The Peninsula

Local focus, Global vision





Look for a slightly more dovish tilt to the Fed's policy group in 2023

Business | 08

'Qatar 2022 was exceptional in every way'



Sport | 01



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Qatar Airways flies nearly 14,000 flights during World Cup

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar Airways, the Official Airline Partner of FIFA, concluded its FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 journey in style, presenting the medals and individual awards to Argentina after their historic 4-2 victory on penalties over 2018 champions, France.

Following a thrilling month of non-stop action and entertainment, the airline operated nearly 14,000 flights, uniting the world in Qatar for the greatest sporting show on Earth.

As the Official Airline Partner of FIFA and the Official Airline of the Journey, Qatar Airways celebrated the historic World Cup with its global passengers through countless international, local, and onboard football-themed activations and entertainment experiences. The tournament was a resounding success, with impressive attendance figures of over 3.4 million fans throughout the 64 matches.

Throughout the duration of the tournament, the Qatar Airways Sky House, located at the FIFA Fan Festival at Al Bidda Park, welcomed more than 1.8 million fans. The iconic pavilion provided a range of interactive activities, including a Neymar challenge, Qverse experience, Swing the World, foosball, and face painting.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, H E Akbar Al Baker said: "What started off as a dream has finally turned into reality. The State of Qatar succeeded in bringing the world together in a celebration of football and unity, and now history will remember this FIFA World Cup - the first in the Middle East, and the best edition ever. On behalf of the Qatar Airways Group, I would like to congratulate the Argentinian team for their victorious performance and also commend the French team for their inspiring journey throughout the tournament."

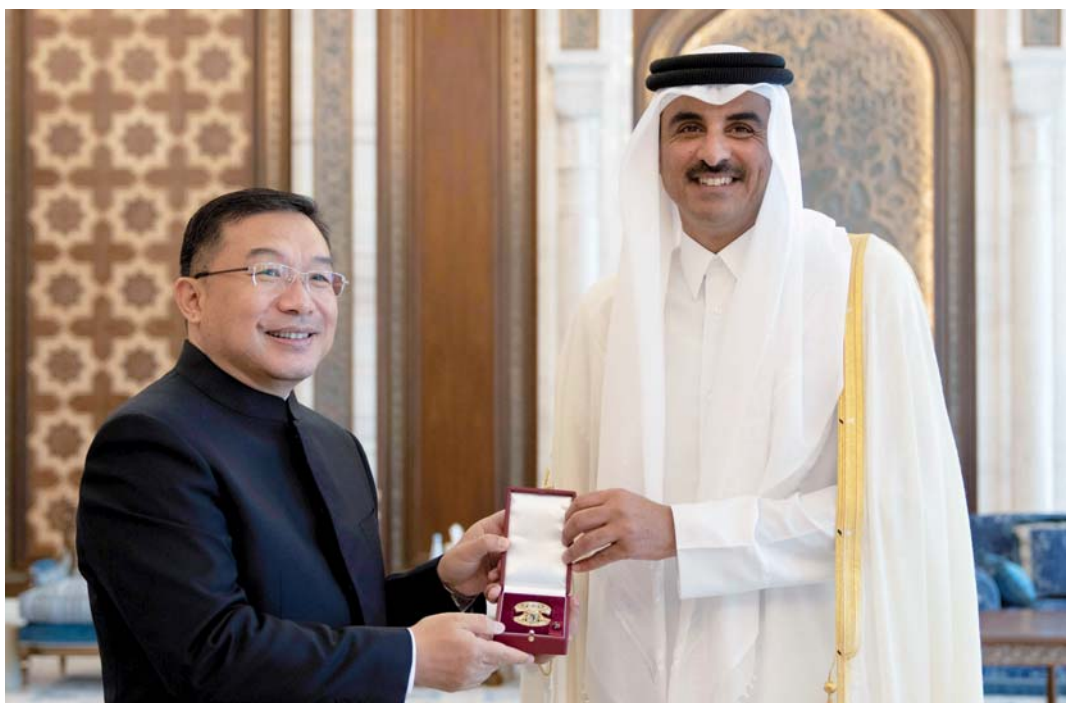
➔P12



"The State of Qatar succeeded in bringing the world together in a celebration of football and unity, and now history will remember this FIFA World Cup - the first in the Middle East, and the best edition ever."

H E Akbar Al Baker

Amir grants Al Wajbah Decoration to Ambassador of China



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani met at his office in Lusail Palace yesterday with Ambassador of the People's Republic of China H E Zhou Jian, who called on H H the Amir to greet him on the occasion of the end of his tenure in the country HH the Amir granted the Chinese Ambassador Al Wajbah Decorationl in recognition of his role in contributing to enhancing bilateral relations, wishing him success in his future missions, and the relations between the two countries further progress and prosperity. For his part, the Ambassador expressed thanks and appreciation to HH the Amir and the State's officials for the cooperation he received that contributed to the success of his work in the country.

Plans to document Qatar's oral history

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

The plans are in place to preserve Qatar's history in an aural format for future generations.

It will be implemented by documenting oral history from families and people across the country.

The Al Khater House, recently restored and preserved by Qatar Foundation in the Education City, is one of the historic sites which will be documented.

Plans are in place to make Al Khater House a center for cultural exchanges and Qatar National Library will collect its oral history by working with the Al Khater family, said Director of Strategy and Strategic Projects, Qatar National Library, Hind Al Khulaifi, recently.

"Orally documenting is a different way of preserving history, so we hear and collect memories of different people in the country and record it," she said, adding that the history of several other sites will also be recorded and documented by Qatar National Library.

Oral history is the collection and study of historical information about individuals, families, and important events through interviews conducted with people who participated in or observed the events and whose memories and perceptions of these are to be preserved as an aural record for future generations.

Oral history strives to obtain information from different perspectives and most of these cannot be found in written sources. Oral history also refers to information gathered in this manner and to a written work (published or unpublished) based on such data, often preserved in archives and large libraries.



"In Qatar we have thousands of heritage sites – from wells to forts to some that are still underground and being excavated. We are working to preserve these locations and fully document their history, so the generations to come can understand for themselves why we are who we are and how we lived our lives."

Sheikha al Thani

The recent discussion on 'Cultivating Arab Heritage and Culture during the First World Cup in the Region,' also highlighted the importance of orally documenting Qatar's history and preserving its heritage sites.

Acting Deputy CEO of Exhibitions and Marketing and the Director of Centralized Exhibitions at Qatar Museums (QM), Sheikha Al Thani said, "Documentation of our heritage is not always available, and we have to capture it. We are documenting oral history from different families and different people throughout the country, and we are very keen to ensure it's preserved."

She also said that QM is working to preserve and document about a large number of heritage sites in the country.

"In Qatar, we have thousands of heritage sites - from wells to forts to some that are still underground and being excavated," she said. ➔P4

Passenger Overflow Areas at HIA and DIA to continue until Dec 31

JOELYN BALUYUT
THE PENINSULA

The World Cup celebrations may have ended in Doha, but not at Qatar's two airports, where the Passenger Overflow Areas are still open until December 31.

This allows departing travellers to partake in a variety of football-themed activities, completing their football journey before they leave Qatar.

Qatar's two airports activated the said project early November at Hamad International Airport (HIA) and Doha International Airport (DIA).

MATAR Chief Operations Officer, Eng. Badr Al Meer earlier said that the area is considered a fan zone and are accessible for passengers arriving four and up to eight hours prior to their flight. "The Passenger Overflow Area will allow fans to experience the exciting FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 excitement until the very end of their journey in Qatar."

Aside from roaming parades, picturesque La'eeb statue, it features food and beverages booths, retail stores, quiet zone, gaming zone, football pitches for children, luggage storage, a lost and found desk, flight information screen, and a free Wi-Fi area.

Several tourists have lauded the Passenger Overflow Areas saying that it's a unique idea where football fans get entertained even before they leave the country.

Aksh Rodriguez from Portugal said: "It's fun and there are a lot of activities to keep us busy before our flight. I'm travelling with my two kids and this area is superb! We have also watched a match before departing on a big screen where sits are provided; it's very comfortable and amusing." Rodriguez stayed in Qatar for a week before travelling back to his country.

Bensar Añonuevo from Philippines who left the country on December 10 and got to watch the Portugal vs Morocco match at HIA Passenger Overflow Area said spending the few hours before his flight there is astounding. ➔P4

Passenger Overflow Areas allows departing travellers to partake in a variety of football-themed activities, completing their football journey before they leave Qatar. Several tourists have lauded the Passenger Overflow Area saying that it's a unique idea where football fans get entertained even before they leave the country.



GAC's dedicated System for World Cup saves clearance time by 80%

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

Sports Event Management System, which was rolled out by General Authority of Customs (GAC) ahead of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, has helped reduce the time of customs clearance for imported consignments by about 80 percent compared to the regular system, said an official.

"The system helped issue 2,500 simplified customs declarations for imported consignments related to associated activities of the mega sporting event," said Chairman of the General Authority of Customs, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Jamal.

Speaking to Qatar Radio recently, he said that the General Authority of Customs in coordination with the authorities concerned implemented several projects successfully notably Sports Event Management System.

"The system was developed to ease the process of trade exchange and import of goods related to the mega sporting event. It saved the time of customs clearance of imported consignments by about 80 percent compared to the regular system," said Al Jamal.



"The system helped issue 2,500 simplified customs declarations for imported consignments related to associated activities of mega sporting event."

Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Jamal.

He said that the Sports Event Management System was implemented in coordination with a number of partners whose permission was needed for the clearance of consignments.

"The partners include the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Municipality, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and Ministry of Interior among others," said Al Jamal.

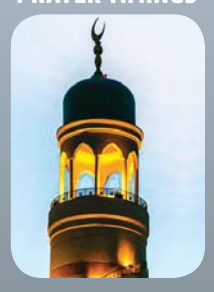
"All products which entered the country during the World Cup underwent strict monitoring process to ensure the safety and health of the people," said Al Jamal.

Speaking about the technologies, he said that Single Window System (Al Nadeeb) and Sports Event Management System which are among the most advanced systems in the world eased the custom clearance of consignments remarkably.

He said that a dedicated support team comprising 200 customs officers was deployed at the customs check posts to step up the procedures during the World Cup.

Meanwhile, the General Authority of Customs issued 6,958 custom declarations for border check posts in November 2022. The Authority also issued 23,046 and 243,257 custom declarations for ports and airports respectively during the period of study. The figure was shared by the Authority on its social media platform.

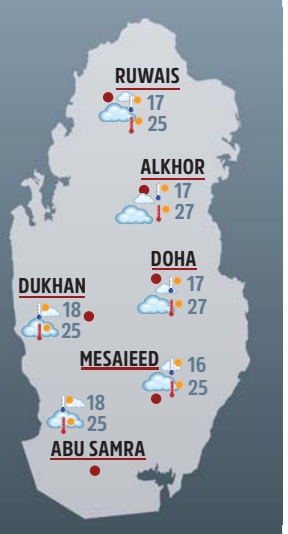
PRAYER TIMINGS



FAJR 4:53AM
SUNRISE 6:15AM
DHUHR 11:32AM
ASR 2:30PM
MAGHRIB 4:51PM
ISHA 6:21PM

WEATHER TODAY

17°C Minimum | 27°C Maximum



Hazy to misty at places at first , becomes mild daytime with scattered clouds to partly cloudy later.

HIGH TIDE 4:00 - 14:00

LOW TIDE 11:00 - 22:00



Deputy PM, EU official discuss relations

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met yesterday with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy H E Josep Borrell on the sidelines of the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership in Jordan. They discussed relations between Qatar and the European Union, in addition to regional developments and corruption investigations in the European Parliament. The Deputy Prime underlined the need to respect the judicial procedures, stressing in this context Qatar's rejection of the misleading media leaks that drag its name in this matter.

Amir receives more greetings on successful hosting of World Cup

QNA — DOHA

H H the Amir received cables of congratulations from HM Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, President of US H E Joe Biden, President of the Russia H E Vladimir Putin among others.

Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani received more cables of congratulations from Their Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses, leaders and heads of governments of brotherly and friendly countries on the occasion of the successful organization of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

H H the Amir received cables of congratulations from H M Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, President of the United States of America H E Joe Biden, President of the Russian Federation H E Vladimir Putin, President of the Republic of Namibia H E Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Singapore H E Halimah Yacob, President of the Republic of Paraguay H E Mario Abdo Benitez, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka H E Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of the Republic of Ghana H E Nana Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Croatia H E Zoran Milanovic, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela H E Nicolas Maduro, Governor-General of Canada H E Mary Simon and President of the Republic of Mozambique H E Filipe Jacinto Nyusi.

Cabinet approves draft to amend law on public hygiene

QNA — DOHA

The Cabinet extended congratulations to Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on the unprecedented success of Qatar 2022.

Prime Minister and Minister of Interior H E Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting held at the Amiri Diwan, yesterday.

The Cabinet extended the highest congratulations to Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on the occasion of the dazzling and unprecedented success of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, thanks to the Almighty God, and then under the directives of His Highness' insightful vision and careful follow-up to all preparation phases of the tournament, since Qatar won the World Cup bid, and it continued as of the kick-off on November 20 until its completion on December 20.

The Cabinet also congratulated Qatari people on this historic achievement, which will remain an honourable legacy for future generations, and a source of pride for Arabs, with its reflections of Arab originality, culture and values to the world.

The Cabinet hailed the efforts of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the Security and Safety Operations Committee of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the Tournament Security Force.

It also expressed thanks and appreciation to all ministries, institutions, state agencies and the private sector, and to everyone who contributed to achieving this exceptional success of the tournament in terms of planning, organisation, securing and providing all the factors of success and means of enjoyment, impressiveness and comfort for the guests, who flocked to Qatar from worldwide, making the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 the most successful and best tournament in the World Cup history, according to the official data and figures announced by FIFA President.

The Cabinet gave approval of a draft law to amend some provisions of Law No. 18 of 2017 on public hygiene, and referring it to the Shura Council.

Among the provisions included in the draft law are the following: It is prohibited to occupy squares, roads, streets, lanes, alleys, sidewalks, and public parking areas with abandoned vehicles, equipment, machinery, temporary or permanent buildings, without a license from the competent municipality.

It is also prohibited to leave the marine means and any equipment used for transporting them by land or sea, any maintenance equipment, or any equipment, machinery, vehicles or parts thereof abandoned in the port or on the seashore, up to the farthest spot reached by the sea waves, within a coastal boundary of a 10-50 metre distance inside sea water, for a period exceeding three days, without a permit from the competent municipality.

It is prohibited to leave, throw or pour waste, or dispose of it, in places other than those specified by the competent municipality, and in the event of violations, the competent municipality may remove the breaches at the expense of the violator, and impound the transport vehicles used in these violations, for a period not exceeding three months.

The competent municipality shall carry out public cleaning works in all its forms, including the collection, transportation, unloading and disposal of waste, and it may recycle and treat it to benefit from it. It also can entrust all or some of these operations to one or more contractors, in accordance with the provisions of the law, including producers or importers of the materials from which these wastes are generated, in accordance with the regulations issued by a ministerial decision.

A committee called the "Joint Committee for the Removal and Disposal of Abandoned Vehicles, Machinery and Equipment" shall be established in the Ministry. The Committee's formation, terms of reference, work system and remuneration for its members shall be determined by a Cabinet decision.

The Cabinet also reviewed the results of the 32nd Meeting of the GCC Ministers of Justice and took the appropriate decision in this regard.

The Cabinet was briefed, through a presentation made by President of the Planning and Statistics Authority, on what has been achieved in implementing the government agencies' strategic plans for the second quarter (April-June 2022), the progress of programs and projects at the level of ministries, the challenges facing the authorities and the proposed solutions.

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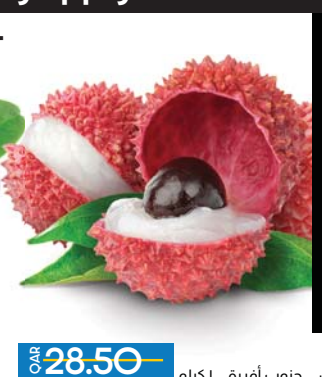
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Apple Royal Gala Serbia 1kg



QAR 4.00 QAR 2.75 مندرين باكستاني ١ كيلو
Mandarin Pakistan 1kg



QAR 6.75 QAR 4.50 توت أزرق جنوب أفريقي ١ باكيت / ١٢٥ جرام تقريباً
Blueberry South Africa 1pkt appx 125gm



QAR 28.50 QAR 14.75 ليتشي جنوب أفريقي ١ كيلو
Lychees South Africa 1kg



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QAR 36.75 QAR 28.50 سمك قاروص تركي وسط ١ كيلو
Sea Bass Medium Turkey 1Kg



QAR 42.75 QAR 32.75 لحم بقري توب سايد روست نيوزيلاندي ١ كيلو
New Zealand Beef Topside Roast 1Kg



QAR 29.75 QAR 22.50 لحم بقري مفروم برازيلي ١ كيلو
Brazilian Beef Mince 1Kg



1pc per customer

QAR 14.50 QAR 8.75 ساديا دجاج كامل ١ كيلو
Sadia Whole Chicken 1kg

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QAR 40.00 QAR 32.75 بوبينز حبوب الشوكولاتة ٣٥٠ غرام / ٣ حبات + لعبة طرية
Poppins Chocolate Cereals 350gm X 3pcs + Soft Toy





QAR 18.00 QAR 10.00 بانزاني معكرونة منوعة ٤٠٠ غرام / ٣ حبات
Panzani Pasta Asstd. 400gm x 3pcs



QAR 37.50 QAR 23.50 نيسكافيه قهوة أصلية ٢٠٠ غرام
Nescafe Original Coffee 200gm



QAR 10.75 بيبسي ماكس عبوة منوعة ٣٣٠ مل / ٦ حبات
Pepsi MAX Can Asstd 330ml X 6pcs



QAR 25.00 QAR 20.00 لوريال إلفيف شامبو منوع ٧٠٠ مل / للحبة
Loreal Elvive Shampoo Asstd 700ml X 1pc

QAR 62.00 QAR 53.00 أومو مسحوق غسيل ٩ كيلو
Omo Washing Powder 9kg

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Qatar voices deep concern at suspension of Afghan women's university education

QNA — DOHA

Qatar calls on the Afghan caretaker government to review its decision in line with the teachings of Islam concerning women's rights

Qatar has expressed deep concern and disappointment with the Afghan caretaker government's decision to suspend girls' and women's studies in Afghan universities until further notice.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that these negative practices will have a significant impact on human rights, development, and the economy in Afghanistan.

As a Muslim country in which women enjoy all their rights, especially education, the State of Qatar calls on the Afghan caretaker government to review its decision in line with the teachings of the Islamic religion concerning women's rights, the statement added.

The statement underscored the position of the State of Qatar supporting all spectra of Afghan people to obtain all their rights, particularly the right to education.

It also renewed the deep commitment of the State of Qatar to work with its Afghan and international partners to ensure that all groups of Afghan people of all ages enjoy their right to education.



Qatar, Morocco discuss boosting cooperation in transportation, logistics, and civil aviation

Minister of Transport H E Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti met Minister of Transport and Logistics of Morocco H E Mohammed Abdeljalil in Rabat. The two ministers reviewed bilateral cooperation and ways to develop them in areas of transportation, its services, logistics services, commercial harbours, and civil aviation. The Moroccan Minister congratulated Qatar on the successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Mohamed Faleh Alhajri, who is in charge of managing the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) also attended the meeting.

Qatar elected to UN Peacebuilding Commission panel

QNA — NEW YORK

The United Nations General Assembly elected by acclamation the State of Qatar, representing the Asia and Pacific Group, as a member of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for 2023-2024 under the category of the General Assembly.

This is the first time that the State of Qatar has nominated itself for membership in the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission due to its firm belief that conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding efforts are crucial to achieve international peace and security and sustainable development.

The State of Qatar is considered one of the most important actors regionally and internationally. It uses preventive diplomacy and mediation as effective means to resolve regional and international disputes.

Qatar will be a strong and effective member that will help the Peacebuilding Commission in increasing its impact and achievement.

'Establishment of Police Academy part of security system modernisation process'

QNA — DOHA

The Police Academy currently grants Master's and Bachelor's degrees and Diploma programmes, while Ph.D. programmes will be added in the future.

Advisor to the Minister of Interior and Vice-President of the Supreme Council of the Police College, H E Major-General Dr. Abdullah Yousef Al Mal stressed that the Amiri decision to establish and regularise the Police Academy, affiliated with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) comes within the framework of the process of modernisation and development of the ministry's education and training system.

Commenting on the occasion, Al Mal said that the announcement of the establishment of the Police Academy comes in light of the special attention given by MoI to the academic security aspects and modernising its educational and training system.

The new academy will bring all academic, research, training, educational, security, and police aspects under one umbrella.

He stressed that the Police College achieved its establishing goals after a busy procession since its start in the academic year 2014/2015 and graduated four batches so far — under the patronage of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani — as the last graduating batch was in January 2022.

Al Mal also indicated that establishing the Police Academy comes within the framework of the efforts by MoI to modernise its educational, training, and research system according to what falls within its competencies to be in line with the latest development in legal and security fields; achieves its strategy; promotes the role of the ministry and other security institutions in fulfilling Qatar National Vision 2030; provides outputs that effectively contribute to human, social, and economic development in the country; and promotes the optimal investment of the country's human resources.

MoI formed a committee that undertook the preparation of all requirements for establishing the Police Academy based on a vision for the Academy to become distinguished centre nationally, regionally, and internationally in higher education, scientific research, and community service, as well as produce and exchange knowledge in legal, and security fields according to best international standards.

The academy's mission is to prepare and qualify national security cadres according to the best academic and research standards, to provide the needs of the Ministry of Interior and other security institutions in the country, and to develop an environment that stimulates creativity and innovation.

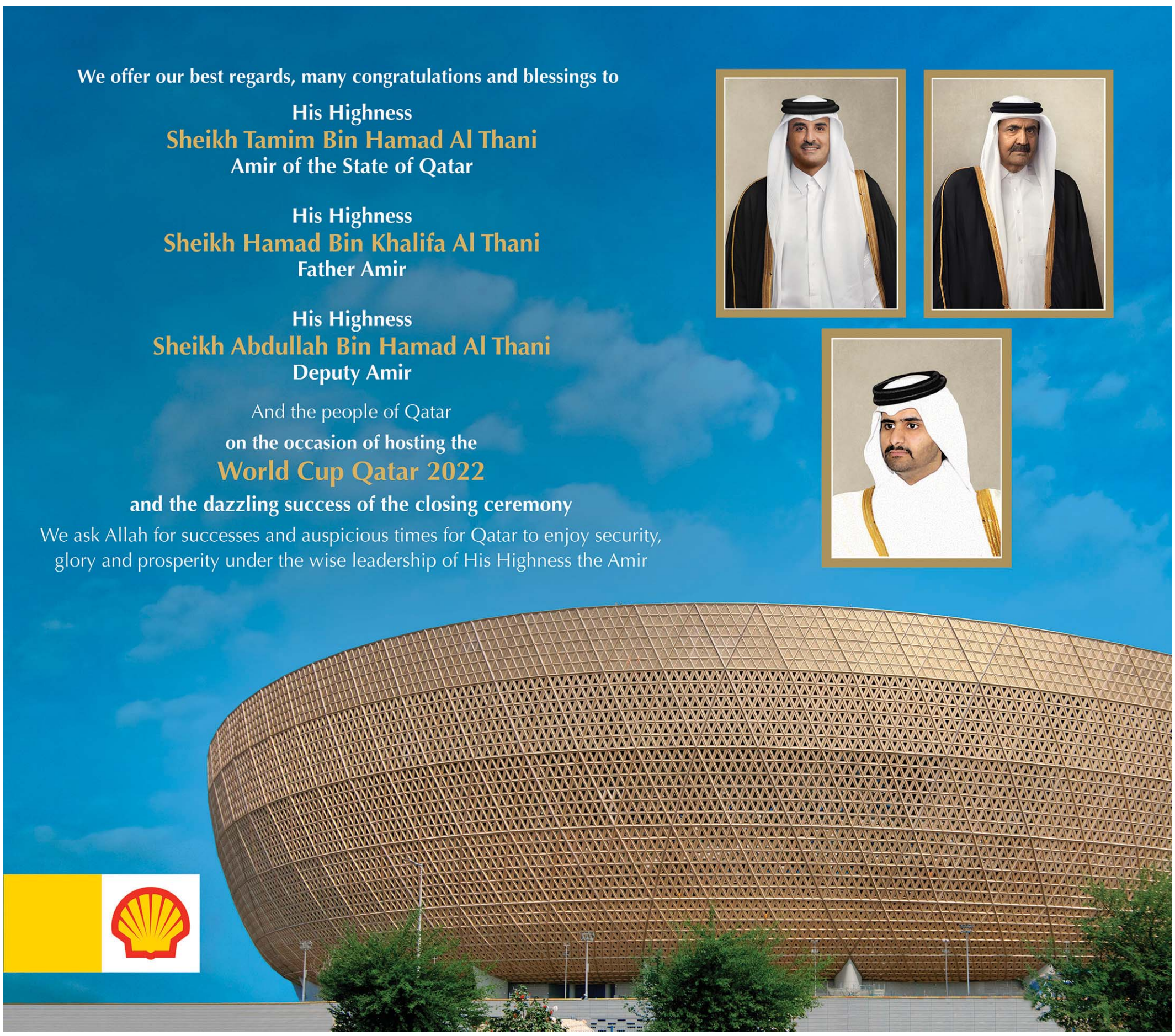
The efforts by MoI culminated in obtaining the approval of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to license the establishment of the Police Academy and approving its academic programmes after completing the standards and requirements for licensing higher education institutions in the country.

The Police Academy aims to prepare scientifically, practically, and well-trained qualified cadres in legal, police, and other fields that the ministry needs. The academy will also attach importance to building effective partnerships with local, regional, and international institutions in the fields of higher education, scientific research, and other relevant fields.

The new academy includes: Police College for bachelors programmes, a college of postgraduate masters and Ph.D. programmes in legal, police, and other fields needed by the ministry, in addition to Ras Laffan Emergency and Safety College, which aims to prepare and implement bachelor and diploma programmes related to scientifically and practically training military and civil technical cadres to respond to cases of fire, safety, emergency, search and rescue, and any other fields related to civil defence work.

The academy also includes: police officers institute for the preparation and implementation of officers training courses and programmes, a police institute for diploma programmes for the preparation and implementation of newcomers, and other ranks training courses and programmes to develop their professional and scientific capabilities and raise their performance, and the women's police institute for the preparation and qualification of military and civilian component in the ministry in line with the latest scientific and professional trends and in an appropriate environment that suits their training needs.

The Police Academy grants scientific degrees currently including Master's, Bachelor's, and Diploma programmes, while Ph.D. programmes will be added in the future.



Transitional President of Chad receives credentials of Qatar's Ambassador

QNA — N'DJAMENA

The Ambassador conveyed the greetings of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to H E Talib bin Mohammed Al Mankhas.

Transitional President of the Republic of Chad H E Lieutenant-General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno received the credentials of H E Talib bin Mohammed Al Mankhas as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar to Chad.

The Ambassador conveyed the greetings of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to Transitional President of the Republic of Chad and His Highness's wishes of good health and happiness to His Excellency and continued progress and prosperity to the government and people of the Republic of Chad.

For his part, the Transitional President of the Republic of Chad entrusted the Ambassador with his greetings to H H the Amir, wishing His Highness good health and happiness and the State of Qatar further progress, development, and prosperity.



MoFA Secretary-General meets Ugandan official

Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi met yesterday with Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda H E Vincent Waiswa Bagiire, who is currently visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral cooperation.

MWANI QATAR مـــوانـــي قـــطـــر

TENDERS AND AUCTIONS COMMITTEE

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SL. no.	TENDER FOR	TENDER NO.	TENDER BOND	DOCUMENT FEES	CLOSING DATE	CONTACT DETAILS	REMARKS
1	DESIGN AND ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY OF AIR-CONDITIONING AND VENTILATION SYSTEM OF INSPECTION SHED 1, 2, & 3 AT CCIA, HAMAD PORT	MQ\TAC/TEN\345\2022	QRS. 15,000	QRS. 200	10.01.2023	ed@mwani.com.qa	Two envelope
2	FIT OUT WORKS FOR SHOPS AT AL YEZWA BUILDING IN RUWAIS PORT	MQ\TAC/TEN\346\2022	QRS. 150,000	QRS. 500	12.01.2023	ed@mwani.com.qa	Two envelope

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

1 - 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) .

2 - 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.

3 - 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.

4 - The deadline for submitting offers will be **02:00 pm** of the date shown above. Any offer arriving thereafter will not be considered.

5 - 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.

6 - 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**.

7 - Every tenderer should attach document showing previous similar experience in the field of the required items/servicer.

8 - For more information you can visit MQ website : **(www.mwani.com.qa)**

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Qatar Post launches stamp on 40th anniversary of GCC

THE PENINSULA — DOHA



Qatar Post has issued a special postage stamp on the occasion of 40th anniversary of the founding of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which displays in its design the pictures of the founding leaders in the member countries and their flags.

Faleh Muhammad Al Nuaimi, Chairman and Managing Director of the Qatar Postal Services Company (Qatar Post) said: "GCC states embodies the meaning of brotherhood, historical unity and a common destiny that binds the peoples of the region. The launching came as part of the role of Qatar in embodying the historical, social and cultural reality of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and reflecting solidarity and Gulf unity."

The stamps will be sold to the public for QR5, as the printed quantity of this issue reached 10,000 copies, 6,000 cards, 1,500 envelopes and 500 folders.

EAA condemns discrimination against Afghan female students

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Education Above All Foundation (EAA) deplores the recent decision to ban all girls and women from attending schools and universities in Afghanistan, and calls for all students in Afghanistan to be given equal access to education at every level, regardless of their gender.

Education is a human right that states must safeguard for all their citizens without discrimination. No party should deprive a person form the right to education, and states, civil society, communities and parents must work together to ensure that children and young people have access to safe, quality primary, secondary and higher education.

EAA is currently helping 250 Afghan students, half of them women, restart their studies after they were forced to leave Afghanistan last year. Through the Qatar Scholarship for Afghan Refugee Project, recently displaced Afghans can now continue their post-secondary education, thereby increasing their chances of building stable and prosperous futures for themselves and their families.

Qatar to start disbursing cash for Gaza families from today

QNA — GAZA

Chairman of Qatar's Gaza Reconstruction Committee Ambassador Mohammed Al Emadi has announced that the committee, in cooperation with Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), will start today the disbursement of the December batch of cash assistance to families in need in the Gaza Strip.

The Ambassador Al Emadi said that the cash assistance will be provided to about 100,000 poor families in the Gaza Strip governorates, at a rate of $100 per family.

Passenger Overflow Areas at HIA and DIA to continue until December 31

FROM PAGE 1

"I and my family enjoyed especially my five-year-old daughter where she was running everywhere, playing all the games. The project is also commendable because beyond the pitch, travellers are able to experience the football fever, and is perfect to spend our waiting time period."

The special pre-departure experience provides enjoyment activities to all passengers departing Qatar and is free of charge.

Departing passengers can access the Passenger Overflow Area at HIA by taking a shuttle bus from the airport's metro station, while at DIA, it can be accessed either by taxi or Metro – Al Mater Al Qadeem station. The area is only accessible for passengers who are coming to the airport over four to eight hours prior to their scheduled departure flight time.

HIA has noted that the Passengers Overflow Area does not have check-in service desks and passengers can only check-in at HIA's or DIA's main terminals check-in hall, or through online check-in on their respective airline's website.

Plans to document Qatar's oral history

FROM PAGE 1

"We are working to preserve these locations and fully document their history, so the generations to come can understand for themselves why we are who we are and how we lived our lives, rather than simply learning this from stories that are passed down," said Sheikha Al Thani.

"With our heritage sites, there is so much happening out there across Qatar. All around the country, there are places where people lived, and we have to ensure we document that history," she added.

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1	OT/14 /420288	Supply Of Sodium Chlorite Solution On Call Off Basis

- Document for the above Tender can be downloaded from the company website www.qewc.com/qewc/tenders
- Closing Date to download the Tender document: 09.01.2023
- Closing Date and Time for Tender submission: 16.02.2023 at 11:00 AM
- Offer must be valid for 120 days from closing date.
- Tender bids to be deposited in the Tender Box situated at the Purchase Department of QEWC, and should be in sealed envelops addressed to the Head of Tender and Purchase Committee.
- Location : Qatar Navigation Tower in Al-Dafna Area, Floor No.48, Zone 63
- This tender is floated in conjunction with Tawteen, Investor packs can be obtained from the e-Brochure which can be downloaded from Tawteen (www.tawteen.com.qa)

For More Information please contact us via email 1482@qewc.com

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للايجار
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Land for sale at Energy City Qatar-Lusail Land Size : 4.656 sqm

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Lebanese Health Minister Dr. Firas Al Abiad along with other officials during the press conference in Beirut.

Lebanon's Health Minister lauds medical aid provided by Qatar and its charities

QNA — BEIRUT

Minister of Public Health in the Lebanese caretaker government Dr. Firas Al Abiad voiced appreciation of the support provided by the State of Qatar and its charities to Lebanon, especially in relation to the health sector.

This came in a press conference, during which Dr. Al Abiad announced receiving medical assistance to the Lebanese ministries of Interior and Public Health, funded by Qatar Charity (QC) and executed by Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) with a total value of QR3.65m, in continuation of the assistance provided in support of the Lebanese health sector in facing the current economic challenges.

The grant consisted chronic diseases medications, including 11 categories that are most in need, according to the Ministry. 70% of these medicines are allocated for free distribution to patients in 240 primary health care centres, while the remaining 30% are allocated for the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities for distribution to pharmacies of the Internal Security Forces (ISF).

Lebanon's Health Minister pointed out that the medical grant comes as a continuation of the ongoing support provided the State of Qatar to Lebanon, especially to projects related to the health sector, referring to the important and numerous programs implemented by QRCS in Lebanon, the latest of which was the cooperation to provide drinking water to the Lebanese as well as refugees in Arsal and other regions.

For his part, the Director General of the ISF Major General Imad Othman extended thanks to the Qatari Embassy in Lebanon , QC and QRCS for the assistance underscoring its significance in the provision of medical services to over 150 thousand beneficiaries from the ISF personnel and their families, as well as retirees.

Head of QRCS mission in Lebanon Dr. Mohamed Al Sousi said that the grant affirms keenness to support the health sector in Lebanon.

Emergency and Relief Department at Qatar Charity Khaled Al Yafei stated that the assistance comes in the framework of QC's attention to the health sector.

NHRC chairperson highlights exhibition's success in introducing rights concepts

The exhibition was held as recommended by the first National Forum on Human Rights on the need to approach the concept of the "right to sport".

QNA — DOHA

Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) H E Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah said that the 'Human Rights and Football' Art Exhibition managed to introduce human rights concepts by linking human rights and humanitarian principles with football.

On the occasion of the conclusion of the exhibition held in the garden of the new Sheraton Hotel on the Doha Corniche, as part of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022-associated events, she highlighted the NHRC's keenness to interact with local and international events related to human rights issues.

The exhibition was held as recommended by the first National Forum on Human Rights on the need to approach the concept of the "right to sport" and the values and principles included in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Olympic Charter. It came also within the framework of cooperation with the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, in a bid to promote a culture of human rights through the exercise of sports.



NHRC Chairperson H E Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah

She hailed sports as a vital means of rapprochement, enhancing understanding between peoples and cultures, establishing values of tolerance and respect for the other, and the need to empower vulnerable groups, and facilitate their access to sports services and facilities, including enabling the blind to follow sports tournaments.

The paintings of the exhibition reflected important messages to the World Cup fans and established concepts that affirm that sport is a right for all, and it is an inherent human right. The paintings also highlighted the importance of achieving sustainable development, preserving the environment, contributing to building a footballing future through voluntary teamwork, and deepening familiarity between people, she added.

She hailed the paintings as creative and distinctive demonstrations of the exercise of the right to sports without discrimination, gender equality, the right of everyone to practice sports, especially those with disabilities, and the importance of enabling them to participate fairly and equitably in recreational and sports activities.

The State of Qatar presented a wonderful example and documented historical moments in which the different nationalities and cultures of the world coalesced under one goal, she added, highlighting sports' role to unite peoples, as positively demonstrated in the local and international media, amid the State of Qatar's great care, protection and facilities offered to fans of different nationalities and religions.

The exhibition is a cultural and artistic platform that contributes to promoting a culture of human rights, respect for human diversity and human coexistence, and spreading tolerance, peace and joint cooperation, as a destination within the purposes and objectives of sport, she said.

Qatar to attend fourth session of Arab Council for Population and Development

QNA — DOHA

The State of Qatar, represented by the Permanent Population Committee will participate in the fourth ordinary session of the Arab Council for Population and Development of the General Secretariat of the Arab League, which will take place at a ministerial level today in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

President of the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA) and Chairman of the Permanent Population Committee, H E Dr. Saleh bin Mohammed Al Nabit will lead Qatar's delegation.

The agenda of the session includes the discussion of important issues, including the scheduling of multiple coordination activities with the member states to prepare for the regional review and a high-level conference on the tenth regional review of the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development to be held in June 2023 in Beirut.

The President of the Planning and Statistics Authority and the Chairman of the Permanent Population Committee will address the participants at the opening of this session to reflect on the development achievements made by the Arab countries in the past few decades. He will outline the social and economic challenges facing these countries and the negative impact of their development sustainability to variable degrees.

He will highlight the need for the intervention to restore the relative balance in the equation of the population and development and to address the internal and external challenges that lead to complicating the social and economic situations in the Arab countries, in line with the objective of the Arab Council for Population and Development.





Record operational achievements during the tournament across 64 matches

Qatar Rail carries 18.2 million passengers onboard its networks during World Cup

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

The total number of passengers who used the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks during the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar – from November 20 to December 18, 2022 – reached 18.2 million, with 17.4 million and 0.8 million passengers using Doha Metro and Lusail Tram respectively, Qatar Rail has announced.

This translates to an average daily ridership of 600,000 for Metro, and 27,000 for Tram.

Doha Metro trains performed a total of more than 79,000 trips, travelling a total of almost 1.5 million kilometers, equivalent to two journeys to the moon and back. The total distance passengers travelled during the tournament exceeded 200 million kilometers, which is 1.4 times the distance to the sun.

Throughout the tournament, metro and tram services witnessed a huge turnout, especially during the first thirteen days when the group stage saw four daily matches played across eight stadiums. With the tournament hitting the highest-ever attendance in FIFA's history during group stages, Doha Metro & Lusail Tram made an exceptional contribution to providing a safe and reliable travel experience to fans who attended up to four matches a day, in addition to carrying them to fan zones, event areas, and key destinations across the city. During this period, Doha Metro trains were amongst the busiest trains anywhere in the world.



This edition of the World Cup was undoubtedly an exceptional one, the successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 represents a historical milestone for the state of Qatar and the successful delivery of this global event will shine a bright light, through which the world will see the State of Qatar.

H E Dr. Abdulla bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie.
Managing Director and CEO of Qatar Rail



Throughout the tournament, Doha Metro provided the highest levels of operational performance, despite witnessing record attendance at stadiums and holding up to four matches per day. Our main objective during the World Cup revolved around delivering a safe and reliable travel experience, with a special focus on the implementation of our operational plans and crowd management systems towards boosting our capacity to accommodate this record patronage, especially during the group stage.

Eng. Abdulla Saif Al Sulaiti

The network's high demand during the World Cup also led to the breaking of several operational records. On November 24, 2022, the tournament's 5th day marked a new record in daily metro ridership when 827,135 passengers were safely transported to and from stadiums and other destinations, exceeding the previous record patronage of 333,000 passengers who were transported on the Qatar National Day (QND) in 2019. The 2022 QND also saw an equally exceptional turnout, with a total of 810,000 passengers carried during the day.

Doha Metro's busiest stations were Msheireb, Lusail QNB, and DECC, while Legtaifiya and Lusail Central were the busiest stops along Lusail Tram.

As for the network's interchange stations, up to 400,00 passengers daily used Msheireb, which connects all three metro lines. Meanwhile, Al Bidda Station, where the Green and Red Lines intersect, received up to 150,000 passengers during the event.

Chief of Service Delivery at Qatar Rail, Eng. Abdulla Saif Al Sulaiti, said: "Throughout the tournament, Doha Metro provided the highest levels of operational performance, despite witnessing record attendance at stadiums and holding up to four matches per day. Our main objective during the World Cup revolved around delivering a safe and reliable travel experience, with a special focus on the implementation of our operational plans and crowd management systems towards boosting our capacity to accommodate this record patronage, especially during the group stage."

Al Sulaiti added: "We also continued to focus on offering world-class customer service by providing travel information, facilitating passenger flow, and providing an integrated experience to fans and passengers."

In addition to directly connecting fans to five of the tournament's eight stadiums, Doha Metro proved to be a reliable mobility partner for fans and facilitated their access to activation areas, especially at the Corniche and its surrounding areas, including the FIFA Fan Festival at Al Bidda Park.



Due to the various events and activities' popularity among fans, the seven metro stations in this area, namely Corniche, Al Bidda, West Bay Qatar Energy, DECC, Souq Waqif and Msheireb, welcomed up to 870,000 passengers per day starting or ending their journey, or transferring between lines. Lusail QNB Station was also popular among fans since it is located near the Darb Lusail Festival.

Thanks to the metro, fans and visitors were also able to easily access other event areas across the country such as the Arcadia Music Festival through Ras Bu Fontas station, the ARAVIA live music experience by MDL-BEAST through Al Wakra station, the Fan Village Caravan City through Al Messila station, and Darb Al Saai festival through Al Rayyan Al Qadeem station.

With the tournament hitting the highest-ever attendance in FIFA's history during group stages, Doha Metro & Lusail Tram made an exceptional contribution to providing a safe and reliable travel experience to fans who attended up to four matches a day, in addition to carrying them to fan zones, event areas, and key destinations across the city.

Due to the compact nature of the tournament, and to cater for the high demand for its services during the tournament, Qatar Rail implemented special operational plans, where in coordination with key partners, the company's preparations for the event translated into an integrated travel experience that contributed to making the Qatar edition of the World Cup among the safest and most secure yet.

Managing Director and CEO of Qatar Rail, H E Dr. Abdulla bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie addressing a ceremony at Al Rayyan Park to celebrate the success of Doha Metro & Lusail Tram's operational plan for the tournament.



Qatar Rail's journey with the World Cup culminated with a special ceremony at Al Rayyan Park to celebrate the success of Doha Metro & Lusail Tram's operational plan for the tournament







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PERFORMANCE DURING FIFA WORLD CUP QATAR 2022

FROM 20 NOV TO 18 DEC, 2022

RAIL الريل
تحقيق رؤية
Accomplishing a Vision

18.2 Mn
Total ridership during the Tournament

110
Trains in service-**100%** of our fleet

37
Metro Stations -Serving the stadium, Fan activations and Key destinations

8.8 Mn
Total ridership during the Group Stage

79,216
Total number of train trips equivalent to **1.5** million Kilometers

827,135
Total Metro passengers on November 24, 2022 - highest ever (exceeding previous record of **333,000** passengers on December 18, 2019)

ZERO
Safety incidents on one of the safest metro systems in the world

165 Seconds
Headway in all the three lines

119,000
Fewer car journeys per day as a result of Doha Metro services with **8,500** tonnes of avoided CO2 emissions

99.8%
The average of our key performance metrics - regularity, punctuality and availability

600,000
Average daily ridership during the Tournament

Qatar Rail's multi-faceted plan provided the World Cup fans a safe and secure experience

In this context, Qatar Rail and its partners and stakeholders developed an ecosystem of integrated skillsets, systems, plans, and procedures to strategically implement an effective crowd management system that optimizes passenger flow and provides rapid response when needed.

To this end, Chief of Program Delivery at Qatar Rail, Eng. Jassim Al Ansari, commented: "Every decision by the team at the ICC was made to improve our passengers' experience after having a full overview of the network. This enabled us to react in a timely manner, for instance by bringing trains on hot standby into service in the busy times and therefore, minimise the impact on the passengers' journey."

"Meanwhile, our maintenance team ensured a rapid response time by allocating resources in strategic locations across the network and scheduling maintenance activities intelligently. This allowed us to achieve 100% fleet availability during the tournament despite the limited engineering hours available," Al Ansari further said.

Accordingly, Qatar Rail mobilized more than 5,000 additional staff to support its operational plans for the World Cup and manage crowds at the stations in collaboration with RKH Qitarat, the operator of Doha Metro & Lusail Tram. Qatar Rail also coordinated with the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy to install over 560 wayfinding signages across stations in order to make it easy and convenient for fans to access stadiums and other destinations in Qatar.



Managing Director and CEO of Qatar Rail, H E Dr. Abdulla bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie (center) and Chief of Service Delivery at Qatar Rail, Eng. Abdulla Saif Al Sulaiti (left) with other officials during a ceremony at Al Rayyan Park to celebrate the success of Doha Metro & Lusail Tram's operational plan for the tournament.



> ***"Every decision by the team at the ICC was made to improve our passengers' experience after having a full overview of the network. This enabled us to react in a timely manner, for instance by bringing trains on hot standby into service in the busy times and therefore, minimise the impact on the passengers' journey."***
>
> ***Eng. Jassim Al Ansari***

Qatar Rail's crowd management plans and ongoing efforts included the enhancement of Doha Metro's operational capacity, with the network's entire fleet of 110 trains serving the World Cup, operating at headwyas as low as 165 seconds across all three metro lines.

In parallel, advanced systems played a key role in providing real-time information on passenger flow at stations, which enhanced the ability to deal with various scenarios related to crowd management safely and effectively.

Station capacities were also increased with 20 additional ticket machines and 35 additional passenger gates installed at strategic locations across the network to accommodate the growing demand for Doha Metro's services throughout the event. in addition, Qatar Rail has raised it security readiness to ensure providing safe travel experience to the fans specially with having large number of crowds at the network during the tournament.

"Our multi-faceted plan provided the World Cup fans with a safe and secure experience onboard our networks. This extended beyond the stations and included critical systems infrastructure protection and was augmented by the Railway Conditions of Carriage and User Regulations for passengers, which achieved an exceptional level of compliance throughout the tournament. We've also achieved the highest standards of environmental sustainability during this period. Moreover, and despite the record patronage, no major incidents were reported, thanks to our security preparedness for the event," Abdulrahman Ali Al Malik, Senior QSHESE Director at Qatar Rail explained.



Complementing their in-station experience, customers also enjoyed access to 5G Wi-Fi services at all stations, as well as a unique shopping experience through more than 250 retail shops that offer a multitude of products and services across the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks.

Qatar Rail's commitment to constantly enhancing its customers' experience also translated into another feat, as 97% of incoming calls answered by the customer service center within 15 seconds of receiving them, which complemented the comprehensive customer communication plan put in place in coordination with partners and stakeholders.

In this connection, the metro amassed the attention of international journalists and fans alike, who praised the metro network, its cleanliness, modernity, and safety during the tournament. Fans' comments also highlighted the trains' interior design and comfort as well as the stations' distinctive architecture and spaciousness, which helped accommodate the influx of visitors and maintain a steady flow of passengers across the network.

By the same token, Qatar Rail's worldwide media coverage featured a large number of articles published in international newspapers underpinning Doha Metro's central role in the success of the World Cup and how it became a melting pot for cultural exchange among fans from all countries and walks of life. The Metro was also a huge hit on social media platforms, where many videos and fan experiences went viral the world over.

Qatar Rail's journey with the World Cup culminated with a special ceremony at Al Rayyan Park to celebrate the success of Doha Metro & Lusail Tram's operational plan for the tournament.

The event was held in the presence of H E Dr. Al Subaie, who attended alongside the senior and executive management officials of Qatar Rail and RKH Qitarat. Qatar Rail and RKH Qitarat's staff were honored during the event, in recognition of their exceptional efforts and valuable contributions to the success of this international mega-event.



> ***"Our multi-faceted plan provided the World Cup fans with a safe and secure experience onboard our networks. This extended beyond the stations and included critical systems infrastructure protection and was augmented by the Railway Conditions of Carriage and User Regulations for passengers, which achieved an exceptional level of compliance throughout the tournament.***
>
> ***Abdulrahman Ali Al Malik***







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EDITORIAL

Sustainable development

ENVIRONMENTAL sustainability has been at the centre of Qatar's development plans including the Qatar National Vision 2030 and was also a key point in the country's hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Environmental sustainability has been a main features of the country's work over the past 12 years as it built mega stadiums and infrastructure for the just-concluded World Cup. Qatar had set an ambitious target of delivering a carbon-neutral tournament by offsetting all greenhouse gas emissions, while advancing low-carbon solutions.

The World Cup sustainability plans included building water and energy-efficient stadiums and other infrastructure using recycled materials while also minimising the impact on nature from construction work. While Qatar built eye-catching mega stadiums, some from scratch, it also created huge green spaces planting tens of thousands of plants and shrubs around these arenas.

As part of the country's plans to host a carbon-neutral World Cup, the Ministry of Municipality had launched an ambition plan to recycle or reuse all the waste generated at World Cup venues. The Ministry has been successful in achieving its 'zero waste to landfill' goal, with 72 percent of total waste generated at World Cup venues including stadiums and associated fan sites having been segregated for recycling. Minister of Municipality H E Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie said about 80,000 tonnes of waste was collected from World Cup venues. The trash has been segregated into organic, plastic, metal, electronic and cardboard. The remaining waste is sent to the Ministry of Municipality's Domestic Solid Waste Management Centre for further treatment in a waste-to-energy plant.

Recent years have witnessed a huge boom in the number of public parks in the country, which have increased to 148 in 2022, from only 56 in 2010. Green spaces in the country have also increased to more than 43 million square metres from about 2.5 million square metres in 2010.

In recognition of Qatar's sustainable development, the World Health Organization has awarded all Qatari cities the 'healthy city' status. Qatar is the first country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to have all its cities obtain this title due to its great efforts in applying the environmental, health and urban sustainability standards.

Qatar's efforts to host a carbon-neutral World Cup will go a long way in aiding global efforts to address climate change. Qatar 2022 has also set a high bar for future sporting events on the environmental front.

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How Lionel Messi's 'bisht' exposed Western media's racism again

AHMED TWAIJ — AL JAZEERA

On Sunday, billions of people collectively turned their gaze to the Lusail Stadium in Qatar, as Argentina were crowned World Cup champions after a sparkling final against France.

Yet instead of focusing on the majesty of the football the world had just witnessed, Western media opted to fixate on how the Amir of Qatar draped Lionel Messi, the Argentine captain, in the traditional Arab cloak known as a "bisht".

Reactions from several pundits and journalists have reflected the same racism and Islamophobia that have been prevalent throughout the tournament and in the years leading up to it. But they also underscore the lack of diversity that marks most Western newsrooms – which limits their ability to comprehend much of the world beyond stilted stereotypes.

"The bizarre act that ruined the greatest moment in World Cup history" read one, now redacted, the headline from British newspaper, The Telegraph. "Absolutely grim" declared the headline on Fox Sports, and "disgraceful" read Yahoo Sports.

Others opted for distinctly racist statements, with Mark Ogden, a senior ESPN journalist writing: "All the pics are ruined by somebody making him wear a cape that looks like he's about to have a haircut". Similarly, Dan Walker, a football television presenter wrote, in a now-deleted tweet, "I bet Mbappe is delighted he managed to swerve the weird mesh cloak with gold trim," suggesting losing a World Cup final would have been better.

A bisht, also known as an aba or abaya in other Arab countries, is a garment symbolic of prestige, honour and stature. It is worn on special occasions and only by senior religious figures, political or tribal leaders, representing immense success.

The honour of wearing a bisht, especially if it is draped over you by a person of prestige – let alone by Qatar's leader – is a rare privilege, a knighting or coronation in many ways. On Sunday, it added to the grandiosity of the occasion and was in recognition of what Messi has accomplished.

For this World Cup did not only represent Argentina's victory. It also sealed Messi's status in the eyes of many as the "GOAT" (greatest of all time) of football – above not just his peer Cristiano Ronaldo, but perhaps even the biggest former icons of the game such as Pele and Diego Maradona. He has now won every eminent trophy the sport has to offer, including seven Ballon D'Or titles – awarded to the best player annually.

Now, I do understand that since childhood it has been Messi's dream to play for Argentina. Part of that dream likely included the hope of one day lifting the solid gold World Cup trophy in an Argentina jersey like Maradona before him. It is reasonable to wonder whether Messi's wishes were overtaken by events on stage. But the Western media outrage is not about Messi's dream. It is about an unwillingness, steeped in racism and Orientalism, to accept that football and celebrations can look different in different parts of the world. At no point did Messi appear to show disdain for the bisht. Nor was his number 10 Argentina shirt – a jersey so iconic it sold out globally ahead of the final – covered beyond recognition.

It is not uncommon for victorious athletes to be given gifts or items of clothing reflective of local cultures. The aptest example is Pele's 1970 World Cup victory in Mexico, where a sombrero was placed on his head. Was Pele's moment "hijacked", as Australia's 7 News claimed happened in the case of Messi? Indeed, from the day Qatar was awarded the right to host the World Cup, Western outlets have displayed their "shock". Eurocentric and hypocritical objections persisted in the build-up to the epochal tournament and continued through it. The outrage over Messi's bisht was one last show of ignorance.

The Moroccan national team's success in the World Cup represented pride for many Arabs and Africans around the world. For me, as an Iraqi Arab, it was truly inspiring to see the triumph of another Arab nation and to witness their culturally similar celebrations. But, like with the bisht, Western media once again displayed anti-Arab ignorance after Morocco's series of shock victories.

After they eventually bowed out to France in the semi-finals, ESPN posted a photograph of the Moroccan players in prostration, a symbol of humility to God for billions of Muslims around the world. But the caption read: "Moroccan players and staff bow in appreciation to their supporters that came out in force".

A German news outlet, Welt, compared Moroccan players celebrating by pointing one finger towards the sky to ISIL (ISIS) fighters. No Western outlet draws such parallels for Messi when he celebrates by pointing his fingers towards the sky after scoring goals. The affectionate images of Moroccan players celebrating with their mothers, a reflection of the importance of family in African and Arab cultures, were mocked by a Danish television channel: The Moroccans were compared with a family of monkeys.

Yet such racism, ignorance and outright incompetence in journalism are not entirely surprising given the lack of representation in most Western newsrooms. In the United States, 40 percent of the population is not white. But a 2020 Reuters Institute study found that nearly 90 percent of top editors are white. Improving diversity at senior levels in newsrooms will help Western media outlets build safeguards against displays of ignorance — though that would need these organisations to accept their failure in dismantling barriers to growth for non-white journalists.

In the Arab world, some are excitedly calling the bisht-wearing Argentine captain "Sheikh Messi". That too is a reflection of the affection he enjoys. Let us not taint his – and Argentina's – glorious victory with a racist furor over a gesture of admiration and respect.

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Deal to restore nature can help climate and people – if done right

JACK GRAHAM — REUTERS

As the COP15 nature summit in Montreal adopted a new global agreement to halt and reverse harm to the Earth's biodiversity, researchers and officials said the deal could also play a vital role in boosting the world's ability to combat climate change.

From the Amazon rainforest to mangroves in Southeast Asia, natural areas help to slow climate change by absorbing and storing vast amounts of planet-heating carbon dioxide. But human activities like deforestation and mining have degraded 40% of the planet's land, according to the United Nations, while rising temperatures worldwide are making it harder for plants, animals and marine life to survive.

"Nature and the climate emergencies (are) very closely related... both in terms of the problems and also in terms of the potential solutions," said Tony Juniper, chair of Natural England, a body that advises the UK government on environmental issues.

This is a "penny that's dropped" as the separate U.N. processes on biodiversity and climate have included the links between the two crises in their recent decision texts, he noted in an interview as the COP15 talks wound up on Monday.

Conservation, restoration and better management of natural areas could contribute more than a third of the greenhouse gas emissions cuts needed by 2030 to meet the 2015 Paris Agreement target of keeping global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) and ideally 1.5C, scientists say.

"If you look at the numbers and what we know about the pathway to (a limit of) 1.5 degrees, there really is no way we can achieve that without both halting the decline of nature and also investing in its recovery," Juniper said. Many so-called "nature-based solutions" aim to restore ecosystems such as forests and wetlands - hoping to both rebuild their ability to revive biodiversity and absorb CO2 emissions.

At COP15, the agreement adopted in Montreal early on Monday includes a target to restore at least 30% of degraded land, inland water, coastal and marine ecosystems by 2030.

That is in addition to the headline "30 by 30" target to conserve and manage at least 30% of the planet's land and oceans by the same year.

Last week, the United Nations announced its top priorities for restoring global ecosystems, naming 10 flagship projects from cleaning up India's polluted Ganges River to replanting trees and savannahs under Africa's Great Green Wall initiative.

However, as projects start to proliferate, scientists have warned that restoration needs to be carefully planned to ensure the work is genuinely positive for the climate and biodiversity.

Paul Leadley, an ecology professor at Universite Paris-Saclay, pointed to a "frenzy" for planting trees, but said that using just one species or placing them in the wrong areas can lead to "perverse impacts".

"The biggest problem is the planting of monoculture tree plantations, many times with exotic trees, and calling that restoration," he said.

Researchers say, for example, that the creation of huge eucalyptus plantations may help suck up planet-warming greenhouse gases but can degrade soils, put pressure on local water supplies, and even harm biodiversity.

But making restoration an all-round success means protecting both nature and people, conservationists said.

"It takes a lot of work to reforest or to grow ecologically appropriate species," said Alfred DeGemmis, a policy expert at the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Restoration projects need to account for things like the structure and functions of an ecosystem's plants and animals, such as how species move and how they might respond to others being reintroduced or regrown, he added. Initiatives should also gain the consent of local communities who may be impacted by the changes, he added.

"You need to ensure that there are robust social safeguards that are fully in line with international and national human rights law," DeGemmis said.

-Joined-up policy Alice Ruhweza, Africa regional director at WWF International, noted that effective nature restoration also requires coordination at a national level.

Countries need policies and approaches that work internationally - as many cross borders - together with sufficient financial resources and scientific expertise to find projects that offer the best "bang for your buck", she said.

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Al Hammadi hosts Croatian Shooting Federation delegation

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Muhammad Ali Al Mutawa Al Hammadi, former Director of the Office of the Minister of Justice, recently hosted President of Croatian Shooting Federation and the accompanying delegation, for whom he held a reception at his Majlis on the occasion of their arrival in Doha to attend the final match of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

President of the Croatian Shooting Federation Hubert Kispal praised the tremendous way Qatar has been able to host the World Cup 2022 and expressed his pride in receiving an invitation from Abdullah Ali Al Mutawa Al Hammadi, member of the Board of Directors of the Qatar Shooting, Bow and Arrow Federation, and to be able to have the opportunity to learn more about Qatari society and its rich culture.

Kispal said that his visit to Qatar came within on the sidelines of the Croatia-Morocco during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and expressed his delight with the World Cup matches he attended, which he thought to be well-organised, as did all fans. Among which were Croatian citizens that were in attendance to l support their teams participating in the tournament.

He also praised the success achieved by Qatar in organising the World Cup, which will inspire the organization of a lot of future sports tournaments. Kispal expressed elation in the opportunity this tournament presented in regards to the culture exchange between Qatar and Croatia in the field of hosting sports tournaments. He stated that he personally believes FIFA World Cup 2022 was the best organized version in the history of all World Cup tournaments.

Muhammad Ali Al Mutawa Al Hammadi congratulated Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and Deputy Amir, H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, as well as the country's government and the honorable Qatari people, on the occasion of Qatar National Day, which coincides this year with the successful hosting of Qatar of the World Cup for the very first time in the Middle East and the Arab region.

Al Hammadi stressed that this year's celebrations of Qatar National Day constitute an occasion for the Bani Hammad tribe to renew its loyalty to the leadership and the country, and to highlight their pride in the country's achievements, which will mark the success of the country towards achieving its National Vision for 2030.

He added that Qatar National Day, which falls on the 18th of December of each year, represents a precious occasion that is dear to all Qataris, in which they show allegiance to the country and their commitment to following down the path their ancestors took to build a modern state that looks towards the future, while committing to its heritage and traditions.

Al Hammadi explained that Qatar National Day this year represents an exceptional event in the history of the state, whose name has always been synonymous with all that is historical and exceptional in terms of achievements, especially since it coincides with the conclusion of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, in which the State of Qatar undoubtedly succeeded in Organizing and hosting.



Muhammad Ali Al Mutawa Al Hammadi, former Director of the Office of the Minister of Justice, with President of Croatian Shooting Federation and the accompanying delegation.

British YouTube star first in history to attend all World Cup matches

MARIVIE ALABANZA
THE PENINSULA

Theo Ogden, popularly known as Thogden on social media, accepted the Crypto.com and COPA90 challenge dubbed 'The Impossible Challenge' and successfully achieved the feat! The challenge is for the footie vlogger to attend every game live and publish on his YouTube channel his experiences after each match.

FIFA World Cup in Qatar has made many firsts in the history of the mega sporting event— this includes the 21-year-old British YouTube sensation becoming the first person in World Cup history to attend every single game live, and breaking a Guinness World Record for the most World Cup games attended.

Theo Ogden, popularly known as Thogden on social media, accepted the Crypto.com and COPA90 challenge dubbed 'The Impossible Challenge' and successfully achieved the feat!

The challenge is for the footie vlogger to attend every game live and publish on his YouTube channel his experiences after each match.

The 21-year-old launched his YouTube channel in 2014 where he uploaded videos of football matches he attended. So far, his channel has amassed over one million subscribers, thanks to Qatar World Cup, his followers are growing even more. The video creator from Bolton, England has been travelling to football matches across the world for years, with the aim to document his journey and experiences and share with his followers for them "to get to feel what it's like from the stands."

64 games, 29 days, 8 venues - Ogden said: "This is the hardest challenge I've ever done!"

"It is my chance to write history," he said in his Instagram post on November 16. Ogden is also popular on Instagram with 295,000 followers.

Fast forward to the kickoff on November 20, Ogden exclaimed: "The challenge begins here. Day one, out of 64." This, he said after attending the Qatar versus Ecuador match at the Al Bayt Stadium. He added: "The challenge is going to start getting a little more difficult, so I wouldn't miss it!"

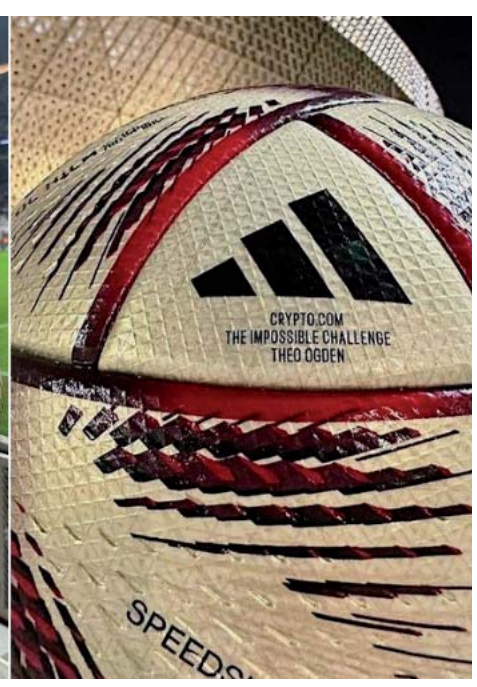
During the group stage matches, Ogden had to leave the venue at half-time as some games were held simultaneously. And with Qatar World Cup being the most compact edition in modern history, with all eight stadiums just within an hour's travel time, he had not missed all the matches and even had great times with fans. In one of his videos, he was seen cheering for Argentina, and for Morocco in another. In his Instagram story, he said: "My wish for 2023 is to visit Morocco."



Theo Ogden, a British vlogger, who attended 64 FIFA World Cup matches. PIC: THEO OGDEN/INSTAGRAM







In an interview, COPA90's Head of Growth, Ed Groves said: "This FIFA World Cup is unlike any other, so we wanted to showcase a unique tournament in a totally unique way with a daring world first. 'The Impossible Challenge' will be a raw, unscripted, and ambitious adventure showcasing the stories from every single country and fanbase going."

In Ogden's latest social media post, he thanked COPA90 and Crypto.com for planning, producing, supplying every ticket throughout the tournament, and making his dream a reality.

"Thank you for sending me on this mission! I'm physically and mentally drained but I've loved it," he said. "64/64 World Cup matches attended and the Argentines took it home. A mix of emotions, many ups and downs but an unreal experience. Thank you all."

On December 20, 2022, FIFA World Cup's Instagram story and Twitter handle congratulated Ogden for completing the challenge to which he replied: "Thank you for making it possible!" Also on the same day, Tuesday, the football superfan captioned his Instagram story with: "Thank you for everything Qatar. One final big up. If you ever want to visit Qatar, I would deffo recommend it."

Theo Ogden is now an official FIFA World Cup record holder and an official fan of Qatar!

Colombia footballer named as Save the Dream Ambassador

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Save the Dream, a global initiative by Doha based International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) has announced the appointment of Isabella Echeverri, Colombian professional football player and winner of the gold medal in the Pan-American Games of 2019, to become the latest ambassador in 2022.

Isabella's appointment will see the 28-year-old international footballer join the team of Save the Dream's internationally renowned champions currently including Alessandro Del Piero. Christian Karembeu, David Trezeguet, Fernando Hierro, Fernando Sanz, Tegla Loroupe, Rosa Mota, Penny Heyns, Giusy Versace, Sheikh Fahad Bin Khalid Al Thani, Nuno Delgado, Fiona May, and Honey Thaljieh, just to name a few.

Save the Dream is operated by ICSS with the support of Ooredoo, the technology partner, to empower youth through safe access to sport and its educational and social values.

Isabella, who plays as a centre back for Liga MX Femenil club CF Monterrey and the Colombia women's national team, agreed to support Save the Dream's mission by promoting the positive values of sport among youth and girls in particular, using the power of football to inspire them and break down barriers and stereotypes.

An icon and role model for many, Isabella has been part of the Colombian national team for the last ten years, making history in tournaments such as the Olympics Games and the Women's World Cup. Captain of every team she has ever been part of, she holds two bachelor's degrees and three master's degrees.

Speaking on her new role, Isabella Echeverri said: "It's a great honor to become one of the Ambassadors of Save the Dream. I am so happy to be part of this global initiative and help to create a future where girls and women can have the right to safely access sport and its educational and social values.

"I grew up believing that dreams had no limits. Football has the power to unite people, dispel stereotypes, and break down social barriers."

Commenting on the appointment, Save the Dream CEO Massimiliano Montanari, said: "Isabella Echeverri is one of the most admired female football players in the world, and we warmly welcome her to join our journey. She has a strong understanding of the complexities and opportunities around women's football and strong visions on how to empower girls through the beautiful game. Together we will have a strong impact."





Ministry of Transport official meets Iranian delegation

A Ministry of Transport delegation headed by Acting Assistant Undersecretary, Land Transport Affairs, Eng. Hamad Essa Abdulla, met with a delegation from the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran headed by Deputy Minister H E Dayrush Amani. The meeting discussed cooperation between the two entities. The Iranian Ambassador to Qatar H E Hamid Reza Dehghani also attended the meeting.

Reviving, learning Arabic language only way to create educated generations: Ambassador

QNA — VIENNA

Qatar's Ambassador to Austria spoke about the challenge of reviving the Arabic language and its role in developing Arab societies and keeping them in pace with science.

H E Sultan bin Salmeen Al Mansoori, the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Republic of Austria, and the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations and international organizations in Vienna, affirmed that reviving the Arabic language, being proud of the language and learning it is the only way to form an educated, knowledgeable, conscious, and enlightened generation that will be the nucleus of an enlightened Arab society.

This came during the participation of the Embassy of the State of Qatar to the Republic of Austria and the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations and international organizations in Vienna, in the celebration of the World Arabic Language Day, which was held at the United Nations Office at Vienna.

In a speech on behalf of the Arab Group, the Ambassador expressed gratitude to the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for their celebration of the World Arabic Language Day; in order to highlight the Arabic language as one of the most important languages in the world. He spoke about the challenge of reviving the Arabic language and its role in developing Arab societies and keeping them in pace with science.

He also praised the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which was held for the first time in an Arab country, saying that it was an occasion for dialogue and the interaction of worldwide fans with manifestations of the Arab-Islamic culture, on Qatari soil, noting that the Arabic language was used for the first time in World Cup history in FIFA advertisements and official statements inside and outside the stadiums.

Doha Festival City, Kahramaa launch EV charging stations

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Doha Festival City has announced the completion of the first phase of its electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in partnership with Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa), represented in the National Program for Conservation and Energy Efficiency (Tarsheed).

The project, undertaken under the mall's sustainability efforts and Tarsheed's guidance and regulations, has seen the completion of 23 stations, which are now all operational.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Eng Rashid Al Rahimi, Manager of Conservation and Energy Efficiency Department from Kahramaa, and Jihad Zarkout, Assistant General Manager of BASREC, owner and operator of DFC mall, and Robert Hall, Doha Festival City's General Manager, along with a number of managers and personnel.

The EV charging stations are now available for public use and can be found in 46 locations across the mall in the Lower Ground Floor, near Monoprix and Sacoor Brothers and on the first floor near the VIP valet area, Harvey Nichols, and VOX.

This step came in the context of the joint action Kahramaa, represented by Tarsheed, is leading in cooperation with different entities in Qatar to achieve environmental sustainability, and it is in line with Doha Festival City's long commitment to promoting the use of clean energy and reducing the carbon footprint from visitor's vehicles. The mall has further plans to install more charging stations in two phases in the coming two years to promote energy efficiency.

Commenting on the project, Eng. Rashid Al Rahimi, said: "The goal of these electric charging stations is to encourage people to use electric cars and to support the infrastructure enabling this transition to sustainable transportation, which will reduce carbon emissions, as the means of transportation in the world in general represent a large proportion of carbon emissions".

Al Rahimi added that these efforts were in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030 and its commitment to preserving the environment in Qatar and the transition to sustainable transport. He also noted that Tarsheed had completed over 100 fast electric charging stations all over Qatar till end of 2022. "Expansion of the network is expected to reach 250 EV charging stations by end of 2023." he added.



Officials from Kahramaa and Doha Festival City during the launch of first phase of its Electric Vehicle charging stations at the DFC mall.

Robert Hall, Doha Festival City's General Manager, said: "As a sustainable mall, Doha Festival City continues improving its operations by following the latest international sustainability best practices and standards. We have a firm commitment towards the environment, and we consider the completion of projects that contribute toward reducing our environmental impact at the top of our priorities. The completion of this first phase of the EV charging stations constitutes the first step on our journey toward providing the infrastructure that promotes the use of these vehicles, contributing to the reduction of the carbon footprint in Qatar and toward cleaner air for all the people in this country."

Eng Mohammed Al Sharshani, head of EV Charging Stations Unit, said that Kahramaa, represented by Tarsheed, was keen on cooperating with all local stakeholders, both in the governmental and private sectors.

"Kahramaa is promoting collective action and cooperation on highest levels to achieve sustainability goals" Al Sharshani added. "We are pleased with this partnership as installing EV charging stations in DFC Mall is a major step in the right direction. Kahramaa achieved a great leap forward in supporting sustainable transportation this year". He concluded.

The Unity50 charging stations can charge electric vehicles with a power output of up to 50 kW and reduce charging times to less than 30 minutes.

The stations are managed by the efficient "ChargeSphere – powered by Kostad" web-based control and management system to ensure cross connectivity and visibility.

All stations will be monitored by Tarsheed Platform that connects all EV charging stations in the State of Qatar for a better user experience in 2023.



Sidra Medicine appoints new CEO

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Sidra Medicine, a Qatar Foundation entity, has announced the appointment of Dr. Iyabo Tinubu Karch **(pictured)** as its Chief Executive Officer.

Dr. Tinubu Karch has extensive clinical experience in general internal medicine, hospital and geriatric medicine. She is certified in health information technology and has led several international based programs about the application of technology in clinical medicine. She also holds numerous high-profile board appointments and memberships in leading healthcare colleges and societies in the United States of America.

Mohammed Khalid Al Mana, current Managing Director and Member of the Board of Governors at Sidra Medicine said: "On behalf of the Board of Governors of Sidra Medicine, we are delighted to have Dr. Iyabo Tinubu-Karch join us as our new Chief Executive Officer. She has been actively involved with the management team at our hospital, in her previous capacity as a non-executive Board member since 2019, well as in an advisory role with our management committee.

Dr. Tinubu-Karch's experience within the healthcare sector and extensive knowledge of Sidra Medicine will be invaluable to lead our organisation into a new era."

QF's D'reesha saw Qatari pianist with autism take centre stage

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

With his eyes diligently fixed on the piano, his fingers delicately moving over its keys, and facial expressions changing ever so slightly with each note, 14-year-old Hassan Saeed Al Shehhi performed in front of his biggest crowd yet at Qatar Foundation's D'reesha Performing Arts Festival.

Al Shehhi was diagnosed with autism when he was two and is non-verbal. His mother, Aisha Al Kash, said: "He couldn't say it to me in words, but I could feel he understood that he was on a stage, performing in front of a crowd, that people were listening to him, and that he was being applauded. I could see it in that instance that he was as proud and as happy as I was."

The Al Shehhi family found out about the D'reesha Performing Arts Festival and expressed their wish for their son to participate, which to their delight was welcomed by the team.

Al Kash said: "We are on always on the lookout for opportunities for Hassan to perform and pursue his passion for music. As parents, we want him to have a place in the community, and by opening their doors to people of all abilities the D'reesha Performing Arts Festival and Qatar Foundation have given him exactly that – a place and a sense of belonging in the community."

Al Shehhi's relationship with music started when he was eight, thanks to a chance encounter at his school where he tried his hand at the piano during one of his music classes. His parents quickly recognized that he showed signs of talent and enrolled him in a private music institute so he could progress.

His mother recalls that when she initially approached the music institute, the piano teacher wasn't sure Al Shehhi would be a good fit, given he had autism. But on her insistence, he agreed to give it a go.

"His memory is particularly good. He never forgets the notes, no matter how long he's been on break, he doesn't forget them. Most other kids need a refresher after a break but not Hassan," said Al Kash, who is quick to point out that when it comes to individuals with special needs, we'd be much better off as a society if we focused on their strengths as opposed to making their weaknesses a barrier to their participation in activities.

When he isn't playing the piano, Al Shehhi enjoys swimming, cycling, horse rising, and skating. "He enjoys everything other children his age do. A little support is all he needs."

Given his interest in music, Al Shehhi also plays the xylophone and is taking lessons in Eastern music too. His mother thinks music has allowed him to concentrate better on whatever task he is doing.

Accorrding to Al Kash, the D'reesha Performing Arts Festival has played a commendable role in showcasing Arab Culture through music, theatre, and arts, but what's more commendable is the way it incorporated inclusivity and accessibility.

She said: "Not only did they have people of all abilities in the performances, but they also had sign language available for the deaf and hard of hearing, and audio description of the performances for the blind and visually impaired. It was beautiful to see just how much thought was put into ensuring they were catering to people of all abilities. It is something I hope to see at all events going forward."

Getting in on the football fever, Al-Shehhi learned how to play World Cup favourites like Arhabo and Hayya Hayya on the piano. "He often plays them for us at home. It's his way of being part of the football fever," said his mother, who dreams of seeing her son perform on a global stage in the near future.

Going forward, she hopes to see more opportunities – recreational and skill development – for people of all abilities across the country. She said: "Opportunities do exist, but they are not necessarily enough. I hope not long in the future we will have enough opportunities that no parent of a child with autism or any other need is put on a waiting list."



Hassan Saeed Al Shehhi performing at D'reesha Performing Arts Festival.

Qatar Airways flies nearly 14,000 flights during World Cup

FROM PAGE 1

"We are grateful to have been a part of this long and rewarding experience as the Official Airline of the Journey. For every step and every mile travelled with us, we have aimed to deliver a flying experience like no other."

Qatar Airways concluded the tournament festivities with a partnership with the international artist, Lili Cantero. During the Final, Cantero live painted a Qatar Airways Boeing 777 aircraft model at the FIFA Fan Festival. Cantero depicted key moments and highlights of the thrilling face-off between Argentina and France. At the intersection of arts and sports, her work portrays the story of the successfully delivered Qatar 2022.

To celebrate the beginning of the tournament, Qatar Airways launched its official FIFA World Cup campaign song, 'C.H.A.M.P.I.O.N.S', featuring the internationally renowned artists DJ Rodge and Cheb Khaled. In the span of a month, the highly-popular song reached an astonishing 23 million views.

Privilege Club, the Official Frequent Flyer Programme of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 welcomed over 67,000 new valued members across the tournament period, having successfully completed five different offer campaigns.

Qatar Airways offered all passengers flying through Hamad International Airport (HIA) and Doha International Airport (DIA) a complimentary experience at the Passenger Overflow Areas (POAs) - pre-departure waiting spaces, setting a new standard of excellence for international travel at sporting events. The POAs were built to provide fans with dedicated facilities, to complete their FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 journey.

During the tournament, Qatar Duty Free (QDF), the Official Retail Store for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, exclusively sold FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 merchandise in the fan zones and at all of the eight spectacular stadiums. QDF also inaugurated the first FIFA store at HIA, showcasing an impressive collection of merchandise, souvenirs, collectibles and team jerseys.

Throughout the World Cup period, Qatar Airways and Qatar Executive also sponsored the Diego Armando Maradona Give&Get Fanfest to honour the late, great Diego Maradona, using state-of-the-art technology, public exhibits, events, auctions and more.

Besides the football, the airline also hosted seven Qatar Live concerts to engage audiences with performances from Jason Derulo, Enrique Iglesias, Black Eyed Peas, J Balvin, Robbie Williams, Tamer Hosny, and Akon. Alongside these world-renowned artists, Qatar Live also brought back the Daydream festival with a new stage - the Magic Lantern.

Ooredoo delivers phenomenal connectivity during World Cup

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Ooredoo — Official Middle East & Africa Telecommunications Operator of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 — has announced record-breaking figures at the conclusion of the sporting mega-event, cementing its position as a world-leading telecommunications and ICT provider.

Records set at the opening ceremony were broken by the time the tournament concluded; the breathtaking final between Argentina and France at Lusail Stadium saw a record-breaking 45.1TB data used, 8.4TB of stadium Wi-Fi used, more than 650,000 calls made and 32,000 fans using roaming.

Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Nasser Al Thani, Chief Commercial Officer at Ooredoo said: "There are no words to describe the pride we feel as we conclude the world's greatest sporting event. To have hosted such an incredible event in our beloved country, and for our country to have put on such a stellar performance, was phenomenal; for Ooredoo to have had the opportunity to show the world just what we and our Network of Champions can do, was priceless."

Across all 64 matches of the most prominent football tournament in the world, the 3.4 million fans attending used a phenomenal 801TB data, of which 40.3% was via Ooredoo's pioneering 5G at a speed of up to 236Mbps. 58.2% was on the 4G network at a speed of up to 19Mbps. 201TB of Wi-Fi was used in and around the eight stadiums.

As many as 11.4 million voice calls were made throughout the event, of which 63.1% were VoLTE, with a call success rate of 99.95%, and an incredible 646,000 fans used roaming. 8,466 antennae placed in the eight stadiums supported the network, while a team of more than 500 experts on the ground ensured seamless service. Lusail Stadium saw the highest figures, with 222TB data used and 2.9 million calls made throughout the tournament.

A full 4G/5G mobile network modernisation - incorporating the very latest, most advanced equipment and functionalities - ensured complete readiness for FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022TM,

Proper network capacity and resiliency throughout all network components — RAN, Core and Transport — was ensured for both national and international segments, and



Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Nasser Al Thani, Chief Commercial Officer at Ooredoo

included full modernisation of the core, with a sophisticated cloud core network in state-of-the-art data centres.

A major upgrade of outdoor radio sites with the latest 5G technology maximised country-level coverage, including stadiums, airports, rail networks, fan zones and other FIFA-related facilities. Capacity for fan zones and other event venues and hotspots was enhanced.

More than 1,130 multi-beam antennas connected over 355km of RF cables and over 202km of fibre optic, covering the eight stadiums and immediate surrounding areas with 4G and 5G. Mobile network services with 5,000+ cells, 1,500+ DOTs, TETRA services and Wi-Fi backbone offered state-of-the-art 5G, 4G, 3G and 2G technologies at all eight stadiums.

A focused taskforce comprising more than 400 experts handled operations from a centralised state-of-the-art Service Operation Centre, supported by a network of multiple remote hubs and field operations round-the-clock. Technical experts with experience in major global events such as the Super Bowl or previous World Cup tournaments were engaged to support during the 2022 tournament.

Ooredoo used a new AI-powered process of identity authentication and SIM card activation to speed up and simplify its onboarding process. The service deployed a sophisticated AI-based digital Know Your Customer (KYC) technology to quickly and efficiently establish the real identity of users in the digital world.

An AI-powered Virtual Voice Assistant, utilising Google Contact Centre Artificial Intelligence, was available 24/7 to assist customers in nine different languages, including English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean and Arabic.



Ooredoo's commitment to, and investment in innovation and technology was leveraged for the benefit of FIFA, the event and its participants, with the company providing connectivity on the go. More than 350 FIFA buses that were used to transport players, match officials and media representatives were provided with mobile broadband, with some 300 of these also fitted with managed Wi-Fi systems.

Sheikh Nasser concluded: "Years of strategic investment in innovation and technology ensured Ooredoo was perfectly placed to deliver seamless connectivity and a vastly enhanced experience for both fans residing in Qatar and those visiting from overseas. Our extensive preparations for the sporting mega-event, including the comprehensive network modernisation and collaboration with several of the world's leading technology giants, meant we were more than capable of delivering on our ambitious promises."

Ookla hails Qatar mobile network, internet performance during World Cup

QNA — DOHA

A report issued by Ookla, a global leader in network intelligence and connectivity insights, praised the performance of the mobile phone network and the Internet during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, pointing out that the network was not affected by the increasing number of users during the tournament.

In a report, it said that there were no problems or disturbances in the Internet, despite the network's performance reaching its peak.

The report pointed out: "Ahead of the event, we outlined the important role of the Qatar Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) and both Ooredoo Qatar and Vodafone Qatar in driving performance gains in the market. A competitive, pro-investment market environment has paid dividends, coupled with firm commitments from both operators to roll out commercial 5G networks in all densely populated areas and all venues associated with the FIFA World Cup."

"As of December 3, 2022, after almost two weeks and 48 games, the FIFA World Cup has seen over 2.45 million cumulative stadium attendees. For a country with a population of 2.93 million, ensuring mobile network performance meets expectations has been no easy feat. Ookla was keen to understand how Qatari mobile networks were handling the deluge of visitors and additional traffic. According to Speedtest Intelligence, median download performance in November rose to 263.37 Mbps on modern chipsets across all mobile technologies combined, with median 5G download performance hitting 472.13 Mbps."

"Fans visiting Qatar for the World Cup have benefited from the offer of local SIMs from national mobile operators Ooredoo and Vodafone, which include free data. Ooredoo SIMs include 2022 MB of data for free, valid for 3 days, while Vodafone customers have access to 3GB of data for free, valid across 2 days. Encouraging visitors to utilize local SIMs has helped provide superior network performance for fans at the World Cup. In addition, it's clear that the network enhancements made by Ooredoo and Vodafone, and their live monitoring and optimization of network performance using crowdsourced data, has helped boost overall network performance at the event, despite the deluge of fans and resultant data traffic."

"We used Speedtest Intelligence data to observe performance in the lead up to, and during the FIFA World Cup . 5G performance increased from a median download of 394.2 Mbps and upload of 19.93 Mbps 10 weeks before the event, while hitting a median download speed of 489.29 Mbps and median upload speed of 38.36 Mbps during the second week of the World Cup . Ooredoo and Vodafone have played a crucial role in driving increased 5G performance at the World Cup with both mobile network operators neck-and-neck in terms of 5G download performance," the report explained.

The report said comparing mobile network performance during the first two weeks of the World Cup to other major sporting events in the region and further afield shows just how impressive 5G network performance has been so far, given the number of attendees. "While not the fastest sporting event on record, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 ranks highly, well ahead of events such as the French Open and Wimbledon."

Ooredoo, FIFA's Official Global Connectivity Services Provider for the event, has been very vocal on the improvements it has made to its network and operations. Ooredoo has rolled out additional macro cell sites and small cells to cater to data traffic around the stadiums, and has also deployed over 5,000 cell sites to offer sufficient network coverage across mobile technologies within the stadiums.

"Using Speedtest Intelligence data to analyze network performance across Qatar's World Cup stadiums for both Ooredoo and Vodafone combined, we see that Al Janoub Stadium recorded the fastest median 5G download performance at 757.77 Mbps, and that all World Cup stadiums recorded median 5G speeds over 400 Mbps. Of the most popular fan sites, the Ras Bufontas and Airport Free Zone recorded the highest 5G performance," Ookla said.



The shipment included medicines for chronic diseases.

QRCS, QC deliver vital medicines to Lebanon

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

As part of backing the Lebanese health sector in the teeth of economic challenges, two batches of vital medicines have recently been delivered to Lebanon's Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), at a cost of QR3,650,000, under a project funded by Qatar Charity (QC) and implemented by Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS).

At Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Medical Center, the Directorate-General of Internal Security Forces held a ceremony to receive chronic disease medications provided by QRCS and QC.

It was attended by Major-General Imad Othman, Director-General of Internal Security Forces; Counselor Mashaal bin Mohamed Al Kuwari, representative of the Ambassador of Qatar to Lebanon; Dr. Mohamed Al Sousi, head of QRCS mission in Lebanon; Brigadier Hussein Khashfa, Head of the Central Administration Unit; Colonel Ahmed Abla, Commander of Beirut Police; and senior officers.

Maj Gen Othman thanked the Embassy of Qatar in Lebanon, QC, and QRCS for supporting the Internal Security Forces.

He stressed the importance of this support to secure medical services for more than 150,000 policemen, family members, and pensioners.

Dr. Al Sousi said, "It is a small contribution made to MoI, municipalities, and Internal Security Forces, despite the pressing needs of this sector. The support from Qatari charities shows our eagerness to back the health sector in Lebanon. I would like to thank QC for funding this project. We at QRCS will continue to give every form of support to Lebanon, especially in the health sector, where we have an evident influence at MoPH's hospitals and clinics."

In his comment, Khaled Al Yafei, Director of Relief and Emergency Department at QC, said, "This support is part of QC's contributions to the health sector. I hope that this assistance will help enhance health care services for patients. QC will continue to support the people of Lebanon, especially during difficult circumstances. I would like to thank QRCS for undertaking this project."

Solutions in the airport

bayanat ENGINEERING

Airports are a part of all major (and now not so major) cities. Every year, millions of people pass through the gates of Hamad International Airport. Over the course of the past century, commercial flights and air travel have been democratized and adapted for the average consumer, while their cost has been, in many ways, reduced. This led to the flourishing of the tourism industry and, logically, to a higher demand on civil aviation.

While a common traveler may take the airport structure and conveniences for granted – largely thanks to this accessibility – it is important to remember that the air hubs have been equipped with a plethora of technological systems that help render travel safe, quick, and pleasant.

Communication and passenger operations

Missing a flight or a gate number is a bad idea. Fortunately, with enough attention and a sufficient time baggage, it is almost impossible nowadays, thanks to the advanced information display systems. The inner signage of the airport is omnipresent, accessible, and easy to read.

And in case one is late to their flight, advanced check-in, passenger tacking and counting systems have the travelers' backs.

In very rare and unlikely occurrences, certain scenarios may temper with a smooth ground-to-flight transition. If ever an emergency, such as a fire, takes place on the airport grounds, its infrastructure will help alert and evacuate all the passengers and staff in due time. This is done through fire alarm and suppression systems, such as FAS and FM200.

Runway and flight solutions

Communication must be maintained not only inside the airport, but between airplanes and operators. All aircrafts should arrive on the time, air traffic must be managed, and landing and takeoff must be carried out as smoothly as possible. A timely transfer is an essential component for all these operations.

Therefore, modern airports use an entire array of solutions, such as clear runway signage, RADAR and radio-based equipment to communicate with the arriving and departing planes, as well as to give the latter clear indications about the directions they are to take.

But good communication alone isn't enough to ensure the safe and steady passage of the flight. Meteorological and environmental conditions could impact landing and takeoff. Birds that could get in the way need to be chased off, while weather control solutions could be used to modify precipitation to a certain extent. The presence of debris may also affect clearance for airplanes. Therefore, Foreign Object and Detection systems for Runways such as Xsight have been put in place in airports, including HIA. This infrastructure helps promptly detect the location of a foreign object in question, while also alerting and archiving the data about its presence in its subsystems. The coverage of the infrastructure extends to all taxiways and runways, allowing for a much more comprehensive analysis of the plane's on-ground and aerial environment.

Latest Solutions

It is also important to keep in mind that every year, new and updated technology appears on the market. With each innovation, each optimization, the functioning of the airport improves. Equipment such as advanced baggage handling has been an excellent helper in reducing baggage loss during transfer. The digitalization of our daily activities has also left its mark on the airport handling, as, nowadays, it is possible to check in online, avoiding the stress and boredom of waiting in long lines. Some other new technologies have specifically been designed to answer the challenges of the big changes in global trends. The coronavirus pandemic, for one, had an immense impact to the traditional travel guidelines. Airports around the world required their passengers and staff to have a certain body temperature and no symptoms of the Covid-19 infection. A solution to this issue has been brought in the form of body-scan cameras, scattered around airports, such as the ones in Qatar International Airport. This modern equipment allowed for precise and rapid body temperature measurements. Even outside of the pandemic context, body scan cameras are a welcome and needed addition to the airport arsenal, as they may help detect dangerously high temperatures on time, potentially saving lives.

If you are a fan of the multiverse and the AI, this next solution may be your favorite! Currently, augmented reality (AR) equipment is being developed for airport use, and no, it isn't about chasing Pokémon. AR is thought to help travelers navigate the air hubs – especially those on a larger scale – with more ease. The computer-generated directions and tips that one will see in their respective equipment will be tied to their preferences and needs and could save a lot of time when finding restrooms or a sought gate.

These solutions by no means resume the entire range of what has already integrated and what is being developed for the air hubs. One thing is for sure: these systems are an immense help to the travelers and the airport staff.

Bayanat Engineering Qatar, a company that has experience and proposes a wide range of these and other aviation solutions. Visit website at bayanatengineering.qa

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Sweden's blocking of Turkish man's extradition 'very negative': Ankara

REUTERS — ANKARA

Ankara says the man it wants extradited is a member of an organisation behind a 2016 coup attempt.

Sweden's Supreme Court decision to block the extradition of Turkish journalist Bulent Kenes is a "very negative" development, Turkiye's foreign minister said on Tuesday, as Stockholm seeks Ankara's approval for it to join NATO.

Mevlut Cavusoglu was speaking at a news conference in Ankara. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan last month singled out Kenes as a person Ankara wants extradited from Sweden as a condition for Ankara's approval for Stockholm to join NATO.

Ankara says Kenes is a member of an organisation that it accuses of orchestrating a 2016 coup attempt.

Sweden's Foreign Ministry said it was bound to act in accordance with the Supreme Court's ruling.

"We cannot speculate on what possible impact this will have on the NATO accession," the Swedish Foreign Ministry said in an emailed comment. "Sweden's government has to follow Swedish and international law when it comes to questions of extradition, which is also made clear in the trilateral agreement." Finland and Sweden both asked to join NATO in May in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but their bids require the approval of all 30 NATO member states, including Turkiye.

In June, Sweden and Finland agreed to take a number of steps to overcome Turkiye 's objections, signing a three-way agreement.

One of Turkiye's demands was that Sweden and Finland extradite suspects Turkiye seeks over terrorism-related charges, although the two Nordic countries have said they have not agreed to specific extraditions and that all requests will be dealt with according to domestic and international law.



Turkish President and leader of the Justice and Development Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan is applauded during his party's group meeting at Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara, yesterday. (AFP)

Nigeria says 'collateral damage' in air strikes against gangs

AFP — KANO, NIGERIA

Nigerian authorities have acknowledged "collateral damage" from air strikes against criminal gangs in which local residents said around 100 civilians died.

The strikes were carried out on Saturday in the north-western state of Zamfara, which is in the grip of so-called bandits notorious for attacks and ransom kidnappings.

A spokesman for the Nigerian air force declined to comment.

But Zamfara governor Bello Matawalle, in a statement published on Tuesday, expressed sympathy "to those who were injured and the families of those who died as a result of this collateral damage," without giving figures.

At least three residents told AFP that troops backed by a warplane engaged hundreds of gunmen who had attacked rural communities in Dansadau district in reprisal for the killing of 15 comrades by local self-defence vigilantes.

The jet bombarded the positions of the motorcycle-riding bandits, killing scores and forcing others to flee into the community, where they hid among residents.

"The jet pursued the bandits who ran into the neighbouring Mutunji, Malele and Dansadau communities and pounded them," Dansadau resident Musa Sa'idu said. "We lost a total of 102 people with dozens of others injured in the unfortunate bombings," said Sa'idu, who took part in the burial of the victims. Mutunji resident Abbakar Sani confirmed Sa'idu's account to AFP by telephone, giving a breakdown of the fatalities. "In Mutunji, 69 people were killed, 27 in Malele, and six in Dansadau. Many people are now in hospitals receiving treatment for serious injuries," Sani said.

According to a local community leader, 73 people were hospitalized due to injuries in the air strikes. He also confirmed a similar death toll from the air raid.

Resident Mustapha Bello said around 190 bodies of bandits were also recovered from the attack in Mutunji, a claim supported by Sa'idu and Sani. The bandits were drawn from four different gangs and came in large numbers, the three resident sources said.

"Thirteen soldiers were also killed in the fighting," Bello said.

That could not immediately be confirmed with the military. There have been previous accidental airstrikes in northeastern Nigeria, where the military is fighting militants who are waging a 13-year insurgency.

In September last year an accidental Nigerian military airstrike on a village in Yobe state killed at least nine civilian residents, according to officials.

The Nigerian air force said its fighter jet was pursuing a group of militants in the area at the time. In January 2017 at least 112 people were killed when a jet struck a camp housing people displaced by militant violence in the town of Rann near the border with Cameroon. The Nigerian military blamed "lack of appropriate marking of the area" for the bombardment in a report it issued six months later.

In July 2019, at least 13 civilians were killed when a Nigerian fighter jet hit Gajiganna village, 50 kilometres from Borno state capital Maiduguri, as it targeted fleeing militants after they attacked a nearby base.

Iran FM says held 'friendly' talks with Saudi counterpart

AFP — TEHRAN

Iran's foreign minister said yesterday he held a "friendly conversation" with his Saudi counterpart in Jordan.

Jordan hosted the "Baghdad II" conference on Tuesday, bringing together key Middle East and international players — including Iran and Saudi Arabia — in a bid to defuse regional tensions.

"On the sidelines of the meeting, I had the opportunity for a friendly talk with some of my counterparts, including the foreign ministers of Oman, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in an Arabic-language post.

"The Saudi minister assured me of his country's readiness to continue dialogue with Iran," he added.

Children 'trapped' in Syria camps at risk: Aid group

AFP — BEIRUT

About 7,000 children of suspected foreign militants housed in overcrowded detention camps in northeast Syria are at risk of attack and must be repatriated, an aid organisation warned yesterday.

Since the Islamic State group's 2019 territorial defeat in Syria, around 56,000 relatives of defeated militants have been detained in the Kurdish-controlled Al Hol and Roj camps.

"These children are trapped in desperate conditions and put at risk on a daily basis," said Matt Sugrue from Save the Children, a charity working in the camps. "There is no time to waste".

The camps are administered by the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces, with more than 10,000 foreigners from around 60 countries held in a separate section.

In 2021, 74 children died in Al Hol, eight of them killed, according to Save the Children.

Last month, the United Nations condemned the "brutal murder" of two Egyptian girls whose bodies were found in sewers at Al Hol, and the charity Doctors Without Borders described the camp as "a giant open-air prison".

A record 517 women and children were repatriated in 2022, representing a 60 percent increase from the year before, but Sugrue called for these efforts "to be sustained and stepped up".

"At the rate foreign governments are going, we will see some children become adults before they are able to leave these camps and return home," he said.

A total of 1,464 women and children have so far been repatriated to their home countries since 2019, according to Save the Children.

"It breaks my heart to see my children growing up in this place, deprived of an education," said 32-year-old Mariam, a Tunisian mother of five living in Al Hol, whose testimony was recorded by Save the Children.

Syria has been devastated by more than 11 years of brutal conflict and large areas of the country remain outside of government control.

Kurdish authorities in the northeast have repeatedly called on countries to repatriate their citizens, but foreign governments have mostly received them only sporadically, fearing security threats and a domestic political backlash.

Somali soldiers return from Eritrea

AFP — MOGADISHU

The first batch of 5,000 Somali men sent to train as soldiers in Eritrea returned home yesterday to be deployed against an insurgency, a minister said.

Their return ends months of worry among families who feared they might have been recruited under false pretence and held captive.

Somali Defence Minister Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur described it as "good news" that they had been brought home to the Horn of Africa nation.

It will have "so much meaning for the ongoing military operations," he added, referring to the fight against the rebel group Al Shabaab.

"The rest of the troops will return in the next couple of days," Nur said, without disclosing how many had come back on Wednesday.



Somalia's Defence Minister Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur speaks at a press conference in Mogadishu yesterday after the arrival of the first group of Somali soldiers trained in Eritrea. (AFP)

Rumours had swirled in the country of 17 million people that the soldiers may have been deployed to the war-torn Ethiopian region of Tigray.

"This will be a blow to the evildoers (Al-Shabaab), and anyone else who is doing harm in the country," Nur said.

Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who had pledged to bring the soldiers home in his election campaign, visited them in training camps in Eritrea in July.

Mohamud said on Monday that bringing all the soldiers home would take until January.

Families without news of their relatives in the army protested several times last year during the presidency of Mohamud's predecessor Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known as Farmajo, demanding information about their whereabouts.

The UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker, in June last year referred to "reports that Somali soldiers were moved from military training camps in Eritrea to the frontline in Tigray, where they accompanied Eritrean troops" supporting Ethiopian federal forces against rebels.

Farmajo said their training ended last year but he had decided to delay their return to avoid disrupting parliamentary and presidential elections.

Somalia has been wracked by decades of civil war, political violence and an insurgency.

Forced out of the country's main urban centres around 10 years ago, Al Shabaab have been waging a bloody insurgency against Somalia's internationally backed federal government for 15 years.

They remain entrenched in vast swathes of rural central and southern Somalia and continues to carry out deadly attacks in the capital Mogadishu.

UN eases arms embargo on DR Congo

AFP — UNITED NATIONS, US

The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution on Tuesday that eases a weapons embargo on the Democratic Republic of Congo, a move hailed by Kinshasa as an "injustice repaired."

The resolution removes a stipulation that previously required countries to inform the 15-member council of arms sales or military assistance to the Congolese government. Kinshasa has long complained that the requirement created an unnecessary bureaucratic hurdle in its battle with militia groups. The DRC has been subject to the UN arms embargo since 2000, originally imposed over widespread violence in the central African nation.

In 2008, the Security Council amended the sanctions regime to apply only to armed groups. The rules still required the government to notify a monitoring committee of arms purchases, however. Earlier this year, the Council prolonged the regime but reduced the notification requirements for certain weapons purchases. Kinshasa continued to push for the restrictions to be lifted amid a surge of clashes with M23 militia in the east.

Diplomats in New York came under increasing pressure to act amid allegations that they were obstructing the Congolese military from protecting civilians.

"A battle won, an injustice repaired," government spokesman Patrick Muyaya wrote on Twitter after the resolution was passed. The Council also voted to renew the mandate of the UN's DRC peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, for another year.

The M23 or "March 23 Movement" first leapt to global prominence in 2012 when it briefly captured Goma, an important commercial hub of about a million people in North Kivu province.

Jerusalem chef gives tourists a Palestinian taste of life in the Old City

REUTERS — JERUSALEM

Palestinian chef Izzeldin Bukhari begins the tours he offers to the Old City of Jerusalem with breakfast at Abu Shukri's hummus restaurant which he says serves the perfect balance of chickpeas, tahina and lemon juice.

"Palestinian cuisine really utilises what the land has to offer," Bukhari says, explaining that these heavily plant-based recipes are deeply rooted in a connection to the local produce.

Bukhari, descended from Sufi mystics who walked to Jerusalem from Bukhara in Uzbekistan 400 years ago, takes guests down the narrow streets of the Old City, to food stalls and restaurants, telling stories of recipes dating back thousands of years.



The owner of the famed Abu Shukri restaurant prepares a bowl of chickpea-based hummus in Jerusalem's Old City, on December 11, 2022. (REUTERS)

For Palestinians living in the complex and often tense political environment of East Jerusalem, which includes the walled Old City and its holy sites of three major religions, food is a major part of their cultural identity. The stories behind it open up ways to talk about the wider culture.

Bukhari explains that kras beid, a quiche-like dish but with a pizza-style crust, is not just a food but also a social activity which brings people together in the evenings. Even the humble plate of hummus served for breakfast has found itself at the centre of heated debates about whether it is a Jewish or Palestinian dish.

"It gives me a way to talk about Palestine and the culture of Palestine through the food," said Bukhari.

The overwhelming majority of East Jerusalem's more than 340,000 Palestinians hold Israeli residency permits but few have citizenship in Israel, which considers the entire holy city as its eternal, undivided capital.

The Palestinians have long sought the city's east, which Israel captured in a 1967 war and later annexed in a move not recognised internationally, as the capital of a future state.

Friction between Israel and Palestinians can sporadically arise, especially around the Al Aqsa mosque, one of the Middle East's most volatile holy sites.

A lesson on food becomes a lesson about a city which has changed hands, like recipes, over generations. In a spice shop, Bukhari explains that rice was once considered a rare delicacy and used sparsely or as a garnish served on other grains, while Palestinians mostly cook with other grains, such as Freekeh, wheat picked when it is young and then fire roasted.

"In our area politics is a big part of the talk of the day, so to have something different which is focusing on the culture, I found it to be unique and people enjoy it as well," said Bukhari.

Guards stop women entering universities after Taliban ban

AFP — KABUL

Hundreds of young women were stopped by armed guards yesterday from entering Afghan university campuses, a day after the nation's Taliban rulers banned them from higher education in another assault on human rights.

A team of *AFP* journalists saw groups of students gathered outside universities in the capital, Kabul, barred from entering by armed guards and shuttered gates.

"The Taliban are scared of women's progress. We can raise educated children in society and they are scared of that," said 19-year Wajiha Kazimi, who survived an attack on an education centre in the capital earlier this year.

The Taliban authorities wanted to "suppress" women, said Setara Farahmand, 21, who was studying German literature at Kabul University.

"They only want women to stay at home and give birth to children. That's it, they don't want anything more for them." Male students also expressed shock at the latest edict, with some in the eastern city of Jalalabad boycotting their exams in protest.

"It really expresses their illiteracy and low knowledge of Islam and human rights," said one male university student, asking not to be named.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation denounced the ban, saying it was "seriously denting the credibility of the government".

At least two male university lecturers in Kabul announced they were quitting in protest.

Most private and government universities are closed for a few weeks over winter, although campuses generally remain open to students and staff. "We are doomed. We have lost everything," said one Kabul student, who asked not to be identified.

'Deeply alarmed'

The decision to bar women from universities came late Tuesday in a terse announcement from Neda Mohammad Nadeem, the minister for higher education.

"You all are informed to immediately implement the mentioned order of suspending education of females until further notice," he said.

Washington condemned the decision "in the strongest terms", while United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply alarmed", his spokesman said.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also denounced the ban, saying it was "seriously denting the credibility of the government".

Qatar said everyone deserves the right to education and urged Afghanistan's rulers to review the decision "in line with the teachings of the Islamic religion".

Germany meanwhile said it would put the ban on the agenda of the G7 club of wealthy nations, of which it currently holds the presidency.

It comes less than three months after thousands of girls and women were allowed to sit for university entrance exams across the country, with many aspiring for teaching and medicine as future careers.

"Just think of all the female doctors, lawyers and teachers who have been, and who will be, lost to the development of the country," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk in a statement.

After the Taliban takeover in August last year, universities were forced to implement new rules including gender-segregated classrooms and entrances, while women were only permitted to be taught by professors of the same sex, or old men.

The movement's supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and his inner circle of clerics are against modern education, especially for girls and women.

But they are at odds with many officials in Kabul -- and among their rank and file -- who had hoped girls would be allowed to continue learning following the takeover.



Afghan female university students stopped by Taliban security personnel stand next to a university in Kabul, yesterday. (AFP)

"The latest decision will increase these differences," a Taliban commander based in northwest Pakistan told *AFP* on condition of anonymity.

Women have also been pushed out of many government jobs — or are being paid a fraction of their former salary to stay at home.

In November, women were prohibited from going to parks, fairs, gyms and public baths.

The international community has made the right to education for all women a sticking point in negotiations over aid and recognition of the Taliban regime.

Afghanistan's neighbour Pakistan said that engagement with the Taliban was still the best path forward.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Tuesday while on a visit to Washington that he was disappointed but stood by the need for engagement with the Taliban.

"I still think the easiest path to our goal -- despite having a lot of setbacks when it comes to women's education and other things -- is through Kabul and through the interim government."

In the 20 years between the Taliban's two reigns, girls were allowed to go to school and women were able to seek employment in all sectors, though the country remained socially conservative.

India on lookout for new variants as COVID-19 cases in other countries climb

REUTERS — NEW DELHI

India's government has asked the country's states to keep a sharp lookout for any new variants of the Coronavirus and urged people to wear masks in crowded areas, citing an increase in COVID-19 cases in China and other parts of the globe.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya met senior government officials yesterday to discuss the matter, with all those present wearing masks - a practice that has not been mandatory in most parts of the country for several months.

"COVID-19 is not over yet. I have directed all concerned to be alert and strengthen surveillance," he said on Twitter. "We are prepared to manage any situation." Local media reported yesterday that India has detected at least three cases of the highly transmissible BF.7 Omicron sub-variant so far, which in October led to a surge in COVID-19 infections in China.

India's health ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on the media reports.

China has registered a surge in infections after ending strict restrictions, while data from the World Health Organization shows infections have risen in countries including Japan, South Korea and the United States in recent days.

The Indian government has asked all states to ensure that samples of positive cases are sent to the country's 54 designated genome sequencing laboratories.

Some opposition leaders and Twitter users in India have called for a suspension of flights to and from China. A government source, who was not authorised to speak to media and declined to be identified, said there was no such plan.

Broadcaster *India Today* said, citing sources, that authorities will randomly test international arrivals at airports. A spokesperson for the health ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Mandaviya also asked participants in a cross-country march organised by the opposition Congress party to ensure they are vaccinated and follow safety measures such as wearing masks.

With more 44 million COVID-19 cases to date, India has reported the most in the world behind the United States. However, its number of confirmed infections has fallen sharply in the past few months, with about 1,200 cases being reported every week at present.

25 militants killed in Pakistan army raid on detention centre

REUTERS — PESHAWAR

Pakistan's security forces killed 25 of 35 Islamist militants holed up in a counter-terrorism centre in the northwestern city of Bannu, while one hostage and two commandos died in the operation to retake the compound, the army said.

Militants being held at the centre took control of the compound on Sunday after overpowering their interrogators and taking their weapons, leading to a two day siege and ultimately army commandoes storming the compound on Tuesday.

"Resurgence in terrorism poses a renewed threat to our national security," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said in a tweet, adding, "Our valiant security forces are fully capable of dealing with this threat." Army spokesman Major General Ahmed Sharif speaking to local TV channel Geo News late on Tuesday said seven of the 35 holed up militants surrendered, and another three who tried to escape were arrested. One hostage, a security official, died during the raid, he said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said all of the militants had been killed and all hostages rescued, but later clarified that the army would provide the final figures and details of the operation.

The army spokesman's comments provided the first detailed official account of the standoff, in which two security personnel were killed when the militants first took over the compound, and two commandoes killed in the ensuing raid.

He said one militant was able to first overpower his interrogator with a brick and seize his weapon. Later other militants at the centre broke into a storeroom where confiscated weapons had been stored.

"We tried very hard to get them (militants) to surrender unconditionally. They weren't ready," Sharif said, adding that they wanted safe passage to Afghanistan, which was rejected by authorities.

After talks failed to resolve a two-day standoff, army commandos stormed the centre on Tuesday. Ten soldiers, including three officers, were also wounded.

Sharif described the raid being a fierce firefight. Earlier, residents said they heard explosions coming from the vicinity of the centre on Tuesday as helicopters hovered overhead.

The militants mostly belonged to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella group of sectarian groups that associates itself with the Afghan Taliban.

The TTP has ramped up attacks in recent weeks since announcing the end of an Afghan Taliban-brokered ceasefire with the Islamabad last month.

The TTP initially confirmed the militants' demand to be given passage to Afghanistan, but later said Pakistan's former tribal regions were also safe for the militants to flee to.

Man survives crocodile and shark infested Australian waters by clinging to flotsam

AFP — SYDNEY

A man whose boat capsized in stormy seas off Australia's north coast was rescued yesterday after he survived for almost 24 hours in shark- and crocodile-infested waters by clinging to a bit of wood.

The Queensland man was found floating in the Torres Strait two kilometres from his upturned dinghy by an air rescue crew.

He was "clinging to some flotsam", according to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, and was winched to safety. The man, who was not named, was "very lucky" to have survived, the authority said in a statement.

He had "departed Getullai Island (on Tuesday) and failed to arrive at their destination by the expected time", the statement said.

A search by rescue aircraft late Tuesday was unsuccessful. The hunt resumed in the morning with the aircraft, a helicopter and a police vessel involved. By late morning "the upturned dinghy was located in the water and following a short aerial search the missing person was found about 2km from the dinghy", the authority said.

There are nearly 300 islands off the northern tip of Australia. Most of the islands' residents are Indigenous Torres Strait Islanders, with close ties to territories in both Australia and Papua New Guinea.

100 Rohingya stranded in boat, many dead: Activists

REUTERS — MUMBAI

Up to 20 people have died of hunger or thirst on a boat carrying ethnic Rohingya that has been stranded at sea for two weeks off India's coast, two Myanmar Rohingya activist groups said.

The boat with at least 100 people is currently in Malaysian waters as members of the Muslim minority continue to escape violence in Myanmar and hardship in Bangladesh refugee camps.

"We estimate that probably as many as 20 have died... some from hunger and thirst, and others jumped overboard in desperation. This is absolutely awful and outrageous," said Chris Lewa, director of the Arakan Project, which works to support Myanmar's Rohingyas.

It is not clear if the boat drifted or was towed to Malaysian waters or if India attempted to provide aid. Indian Navy and Coast Guard did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Each year many Rohingya risk their lives boarding rickety vessels to reach Malaysia.

Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network's Rohingya Working Group said the group had been adrift for more than two weeks. "These people have been adrift on a damaged boat for more than two weeks without food and water. We have heard that up to 16 people may have already died," said Lilianne Fan, chair of Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network's Rohingya Working Group.

Five dead, more than 70,000 evacuated in Malaysia floods

AFP — KUALA KRAI

At least five people were killed and more than 70,000 rushed to evacuation centres in Malaysia after monsoon-triggered floods inundated the country's north, authorities said yesterday.

More than 31,000 people have fled their homes in Kelantan state while more than 39,000 residents have been evacuated to temporary shelters in neighbouring Terengganu after flooding began over the weekend, the official Bernama news agency said.

Emergency services officials said a total of five people had been killed.

"The water levels reached almost three metres (10 feet)," Muhammad Ameenudin Badrul Hisyam from Kuala Krai district in Kelantan told AFP, as he cleared debris from his home after a nearby river overflowed and forced his family to flee.

Local media reported that four people died in Kelantan on Monday when three sisters were electrocuted while wading in the floodwaters and a 15-month-old boy drowned.

The fifth victim was a two-year-old girl swept away by strong currents in Terengganu on Sunday.

Additional evacuations took place in the states of Pahang, Johor and Perak, Bernama reported.

Malaysia's meteorological department forecast continuous rains through Thursday in several states, including Terengganu.

Floods are an annual phenomenon in the Southeast Asian nation of 33 million people due to the northeast monsoon that brings heavy rain from November to March.

In the same month last year, the country was battered by its worst floods in history when more than 50 people died and thousands more were displaced.

Newly elected Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim visited affected areas and a school being used as an evacuation centre in Kelantan yesterday.



Residents being rescued in a boat as the flood water rose and partially submerged the building at Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia, yesterday. (REUTERS)

Anwar, who is also the finance minister, said in parliament Tuesday the government had initially allocated 400m Malaysian ringgit ($90m) to the National Disaster Management Agency to deal with the emergency.

Disaster officials said they would aerially monitor the flood situation in the worst-hit areas.

Zelenskiy goes to Washington seeking 'more weapons'

Zelenskiy said the visit was meant to strengthen Ukraine's "resilience and defence capabilities" amid repeated Russian missile and drone attacks on the country's energy and water supplies in the dead of winter.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff of Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov attend an annual meeting of the Defence Ministry Board in Moscow, yesterday. (REUTERS)

REUTERS — KIEV/WASHINGTON

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy headed to Washington yesterday to meet President Joe Biden, address Congress and seek "weapons, weapons and more weapons" in his first overseas trip since Russia invaded Ukraine 300 days ago.

Zelenskiy said the visit was meant to strengthen Ukraine's "resilience and defence capabilities" amid repeated Russian missile and drone attacks on the country's energy and water supplies in the dead of winter.

His political adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said the visit showed the high degree of trust between the two countries and offered him the opportunity to explain what weapons Kiev needs. "This finally puts an end to the attempts by the Russian side... to prove an allegedly growing cooling in our bilateral relations," Podolyak told *Reuters*.

"This, of course, is not even close. The United States unequivocally supports Ukraine." Biden will announce nearly $2bn in further military assistance for Ukraine that will include a Patriot missile battery to help it defend itself against barrages of Russian missiles, a senior US official said.

"...Weapons, weapons and more weapons. It is important to personally explain why we need certain types of weapons," Podolyak said. "In particular, armoured vehicles, the latest missile defence systems and long-range missiles." Zelenskiy's visit was expected to last several hours.

He will hold a meeting with Biden at the White House at 2.30pm (1930 GMT), participate in a joint news conference with the US president and then go to Capitol Hill to address a joint session of the US Senate and House of Representatives.

White House spokesman John Kirby said diplomacy and defence capabilities would top the agenda.

"Clearly we're going to make sure that President Zelenskiy, when he leaves this country, knows that he's leaving with the full support of the United States going forward," he told MSNBC in an interview ahead of Zelenskiy's arrival.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was defiant yesterday at an end-of-year meeting of top defence chiefs, saying Russian forces were fighting like heroes in Ukraine, would be equipped with modern weapons and would achieve all Moscow's goals.

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 aiming to capture the capital Kiev in days, a goal that quickly proved out of reach. Moscow then focused on advancing along eastern and southern fronts but has suffered a series of battlefield defeats since the summer and on Tuesday Putin conceded that conditions in Russian-held areas were "highly complicated".

In his remarks yesterday, Putin said there were no financial limits on what the government would provide in terms of equipment and hardware, and the army had to learn from and fix the problems it had suffered in Ukraine.

Putin also said he still considered Ukrainians — who have been killed in their tens of thousands, forced to flee in their millions, and seen whole towns and cities destroyed — to be a "brotherly" people.

Putin blamed the war on "third countries (seeking) the disintegration of the Russian world", revisiting a familiar theme. The West has rejected this as nonsense, calling Russian actions in Ukraine an imperial-style land grab.

A Biden will be face-to-face with the man he has spoken with regularly over the past 10 months but not met in person since the war broke out. He will not use the talks to push Zelenskiy towards the negotiating table with Putin, the US official said.

Russia proposes 30% increase in size of armed forces

REUTERS — MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin gave his backing yesterday to a plan to boost the size of the armed forces by more than 30% as he said Moscow needed to learn from and fix the problems it had suffered in Ukraine.

At an end-of-year conference of Russia's top military brass, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu proposed beefing up the armed forces to 1.5 million combat personnel from 1.15 million.

This was required "to guarantee the solving of problems related to Russia's military security", Shoigu told Putin at the televised event. He said 695,000 of the fighters should be professional contracted soldiers as opposed to conscripts serving mandatory military service.

Putin had signed a decree only this summer ordering troop numbers to be increased by 137,000 from January 1, 2023 to reach the 1.15 million level, and has also drafted more than 300,000 reservists in a controversial mobilisation drive to support Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

France seeks to ease labour shortages in immigration overhaul

REUTERS — PARIS

The French government wants a new residency permit for foreigners to plug skills shortages and to allow some asylum seekers to enter the workforce quickly under proposed revisions to immigration rules.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin and Labour Minister Olivier Dussopt told *Le Figaro* newspaper that draft legislation to be sent to Parliament in early 2023 sought to balance labour market needs and voter concerns over identity, integration and security. Dussopt said the bill reflected the government's "pragmatism and realism".

The French reform comes at a time when other European countries are also loosening immigration rules to deal with labour market pressures, although it is a particularly sensitive subject in France.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz this month said Europe's biggest economy should attract more foreign workers and make it easier for women and older people to work to avoid labour shortages and a pension system crisis in the years ahead.

Spain modified its residency permit rules this year to reduce restrictions on foreign students working and to allow temporary work permits for overstretched sectors, while Egypt will provide seasonal workers to help meet the needs of Greece's agricultural sector under a pilot scheme.

In Britain, however, where Brexit has exacerbated labour shortages, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has pushed back against calls from companies to liberalise immigration to help boost growth.

Under the French plans, the new work permit for stressed sectors of the economy would run until end-2026 and would seek to 'regularise' certain groups of foreigners already working in the country, rather than new arrivals.

A report published by the INSEE national statistics agency in November highlighted builders, care assistants, butchers and plumbers as among professions suffering acute shortages.

Unemployment in France fell to its lowest levels in 14 years in the third quarter but still exceeded 7%. Even so, many voters are against using immigration to fill the gaps.

President Emmanuel Macron's government lacks a working majority in the lower house of parliament and will need support from the conservative Les Republicains party for it to pass in a vote.

Some right-wing lawmakers warn the immigration bill is not tough enough and will lead to a wave of foreigners illegally present in France obtaining papers. Left-wing opponents say the proposals are too repressive.

Belarus restricts access to parts of Gomel region

REUTERS — MINSK

Belarus issued a ruling yesterday temporarily restricting access to parts of the southeastern Gomel region that borders Ukraine and Russia.

The government said on its website it would "temporarily restrict entry, temporary stay and movement in the border zone within the Loevsky, Braginsky and Khoiniki districts of the Gomel region".

Russian forces used Belarus as a launch pad for their abortive attack on the Ukrainian capital Kiev in February, and there has been growing Russian and Belarusian military activity in recent months. The government did not indicate how long the restriction would last but said that it did not apply officials, and workers and residents of those areas.

Belarus began staging what it called anti-sabotage drills in the Gomel region on Oct. 11. Russian servicemen arrived in Belarus four days later to join a regional grouping that the neighbours have set up.

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Belarus on Monday, his first trip to the country since 2019, raising fears in Kiev that he intends to pressure Russia's fellow former Soviet ally to open a new invasion front against Ukraine.

IN BRIEF

French train strike leaves many thousands stranded

PARIS: Some 200,000 holidaymakers in France were scrambling yesterday for alternatives to their cancelled trains as a rail strike caused mayhem in the run-up to Christmas.

National rail operator SNCF cut one third of scheduled trains for the Christmas weekend at a time when millions of French people traditionally travel for family gatherings.

The worst affected services were high-speed TGV lines, the mainstay of long-distance rail travel in France, SNCF said.

According to the SNCF website, half or more of scheduled trains were cancelled for the weekend on key itineraries such as Paris to Rennes, western France, or Paris to Bordeaux, in the southwest. The rail operator promised re-bookings free of charge, including for more expensive seats, but most TGVs were already fully booked yesterday.

It also offered to pay out twice the original ticket price to people unable to rebook, but travellers queueing at railway stations said that was not much of a consolation for a ruined holiday.

"I understand their demands but do they have to go on strike during the festivities?" said Isabelle Barrier, holder of a ticket from Paris to Toulouse, in France's southwest, standing in line for a refund after her train got cancelled.

"It's hard on children and families," she said, adding that she would now travel a day early by coach, a trip of eight hours. "It's quite annoying," she said. -***AFP***

Swedes should prepare for unprecedented power cuts: Govt

OSLO: Sweden's government yesterday warned households and companies to prepare for possible power cuts this winter amid nuclear reactor outages, cold weather and a shortfall of energy in Europe after Russia reduced its gas exports.

"The risk of outages is real and Swedes must prepare themselves for this," Minister for Civilian Defence Carl-Oskar Bohlin told a news conference.

"Sweden has never been in this situation before," he said.

Nordic power prices have soared this year amid fears that cuts in Russian gas exports to Europe will lead to shortages, and the Swedish government earlier this month urged people to use less electricity. Emergency plans must take into account the possibility of short as well as longer outages where power does not return as planned, the minister said.

"Those who under normal circumstances can take care of themselves, must also be able to do so in a crisis such as a power outage," Bohlin said.

Official recommendations include keeping a battery driven radio, flashlights, bottled water and food that is simple to prepare.

In case of an outage, households should designate a room in which the family can stay in order to preserve heat over time, the minister said. "It's better to be prepared than not. This is not an attempt at being alarmist," Bohlin said.

Swedish utility Vattenfall on December 2 said it had delayed the restart of its Ringhals 4 nuclear reactor to February 23, one of several outages hitting Nordic power supply. -***Reuters***



Ambulance workers gather at a picket line outside the Waterloo ambulance station in London, United Kingdom, yesterday. (AFP)

Thousands of UK ambulance staff strike as public urged to avoid risks

REUTERS — LONDON

Thousands of ambulance workers in England and Wales walked out over pay yesterday, increasing the strain on a state-funded health service a day after nurses went on strike, as the government advised the public to avoid taking risks.

The government said the "deeply regrettable" strike would result in fewer ambulances on the road, with only the most urgent life-threatening cases such as heart attacks prioritised.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said the public should "just use their common sense", adding that the action came when the National Health Service (NHS) was "already facing very significant pressure".

"That's the point at which the trade unions have chosen to take industrial action and in doing so they haven't been willing to work with us to agree national exemptions in terms of covering all of the category one, category two, life threatening and emergency calls," he told the BBC.

Christina McAnea, general secretary of Unison, said she was "utterly shocked" by Barclay's comments, adding that he knew detailed plans were in place in local areas.

"These accusations from the SoS (secretary of state) are a distraction from the government's own failings and their refusal to constructively resolve this dispute," she said.

Her counterpart at Unite, Sharon Graham, said all category one calls would be answered, while category two calls, which includes conditions like strokes, would be assessed by healthcare workers.

"This strike did not need to happen," she told the BBC. "(The government) need to get back to the negotiating table so we can get a proper pay rise for these workers and everyone can go back to work." The third union, the GMB, has said pay in the health service has fallen 17% in real terms since 2010, while demand for ambulances has risen 77% in the same period.

An independent pay review body has awarded more than 1 million NHS workers a pay rise of at least 1,400 pounds ($1,704), equating to an increase of at least 4% for most ambulance staff, according to the government. Unions have asked for a rise above inflation, which stood at 10.7% on the consumer price measure in November.

The NHS Confederation, which represents national health service organisations, said the strike risked patient safety. "This is the worst possible time for industrial action," Chief Executive Matthew Taylor told ITV.

"It was already the case even without the ambulance industrial action today that it was taking us twice as long to get to people in category two."

Czechs to buy 210 Swedish-made CV90 combat vehicles

AFP — PRAGUE

The Czech Republic has signed a memorandum with Sweden and Britain's BAE Systems to buy 210 CV90 tracked combat vehicles, the defence minister said yesterday.

The memorandum signed on Tuesday "confirms an agreement of all three parties on the basic parameters concerning the purchase of CV90 combat vehicles", Minister Jana Cernochova said.

She added the deal would be worth up to $2.3bn, without disclosing further details.

BAE Systems Hagglunds' CV90 is a tracked combat vehicle with a turret-mounted cannon that can be considered a light tank or armoured personnel carrier.

Trump paid no income tax in 2020, reported losses

REUTERS — WASHINGTON

Donald Trump paid no income tax during the final full year of his presidency as he reported a loss from his sprawling business interests, according to tax figures released by a congressional panel.

The records, released late on Tuesday by the Democratic-led House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee after a years-long fight, show that Trump's income, and his tax liability, fluctuated dramatically during his four years in the White House.

The records cut against the Republican's long-cultivated image as a successful businessman as he mounts another White House bid. Trump and his wife, Melania, paid some form of tax during all four years, the documents showed, but were able to minimize their income taxes in several years as income from Trump's businesses was more than offset by deductions and losses.

The committee questioned the legitimacy of some of those deductions, including one for $916m, and members said on Tuesday the tax returns were short on details. The panel is expected to release redacted versions of his full returns in coming days.

A Trump spokesman said the release of the documents was politically motivated.

Trump refused to make his tax returns public during his two presidential bids and his campaign for office, even though all other major-party presidential candidates have done so for decades. The committee obtained the records after a years-long fight and voted on Tuesday to make them public.

A Trump spokesman said the release of the documents was politically motivated.

"If this injustice can happen to President Trump, it can happen to all Americans without cause," Trump Organization spokesman Steven Cheung said yesterday. Democrats on the panel said their review found that tax authorities did not properly scrutinise Trump's complex tax returns to ensure accuracy.

Though the US Internal Revenue Service is supposed to audit presidents' tax returns each year, it did not do so until Democrats pressed for action in 2019.

The IRS assigned only one agent to the audit most of the time, the panel found, and did not examine some of the deductions claimed by Trump.

The IRS did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Prior to taking office, Trump reported heavy losses for many years from his business to offset hundreds of millions of dollars in income, according to media reports and trial testimony about his finances.

The documents released by the committee showed that pattern continued during his time in the White House.

During that time Trump and his wife were liable for self-employment and household employment taxes. As a result, they paid a total of $3m in taxes over those four years.

But deductions enabled them to minimize their income tax liability in several years.

In 2017, Trump and his wife reported adjusted gross income of negative $12.9m, leading to a net income tax of $750, the records showed. They reported adjusted gross income of $24.3m in 2018 and paid a net tax of $1m, while in 2019 they reported $4.4m of income in 2019 and paid $134,000 in taxes. In 2020, they reported a loss of $4.8m and paid no net income tax.

Peru President announces partial Cabinet reshuffle

REUTERS — LIMA

Peru President Dina Boluarte announced a handful of Cabinet reshuffles yesterday, including a new prime minister, though she opted to keep other key figures on, amid ongoing protests in the country following the impeachment of her predecessor.

Lawyer Alberto Otarola was named as the new prime minister, alongside a new minister of defence and a new interior minister. However, Alex Contreras was kept on as economy minister and Oscar Vera will stay on as the minister of energy and mines.

The changes were announced at a swearing-in ceremony at the governmental palace. Women now make up half of the 18-member Cabinet led by Boluarte, who is Peru's first female president.

The reshuffle came days after the resignation of two ministers over the handling of protests that left at least 21 dead and hundreds injured.

Musk says 'crazy' cost cuts have saved Twitter

AFP — SAN FRANCISCO

Elon Musk yesterday said that severe cost cuts at Twitter had repaired the company's dire finances as he set out to find a new CEO for his troubled social media platform.

The mercurial billionaire told a live chat forum that without the changes, including firing over half of Twitter's employees, the company would have bled $3bn dollars a year.

"Not good since Twitter has $1bn in cash. That's why I spent the past five weeks cutting costs like crazy," he told Twitter Spaces, a feature of the platform he bought for $44bn.

"If... you're looking at it from my standpoint... basically, you're in a plane that is headed towards the ground at high speed with the engines on fire and the controls don't work," he said.

Just weeks into his ownership of Twitter, Musk fired about half of its 7,500-strong workforce, sparking concern that the company was insufficiently staffed to carry out content moderation and spooking governments and advertisers.

Musk said that his strategy was paying off and that by massively reducing costs and building subscriber revenue, "I now think that Twitter will in fact be OK next year" and break even.

He added that he understood that advertisers were skittish over spending on his platform, but blamed their caution on the souring economic outlook and not worries about content moderation.

He said the new $8 subscription service called Twitter Blue would help make up the difference. "Because otherwise, how do we pay the fruggin' server bill," Musk said, adding that Twitter's hardware costs around $1.5bn annually.

Musk made the defense of his policies after he tweeted that he was on the hunt for a new CEO "foolish" enough to replace him. He said he would then limit his duties to running the software and server teams at Twitter.

This followed a Twitter poll in which Musk asked users whether he should stay on as the company's CEO — 57 percent of votes said he should step down.

PENOMAG

CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGING OF NAME

I, Md Khaliur Rahman Khalil
Holder of Bangladesh Passport No.0415829
(Qatar ID No. 29305005667)
hereby change my name to

MD KHALILUR RAHMAN KHALIL

Any objection, please contact the Immigration and Passport Office within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

I, Ishtiaq Ali Mohammed
اشتياق علي محمد
Holder of India Passport No.M9551643
(Qatar ID No. 27735603130)
hereby change my name to

MOHAMMED ISHTIAQ ALI
محمد اشتياق علي

Any objection, please contact the Immigration and Passport Office within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

I, Adhithya Lakshman Manalipadam
د ي ا
Holder of India Passport No.0542777
(Qatar ID No. 31635607180)
hereby change my name to

ADITYA LAKSHMAN SANTHOSH
اديتيا لاكشمان سانتوش

Any objection, please contact the Immigration and Passport Office within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

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