noting the importance

of Qatar's role in the dissemination of the Arab-Islamic culture in France and Europe.

In this context, he said Qatar is internationally recognised as a hub for excellence in intellectual discourse, with many Arab intellectuals working in its research centres, especially in the social sciences and cultural diplomacy, which is a strategic axis, stressing that Qatar's support for contemporary Arab thinkers to disseminate their writings and studies will undoubtedly contribute to benefiting and promoting dialogue between cultures, which is needed for today's world to confront misunderstanding and hate speech.

The institute is committed to fostering a culture of dialogue and these noble values through conferences, publications, and translations to French language by intellectuals who seek to benefit the world, the academic and former law professor explained.

He noted Qatar's international policy in museum construction and design, as well as Qatar's distinction in attracting and hosting world-renowned architects, mentioning iconic projects like the Museum of Islamic Art designed by IM Pei and the Qatar National Museum by Jean Nouvel, praising the remark-

able collections of ancient and modern Arab-Islamic arts housed in Qatari museums.

Lang also pointed out Qatar's keen interest in its tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which forms an integral part of the contemporary art collections at the Institutes Museum of Contemporary Art, narrating the rich history of the Arab world from ancient times to the present day, particularly the history of the Arabian Peninsula.

He highlighted the institute's equal interest in nurturing emerging talents in Qatar's contemporary art scene, noting that it will attract some exhibitions by Qatari artists and will soon host an exhibition featuring Qatari artist Sofia al-Maria. He pointed to the existing co-operation between the Arab World Institute in Paris and the embassy of Qatar in Paris, stressing the institutes permanent openness to further co-operation with Qatar and its welcome of co-operation agreements, including a project to establish an Arab poetry award.

Qatar is an extremely important partner for France in all fields, Lang said, praising the State's significant efforts in reaching a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, and putting an end to the suffering of civilians.

AlKhatir meets Irish minister



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir met yesterday with Irish Minister of State for European Affairs and Defence Peter Burke, on the sidelines of the High-level Segment of the 55th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, held at the UN office in Geneva. The meeting discussed co-operation aspects between the two countries, especially in humanitarian and development fields in Gaza and Sudan. They also discussed the need to resume support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to enhance its efforts in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, in addition to the challenges that impede the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, and Qatar's initiative to evacuate and treat injured Palestinian victims of the war on Gaza. (QNA)



Speakers and attendees at the event.

WCM-Q workshop focuses on AI in healthcare

Well Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) recently hosted a workshop to provide healthcare professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively understand, implement, and leverage artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in their practice. The session was held at WCM-Q's world-class facilities.

As technology rapidly advances, the integration of AI in healthcare is expected to become increasingly important to enhance patient care, optimise clinical workflows, and improve healthcare outcomes. Titled 'Fundamentals of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare', the one-day workshop was designed as an initial step towards

building an understanding and appetite for the topic of AI in healthcare.

The course covered AI introductory essentials such as the history of AI and its application in healthcare, the fundamentals of machine learning, and the ethical issues and potential challenges of building an AI system. Participants also engaged in a series of interactive sessions, case studies, and hands-on demonstrations.

Coordinated by the Division of Continuing Professional Development at WCM-Q, the workshop was directed and led by a team of highly experienced computer scientists from WCM-Q's AI Centre for Precision Health—Dr Arfan Ahmed, assistant professor of research

in population health sciences, Dr Alaa Abd-alrazaq, research associate in population health sciences, Dr Rawan al-Saad, postdoctoral associate, and Sarah Aziz, research specialist.

Dr Ahmed said: "AI is transforming healthcare, and every aspect of medicine will have an AI element moving forward, whether diagnostics, delivering care, or monitoring patients. Given this, it is important to ensure that while educating the next generation of doctors and scientists, we are also offering practicing healthcare professionals the opportunity to develop an understanding of AI systems in relation to healthcare and their professional growth."

EAA to host 'Goals4Good' tournament as part of Ramadan 2024 campaign

The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation will host on Friday the Goals4Good tournament, part of its Ramadan 2024 Campaign themed 'Rebuild Hope for Children'. The event, which kicks off on March 1 at Doha College, aims to support the educational endeavours of the world's most vulnerable and marginalised youth.

It will feature both football and art competitions and will involve students from 30 schools across Qatar. From 1pm to 8pm Doha time, the participating schools will engage in a series of football matches leading up to quarter-finals, semi-finals, and a grand final. Competitors, spanning ages 10 to 18, will be divided into both boys' and girls' teams across three age categories. These teams will vie for the championship through group stages and knockout rounds, with

the ultimate victors earning trophies, certificates, and individual awards for Best Player, Best Goal, and Best Goalkeeper. Parallel to the football championship, an art contest themed "Education" will crown its winners on the same day. Open to juniors (ages 6-13) and seniors (ages 14-19), this competition invites participants to express the importance of education through various art forms creatively. Judging criteria will focus on theme expression, colour use, neatness, and originality.

Adding to the tournament's excitement, attendees can enjoy a selection of carnival games suitable for family fun, provided by volunteers from various companies. This element underscores the event's aim to offer a wholesome and enjoyable experience for families, reinforcing the EAA Foundation's commit-

ment to fostering community engagement and support for education.

The Goals4Good tournament aligns with the EAA Foundation's sustainability goals, emphasising Quality Education for All (SDG4), Good Health and Well-Being (SDG3), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG17). Moreover, it celebrates the unifying power of sports, promoting tolerance, respect, and social inclusion while supporting gender empowerment and community development. Sponsored by leading entities, the event not only provides a platform for raising awareness and visibility for participating organizations but also underscores the collective effort in advancing education for underprivileged children. All sponsorship proceeds will directly fund EAA's education projects. (QNA)

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QNL, Qeeri launch project to protect Islamic manuscripts

Qatar National Library (QNL) and Hamad Bin Khalifa University's Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute (Qeeri) have signed a collaborative research agreement to create a methodology that conservators worldwide can leverage to protect Islamic manuscripts against degradation, positioning Qatar as a pioneer in Islamic manuscript preservation.

The project falls in line with Qatar Foundation's multiversity approach, enhancing understanding of historical ink, pigment production, and the trading routes for rare pigments that were in use from the 10th century CE onwards. Its impact will also extend to historians and codicologists, fostering new partnerships and networks, primarily in Asian countries such as Iran, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Under the project, QNL's scientific laboratory and Qeeri's Corrosion Centre will unite to conduct experiments and develop new methodologies to stabilise inks and metal-containing pigments used in old Islamic illuminated manuscripts. The unstable iron-gall ink represents one of the primary factors behind the chemical process responsible for the degradation of heritage documents, impacting a quarter of all Islamic manuscripts worldwide. How-



The project falls in line with Qatar Foundation's multiversity approach.

ever, the process hasn't attracted much research, with fewer than 20 scientific papers published on iron-gall ink in Arabic manuscripts.

The collaboration will lead to a better understanding of the degradation process, enabling both Qeeri and QNL's IFLA Preservation and Conservation Regional Centre, to better develop ways to retard the degradation process thus helping to preserve important historical artifacts.

Tan Huism, executive director, QNL said the project embodies the values that have guided the Library throughout its journey since foundation. "The agreement fur-

ther cements the QNL's role as a guardian of the region's heritage and as an institution committed to promoting innovation and continuous learning, values that lie at the core of our mission."

Dr Tareq al-Ansari, Qeeri's acting executive director, said his organisation was proud to contribute to the development of methodologies that will protect these invaluable manuscripts. "Through our collaboration with Qatar National Library, we are pioneering efforts to understand and mitigate the degradation process, ensuring the preservation of our rich heritage for generations to come," he added.



Qatar partakes in WTO ministerial conference being held in Abu Dhabi

QNA
Abu Dhabi

Qatar is participating in the proceedings of the 13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which continues until the Feb 29 in the United Arab Emirates. The delegation of Qatar is led by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani.

HE the Minister also chaired the ministerial meeting of GCC countries and the United Kingdom regarding the negotiations of the free trade agreement, with the participation of the Ministers of Trade of GCC countries and the UK Secretary of State of Business and Trade, in the presence of the GCC Secretary-General.

The meeting dealt with ways of co-operation and development regarding the free trade agreement between the two sides, emphasising the importance of concluding the negotiation rounds for the Free Trade Agreement, which began on June 22, 2020. On the sidelines of the 13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, the Minister of Commerce and Industry participated in the coordination meeting of Arab Trade Ministers, with the participation of trade ministers from Arab member countries of the organisation and the attendance of Director-General of the World Trade Or-



The delegation of Qatar is led by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani.

ganization Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and a large number of ambassadors from participating countries in the conference. Also on the sidelines of conference proceedings, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry met separately with Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria Dr Doris Uzoka-Anite, and Minister of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic Jozef Sikela. During the meetings, discussions focused on areas of common cooperation, especially in trade, investment, and industrial fields, and ways to enhance and develop them, in addition to exchanging views on the topics listed on the conference agenda.

HE the Minister highlighted during the meetings the successful economic policies established by the State of Qatar to support the private sector, explaining the incentives, legislation, and prom-

ising opportunities available in the country aimed at encouraging investors, businessmen, and company owners to invest in Qatar. It is worth mentioning that Qatar hosted the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation in 2001, which resulted in one of the most important negotiation rounds of the organisation, represented by the Doha Round. Qatar also participated in various previous sessions of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation.

The ministerial conference is the highest authority in the World Trade Organisation for making decisions that are adopted unanimously. It convenes once every two years, gathering all members of the World Trade Organisation, including trade ministers and senior officials responsible for international trade.

Katara opens monochrome exhibition



The Cultural Village Foundation (Katara) opened the monochrome exhibition for the Art Space group at Katara Building No. 1. The opening was attended by HE the Minister of State and President of the Qatar National Library Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, Deputy General Manager and Director of Human Resources at Katara Saif Saad al-Dosari, and a group of artists and those interested. The exhibition, which was opened last night and will continue until March 10, features 50 paintings by 25 artists. Monochrome is a technique using a single colour with its lighter and darker shades to create artistic work. The artist's role is to give a complete feeling by embodying the visual scene using only one colour. **(QNA)**



QU holds workshop on national identity

The Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University (QU) organised a workshop titled 'The National Identity in Qatar'. The workshop aims to define the concept of national identity in Qatar through scientifically-based studies, contribute to the scientific field related to national identity in Qatar, and connect researchers with stakeholders, beneficiaries, and relevant parties in both the private and public sectors to discuss their experiences on this subject. The workshop also seeks to share and discuss the study's results.

The workshop included a presentation of the study's results by researcher Fahad al-Buainain and a panel discussion with the participation of Khalid bin Nasser bin Ghanim al-Maadheed, a member of Qatar's Shura Council and the Director of Wijdan Cultural Centre; Dr Jassim Sultan, a Qatari thinker and strategic adviser; Prof Hassan al-Sayed, a constitutional law professor at QU; Maryam Yassin al-Hammadi, Director of the Department of Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture; and Dr Buthaina al-Janahi, the founder and CEO of Qalam Hebr




Company. Secretary-General of the Qatar National Archive Dr Ahmed Abdullah al-Buainain praised the workshop's significance, stating, "This workshop highlights the importance of understanding and enhancing our national identity, a cornerstone for constructing and advancing societies and nations. It distinguishes each country through its culture, social norms, policies, and civilisation.

National identity serves as the cultural code for societies, facing internal and external challenges and necessitating intensive efforts to preserve and enhance it."

Director of SESRI at QU Prof Kaltham al-Ghanim stated, "This study measures levels of

adherence to national identity and provides reliable data on the determinants of national identity. Data collected from a representative model of citizens, totalling 1,202, resulted in scientific findings that will contribute to enhancing scientific knowledge about national identity and its challenges."

Prof al-Ghanim added, "The goal of our activity today is to convey these results to relevant parties and researchers, discuss the study's results, clarify the concept, characteristics, and threats to national identity in Qatar, and promote collaboration, idea exchange, and contribution to knowledge in the field of national identity." **(QNA)**



TENDERS AND AUCTIONS COMMITTEE

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SL no.	TENDER FOR	TENDER NO.	TENDER BOND	DOC FEES	CLOSING DATE	CONTACT DETAILS	Remarks
1	DESIGN, SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF OPERATIONAL SAFETY SIGNAGES AT MWANI PORTS (RETENDER)	MQ/TAC/TEN \368\2023	QRS. 25,000	QRS. 300	17.03.2024	(Hsse.dept @mwani.com.qa)	Two envelope
2	RECRUITMENT OUTSOURCING AND MANPOWER STAFFING	MQ/TAC/TEN \372\2023	QRS. 150,000	QRS. 500	12.03.2024	HR @mwani.com.qa	Two envelope
3	SUPPLY OF ELECTRICAL SPARE PARTS (SUBSTATION AND STREET LIGHTING) FOR ONE YEAR (RETENDER)	MQ/TAC/TEN \379\2023	QRS. 15,000	QRS. 300	19.03.2024	d.controller @mwani.com.qa	Two envelope

The Tenders and Auctions Committee of Mwani Qatar hereby announces the above tenders with the following terms and conditions:

- Tender documents can be obtained (via Email) from the Finance and Accounting Department Tel No. (40453724/568), after depositing the non-refundable amount mentioned above at MQ A/C No. (0850 - 102030 - 060) at QNB and submitting the bank depositing receipt and copy of the Commercial Registration to : (tender.secretary@mwani.com.qa) Tel. (40453724/568 - 31265655 / 30121037).
- Offer should be accompanied with a Tender Bond / issued by one of the Banks operating in Qatar for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 120 days from the closing date. The offer which is not accompanied by the Tender Bond will not be considered. The successful bidder should submit a Performance Bond of 10% of the total Tender value, which should be valid for (90) days after the expiry of the contract period.
- Offers should be valid for ninety (90) days commencing from the tender closing date and MQ has the right (after Tenders and Auctions Committee approval) to increase or decrease the items/services by 20% of the contract value according to its conditions and prices.
- The deadline for submitting offers will be **02:00 pm** of the date shown above. Any offer arriving thereafter will not be considered.
- The offers should be deposited in the Tenders and Auctions Committee Box of MQ as per the address given above. Tel. No : (40453407/40453633). The tender submitting party should confirm that he has received the receipt for delivering the tender. It should be in closed envelopes, sealed with red wax and addressed to the Chairman, Tenders and Auctions Committee of MQ, writing the number and subject of the Tender.
- The offers must be submitted in **Two envelope system, (Technical original and copy one envelope + Commercial original and copy one envelope)** The envelopes should not bear any mark denoting the name of the Company. **The original Tender bond must be attached with the Original Technical offer.**
- Every tenderer should attach document showing previous similar experience in the field of the required items/service.
- For more information you can visit MQ website : (www.mwani.com.qa)

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Fifty One East hosts fourth edition of Jalabiyas & Kaftans Exhibition

Fifty One East, 'Qatar's favourite department store', has unveiled the fourth edition of its Jalabiyas & Kaftans Exhibition, showcasing the latest collections from both local and regional design houses. Hosted on Level 1 of Fifty One East at Lagoona Mall, the opening event was attended by guests and participating designers. Running until April 11, the exhibition underscores Fifty One East's steadfast dedication to nurturing and promoting local and regional talents, empowering them to thrive in the dynamic fashion landscape, a statement said. The event serves as an invaluable platform for designers to unveil their creativity to a broader audience while fostering direct connections with their discerning clientele. This year's exhibition marks a significant milestone with its unprecedented growth, boasting the largest number of exhibitors



to date. Featuring a stellar lineup of 28 established and emerging designers from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, visitors can explore an extraordinary array of



meticulously crafted collections, tailored for the upcoming Ramadan season. The showcase highlights intricately embroidered Ramadan-ready collections,

exuding the essence of the season with Oriental styles encapsulated by traditional charm and contemporary flair. Radiating timeless elegance, these creations offer women a diverse spectrum of options, boasting vibrant hues and innovative designs suitable for every occasion, the statement added.

Commercial 5.5G: Eight innovation practices unveiled

By Kamran Rehmat
Barcelona

On the opening day of the much anticipated Mobile World Congress 2024 here, Huawei introduced eight 5.5G innovations to assist operators in developing multi-path 5.5G networks.

Cao Ming, Huawei's Wireless Solution president, announced the start of 5.5G commercialisation, highlighting the Chinese tech giant's comprehensive 5.5G offerings featuring "Native Giga" and "Native Green" for global operators. This marks the transition of 5.5G from concept to reality, with all necessary standards, services, and policies in place, signalling the acceleration of 5.5G deployment worldwide. Operators in the Middle East have already scaled 5.5G commercial use, while those in Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America are testing 10Gbps speeds for 2024 commercialisation.

The 5.5G evolution involves all bands, utilising both test-driven development (TDD) and feature-driven development (FDD) networking to achieve ubiquitous 5Gbps and hotspot 10Gbps speeds. Huawei's 5.5G GigaGreen products and solutions, which are "Native Giga" for performance and "Native Green" for energy efficiency, are already supporting the global rollout of high-performance, energy-efficient 5.5G networks.

Following are the eight innovation practices that Huawei has introduced:

(1) The 64T MetaAAU with Extremely Large Antenna Array (ELAA) supports multi-band operations, achieving 5Gbps eve-



Cao Ming speaks at the Mobile World Congress 2024 in Barcelona on Monday.

rywhere by combining high and low bands. Implemented in China and the Middle East, it simplifies site construction by verifying multi-carrier TDD with bands like 3.5GHz, 2.6GHz, and 4.9GHz.

(2) The Hepta-band RRU upgrades FDD to support seven bands from 700MHz to 2.6GHz, reusing 100MHz bandwidth for 5 Gbps networks. The solutions enhance FDD efficiency, with the triple-band 8T8R and Massive MIMO significantly improving coverage and capacity in Cambodia and Malaysia.

(3) The mmWave technology, essential for 5.5G's 10Gbps, features the industry's largest AAU with over 2,000 antenna elements, offering four times the beam density of competitors and overcoming coverage challenges. Successful implementations in China and Finland demonstrate smooth 10Gbps mobile experiences.

(4) LampSite X supports up to 1.6GHz bandwidth in sub-6GHz and mmWave bands for indoor 10Gbps. In Hong Kong, it enabled a 10Gbps business area, enhancing AR experiences and boosting network traffic and merchant revenue.

(5) Huawei's "0 Bit 0 Watt" ap-



The venue of the Mobile World Congress 2024 in Barcelona.

proach for 5.5G equipment, based on "Native Green" design, improves energy efficiency tenfold. Verified in Zhejiang, China, it significantly reduces power consumption in both idle and active modes, achieving all-day energy savings.

(6) MAGICSwave enables Microwave 2T in all scenarios, reaching up to 50Gbps to support 5.5G evolution.

(7) Signal direct injection feeding (SDIF) is applied to all antennas, enhancing energy efficiency by 20% across bands.

(8) Huawei IntelligentRAN utilises large communication models and digital twin systems for L4 network intelligence, optimising costs and efficiency.

Cao Ming underlined the obtaining performance and energy efficiency.

"As we keep walking the walk, we can reach our goals. Huawei's GigaGreen full-series solutions provide the most powerful performance with minimal resource consumption, aiding operators in maintaining their success during the 5.5G era with networks known for their unparalleled performance and energy efficiency," he concluded.

Ahmad al-Obaidly acting CEO of Karwa

Mowasalat (Karwa) has announced Ahmad Hassan al-Obaidly as acting chief executive officer from February 2024. He joined Mowasalat in 2019 as chief operations officer, an official statement said.

Under al-Obaidly's strategic leadership of Mowasalat Operations, the company delivered seamless transportation services for several national and international projects such as AFC Asian Cup 2023, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, The FIFA Arab Cup 2021, FIFA Club World Cup 2020 and Formula 1 events amongst others. Given the company's fulfilment of the Qatar National Vision,



Ahmad Hassan al-Obaidly

al-Obaidly spearheaded the organisation's transition to electric vehicles and the establishment of the respective pilot charging infrastructure. His focus on robust processes and systems has nota-

bly enhanced service delivery and customer satisfaction, emphasising safety and reliability.

Before his tenure in Mowasalat, al-Obaidly was a technical adviser at the Ministry of Finance while successfully delivering key projects during 2016-2019. In parallel, he has held several high-profile board and committee memberships.

From 2008-2016, he worked in the projects department of Qatar Petroleum (now QatarEnergy), with a secondment to Shell plc in the Netherlands. Al-Obaidly holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Qatar University.

Road to the future: Huawei launches first 5.5G Intelligent Core Network

By Kamran Rehmat
Barcelona

At the grand inauguration of the Mobile World Congress (MWC24), an electrifying new product solution event was hosted by Huawei. George Gao, president of Huawei's Cloud Core Network Product Line, unveiled the groundbreaking 5.5G intelligent core network solution. This year marks a monumental milestone in the realm of telecommunications with the advent of 5.5G, heralding a new era of commercialisation. The 5.5G intelligent core network, a cornerstone of this technological evolution, weaves together the threads of service, network, and Operation and Maintenance (O&M) intelligence, promising to elevate the realms of business value and developmental prospects to unprecedented heights.

The previous year witnessed the pioneering deployment of New Calling, reaching an impressive milestone by catering to over 50mn subscribers sprawled across 31 provinces in China. Its success didn't just stop at the borders of China; it extended its verification credentials to regions including Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Asia Pacific, setting the stage for its commercial debut in these territories within the year.

Gao introduced Huawei's New Calling-Advanced solution, a trailblazer in the industry boasting enhanced intelligence and data channel-based interaction capabilities. This innovation is a leap towards the dawn of a multi-modal communication era, offering telecom operators a golden opportunity to revolutionise their service frameworks.

In a bid to enrich the calling experience, Huawei also lifted the curtains on its Multi-mo-



George Gao delivering a keynote address at the Mobile World Congress 2024 in Barcelona on Monday.

dal Communication Function (MCF). This cutting-edge feature empowers users to animate digital avatars with their voice during calls, introducing a layer of personalisation never seen before. Enterprises are not left behind; they can tailor-make their own digital ambassadors, leveraging this for brand promotion like never before.

The quest for traffic monetisation on mobile broadband (MBB) networks has been long and arduous for operators. They faced three formidable technical chasms: inaccessible user experience, lack of dynamic optimisation, and absence of closed-loop operations. Huawei's answer to these challenges is the pioneering Intelligent Personalised Experience (IPE) solution, designed to enable operators to weave experience privileges into service offerings, thereby unlocking new avenues for monetising differentiated experiences.

Traditionally, the core network's user plane would handle each service flow with a single virtual CPU (vCPU), struggling under the weight of high-demand services like 2K or 4K HD video and live streaming. This often leads to vCPU overload and resultant packet loss. Huawei's response is the revolutionary

Intelligent user-defined graphic (UDG). This industry-first solution promises a seamless 10Gbps experience across the board.

The introduction of the Digital Assistant & Digital Expert (DAE), powered by the multi-modal large model, is set to transform O&M from a traditional "experts+tools" model to an intelligence-driven "DAE+manual assistance" paradigm. This innovation is poised to automate 80% of trouble tickets, a significant leap from the erstwhile fully manual processes. Moreover, DAE champions intent-driven O&M, sidelining manual decision-making.

In an era where expert cultivation in a domain could stretch over five years, the multi-modal large model stands out with its ability to be trained and updated in mere weeks.

With the launch of 5.5G in 2024, Huawei is embarking on a collaborative journey with operators and partners globally, aiming to spearhead novel innovations in networks, cloud, and intelligence. This collective endeavour is set to catalyse the 5G business landscape and nurture a vibrant industry ecosystem, paving the way for an intelligent digital transformation that promises to redefine the future.

Halal Qatar concludes at Katara



The 12th edition of Halal Qatar Festival concluded on Monday at Katara - Cultural Village with strong participation from livestock breeders, also from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE. The six-day event at the southern part of Katara attracted a large number of visitors, who expressed great interest in enjoying part of the integral heritage and traditions of life in Qatar and the region. There were beauty contests for goats and sheep as well. Salman Mohamed al-Nuaimi, head of the organising committee of the festival, expressed his happiness at the immense success of the festival.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SAMEER KUNIYIL VAISHAMBETH

holder of

Indian Passport No. Z3683911
QID No. 28035600728

hereby change my name

from

SAMEER KUNIYIL VAISHAMBETH

to

SAMEER KAIVELIKKAL

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

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Indian Passport No. T8261378
QID No. 31435601034

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KIANA KEVIN DSOUZA

to

KIYANA KEVIN D'SOUZA

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THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
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within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

QM presents partner exhibitions, commissions at Design Doha Biennial

Qatar Museums (QM) has revealed a wide array of partner exhibitions and commissioned works as part of Design Doha.

The biennial showcase for excellence and innovation in the design community in Qatar and the Mena region has kicked off with a week of special events and exhibition openings running until February 28, with programming running through August 5.

Established under the leadership of QM's chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Design Doha will be a new platform for practitioners from across the Arab world, helping to build professional pathways and engage with the acclaimed design professionals from around the world who will convene at the event.

Design Doha events are taking place within Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD). The commissions which will be presented as part of Design Doha are: Desert by Amine El Gotaibi (The Ned), Doha Dragon by Joris Laarman (Msheireb), and Afterimage of the Beginning by Choi Byung Hoon (National Museum of Qatar).

The exhibitions which will be presented as part of Design Doha are: "Room of Azerbaijan" at M7 - Profiles Café (until today); "Craft and Symbol: The Evolution of Contemporary Design in Turkey" at Galleria, MDD (until today); "Infinite Stitches: Weaving a Dance between Tradition and Trend" at M7 - The Cutting Studio (until March 30); "Embrace Blue" at Sahat Al Nakheel, MDD (until March



Amine El Gotaibi



Bunch of Mottos

30); Msheireb to Milan FROMM. Studio, at M7 (until March 8); "The World As We Know It Is Changing" at Galleria, MDD (until today); "Cultural Kinship" at M7, Studio 7 (until March 30); "Crafting Uzbekistan: Tradition in Threads" at M7, Learning Space (until March 30); "Forgotten Spaces: An Immersive Installation of Carpets and Tapestries" at Galleria, MDD (until March 30); "Virtual Visions and DAUP" - Interactive Installation by Qatar University at Sahat Al Nakheel, MDD (until tomorrow); Jalset Sawa Booth by Studio EF at M7 - 1st Floor (until March 30); "Momenta

Contemplation" at Msheireb Company House (until March 30); "Dalu: The Home of Artistic Collaborations" at Galleria, MDD (until March 30); "Bariid" by Altqadam at Sahat Al Wadi, MDD (until March 30); Kuwait Design Hub: An Eco-Cultural Tapestry at Galleria, MDD (until tomorrow); Bunch of Mottos at Galleria, MDD (until March 30); Anatomy of a Majlis at Galleria, MDD (until March 9); Sonic Fields at Liwan Design Studios and Labs (until March 30); Jotun Space at Galleria, MDD (until March 30); Ripples Of Hope by Asma Derouiche at M7, Studio7.



QIB launches 'exclusive' auto finance offer

QIB has launched its yearly 'Auto Finance' offer coinciding with the holy month of Ramadan, valid until end-April, providing an 'exclusive' opportunity for both new and existing customers to enjoy exceptional deals from exclusive dealers and brands. The salient features include fully Shariah-compliant finance packages, including a flat profit rate starting from 2.63% along with fixed monthly instalments and no administration charges. Moreover, customers can benefit from an additional discount on the preferential rate when purchasing electric and hybrid vehicles, emphasising QIB's commitment to environmental sustainability and encouraging customers to make eco-friendly choices.

Customers will enjoy additional benefits, such as a complimentary credit card for the first year, a grace period up to six months for Qatari customers and three months for expatriates, a complimentary QIB-MyBook subscription, and comprehensive Takaful coverage at attractive rate of 1.60%. D Anand, QIB general manager (Personal Banking Group) stated,

"The Auto Finance offer reflects our commitment to providing exceptional value and memorable experiences for our customers by offering them competitive profit rates and exclusive benefits.

"We are pleased to introduce a special offer with reduced profit rates for Green Finance, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and eco-friendly practices.

"We thank all of the car dealers and brands that are collaborating with us as we are delighted to offer our valued customers the chance to own the car of their choice," D Anand added.

In line with its commitment to the Qatar National Vision 2030, QIB has launched this offer to provide customers with an opportunity to make sustainable choices that contribute to a better future.

According to a study published by the International Energy Agency in 2023, the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles plays a crucial role in reducing carbon emissions and combating climate change. QIB further helps track the carbon footprint of its customers through an added feature - 'Carbon Emission Tracker', in its mobile app.

GIRARD-PERREGAUX



Free Bridge Meteorite

Out of this world



مجوهرات الفردان
Alfardan Jewellery



Girard-Perregaux unveils a new addition to its famous Bridges Collection. This latest model embraces modernity while simultaneously upholding the marque's fondness for symmetrical styling. Incorporating two meteorite plates, the Free Bridge Meteorite unites avant-garde design with cutting-edge materials. Quite simply, this latest model is out of this world.

A fondness for symmetry since the 1860s

The famous Bridges is legendary within the watch industry. Regarded as the oldest mechanical signature within the field of Haute Horlogerie, its origins date back to the 1860s. Over time, the bridges have evolved, encompassing different shapes, finishes and materials. Now, the Manufacture has, once again, reimagined the structural components famously located front of house and presented them in a new, highly inventive way.

In 1889, La Esmeralda, a chronometer featuring three gold bridges, a tourbillon and an elaborately engraved case, won a gold medal at the Paris Universal Exhibition. Like the prize-winning pocket watch, the Free Bridge Meteorite is endowed with an inverted movement with bridges located to the front, the balance wheel at 6 o'clock and the spring barrel positioned directly above. This imbues the display with a becoming symmetry, a characteristic it shares with the legendary Tourbillon with Three Gold Bridges of the 19th century.

Fulsome, skeletonised, dauphine-style hour and minute hands sit atop a bridge that straddles various wheels belonging to the gear train and motion works. This tendency to reveal parts normally positioned out of sight



endues the model with a unique appearance. It is a design approach that is also manifest with the openworked spring barrel, located below 12 o'clock, that affords views of the mainspring in various states of tension.

A horological canvas enriched with multiple depths and various textures

The display sits beneath a sapphire crystal box that drinks in light, illuminating the various indications. At the base of the neoteric dial, the aptly-named Neo Bridge spans the mainplate, supporting the balance. Throughout

the design, the Manufacture has masterfully played with different depths and textures. The suspended indexes are positioned on a flange and project over the surfaces below, again serving to reinforce the model's distinctive three-dimensional styling. The 44 mm stainless steel case is endowed with a tasteful blend of polished and satin-finished surfaces, while the crown is enriched with a blend of polished and sandblasted facets.

Two meteorite plates deliver an unworldly allure

As its names implies, the watch incorporates

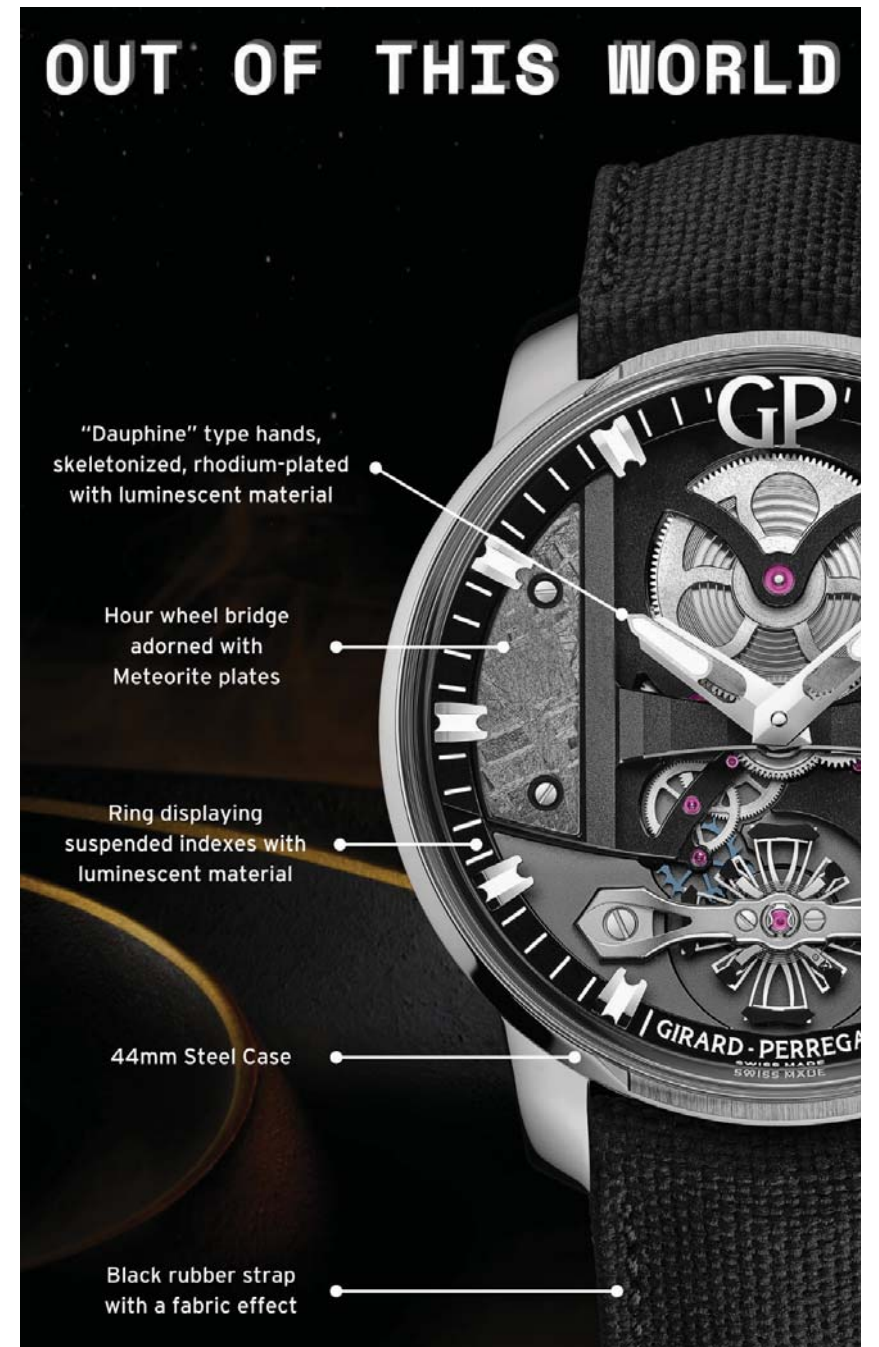
fragments from the asteroid belt. Discovered in Namibia, the Gibeon meteorite is composed of an iron-nickel alloy, incorporating small amounts of cobalt and phosphorus. The meteorite features naturally occurring flow lines termed the Widmanstätten pattern. This endows the fragments with their own identity, making each watch unique and rare. The intricate arrangement of lines, together with the textured surface of the meteorite, delivers an alluring tonal contrast.

The central bridge of the watch features a marquetry of two meteorite plates, each retained with two gleaming screws. The creation of these plates is protracted and complex. Everything begins with the slicing of the Gibeon meteorite. Thereafter, the slices are machined into the desired shape and pierced with two holes to accommodate the aforementioned screws. Subsequently, each plate is treated in order to accentuate the Widmanstätten pattern, a process that has to be carefully mastered to avoid eroding too much of the material. Finally, the plates are rhodium-plated, providing a protective layer that prevents the iron-rich meteorite from corroding.

Silicium technology

Consistent with its avant-garde design, the Free Bridge Meteorite is equipped with a contemporary, self-winding movement, the Calibre GP01800-2085. An evolution of the existing Calibre GP01800, this latest iteration features up-to-the-minute know-how. The escape wheel, pallet lever and the arms of the elaborately shaped balance wheel are formed of silicium, a lightweight material that is not liable to corrosion.

Made within a laboratory setting, free of dust, silicium components can be formed into intricate shapes not possible using traditional milling or stamping techniques. This freedom



to create intricate shapes means that the geometry of components can be optimised.

Silicium has a low coefficient of friction, mitigating wear and thereby augmenting durability. Moreover, silicium is unaffected by changing temperatures and is less susceptible to magnetic fields when compared with traditional materials.

With the advent of the Free Bridge Meteorite, Girard-Perregaux has produced a variable inertia balance and escapement in the cutting-edge material. The resultant balance is less sensitive to adverse influences such as magnetism and shocks. Moreover, the enhanced shock resistance confers superior rate stability, thereby augmenting precision.

Unquestionably modern, the Free Bridge Meteorite incorporates several traditional ma-

terials synonymous with fine watchmaking. Movement components are embellished with classical Côtes de Genève, bevelling and snailing as well as sandblasted finishes. Consistent with all Girard-Perregaux Manufacture movements, the Calibre GP01800-2085 is also engraved with the Eagle emblem.

While the Free Bridge Meteorite pushes the limits of horological creativity and performance, it shares several characteristics with other members of the Bridges collection, including the legendary arrow-shaped bridges, first seen in the 1867. Today, the Maison's inventive spirit is perpetuated with the release of the new Free Bridge Meteorite.

The Free Bridge Meteorite goes on sale in March 2024 and will be available worldwide in all authorised Girard-Perregaux retailers.



Queen Rania calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Queen Rania of Jordan has called for immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the Palestinian right to self-determination, asking to stop all the destruction happening over there.

"We need a ceasefire, a cease to the destruction, a cease to the displacement, a cease to the deprivation by design. This war must end now. The inhuman obstruction of the aid delivery must end and the hostages and detainees must go home," Queen Rania said in a powerful speech at Web Summit Qatar 2024.

"But that is only the beginning. Ultimately, Palestinians want what most us take for granted - the right to self-

determination, the ability to govern their own lives in dignity and security and freedom from occupation. These things are only possible through the establishment of the Southern Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel," she stressed. Queen Rania started her speech noting that humans are by nature story tellers and that is how they make sense of the world. She explained: "Every selfie, status update and video we share adds a few more lines to the story that we are constantly writing and rewriting about ourselves. How can anyone feel that they belong to a world where their stories fade into the background. For decades one story has been obscured and relegated to a footnote, a narrative authored by someone else. It is the story of Palestine." She noted that

for too long, Palestinians have been degraded, dehumanised and discredited, turned into a set of people unto whom anything can be done without any consequences. "Their status as occupied people is lost over. Their diversity is disregarded. Instead Palestinians have been cast as a security threat. Since three quarters of a century, for the first time people around the world are getting a glimpse of what it means to be a Palestinian," she added.

"Scrolling through the scenes and images of a merciless war, I find myself thinking it can't get any worse. And then, it does and gets to new lows. Actions once unthinkable are now in common place. Hospitals under fire, places of worship destroyed and many more," she lamented.

She said that in last 75 years,

Palestinians have not known a single day of genuine peace. She highlighted: "When we fail to stand up for all these rights, we stand up for all that is wrong. Palestinian solidarity cannot become a passing trend. The millions who have amplified their voices can not let the story of Palestine fade into the background once more."

"Public pressure can write the future. Collective actions have compelled to take steps on issues thought to be impossible. Make no mistake, there is nothing more powerful than an informed, indignant global community calling for end to a great injustice. Because change is possible, injustice is reversible. But the onus is on us. We must insist on a world where peace, dignity and freedom are inevitable," concluded Queen Rania.

PM meets CEO of Web Summit

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with CEO of the Web Summit Katherine Maher, on the sidelines of the Web Summit Qatar 2024, hosted in Doha. The meeting discussed aspects of co-operation and topics of joint interest. (QNA)



HE the Minister of State and Chairman of QFZ/DVC Dr Ahmad al-Sayed witnesses the signing ceremony between Ginkgo Bioworks, Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ), and Doha Venture Capital (DVC) for the establishment of the first Centre for Unified Biosecurity Excellence in Doha (CUBE-D) within Qatar Free Zones.

Ginkgo Bioworks partners with QFZ to set up pathogen monitoring centre

Ginkgo Bioworks, which is building the leading platform for cell programming and biosecurity, signed an agreement yesterday with Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) and Doha Venture Capital (DVC) to build the first Centre for Unified Biosecurity Excellence in Doha (CUBE-D) within Qatar Free Zones.

The signing took place alongside QFZ's and DVC's participation in the Web Summit Qatar at a ceremony attended by HE the Minister of State and Chairman of QFZ/DVC Dr Ahmad al-Sayed; HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai, who is also vice-chairman of QFZ/DVC; and Matthew McKnight, general manager for Biosecurity, Ginkgo Bioworks.

CUBE-D's advanced platform is expected to serve as a nucleus for global pathogen monitoring efforts and be a key hub in Ginkgo's bioradar network. Supporting global programmes modelled in part after the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Traveler Genomic Surveillance (TGS) programme, which tracks and analyses pathogens collected at seven international airports in the US, CUBE-D will be a foundational piece of biosecurity and health security infrastructure in Ginkgo's multi-continent, integrated early warning system for biological threats.

CUBE-D plans to support analysis of data collected from pathogen monitoring stations in both Qatar and partner countries, such as airports, municipalities, and agricultural sites by leveraging cutting-edge analytical platforms powered by artificial intelligence and developed by Ginkgo. Environmental and other anonymous, non-clinical samples will be regularly scanned for signals of emerging outbreaks, offering insight into how pathogens travel and evolve and building detection capabilities for natural, accidental, or intentional biothreats.

Advanced sequencing and bioinformatics tools aim to pinpoint the genetic signatures of pathogens and provide early warning for global health and national security

leaders in as close to real-time as possible. Coupled with Ginkgo's leading epidemiology and risk analytics platforms, this type of biointelligence will feed into predictive models to facilitate rapid response, such as medical countermeasures, before a biological threat impacts lives and economies.

Al-Sayed said: "We are delighted to welcome Ginkgo Bioworks, a pioneer in the biotech space and an anchor player joining an expanding community of innovative companies, within the free zones in Qatar. Ginkgo's partnership with our tech development fund, DVC, will foster innovation and enhance the overall biotech ecosystem within Qatar and the broader region."

Jason Kelly, CEO of Ginkgo Bioworks, said: "The world needs effective biosecurity. Building hubs like CUBE-D to connect Ginkgo's network of international biosurveillance nodes transcends regionalism and lays a foundation for the future. After all, biology doesn't respect borders. I am proud of Ginkgo's ability to technically and socially synthesise this global immune system, one node and hub at a time. Everybody's health is connected, and CUBE-D is a foundational step forward for global biosecurity."

McKnight said: "CUBE-D represents the next generation of biosecurity infrastructure. By leveraging lessons from Covid-19, Ginkgo is building a global bioradar system to detect a wide range of known and unknown biothreats. As a central connectivity hub with over two-thirds of the world's population within an eight-hour flight, we believe Qatar and its free zones are ideally positioned to anchor these bioradar efforts."

With the new site in Doha providing expanded monitoring capabilities into the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, and connecting into Ginkgo's existing network across the world, the launch of CUBE-D will bring the world closer to the goal of creating global infrastructure to protect against biological risks.

Self-belief helped Qatar deliver a great World Cup, says al-Thawadi

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The secretary-general of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy HE Hassan al-Thawadi, noted that Qatar's stupendous delivery of FIFA World Cup 2002 was due to the self-belief in setting up goals and realising them.

Al-Thawadi was interacting with Ayman Mohyeldin of MSNBC at the ongoing Web Summit Qatar 2024 yesterday at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

"What guided us all through the preparation to the World Cup was the unwavering belief in our ability as we set very ambitious goals which guided our team to achieve them. Our leadership believed and supported us thoroughly to realise our goals. We harnessed this opportunity to try to achieve every single aspect of that opportunity and finally delivered a great tournament," al-Thawadi said.

Al-Thawadi said that for 13 years, the entire organising



HE Hassan al-Thawadi addressing the session yesterday.

PICTURE: Web Summit Qatar 2024

team went through many difficult cycles and different challenges. "Every challenge we faced was an opportunity for us in achieving our goals. We had various difficulties but never ever did any doubt creep into our minds," he noted.

"It was the self-belief that took us forward despite criticism from various corners and cynicism that was raised against

hosting the World Cup in Qatar. People raised several doubts about the compact World Cup, about the infrastructure as well several other aspects of the tournament. We entered into the process of hosting the World Cup knowing exactly what we wanted and what we can do," explained, al-Thawadi.

The official noted that building the bridges between the cul-

tures was very important part of the whole effort. He said: "We were confident right from the beginning that we have a very talented population capable of accomplishing and achieving many things. It was the belief that the Arab World as well as the Middle East has the capability to set its own narrative and write its own story. In a sense, it was welcoming the entire world to be part of our story."

Al-Thawadi said that as a nation, Qatar always believes in the transformative power of sports and that is how the country approached the World Cup 2022.

"We had hosted several major events but nothing of the magnitude of World Cup. We had worked with the previous World Cups, Champions League as well as Olympics to understand closely about major events and by 2022 we had a great team of workforce who had every idea of hosting the biggest sporting event in the world. Any major event that comes to Qatar will be elevated to the next level for the better," he added.

Strong focus on women in tech at Web Summit Qatar

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

Web Summit Qatar, the first in the country and the region, recorded an impressive participation of women during the event, according to Web Summit CEO Katherine Maher.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Maher said: "37% of our attendees are women and 30% are female speakers, two figures that we're quite proud of. As you know, in all of our global events, we have a strong focus on women and technology and seek to always continue to improve those ratios towards gender parity."

One in three startups participating in the startup programme has a woman on the founding team, Maher emphasised. Also, the Women in Tech Lounge will



Web Summit CEO Katherine Maher. PICTURE: Stephen McCarthy/Web Summit Qatar via Sportsfile

welcome organisations, including Women of Qatar and Women Techmakers, along with thousands of women in tech attendees from all over the world.

According to Maher, Web Summit had anticipated about 7,500 attendees this year. However, 15,453 attendees from 118

countries gathered at the event, which will run until February 29 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

She said Web Summit Qatar is "the largest gathering of startups in the Middle East" with 1,043 startups from 81 countries showcasing their vision to attendees on the event floor. Ten percent of attending startups come from Qatar, while 20% come from Africa, and 50% from the wider Mena region.

As many as 401 investors from 46 countries and some of the largest funds in the world have attended the event to explore investment opportunities in one of the fastest-growing markets in the world and to meet the next generation of startups.

Maier also thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who toured the venue and met some of the

partners and several participating startups. Similarly, Maier lauded Qatar's \$1bn investment in both international and regional venture capital funds, which was announced by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani during Web Summit Qatar's opening night.

"The first-ever venture capital funds programme is meant to foster innovation in the startup ecosystem and to attract international VCs and startups to the GCC. As His Excellency emphasised, technological innovation is rapidly advancing and it is our collective duty to ensure that this progress continues to serve the greater good by balancing innovation with ethical principles and guiding progress with moral wisdom for the benefit of all," Maier said,

QRDI Council stresses on innovation at event

Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation (QRDI) Council kicked off the Web Summit Qatar 2024 with a dynamic lineup of sessions featuring industry luminaries and thought leaders from around the globe.

Day one commenced with a lineup of sessions curated by the QRDI Council, featuring speakers and RDI leaders from diverse sectors. Discussions and presentations spanned crucial topics essential for fostering innovation, research and development initiatives.

Attendees were treated to dialogues covering Lars Gehrman, chief digital officer of the QIC Group, Ravi Belani, CEO and founder of Alchemist Accelerator, Mohamed ElHafiz Abubakar ElTahir, senior manager at Milaha, Rana Lonnen, managing director of CVC Novartis, and more.

The sessions provided insights into nurtur-



ing startups, accessing funding opportunities, and leveraging technology for societal impact. The day culminated with a panel emphasising the importance of supporting education innovation to address global challenges. As

anticipation mounts for the remaining days of the summit, the QRDI Council looks forward to further collaboration and knowledge exchange propelling Qatar's innovation landscape forward.

1,043 startups from 81 countries attending Web Summit Qatar

From Page 1

The 401 investors include some of the largest funds in the world, attending to explore investment opportunities in one of the fastest-growing markets in the world, and meet the next generation of startups. Investors at the event include Peak XV managing director G V Ravishanker, Global Ventures founder Noor Sweid, 500 Global's Christine Tsai and Khailee Ng, and Invest Qatar's Ali Alwaleed al-Thani.

As many as 896 members of the media are attending Web Summit Qatar 2024 which has trade delegations from countries including Canada, Turkiye, Bahrain, Pakistan, Nigeria and Kenya exploring business opportunities in the

Middle East. Also taking part in the event are six community partners - groups that support and prioritise under-represented people across the technology industry. Web Summit runs the world's largest technology events. Web Summit in Lisbon, Web Summit Rio in South America, Collision in North America, RISE in Asia and Web Summit Qatar have gathered half a million people since Web Summit's beginnings as a 150-person conference in Dublin in 2009.

Web Summit's mission has been to create software that enables meaningful connections between the CEOs, founders, investors, members of the media, politicians and cultural icons who are reshaping the world.

QFZ in pact with Germany's ZE-KI to set up AI research centre

The Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) and Zentrum für Erlebbar Kunstliche Intelligenz und Digitalisierung e.V. 'ZE-KI e.V.' (Centre for Tangible Artificial Intelligence and Digitalisation) based in Germany have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish an applied research centre of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within Qatar's free zones.

The event took place during a ceremony held on the sidelines of QFZ's participation in the Web Summit Qatar at the Qatar Startup Pavilion, alongside partners from Qatari ministries, leading authorities and organisations.

The MoU was signed by HE the Minister of State and Chairman of Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) Dr Ahmad al-Sayed and Prof Dr Sahin Albayrak, the chairman of Zentrum für Erlebbar Kunstliche

Intelligenz und Digitalisierung e.V. 'ZE-KI e.V.', in the presence of German ambassador Lothar Freitschler and senior executives from both entities.

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai, who is also vice-chairman of QFZ, said: "In our quest for technological innovation and economic diversification, the partnership between QFZ and the ZE-KI Centre for Tangible Artificial Intelligence and Digitalisation through this memorandum of understanding signifies a key achievement and highlights our commitment to creating a dynamic environment for AI research and digital growth within the free zones in Qatar."

Al-Sayed said: "This MoU is not just an agreement but also a reflection of our vision to develop



HE Dr Ahmad al-Sayed and Prof Dr Sahin Albayrak during the signing ceremony on the sidelines of the Web Summit Qatar 2024.

an Artificial Intelligence cluster that drives sustainable growth and prosperity aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the third National Development Strategy.

"With this step, QFZ reaffirms its commitment to the development of the emerging technology sector within the framework of its strategic partnership with the

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in Qatar."

Formalising collaboration between QFZ and ZE-KI, the MoU aims to facilitate the establishment of an applied AI research centre in Qatar's free zones. The centre, commonly known as the ZE-KI Doha Centre, will be operated by ZE-KI whilst QFZ will support, encourage, and facilitate interaction between ZE-KI Doha Centre and investors established in the free zones in Qatar, as well as other relevant institutions such as educational providers, and entities, such as MCIT and the Artificial Intelligence Committee to ensure strategic alignment.

Albayrak said: "The establishment of the ZE-KI Doha Centre within the free zones in Qatar is a reflection of our commitment to advancing the field of arti-

ficial intelligence in the Gulf and Middle East regions. This MoU is about more than building a research facility; it's about creating a nexus for innovation, where industry and academia can converge to push the boundaries of AI and digitalisation."

The partnership with ZE-KI showcases QFZ's commitment to the development of the digital industry, which focuses on emerging sectors and partnerships with leading organisations coupled with significant investments in infrastructure. QFZ is focused on key business sectors where it offers a strong competitive advantage for businesses, such as emerging tech, logistics and trading, industrial and consumer, Marsa maritime development, aerospace and defence, food and agritech, and biomedical sciences.

QNB launches 24x7 smart card machines

On the sidelines of its participation at the Web Summit Qatar as a diamond sponsor, QNB, the largest financial institutions in the Middle East and Africa, has launched an "innovative" 24x7 smart card machine that provides customers with a seamless card replacement and renewal services at their own convenience.

Amongst the key features of the new machines, the 24x7 accessibility will ensure that customers can access the provided card services without any constraints of traditional banking hours with a customer-centric and user-friendly interface, on-the-spot processing and with the latest security technology.

The smart card machine will be available in QNB Msheireb, Medina Centrale, C-Ring Road, J Mall, LuLu Al Khor, Doha Festival City and Landmark branches. Commenting on the launch of the campaign, Adel Ali al-Malki, senior executive vice-president, QNB Retail Banking Group said:



"We are very pleased to launch this new service and we are committed to leverage the cutting-edge technology to enhance the banking experience for our customers. With the introduction of the 24x7 smart card machine, we aim to provide a seamless and extremely convenient solution that is relevant and rewarding to our customers."

The launch of this service comes as part of the bank's commitment towards investing in greater digitisation and innovative solutions that help

to simplify banking services for its customers.

QNB Group currently ranks as the most valuable bank brand in the Middle East and Africa. Through its subsidiaries and associate companies, the Group extends to some 28 countries across three continents providing a comprehensive range of advance products and services.

The total number of employees is more than 30,000, operating through 900 locations, with an ATM network in excess of 4,800 machines.

Creativity, critical thinking stressed amid AI growth

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

Creativity, critical thinking and adaptability are some of the key factors that both companies and employees should prioritise amid rapid technological advancements, such as automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

This was revealed yesterday during Web Summit Qatar's first talk titled 'The AI Moment', which featured Mohamed al-Hardan, head of Tech at Qatar Investment Authority (QIA); and Sachin Dev Duggal, founder and chief wizard at Builder.ai.

The discussion, which was moderated by France 24 presenter and journalist Julia Sieger, included topics, such as the impact of AI on employment and how it is expected to automate tasks of certain jobs.

According to al-Hardan, structural unemployment may occur in the next decade across the globe as AI is going to further automation and the development of robotics. This also puts the gig economy at risk, he further pointed out.

While repetitive tasks could be replaced by AI, al-Hardan emphasised the need for humans to evolve and the need to focus on creativity and "on EQ as opposed to IQ."



(From left) Sachin Dev Duggal, Mohamed al-Hardan and Julia Sieger during the session yesterday. PICTURE: Web Summit Qatar

"I think jobs are at risk, but not all jobs are at risk. Humans will evolve around the evolution of AI. And I think those that are unable and are not capable of evolving will be left behind," al-Hardan noted.

Duggal, meanwhile, underscored the potential of AI to replace certain tasks and elaborated on the common misconceptions about tasks, jobs and careers, emphasising that these are "very different atomic units of work."

He said the world is "re-entering the DaVinci era," where polymaths, creativity and critical thinking are more valuable than just having STEM skills.

Asked if AI should be regulated, al-Hardan said regulators could face potential issues

considering that AI is a rapidly evolving technology and that regulations could limit the further development of Artificial Intelligence.

On Builder.ai's \$250m Series D funding, which was led by QIA, al-Hardan lauded the company's ability to reduce the cost and the time required to ship an application.

"Just as Space X reduces the cost of accessing space, Builder.ai is reducing the cost for entrepreneurs, enterprises and founders to access the digital economy," al-Hardan explained.

From a due diligence perspective, al-Hardan noted that QIA is confident that Builder.ai genuinely utilises Artificial Intelligence, unlike other companies that claim to specialise in AI.

Qatar to host first-ever Shell Eco-marathon in Middle East



At the Shell booth at Web Summit Qatar 2024, visitors can get up close to a Shell Eco-marathon vehicle and learn more about the programme.

For the first time ever, one of the world's leading energy-efficiency engineering programmes for students, Shell Eco-marathon, is coming to the Middle East and will be hosted in Qatar under the patronage of HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, chairperson of Qatar Museums.

The announcement was made at Web Summit Qatar 2024 yesterday by Richard Tallant, executive vice-president of GTL and managing director of Shell Companies Qatar, together with university students who competed at last year's Shell Eco-marathon Asia-Pacific and Middle East regional championship.

Commenting on the news, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa, said: "Bringing the Shell Eco-marathon to Qatar marks a significant milestone in our commitment to fostering innovation and sustainability among our nation's youth and the wider region. This event marks the beginning of the collaboration between our upcoming Qatar Auto Museum and Shell to empower young minds to tackle the pressing challenges of energy efficiency and environmental stewardship. This collaboration underscores

Qatar's dedication to shaping a brighter and more sustainable future for generations to come."

Shell Eco-marathon is a global academic programme which tests student teams to design and manufacture energy-efficient vehicles that can travel the farthest with the least amount of fuel. It aims to push the boundaries of what is technically possible and inspire young people to become leading scientists and engineers of future energy solutions.

The programme provides a platform for teams to explore every aspect of design and technology, using their Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) skills to build their own ultra-energy efficient cars, and then take them out on the track in competition.

Every year, three regional championships are held around the world. They are designed for experienced teams to push new boundaries, encouraging innovation and novel approaches to achieving energy efficiency.

Tallant said: "We are thrilled that Shell Eco-marathon is making its debut in the Middle East and will be hosted in Qatar. This decision reflects Qatar's strong

commitment to innovation and education and Qatar's world-class infrastructure will provide the perfect backdrop for teams to showcase their energy-efficient vehicles. I would like to express my gratitude to HE Sheikha Al Mayassa for her support in bringing Shell Eco-marathon to the country, and to our strategic partners who will help to make this event possible. This marks a significant milestone in our commitment to fostering sustainable innovation in the region."

At the upcoming 2024 Asia-Pacific and Middle East regional event in Indonesia in July, teams from Qatar University, Texas A&M University at Qatar and University of Doha for Science and Technology, will compete with their purpose-built vehicles.

Student teams can participate in one of two vehicle classes: Urban Concept or Prototype. Urban Concept vehicles have familiar road car features and more closely resemble passenger cars. The Prototype category consist of ultra-efficient, lightweight vehicles which have the potential to reach record breaking distances using the least amount of fuel possible.

The cars are powered by one of three energy sources: internal combustion engine, battery electric or hydrogen fuel cell. They employ advanced engineering techniques, aerodynamics, lightweight materials and innovative designs to maximise efficiency.

On top of technical skills, Shell Eco-marathon also encourages collaboration, teamwork and problem-solving skills among the participating students. It provides a platform for young minds to showcase their talent, creativity and passion for engineering and sustainability.

At the Shell booth at Web Summit Qatar 2024, visitors had a chance to get up close to a Shell Eco-marathon vehicle and learn more about the programme. Shell Eco-marathon Qatar is set to take place in the first quarter of 2025 at the Lusail International Circuit.

Ooredoo Qatar is official telecom partner for Web Summit Qatar 2024

Ooredoo Qatar has announced its pivotal role as the Official Telecom Partner for Web Summit Qatar 2024, the world's largest technology conference and a gathering of technology leaders, entrepreneurs, startups and experts. This event marks the first time the Web Summit is hosted in the Middle East, reflecting Qatar's significant role in the region and the remarkable strides in technological development it has made in creating such a robust and internationally

acclaimed digital infrastructure. The sponsorship showcases Ooredoo's steadfast commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and technological advancement in Qatar and the broader region, a statement said. Supporting such an event that not only demonstrates the latest trends in technology, but also connects a new generation of innovators in the Middle East to global opportunities, aligns perfectly with Ooredoo's strategic objectives and ongoing efforts to invest in future growth.

Microsoft showcasing latest Data, AI solutions

Microsoft is showcasing its latest solutions in Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) at Web Summit Qatar 2024, as a diamond sponsor, a statement said.

Alongside its partners Qatar Datamation Systems, ICT Qatar, Mannai Corporation and EBLA corp, Microsoft is demonstrating how its Microsoft AI, Azure AI and Azure OpenAI Service technologies are empowering organisations of all sizes and across all industries to create cutting-edge AI solutions that tackle key industry challenges, drive digital transformation efforts and leave a positive impact on society.

The company is also showcasing how it is driving innovation from Qatar to the world by supporting startups, entrepreneurs and developers with the tools, resources, skills and guidance they require to succeed through Microsoft for Startups Founders Hub platform.

Commenting on their participation at the global event, Lana Khalaf, general manager, Microsoft Qatar, said the latest advancements in AI are reshaping



industries, redefining possibilities and unlocking solutions to some of humanity's greatest challenges.

"However, the true potential lies not just in the technology itself, but in the hands of the innovative minds who can harness it effectively to create positive change. At Microsoft, we are committed to empowering these trailblazers across every industry and Web Summit Qatar 2024 serves as the perfect platform for us to connect

with them, showcase our comprehensive suite of solutions, and collaborate on building a brighter future for all."

Microsoft's participation at the summit also provides attendees with the opportunity to engage in several challenges at the company's stand such as building their own copilot with Azure AI Studio. Visitors will also be able to sign up for the "Zero to Hero" Hackathon where they will be building web apps using GitHub Copilot.



CHAIRMAN

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- ✉ P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
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GULF TIMES

Emerging economies face rising debt burden amid 'lost decade' warning

Developing nations spent a record \$443bn on debt service payments in 2022, according to the World Bank, which has warned the situation risks tipping them into crisis and creating a "lost decade" of economic stagnation.

About a dozen developing nations are in default or have global bonds trading at levels that suggest the market is bracing for the country to miss payments, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The World Bank has warned that high borrowing costs have "changed dramatically" the need for developing nations to boost sluggish economic growth.

The multilateral lender's latest warning comes as international bond sales from emerging market governments hit an all-time record of \$47bn in January, led by less risky emerging economies such as Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Romania.

Data published by the Institute of International Finance last week showed global debt levels had touched a new record of \$313tn in 2023 while the debt-to-GDP ratio - a reading indicating a country's ability to pay back debts - across emerging economies also scaled fresh peaks, indicating more potential strains ahead.

The World Bank warned in its Global Economic Prospects report in January that the global economy was set for the weakest half-decade performance in 30 years during 2020-2024, even if recession is avoided.

Global growth is expected to slow for a third consecutive year to 2.4%, before ticking up to 2.7% in 2025.

The growth slowdown is particularly acute for emerging economies, around a third of which have seen no recovery since the Covid-19 pandemic and have per capita income below their 2019 levels.

In 2022, developing countries faced a collective debt stock of about \$9tn, with annual service payments hitting a record \$443bn

If growth remains low, some emerging economies might face having to restructure debt by reprofiling maturities or agreeing haircuts with creditors.

Principle payments of emerging markets' sovereign Eurobonds will spike to \$78.4bn in 2024, from \$43.6bn last year, according to JPMorgan.

The bill due for lower-rated emerging sovereigns will surge to over \$65bn in total for 2024 and 2025 combined, up from just over \$8bn this year.

Countries will need to either find the cash to pay,

or a new lending source to refinance.

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the debt problem that was already weighing down the world's poorer countries. In response, richer countries, meeting in the Group of 20 forum in 2020, created a co-ordinated plan for debt relief called the Common Framework.

It was designed to reflect a new reality: China now lends far more to developing countries than the mostly Western nations of the Paris Club, the body that had overseen international debt negotiations for decades.

As 2023 ended, the Common Framework had yet to produce any meaningful relief. Economists worry that a failure to resolve the stalemate could lead to or deepen economic stagnation for large swaths of the globe.

In 2022, developing countries faced a collective debt stock of about \$9tn, with annual service payments hitting a record \$443bn, according to the World Bank, which estimates that the service burden will continue to grow.

The situation has left roughly 60% of the world's 75 poorest countries in or near debt distress.

The deeper problems in the emerging economies stem from the excessive financialisation of the global economy that has occurred since the 1990s.

The resultant policy dilemmas - rising inequality, greater volatility, reduced room to manage the real economy - are seen continuing to preoccupy policymakers in the decades ahead.

The World Bank and others have warned about a "lost decade" for poorer countries, as debt payments and lack of access to capital diminish resources that could otherwise be used for education, health and the environment.

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Qatar, France moving towards new horizons

QNA
Doha

Experts and officials affirmed the strength of the relations between Qatar and France, built on mutual respect, and characterised by diversity and inclusiveness.

They pointed out, in statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to France demonstrates the strength of the Qatari-French partnership and moving it towards new horizons, especially in the trade and economic fields.

They stressed that Qatari investments in France and French investments in Qatar are the basis of the economic partnership and important tributaries of the two countries economies, noting that France occupies advanced stages in the list of trade partners with Qatar, and the areas of partnership include the energy, technology, trade, and real estate sectors, in addition to coordination and mutual understanding in Regional and international files.

First Vice-Chairman of the Qatar Chamber Mohamed bin Ahmed Twar al-Kuwari underlined the importance of the visit of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to France, in supporting co-operation relations between the two countries at all levels.

He added that there is great interest on the part of the leadership in both countries to develop these relations towards broader horizons, noting that the Amir's visit will strengthen these relations and open new horizons for co-operation between the two countries, especially in the trade and economic fields, which will reflect positively on trade and investment exchange and relations of co-operation and partnership between the business sectors of the two countries.

He pointed out that trade relations between the two countries have witnessed remarkable



Mohamed bin Ahmed Twar al-Kuwari

development in recent years. France is also considered one of the most important trading partners of Qatar, in addition to the fact that there are many cooperation agreements and memorandums of understanding signed between them in many areas of co-operation, he added.

The First Vice-Chairman of the Qatar Chamber pointed out that there are many successful Qatari investments in France in various sectors, as Paris is considered a distinguished investment destination for the Qatari investor, and there are also many French companies operating in the Qatari market in different sectors, where they can increase their investments in Qatar, and benefit from the availability of good infrastructure, investment climate, and investment opportunities in all sectors.

He stressed that the private sector in Qatar and France can play an important role in developing these relations through the establishment of companies, commercial alliances, and investment projects, calling on Qatari and French companies to benefit from the investment advantages and facilities granted to foreign investments in the two countries, and to exploit the opportunities available to enter joint economic alliances.

In the same context, economic expert Dr Abdullah al-Khater said that the Qatari-French relations are long-standing and complex at the level of the state and investors, pointing out that they are characterised by a strategic



Dr Abdullah al-Khater

dimension, and have witnessed diversification after the signing of many co-operation agreements and memorandums of understanding, at the forefront of which is the strategic dialogue agreement between the two countries, and the great consensus between the two countries in visions regarding many Arab, regional and international issues.

Last June, the second strategic dialogue session between Qatar and France was held in Doha, which is an important mechanism to enhance fruitful and constructive cooperation between the two friendly countries, as the strategic relations between the two countries are characterized by complete harmony, convergence in positions, and continuous coordination.

Al-Khater said the Amir's visit demonstrates the strength and solidity of the Qatari-French partnership, as it is expected to address the partnership relations between the two countries, in addition to regional and international files, pointing out that this visit comes at a critical stage in the history of the region, especially the developments in the situation in Gaza, and the necessity of working seriously and persistently to stop the war, stop bloodshed, spare civilians the consequences of military confrontation, and prevent the conflict from expanding, in order to ensure security and stability in all occupied Palestinian territories, in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions and the principle of the two-state solution.

He pointed out that France gives

a high priority to energy security, especially clean energy, noting the effective partnerships in the energy sector with the State of Qatar, as well as its interest in energy challenges at the global level.

Last October, two companies affiliated with QatarEnergy and TotalEnergies signed long-term sale and purchase agreements to supply up to 3.5mn tonnes annually of liquefied natural gas from Qatar to France. Under the two agreements, gas shipments will be delivered to the Fos Cavaou LNG receiving terminal in southern France, starting in 2026 and for 27 years.

TotalEnergies is a partner in the North Field LNG expansion projects, with a 6.25% stake in the North Field East project, and a 9.375% stake in the North Field South project.

According to the latest data from the Planning and Statistics Authority, the volume of trade between Qatar and France amounted to QR8.5bn last year, with the total exports of the State of Qatar to France amounting to QR5.145bn, while the total Qatari imports from the French Republic reached QR3.353bn, and the total amount of Qatari imports from the French Republic reached QR3.353bn. The trade balance surplus is about QR1.79bn in 2023.

According to the same data obtained by the Qatar News Agency (QNA), Qatar's exports to France focused on oil gases and other gaseous hydrocarbons, amounting to QR3.245bn, in addition to various other exports, such as rare gases hydrogen and other non-metals, vinyl chloride polymers, petroleum oils, oils obtained from non-raw bituminous mineral materials, ethylene polymers in their primary forms, and others.

The State of Qatar's imports from the French Republic were concentrated in parts for regular aircraft, helicopters, and drones, amounting to QR335mm, in addition to gold jewellery worth QR202mm, in addition to liquid and frozen perfumes and other products and commodities.

Qatar envoy: Amir's visit culmination of Qatari-French ties

QNA
Paris

Qatar's ambassador in Paris Sheikh Ali bin Jassim al-Thani affirmed that the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to France represents the culmination of steady path of the distinguished historical and strategic relationship between the two nations. In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said the visit highlights the outstanding progress of relations between the two countries, the tremendous advancement the relations have achieved, as well as the joint keenness to upgrade them further in the political, economic, security, investment, and energy fields.

He discussed the long-standing historical relationship between Qatar and France, pointing out that they are evolving and getting stronger, by virtue of the meetings and engagements between the leaderships of the two nations, along with the co-ordination in a variety of fields,

such as their agreement to constantly strive to put an end to upheaval in numerous countries of the region to ultimately achieve peace, particularly the joint efforts of the two nations in Lebanon.

He outlined that the Qatari and French sides underscore the significance of supporting Lebanon and its people to overcome crises, including their commitment to carrying out economic reforms to ensure a more prosperous future for the Lebanese people by emphasising the importance of safeguarding Lebanon's sovereignty and independence.

The second strategic dialogue session between Qatar and France was held at the Amiri Diwan on June 8, 2023, chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna, during which they discussed the strategic relationships between them, the outcomes of the working groups of the strategic dialogue, in addition to the latest regional and global developments, especially the Palestinian cause, Sudan, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, the Horn

of Africa, and the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, the ambassador said.

The two sides lauded the major progress made to strengthen their partnership since the first convention of the first strategic dialogue in March 2022 and reiterated their ironclad commitment to reinforcing co-operation and the full potential of their relationship in all fields, chiefly the outcomes of the dialogue, he added. In the economic field, the ambassador said that the trade exchange figures between the two nations have shown a steady annual growth in recent years, noting that Qatar plays a critical role in securing gas supplies to many countries of the world, including France, noting the role of Qatari investments in supporting the French economy, which it ranked first among investments coming from the Middle East in providing and maintaining job opportunities in France.

He touched on the role of the bilateral fund that was established between the two countries in 2013 with a value of 300mn euros, and renewed in 2023 at the same value, providing the necessary financing for innovative French companies with a promising future.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Prince William pulls out of event due to 'personal matter'

Britain's Prince William, whose wife Catherine is recovering from surgery and father King Charles III is undergoing cancer treatment, yesterday pulled out of attending a memorial service, citing a "personal matter". William's Kensington Palace office declined to elaborate but said Catherine, the Princess of Wales, continued to be "doing well". William had been due to attend the memorial at Windsor Castle, west of London, for the late King Constantine of Greece. The Prince of Wales, who was to have delivered a reading, had called the Greek royal family to let them know he was unable to attend, the palace said.

CRIME

Trio in UK court over alleged right-wing terror plot

Three men appeared in a UK court yesterday over allegations that they were preparing a terrorist attack on an Islamic target, having manufactured a firearm using a 3D printer. Following an investigation into suspected extreme right-wing activity, counter-terror police said that they charged the three men yesterday with preparing for an act of terrorism. The trio appeared at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court and spoke only to confirm their names and ages. They were remanded in custody until their next appearance at the Old Bailey, the country's top criminal court, on March 15.

POLICY

New Zealand set to scrap world-first tobacco ban

New Zealand was set to repeal a world-first law banning tobacco sales for future generations, the government said, even while researchers and campaigners warned of the risk that people could die as a result. Set to take effect from July, the toughest anti-tobacco rules in the world would have banned sales to those born after January 1, 2009, cut nicotine content in smoked tobacco products and reduced the number of tobacco retailers by more than 90%. The new coalition government elected in October confirmed the repeal will happen as a matter of urgency, enabling it to scrap the law without seeking public comment, in line with previously announced plans.

LAW AND ORDER

India court slaps ban on Patanjali medicine ads

India's top court yesterday barred consumer firm Patanjali Ayurved, co-founded by one of country's most popular yoga gurus, from publishing advertisements for its traditional ayurvedic medicines that claim to cure some diseases. The Supreme Court order was issued in an ongoing legal dispute with the Indian Medical Association, which has accused Patanjali of allegedly disparaging other forms of conventional medicines. Yoga guru Baba Ramdev, who co-founded Patanjali, has previously denied the criticism and accused some doctors of spreading propaganda against traditional medicines.

French army chief visits India



French army chief General Pierre Schill shakes hands with his Indian counterpart General Manoj Pandey during his ceremonial reception in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

EU leaders reject sending troops to Ukraine

AFP
Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron faced uneasy reactions from European allies and a warning from the Kremlin yesterday after he refused to rule out the dispatch of Western ground troops to Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion. Macron said after a conference of European leaders yesterday that "everything that is necessary" must be done to ensure the defeat of Russia, including deploying troops.

takes to ensure that Russia cannot win this war," Macron added.

Macron had refused to say more about France's position, citing the need for "strategic ambiguity" but saying the issue was mentioned "among the options".

"We are convinced that the defeat of Russia is indispensable to security and stability in Europe," Macron said.

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, accused by critics of being too cosy with Moscow, said after the meeting that there was disunity on the issue among European leaders.

"There are countries that are ready to send their own soldiers to Ukraine, there are countries that say never - Slovakia is among them - and there are countries that say that this proposal should be considered," he said.

Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson of Sweden, which is set to join Nato, poured cold water on the idea, saying "it's not on the cards at all for the moment".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in a tetchy message on X: "We agreed that everyone must do more for Ukraine in Paris yesterday. Ukraine needs weapons, ammunition and air defence. We are working on it. It is clear: there will be no ground troops from European countries or Nato."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that, if Nato troops appeared in Ukraine, "we (would) need to speak not about a possibility but of the inevitability" of confrontation.

"This is absolutely not in the interests of these countries, they should be aware of this," he added.

A Nato official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, emphasised "there are no plans for Nato combat troops on the ground in Ukraine" despite the "unprecedented military support" from the alliance.

The Italian government said support for Ukraine did not include sending troops.

"When we talk about sending troops, we must be very cautious because we must not make people think we are at war with Russia," said Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani.

"We are not at war with Russia," he said.

But the UK issued a somewhat more circumspect reaction, with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman saying there were no plans for a "large-scale" troop deployment to Ukraine.

It is understood that any Western troops eventually sent to Ukraine would have no mandate to fight Russian forces but work on priorities outlined by Macron in his news conference, including de-mining, securing neighbouring countries such as Moldova and thwarting cyberattacks.

"We are not talking about soldiers on the front line, in combat, but about specific activities, far from the front," said Rym Momtaz, consultant research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).

India's first astronauts will inspire nation, says Modi

AFP
New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday toasted the four astronauts preparing for the nation's first crewed orbital mission, saying the latest advance in spacefaring would inspire the next generation.

"The countdown of the rocket inspires thousands of children in India, and those making paper planes today dream of becoming scientists like you", Modi said.

The Gaganyaan - or "Skycraft" - mission is slated to launch the astronauts into Earth's orbit in 2025, an important measure of

the Indian Space Research Organisation's technical capabilities.

"All of you are opening new doors of future possibilities," Modi told ISRO scientists yesterday.

Visiting the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in the southern state of Kerala, Modi presented "astronaut wings" to the four men: Ajit Krishnan, Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair, Angad Pratap and Shubhanshu Shukla.

"They are not just four names or individuals, they are carrying the aspirations of 1.4bn Indians into space," he added.

Gaganyaan is the first mission of its kind for India and comes

with an estimated price tag of \$1.08bn, according to ISRO.

India plans to send the quartet beyond the reaches of Earth's atmosphere for three days before bringing them back with a soft landing in its territorial waters.

Modi has previously announced plans to launch a space station by 2034, and to put people on the Moon by 2040.

In August, India became just the fourth nation to land an unmanned craft on the Moon, after Russia, the US and China.

The following month, it launched a probe to observe the outermost layers of the Sun from solar orbit.

Rat on a plane sparks worries for Sri Lanka's airline

Sri Lanka's national airline yesterday blamed a rat for grounding a plane for three days, sparking chaotic delays and fears it will scare off investors for the cash-strapped carrier.

The stowaway rodent was spotted enjoying the SriLankan Airlines Airbus A330 flight from the Pakistani city of Lahore on Thursday, triggering an aircraft search to ensure it had not chewed through critical components. An airline official said the plane has now resumed flights, but that the grounding had a knock-on effect on the entire schedule.

"The aircraft was grounded for three days at Colombo," an airline official said "The plane could not be flown without making sure that the rat was accounted for. It was found dead." The state-owned airline, which had accumulated losses of more than \$1.8bn at the end of March 2023, has three other aircraft grounded for over a year out of a fleet of 23.

Taylor Swift's dad probed over alleged assault

AFP
Sydney

Australian police are investigating claims Taylor Swift's father - nicknamed 'Papa Swift' by her adoring fans - punched a photographer while disembarking a superyacht in the early hours of yesterday morning.

"Police have been told a 71-year-old man allegedly assaulted a 51-year-old man at Neutral Bay Wharf about 2.30am, before leaving the location," police spokeswoman Alicia McCumstie said. Australian police do not formally identify suspects.

However, the alleged victim - veteran photographer Ben McDonald - and a law enforcement source both identified the man accused as Swift's father, Scott.

McDonald said he had been taking pictures of the US pop star and her entourage on a luxury superyacht in Sydney Harbour - an apparent late-night celebration after the last of her four sellout gigs in the city.

McDonald alleges that her security detail put an umbrella in his face to prevent photographs as Swift and the group disembarked and walked down the jetty to a waiting vehicle.

He also claimed an older man confronted him and "took it further" after Swift departed.

"He punched me," McDonald said. "It was a shock. That's never happened to me in 26 years."

"I didn't know who he was," the photographer said, adding that he initially believed it may have been an overzealous local security contractor "trying to impress the Americans".

Displaced people seek aid



Displaced people from the province of Cabo Delgado gather to receive humanitarian aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) at the 21 de Abril Tribune School in the town of Namapa, Erati district of Nampula, Mozambique, yesterday. A new outbreak of violence occurred in northern Mozambique about two weeks ago, according to local sources and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), a UN agency. The IOM estimates the number of displaced people who fled attacks in Macomia, Chiure, Mecufi, Mocimboa da Praia and Muimbe between December 22 and February 25 at 71,681 people.

Cheese row leaves bitter aftertaste for fast-food chains in India state

Reuters
Mumbai

India's western state of Maharashtra will inspect outlets of global fast-food brands to check if they use cheese alternatives in products wrongly promoted as containing real cheese, widening scrutiny beyond a crackdown on McDonald's, a top official said.

The checks threaten to cause a headache for global brands after recent inflationary pressure hit consumption of burgers and pizzas that are pricey for many Indian consumers, prompting firms

to launch of discounted offerings.

McDonald's biggest India franchisee, Westlife Foodworld, has been defending its use of "real cheese" after media reported that state authorities last year found some products made use of so-called cheese analogues of vegetable oil, rather than real cheese.

The McDonald's franchisee disagreed with the findings, but in December it dropped the word "cheese" from the names of many burgers and nuggets it sells statewide.

It renamed a "corn and cheese burger" as an "American vegetarian burger", for example.

Inspectors of the state's food and drug administration will now visit all McDonald's outlets, as well as those of other major brands, to check for similar violations of display and labelling rules, its chief, Abhimanyu Kale, said.

"We are planning to check all outlets of McDonald's," he said. "We will also take action on other well-known and frequently visited global fast-food chain outlets," he added, but declined to identify the brands being targeted.

Shares of Westlife plunged as much as 6.7% after the report. Another senior state govern-

ment official, who sought anonymity, said inspectors would visit Indian franchisee outlets of brands such as Domino's, Pizza Hut, Burger King and KFC.

Indian state authorities have the power to suspend the licences of restaurants found to have infringed food and safety regulations in a way that misleads consumers.

Westlife, which runs McDonald's in west and south India, will welcome any inspections and maintains the "highest standards", its managing director, Saurabh Kalra, said.

Domino's franchisee Jubilant FoodWorks, Burger King opera-

tor Restaurant Brands Asia and Devyani International, which operates Yum Brands' Pizza Hut and KFC in India, did not respond to queries.

Another Pizza Hut operator, India's Sapphire Foods, declined comment.

Devyani shares slipped on yesterday's news to trade down 4%.

India's western state of Maharashtra is its second most populous. Home to the financial capital Mumbai, which has about 100 McDonald's outlets, and many other urban cities, it is a key market for global fast-food brands.

In the McDonald's case, state

food inspectors suspended the licence of one outlet east of Mumbai in November for allegedly using analogues in products promoted as containing cheese.

The suspension was later revoked on appeal by Westlife, the franchisee.

The company reassured many consumers online who voiced concerns about its cheese offerings, saying on social network X that it uses "globally approved gold-standard suppliers".

"Our cheese is made from real milk only and we do not use any substitutes or cheese analogues," it said on Monday.

Amir, French president hold official talks in Paris



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and French President Emmanuel Macron held an official talks session at the Elysee Palace in Paris yesterday. His Highness the Amir and the French president also held a bilateral meeting in which they discussed co-operation relations between the two friendly countries, in addition to discussing a number of issues of mutual interest. An official reception ceremony was held for His Highness the Amir upon his arrival at the Elysee Palace.

QC's Turkiye quake relief continues

Qatar Charity (QC) continues to provide necessary assistance to sponsored families, including refugees and locals affected by the earthquake in Turkiye, with support from benefactors in Qatar.

The project aims to cover the house rent for approximately 250 families who lost their homes, ensuring them a dignified living in fully furnished houses. QC paid the rent directly to the landlords for a full year.

The houses were handed over to the families most in need, especially those who took refuge in the Urfa Refugee camp, established by QC a year ago after the

disaster to serve as a shelter for the affected.

Um Yazan, a mother of three orphans, said: "I have been a refugee in Turkiye for 10 years, and we had to stay in an orphanage. After the earthquake, the orphanage management informed us that the building was damaged, and we couldn't return to it. I contacted Qatar Charity, which sponsors my children, and helped me find a home. The rent for a full year was paid, in addition to providing furniture. I am grateful to Qatar's generous people who turned my dream of living in a home with my children into a reality. May Allah reward you abundantly."



QU students raise about QR111,000 for Palestine

The students of the Core Curriculum Programme (CCP) at Qatar University (QU) raised about QR81,000 for Palestine by way of donations over a two-day campaign and about QR30,000 from a charity auction of art pieces.

The CCP, part of the Deanship of General Studies at QU, held the campaign in partnership with the Leadership & Civic Engagement Department and Qatar Charity, in solidarity with Gaza and Palestine.

Dr Saba Mansoor Qadhi, director of the CCP, said: "This event is part of our continuous efforts to raise awareness and show solidarity with the Palestinian cause, which is the primary concern for Muslims. We are proud of the students' commitment and effective contribution to the success of this initiative."

Dr Abdelhamid Ahmed, CCP Professor, emphasised the event's success as a reflection of the leadership spirit and dedication of QU students in serving the community and fulfilling their role towards the Arab and Islamic nations.

Dr Mohamed al-Khojah, CCP Lecturer, said: "This event reflects our ongoing commitment



to promoting the values of generosity and solidarity in the cultural development of our university youth. We are committed to continuing our work in supporting humanitarian causes and achieving social justice."

Maryam al-Nuaimi, a third-

year student in the College of Arts and Sciences, highlighted her participation for the purpose of raising awareness about the Palestinian issue. She, along with her colleagues, managed a booth selling Palestinian food, with proceeds go-

ing towards donations for Gaza. Mohamed Abdullah, another student, stated that the event once again proved the Qatari people's solidarity with their Palestinian brothers, emphasizing the continuous and enduring Arab solidarity with Palestine.

AgriteQ wraps up showcasing cutting-edge technologies

Qatar's 11th International Agricultural Exhibition - AgriteQ 2024 wrapped up yesterday at the International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha.

The seven-day exhibition hosted 249 local and global exhibitors, 106 local farms, 40 participants at dates market and 30 participants at honey market.

The exhibition featured numerous events and partnerships which clearly deepened the share of expertise among participants and played a critical role in reinforcing the global cultural and agricultural exchange, with the exhibitors strongly praising this edition which constituted a distinguished opportunity to converge active stakeholders of the agri sector at the local and global levels to share agricultural expertise.

Vice-Chairman of the Organising Committee and Director of the Agricultural Affairs Department Yousuf Khalid al-Khulafi said the exhibition was an active platform to showcase top-notch technologies in agriculture with the participation of 280 entities and 100 local and international experts in this event to further upgrade production and achieve self-sufficiency and food security.

Cutting-edge agricultural technologies were showcased, including the utilisation of AI applications in agriculture and sustainable organic farming, as well as using robots, indicating that Qatar gives top priority to advancing the overall agri sector, upscaling the awareness on the state-of-the-art practices and sustainable agri technology, al-Khulafi highlighted.

He added that the exhibition was a platform primarily devoted to reinforce co-operation and forging productive partnerships in agriculture, in addition to sharing expertise and technologies, resulting in launching co-operative ventures that strengthen innovation and advancing the agri sector, emphasizing that the event generated a positive impact on the local



agriculture through supporting the participating firms and bolstering trade and investment activities in agriculture, in addition to upscaling the public awareness of the significance of agriculture in achieving self-sufficiency and providing a healthy and sustainable food.

The last day of the event included holding a workshop on life and environment technology, building sustainable circular bioeconomy which was broadly revolved around methods of leveraging



biotechnology in optimising agri sector performance and achieving the environmental and economic sustainability.

The event was punctuated by a workshop delivered by co-ordinator of Environmental Sciences Programme Department of Biological & Environmental Sciences

at QU Dr Nabil Zouari on the importance of pursuing biological solutions in building a circular bioeconomy.

Zouari reviewed the cutting-edge innovations utilised in this field, noting the importance of co-operation among public and private sectors to strengthen the



utilisation of biotechnology in multiple fields, such as agriculture, water treatment and waste management.

The workshop displayed the best models of life technology and environment, in addition to sharing expertise and internalising the ideas and methods

of applying these solutions in agri sector and environment in Qatar.

Aquaculture had a vibrant and powerful presence at the exhibition as well, during which the firms showcased the cutting-edge technologies and innovations in this field. (QNA)

