The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision
MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024 | 2 SHA'BAAN-1445 | QR2 WWW.THEPENINSULA.QA /PENINSULAQATAR /THEPENINSULAQATAR /PENINSULA_QATAR +974 55698797



ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

First Qatar Government Excellence Award held

The Qatar Government Excellence Award was launched based on Amiri decision No. (63) of 2023 issued by Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in August to enhance the quality of government performance and encourage government agencies to compete in applying quality, development and excellence in their performance.

QNA – DOHA

Under the patronage of Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau (CGB) held yesterday the first ceremony of the Qatar Government Excellence Award to honour the awarded ministries and government agencies.

The Qatar Government Excellence Award was launched based on Amiri decision No. (63) of 2023 issued by Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in August to enhance the quality of government performance and encourage government agencies to compete in applying quality, development and excellence in their performance by honouring outstanding achievements and efforts that contribute to achieving the Qatar National Vision 2030, which aims to take Qatar to advanced levels capable of achieving sustainable development and ensuring the lasting of decent living for its people and future generation.

The Qatar Government Excellence Award includes seven categories divided into four main awards and three specialised sub-awards. The participating ministries and government agencies are divided into four main groups competing for the Irtiqaa Award and the Excellence Award awarded to ministries and government agencies that best meet all of the criteria of the Qatar Government Excellence Award to represent a model for all government agencies in providing systematic practices supported by documented and positive results in developing institutional performance, operations and services provided to citizens and residents, and investing its capabilities in electronic transformation to enhance efficiency and productivity.

Received by Minister of Interior H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Ministry of Interior won the Irtiqaa Award for ministries. The Irtiqaa Award for agencies was won by the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) and received by Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry won the Excellence Award for ministries and the award was received by Minister of Commerce and Industry H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Qassim Al Abdullah Al Thani. ➔P4


Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani handing over the award to Minister of Interior H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani yesterday.

Amir offers condolences to UAE President

QNA – DOHA

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani offered his condolences to his brother President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) H H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan over the martyrdom of members of the UAE Armed Forces in Mogadishu in the Federal Republic of Somalia. His Highness wished the injured a speedy recovery.

This came during a phone call H H the Amir held yesterday with President of the UAE. H H President of the UAE expressed his thanks and appreciation to H H the Amir for his condolences, solidarity and sympathy.

Amiri Diwan announces NSD holiday

QNA – DOHA

On the occasion of Qatar National Sports Day, which falls on the second Tuesday of February of each year, the Amiri Diwan announced that Tuesday, February 13, 2024, will be an official holiday.

Hayya visa entry closes

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

The deadline for entry under the Hayya visa scheme for fans of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 came to a close on February 10. Initially extended in December last year, the Hayya visa aimed to streamline the arrival of global fans and visitors attending Qatar's major sporting events and other activities.

The Hayya visa holders have started receiving email from Hayya platform regarding the expiration of their Hayya visa entry, and if they wish to reapply, they must return with a new Entry Visa. "You can submit a new Hayya application through the Hayya to Qatar App or on Hayya," the email said.

Under the guidelines set by the Ministry of Interior, the visa will remain valid until February 24, with the final opportunity for visa holders to enter Qatar is on February 10. This window allowed them the chance to participate in various events, including the recently concluded AFC Asian Cup.

EDITORIAL ↘09

Rafah on brink of catastrophe

A FULL-scale ground offensive against the southern Gaza city of Rafah seems imminent as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netayahu has asked military leaders to present a plan to evacuate civilians from the area.

BUSINESS ↘ 13

Qatar Credit Bureau announces new update of its application

QATAR CREDIT Bureau announced yesterday the launch of a new update of its application to enhance user experience and achieve the highest security standards.

SPORT ↘ 17

Qatar bask in glory, World Cup qualifiers next big task

World leaders congratulate Qatar on winning Asian Cup

QNA – DOHA

Following Qatar football team's win of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 title, leaders of several countries congratulated the State of Qatar on this distinguished achievement. The congratulatory messages conveyed wishes and congratulations to the Qatari team and all the players who presented a wonderful performance throughout the tournament.

In this regard, H M King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein of the Kingdom of Jordan congratulated the State of Qatar on winning the Asian Cup and on its good organization, while expressing his pride in the Jordanian national team and its distinguished performance in the Asian Cup.

In a post on his X account on Saturday, the Jordanian King said: "The "Nashama" was the center of attention for everyone in this distinguished tournament.

"Well done, Nasahma! You were the center of attention for everyone in this distinguished tournament. You presented a dazzling and high-level performance. We extend full support for our national team for this beautiful game and high national spirit. It is a source of pride for Arabs to reach the final."

UAE President H H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in a post on his X account, said: "Sincere congratulations to my brother, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, and the Qatari people on Qatar's victory in the AFC Asian Cup in Doha. I commend Jordanian and Qatari teams for an excellent performance and congratulate all participants for demonstrating the power of sport during the match .. I congratulate Qatar on the successful organization of the tournament."

Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai H H Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum posted on X: "Wonderful organization. Enjoyable match. Exceptional sporting performance. Congratulations to my brother Tamim... and to the beloved people of Qatar for winning the Asian Football Cup. We also congratulate you. Jordan has this wonderful team that raises the heads of the Arabs."

Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq H E Mohamed Shia Al Sudani also expressed his congratulations to the State of Qatar on its national team's win of the Asian Football Cup, praising Qatar and the sports fans for the good organization and positive interaction with the tournament matches. ➔P8



FACILITATING MOVEMENT

Doha Metro, Lusail Tram carried over 6.4 million passengers during Asian Cup

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

During the tournament, the day of the Asian Cup Final recorded the highest daily network ridership of 303,500 with 295,900 travelling by metro and 7,600 on tram.

Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) announced that more than 6.46 million passengers used the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram during the Asian Cup Qatar 2023, from January 12 to February 10, 2024, with 6.22 million passengers using the metro and 236,000 passengers using the tram.

The metro and tram played an instrumental role in facilitating the movement of fans and visitors to and from stadiums and other event activations. This was achieved through providing world-class transportation services and ensuring a safe and reliable travel experience throughout the tournament.

In terms of operational performance, 83,358 train-trips were completed on the metro and tram network during the tournament, of which 72,010 were by metro and 11,348 by tram.

Throughout the tournament, 29% of spectators travelled to stadiums using the metro, whilst metro usage increased to 36% for stadiums within walking distance to metro stations.

During the tournament, the day of the Asian Cup Final recorded the highest daily network ridership of 303,500 with 295,900 travelling by metro and 7,600 on tram. Furthermore, Lusail QNB Metro Station recorded a footfall more than 115,000, with approximately 53% of the overall stadium trips using metro on the day. ➔P8



UNIQUE STRUCTURE

Rwandan pavilion stands out at Expo 2023 Doha

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

The Rwandan pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha has emerged as a standout attraction and has received more than 20,000 visitors with its striking design and offerings.

Drawing attention for its unique structure and engaging exhibits, the pavilion has garnered widespread acclaim, with its coffee shop proving to be a particular highlight. The pavilion stands out as a must-visit destination within the Expo grounds.

"We were one of the first pavilions to open in the International Zone. We opened on the first day of Expo 2023. We showcase a range of things including Rwanda's developments in technology, innovation, agriculture, as a destination for tourism, various kinds of products, handcrafts, coffee, tea and several others," Manager of Rwanda's Pavilion at Expo 23 Doha, J D Shema, told The Peninsula.

Rwanda pavilion welcomes visitors through a grand entrance, the screens around the pavilion let visitors learn the stories, culture, and heritage of Rwandan people, and watch the rapid pace at which the country developed.

The pavilion offers to learn more about the gorilla trekking experience and showcases the Rwandan government's commitment to environmental preservation through its green initiatives. It also promotes Rwanda as an ideal destination for investment and business.

Visitors can also enjoy a respite at the Rwanda cafe, savouring its renowned local coffee, recognised among the world's finest blends.

The cafe 'Rwanda Coffee-A Second Sunrise' is specially designed to introduce the country's coffee and tea to people in Qatar and visitors to Expo 2023 Doha. ➔P8



We extend our heartiest congratulations to

His Highness
Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar

His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
Father Amir

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

and to all the honorable people of Qatar

on Qatar National Football Team winning the AFC ASIAN CUP QATAR 2023

We hope for more success in promoting the name of our beloved country Qatar to the highest level under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir

ABA
علي بن علي القابضة
Ali Bin Ali Holding



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Chairman, members of the Board of Directors, executive management and all employees in Qatar Media City

المدينة الإعلامية
Media City
Qatar قطر

Amir condoles with President of United Arab Emirates

QNA—DOHA: AMIR H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani sent cables of condolences to President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) H H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on the martyrdom of several UAE Armed Forces servicemen in the city of Mogadishu in the Federal Republic of Somalia, wishing a speedy recovery for the injured.

Amir condoles with King of Bahrain

QNA—DOHA: AMIR H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani sent cables of condolences to H M King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain on the martyrdom of a Bahrain Defence Force officer in the city of Mogadishu in the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Amir congratulates Iranian President

QNA—DOHA: AMIR H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to President of the Islamic Republic of Iran H E Dr. Ebrahim Raisi on the occasion of his country's National Day.

First Qatar Government Excellence Award held



Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani; Shura Council Speaker H E Hassan bin Abdulla Al Ghanim; Their Excellencies the Ministers and other dignitaries during the awards ceremony.

FROM PAGE 1

The Excellence Award for agencies went to the Aspire Zone Foundation and was received by the CEO of the Aspire Zone Foundation Mohammed Khalifa Al Suwaidi. The sub-awards included Leadership awards in institutional transformation, comprehensive experience, and human capital development.

The Leadership Award in comprehensive experience went to the Ministry of Municipality for its pioneering practices in providing services and its adoption of effective work systems to manage complaints and suggestions on its services, as well as its endeavour to develop an exceptional experience for customers and employ modern technologies in providing services.

The award was received by Minister of Environment and Climate Change H E Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie (former Minister of Municipality), as well as Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah. The Ministry of Sports and Youth won the Leadership Award in institutional transformation for motivating innovation and experimentation with emerging technologies as well as for its excellent leadership and ability to make proper and effective decisions. The award was received by Former Minister of Sports and Youth H E Salah bin Ghanim Al Ali and Minister of Sports and Youth H E Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Thani.





The Prime Minister honouring Minister of Environment and Climate Change H E Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie and Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah. RIGHT: Minister of Sports and Youth H E Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Thani and former Minister of Sports and Youth H E Salah bin Ghanim Al Ali receiving the award.

The Leadership Award in human capital development was won by the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) for providing a distinguished and stimulating work environment for employees, enhancing trust and positive relations between stakeholders as well as implementing Qatarization plans and attracting the necessary skills and competencies. The award was received by the Managing Director of the PHCC Dr. Maryam Abdulmalik.

The Qatar Government Excellence Award is one of the most important developments in the government excellence process that began in 2014. It seeks to provide government services that meet the needs of Qatari society, build a government sector characterised by flexibility while maintaining performance quality, invest in human resources to meet future requirements as well as provide a consistent experience to customers across service delivery channels.

The seventh national outcome of the third National Development Strategy (2024-2030) reflects the State of Qatar's ambition to reach global ranks through distinguished government institutions in accordance with ambitious outcomes, contributing to the State of Qatar becoming a world-class provider of government services to citizen and residents and a top nation for effective, efficient, and transparent governance.

In his speech, President of the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau (CGB), President of the Qatar Government Excellence Award Committee of Trustees H E Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak Al Khalifa said that this ceremony constitutes a landmark on the path of government excellence.

He added that it is an effective implementation of the Third Qatar National Development Strategy's Strategic National Outcome No. 7 on Government Excellence. Al Khalifa said that human assets is at the heart of the pursuit of excellence and that it is a continuous endeavour that requires constant improvement and innovation.

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company
Q.P.S.C

Beema
بيمه

شركة الضمان للتأمين الإسلامي
(شركة مساهمة عامة قطرية)

Invitation to attend the General Assembly meeting

The Board of Directors is pleased to invite you to participate in the AGM & EGM meetings, to be held on Thursday , 07/03/2024 at 4:30 P.M by attendance/remotely at the Company's Main Building – Lusail. In the event of incomplete attendance Qorum, the second meeting will be held on Thursday, 14/03/2024 at 9:00 P.M at the same location to review the following:

The Agenda of the Annual General Assembly Meeting:

1. Discussing the Board of Directors' report regarding the Company's activity and its financial Position during the fiscal year ending 12/31/2023, in addition to Approving the company's future plan.
2. Discussing & approving the auditors' Financial for the year 2023.
3. Discussing & approving the Sharia Supervisory Board report for the year 2023.
4. Discussing and approving the annual budget and the profits and losses statement.
5. Approving the distribution of profits of 2023 for the shareholders and distribution of the surplus for the policyholders.
6. Considering discharge of the Board of Directors' members and approve their remunerations.
7. Discussing and approving the governance report.
8. Approval of the main transactions and the related parties' transactions that the company concluded during the fiscal year ending on 12/31/2023
9. Appointment of an auditors, specifying his remuneration for the coming year, unless it is specified in the Articles of Association.
10. Election of members of the Board of Directors for the remainder of the period (2023-2027)

1. Approving the amendment to the text of Article (2) of the company's Articles Of Associations (company purposes) by adding clause (1) to read as follows:

Second : The agenda of the extraordinary general assembly meeting (EGM):

Accounts Separation and Insurance Operation Surplus :

The Company maintains a distinct and separate account for its Policyholders, known as the Policyholders' Account. This account is credited by the contributions paid by the Policyholders and returns of their investments and debited by claims, reinsurance Contribution, the necessary provisions and reserves and the Wakala Fee. The surplus arrived at (if any) will be distributed in all or partially to the Policyholders in proportion to the contribution paid by them in the manner decided by the Board of Directors and approved by the Shariá Supervisory Board.

2. Approval to amend the text of Article (28) of the Company's Articles of Association (Company Management) (Board of Directors and Appointment of Board Secretary) to read as follows:

Before
"The Company shall be managed by a Board consisting of nine directors, all of whom shall be elected by the Ordinary General Assembly by secret ballot."

After
"The Company shall be managed by a Board consisting of Ten directors, all of whom shall be elected by the Ordinary General Assembly by secret ballot."

Notes: subject to the approvals of the Qatar Central Bank and other relevant authorities.

- Those with the right to attend or participate in the meetings (AGM / EGM) are the Stock owners registered in the company's shareholder register with the Qatar Central Securities Depository Company, according to the close of trading on the stock exchange on the day of the meeting.
- Shareholders are requested to provide proof of their identity and power of attorney slips (or authorization letters for company representatives).
- In the event that the shareholder is unable to participate in person, please authorize someone on his behalf from among the other shareholders to participate in the meeting, according to the power of attorney vouchers/authorization letters available at the company's headquarters in Lusail and on the company's website www.beema.com.qa
- If the shareholder is a legal person (company - body - institution), it is necessary to submit a written authorization signed and stamped by the shareholder along with a copy of the establishment registration card/commercial registry .
- This invitation, the data attached to it, the governance report, and the power of attorney/authorization form have been published on the company's website www.beema.com.qa and on the Qatar Stock Exchange website companynews@qe.qa
- The company's remuneration policy for the year 2023, and the amendments to the company's articles of association, have been published on the company's website www.beema.com.qa, and are also available at the company's headquarters in Lusail.
- This invitation, the financial statements and reports below have been published in accordance with the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law, the Securities Offering and Listing System, the Qatar Central Bank Law and the Regulation of Financial Institutions.
- Approval of financial statements is subject to the approvals of the Qatar Central Bank and other relevant authorities.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Shareholders
Damaan Islamic Insurance Company "BEEMA" (Q.P.S.C.)
Doha – Qatar

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion
We have audited the financial statements of Damaan Islamic Insurance Company "BEEMA" (Q.P.S.C.) (the "Company"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023, and the statements of policyholders' revenues and expenses, changes in policyholders' surplus, shareholders' income statement, changes in shareholders' equity and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.
In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as at 31 December 2023, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the Financial Accounting Standards ("FAS") issued by Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions ("AAOIFI").

Basis for Opinion
We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISA). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (IESBA Code) together with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the State of Qatar, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the IESBA Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Key Audit Matters
Key audit matters are those matters that, in our professional judgment, were of most significance in our audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023. These matters were addressed in the context of our audit of the financial statements as a whole, and in forming our opinion thereon, and we do not provide a separate opinion on these matters.

Key Audit Matters	How our audit addressed the key audit matter
Valuation of the takaful contract liabilities	
The Company's takaful contract liabilities amount to QR. 524 million and QR. 504 million as at 31 December 2023 and 2022 respectively and represent a significant portion of the total liabilities. The estimation of takaful contract liabilities, in particular the claims reported unsettled reserve and the claims incurred but not reported reserve ("IBNR") and unearned contribution reserve, involves a significant degree of judgement. These liabilities are based on the best-estimate of the ultimate cost of all claims incurred but not settled at a given date, whether reported or not. A range of methods may be used to determine these reserves. Underlying these methods are a number of explicit or implicit assumptions relating to the expected settlement amount and settlement patterns of claims. Its accuracy is dependent on the input data being correct and requires management to apply significant judgements, make significant estimates and use actuarial models. The risk of error arises as a result of inappropriate choice of actuarial methodologies, techniques and assumptions. Management used an internal and external actuary to assist them in the aforementioned determination. Due to the magnitude of the balances and the estimation uncertainty and subjectivity involved in the assessment of these liabilities we have considered the valuation of the takaful contract liabilities as a key audit matter. Refer to note 3 and 4 for significant accounting policies significant accounting judgements, estimates and assumptions.	We performed specific audit procedures which were a combination of testing the operating effectiveness of the relevant controls and specific substantive procedures focusing on the significant estimates and judgements involved. Our audit procedures included the following: - Updating our understanding of the business process related to valuation of claims reported unsettled reserve, unearned contribution reserve and IBNR and testing the design and operating effectiveness of the relevant controls over assessment, calculation and overall conclusion of technical reserves including inputs, assumptions and methodology. - Assessing their completeness and accuracy - Assessing the development of claims reported unsettled and IBNR by performing a review of retrospective historical performance of the estimates and judgements made by the Company; - For a selection of claims reported unsettled, we compared the estimated amount of the reserve to appropriate documentation such as surveyor / loss assessors' reports, internal policies for reserving and assumptions used by management. - Evaluating the objectivity, skills, qualifications and competence of the independent external actuary and reviewing the terms of the actuary's engagement with the Company to determine if the scope of his work was sufficient for audit purposes. - Use of our internal actuarial specialists to assist us in evaluating reasonableness of key assumptions and methodologies used in assessing unearned contribution reserve and IBNR by actuarial experts of management including assessing related sensitivities, and - We have assessed whether the related disclosures for takaful contact liabilities are adequate in accordance with the requirements of FAS issued by AAOIFI.

Other information
The Board of Directors is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Board of Directors' Report but does not include the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Board of Directors' Report is expected to be made available to us after the date of this auditor's report.
Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.
In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information identified above and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed on the other information that we obtained prior to the date of this auditor's report, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements
Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with FAS issued by AAOIFI, the Islamic Shari'a rules and principles as determined by the Shari'a Supervisory Board of the Company, Articles of Association of the Company, applicable provisions of Qatar Commercial Law No. 11 of 2015, including subsequent amendments through Law No. 8 of 2021 and applicable provisions of Qatar Central Bank's rules and regulations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.
Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Company's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements
Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.
As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control;
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Company›s internal control;
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management;
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's.
- report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Company to cease to continue as a going concern;
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.
We also provide those charged with governance with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.
From the matters communicated with those charged with governance, we determine those matters that were of most significance in the audit of the financial statements of the current period and are therefore the key audit matters. We describe these matters in our auditor's report unless law or regulation precludes public disclosure about the matter or when, in extremely rare circumstances, we determine that a matter should not be communicated in our report because the adverse consequences of doing so would reasonably be expected to outweigh the public interest benefits of such communication.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements
Further, as required by the Qatar Commercial Companies Law, we are also of the opinion that proper books of account were maintained by the Company. We have obtained all the information and explanations which we considered necessary for the purpose of our audit. To the best of our knowledge and belief and according to the information given to us, no contraventions of the applicable provisions of Qatar Commercial Companies Law and the Company's Articles of Association were committed during the year which would materially affect the Company's financial position or its performance.

Doha – Qatar
February 6, 2024

For Deloitte & Touche
Qatar Branch

Joseph Khalife
Partner
License No. 433
QFMA Audit Registration 120156

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company Q.P.S.C

Beema

شركة الضمان للتأمين الإسلامي (شركة مساهمة عامة قطرية)

CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
31 DECEMBER 2023

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
as at 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 QR	2022 QR
Policyholders' assets			
Cash and bank balances	5	**76,890,544**	125,674,937
Investments at fair value through equity	6 (a)	**427,481,383**	481,030,833
Investments at fair value through income statement	6 (b)	**11,475,535**	11,456,061
Due from related parties	7 (b)	**16,251,744**	8,063,798
Re-takaful contract assets	8	**137,010,835**	134,109,693
Property and equipment	9	**6,214,446**	3,886,848
Takaful and other receivables	10	**165,993,427**	154,123,380
Total policyholders' assets		**841,317,914**	918,345,550
Shareholders' assets			
Cash and bank balances	5	**50,685,709**	246,502,066
Investments at fair value through equity	6 (a)	**335,822,659**	398,837,244
Investments at fair value through income statement	6 (b)	**19,497,979**	19,394,967
Prepayments and other receivables	10	**4,885,837**	3,706,844
Due from policyholders		**51,591,014**	62,207,402
Right-of-use assets	11	**2,845,037**	2,968,735
Property and equipment	9	**114,979,955**	119,319,022
Total shareholders' assets		**580,308,190**	852,936,280
TOTAL ASSETS		**1,421,626,104**	1,771,281,830
Policyholders' liabilities			
Takaful contract liabilities	8	**524,123,490**	503,722,496
Due to related parties	7 (c)	**3,889,802**	3,500,793
Takaful and other payables	12	**50,102,893**	45,137,750
Murabaha finance	13	**1,006,116**	124,714,362
Due to shareholders		**51,591,014**	62,207,402
Distributable surplus payable	14	**61,115,196**	57,461,171
Total policyholders' liabilities		**691,828,511**	796,743,974
Policyholders' surplus			
Fair value reserve		**(19,934,682)**	(29,736,360)
Equalization reserve	15	**90,000,000**	90,000,000
Retained surplus		**79,424,085**	61,337,936
Total policyholders' surplus		**149,489,403**	121,601,576
Total policyholders' liabilities and surplus		**841,317,914**	918,345,550
Shareholders' liabilities			
Provisions and other payables	12	**61,897,092**	55,653,354
Due to related parties	7 (c)	**6,174,565**	213,687,638
Murabaha finance	13	**--**	115,506,643
Net Ijarah liability	11	**2,973,442**	3,012,852
Employees' end of service benefits	16	**4,291,220**	3,995,122
Total shareholders' liabilities		**75,336,319**	391,855,609
Shareholders' equity			
Share capital	17	**200,000,000**	200,000,000
Legal reserve	18	**200,000,000**	200,000,000
Fair value reserve		**(11,557,398)**	(18,926,538)
Retained earnings		**116,529,269**	80,007,209
Total shareholders' equity		**504,971,871**	461,080,671
Total shareholders' liabilities and equity		**580,308,190**	852,936,280
TOTAL LIABILITIES, POLICYHOLDERS' SURPLUS AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY		**1,421,626,104**	1,771,281,830

Sheikh. Jassim Bin Hamad Bin Jassim J. Al Thani
Chairman

Nasser Rashid Al Misnad
Chief Executive Officer

STATEMENT OF POLICYHOLDERS' REVENUES AND EXPENSES
For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 QR	2022 QR
Gross contributions	19	**401,324,624**	392,565,127
Re-Takaful share	19	**(91,671,641)**	(93,595,657)
Net contributions		**309,652,983**	298,969,470
Movement in unearned contribution - net	19	**(19,648,192)**	(31,662,090)
Net earned contributions		**290,004,791**	267,307,380
Gross claims paid	19	**(174,583,871)**	(174,860,091)
Re-Takaful and other recoveries	19	**66,986,989**	75,705,242
Movement in outstanding claims and IBNR - net	19	**2,148,340**	1,313,870
Commission income	19	**4,752,876**	8,917,429
Commission expense	19	**(58,251,775)**	(55,686,119)
Net takaful expenses		**(158,947,441)**	(144,609,669)
Surplus from Takaful operations	19	**131,057,350**	122,697,711
Depreciation of property and equipment	9	**(436,605)**	--
Fair value gain / (loss) on investments at fair value through income statement	20 (a)	**19,474**	(551,005)
Reversal / (provision) for impairment of investments at fair value through equity	20 (a)	**194,482**	(22,262)
Investment income	20 (a)	**19,631,111**	16,448,180
Investment expenses	20 (a)	**(1,339,703)**	(2,060,078)
Mudarib share	20 (a)	**(12,089,931)**	(8,288,901)
Wakala fees	22	**(95,061,473)**	(81,801,733)
Other income		**2,960,374**	2,295,270
Other expenses	21	**(17,980,252)**	(4,113,635)
Total surplus for the year		**26,954,827**	44,603,547

SHAREHOLDERS' INCOME STATEMENT
For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 QR	2022 QR
Income			
Income from shareholders' investments	20 (b)	**13,932,499**	11,718,363
Wakala fee	22	**95,061,473**	81,801,733
Mudarib share	20 (a)	**12,089,931**	8,288,901
Other income		**1,607,553**	1,765,202
Total income		**122,691,456**	103,574,199
Staff costs		**(32,493,142)**	(25,864,201)
Depreciation of property and equipment	9	**(6,819,608)**	(6,459,262)
Fair value gain / (loss) on investments at fair value through income statement	20 (b)	**103,012**	(1,014,537)
Reversal for impairment of investments at fair value through equity	20 (b)	**334,894**	24,143
General and administrative expenses	23	**(11,742,944)**	(11,515,999)
Finance costs		**(543,899)**	(729,180)
Investment expenses	20 (b)	**(1,250,737)**	(325,316)
Total expenses		**(52,412,424)**	(45,884,352)
Profit before tax for the year		**70,279,032**	57,689,847
Income tax expense	26	**-**	(1,064,981)
Net profit for the year		**70,279,032**	56,624,866
Basic/Diluted earnings per share in Qatari Riyal	29	**0.35**	0.28

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY
For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Share capital QR	*Legal reserve QR*	*Fair value reserve QR*	*Retained earnings QR*	*Total QR*
Balance at January 1 2022	200,000,000	200,000,000	6,623,420	39,862,376	446,485,796
Prior period adjustment (Note 37)	-	-	-	3,519,967	3,519,967
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	56,624,866	56,624,866
Net change in fair value of investments at fair value through equity	-	-	(25,549,958)	-	(25,549,958)
Dividends paid (Note 24)	-	-	-	(20,000,000)	(20,000,000)
Balance at 31 December 2022	**200,000,000**	**200,000,000**	**(18,926,538)**	**80,007,209**	**461,080,671**
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	70,279,032	70,279,032
Net change in fair value of investments at fair value through equity	-	-	7,369,140	-	7,369,140
Dividends paid (Note 24)	-	-	-	(32,000,000)	(32,000,000)
Social and sports fund appropriation (Note 27)	-	-	-	(1,756,972)	(1,756,972)
Balance at 31 December 2023	**200,000,000**	**200,000,000**	**(11,557,398)**	**116,529,269**	**504,971,871**



Health Minister discusses bilateral relations with Chadian counterpart

H E Dr. Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari, Minister of Public Health, met yesterday with H E Dr. Abdelmadjid Abderahim, Minister of Public Health and Prevention of the Republic of Chad, who is currently visiting the country. During the meeting, discussions were held on the cooperation relations between the two countries and ways to enhance and develop them in the field of health.



President of Palestine arrives in Doha

President of the sisterly State of Palestine H E Mahmoud Abbas arrived in Doha yesterday for a work visit. His Excellency and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Hamad International Airport by Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al Khulaifi and Ambassador of Palestine to the State of Qatar H E Munir Abdullah Ghannam.

QM invites public to join special activities for Sports Day

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Qatar Museums (QM) invites the public to join an exciting day of activities and energising events planned for this year's Qatar National Sports Day on tomorrow from 8am to 3pm in the National Museum of Qatar at the Al Baraha Area.

QM has collaborated with 14 Qatari businesses to deliver a range of activities for people of all ages to participate in, including: workout challenges and bootcamps tailored for children, adults and ladies only groups; challenges and obstacle races for children; healthy tips and Q&A sessions delivered by experienced dietitians and nurses; live cooking stations and healthy restaurants; giveaways and prizes for all participants, including gift vouchers and 150 bags of meals and snacks.

INNOVATION

MoSDF inaugurates Sokoon Sign Language app

QNA – DOHA

The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MoSDF) has launched the Sokoon Sign Language app funded by the Social & Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM) dedicated to digitizing the sign language in collaboration with the Qatar Assistive Technology Center (Mada).

Minister of Social Development and Family H E Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad said the work is underway to complete the second phase of the project that includes modernizing the vocabulary to contain 15,000 Arabic words to ensure the utmost benefits and services for the community segments, in addition to providing intelligible platform through which the certified sign language is taught in Qatar and disseminating it in the Arab region and countries of the world.

For her part, Assistant Undersecretary for Family Affairs at the MoSDF Sheikha Sheikha bint Jassim Al Thani thanked DAAM for its role in supporting the sustainable development in alignment with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The application is a solution for communication in Qatar and the Arab world, considering the existence of unified terminologies, as the App is easy to use and features an educational and recreational content.

The accessible "Sokoon" application helps the individuals learn the sign language in a more interactive and seamless way and forge a social network that connects people with the deaf and mute individuals and promotes the feasibility of interaction and communication with the society.

The application is a solution for communication in Qatar and the Arab world, considering the existence of unified terminologies, as the App is easy to use and features an educational and recreational content through innovative technological tools, along with a combination of activities and educational resources that cover various aspects of the Arabic sign language.

"Sokoon" application has been upgraded within the framework of the State of Qatar's initiative, represented by the MoSDF, to digitize the unified Arabic sign language vocabulary in collaboration with the Arab league. The application currently includes 2,637 words, 485 sentences, along with 20 classifications in a variety of fields and it can be surfed with Arabic, English and French languages.

Qatar is making massive efforts to empower the persons with disabilities at the local and Arab levels, especially since the country had the merit of unifying the Arabic sign language and issued the unified Arabic sign language vocabulary in 2007.

Qatar participates in 126th session of Permanent Council of Francophonie

QNA – PARIS

The State of Qatar participated in the 126th extraordinary session of the Permanent Council of the Francophonie, which was held virtually under the chairmanship of HE Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) Louise Mushikiwabo.

Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the French Republic and its representative to OIF H E Sheikh Ali bin Jassim Al-Thani represented the State of Qatar in the meeting.

The OIF Secretary General opened the session and reviewed the political, diplomatic and economic of the organization, in addition to the developments in Gabon, Guinea and Haiti.

The meeting followed up on the implementation of the decisions adopted during the organization's 44th Ministerial Conference which was held in held in the Cameroonian capital, Yaounde on November 4-5, 2023.

Representatives of the member states of the International Organization of La Francophonie approved the recommendations of the 24th session of the Steering Board of the International Committee of the Francophone Games, and approved Armenia's candidacy to host the 10th Francophone Games in 2027.

Since joining the OIF in 2012, the State of Qatar has steadfastly supported Francophone values and principles, and has contributed through its tireless diplomatic and political efforts at the regional and international levels, especially within the Francophonie space, to mediation between entities and countries towards convergence of views and finding peaceful and sustainable solutions to disputes and disagreements.

Raffles Doha awarded Forbes Travel Guide's Five-Star rating

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Raffles Doha has announced it has been awarded Forbes Travel Guide's highly-coveted Five-Star ranking, earning recognition in its debut year for its elevated guest experience and highly-personalised service.

Forbes Travel Guide's Star Awards are a global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants, spas, and ocean cruises, and is the world-renowned authority on excellence in hospitality.

"I am incredibly proud of Raffles Doha for being awarded Five Stars by Forbes Travel Guide. This is an incredible accomplishment made possible by the hotel team's dedication to providing a flawless guest experience, which reflects the best-in-class service and hospitality that guests know to expect when traveling with Raffles. This recognition is a testament to the team's excellence and the property's bright future," said CEO, Raffles Hotels & Resorts and Fairmont Hotels & Resorts Omer Acar.

Featuring 132-suites, Raffles Doha is bringing a new wave of elegance and glamour to the country as Qatar's first all-suite hotel. The striking hotel is anchored between desert and sea, with a distinct location on Doha's bustling waterfront.



Exterior view of Raffles Doha.

Raffles Doha offers guests unparalleled and highly-personalized hospitality, elevating each guest's experience through access to bespoke amenities such as personal scent by Frederic Malle

Featuring the Raffles brand's legendary butler service, Raffles Doha offers guests unparalleled and highly-personalized hospitality, elevating each guest's experience through access to bespoke amenities such as personal scent by Frederic Malle, a gallery of curated books and art, and a walk-in dressing room designed as a delicate jewelry box.

Adding to the destination's rich culinary scene, Raffles Doha offers five distinct dining experiences, including Alba, the first overseas outpost for the celebrated three-starred Michelin restaurant by Chef Enrico Crippa, in addition to modern cuisine, beverages, and artisan coffee and tea.

"This year's Star Awards reflects the forecasted surge in demand for more thrilling travel experiences. They are delivering at the very top of their game and reimagining the future of luxury across design, dining and well-being. Our 2024 winners include more special places to visit across the Middle East and Africa, with a record number of list additions for the region. We commend all the 2024 winners for continuing to deliver a fresh new guest experience," said President of Ratings for Forbes Travel Guide Amanda Frasier.



DOLPHIN ENERGY دولفين للطاقة

Dolphin Energy Limited

Invitation to Tender

Tender Number	Description	Tender Bond	Deadline for Submission, 12 Noon (Qatar Time) on
ITT-QC-OPU-1752	Offshore Shutdown Works (2025-2027)	USD 60,000	26th February 2024

Dolphin Energy Limited (Qatar) is inviting companies to participate in the above Invitation to Tender.

Only companies registered in the State of Qatar with proven experience, the required facilities and technical knowledge as well as a demonstrated track record in the supply of the services required should apply.

How to Tender	Expression of Interest (EOI) Form and Scope of Services/Works can be downloaded from the company's website www.dolphinenergy.com/procurement Interested companies must complete the EOI Form and submit to company's email address within two (2) working days from the publication date of this advertisement. Following receipt of completed EOI Form, interested companies will receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) through Dolphin Energy's SAP Ariba to tender.



Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah (right), Rwanda's Minister of Agriculture H E Ildephonse Musafiri (second right) and others at the event.

Expo 2023 Doha marks National Day of Rwanda

QNA — DOHA

The International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha Qatar yesterday marked the National Day of the Republic of Rwanda in the presence of Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah, Minister of Agriculture of Rwanda H E Ildephonse Musafiri, and a number of diplomats.

The celebration featured a range of cultural activities that expressed the African patrimony, including traditional music show.

The audience also witnessed the economic forum, with several Rwandan officials showcasing the most prominent efforts by the Rwandan government to support agriculture and the sustainable development, highlighting the major progress and renaissance Rwanda witnessed to draw investments.

Rwanda is participating in Expo 2023 Doha with a stellar pavilion at the International Zone which exhibited its history, as well as present and future, the cutting-edge technologies, the progress made in agriculture and water management through screens that displayed the stories, culture, and the heritage of the Rwandan people to learn about the accelerating pace of evolution in Rwanda.

The Rwandan pavilion presents a chronology of the evolution of Rwanda till it has become a regional hub for communications and information technology, as well as a tourist destination and optimum destination for investment and businesses.

Egypt Health Minister visits Gaza patients in Doha, lauds Qatar's efforts



Egypt's Minister of Health and Population H E Dr. Khaled Abdel Ghaffar and Minister of State for International Cooperation H E Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater with other officials during the visit.

QNA — DOHA

Minister of Health and Population of Egypt H E Dr. Khaled Abdel Ghaffar yesterday visited a number of injured Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who are receiving treatment in Qatar, accompanied by Minister of State for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater.

The Egyptian Minister of Health and Population visited Gaza patients at The View Hospital and Sidra Medicine.

During his tour of the two hospitals, he was briefed on the health condition of the wounded Palestinians, nature of their injuries, treatment plans, and the facilities provided to them throughout the treatment period.

Dr. Khaled Abdel Ghaffar appreciated the great capabilities provided by Qatar for the wounded Palestinians and receiving them in the state-of-the-art hospitals with distinguished medical staff and the latest medical equipment which ensures the provision of high-quality health care.

Speaking about coordination between Qatar and Egypt, he said cooperation between the two sides is very important and has contributed to the success of the initiative to treat the wounded Palestinians in Doha.

Al Khater expressed Qatar's appreciation for close cooperation with Egypt in treating the wounded Palestinians, noting in this regard that most of the wounded received treatment first in Egypt before being transferred to Qatar for further treatment. Qatar has so far received 15 batches of Palestinians injured in the Gaza Strip for treatment, as part of the initiative of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to provide treatment for 1,500 Palestinians from the Strip.

Mowasalat helps transport over 3.3 million passengers during Asian Cup

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Mowasalat (Karwa) provided comprehensive transportation services during the AFC Asian Cup 2023. Demonstrating a commitment to excellence and efficiency, Mowasalat (Karwa) has once again proven itself as a leader in transportation, facilitating seamless travel for fans, teams, and officials throughout the tournament.

During the event, Mowasalat (Karwa)'s Tournament and Public Bus Services Team managed the transportation of 3,389,040 passengers, with a record-breaking day on January 31 as the event's busiest.

This achievement once again highlights the company's ability to deliver outstanding service on a massive scale.

To meet demand during the Asian Cup, Mowasalat (Karwa) operated a fleet of 900 buses, while focusing on environmental sustainability with 50% of the vehicles being electric.



Mowasalat (Karwa) deployed 900 buses and 1,000 drivers during the tournament.

The operation was supported by a dedicated team of 1,000 drivers and 500 support and ground staff from over 54 nationalities, reflecting the global spirit of the event.

Specialised transportation services catered to the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) requirements, including tailored solutions for the 24 National Teams, officials and referees, international VIPs, and media personnel. Mowasalat (Karwa) elevated the fan experience by metro shuttle services to major stadiums such as Al Bayt, Al Janoub, Al Thumama, and Abdula Bin Khalifa, and park-and-ride options for Lusail Stadium.

It also provided attendees with exceptional taxi and limousine services. With dedicated ranks at every stadium, Karwa ensured a seamless, safe, and comfortable transportation experience, supporting the seamless flow of fans to and from the games.

"The AFC 2023 Asian Cup project has been a remarkable



achievement for Mowasalat (Karwa). Since we organised the transport for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 we have not rested on our laurels but have honed our service skills and operational streamlining," said Mowasalat (Karwa) CEO Fahad Saad Al Qahtani (**pictured**).

"Our detailed planning and the dedication of our diverse team have demonstrated our capacity to provide great transportation solutions. We are honoured to have contributed significantly to the success of this global event, reinforcing Qatar's position as a premier destination for major sports tournaments."

Team sports are vital to academic excellence at Georgetown Qatar

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

With National Sport Day approaching, students at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) reflected on the importance of campus sports in creating community and helping them to achieve goals on and off the field as part of their holistic academic experience.

For Shahd Al Qassabi (GU-Q'25), a proud Qatari student and women's basketball team captain, playing basketball offers a chance to develop camaraderie, teamwork, and mutual support for personal and academic endeavours.

"The basketball court becomes a meeting ground, erasing boundaries and fostering connections that transcend disciplines. It's a testament to the unifying power of sport, creating bonds with individuals whose paths we might not have crossed otherwise," she says.

The shared victories and lasting friendships embody the Georgetown spirit, adds Shahd. "We evolved into a cohesive unit, connected through the shared pursuit of excellence. It's been amazing to witness the evolution, the growth, and the bonds that have formed – a testament to the joy found in the shared journey of becoming not just teammates, but a family on and off the court." Jemimah Golo (GU-Q'26), co-captain of the women's basketball team, played the sport competitively in high school and it also helped her find her place at GU-Q. Being part of a team motivates her to stay active and healthy helping her to deal with the pressures of academic life. "I play to de-stress. It's very nice that, one, I don't have to do this alone, and two, I do have this avenue to de-stress if I'm having a bad day." Having a social outlet and wider sports community is an added benefit. As part of the Qatar Collegiate Sports Federation, the team actively competes in university basketball league tournaments against institutions from across the country.

For Abdul Hannan (GU-Q'25), captain of the Track and Field Club, running adds a dynamic and fulfilling dimension to his academic life. "Our group runs are open to everyone, regardless of individual skill level, creating a sense of camaraderie among peers," he noted. "We motivate one another to push our boundaries and be the best version of ourselves." According to Hannan, the Track and Field Club welcomes members of the public to join their programme of activities, a unique opportunity to forge new relationships.

It also enables GU-Q to spread awareness of the physical and social benefits of sport, within Education City and the wider community, and contribute to Qatar's national vision to promote participation in sport.



Georgetown University in Qatar students during a sports activity.

India's MMA star Arjan Bhullar embracing 'home' feeling at ONE 166: Qatar



THE PENINSULA

For Arjan Bhullar, the upcoming ONE 166: Qatar blockbuster event marks the beginning of his road to redemption.

The former ONE Heavyweight MMA World Champion is scheduled to lock horns with Iran's Amir Aliakbari at the picturesque Lusail Sports Arena on March 1.

What makes this upcoming bout even more special for the Indian superstar is the backdrop against which it unfolds — a Gulf nation that embraces nearly 700,000 of his fellow countrymen.

Being chosen as one of the competitors for ONE Championship's first on-ground spectacle in Qatar is an honor he doesn't take lightly.

"I'm feeling great, very happy to be a part of this historic event. [There's a] big Indian community there as well. So, it's going to feel like home," he said. Adding to Bhullar's inspiration is the recent arrival of a new member to his family — a lively baby boy named Heera.

The former ONE Heavyweight MMA World Champion is scheduled to lock horns with Iran's Amir Aliakbari at the picturesque Lusail Sports Arena on March 1.

"It really made our family whole with two sisters that he has and just the feeling of completeness, of being blessed," he shared.

"Having a healthy child and having a brother to his sisters and having his sisters welcome him into this world, it felt amazing. It was a special moment for my wife and me."

The birth of his son marks a significant family milestone, and to commemorate this joyous occasion, Bhullar and his partner carefully chose a name that befits the importance of the moment.

"We named him Heera, and it wasn't inspired by someone. It was inspired by him," the Indian MMA fighter said. "He is a Heera. He is our diamond, and he really fits that name. And he was the inspiration. And we're very happy with the name. It fits him."

Between the birth of his son and the support of his compatriots in Qatar, Bhullar finds himself fueled by a unique blend of personal and communal motivations.

As he prepares for this vital assignment at ONE 166: Qatar, the Indian star understands the challenges that lie ahead. It comes on the heels of a heartbreaking setback that saw him relinquish the coveted ONE Heavyweight MMA World Title to Anatoly Malykhin in June 2023.

The defeat was a bitter pill to swallow for Bhullar, but he knows that true champions are defined by their ability to bounce back from adversity.

"I'm a competitor. I like to win. But you learn your lessons and life goes on," he said.

"The best thing that can happen is go out there and win another fight. That helps all those feelings, and that's the plan."

Fans can purchase tickets for ONE 166: Qatar at Virgin Megastore or Q-Ticket!

SHOPPING

Home Centre unveils Ramadan collection and campaign

Each of the five edits - Desert Elegance, Faris, Sama, Noura and Kashida for Home Centre - celebrates unique textures, fabrics and patterns influenced by the region's colourful heritage, allowing customers to reflect their own unique style at home this Ramadan.





Officials during the launch of 'My Home My Way' Ramadan Collections by Home Centre at the Asmakh Mall. PICS: SALIM MATRAMKOT/THE PENINSULA

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Home Centre, one of the largest retailers of furniture and home furnishings in the Middle East, North Africa and the Indian sub-continent, has curated five brand-new Ramadan-inspired collections giving homes across the region the opportunity to make room for new memories during the holy month.

Each of the five edits – Desert Elegance, Faris, Sama, Noura and Kashida for Home Centre – celebrates unique textures, fabrics and patterns influenced by the region's colourful heritage, allowing customers to reflect their own unique style at home this Ramadan.

The Desert Elegance collection captures the magical spirit of the desert and classic mid-century design, applying organic shapes, bold patterns, earthy tones and striking silhouettes to bring the natural beauty of the region indoors to create warm and cozy living and dining spaces to gather in.

In homage to an icon of the region, the luxurious Faris collection is inspired by Arabian horses, dramatically mixing indulgent marbles and shimmering metallics to create a striking yet elegant impact.

With energy and creativity at its heart, the Sama collection uses fluid shapes and ripple effects to create sophisticated signature pieces to elevate any space. Flowing lines, gold accents, and sumptuous velvets offer a premium and organic feel.

Influenced by modern mashrabiya architecture and structured origami designs, the Noura collection applies soft and contemporary neutral colors and textures evoking a sense of serenity and calm.

And finally, the fifth curation in Home Centre's Ramadan collection is an exclusive collaboration with Kashida Design aptly titled Kashida for Home Centre. This iconic partnership with the UAE-based design house sees artistic Kufic script and calligraphy lend a sense of cultural richness to wall art, furniture, dining sets and more.

Territory Head , Landmark Group Qatar Shumalan Naicker said, "As a homegrown brand from the region, the holy month of Ramadan is very special to us. We understand the sentiment of the season and recognize the extraordinary pressures that fall upon homemakers as they prepare to welcome Ramadan into their homes.

"As a brand that celebrates individual expression, our objective is to always offer true choice through our extensive range of styles and price points. With a profound understanding born from our own reverence for Ramadan, we meticulously curate our collections that strike the perfect balance between trendy and traditional, enabling our customers to infuse their homes with their unique style and creativity, ensuring a truly memorable Ramadan experience."

Desert Falls Waterpark reopens with an exclusive offer

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

The anticipation is palpable as the vibrant hues of fun and excitement return to Qatar's beloved Desert Falls Waterpark at the Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas.

After a brief hiatus for annual maintenance, the waterpark has now reopened its gates and is welcoming families and thrill-seekers back to a world of aquatic adventures and unforgettable moments.

The water park is open daily from 10am until 6pm, with extended hours until 7pm on Thursday and Friday. As if that was not enough Desert Falls is also home to several other attractions, adding a further element of fun for all the family.

What awaits visitors is not just a day of thrills and splashes but an immersive experience promising cherished memories and shared adventures.

Adding to the excitement, Desert Falls announces a limited time Buy 1 Get 1 Free offer, available to buy until 29th February but for use on admission throughout 2024. This exclusive deal opens the floodgates to a year filled with laughter, splashes, and cherished memories for guests of all ages.

Unveiling a Vibrant Oasis of Fun: Tucked within the expansive and picturesque grounds of the award-winning Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas, lies the world-class Sea Caves Waterpark and is part of the world-class Desert Falls Water and Adventure Park, which is one of the largest theme parks in the Middle East with an impressive array of 18 attractions and 56 rides and slides.



More than just a recreational spot; it is a cornerstone of Qatar's family entertainment scene and convenient location on the Qatar/Saudi border makes it the ideal destination for Saudis seeking a fun-filled destination close to home, or as a stop off on the way to/from Doha.

Tucked within the expansive and picturesque grounds of the award-winning Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas, the waterpark stands as a beacon of joy amidst the desert landscape. Its diverse attractions cater to every member of the family, from adrenaline-pumping slides to tranquil lazy rivers, ensuring that there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Whether you are a daredevil or prefer a more leisurely experience, brace yourself for laughter, splashes, and excitement as the waterpark offers a treasure trove of exhilarating slides, lazy rivers and attractions for all ages.

Meanwhile, adventurous little ones will love the Ship Kids Pool which has five fun water slides and water features for kids from 0.9m and above, while smaller children will love Lenny's Lagoon, a dedicated area where they can splash about and enjoy interactive water play in a safe and fun-filled space.

Adding to the excitement of the reopening is an exclusive offer that is bound to make a splash: Buy 1 Get 1 Free on day passes. From February 8 to 29, day visitors have the opportunity to enjoy double the fun for the price of one, making every splash and slide an unforgettable experience to share with family and friends. Whether planning a family outing or a thrilling day with friends, this exclusive deal ensures that fun knows no bounds at Desert Falls.

But the excitement doesn't end with the reopening. Tickets bought on the Buy 1 Get 1 Free offer this month are valid for admission throughout the year so families can embark on a journey of endless fun and exploration, knowing that every visit to Desert Falls Waterpark promises new adventures and cherished moments.

MDD set to host numerous National Sport Day activities

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Msheireb Properties, known for creating sustainable communities with a focus on people's needs, is celebrating National Sport Day this year by hosting exciting activations all around Msheireb Downtown Doha in collaboration with Qatar Olympic Committee, PSG Academy Qatar, Cyqlone, and Zulal Wellness Resort.

"As we celebrate Qatar National Sport Day, I am proud to join the nation in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, in line with this year's slogan 'The Choice is Yours'. At Msheireb Properties, we recognize the pivotal role that an active lifestyle plays in fostering a healthy and dynamic community.

"This special day serves as a reminder of the importance of physical activity in our lives and the many different ways it can be incorporated. We invite everyone to join us in Msheireb Downtown Doha on Tuesday," said Dr. Hafiz Ali Abdullah, Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Msheireb Properties.

Barahat Msheireb will be filled with interactive stations dedicated to different sports including weightlifting, high jump, taekwondo, judo, karate, handball, long jump, basketball, football, and volleyball.

For those in the mood for some competition, stations featuring a treadmill challenge, a target wall, soccer skeeball, giant dart tennis, foot golf, touch the spots, interactive sports screen, and padel, will also be available.

In addition to the interactive stations, there will be thrilling tournaments hosted at Barahat Msheireb that are open to the public for volleyball, football, basketball, and para-sports.

A custom-built Human Foosball Arena in Sahat Wadi Msheireb will host friendly matches between visitors. Up to 16 players will step into the cage designed to create conditions similar to a typical foosball table with live DJ's providing play-by-play commentary and music.

Cyqlone will be challenging visitors in their outdoor cycling class hosted at Sahat Al Nakheel on Sikkat Al Wadi at 10 am. A 3-kilometre walk and a 5-kilometre run will also encourage participants to reach the Green Gorilla where they will enjoy mini acai bowls and receive gift vouchers.

Cyqlone's Longest Ride will also take place from 4.30pm to 6pm, featuring a guest appearance from a prominent local DJ.

Zulal Wellness Resort will engage visitors with one-hour on-stage classes, including yoga at 9am, Tai Chi at 12.30pm, and Pilates at 2pm.

Doha Metro, Lusail Tram carried over 6.4 million passengers during Asian Cup

FROM PAGE 1

The overall footfall across all stations and associated facilities of the metro exceeded 734,000 across the day.

Chief of Service Delivery at Qatar Rail Eng. Abdulla Saif al-Sulaiti said, "We are proud of the reliable operational performance recorded during the Qatar 2023 Asian Cup and our contribution to its success while serving Qatar's visitors throughout the tournament via the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks. We extend our thanks to all our staff of both the metro and tram networks, appreciating their significant contribution to the successful execution of the operational plan for the Asian Cup." He added, "This success is attributed to the pre-planning and readiness for the tournament, taking in consideration the lessons learned from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and previous major events into account in terms of operations, crowd management, customer service, and more.

A comprehensive operation plan was developed and executed to meet the tournament's requirements, including increasing the metro's capacity by operating the full fleet of 110 trains, running the 6-car trains on the Red Line, and the train headway was set to be 3 minutes before and after match times on all lines to. Additionally, we cannot overlook the role of coordinated efforts at various levels among all relevant entities, especially the Ministry of Transport and the Local Organizing Committee, to provide a smooth and safe travel experience."

Chief of Strategy and Business Development at Qatar Rail Ajlan Eid Al Enazi said: "The Asian Cup tournament represented another key experience and added another milestone in network track record during major events. The metro achieved a new success as it became one of the key players of the tournament's transportation system, given its role in complementing the experience of both local fans and visitors throughout the Asian Cup."



A view of commuters at a Doha Metro station.

Rwandan pavilion stands out at Expo 2023 Doha

FROM PAGE 1

"We have designed this as a space for people to sit and talk and have coffee. The purpose is to showcase and introduce Rwandan coffee to the Qatari market.

"During the first three days, we offered free coffee and tea. We received very interesting comments from the visitors, and since then we have had many regular guests. It's widely known in the Expo ground," said Shema, adding that Rwanda has emerged as an African coffee powerhouse.

According to him, Rwanda's elevation, temperature, soil quality, and humidity combine to create some of the best coffee-growing conditions in the world.

"Coffee and tea are among the main products of Rwanda. Rwandan coffee is the best in Africa. Rwandan coffee cultivated in different parts of the country is known for its good aroma and uncommon taste," said Shema.

Technical team for awareness works in GCC sates convenes meeting

QNA – DOHA

The technical team for awareness works in security media field in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states held its 7th meeting virtually yesterday.

Assistant Director of Public Relations Department at the Ministry of Interior Col. Dr. Jabr Hammoud Al Nuaimi chaired the meeting.

Director of the Security Media Department Lt. Col. Hadi Mohamed Al Hajri represented the State of Qatar at the meeting which discussed a range of topics on the agenda, along with the issues pertaining to security awareness in the GCC states.

Leaders congratulate Qatar on winning AFC Asian Cup

FROM PAGE 1

In a post on his official account on the X platform, Al Sudani said: "We congratulate the brothers in the State of Qatar for Qatar team's win of the Asian Football Cup and best of luck to the Jordanian brothers and the participating teams.

Thank you to Qatar and the sports fans for the good organization and good interaction with championship matches."

Ambassador of the Republic of Yemen to the State of Qatar Rajeh Badi also wrote on his X account: A beautiful Arab final in the Asian Cup... Congratulations to the brothers in Qatar for this important achievement and title for the second time in a row."

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EDITORIAL

Rafah on brink of catastrophe

A full-scale ground offensive against the southern Gaza city of Rafah seems imminent as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netayahu has asked military leaders to present a plan to evacuate civilians from the area.

Several world leaders have warned against the move. A senior aid official has been quoted as saying that an assault on Rafah – where about 1.3 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering – would lead to a "bloodbath", and the UN has appealed against the forced mass displacement.

With more than half of Gaza already under evacuation orders, widespread destruction throughout the coastal strip, and continuing fighting, it was unclear where such a large number of people could safely be moved.

Meanwhile, Qatar has been making tremendous efforts with Egypt and the US to reach a ceasefire to end the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza.

Qatar slammed the Israeli threats to storm Rafah, warning of a humanitarian disaster. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Saturday called for urgent action to prevent Israeli offensive. The ministry underscored Qatar's rejection of attempts of forced displacement of Palestinians. It reiterated Qatar's unwavering stance on the justice to the Palestinians and the establishment of an independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani participated in a consultative meeting to discuss the developments in the Gaza Strip held in Riyadh on Friday.

The meeting emphasised the necessity of ceasefire and ensuring protection of civilians in accordance with international laws. It also called for lifting of all restrictions hindering the entry of aid into Gaza, and expressed support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The war on Gaza has left a trail of human suffering and destruction. The conflict had claimed 28,176 lives as of yesterday.

The US also warned against attacking Rafah. The US national Security Council spokesperson, John Kirby, said on Thursday that any assault on Rafah without due consideration of civilians would be a disaster and "we would not support it".

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell joined leaders warning against the Israeli offensive on Rafah, saying it would "lead to an unspeakable humanitarian catastrophe and grave tensions with Egypt". Gaza's Hamas rulers said that Israel's planned army operation in overcrowded Rafah could cause "tens of thousands" of casualties in the city.

The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision

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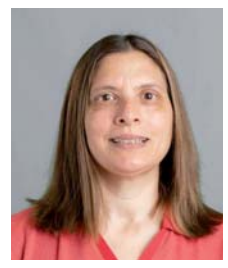
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20 years of sporting events in Qatar: What's the score?





DR. CHRISTOS ANAGNOSTOPOULOS AND DR. KAMILLA SWART-ARRIES

Qatar is one of the few countries to have a national holiday dedicated to sport and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. In accordance with Amiri Resolution No. (80) (2011) the second Tuesday of February has since 2012 been marked as National Sports Day.

To celebrate this year's 14th edition, professors and students majoring in sport and entertainment management at Hamad Bin Khalifa University's (HBKU) College of Science and Engineering (CSE), were tasked with answering a simple but highly indicative and pertinent question: how many sporting events has Qatar hosted since 2005, when the 3rd West Asian Games were held here as a test event for the 2006 Asian Games?

The project was led by Dr. Christos Anagnostopoulos, Assistant Professor in Sport Management and UNESCO Chairholder on Governance & Social Responsibility in Sport, supported by Dr. Kamilla Swart-Arries, Associate Professor and Director of HBKU's MSc in Sport and Entertainment program, and primarily executed by Hissa Hadi Al-hajri and Farah Zeyad Ali, 2nd and 1st-year students of the MSc program, respectively.

Examining published data, the research team meticulously categorized Qatar's hosted events into regional and international categories, as well as team and individual competitions, and clustered them per sport. Since 2005, Qatar has hosted a remarkable 176 high-profile sporting events, with 101 falling within the regional spectrum and 76 on an international scale. Notably, the country has shown a proclivity for team sport events, with 50 categorized as regional (compared to 31 individual events) and 63 as international (versus 32 individual events).

The data underscores Qatar's rapid evolution into a major destination for sporting events across various disciplines. Notable highlights obviously include FIFA World Cup 2022, the first time that football's leading tournament was hosted by an Islamic and Middle Eastern country. Beyond football, Qatar has left an indelible mark on tennis hosting 15 prominent Asian and international events. These include the Qatar ExxonMobil Open, where top stars regularly showcase their talents.



The data underscores Qatar's rapid evolution into a major destination for sporting events across various disciplines. Notable highlights obviously include FIFA World Cup 2022, the first time that football's leading tournament was hosted by an Islamic and Middle Eastern country.

Qatar has also established itself as a basketball hub, having hosted 10 major tournaments, ranging from continental championships to global World Cup qualifiers. Although not part of the data, it is worth mentioning that the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) has been awarded the hosting rights for the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027. And let's not forget that this year's National Sports Day coincides with Doha's staging of the World Aquatics Championship, the most prestigious global event for watersports.

Qatar has a growing reputation for hosting multi-sport events, such as the 9th edition of the GCC Sports Tournament for Universities and Higher Education Institutes, and record-breaking spectacles like the 2006 Asian Games. Beyond organizing 38 multi-sporting occasions, the country has also organized many standalone world-class events covering cycling, sailing, billiards, archery, fencing, and more. Add to this mix 5 combat sports championships, the same number of top-class squash competitions, as well as 8 major cricket tournaments and it's easy to see why Qatar has a burgeoning reputation for flawlessly delivering events across a diverse range of sports.

This 'picture' empirically demonstrates that Qatar has firmly positioned itself as a key player in the global sports arena, aligning with its National Vision 2030, which emphasizes economic diversification, environmental initiatives, human development, and social progress. Evidently, sport has been one of the key pillars for implementing this vision. In accordance with the 3rd National Development Strategy (NDS3) 2024-2030, Qatar aims to further cater to specialized demand segments within the booming sports tourism market. It is clear that the future of sport in Qatar is bright, so let's embrace this year's National Sport Day with pride for what the country has contributed to, and benefits from, sport at both the international and regional level.

Dr. Christos Anagnostopoulos is Assistant Professor in Sport Management at HBKU's College of Science and Engineering. Dr. Kamilla Swart-Arries is Associate Professor and Director: Sport and Entertainment Management at HBKU's College of Science and Engineering.

The way forward for Palestine: A call for international protection

SULTAN BARAKAT – AL JAZEERA

In the wake of the landmark International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that Israel is plausibly engaged in a genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza, all states that are party to the Genocide Convention now have a legal obligation to take material steps to put an end to Israel's genocidal acts in the besieged Strip.

In this context, the decision by many Western nations to withdraw funding to UNRWA, the UN's main humanitarian agency for Palestinian refugees, over unsubstantiated "terror" allegations made by Israel, is not only perplexing – the very opposite of what the court legally obliged them to do – but also highly abhorrent as starving Palestinians face a deepening famine and deadly disease outbreaks in besieged Gaza.

The real aim of Israel's lobbying efforts to undermine UNRWA is the liquidation of the Palestinian identity and the right of return of the Palestinian people that the UN agency has come to embody.

If the Western states, and especially the United States, continue to bow down to Israel's genocidal demands they will only add further weight to the accusations that they are complicit in its genocide in Gaza.

What is at stake today is not only the future of millions of Palestinians and the very viability of the Israeli state, but the stability of an entire region, and the future of the rules-based world order.

Unabated, Israel's assault on Gaza, with the unconditional backing of the West, risks a regional conflagration further inflaming conflicts from Yemen to Iraq and Syria, and paving the way for an unprecedented surge in terrorism across the globe.

Today, there is mounting anger towards Western powers not only in the Arab world, but across the Global South, for their perceived complicity in Israel's massacres of Palestinian civilians. Terrorist organisations like ISIL and al-Qaeda could not have asked for a better environment to regroup and mount new attacks on the West, as the global majority now views the West solidly as an enabler of the ongoing genocide of an occupied and oppressed Indigenous people. There is every reason to expect such terror groups, or brand new ones like them, to take advantage of this moment and launch attacks against Western populations and their allies and supporters across the globe.

The future of the entire rules-based world order – and international law itself – is also very much at risk. The stark contrast between the West's response to the war on Ukraine and the war on Gaza, has convinced many that international law applies to the West's enemies, like Russia, alone. With the West demonstrating clearly that it considers itself and its allies, in this case, Israel, as being beyond the constraints of the law, there has been an immense loss of trust in international institutions like the United Nations. Indeed, the UN not only found itself completely powerless to stop Israel's blatant violations of international law and attacks on Palestinian civilians, but could not even hold it to account for its outbursts against its secretary-general and targeting of UN staff in Gaza.

The real aim of Israel's lobbying efforts to undermine UNRWA is the liquidation of the Palestinian identity and the right of return of the Palestinian people that the UN agency has come to embody.

Given the global majority's strong opposition to the continuation of Israel's war on Gaza, and the expressed position in favour of a two-state solution of the vast majority of the UN member states, including the permanent five at the Security Council, there is only one way to give another life to the rules-based world order, bring stability to the Middle East, and prevent the dawn of a new era of terror across the globe: ending the occupation of Palestine.

This is also the only feasible way forward for Israel. After Hamas's October 7 attack, as is evident in the erratic actions of its far-right government and the desperate acts of extreme violence it unleashed on the Palestinians, Israel has lost all confidence in its deterrence capabilities in the region. Israelis are feeling more vulnerable and exposed today than ever before. Many of its citizens have lost trust in the ability of the state of Israel to ensure their security, and are questioning the state's viability in the region.

Only the end of the illegal occupation, supported by a settlement in which the Arab states assure Israel that it is indeed a part of the region, and can exist among them in peace and prosper, would allow Israel to regain a sense of security and permanence.

Clearly, the longest ongoing occupation in recent history must end – and quickly. However, given the current gridlock and the total devastation of Gaza, the first step towards ending occupation should be to bring the Palestinian people – who have now been identified by ICJ as a unique "group" – under international protection. This interim arrangement must be put in place under the auspices of the UN – whose involvement would restore the legitimacy of the rules-based order, for a period of three to five years, until a fully functional and independent Palestinian state can be realised.

During this period of international protection, an independent tsar, appointed by the UN with the approval of the global community, must lead the process and be responsible for day-to-day governance, with guidance and support from a special council made out of individuals representing all Palestinian factions, including Hamas.

There would likely be serious objections to the inclusion of an official Hamas representative into this set-up, but it should be possible to include in the council a non-member who is acceptable to the group, and can represent its interests. The inclusion of Hamas in any peace process is crucial as no sustainable settlement can be achieved without acknowledging the concerns and expectations of the group that has led Palestinian armed struggle against occupation for many years.

Given the West's undeniable pro-Israel bias, the countries that have shown care and consideration for the rights and well-being of the Palestinians, and respect for international law, throughout this latest conflict, such as South Africa, Turkey, and Brazil, should be part of the international protection coalition. This coalition should also ensure the security and territorial integrity of Jordan and Egypt.

Security enforcement in the Palestinian territories during this transitional period under international protection could follow a hybrid model – a local police force supported by an international force.

The responsibility of shepherding such a proposal via the Security Council must fall on the United Kingdom and France given their historic responsibility in the creation of the State of Israel and subjugation of the Palestinian people.

The rebuilding of Gaza, which has been reduced to rubble in the past four months, will inevitably be part of the mandate in the interim international protection period. Countries that are directly responsible for the destruction, Israel, the US and Germany among others, should provide the bulk of the required financial resources, keeping in mind that the total rebuilding cost will be less than 20 percent of what the US has promised Israel in terms of additional military support to guarantee its security.

WAR ON GAZA

Egypt threatens to suspend peace treaty if Israel pushes into Rafah

AP — RAFAH, GAZA STRIP

Egypt is threatening to suspend its peace treaty with Israel if Israeli troops are sent into the densely populated Gaza border town of Rafah, where it says fighting could force the closure of the besieged territory's main aid supply route, two Egyptian officials and a Western diplomat said yesterday.

The threat to suspend the Camp David Accords, a cornerstone of regional stability for nearly a half-century, came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signalled sending troops into Rafah.

Over half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled to Rafah to escape fighting in other areas, and they are packed into sprawling tent camps and UN-run shelters near the border. Egypt fears a mass influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who may never be allowed to return.

The standoff between Israel and Egypt took shape as aid groups warned that an offensive in Rafah would worsen the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, where around 80% of residents have fled their homes and where the UN says a quarter of the population faces starvation. Hamas's Al Aqsa television station quoted an unnamed Hamas official as saying that any invasion of Rafah would "blow up" talks aimed at achieving a cease-fire and the release of hostages.

Israel's offensive has caused widespread destruction, particularly in northern Gaza, and heavy fighting is still taking place in central Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis. In Gaza City yesterday, the remaining residents covered decomposing bodies in the streets or carried bodies to graves. Some streets were piled high with sand from bombings. Smoke billowed from destroyed buildings.

A ground operation in Rafah could cut off one of the only avenues for delivering Gaza's badly needed food and medical supplies.

All three officials confirmed Egypt's threats, speaking on condition of anonymity. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other countries have also warned of severe repercussions if Israel goes into Rafah.

"An Israeli offensive on Rafah would lead to an unspeakable humanitarian catastrophe and grave tensions with Egypt," European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell wrote on X.

The White House, which has rushed arms to Israel and shielded it from international calls for a cease-fire, has also warned against a Rafah ground operation under current circumstances, saying it would be a "disaster" for civilians.

Egypt has heavily fortified its border with Gaza, carving out a 5km buffer zone and erecting concrete walls above and below ground.

Egyptian officials fear that if the border is breached, the military would be unable to stop a tide of people fleeing into the Sinai Peninsula.

The United Nations says Rafah, normally home to fewer than 300,000 people, now hosts 1.4 million more who fled fighting elsewhere, and it is "severely overcrowded."

Israel has ordered much of Gaza's population to flee south, with evacuation orders covering two-thirds of the territory, even as it regularly carries out airstrikes in all areas, including Rafah. Airstrikes on the town in recent days have killed dozens of Palestinians, including women and children.

Gaza's Health Ministry said yesterday that the bodies of 112 people killed across the territory had been brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours, as well as 173 wounded people. The fatalities brought the death toll in the strip to 28,176 since October 7.



A picture taken from Rafah shows smoke billowing during Israeli bombardment over Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. (AFP)

Four Emirati soldiers, Bahraini officer killed in Somalia attack

AFP — DUBAI

Four Emirati soldiers and a Bahraini officer were killed following an attack in Somalia, where they were training the Somali national army, the United Arab Emirates announced.

The soldiers were "exposed to a terrorist act" while "performing their work duties in training and qualifying the Somali Armed Forces", the UAE's defence ministry said in a statement on Saturday, adding that three Emirati soldiers and a Bahraini officer were killed.

A fourth Emirati soldier, who was among two injured in the attack, "passed away upon arrival" in the UAE yesterday, the official WAM news agency said, raising the overall death toll.

The corpses arrived in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi on board a military aircraft, according to WAM, which carried footage of three coffins draped in Emirati flags being carried on a red carpet across the tarmac during a military ceremony.

The UAE "continues to coordinate and cooperate with the Somali government in investigating the sinful terrorist act", the defence ministry statement said.

A Somali military source told AFP that the gunman was a member of the Somali army who opened fire inside a training camp in the capital Mogadishu, killing and injuring an unknown number of people including soldiers from the UAE.

"The shooting was carried out by a member of the army who stayed in the camp. He was killed in the shooting," said a senior Somali army official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive security matters.

The attack was claimed by Al Shabaab, a militant group aligned with Al Qaeda that has waged a violent insurgency against Somalia's central government and its foreign backers for over 15 years.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud sent his condolences "to the government and the people of the United Arab Emirates over the death of the military officers in Mogadishu who came to assist in rebuilding the Somali army".

"We condemn in our strongest terms this heinous act in which these officers were killed. I have instructed an urgent investigation on the matter," he said in a post on X.

The United Arab Emirates and Somalia signed a military and security cooperation agreement in January 2023.

One of attackers on Istanbul election campaign event arrested

AP — ISTANBUL

One of the assailants who opened fire at an Istanbul campaign event for upcoming municipal elections has been caught, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday.

Erdogan condemned Saturday's attack that critically wounded one woman and praised police and prosecutors for working to apprehend the other suspects. He didn't mention their affiliation or a motive for the attack.

The attack took place as Aziz Yeniay, a candidate for mayor in Istanbul's Kucukcemece district for the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, was visiting an association, Turkish semi-official Anadolu Agency reported.

A 32-year-old woman was critically wounded and the attackers escaped in a vehicle.

Police said they were reviewing security camera footage and had found 17 spent shells at the site. Footage showed people firing from a white car before speeding away.

Turkiye will hold municipal elections on March 31. Erdogan's ruling AKP hopes to retake many crucial cities and districts.

US military strikes more missiles in Yemen

AFP — WASHINGTON

The US military said yesterday it had struck more devices and missiles in Huthi-controlled areas of Yemen that were prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea.

The strikes occurred on Saturday between 4:00-5:00 pm (1300-1400 GMT) north of the city of Hodeida, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on social media.

American "forces successfully conducted self-defense strikes against two unmanned surface vessels (USV) and three mobile anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM)... that were prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea," the statement said.

The Huthi-run Al Masirah television on Saturday night reported three strikes on the Salif port area, while an AFP correspondent in the area heard loud blasts.

The strikes are part of a series of actions taken by the United States and its allies against the Huthis, aimed at halting the rebels' repeated attacks on vital Red Sea shipping lanes.

On Saturday, the Huthis confirmed that 17 of their fighters had been killed in recent strikes, following a previous announcement on Thursday by the United States that it had struck missile launchers.

The Huthis, who control much of war-torn Yemen including the port of Hodeida, began their attacks in November, saying they were hitting Israel-linked vessels in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

US and British forces have responded with strikes against the Huthis, who have since declared the two countries' interests to be legitimate targets as well.

On Tuesday the Huthi rebels said they had struck US and British ships in two attacks in the Red Sea, causing minor damage but no casualties. The Red Sea attacks have raised insurance premiums for shipping companies, forcing many to avoid the Red Sea, a vital route that normally carries about 12 percent of global maritime trade.

Thousands in Morocco protest ties with Israel

AFP — RABAT

Thousands of Moroccans yesterday again took to the streets of their capital to call for an end to their country's ties with Israel, which they denounced for "genocide" in Gaza.

In late 2020, Morocco established diplomatic ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords brokered by the United States which saw similar moves by the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

As part of the deal, Rabat received Washington's recognition of its claim to sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

Since October 7, several large-scale demonstrations in the North African kingdom have called for the abrogation of the normalisation deal.

"Normalisation is treason," and "Stop the massacre," read banners protesters carried in front of Morocco's parliament in the centre of Rabat.

AFP journalists estimated more than 10,000 people joined the rally, some of them carrying an immense Palestinian flag. The crowd size matched that of a similar November protest in Morocco's commercial capital Casablanca.

"We see 24 hours a day bombardments, children killed, nearly 30,000 dead and nothing stops it. The genocide continues," said Abdelhakim Ziani, 25, a medical student who joined the rally and wants an end to ties between Morocco and Israel.

"We can't continue selling and buying from these genocidal people," he said.

Morocco has officially denounced what it said was "flagrant violations of the provisions of international law" by Israel in its war against Hamas, but has not given any indication that normalisation with Israel would be undone.



Protesters gesture and chant during a demonstration in solidarity with Palestinians, in Rabat, yesterday. (AFP)

DR Congo set to restore death sentence for army treason

AFP — KINSHASA

The DR Congo government intends to end a 20-year moratorium on capital punishment for soldiers guilty of treason in the conflict against M23 rebels, according to a cabinet report.

Death sentences are regularly handed down by courts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but they have been systematically commuted to life in jail since a 2003 moratorium on capital punishment.

The justice minister on Friday submitted a note to cabinet about "lifting the moratorium on the death sentence" for the military, government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said. At a CSD defence council meeting in Kinshasa on Monday, discussion centred on treason in the military and security services, Muyaya noted.

"With the aim of ending it (treason), the CSD requested the head of state "to lift the moratorium... at a time when the country is facing aggression from Rwanda" which denies accusations of backing the M23.

After years of dormancy, the M23 (March 23 Movement) took up arms again in late 2021 and has since seized vast swathes of Nord Kivu province.

"Given the absolute need... to rid the army of traitors by carrying out the capital punishments they deserve after an irreversible sentence for treason," the justice ministry asked government "to recognise the intention to lift the moratorium", the spokesman said.



Region receives rain

A man uses an umbrella as he rushes for cover from the heavy rain in Kuwait city yesterday. Parts of the region including Qatar received rain yesterday. (AFP)

Death of teenager takes Senegal protest toll to three

AFP — DAKAR

A 16-year-old died following clashes in Senegal's Ziguinchor, the third fatality in unrest after President Macky Sall postponed this month's election, a hospital source and a local politician said yesterday.

Sall's decision to push back the February 25 presidential vote has plunged Senegal into one of its worst crises since independence from France in 1960.

Protests pitting youths against the security forces have turned increasingly violent in a country seen as a haven of stability and democracy in West Africa, a region roiled by coups and unrest.

Landing Camara, who was known as Diedhiou, died Saturday evening in hospital after being wounded in Ziguinchor. His identity papers showed he was 16, after the hospital source said he was 19.

The southern city is a stronghold of jailed opposition figurehead Ousmane Sonko, where youths and security forces clashed throughout the day.

The teenager "took a projectile to the head and died of his injuries in intensive care", the hospital source in Ziguinchor told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"There were several seriously wounded people during the protests and one died. He was hit in the head by a bullet," said Abdou Sane, coordinator of the opposition party Pastef in Ziguinchor.

Two other youths died following protests in the capital Dakar and northern city of Saint-Louis since Friday. In Dakar, a 23-year-old, was shot "in the stomach with a live round", his brother who was with him told AFP.

The circumstances around the death of a 22-year-old at a university campus in Saint-Louis remain unclear. The Saint-Louis prosecutor's office said it had opened an investigation into the death. The interior ministry issued a statement denying that security forces had been operating on the campus. The US Bureau of African Affairs shared condolences with the families and friends of the victims in a message on social media.

"Saddened to learn of two lives lost", it said on X, formerly Twitter.

"We urge all parties to act in a peaceful and measured manner, and we continue to call on President Sall to restore the electoral calendar, restore confidence, and bring calm to the situation." The European Union for its part urged Senegal's authorities to "guarantee fundamental freedoms" after the latest fatality, the bloc's foreign affairs and security policy spokesperson Nabila Massrali said on X, formerly Twitter.

Sall said he postponed the election because of a dispute between parliament and the Constitutional Council over potential candidates barred from running. He has said he wants to begin a process of "appeasement and reconciliation" and reiterated a commitment not to stand for a third term amid expressions of international concern.

PAKISTAN POLITICS

Police clash with Khan supporters at election protests

AFP — ISLAMABAD

Police fired tear gas to disperse supporters of jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan yesterday after his party urged protests outside election offices where they said rigging had taken place in last week's national vote.

Clashes were reported in Rawalpindi city, south of the capital, and Lahore, in the east, while dozens of other protests were held across the country without incident.

Police warned earlier they would come down hard on illegal gatherings. There were no immediate reports of injuries from the protests. Independent candidates — most linked to Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party — took the most seats in the polls, scuppering the chances of the army-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to win a ruling majority.

However, independents cannot form a government and the country faces weeks of political uncertainty as rival parties negotiate possible coalitions.

PTI leaders claim they would have won even more seats if not for vote rigging.

Clashes were reported in Rawalpindi city, south of the capital, and Lahore, in the east, while dozens of other protests were held across the country without incident.

A nationwide election-day mobile telephone blackout and the slow counting of results led to suspicions the military establishment was influencing the process to ensure success for former premier Nawaz Sharif's PML-N. "Throughout Pakistan, elections were manipulated in a subtle way," PTI chairman Gohar Ali Khan told a news conference Saturday, calling on supporters to "protest peacefully" yesterday.

Authorities warned they would take strict action, saying so-called Section 144 orders were in place — a colonial-era law banning public gatherings.

"Some individuals are inciting illegal gatherings around the Election Commission and other government offices," a statement from Islamabad's police force said yesterday.

"Legal action will be taken against unlawful assemblies. It should be noted that soliciting for gatherings is also a crime," it said.

A similar warning was also issued in Rawalpindi, while dozens of police equipped with riot gear assembled near Liberty Market in Lahore.

In Rawalpindi, AFP staff saw police fire tear gas at a crowd of dozens of PTI supporters after they refused orders to stop picketing an office used to collect constituency election results.

Another gathering of around 200 PTI supporters in Lahore dispersed quickly when police moved in with riot shields and batons. Local media said several people were detained in Karachi, in the south, when they refused orders to clear the area.

Imran Khan's party defied a months-long crackdown, which crippled campaigning and forced candidates to run as independents, to emerge as the winners of Thursday's vote.

Final results were announced Sunday, with independents winning 101 seats, PML-N 75, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) 54, and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) 17.

Ten minor parties mopped up the remaining 17 seats, with two remaining vacant.

"The results have clearly indicated that no single party possesses a simple majority to establish a government," said Zahid Hussain, a political analyst and author.

"The political future of the country from this point onward is highly uncertain." Still, PTI leaders insist they have been given a "people's mandate" to form the next government.

"The people have decided in favour of Imran Khan," party chairman Gohar Ali Khan told Arab News in an interview.

A coalition between the PML-N and the PPP — who formed the last government after ousting Imran Khan with a no-confidence vote in April 2022 — still seems the most likely outcome.



Supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party protest against the alleged skewing in Pakistan's national election results, in Karachi yesterday. (AFP)

Philippine Coast Guard accuses Chinese vessels of 'dangerous' manoeuvres

AFP — MANILA

The Philippine Coast Guard yesterday accused Chinese vessels of "dangerous" manoeuvres during a nine-day patrol near a reef off the coast of the Southeast Asian country.

The Philippine vessel BRP Teresa Magbanua was sent in early February to patrol the waters around Scarborough Shoal, a rich fishing ground in the South China Sea, and deliver provisions to Filipino fishermen and ensure their safety.

The reef has been a flashpoint between the countries since China seized it from the Philippines in 2012.

Since then, Beijing has deployed patrol boats that Manila says harass Philippine vessels and prevent Filipino fishermen from reaching the lagoon where fish are more plentiful.

During the patrol, Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) vessels "performed dangerous and blocking manoeuvres at sea against BRP Teresa Magbanua four times, with the CCG vessels crossing the bow of the PCG vessel twice", the Philippine Coast Guard said in a statement.

The Philippine Coast Guard said its ship was also "shadowed" by four Chinese Coast Guard vessels "on more than 40 occasions".

The reef has been a flashpoint between the countries since China seized it from the Philippines in 2012.

The coast guard also observed what it described as "four Chinese Maritime Militia vessels". China Coast Guard spokesman Gan Yu hit back, saying the Philippine vessel had "illegally intruded" into the waters several times.

"The China Coast Guard, noting that the warnings it had issued had proved ineffective, took action in accordance with the law to control the progression of the Philippine vessel and force it to leave," Gan said. "The China Coast Guard dealt with the incident professionally and to standard," he added.

Videos released by the Philippine Coast Guard show a Chinese Coast Guard vessel metres from the port beam of the BRP Teresa Magbanua, before it crosses the path of the Philippine boat.

Scarborough Shoal is 240 kilometres (150 miles) west of the Philippines' main island of Luzon and nearly 900 kilometres from the nearest major Chinese land mass of Hainan.

The incidents came two months after tense standoffs between China and the Philippines around disputed reefs in the South China Sea that saw a collision between vessels from the two countries and Chinese ships blasting water cannon at Philippine boats.

China claims almost the entire sea and has ignored an international tribunal ruling that its assertions have no legal basis.

It deploys boats to patrol the busy waterway and has built artificial islands that it has militarised to reinforce its claims.

Chinese and Philippine officials last month agreed on the need for closer dialogue to deal with "maritime emergencies" in the waterway as tensions escalated.

No prerequisites for destabilisation around Taiwan: Moscow

SPUTNIK — MOSCOW

Russia has not so far seen any preconditions for a sharp destabilization of the situation around Taiwan after the election of the island's head of administration in January, as the Taiwanese authorities and the West realize possible consequences of crossing "red lines" in this regard, Russian senior diplomat Ivan Zhelokhovtsev told Sputnik.

On January 13, Taiwan held a general election in which pro-independence candidate Lai Ching-te of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party won with 40.05% of the vote to head the island's local administration.

"So far, we have seen no serious prerequisites for a sharp destabilization. The island authorities and their Western patrons realize the existence of 'red lines' in the Taiwan issue, the crossing of which could lead to the implementation of a military scenario. Let me remind you that the Anti-Secession Law, which gives the Chinese authorities the respective legislative authority [to implement such a scenario], was adopted back in 2005. At the same time, the country's leadership has consistently emphasized its commitment to peaceful unification," Zhelokhovtsev, who heads the Russian Foreign Ministry's First Asian Department, said.

The growing tensions in the region, including around Taiwan, are a long-term trend that is in fact driven by the actions of the United States and its allies, the Russian diplomat said, adding that although Washington formally recognizes the one-China principle, it "fuels separatist sentiments on the island, strengthens its military potential, and carries out political contacts and interaction through military and intelligence agencies."

IN BRIEF

N Korea, Russia to agree on timeline for Putin's visit: FM

SPUTNIK—MOSCOW: MOSCOW and Pyongyang are going to agree on the terms of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to North Korea through diplomatic channels, the director of the First Asian Department the Russian Foreign Ministry, Ivan Zhelokhovtsev, told Sputnik.

"As is known, during the summit at the Vostochny spaceport in September 2023, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un invited the Russian president to visit Pyongyang. This invitation was confirmed during the recent visit to our country by North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui. Specific terms of the visit will be agreed upon through diplomatic channels," Zhelokhovtsev said.

Fire in southern Myanmar destroys houses, vehicles

XINHUA—YANGON: A fire has destroyed seven houses and several vehicles in southern Myanmar, an official from a rescue organization told *Xinhua* yesterday. An early morning fire engulfed Myeik Town's free funeral service society building, causing the damages, an official said.



Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations in North Korea

People visiting Mansu Hill in Pyongyang, yesterday, on the first day of the Lunar New Year of the Dragon. On the start of the new year, North Koreans typically visit the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun or statues of the two Kims in their neighborhoods to pay tribute to their former leaders. (AFP)

Myanmar junta enforces military service law following battlefield losses

AFP — YANGON

Myanmar's junta is enforcing a law allowing the military to summon all men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27 to serve for at least two years, it said on Saturday, as it struggles to crush opposition to its 2021 coup.

The Southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since the military takeover in February of that year, which ended a ten-year experiment with democracy and sparked mass protests and a crackdown on dissent. Three years on, the junta is struggling to crush widespread armed opposition to its rule and recently suffered a series of stunning losses to an alliance of ethnic minority armed groups.

The junta "issued the notification of the effectiveness of People's Military Service Law starting from February 10th, 2024," the junta's information team said in a statement.

The law was authored by a previous junta in 2010 but was never brought into force.

Saturday's statement did not give further details but said the junta's defence ministry would "release necessary bylaws, procedures, announcements orders, notifications and instructions." It did not give details on how those called up would be expected to serve.

The junta has previously said it is taking measures to arm pro-military militias as it battles opponents across the country. A "national military service system involving all people is essential because of the situation happening in our country," junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said in an audio message released by the information team.

Indonesia set for presidential vote, ex-general tipped to win

AFP — JAKARTA

Indonesians vote in a presidential election Wednesday with Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto the clear favourite after a campaign mixing nationalist rhetoric and pledges to continue the era of popular outgoing leader Joko Widodo.

The former general lost to Widodo in 2014 and 2019 but is on course to finally lead the world's third-largest democracy after rehabilitating his image.

Widodo is constitutionally barred from running for a third term but his popularity hit all-time highs last year with polls showing he would have likely won another election.

Instead he is playing kingmaker for his defence chief and eldest son, who have joined forces on the same ticket.

Polls project Subianto to win a majority from nearly 205 million Indonesians who will dip their finger in halal ink at more than 800,000 polling stations across the volcano-dotted archipelago.

"What do I like? His persistence. For me, he cares about the people," said Wilhelmina, a 51-year-old housewife in the capital Jakarta who goes by one name.



Presidential candidate and Indonesia's Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto reacts during a campaign rally at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta on February 10, 2024. (AFP)

Battling the 72-year-old for a potential second-round run-off vote if he falls short are former Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan and former Central Java governor Ganjar Pranowo.

NGOs and his former military bosses accuse Subianto of ordering the abduction of democracy activists at the end of dictator Suharto's rule in the late 1990s, but his new "cuddly grandpa" persona has won over younger voters.

Wilhelmina joined student protests when Subianto allegedly targeted them but says she has forgiven him.

"That figure was in the past," she said. The defence chief's strongman credentials as a former special forces leader, his new social media image and the addition of Widodo's eldest son have boosted his appeal.

The decision to recruit Gibran Rakabuming Raka courted controversy after Widodo's brother-in-law passed a ruling to lower the age for candidates.

KIEV CONTINUES WAR CABINET RESHUFFLE

Russia launches 45 drones over Ukraine

AP — KIEV

Russian forces launched 45 drones over Ukraine yesterday in a five-and-a-half-hour barrage, officials said, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy continued the reshuffle of his war cabinet as the war enters its third year.

In a statement, the Ukrainian air force said it had shot down 40 of the Shahed drones over nine different regions, including on the outskirts of the country's capital, Kiev.

The five-and-a-half-hour attack targeted agricultural facilities and coastal infrastructure, officials for Ukraine's southern defence forces wrote on Telegram. They said that a strike in the Mykolaiv region had injured one person, sparking a fire and damaging nearby residential buildings.

Another person was injured in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region when a blaze broke out due to falling debris from a destroyed drone, said the head of the region's military administration, Serhiy Lysak.

> The Ukrainian air force said it had shot down 40 of the Shahed drones over nine different regions, including on the outskirts of the country's capital, Kiev.

The strikes come as Zelenskiy continues his shakeup of military commanders in a bid to maintain momentum against attacking Russian forces.

Kiev announced yesterday that former deputy defense minister Lt Gen Alexander Pavlyuk would become the new commander of Ukraine's ground forces. The post was previously held by Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi, who was named on Thursday as the replacement for Ukraine's outgoing military chief, Gen Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

New presidential decrees also named Yurii Sodol, the former head of Ukraine's marine corps, as the new commander of Ukraine's combined forces; Brig Gen Ihor Skibiuk as commander of Ukraine's air assault forces; and Maj Gen Ihor Plahuta as commander of Ukraine's territorial defence forces.

Incoming commander-in-chief Syrskyi has signalled that his immediate goals include improving troop rotation at the front lines and harnessing the power of new technology at a time when Kiev's forces are largely on the defensive.

Ukraine's military intelligence service said yesterday that attacking Russian forces had been found using Starlink terminals to aid their attack. It released what it said was a recording of an intercepted conversation between two Russian soldiers as proof.

Starlink terminals, which use a series of satellites run by Elon Musk's company Space X to provide high-speed communications, have been vital in giving Ukraine's military an edge over invading Russian troops.

However, multiple reports of Russian troops using Starlink on the front line in occupied Ukraine had begun to surface in the Ukrainian media in recent weeks. They prompted Space X to release a statement on social media on Feb. 8, saying that it did not "do business of any kind with the Russian government or its military".

However, Western tech components have regularly been found among Russia's arsenal as Moscow has become more skilled at evading sanctions, often importing goods via third countries.

In a statement on Telegram Saturday, Zelenskiy said that he hoped to "reboot" the upper levels of Ukraine's armed forces with experienced combat commanders.

"Now, people who are well-known in the army and who themselves know well what the army needs are taking on new responsibilities," he said.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy (centre) with the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Oleksandr Syrsky (centre right) and Minister of Defence of Ukraine Rustem Umerov (centre left) with other military officials in Kiev, on February 10, 2024. (AFP)

NATO chief, EU council president denounce Trump's threat

AFP — BRUSSELS

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg yesterday warned against talk that "undermines security" after former US president Donald Trump threatened to encourage Russia to attack NATO members who were not fully paid up.

"Any suggestion that allies will not defend each other undermines all of our security, including that of the US," Stoltenberg said in a statement.

Trump threatened Saturday, in the event he is re-elected in the United States, that he would not defend NATO members who had not met their financial obligations, and going further would "encourage" Russia to attack them.

The former US president has regularly criticised allies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for underfunding the group. European Council President Charles Michel earlier yesterday also denounced his comments as "reckless".

"The Transatlantic Alliance has underpinned the security and the prosperity of Americans, Canadians and Europeans for 75 years," said Michel on X, formerly Twitter.

"Reckless statements on #NATO's security and (Article) 5 solidarity serve only Putin's interest" and "they do not bring more security or peace to the world", he added.

"On the contrary, they re-emphasise the need for the #EU to urgently further develop its strategic autonomy and invest in its defence," he continued.

Article 5 stipulates that if a NATO country is victim of an armed attack, each member of the Alliance must consider the act as an attack against the whole group and take measures to provide aid to the country under threat.

Trump, likely the candidate to face Democrat President Joe Biden in November's election, made his statement about NATO after having put pressure on Republicans in Congress to block a bill to provide new aid to Ukraine.

The White House reacted sharply to Trump's remarks. "Encouraging invasions of our closest allies by murderous regimes is appalling and unhinged," White House spokesman Andrew Bates said Saturday night.

Stoltenberg yesterday noted it also "puts American and European soldiers at increased risk".

"I expect that regardless of who wins the presidential election the US will remain a strong and committed NATO Ally," he added.

Trump vows deportation operation

AFP — WASHINGTON

White House hopeful Donald Trump on Saturday celebrated the collapse of legislation targeting the migrant crisis on the US-Mexico border, while vowing that, if reelected, he would carry out a massive "deportation operation" on his first day in office.

The death of the bipartisan bill in the US Senate this week highlights the ex-president's iron grip on the Republican Party, as its lawmakers acceded to his desire to deny Biden a win on immigration.

"Let's not forget that this week we also had another massive victory that every conservative should celebrate. We crushed crooked Joe Biden's disastrous open borders bill," Trump declared at a rally in South Carolina.

"The whole group did a great job in Congress. We crushed it." Under pressure from Trump, who wants to exploit Biden's perceived weakness on immigration, Republican lawmakers appeared to decide that they would prefer stopping any border reforms until after November's election.

Trump — whose first presidential campaign featured a centra plank of building a "big, beautiful wall" on the US-Mexico border -- on Saturday declared that deporting migrants would be one of his first tasks.

"On day one I will terminate every open border policy of the Biden administration and we will begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history. We have no choice." The Senate border bill had included aid for Ukraine and Israel, with lifelines for the US allies appearing dead in the water after Republicans rejected it Wednesday.

The upper chamber is now considering a foreign aid package that decouples the aid from the border issue entirely.

IN BRIEF

Honduran ex-president's trial postponed in New York

AFP —NEW York: The trial of former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez, which was to begin today in New York, has been postponed until February 20, one of his lawyers said on Saturday.

Hernandez was extradited to the United States on drug charges in 2022, accused of facilitating the smuggling of 500 tons of cocaine in exchange for millions of dollars in bribes.

His trial has been delayed because US prosecutors "confirmed they were unable to complete the redaction of classified information" that they were supposed to have already handed over to the defence, lawyer Raymond Colon told *AFP*.

Hernandez, 55, has maintained that he is innocent. As president, Hernandez worked closely with the administration of former US president Donald Trump.

Hungary president resigns over a pardon to a man

AP —BUDAPEST: Hungary's conservative president resigned on Saturday amid public outcry over a pardon she granted to a man convicted as an accomplice in a child abuse case, a decision that unleashed an unprecedented political scandal for the long-serving nationalist government.

Katalin Novák, 46, announced in a televised message that she would step down from the presidency, an office she has held since 2022. Her decision came after more than a week of public outrage after it was revealed that she issued a presidential pardon in April 2023 to a man convicted of hiding a string of child abuses in a state-run children's home.

Greece rescues 84 migrants in two separate incidents

AP—ATHENS: GREEK authorities found 84 migrants arriving by sea and arrested four individuals, accusing them of being the traffickers that transported them, the coast guard said yesterday.

Both incidents occurred early Saturday, it said. In the first incident, the coast guard was alerted to a boat drifting, due to mechanical failure, at sea, 46 nautical miles (85km) south of the island of Crete.

A Greek Navy frigate found the boat and rescued a total of 72 individuals, 58 of them men and 14 minors, transporting them to Crete.

After questioning the new arrivals, the coast guard arrested two of them, aged 30 and 18, for being the traffickers that piloted the boat.

In the second case, the patrol boat intercepted a speedboat with two men who were headed to the Turkish coast. The two foreigners, who were not carrying travel documents, declared they were aged 34 and 24 years old, respectively.

A little later, the police patrol found 14 migrants, including five men, four women and five minors, authorities said.

Finland votes in run-off for new president

AFP — HELSINKI

Finns cast their ballots yesterday in presidential elections with two seasoned politicians facing off for the role that has gained importance in light of the country's NATO membership and rising tensions with neighbouring Russia.

Some 4.3 million voters are choosing between former conservative prime minister Alexander Stubb and ex-foreign minister Pekka Haavisto, a Green Party MP running as an independent.

In Helsinki, Erja Vanhanen, 59, was among the first to vote when polling stations opened at 0700 GMT.

She told *AFP* her choice was "a leader with values who is on the side of minorities and who takes a stand on these issues when necessary".

The changing geopolitical landscape in Europe will be the main concern for the new head of state, who — while having limited powers compared to the prime minister — leads the country's foreign policy together with the government and acts as supreme commander of Finland's armed forces.

Relations between Moscow and Helsinki deteriorated following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, prompting Finland to drop decades of military non-alignment and join NATO in April 2023.

Russia, with whom Finland shares a 1,340km border, swiftly warned of "countermeasures".

"The fact that we've just joined NATO has a lot of significance because the building of the NATO institution in Finland and what it will look like will largely be a task for the new president," Theodora Helimaki, doctoral researcher in political science at the University of Helsinki, said.

"The top two were perhaps the most experienced in terms of foreign policy," she added regarding the first round. Stubb came out ahead in the first round on January 28 with 27.2 percent of votes, while Haavisto came in a close second with 25.8 percent of the vote — qualifying them for the second round.

An opinion poll by public broadcaster Yle published on Thursday saw Stubb getting 54 percent of the vote, compared to 46 percent for Haavisto.

In the post-Cold War period, Helsinki maintained good relationships with Moscow. Outgoing president Sauli Niinisto, first elected in 2012, once prided himself on his close ties with Russian leader Vladimir Putin before becoming one of his most trenchant critics.

Niinisto contacted him directly to announce the decision to join NATO.

Since then, there has been radio silence and neither candidate is expecting a phone call from the Kremlin if they win the election.

In August 2023, Finland observed an influx of migrants entering through its eastern border without visas.

Helsinki claimed Moscow was pushing the migrants to destabilise it, and in response closed their border in November — a move supported by both candidates. Stubb and Haavisto, who have both served as foreign minister, share similar visions for the country's position towards Russia, calling for additional sanctions against Moscow and support for Ukraine.

"The European Union can do much more to help Ukraine," Haavisto said during a televised debate on Thursday evening.

"Ukraine's road is our road, and at the moment they are fighting for the freedom of Europeans. They deserve all the support that we can give to them," Stubb agreed.



Finnish President Sauli Niinisto (right) and his wife Jenni Haukio arrive with their son Aaro to cast their vote in Espoo, Finland, yesterday. (AFP)

France to revoke birthright citizenship in Mayotte to tackle migration

AFP — MAMOUDZOU/PARIS

French authorities yesterday announced a controversial plan to amend the Constitution to revoke birthright citizenship on the French Indian Ocean island of Mayotte, which has been struggling with social unrest and a crippling migration crisis.

The proposal risks to further ramp up tensions in France following the adoption of a tough new law on immigration, with the left denouncing the fresh plan as another attack on France's centuries-old values.

The reform was announced by Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who arrived on the island, the country's poorest department, yesterday following three weeks of protests there. In Mayotte's capital Mamoudzou, several hundred protesters greeted Darmanin and his entourage with boos and shouts of "Mayotte is angry".

Mayotte is composed of two islands that voted to stay part of France in 1973, while the others in the surrounding Muslim-majority archipelago sought independence, becoming the Comoros Islands.

Thousands of Comorans fleeing the poverty and corruption of their homeland make the trip across to Mayotte in search of higher living standards every year.

The influx has caused major tensions, with many locals on Mayotte complaining about crime and poverty. For the past three weeks activists have been staging strikes and erecting roadblocks to protest against the lack of security and the migration crisis. A months-long water crisis has also exacerbated tensions. "We are going to take a radical decision," Darmanin said on the island.

"It will no longer be possible to become French if you are not the child of a French parent," he said.

He said the measure would reduce "the attractiveness" of the archipelago for prospective migrants. "It is an extremely strong, clear, radical measure, which obviously will be limited to the Mayotte archipelago," said Darmanin.

Mayotte, which lies northwest of Madagascar, became a full-fledged French department in 2011.

According to France's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), the 375sqm island is home to around 310,000 people, but officials say this figure is seriously underestimated.

Nearly half of island residents do not have French nationality.

According to INSEE, more than 40 percent of the islanders survive on less than €160 euros per month.

Residence permits issued in Mayotte are only valid on the island and cannot be used to travel to mainland France.

The Peninsula Local focus, Global vision

BUSINESS

MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024 | QSE: 10,044.29 +83.59 (0.84%) | FTSE 100: 7,574.97 -33.27 (0.44%) | DOW: 38,651.06 -75.27 (0.19%) | BRENT: $82.06 (+0.41)



QIB announces new millionaire of Misk Account Draw

QIB, announced new Misk Millionaire of the 7th edition of the Misk Account Draw, underscoring its commitment to reward its customers. ➔P15

Dukhan Bank announces February Thara'a draw winners

Dukhan Bank announced names of the most recent round of draw winners for Thara'a, its Shariah compliant savings account. ➔P15









QNB Ordinary General Assembly approves 65% cash dividend for shareholders



Minister of Finance and Chairman of QNB Group H E Ali Ahmed Al Kuwari (fourth right) along with Board of Directors during the Ordinary General Assembly held at Fairmont Doha, yesterday.

JOEL JOHNSON
THE PENINSULA

QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the Middle East and Africa region, held its Ordinary General Assembly Meeting, yesterday, which approved the Group's financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2023 and a recommendation by the Board of Directors to distribute a cash dividend of 65 percent of the nominal share value (QR0.65 per share).

At the meeting, the Minister of Finance and Chairman of QNB Group's Board of Directors H E Ali Ahmed Al Kuwari, presented a report on the Bank's activities and financial strength for the year ended December 31, 2023 and plans for 2024.

H E Al Kuwari stated: "In 2023, we continued to successfully execute upon our vision and strategy. The underlying financial performance of the Bank remained strong, and we additionally progressed on our risk, control, and regulatory agendas. Our performance and growth was driven by strong governance, strategy, leadership, and disciplined execution."

"QNB's vision is to be the number one bank in MEA while aiming to be a leading MEASEA bank, which is aligned with our purpose to promote prosperity and sustainable growth across the markets we serve. Our strategy requires us to continuously uplift our capabilities to cater for an ever-changing world," the Chairman added.

The Group also reached a net profit of QR15.5bn ($4.3bn) for the year ended December 2023, witnessing a significant surge of 8 percent compared to its previous year. On the other hand, the Total Assets amounted to QR1,231bn ($338bn), which saw an increase of 4 percent last year compared to 2022.

Last month, Moody's upgraded QNB's long-term credit rating to Aa2 from Aa3 based on the robust financial position of the Group. At present, QNB Group is ranked as the most valuable bank brand in the Middle East and Africa region.

This year, the Group marked its 60th Anniversary, which was established as one of the first and oldest financial institutes in the country, embarking on a milestone that drives its success as the most profitable and remarkable institute. With over 29,000 employees working for QNB Group, it serves more than 20 million clients in pivotal financial and business capitals across the globe.

Through its subsidiaries and associate companies, QNB Group's presence extends to more than 28 countries across three continents providing a comprehensive range of advanced products and services. The total number of employees is 30,000 operating through 900 locations, with an ATM network of more than 4,800 machines.

Qatar Credit Bureau announces new update of its application

QNA — DOHA

مركز قطر للمعلومات الإئتمانية
Qatar Credit Bureau

The technology allows users to access their accounts using fingerprints or facial recognition, which enhances security and reduces the risks of fraud and impersonation.

Qatar Credit Bureau announced yesterday the launch of a new update of its application to enhance user experience and achieve the highest security standards.

The Bureau pointed out that the update includes important additions that focuses on biometric entry and expanding electronic payment options, noting that this update includes fingerprint login to the National Authentication System.

The technology allows users to access their accounts using fingerprints or facial recognition, which enhances security and reduces the risks of fraud and impersonation.

Additionally, the update now supports Apple Pay and Google Pay digital wallets, allowing customers to make payments quickly and securely via their mobile devices. This feature meets the growing need for convenient and secure online payment methods.

Executive Vice President of the Qatar Credit Bureau Mohammed Arhama Al Kuwari said that the launch of the new update to the Bureau's smart phone applications reinforces the financial sector strategy announced by the Central Bank towards digital transformation and promoting technological innovation in the financial sector, which is consistent with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

He said that the Bureau provides all its services through the electronic services portal and smart phone applications 24/7.

This has greatly contributed to reducing reliance on providing services in person at the customer service center, as the percentage of electronic services used during 2023 reached approximately 80 percent of the total credit reports submitted to the public, compared to 20 percent of the credit reports submitted through the customer service center.

Barwa Real Estate reports QR1,229m net profit in 2023

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

BARWA بـــــروة

Barwa Real Estate discloses its annual financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2023. The results showed a net profit of QR1,229m attributable to the shareholders of the parent, compared to a net profit of QR1,138m in the previous year.

The Earnings per Share (EPS) amounted to QR0.316 for the year ended December 31, 2023 compared to an EPS of QR0.292 in the previous year.

The board of directors proposed the distribution of a cash dividend of 18 percent of the shares' par value at the rate of QR0.18 per share. The proposed cash dividend is subject to the approval of the shareholders' general assembly.



'Australian businessmen eager to explore investment opportunities in Qatar'

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

■ The meeting focused on enhancing cooperation between both sides for the advantage of the private sector, and the investment climate and opportunities in both countries.

Qatar Chamber First Vice-Chairman, Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Twar Al Kuwari met with Lyall Gorman, Deputy President of the Australian Chamber of commerce and industry (ACCI), at the Chamber's venue.

The meeting focused on enhancing cooperation between both sides for the advantage of the private sector, and the investment climate and opportunities in both countries.

It also discussed the possibility to sign a memorandum of understanding between both chambers to cement cooperation, exchange information and visits and coordinate bilateral meetings.

In his remarks, Mohamed bin Twar said that the Qatari private sector is interested in learning about investment opportunities available in Australia and forging partnerships there, noting that it is timely for expanding mutual investments between the private sector in both countries and developing their trade volume.

He highlighted that Australian investor are welcomed to invest in Qatar which owns an attractive investment environment, a world-class infrastructure and leading legislation.

He underscored the Chamber's preparedness to assist Australian investors willing to enter the Qatari market.

For his part, Lyall Gorman said that the visit aimed to coordinate with the Qatar Chamber to enhance cooperation between the two chambers, thereby serving the business communities in both countries and increasing the volume of trade between Qatar and Australia. ➔P15

China's outbound investment rises steadily in 2023

XINHUA — BEIJING

China's outbound investment rose steadily last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

China's non-financial outbound direct investment (ODI) increased 16.7 percent year on year to 916.99bn yuan in 2023. In US dollar terms, ODI totaled 130.13bn dollars in this period, up 11.4 percent from a year earlier.

Non-financial ODI in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative came in at 224.09bn yuan last year, an increase of 28.4 percent year on year.

The turnover of contracted projects overseas grew 8.8 percent year on year to 1.13 trillion yuan in 2023, the ministry said.

MPHC reports net profit of QR1.1bn for 2023

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

شركة مسيعيد للبتروكيماويات القابضة
Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding Company

● The Board of Directors recommends a cash dividend of QR 0.086 per share, equating to a payout ratio of 100% of net earnings for 2023

● EPS amounted to QR 0.086 for the year ended December 31, 2023

● The Group revenue reached QR3.1bn for the year ended 31, December2023

Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding Company ("MPHC" or "the Group"; QE ticker: MPHC), yesterday announced a net profit of QR1.1bn for the year ended 31 December 2023, representing a decline of 39% compared to the year ended 31 December 2022.

This decline in profitability was mainly linked to lowered Group revenue, which declined by 21% and reached QR3.1bn.

Commenting on the financial and operational performance for the year ended 31 December 2023, Ahmad Saif Al Sulaiti, Chairman of the Board of Directors, MHPC, said: "In successfully navigating the challenges posed by our business dynamics, we achieved commendable financial results despite market volatility. Our teams worked tirelessly to safeguard operations, emphasizing our business strengths. On the sustainability front, we are actively reducing our environmental footprint, concurrently building our operations with a strong focus on energy efficiency and conservation pillars.

Also this year, QatarEnergy successfully fulfilled its IPO commitment by distributing the second and last tranche of incentive shares to eligible MPHC shareholders. This landmark achievement saw the transfer of 948 million ordinary shares from QatarEnergy ownership to eligible IPO shareholders, in accordance with the mechanisms set forth in the IPO Prospectus of MPHC. My sincere thanks to QatarEnergy's leadership for their support and guidance in making this possible"

MPHC's operations continue to remain robust and resilient with total production for the current period reaching 1,137 thousand MTs .Production for year ended 31 December 2023flat in comparison to last year. Production remains flat despite the maintenance turnaround carried out at QVC facilities during 1Q-23.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis production volumes for 4Q-23decreased by 4%in comparison to 3Q-23, mainly due to a decline noted in production volumes from Petrochemicals segment.

The decline in Group revenue is primarily attributed to the decrease observed in average blended product prices, which fell by 19% compared to the same period last year. This decline translated into a QR832m decrease in MPHC's net earnings for this year comparison to last year. The subdued commodity demand, driven by macroeconomic headwinds and exacerbated by surplus supply, led to a decrease in commodity prices.

Sales volumes also declined marginally by 2% versus the same period last year, mainly driven by lowered sales volumes reported by the chlor-alkali segment, being partially offset by higher volumes reported by the petrochemicals segment on the back of higher operating days compared to last year. Negative movement in sales volumes translated into a decline of QR24m in MPHC's net earnings for the period ended 31 December 2023 net earnings versus last year.

EBITDA for the current period amounted to QR1,526m with a decline of 26% versus the same period last year, mainly due to lower revenue. EBITDA margins for the year ended 31 December 2023 reached 52% versus 55% achieved during the same period last year. ➔P15

QC organises training programme for customs brokers

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Qatar Chamber (QC) has recently launched the 31th session of the training programme for customs brokers and representatives.

The programme, which is being held in cooperation with the General Authority of Customs, aims to qualify workers in the field of customs clearance and inform them on the regulations, laws, and procedures relating to the customs clearance.

It also seeks to improve the customs clearance profession and develop the performance of workers in this sector, I addition to provide distinguished customs services to the public and reduce the congestion on customs ports.



Customs brokers and representatives taking part at the training programme organised by QC.

The programme, which is being held in cooperation with the General Authority of Customs, aims to qualify workers in customs clearance and inform them on regulations and laws

A number of customs experts lecture in the course, which touched numerous topics, including preferential international agreements, customs procedures, customs tariffs in accordance with the harmonized system, provisions and rules of origin, customs law, and the Al-Nadeeb Programme.

It is noteworthy that the programme, which was launched in 2015, qualified a large number of customs brokers, who received a certified certificate from the Chamber after at the end of the program, qualifying them for the final test that is held at the venue of the General Authority of Customs.

The Qatar Chamber regularly holds the Customs Programme, which is of importance to the Qatari business community, as it qualifies customs brokers and prepares them for the labour market, thereby facilitating and accelerating procedures for clearing shipments from ports.

Italian luxury group Tod's to delist from Milan stock exchange

AFP — MILAN

Italy's luxury shoemaker Tod's will delist from the Milan stock exchange and go private under a deal with private equity fund L Catterton, backed by LVMH and owner Bernard Arnault.

Under the terms of deal agreed with the Della Valle family, Tod's majority shareholder, L Catterton will launch a tender offer to acquire 36 percent of the company's share capital at €43 per share, for a total of €512.2m. Under the deal, the Della Valle family will hold 54 percent of shares, L Catterton will control 36 percent and LVMH will retain its current 10 percent stake, according to a press release issued by Tod's. "Exiting the stock market... seems to us to be the most appropriate choice from a strategic point of view", said Tod's CEO Diego Della Valle.

A first attempt to delist Tod's failed in October 2022, when a bid launched by the Della Valle family failed to reach the necessary 90 percent threshold. Owned by the family since its founding in 1978, the group is known for its leather loafers, saw its sales rise by 11.9 percent to €1.12bn in 2023. In addition to Tod's, the group owns the Hogan and Roger Vivier brands.

UNVEILING AUTOMOTIVE EXCELLENCE

Blue Lake Motors, ZEEKR to showcase sustainable motoring in Qatar

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

Blue Lake Motors, an Al Mana Holding subsidiary, collaborated with the premium electric automobile brand ZEEKR to host an exclusive preview event at The St. Regis Marsa Arabia. VIPs and media were invited to delve into the avant-garde design philosophy of ZEEKR, showcasing two unique electric vehicle (EV) models, the ZEEKR 001 and ZEEKR X, providing an insightful exploration of cutting-edge automotive innovation. The half-day event, encompassing discussions, demonstrations, and test drives, provided participants with the opportunity to explore the future of Qatar's automotive scene.

The ZEEKR brand's introduction in Qatar aligns seamlessly with the nation's QNV 2030 initiative, aiming to propel Qatar towards a forward-looking and sustainable society. According to Fitch Solutions, the passenger EV market in Qatar is poised for robust growth from 2023 to 2032, following the government's announcement of electrification targets. In April 2023, Qatar's Ministry of Transport unveiled a goal to transition 35% of its fleet and all public transport buses to electric by 2030, as part of the 'Qatar National Vision 2030.'



Blue Lake Motors and ZEEKR officials pose for a photo.

This commitment is projected to drive a 302.8% expansion in passenger EV sales in 2023, with an anticipated average annual growth of around 48% from 2024 to 2032, reaching an annual sales volume peak of just over 15,000 units. By 2032, the passenger EV penetration rate is expected to reach 20.4%.

Amid the global shift towards electric mobility, Blue Lake Motors assumes a leading role by presenting ZEEKR models that cater to a wide spectrum of customer preferences and needs. ZEEKR's intelligent electric vehicles are intricately crafted to provide unmatched driving experiences while simultaneously reducing their environmental impact by minimizing carbon emissions.

Speaking about the event, Hisham Saleh Al Mana, Chairman and Managing Director of Al Mana Holding, said: "This signifies a monumental achievement for our group of companies. The launch of the ZEEKR EV brand is not just about providing premium electric vehicles to our customers; it's also a significant contribution to Qatar's pursuit of sustainable development goals. The vehicles from ZEEKR epitomize our dedication to pushing the boundaries of innovation, delivering luxury, and taking on environmental responsibility. This is more than a milestone; it's a bold step towards a greener and more advanced automotive landscape."

In Qatar, motor enthusiasts will have access to two distinctive ZEEKR models designed at Geely Design Centre at Gothenburg, Sweden: the ZEEKR 001 and the ZEEKR X.

ZEEKR X is a sport utility vehicle tailored for urban living and exploration. With its dimensions at 4,432mm in length, 1,566mm in height, and a 2,750mm wheelbase, it navigates city streets with finesse while commanding attention with its elegant design. The ZEEKR X boasts hidden sealing strips, frameless doors, and mirrors, achieving a seamless transition between sheet metal and glass. It adheres to timeless proportions based on the 'golden ratio,' as seen in art and architecture, making it an ideal companion for families and individuals seeking new adventures.

The ZEEKR X comes equipped with a 50W wireless charging pad, soft-reading lights, and elegant rose gold finishes, ensuring both comfort and luxury are readily accessible. With a top speed of 200 km/h and the ability to accelerate from 0 to 60 in just 3.8 seconds, the ZEEKR X delivers exhilarating performance. Moreover, it boasts top safety ratings for collision protection and cutting-edge features such as lane centering and automatic lane change for collision prevention. Entertainment and climate controls are seamlessly managed through a high-definition 14.6-inch screen.

Both models exemplify ZEEKR's steadfast commitment to pioneering the potential of electric vehicles (EVs). The brand prioritizes a fusion of design, performance, comfort, luxury, and safety. ZEEKR meticulously addresses local market demands through extensive road testing, covering over 50,000 kilometers to enhance battery and heat performance in the GCC region. This approach has garnered significant market acceptance, reflected in a remarkable 65% surge in unit sales during 2023 compared to the preceding year.

Starting in mid-February, car enthusiasts are invited to explore, and test drive the ZEEKR 001 and ZEEKR X at the Blue Lake Motors showroom located in Place Vendôme.

شركة بروة العقارية ش.م.ق

BARWA

INVITATION

TO ATTEND THE ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

Dear Esteemed Shareholders,

The Board of Directors of Barwa Real Estate Company (Q.P.S.C.) is pleased to invite you to attend the Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of the Company to be held on Tuesday 5th March 2024 at 5:30 pm, at Millennium Plaza Doha, Barwa Al Sadd. In the event the quorum is incomplete, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 12h March 2024 at 09:30 pm at the same venue, to discuss the below agenda.

Abdullah Hamad Al-Attiyah
Chairman – Barwa Real Estate

The Agenda of the Ordinary General Assembly:

1. To review and approve the Board of Directors' Report on the activities of the company and its financial position for the financial year ending 31/12/2023 as well as to discuss and approve the company's future plans for the year 2024.
2. To review and approve the auditors' report on the financial statements of the Company for the year ending 31/12/2023.
3. To review and approve Sharia'a Supervisory Board report for the year ending 31/12/2023 and to appoint new Sharia'a Supervisory Board for the year 2024.
4. To discuss and approve the company's balance sheet and profit/loss statement for the year ending 31/12/2023.
5. Consider the Board of Directors' proposal regarding the distribution of dividends for the fiscal year ending on 31/12/2023.
6. To absolve the Board of Directors' members of any liability for the financial year ending 31/12/2023, and approve their remuneration for the year then ended.
7. To discuss and approve the company's Governance Report for the year ending 31/12/2023.
8. To review and approve the auditors' report on the Company's compliance with the regulations of Qatar Financial Markets Authority related to corporate governance for the year ending 31/12/2023.
9. To review and approve the auditors' report on the Company's compliance with the regulations of Qatar Financial Markets Authority related to the internal controls of preparing the financial statements for the year ending 31/12/2023.
10. To appoint the Auditors for the 2024 financial year, and agree on their fees.

Notes

- Honorable shareholders are kindly requested to consider attending the mentioned venue, at least an hour before the specified time in order to facilitate the completion of the registration procedures, along with their identification cards or proxies. If a shareholder can't attend in person, please nominate another shareholder as a proxy (other than the members of the Board of Directors). The number of shares held by the proxy in this case shall not exceed 5 % of the total number of shares. In case the shareholder is a legal entity (a company, corporation, etc.), the proxy shall present a written authorization from the company/organization duly signed to attend the meeting.
- The shareholders may obtain a copy of a statement that includes all wages, fees, commissions, cash loans, overdrafts and bank guarantees, as well as in-kind and cash benefits and remunerations obtained by the Chairman and other Board members, from the Board of Directors' Secretary, 18th floor of Barwa HQ in Suhaim Bin Hamad Street - AlSadd area, one week before the General Assembly Meeting .

. For more information, call +974 44088785

نبني المستقبل
Building The Future



Qatar Chamber First Vice-Chairman, Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Twar Al Kuwari met with Lyall Gorman, Deputy President of the Australian Chamber of commerce and industry, during the meeting.

'Australian businessmen eager to explore investment opportunities in Qatar'

FROM PAGE 13

He highlighted the success of joint investments between the two countries and identified several areas where cooperation could be expanded, such as food security, contracting, education, and agricultural technology.

Gorman also emphasized that Australian businessmen are eager to explore investment opportunities in Qatar.

He stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation between the Qatar Chamber and the Australian Arab Chamber, suggesting the organization of seminars and meetings for businessmen from both countries to promote investment opportunities and explore potential joint ventures.

MPHC reports net profit of QR1.1bn for 2023

FROM PAGE 13

Compared to 3Q-23, MPHC revenue increased by 8% and net profit declined by 11%. Key contributor towards the upward trend in revenue was mainly the higher selling prices realized during 4Q-23 versus 3Q-23. Incline in selling prices was mainly linked to upward trajectories noted in commodity prices hinting at the gradual recovery phase gaining momentum. Sales volumes also increased by 3% compared to 3Q-23 predominantly linked to higher volumes reported by the chlor-alkali segment.

After reviewing Group's current year financial performance, with present and potential liquidity position, and considering the current and future macroeconomic conditions, business outlook, CAPEX, investing and financing requirements of the Group, the Board of Directors proposed a total annual dividend distribution of ~ QR1.1bn for the year ended 31 December 2023, subject to the approval of General Assembly, representing a payout ratio of 100% of current year's net earnings. A dividend of QR0.086 per share represent a dividend yield of ~ 5% on the closing share price as of 31 December 2023.

MPHC will host an IR earnings call with investors to discuss its results, business outlook and other matters on Thursday, 15 February 2024 at 1:30p.m. Doha Time. The IR presentation that accompanies the conference call will be posted on the 'financial information' page within the Investor Relations section at MPHC's website.

QIB announces new millionaire of Misk Account Draw

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

The Misk Account Draw, known for its substantial prize pool and remarkable rewards, celebrates the financial success of its customers by awarding four individuals with QR1m each year.



Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB), a leading Islamic bank in Qatar, announced the new Misk Millionaire of the 7th edition of the Misk Account Draw, which commenced in November, underscoring its commitment to encourage saving habits and reward its customers.

Shaikha Saad Al Kaabi was announced as the first millionaire of this Misk edition. The draw took place in the presence of official representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, along with QIB officials.

The Misk Account Draw, known for its substantial prize pool and remarkable rewards, celebrates the financial success of its customers by awarding four individuals with QR1m each year. Additionally, 15 customers are selected weekly, each receiving QR10,000, while four customers receive a monthly prize of QR50,000. With a total of 832 winners sharing a substantial prize pool of QR14,2m, the Misk Account Draw remains the largest cash prize ever awarded in Qatar. QIB has awarded 188 of weekly and monthly winners since the start of the 7th edition in November 2023.

This announcement marks the continuation of QIB's commitment to rewarding its valued customers through the Misk Account Draw. By fostering a culture of savings and financial responsibility, QIB enables individuals to achieve their financial goals while offering opportunities for substantial cash rewards.

Shaikha Saad Al-Kaabi, the new millionaire of this year's edition said: "I am deeply thankful to QIB for providing me with the chance to become a millionaire. As a long-standing QIB customer, I have found the Misk savings account to be exceptionally unique, offering great features and benefits. This account not only helps me in reaching my dreams and aspirations but also serves as an excellent means to save money."

Anand, QIB's General Manager – Personal Banking Group, said, "We are pleased to announce the new Misk Millionaire. At QIB, we are dedicated to supporting and rewarding the financial achievements of our customers, creating meaningful opportunities for our customers to thrive financially. The Misk Account Draw has consistently awarded cash prizes, encouraging our customers to save responsibly with QIB. Last year, Misk has witnessed impressive growth and received positive feedback from our customers. We are committed to keep offering great rewards and opportunities to our valued customers."

Existing and new QIB customers can open a Misk Account easily through the QIB Mobile App. Customers will receive a free debit card, become eligible to request a free, for the first-year, credit card against their Misk Account balance, receive profits on their savings, and have the chance to frequently win cash prizes.

NOTICE

MR. BHAL BAHADUR GURUNG
NEPAL NATIONAL PASSPORT NO. 07784558
QATAR ID NO. 26552400985



The said person is leaving for good on 20/02/2024, Anybody having any claim should contact us within two (2) days from the date of this notice. We shall not be held responsible to anyone for any dealings with the abovementioned person, from the date of this notice.

MOBILE: 55508534

Dukhan Bank announces February Thara'a draw winners

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Dukhan Bank continues its customer-centric approach with the unveiling of a new campaign for its Thara'a savings account, reinforcing its commitment to rewarding clients.



Dukhan Bank announced the names of the most recent round of draw winners for Thara'a, its Shariah compliant savings account, at the Bank's headquarters.

The draw was conducted under the supervision of a representative of the qualitative license and market control department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

As the draw results showed, a cash prize worth QR5,000 was awarded to Bibibakhiyar Mahoudinowdaz, Ibrahim Al-Abdulla, Nabil Allahham, Sameer Khan, Najat Al-Muslemani, Amroo Haikal, Shaikh Munawaruddin, Aldana Al-Saad, Naseer Cheruvote, Salem Al-Qitairi, Abdulla Al-Marri, Latifeh Taha, Abdulla Al-Khulaifi, Rabie Khaldi, Maryam Alkhayareen, Mohamed Allabban, Fildy Iswara, Khalid Alobaidli, Adeeba Al-Sulaiti, Ali Alkhulaifi, Maryam Al-Hetmi, Abdulaziz Abdulmageed, Alina Nefedova, Hatem Hajri, Sanchita Talwar, Rashid Al-Kuwari, Eleen Elbatneagy, Rene Pena, Sharifa Al-Mulla,Yousif Al-Abdulla.

Dukhan Bank continues its customer-centric approach with the unveiling of a new campaign for its Thara'a savings account, reinforcing its commitment to rewarding clients. Departing from the previous annual grand prize structure of 1m for a solitary winner, the enhanced campaign now boasts a collective grand prize of QR3m, distributed among three fortunate individuals. Additionally, the initiative introduces 30 monthly winners, each contending for a 5,000 Qatari Riyals prize, resulting in a noteworthy increase in the total prizes awarded to customers – a grand total of 273, with a cumulative value of QR4,350,000m.

Coupled with cash prizes and a reward scheme, Thara'a is a product full of value-added benefits and services. Thara'a offers account holders access to Dukhan Bank's innovative banking channels.

Customers may learn about the many benefits of Thara'a savings account by visiting Dukhan Bank's website dukhanbank.com, or by calling the Contact Centre on 800 8555 or ask 'Rashid', our virtual assistant, on the website, mobile app or via WhatsApp on 44100888.

PENOMAG

CLASSIFIEDS

Reyada
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reyadamedicalcentre.com

Preventive Health Checkup Package
فحص صحي وقائي
QR 155

Package Includes / يشمل الفحص على

- CBC – صورة دم
- ESR – سرعة ترسيب
- Serum Ferritin – مخزون الفيريتين
- Diabetic Screening (HbA1c, Blood Sugar) – فحص السكر
- Lipid Profile (Total Cholesterol, Triglycerides, HDL Cholesterol, LDL Cholesterol, VLDL Cholesterol, LDL/HDL Ratio, TC/HDL Ratio) – فحص الدهون
- Renal Function Test (Urea, Creatinine, Uric Acid, Sodium, Potassium, Chloride, Blood Urea Nitrogen) – وظائف الكلي
- Thyroid Profile (Free T3, Free T4, TSH) – فحص شامل هرمونات الغدة الدرقية
- Liver Function Test (Bilirubin – Total, Bilirubin–Direct, Bilirubin – Indirect, SGOT (AST), SGPT (ALT), Alkaline Phosphatase, Gamma-Glutamyl Transferase, Serum Total Protein, Albumin, Globulin, A G Ratio) – وظائف الكبد
- Eye Screening (Refraction (Vision Test)) – كشف نظر العين
- ECG – تخطيط قلب
- GP Doctor Consultation – إستشارة طبيب عام

Executive Health Checkup Package
حصرياً عروض فحص الصحة
QR 99

Package Includes / يشمل الفحص على

- CBC – صورة دم
- ESR – سرعة ترسيب
- Diabetic Screening (Blood Sugar) – فحص السكر
- Lipid Profile (Total Cholesterol, Triglycerides, HDL Cholesterol, LDL Cholesterol, VLDL Cholesterol, LDL/HDL Ratio, TC/HDL Ratio) – فحص الدهون
- Renal Function Test (Urea, Creatinine, Uric Acid, Sodium, Potassium, Chloride, Blood Urea Nitrogen) – وظائف الكلي
- Liver Function Test (Bilirubin – Total, Bilirubin–Direct, Bilirubin – Indirect, SGOT (AST), SGPT (ALT), Alkaline Phosphatase, Gamma-Glutamyl Transferase, Serum Total Protein, Albumin, Globulin, A G Ratio) – وظائف الكبد
- Serum Calcium – الكالسيوم في الدم
- Urine Analysis – تحليل البول
- GP Doctor Consultation – إستشارة طبيب عام

*Valid till February 29th, 2024 متوفر لغاية ٢٩ فبراير ٢٠٢٤
*Fasting of 8-10 hrs الصيام من ٨ الى ١٠ ساعات
*This package excludes health insurance coverage هذه العرض لايشمل تغطية التأمين الصحي

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ADL appoints two new partners

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Arthur D Little (ADL) announced the appointment of two new partners in its Dubai office, expanding and strengthening the company's presence and service offering in the Middle East.

Nitin Arora has joined the company as a Partner in its Operations Management practice. With 20 years of experience in both consulting firms and technology players, Nitin specializes in the areas of Digital Operations and Supply Chain transformations across multiple industries including Technology, Transportation and Telecommunications/ICT.

Prior to joining ADL, Nitin was a Senior Director at Strategy& in India and subsequently a Senior Executive Advisor with Strategy& Middle East. He had multuple stints in Technology firms in his career, specifically with a London-based cloud services start-up Canopy, and with Google in product management and development.

Ali Alessandro Ayach has joined the company as a Partner, where his main focus will be the Healthcare and Life



Nitin Arora



Ali Alessandro Ayach

Sciences practice. Ali has 18 years of consulting experience across Europe and the Middle East where he has specialized in both corporate and government sectors.

Prior to joining ADL, Ali was a Senior Director at Alvarez & Marsal in the Middle East, where he supported the establishment of the company's regional Healthcare and Life Sciences practice in 2021.

Before that, he was a Managing Director at GE Healthcare Partners (2015-2021), and supported the consulting business and digital solutions. Ali has also held senior roles at Philips Healthcare Transformation Services and Accenture, as well as working as an Advisor to the Government of Dubai.

Ali holds an MBA in Enterprise Engineering from the University of Rome II, and a Master's in Biomedical Engineering and a Bachelor in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Rome La Sapienza. He also has Ph.D in Industrial and Managerial Engineering from the University of Rome and exchange program from Harvard University

Thomas Kuruvilla, Managing Partner at ADL, comments, "We're exceptionally pleased to welcome Nitin to ADL.

Having already shown himself to be a natural leader with strong adaptation skills and an ability to achieve consensus in often challenging situations, Nitin's wide-ranging experience in digital and IT projects will significantly boost our sector expertise in the Middle East."

Microsoft re-designs AI assistant 'Copilot'

QNA – WASHINGTON

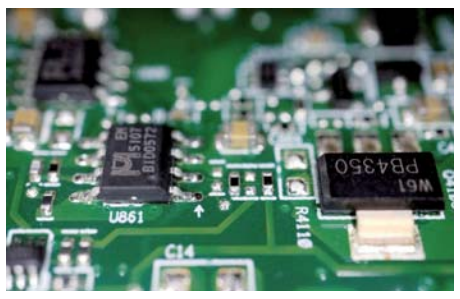
Microsoft announced the redesign of its artificial intelligence assistant, Copilot, on the occasion of the one-year anniversary of its launch.

Corporate Vice President & Consumer Chief Marketing Officer Yusuf Mehdi said that Copilot Assistant has provided users with more than 5 billion conversations and generated more than 5 billion images so far, adding that "Copilot experience on the web, Android and iOS now features an improved AI model, Deucalion, along with a more streamlined look and feel - with a cleaner style for answers and a carousel of suggested prompts to feed Copilot".

Microsoft has developed new editing capabilities in the "Designer" tool, which relies on generative artificial intelligence models such as DALL-E 3 to convert text commands into images.

Japan earmarks $300m to fire up chip research at home

TOKYO – THE WASHINGTON POST / BLOOMBERG



Japan will spend as much as ¥45bn ($300m) to back a research group developing advanced chip technology, part of a national push to catch up in semiconductor manufacturing.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said it approved outsourcing research on cutting-edge fabrication tech to Leading-edge Semiconductor Technology Center. The year-old organization was set up to assemble Japan's researchers in areas such as nanotechnology, materials and artificial intelligence and support chip manufacturing at state-backed Rapidus Corp.

"We outsource research and development that the government deems is necessary but is too risky for the private sector to carry out," Hidemichi Shimizu, director of METI's strategy office for the software and information services industry, said at a news briefing on Friday. The contract is for up to five years and would span chip technology for 2 nanometers and beyond, as well as AI-enabling chip design, he said.

LSTC aims to develop 1.4nm chip manufacturing knowhow by 2028 that it plans to share with Rapidus.

Rapidus is spending billions of dollars in subsidies on a longshot bid to produce advanced 2nm chips in Chitose in Japan's northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido and compete with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. and Samsung Electronics Co.

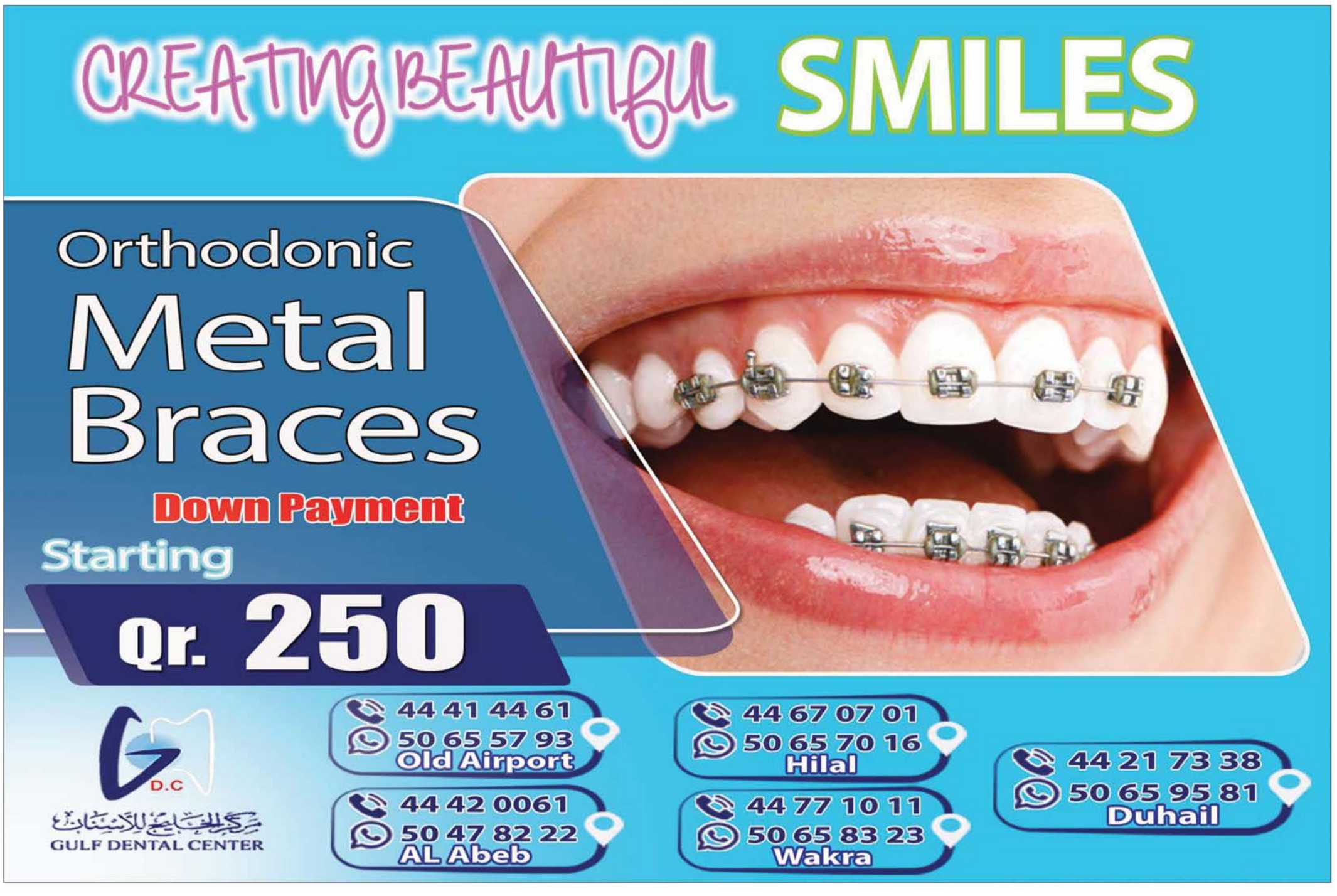
The startup aims to create a cycle that sparks new demand in parallel with developing cutting-edge technology, Rapidus Chairman Tetsuro Higashi said at a press conference.

PENOMAG Classifieds

Monday 12 FEBRUARY 2024 Contact: Tel: 44557 857 or email: adv@pen.com.qa







The Peninsula Local focus, Global vision
SPORT
MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024 | PREMIER LEAGUE: WEST HAM UNITED 0-6 ARSENAL, ASTON VILLA 1-2 MANCHESTER UNITED TODAY: CRYSTAL PALACE VS CHELSEA

Sheikh Joaan meets sports officials

Qatar Olympic Committee President H E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani yesterday met Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Executive Board Member of the International Olympic Committee H E Dr. Kirsty Coventry, and the President of the Spanish Olympic Committee Alejandro Blanco Bravo on the sidelines of the World Aquatics Championships - Doha 2024, currently taking place in Doha. The meetings reviewed aspects of sports cooperation and ways to support them in the coming period.







Qatar players celebrate with the trophy on Saturday night.

Qatar bask in glory, World Cup qualifiers next big task

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

Qatar's historic AFC Asian Cup triumph on Saturday night followed the champions' parade as fans celebrated Al Annabi's back-to-back titles across the country, with congratulatory messages pouring in from leaders of different nations yesterday.

Qatar overpowered Jordan 3-1 in the final at the packed Lusail Stadium becoming only the fifth side in history to retain their crown in the continental showpiece.

The champions with their 14th consecutive victory across two editions also broke Iran's record of 13 straight wins in the Asian Cup.

Star forward Akram Afif, who fired a hat-trick of penalties in the title clash, earned the top scorer and player of the tournament accolades after finishing with eight goals. He also became the first player to score goals in two Asian Cup finals having also scored against Japan in 2019.



CEO of the Local Organizing Committee Jassim Abdulaziz Al Jassim addresses the media at the Main Media Centre of the AFC Asian Cup 2023 that ended on Saturday night. Al Jassim yesterday hailed the tournament as best edition of the continental showpiece, crediting teamwork for the huge success as Qatar hosted another blockbuster after the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. LOC Operations Executive Director, Rashid Al Khater, and LOC Marketing and Communication Executive Director, Hassan Rabea Al Kuwari were also present.

"We worked very hard throughout the event to win this title. I want to congratulate the entire country and thank fans for their overwhelming support," said Afif.

Meshaal Barsham picked the best goalkeeper award as Qatar players swept individual trophies after a dream run in title defence, with coach Marquez Lopez hailing players' fighting spirit and efforts.

"I'm extremely happy and I congratulate the Qatari people and the players. We are so happy that we won the match. The tension was high," said Lopez after claimed victory in front of 85,500 spectators.

Qatar midfielder Abdulaziz Hatem said collective efforts made the tough task possible for Al Annabi.

"It's a great achievement to win back-to-back titles in this elite tournament. We are proud to win on home soil. Every member of the squad including coaching and technical staff played part in this achievement," he said.

Currently ranked 58th, Qatar are set to make a big jump in the latest FIFA rankings on Thursday after the title win that also included a semi-final victory over higher-ranked Iran.

Qatar's next big challenge will be qualifying for the FIFA World Cup for the first time having made their debut in the global showpiece as hosts in 2022.

They got off to a fiery start in their Preliminary Joint Qualification - Round 2 for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 defeating Afghanistan 8-1 and India 3-0 in their opening group matches, before the surprise departure of coach Carlos Queiroz in December.

It remains to be seen who will coach the side as Lopez was appointed until the Asian Cup.

"What will happen is I'll go back to Al Wakrah. I haven't talked about the future. I'm not sure what will happen, but we will enjoy the moment for now," Lopez said when asked about his future with the national team.

Qatar will resume their qualifying battle with a match against Kuwait on March 21. They will play them again in the return leg on March 26 while their second match against Afghanistan is set for June 6, before the game against India five days later.

A total of 36 teams divided into nine groups are taking part in the second round. All nine group winners and the respective runners-up will advance to the third round of World Cup qualifying, and at the same time seal their places at the 2027 Asian Cup.

Memorable moments from AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023

AP — DOHA

After four weeks filled with drama and upset, the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 ended with host nation and defending champion Qatar celebrating its second consecutive title.

A hat-trick of penalties for the tournament's star player and leading scorer Akram Afif secured a 3-1 win against Jordan and provided a glorious finale for Qatar on Saturday. Home fans had hoped for such a perfect ending when turning up at the same venue for the opening ceremony a month earlier.

The scenes on Saturday night, with players joyously celebrating on the field with fans joining in, in the stands, would have seemed unlikely after Qatar, as host, exited its own World Cup after three straight defeats in the group stage in 2022.

Just over a year on and that pain was turned to ecstasy, with Afif's eight goals, making him the stand-out player of a tournament that featured stars from Europe's top leagues.

After fans exited Lusail Stadium - which had played host to Lionel Messi and Argentina's crowning glory at the World Cup - a spectacular firework display continued over Doha. Throughout the tournament, there was no shortage of explosive moments on the field, with dramatic late goals a consistent feature.

Saudi Arabia exited at the round of 16 after South Korea's equalizer in the ninth minute of stoppage time saw the game go to extra time and a penalty shootout. Saudi Arabia's Italian coach, Roberto Mancini, sparked controversy when walking away before the shootout was even completed to create one of the most memorable moments of the tournament.

South Korea coach Jurgen Klinsmann would later face scrutiny of his own for looking too happy as his team was beaten in the semifinals by underdog Jordan.

Pre-tournament favorite Japan had turned up with high expectations, but suffered a surprise defeat to Iraq in the group stage and was eliminated by Iran in the quarterfinals. It will have to wait to for a record-extending fifth Asian Cup title.

Instead, Qatar became a multiple winner of the trophy and the fifth nation to successfully defend it.

H H THE AMIR SWORD FESTIVAL

QNB sponsors Golden Sword at prestigious racing gala

THE PENINSULA - DOHA

For the fifth running year, QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, is participating in sponsoring the H H The Amir Sword Festival, which will be held at the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) from February 15-17.

This year, QNB is sponsoring the feature race and finale of the Festival, the H H The Amir Sword race, a Gr1 for Purebred Arabians run over 2400m. Some of the world's best Arabians will battle for the coveted sword in the lucrative race, which boasts a purse of $2.5m, making it the most valuable race for Purebred Arabians in the world.

This sponsorship coincides with the strategic and permanent partnership between QREC and QNB, which aims to contribute to the success of the prestigious Festival as the most important and prestigious horse racing event in Qatar and the region in general.

The continuation of the partnership between the QREC and QNB Group serves to achieve the common goal of the sponsorship agreement and contributes to the success of the mega Festival in terms of both the organisational and the sports aspects. This partnership between QREC and QNB Group is a true embodiment of the form of partnership, which adds to the success of major events of this calibre in Qatar, especially as cooperation has always been there between the two parties for several years. Each time the benefits are greater and the potential to exploit this cooperation gets stronger.

This agreement between QREC and QNB was announced in presence of QREC Chairman Issa bin Mohammed Al Mohannadi and QNB Group CEO Abdullah Mubarak Al Khalifa, along with representatives of both sides and the media.

Commenting on this productive partnership, Al Mohannadi said: "We have a strong and established relationship with QNB. This relationship is much more than just a partnership to contribute to sponsoring the Festival. We are pleased to continue this cooperation and benefiting from the common desire of the two parties to continue to our efforts to further enhance the remarkable standing of the H H The Amir Sword Festival on the world's horse racing scene, especially with international horses running in several races of the Festival. I'd like to thank QNB Group management for their continued support for QREC and the Festival, and for their keenness to sponsor the H H The Amir Sword Race. It is a demonstration of the leading role of QNB in supporting this sport, which is deeply rooted in our heritage and their constant dedicated efforts to be part of the biggest successes achieved every year in the Festival, which has become a unique event in the equestrian sport in general and horse racing in particular."



QREC Chairman Issa bin Mohammed Al Mohannadi (left) and QNB Group CEO Abdullah Mubarak Al Khalifa during the agreement signing ceremony.

QNB Group CEO Al Khalifa hailed the long-term partnership with QREC.

"We are pleased to continue cooperation and enhance our long-standing relation with the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club", he said.

"This relation, in turn, fosters our commitment to sponsoring important events in the field of traditional sports in our Qatari society and the H H The Amir Sword Festival is the most important event on the agenda of local events of a global nature, which contribute to celebrating the standing of horses in our Arab culture and identity," Al Khalifa said.

Hoshino wins Commercial Bank Qatar Masters for first DP World Tour title

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Japan's Rikuya Hoshino fired a 4-under 68 on the final day to win the prestigious Commercial Bank Qatar Masters to claim his maiden World Tour title by a single stroke yesterday.

At the Doha Golf Club, the 27-year-old rolled in a brilliant par putt at the 18th hole and punched the air after holding off playing partner Ugo Coussard, who made birdie at the last to finish alone in second place.

Hoshino, who was in a three-way tie for the lead with Rasmus Hojgaard and Coussaud going into the final day, finished with 14-under overall to celebrate his first title after being runner-up twice in Australia at the start of the 2024 Race to Dubai.

Fast-finishing Scott Jamieson was third on 12 under after a final round of seven-under 65.

A fine approach to inside five feet at the second set up an early birdie and, after a bogey on the fourth, Hoshino made back-to-back gains on the fifth and sixth.

A wayward drive on the seventh led to another dropped shot and Hoshino returned to 12 under with a gain at the long tenth.

Jamieson was putting the finishing touches on a sensational 65 at that stage to set the clubhouse target at 12 under.

That mark held firm until Hoshino drove the 16th and made birdie, before holing a 25-footer at the next to seemingly put the result beyond doubt.

There was still time for Coussaud to add an element of tension at the last, as he made birdie from ten feet to leave his playing partner needing to convert from four feet to avoid a play-off, which he duly managed.

The victory makes Hoshino the first Japanese winner of the event, and only the fourth in DP World Tour history after Isao Aoki, Hideki Matsuyama and Ryo Hisatsune.

The result also moves him comfortably inside the top 100 on the Official World Golf Ranking.



FROM LEFT: Commercial Bank Qatar Masters winner Rikuya Hoshino of Japan, Commercial Bank Board Member Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al Attiyah, Commercial Bank Group CEO Joseph Abraham and Qatar Golf Association President Hassan Al Naimi at the presentation ceremony.

"I'm honoured to win at this wonderful tournament," he said. "I was second at the last two Australian tournaments so I'm so happy to finally win.

"Of course I was nervous but I just tried to keep enjoying it."

Northern Irishman Tom Mckibbin finished fourth with an 11-under after he carded two-under 70 yesterday followed by Spain's Jorge Campillo, who returned with three-under 69 for an aggregate of 278.

Overnight joint leader Hojgaard finished one stroke behind for joint sixth with Frenchman Antoine Rozner, Paul Waring of England as he could score 73 on the final day.

COMMERCIAL BANK QATAR MASTERS 2024

QATAR MASTERS SCORES

Leading scores from the DP World Tour's Qatar Masters at Doha Golf Club yesterday:

274 Rikuya Hoshino (JPN) 69-68-69-68
275 Ugo Coussaud (FRA) 71-68-67-69
276 Scott Jamieson (SCO) 72-71-68-65
277 Tom McKibbin (NIR) 69-70-68-70
278 Jorge Campillo (ESP) 70-70-69-69
279 Rasmus Hojgaard (DEN) 73-66-67-73, Antoine Rozner (FRA) 73-68-70-68, Paul Waring (ENG) 69-71-68-71
280 Wu Ashun (CHN) 67-72-70-71, Haydn Barron (AUS) 68-67-74-71, Ewen Ferguson (SCO) 70-71-66-73, Richard Mansell (ENG) 72-70-69-69
281 Sam Bairstow (ENG) 72-67-69-73, Jack Davidson (WAL) 72-71-69-69, Nacho Elvira (ESP) 70-71-69-71

Commercial Bank and Doha Golf Club wrap up another stellar tournament

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Commercial Bank, the Title Sponsor of the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters tournament, has closed yet another successful year marking the 27th edition of the tournament with Doha Golf Club. The Commercial Bank Qatar Masters is a yearly tournament on the DP World Tour Calendar that gathers a lineup of top golfers from around the world to compete.

Following a remarkable tournament, Commercial Bank's Board Member Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al Attiyah, and Commercial Bank's Group CEO Joseph Abraham presented the Mother of Pearl trophy to the winner of this year's tournament, Rikuya Hoshino. He was also awarded with a financial award of $425,000.

For the past 19 years, Commercial Bank has aimed to set the stage for what is known to be an annual groundbreaking event. And to make it even more impactful this year, it chose a theme close to heart, Artificial Intelligence. This concept is no stranger to the Bank as it has introduced a myriad of financial solutions that changed the course of the banking industry in Qatar. Players and attendees got to experience firsthand how Commercial Bank has been harnessing the power of technology and the key role it has been playing in keeping the nation's financial landscape one step ahead on a global scale.



Japan's Rikuya Hoshino poses with the Mother of Pearl trophy.

Joseph Abraham, Group Chief Executive Officer of Commercial Bank, stated: "As we continue our sponsorship of the premier European tour golf event, the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters, spanning over the past 19 years, we strategically align with Qatar's Vision to be a global sports hub and host for significant international sporting events. As players and participants gathered from around the world, I extend my congratulations to the winners and thanks for all the players, officials and fans for their participation. We are delighted to have concluded yet another successful and remarkable tournament."

Hussein Al Abdullah, EGM, Marketing and Alternative Assets at Commercial Bank said: "Commercial Bank Qatar Masters stands as one of Qatar's most beloved annual sporting events, catering to players, golf enthusiasts, and families. Beyond its sporting allure, the event aligns seamlessly with our strategic vision, showcasing Qatar as a pivotal player in the sports industry. Moreover, it serves as a significant avenue for us to emphasize our commitment to digital transformation for a cashless society, driven by substantial investments in artificial intelligence, contributing to the realization of Qatar Vision 2030. As we collaborate once again with the QGA, QOC, and Doha Golf Club to organize this premier golfing event, we recognize it as an excellent opportunity for individuals to experience not only the excitement of the tournament but also the chance to explore Commercial Bank's digital offerings in a networking environment during the event."

The Bank has been a forerunner in today's digital age having kept its promise to lead with innovation not only on the field, but in the world of banking as well. Aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030 and its goals, Commercial Bank Qatar Masters continues to present the limitless possibilities that lie at the intersection of sports, technology, and banking.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Rice scores on return as Arsenal hit West Ham for six

AFP – LONDON

Declan Rice scored on his return to West Ham as Arsenal smashed David Moyes' men 6-0 in a statement of intent in the Premier League title race yesterday.

Bukayo Saka struck twice, while Leandro Trossard and centre-backs William Saliba and Gabriel Magalhaes were also on target in a ruthless display from Mikel Arteta's men as they set a new club record for a Premier League away win.

Victory takes the Gunners back to within two points of Premier League leaders Liverpool and behind Manchester City only on goals scored.

"We were 4-0 up in the first half and we could have scored more," said Saka.

"We smelled blood today and went for the kill."

McTominay strikes late as Man Utd sink Villa to boost top four bid

Meanwhile, Scott McTominay kept alive Manchester United's hopes of finishing in the Premier League's top four as the midfielder's late goal clinched a vital 2-1 win against Aston Villa yesterday.

Erik ten Hag's side desperately needed a victory at Villa Park to close the gap in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League.

United took an early lead through in-form Rasmus Hojlund before Douglas Luiz levelled in the second half.

That set the stage for United's second late winner against Villa this term as McTominay came off the bench to head home with just four minutes left.

United remain in sixth place after their fourth successive victory in all competitions, but they are now just five points behind fifth-placed Villa and six adrift of fourth-placed Tottenham.

"It is a massive win for us. We've got closer and that was the aim for today. The way we did it, I liked it," Ten Hag said.

"At 1-1 we had to fight back and we are really happy about that. It was so open, like a tennis match. It could go two ways, but we found the mentality and character to win.

"Scott is great. He is an example for many players these days. He is always ready to come on and make a difference."

Ooredoo, Save the Dream promote positive change through sport

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Ooredoo and Save the Dream convened at EXPO Doha 2023 the forum "The Game Changers: developing skills and promoting positive change through sport and its values".

Over 200 youth leaders, many of them mobilized by the Qatar Youth Power association, had the opportunity to meet and learn from high-level representatives from leading organizations based in Doha such as Generation Amazing, Aspire Academy, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Josoor Institute, Qatar Foundation, the UNESCO Office for the Gulf States and Yemen in Doha, and the EU Delegation to Qatar, and be inspired by the stories and experiences of successful athletes like Nada Mohammed Wafa, Dual Olympian, London 2012 and Rio 2016, Ali Alobaidli, Qatar's first World snooker champion, Mariam Farid, Runner, Member of Qatar's National Team of Athletics, and Wejdan Majed Al Malki, Athlete, CDI5* Grand Prix Dressage.

The forum also featured Save the Dream Ambassadors Honey Thaljieh, Public Relations Manager at FIFA, and Sheikh Fahad Al Thani, President of the Qatar Boxing and Wrestling Federation (QBWF).

Held on the eve of the National Sport Day, the event provided a unique opportunity for young people to understand the role of sport with regard to the development of transversal skills, promotion of societal values and its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Participants learnt about both volunteering and working opportunities in the sport industry and were engaged in a vibrant conversation on how to use the educational values of sport to build bridges and promote positive change.

The dialogue was structured around best practices, storytelling, and research findings related to youth empowerment through sports. Athletes shared their experiences, reflecting on their journey of growth and success that defined their career and personal life.

Sabah Rabiah Al Kuwari, Director of Public Relations at Ooredoo Qatar, commented: "This event has highlighted the role of sport as a universal language of empowerment and positive change. Through our collaboration with Save the Dream and the involvement of Qatar's vibrant youth and sporting community, we've helped to spotlight the invaluable lessons sport teaches us—resilience, teamwork, and the pursuit of excellence. As Ooredoo continues to champion these values, we remain committed to leveraging our platform to nurture young leaders and advocate for sport's educational and societal benefits."



President of the Qatar Boxing and Wrestling Federation Sheikh Fahad Al Thani (centre) speaks during the forum.

Massimiliano Montanari, CEO at Save the Dream, said: "It was a very good day. First of all, we spent quality time with most of our key partners in Qatar. Being all of us busy on so many fronts, it does not happen every time. We appreciate each other, and it is a joy to connect and reconnect. And it was great to make new friends, meeting amazing athletes and so many youth leaders. I hope we were able to give them some useful information, tips, and a bit of inspiration."

Salah Khaled, Director of the UNESCO Office for the Gulf States and Yemen; Dr. Angelos Lenos, Deputy Head of Mission at the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Qatar; Natalie Magness, Founder of Qatar Youth Power; Nasser Alkhori, Executive Director of Generation Amazing Foundation; Valter Di Salvo, Director of Football Performance & Science, Aspire Academy; Afraa Al Noaimi, Executive Director, Josoor Institute; Valter Di Salvo, Director of Football Performance & Science, Aspire Academy; Nasser Al Khori, Executive Director, Generation Amazing; Christos Anagnostopoulos, UNESCO Chairholder & Director: Governance & Social Responsibility in Sport; Angelos Lenos, Deputy Head of Mission, EU Delegation to Qatar; Donia Abdelwahed, Program Specialist, UNESCO office for the Gulf States and Yemen; Ahmed A. Al Banai, Manager CSR & Sponsorship, Ooredoo; Kamilla Swart-Arries, MSEM Director, Hamad Bin Khalifa University; Bashayer Al Ali, Head of Partnerships Assessment, Qatar Foundation; Carol Jimenez, Coordinator, The House of Sport Volunteer; Shafeeque Parakkuth, Head, Sport for Development and Peace, Save the Dream; and Ali Fouad, Head Goalkeeper Coach, Aspire Academy, also addressed the forum.

QATAR TOTALENERGIES OPEN

Collins stuns Kudermetova in first round, Jabeur eyes strong show

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

Unseeded Danielle Collins of the United States yesterday stunned World No. 13 Veronika Kudermetova of Russia 7-5, 6-3 to enter the second round of the Qatar TotalEnergies Open.

Collins, who is ranked 71st in the world in contrast to Kudermetova's position of 16, will now meet Czech Marie Bouzkova or Sofia Kenin of the United States, in her next match at the WTA 1000 event at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex.

Romania's Sorana Cirstea also stood out with a convincing win over former Grand Slam champion Sloane Stephens to book a high-profile clash against top ranked Iga Swiatek.

The Romanian fired four aces against the 2017 US Open champion before defeating the latter 6-3, 6-2 in their Round of 64 match.

Cirstea, returning to Qatar after her quarter-final finish at the Abu Dhabi Open, where she outclassed some of the top stars including French opponent Caroline Garcia and Greek Maria Sakkari, will take on the Polish top seed Swiatek at the Centre Court of the state-of-the-art venue, today.

At the WTA 1000 in Doha this time, Sakkari will join the contest from Round 2, while Garcia will take four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka in the opening round today.

Also yesterday, a notable victory was achieved by World No. 19 Ekaterina Alexandrova of Russia who secured a hard-fought 7-6 (5), 6-3 victory against Viktoriya Tomova of Bulgaria. Belgium's Greet Minnen also made it to the next round with a dominant performance against Germany's Tatjana Maria, cruising to a 6-1, 6-1 victory.



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur speaks during a press conference held in Doha, yesterday.



Poland's Iga Swiatek speaks during a press conference.

Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk overcame Caroline Dolehide from the United States, with scores of 6-3, 7-5, while Lesia Tsurenko, also from Ukraine, dispatched Zeynep Sonmez of Turkiye in straight sets, 7-5, 6-3.

Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic triumphed over Donna Vekic of Croatia with scores of 7-5, 6-1.

Jabeur looks to bounce back in Doha

Meanwhile, Arab sensation Ons Jabeur, will be looking to make a comeback following a stunner at the Abu Dhabi Open few days ago.

The World No.6 defeated Emma Radacanu in straight sets but fell to Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-3, 6-4. Earlier, at the Australian Open, the Tunis star was eliminated in the second round by 16-year-old Mira Andreeva.

"I have been struggling with the knee for a long time, and last week was very, very tough," Jabeur said yesterday.

"Hopefully I can recover in time and then play better here in Doha," Jabeur, who missed the Qatar TotalEnergies Open last year, said.

"For me personally, it is very important to be here to connect with Arabic crowds. I feel so much love here in the region, and obviously that's one of the reasons I chose to play Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Dubai, because I feel so good here."

Jabeur, who has reached the quarter-finals in Doha twice, will take on Tsurenko, in the second round.

RESULTS

(seedings in parentheses):

WOMEN'S SINGLES ROUND OF 64

Marta Kostyuk, Ukraine, def. Caroline Dolehide, United States, 6-3, 7-5.
Lesia Tsurenko, Ukraine, def. Zeynep Sonmez, Turkiye, 7-5, 6-3.
Ekaterina Alexandrova (14), Russia, def. Viktoriya Tomova, Bulgaria, 7-6 (5), 6-3.
Greet Minnen, Belgium, def. Tatjana Maria, Germany, 6-1, 6-1.
Katerina Siniakova, Czech Republic, def. Donna Vekic, Croatia, 7-5, 6-1.
Danielle Collins, United States, def. Veronika Kudermetova (13), Russia, 7-5, 6-3.
Sorana Cirstea, Romania, def. Sloane Stephens, United States, 6-3, 6-2.
Erika Andreeva, Russia, def. Diana Shnaider, Russia, 7-6 (2), 6-4.
Zhu Lin, China, def. Varvara Gracheva, Russia, 6-1, 6-1.



Al Shaqab National League Showjumping event takes centre stage on NSD

THE PENINSULA - DOHA

Al Shaqab, a cornerstone of excellence in sports, is proud to announce the much-anticipated Al Shaqab National League Showjumping Event, set to grace the Longines arena on Qatar's National Sport Day (NSD), today. The event will run from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm and promises a thrilling showcase of equestrian prowess.

Al Shaqab, aligned with Qatar's National Vision 2030, has consistently played a pivotal role in advancing sports and fostering a culture of excellence. The National League Showjumping Event reflects the commitment to these principles, inviting horse enthusiasts and the wider community to join in celebrating the spirit of athleticism and horsemanship.

The mission of the Al Shaqab National League Showjumping Event is to establish a premier showjumping league, providing a distinguished platform for riders of diverse backgrounds. With a particular emphasis on promoting opportunities for female and junior riders, the event aims to create an inclusive and empowering atmosphere within the equestrian community.

The event is set to commence at 9:00 am and will continue until 8:00 pm. A day filled with exciting activities and meaningful engagements awaits the attendees. Entry is open to all Riding Academy members and external athletes who meet the requirements. Registration closes 5 days before the start of the event.All classes will adhere to FEI rules and regulations, except for intro classes.

The local tournaments include multiple categories, including training categories: Intro 1, Intro 2 and Intro 3. The main local categories are: Future Champions, Junior Champions, Youth Champions, Al Farissa and open class.

Each round of the competition has been carefully designed to encompass diverse categories, specifically tailored to meet the unique needs and skill levels of riders across various age groups. This point system aims to determine the top-performing riders, irrespective of gender, by the season's conclusion.

Australia U-19s emulate their seniors by beating India in World Cup final

AFP – BENONI

Australian dominance of major cricket events continued yesterday when they beat India by 79 runs in the Under-19 World Cup final at Willowmoore Park in South Africa.

Australia's senior men's team won the world Test championship and Cricket World Cup in 2023 - beating India in the finals on both occasions.

The Australian women's team are the current 50-overs and T20 World Cup champions.

Sunday's final between the only unbeaten teams in the tournament was surprisingly one-sided.

Australia made 253 for seven in their 50 overs after winning the toss and deciding to bat. Strongly-built left-hander Harjas Singh made a hard-hit 55 to highlight a solid batting performance.

India's batting had been their strength leading up the final but they crashed to 122 for eight against Australia's pace bowling attack. Opening batsman Adarsh Singh (47) was the only top-order batsman to shine.

Murugan Abhishek (42) led some lower-order resistance before the five-time champions were bowled out for 174.

Fast bowler Mahli Beardman took three for 15 and was named man of the match. Off-spinner Raf MacMillan took three for 41.

Australian captain Hugh Weibgen said at the post-match presentation that his team's bowlers had been the key to their success.

"With a bowling attack like ours we had a lot of confidence with 250 runs on the board. As a unit they bowl so well together. They know their roles and I will be surprised if all of them don't go a long way in their careers." Indian captain Uday Saharan said he was proud of his players despite stumbling in the final.

It was Australia's fourth Under-19 World Cup title but their first since 2010 when they were led by current international Mitchell Marsh.

BRIEF SCORES: Australia 253-7 in 50 overs (H. Dixon 42, H. Weibgen 48, H. Singh 55, O. Peake 46 not out; R. Limbani 3-38, N. Tiwari 2-63).
India 174 in 43.5 overs (A. Singh 47, M. Abhishek 42; C. Vidler 2-35, M. Beardman 3-15, R. MacMillan 3-43).

Record-breaking Zhanle leads off China to 4x100m free gold in Doha

THE PENINSULA - DOHA

The high-profile swimming events at the World Aquatics Championships Doha 2024 got underway with swimming sensation Pan Zhanle breaking the men's 100m freestyle world record as he led off China to men's 4x100m gold yesterday.

At the Aspire Dome, the 19-year-old shaved 0.06sec off the previous record of 46.86 achieved by Romanian David Popovici at the European championships in Rome two years ago.

After Zhanle's stunning start, the Chinese team never looked back, staying ahead of a loaded field throughout. After Pan, Ji Xinjie, Zhang Zhanshuo, and Wang Haoyu saw out the race, with Wang's 47.47 the fastest anchor split to seal victory in 3:11.08.

"Yeah, that was an incredible time. I trusted my friends and we did our best," Pan said after the race.

Italy, represented by Alessandro Miressi, Lorenzo Zazzeri, Paolo Conte Bonin, and Manuel Frigo, took silver exactly a second behind China.

Bronze went to the USA quartet of Matt King, Shaine Casas, Luke Hobson, and Carson Foster, in 3:12.29.

After the race, Pan told media: "Actually, I wasn't feeling in great form. I would've been happy with just getting on the podium.


China's Zhanle Pan competes in the final of the men's 4X100m freestyle relay swimming event at Aspire Dome yesterday.


New Zealand's Erika Fairweather competes in the final of the women's 400m freestyle swimming event. AFP

This morning (in heats), the US, Great Britain and Italy were all quicker than us, and I just wanted to focus on doing my job well.

"I told myself, just swim hard. I was shocked when I saw the time, I wasn't expecting to break the record now – I wanted to leave it for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games."

Meanwhile, Kim Busch, Janna Van Kooten, Kira Toussaint and Marrit Steenbergen teamed up to give the Netherlands a women's 4x100m freestyle relay gold with a combined time of 3:36.61.

Australia's Brianna Throssell, Alexandria Perkins, Abbey Harkin and Shayna Jack clocked 3:36.93 to settle for a silver medal, while Canada's Rebecca Smith, Sarah Fournier, Katerine Savard and Taylor Ruck combined to finish the relay in 3:37.95 to secure bronze medal.

Also yesterday, South Korea's Kim Woo-min clinched victory in the 400m freestyle, clocking 3 minutes 42.71 seconds to beat Australia's 2022 world champion Elijah Winnington. Germany's Lukas Martens took third place in the event.

Olympic champion Ahmed Hafnaoui of Tunisia was a surprise casualty in the heats, coming a lowly 17th overall and missing out on a place in the final.

In the women's 400m freestyle, New Zealand's Erika Fairweather emerged victorious cruising to victory after outpacing China's Li Bingjie by two seconds.

Isabel Gose of Germany claimed the bronze in the event.



WEATHER TODAY

Cloudy with moderate to heavy rain, thundery at times and cold by night.

17°C Minimum

22°C Maximum

DOHA	RUWAIS	ALKHOR	DUKHAN	MESAIEED	ABU SAMRA
17	14	13	14	16	13
22	21	21	20	22	21

HIGH TIDE 6:13 - 17:44 LOW TIDE 0:30 - 13:55

TRADING ROUTES

QM to host lecture on ancient shipwrecks off Indonesia coast

THE PENINSULA — DOHA

The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), in partnership with Qatar Museum's Department of Archaeology and the Years of Culture initiative, will host a public lecture on two ancient shipwrecks off the coast of Indonesia, shining the spotlight on the robust trading routes that encircled the world over a century ago.

Organised as part of Year of Culture legacy programming, the event will take place in the MIA Auditorium on Monday, February 19, at 6:30pm. It is free and open to the public who pre-register through the MIA website.

Renowned scholar Stephen A Murphy will lead the discussion titled "From Srivijaya to the Abbasid Caliphate: The Belitung and Cirebon shipwrecks and maritime connectivity in the 9th and 10th centuries CE." He holds the position of Pratapaditya Pal Senior Lecturer in Curating and Museology of Asian Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

Years of Culture Legacy Coordinator and Spokesperson Aljazi Al Khayareen said: "The lecture by Dr .Stephen Murphy promises to be a captivating exploration of the ancient maritime world, uncovering hidden stories of trade and cultural exchange. The Years of Culture initiative take the long view of cultural partnerships, creating legacy content that continues to celebrate the rich tapestry of connections between Qatar and the partner nation. I would encourage everyone to take this opportunity to journey through time and space and discover the fascinating maritime history that binds the Gulf region and Indonesia."

The talk will delve into the heart of the 9th and 10th-century Indian Ocean World to discover the untold tales of globalisation and cultural convergence that once connected the Gulf region with modern-day Indonesia. The spotlight will be on two archaeological wonders—the Belitung and Cirebon shipwrecks—revealing the powerful connections that shaped the world over a millennium ago.

In the middle of the ninth century, a ship embarked from the Gulf on a monumental journey, connecting three major cultures, the Abbasid Caliphate, the maritime power of Srivijaya, and Tang dynasty China. Laden with Chinese ceramics, the ship faced disaster near Palembang, a major port in Southern Sumatra (modern-day Indonesia). The Belitung wreck, discovered in 1998 by fishermen, stands as one of the few surviving Indian Ocean World shipwrecks from the ninth century.

Just over a century and a half later, another vessel set sail from Southern China, stopping at a port in Southern Sumatra before heading to Java. Known as the Cirebon Wreck, this ship carried Chinese ceramics and Middle Eastern glassware, offering insights into interregional trade between Indonesia and China in the tenth century. Discovered between 2004-2006, the Cirebon Wreck provides valuable information on trade and the exchange of ideas and social ties that shaped the world. Artifacts from the Cirebon shipwreck are on permanent display at MIA and the National Museum of Qatar.



Belitung and Cirebon Shipwrecks.



Editor-in-Chief meets Italian Envoy

Editor-in-Chief of *The Peninsula* Dr. Khalid Mubarak Al-Shafi received Ambassador of Italy to Qatar, H E Paolo Toschi, at the newspaper's office recently. The Ambassador was briefed about the evolution of the newspaper over the past two decades, its mission and vision in addition to the role of its website. Moreover, the envoy and the Editor-in-Chief discussed cooperation between the embassy and the newspaper in promoting the interest of the people of the two countries. PIC: SALIM MATRAMKOT/THE PENINSULA

Lunar New Year of the Dragon flames colourful festivities across Asian nations

AP — TAIPEI

With fireworks, feasts and red envelopes stuffed with cash for the kids, numerous Asian nations and overseas communities have welcomed Saturday the Lunar New Year.

It begins with the first new moon of the lunar calendar and ends 15 days later on the first full moon. The dates of the holiday vary slightly each year, falling between late January and mid-February as it is based on the cycles of the moon.

Taiwan, China and other areas saw highways clogged and flights fully booked as residents travelled home to visit family or took the approximately one-week holiday as an opportunity to vacation abroad.

Firing bottle rockets and other fireworks is a traditional way of welcoming the new year and seeing off any lingering bad memories. Children are given red envelopes stuffed with cash as a show of affection and to help them get a leg-up in the coming months.

Long lines of cars congested South Korean highways as millions of people began leaving Seoul to visit relatives across the country for the Lunar New Year's holiday.

Royal palaces and other tourist sites were also packed with visitors wearing the country's colourful traditional "hanbok" flowing robes. Groups of aging North Korean refugees bowed northward during traditional family rituals held in the Southern border town of Paju.

Vietnam also celebrated the Lunar New Year, known there as Tet.



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