



Published in QATAR since 1978

BRAND NEW BUILDING FOR RENT

Ready To Occupy

HABARI REAL ESTATE

Call Now!
+974 3030 0880
+974 3341 9475

Al Murra, Doha www.habariestate.com

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

Now on **talabat**

ALIF

Sky Vision Real Estate Offer

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

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

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

LOW SODIUM FOR BETTER HEALTH

Amwaj

1500ml/600ml
350ml/200ml

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

Speaker hails new milestone in Asia ties

HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines constitutes a new milestone in developing relations with Asia, praising the Amir's keenness on consolidating co-operation between Qatar and various countries of the world.

In an exclusive statement to Qatar News Agency, he said the visit would strengthen the bonds of friendship, co-ordination, co-operation, and common interests with these countries in various fields. It would also push parliamentary relations to broader horizons and consolidate parliamentary efforts aimed at bringing the Qatari people and the peoples of those friendly countries closer together, considering the growing relations between Qatar and Asian countries.

The Speaker noted the great importance of parliamentary relations between the Shura Council and Asian parliaments in view of the distinguished regional, geographical, and economic status of Qatar, which enabled it to become a strategic partner for Asian countries, in addition to Qatar's important regional political role at the international level that allowed it to build strong and established bilateral relations with Asian countries.

He pointed out that Qatar supported the key goals upon which the Asian Co-operation Dialogue Initiative was based, most notably strengthening intra-relations between member states, coordinating political positions, consolidating aspects of co-operation in various fields, and achieving common interests.

He said the Shura Council has built solid parliamentary relations with the parliaments of Asian coun-

tries, especially since the Council has a prominent presence in the Asian Parliamentary Assembly.

He explained the parliamentary friendship group with Asian countries had an important role in consolidating and strengthening relations through bilateral meetings and mutual visits, pointing out that the Shura Council will work to reinforce and develop these relations, in a way that contributes to supporting and strengthening the country's orientation towards developing relations with Asian countries.

The Speaker added that relations between the peoples of the Gulf region - of which the Qatari people are a part - and the Asian peoples in their various cultural, civilisational, political, and economic dimensions are well-established and rooted, pointing to the historical relationship that links Qatar with these countries in both commercial and cultural aspects since the pre-oil era.

He added that Arab and Gulf literature is full of rich cultural heritage that dealt with Asian cultures through study and analysis, and this had a great impact on our culture and heritage, and a positive impact on the social relationship between the two sides.

See also Pages 2,4, 5 Business Page 2

Amir begins Asian tour from today

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will begin a tour in several friendly Asian countries today upon the invitation of their leaders. His Highness the Amir will commence his tour with a visit to Philippines, followed by Bangladesh, and conclude with a visit to Nepal. During the tour, the Amir will hold talks with the leaders and senior officials of these countries, focusing on ways to enhance co-operation and discussing a number of issues of mutual interest. Additionally, agreements and memoranda of understanding will be signed in various fields. The Amir will be accompanied by an official delegation.

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

● Will hold talks with leaders of Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal



US House passes \$95bn Ukraine, Israel aid package

The US House of Representatives yesterday with broad bipartisan support passed a \$95bn legislative package providing security assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, over bitter objections from Republican hardliners. The legislation now proceeds to the Democratic-majority Senate, which passed a similar measure more than two months ago. The Senate is expected to pass the measure next week, sending it to Biden to sign into law. The bills provide \$60.84bn to address the conflict in Ukraine, including \$23bn to replenish US weapons, stocks and facilities; \$26bn for Israel, including \$9.1bn for humanitarian needs, and \$8.12bn for the Indo-Pacific, including Taiwan. **Page 8**

Iraq's PMF force says base was attacked

A huge blast at a military base in Iraq early yesterday killed a member of an Iraqi security force. The force commander said it was an attack while the army said it was investigating and there were no warplanes in the sky at the time. Two security sources had said earlier that an air strike caused the blast, which killed a member of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) and wounded eight others at Kalso military base about 50km south of Baghdad. In a statement, the PMF said its chief of staff Abdul Aziz al-Mohammedawi had visited the location and reviewed information from investigators.

50 killed as boat capsizes in Bangui

Around 50 people on their way to a village funeral died after their riverboat capsized in the Central African Republic's capital Bangui on Friday, an official said yesterday. "We were alerted 40 minutes after the incident and rescuers were able to extract around 50 lifeless bodies," civil protection department head Thomas Djimasse said. He added that the search was continuing with more people possibly drowned in the Mpoko River.

PM meets Abu Dhabi deputy ruler



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and National Security Adviser of the sisterly United Arab Emirates Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed al-Nahyan, currently visiting Qatar. They discussed relations between the two countries, and a host of regional and international issues of common concern. (QNA)

Qatar to care for 20 Russian and Ukrainian families

Integration effort aimed at providing healthcare, support

Qatar announced that 20 Russian and Ukrainian families, including 37 children, have arrived in Doha under an integrated programme that aims to provide healthcare and comprehensive support for the families and their children within Qatar's ongoing mediation efforts dedicated to reuniting families separated due to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Qatar hosts these families during April 18-27 to help them receive medical, psychological, and social support. The programme represents a critical step towards assisting the families to undergo the healing process and is designed to provide an overall support that meets immediate needs and lays the foundation for long-term recovery and inclusion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed in a statement yesterday.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out that the programme helps promote health well-being and stability through focusing on psychological, physical, and social health for all family members, paving the way for families to build their life confidently and safely, highlighting that the programme is conducted in partnership with representatives of both the Rus-

sian Federation and Ukraine. Qatar in its capacity as mediator will remain committed to protecting the well-being of all conflict-affected civilians, along with its unflinching commitment to continuing the mediation efforts with a special focus on children reunification and ensuring their safety and care, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs underlined. (QNA) **Page 2**

Israel kills 14 more Palestinians

Reuters
Nur Shams

Israeli forces killed 14 Palestinians during a raid in the occupied West Bank yesterday, while an ambulance driver was killed as he went to pick up wounded from a separate attack by violent Jewish settlers, Palestinian authorities said.

Israeli forces began an extended raid in the early hours of Friday in the Nur Shams area, near the flashpoint Palestinian city of Tulkarm and were still exchanging fire with armed fighters well into yesterday.

Israeli military vehicles massed and bursts of gunfire were heard, while at least three drones were seen hovering above Nur Shams.



A Palestinian woman and children check the rubble of a building hit by overnight Israeli bombing in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. (AFP)

Yesterday, Palestinian health authorities said at least 14 Palestinians, two of whom were identified by Palestinian sources and officials as a gunman and a 16 year-old boy, were killed dur-

ing the raid, one of the heaviest casualty totals in the West Bank in months. Another man was killed on Friday.

The Israeli military said a number of Palestinian fighters were killed or arrested during the raid, and at least four soldiers were wounded in exchanges of fire.

In a separate incident, the Palestinian health ministry said a 50-year-old ambulance driver was killed by Israeli gunfire near the village of Al-Sawiya, south of the city of Nablus, as he was making his way to transport people injured during the attack on the village.

It was not immediately clear whether he was shot by settlers. There was no immediate comment from the military.

Iran, Israel appear to pull back from brink

AFP
Tehran

Iran and Israel appeared to step back from the brink of broader conflict as lawmakers in the United States approved new Israeli military aid yesterday despite growing criticism of its ally's war in Gaza. Iran downplayed Israel's reported retaliation for its unprecedented drone and missile attack, tamping down fears that escalating tit-for-tat attacks between the arch enemies could tip over into a broader war in the Middle East. However a deadly blast at an Iraqi military base underlined the tensions which persist in the region, as did more deadly Israeli strikes in Gaza and intensifying clashes in the West Bank.

After Iran launched more than 300 missiles and drones a week ago in Tehran's first-ever direct attack on Israeli territory, Israel had warned it would hit back. The Iran attack was itself in retaliation for an air strike - widely blamed on Israel - that levelled the Iranian consulate in Damascus and killed seven Revolutionary Guards on April 1. The Israeli retaliation appeared to come on Friday, when Iranian media reported blasts in the central province of Isfahan. Fars news agency reported "three explosions" close to Qahjavarestan, near Isfahan airport and the 8th Shekari army air base. "What happened last night was no attack," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told NBC News.

Qatar welcomes Russian, Ukrainian families in Doha to receive care, support

Twenty Russian and Ukrainian families (including 37 children) have arrived in Doha under an integrated programme that aims to provide healthcare and comprehensive support for the families and their children within Qatar's ongoing mediation efforts dedicated to reuniting families separated due to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Qatar is hosting these families between April 18-27 to help them receive medical, psychological, and social support. The programme represents a critical step towards assisting the families to undergo the healing process and is designed to provide an overall support that meets immediate needs and lays the foundation for long-term recovery and inclusion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. (QNA)



Amir's Asian tour key to robust economic co-operation: QCAA

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Nepal is key to economic co-operation and trade exchange, said In Charge of Managing Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) Mohamed Faleh al-Hajri.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Hajri said that Qatar Airways operates direct flights to the three countries under air services agreements. He added that a robust economic co-operation directly reflects on the tourism and air transport industries. Qatar closely co-operates and develops outstanding air transport relations with the three countries, he said. Highlighting an air transport recovery after grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic repercussions, al-Hajri cited the International Air Transport Association (IATA)'s global air transport outlook which forecasts the industry will return to normal in 2025.

He added that the flag carrier of Qatar operates flights to about 90% of Asian countries, which reflects positively on its growth. His Highness the Amir's tour, which seeks to increase the volume of trade exchange in general, will bolster the trade and economic sectors, including air transport, he added.

On July 8, 2002, Qatar sealed an air service agreement with Nepal, which took effect on July 21, 2002.

Qatar inked an air services agreement with Philippines on Jan 10, 1993, which entered into force on May 19, 1994. Moreover, Qatar and Bangladesh initialled an air service agreement on Dec 31, 1979. (QNA)

QRCS implemented QR666mn worth of projects, aid: al-Khater

QNA
Doha

HE the President of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) Yousef bin Ali al-Khater revealed that over the past five years, QRCS has implemented projects and provided aid in Asia with over QR666mn, from which around 26mn people in 23 Asian countries have benefited.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE al-Khater indicated that QRCS is focusing its efforts on Asia, given the frequent natural disasters that various Asian countries suffer from, such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, landslides, monsoon rains, and severe cold waves. HE al-Khater said that among the Asian regions that QRCS focuses on in its work are the countries of South and South-east Asia, such as Nepal, the Philippines, and Bangladesh, where QRCS has provided aid to more than 5mn people since 2017 with more than QR76mn.

In this context, he said that the QRCS's interventions include various forms of assistance needed by those affected by conflicts and disasters, such as health aid, shelter, distribution of food and non-food items, securing drinking water and sanitation, supporting livelihoods, and rebuilding family ties.

Regarding the impact that such projects have had on the targeted communities in Asia, HE al-Khater stressed that QRCS is always one

of the first initiators in responding to disasters and crises by activating the Emergency Information Management Center and sending trained relief teams to affected areas. He indicated that based on the assessment of urgent needs and coordination with fellow national societies in the targeted countries, aid is being provided in the most important life-saving areas, regions, and communities most in need. He pointed out that this work methodology helped make a real difference in the lives of displaced people and refugees, alleviate their suffering, and move them from the stage of early recovery to development and reconstruction.

Regarding the contribution of these development and charitable projects to enhancing communication and interdependence between the Qatari people and the beneficiary communities, he stressed that the QRCS has gained great trust over the years among partner agencies and beneficiary communities alike, thanks to its strategy based on neutrality and humanity, as well as the competence, professionalism, and ethics of its staff.

Concluding his remarks to QNA, HE Yousef bin Ali al-Khater stressed that as the first voluntary humanitarian organization in Qatar, QRCS works to serve people wherever they are without bias or discrimination by implementing hundreds of annual humanitarian projects and interventions in various areas worldwide.

Two Qataris win aerial photography award

Two Qatari photographers are among the winners of the DJI Kuwait Company Aerial Photography Competition, in its third edition. While Ali Saifaldeen won the first place in the city landmarks category, Azzam al-Mannai won the Excellence Award in the nature and the wild-

life category. This edition was under the patronage of Kuwait's Minister of Information Abdulrahman al-Mutairi. This year, the competition included entries from all the GCC countries and more than 1,000 photos were received in three categories, the Kuwait News Agency reported.



Ali Saifaldeen



Azzam al-Mannai

Awqaf opens new mosque in Al Sadd



The Jassim bin Fahd bin Jassim al-Thani Mosque in Al Sadd in Doha.

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened the rebuilt Jassim bin Fahd bin Jassim al-Thani Mosque in Al Sadd in Doha. Spread over a total area of 1,557sq m, the mosque, according to an Awqaf statement, was opened in March and can accommodate 856 male and female worshippers and has houses for the imam and muezzin.

Numbered M.S. 176, the mosque has a main prayer hall that can accommodate 504 worshippers and a prayer hall on the mezzanine floor that can accommodate 252. There is a women's hall for 100 worshippers. With a tall minaret, the mosque includes a spacious ab-

lution place in addition to a large number of public parking lots, including those for persons with disabilities. The entrances and exits are disabled-friendly.

The Department of Engineering Affairs at the ministry is concerned with fulfilling the needs of the regions in the country for mosques and prayer grounds while providing temporary mosques and supervising their preservation as well as preparing the annual plan for the maintenance of mosques and imams' residences. These are in co-ordination with the competent authorities.

In mosque designs, the department takes into account the requirements of different areas along with the guidelines for green and



The mosque has a main prayer hall that can accommodate 504 worshippers and a prayer hall on the mezzanine floor that can accommodate 252. There is a women's hall for 100 worshippers.

sustainable buildings. Also, the department focuses on the conditions for sustainability in the use of electricity and water, and preserving the aesthetics of heritage in design that reflect the authenticity of Qatari and Islamic heritage to the highest standards.

The Ministry of Endowments' plans to build mosques also take into account the population den-

sity map along with engineering, architectural specifications and the heritage aspect within the framework of caring for the mosques to enable worship and to serve the worshippers. Mosque locations can be searched on Awqaf's website through accurate and specific maps that facilitate access to mosque locations in all cities across the country.

Qatar Family Day celebrated

The Ministry of Social Development and Family, in co-operation with the Museum of Islamic Art, yesterday celebrated Qatar Family Day, observed on April 15 of each year, as part of its keenness to revive the value and role of families in achieving the pillars of community development. On the occasion, Director of Family Development at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Dhabia al-Maqbali underlined the importance of marking the day as an important occasion and social initiative.

This day reflects the priority and importance that the Family Development Department in the Ministry of Social Development and Family attaches to the family, she said, noting that Qatar Family Day highlights the efforts of social institutions in supporting and developing community construction and growth, in accordance with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the state's national development strategy.

According to al-Maqbali, the Ministry of Social Development and Family organised several events on this occasion, including a series of recreational activities and events that champion cohesion between family members, and educating society about the importance of the family's role in raising young people and promoting social cohesion. (QNA)



EAA implements 33 educational projects in 21 Asian countries: CEO

QNA
Doha

The CEO of Education Above All (EAA) Foundation Fahd bin Hamad al-Sulaiti has said that EAA is currently carrying out a number of educational projects in Asia supported by Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD), alongside a group of global partners.

He added that EAA is laser-focused on optimising access to education opportunities for the marginalized groups and out-of-school children and operates in 33 projects in 21 Asian countries.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Sulaiti highlighted that QFFD joint projects offer the possibility of access to good education for 7,441,256 beneficiaries in all Asian countries. In Nepal, QFFD succeeded in achieving tangible results through 13 projects, such as establishing and optimising the educational infrastructure by building 105 new schools and upgrading 145 others which had a profound and

positive impact on local communities with the abundance of opportunities for 188,554 beneficiaries from the primary education.

QFFD launched the 'Reach Mindanao' project in Philippines which helped young people complete their secondary education and achieve self-sufficiency, either through decent works, or initiating their private businesses which profoundly advanced the community and supported local peace efforts from which 5,296 people had benefited, al-Sulaiti added.

Al-Sulaiti stated that in Bangladesh QFFD provided a large-scale support through 12 projects that included supporting out-of-school children, refugees, and displaced people with a total target of enrolling 974,700 out-of-school children. Also, QFFD succeeded in achieving a concrete impact with the total number of beneficiaries reaching roughly 989,946 individuals. CEO of EAA described the footprint left by EAA on the targeted communities in Asia as profound and inclusive which achieved a paradigm shift in education and

supporting the sustainable development goals in Nepal, Philippines and Bangladesh. He pointed out that the projects have demonstrated the institutions' capability of making concrete changes that transcended the provision of education to encompass the promotion of stability, as well as community and economic development.

Education in Nepal witnessed a major transformation following the construction of new schools and improving educational infrastructure, offering opportunities for good education for thousands of children, with educational initiatives empowering young people and upgrading their capabilities, he pointed out. Al-Sulaiti emphasised that these initiatives have supported peace and local development, and these programs have enhanced the provision of primary education for children, refugees, and displaced people in Bangladesh with a remarkable impact on improving life quality and opening new horizons for the future.

He stated that the same initiatives have effectively empowered

young people through strengthening their leadership and development skills, in addition to encouraging their active engagement in the sustainable development initiatives, addressing climate issues, and building local and global advocacy networks.

Additionally, QFFD intends to provide educational opportunities for children, in the conviction that education is the best way out of the scourge of poverty and the basis of establishing communities that enjoy justice and peace, in addition to unlocking the full potential of all young people and children, al-Sulaiti outlined.

He pointed out that Asia is plagued with varying social and economic challenges, hence, QFFD role is accentuated as a pivotal actor in achieving development through empowering young people utilising a flexible qualitative education, building skills, strengthening educational environment, and helping out-of-school children, displaced communities, marginalised and vulnerable groups flourish their hope.

'Architecture and Identity' session held



As part of their endeavour to drive positive impact in the fields of architecture, art, craft, agriculture, and education, Caravane Earth Foundation, Heenat Salma Farm and INTBAU Qatar (the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism) launched a series of events starting with a sequence of documentary screenings followed by interactive sessions with experts in the related fields. The debut event on Friday at Heenat Salma Farm was on the topic of 'Architecture and Identity'. Screened on the occasion was a documentary dedicated to the renowned master architect Abdel-Waheed El-Wakil, exploring his influential work and philosophy on architecture over the decades. Subsequently, a lively conversation with the master architect was moderated by Fahad al-Attiyah. The dialogue centred on the critical role of traditional architecture in preserving cultural identity amidst modern changes. "There has been constant and inevitable change and development of forms, but there has always been continuity, and the warrant of continuity has been adherence to tradition and its disciplines," pointed out El-Wakil. The event was attended by architecture enthusiasts and audience from various professional backgrounds.



QM opens major exhibition in Venice

Qatar Museums (QM) has opened a major exhibition to coincide with the 60th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale, bringing the visions of dozens of filmmakers and video artists from the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia to the art world's most prestigious stage.

The exhibition, titled *Your Ghosts Are Mine, Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices*, on view at ACP-Palazzo Franchetti until November 24, presents a journey in moving images through contemporary experiences of community life and memory, transnational crossings and exile.

Your Ghosts Are Mine, Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices is produced by Qatar Museums and co-organised by Doha Film Institute (DFI), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and the future Art Mill Museum in collaboration with ACP Art Capital Partners and with support from Media City Qatar.

The exhibition is curated by Matthieu Orléan with the collaboration of Majid al-Remaihi and Virgile Alexandre, with exhibition design by architects and spatial designers Cookies (Federico Martelli and Clément Périssé). The advisory committee includes Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Zeina Arida and Catherine Grenier. Project management is by Minas Stratigos and Khalifa al-Thani is the exhibition manager.

The exhibition offers an all-encompassing journey through 10 galleries, each dedicated to themes such as deserts (cradles of civilisation and places of rebirth), ruins (relics of culture), women's voices, borders (demarcations between allowed and forbidden places) and exile, as experienced through selected films supported, co-financed or initiated by DFI and video works from the collections of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and the future Art Mill Museum. The films and video works span genres including fiction, documentary, animation and memoir, often blending invented narrative with fact, modernity with tradition and spirituality with postcolonial sensibilities.

Included are excerpts from works by more than 40 artists including Faouzi Bensaidi (Morocco), Jessica Beshir (Ethiopia), Ali Cherri (Lebanon), Tala Hadid (Morocco), Joana Hadjithomas

(Lebanon), Khalil Joreige (Lebanon), Soudade Kaadan (Syria), Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese (Lesotho), Asmae El Moudir (Morocco), Amal al-Muftah (Qatar), Shirin Neshat (Iran), Larissa Sansour (Palestine), Abderrahmane Sissako (Mauritania), Elia Suleiman (Palestine), Ramata-Toulaye Sy (Senegal), Tariq Tegui (Algeria), Shaima al-Tamimi (Yemen) and makers from more than a dozen other countries, as well as video works by artists Wael Shawky, Lida Abdul, Hassan Khan and Sophia al-Maria.

HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of QM and DFI, said: "Opening at the same time as the Venice Art Biennale and continuing throughout the presentation of the Venice Film Festival, *Your Ghosts Are Mine* will open the eyes of multitudes of international viewers to the ideas, the feelings, and above all the artistic visions of today's filmmakers from the Arab world and neighbouring regions. By presenting this exhibition, Qatar Museums advances its key mission of encouraging understanding across borders through cultural exchange, while Doha Film Institute fulfils its mandate to nurture and promote the rising talents of our region."

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, CEO, DFI, said: "For nearly 15 years, the Institute has worked to correct the misrepresentation of Arab culture, stories and aesthetics by nurturing important new voices in cinema. We are proud to have supported over 800 diverse projects from 74 countries, underlining Qatar's commitment to empower a new generation of storytellers and bring balance to the global film landscape."

The exhibition is one of several QM initiatives coinciding with the Venice Biennale. Mathaf is lending several works by major Arab modern artists to be exhibited in *Foreigners Everywhere*, the main exhibition of the 60th International Art Exhibition curated by Adriano Pedrosa. QM is also a supporter of the Nigeria Pavilion at the Biennale and the founding sponsor of the Art for Tomorrow conference, which takes place in Venice from June 5-7. *Your Ghosts Are Mine, Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices* remains on view during the Venice International Film Festival, opening August 28.



Patrol Super Safari 'Al Ostoura' edition unveiled

Nissan has launched a GCC special edition 2024 Patrol Super Safari, titled 'Al Ostoura' to commemorate the iconic SUV, a statement said yesterday. 'Al Ostoura', literally translates to 'The Legend' in Arabic. The Patrol Super Safari, affectionately referred to as the "VTC", is based on the fifth-generation Nissan Patrol, originally produced from 1997-2010.

Its formidable all-terrain capabilities and class-leading power made it a popular SUV for off-road enthusiasts and thrill-seekers in the Gulf region. The enduring customer demand for this model in the GCC led to its revival in 2016 as the Patrol Super Safari – and it has been in production ever since.

The 2024 Al Ostoura edition marks the culmination of the legacy of the fifth-generation Patrol and features various exterior and interior design enhancements inspired by the region's desert landscape.

Marking its distinction are special badges on the SUV's rear pillar and engine, featuring 'Al Ostoura since 1951' engraved in Arabic calligraphy, alongside the SUV's iconic silhouette.

The distinctive Arabian desert dunes also inspire a recurring design motif in the Al Ostoura edition – displayed on the spare tyre cover and fender garnish, as well as interior elements such as the centre console badge and floor mats. The rich colour palette, featuring two exterior colour schemes, is complemented by

17-inch alloy wheels, distinctive body stickers and contrasting exterior inserts on the roof, bumpers and wheel arches.

Thierry Sabbagh, president, Nissan Saudi Arabia, Infiniti Middle East and managing director, Nissan Middle East, said: "The Patrol is a legendary nameplate for Nissan in the Middle East, and the journey of the Patrol Super Safari over decades is a testament to the deep emotional bond we have built with our loyal customers.

"By combining exceptional performance and nostalgic memories for GCC nationals and expatriates alike, it has successfully integrated itself into the cultural fabric of our region. The 'Al Ostoura' special edition encapsulates the spirit of the Patrol Super Safari and is our way to express our gratitude to the people of the region who have made it more than just a vehicle, but a cherished part of our shared heritage."

Nassim Mourami, general manager of the Automotive Group at Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Company, said: "Bearing the name 'Al Ostoura', this edition honours the enduring heritage and profound connection the Patrol Super Safari shares with our local communities. Inspired by our desert landscapes, this edition boasts bespoke exterior and interior enhancements, paying homage to its timeless legacy. As a rugged and reliable off-road vehicle, the 2024 Patrol Super Safari Al Ostoura promises exceptional performance and an exhilarating



driving experience."

A rugged and reliable off-road vehicle, the 2024 Patrol Super Safari Al Ostoura is powered by a 4.8-litre in-line six-cylinder engine, delivering 280hp and 451 Nm of torque. Featuring Valve Timing Control (VTC) and Nissan Induction Control System (NICS), it offers exceptional off-road performance and impressive top speed on the highway. The power is seamlessly directed through a 5-speed automatic or manual transmission.

Beyond its powerful performance, 'Al Ostoura' is equipped with an electronically controlled power steering for effortless control at low speeds and firm handling at high speeds. This is complemented by cruise control, a tyre pressure monitoring system, ABS, dual-front SRS airbags, and Vehicle Dynamic Control (VDC) to ensure a safer and more connected driving experience, both on and off the road.

The 2024 Nissan Patrol Super Safari Al Ostoura is available at Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co, the exclusive dealer of Nissan in Qatar, at its showrooms on Salwa Road, The Pearl, Al Sadd, Bin Omran, Barwa and Al Khor. This exclusive model joins the wider model line-up, which includes the Patrol and the motor sport inspired Patrol NISMO. More information is available from 8000505.

HBKU's TII opens registration for language courses

The Translation and Interpreting Institute (TII) Language Center at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)'s College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), is inviting aspiring language learners to register for its Summer 2024 language courses.

Interested students can enrol in their choice of 12 language courses which cover Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. Participants can choose between a classroom or virtual format for their course, where they can develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities in their chosen language according to their level of proficiency and needs, a statement said yesterday. Participants must complete the registration process by May 8, 2024.

Dr Ameena Hussain, director, Language Center at HBKU's CHSS, said, learners looking to make the most of their early summers in Doha can engage with a new language or sharpening their skills in others. "Residents of all ages are encouraged to explore and connect with new cultures." In-person classes will be held in Education City. Students with prior knowledge of a language are encouraged to take a placement test to determine the type of course that suits their needs. For more information and to enrol, please visit <https://www.tii.qa/LC>

Lawyers laud online services of courts

The various online services of the courts sector under the Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) have been highly appreciated by Qatari lawyers, who told local Arabic daily *Arrayah* that the facility expedites the litigation process.

The online services concerned have considerably enhanced the confidence of the parties besides achieving high level of transparency. Further, the process of filing a case, notification and obtaining copies of the rulings and other documents has become easily accessible through the SJC e-portal, compared to the past.

Lawyer Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohamed al-Thani stressed that the new systems even though working well, involve various procedural challenges and there is a need to maintain more direct links with different entities concerned, especially regarding labour dispute cases.

Lawyer Abdulrahman al-Mahmoud said that due to the major development of the judicial and courts systems, lawyers can now reduce the number of their administrative staff, as most tasks can be managed easily online.

Lawyer Ibrahim Bu Matar al-

Mohannadi said the online services of the courts serve both the general public and lawyers in addition to easing the litigation processes, where the case can be filed, documents uploaded and downloaded and fees paid in addition to constantly following up the status of the case.

Dr Khalid Abdulla al-Mohannadi, a researcher in fighting corruption and sustainable development, said that notifying the parties of the litigation electronically through e-mails and SMS has helped greatly in the process and achieved justice more quickly.

Music icon Andrea Bocelli in Qatar concert



Visit Qatar will host one of Italy's best and most famous tenors, Andrea Bocelli in Qatar as part of his 30th anniversary in the music industry. The concert is set to take place on May 13, 2024, at the Lusail Multipurpose Arena, a statement said yesterday. Bocelli, who has sold over 90mn records worldwide, has broken several records in the music industry, including having a Hollywood Walk of Fame star (2010), six Grammy Award nominations, and six Latin Grammy Award nominations. He has performed for four presidents of the US, three Popes, the British Royal Family, and several prime ministers, in addition to at ceremonies of the Olympics, the Universal Expo in Shanghai (2010), the Universal Expo in Milan (2015), and Expo Dubai (2021).

'Amir's tours are opportunities to evaluate, enhance bilateral ties'

QNA
Doha

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa al-Hassan al-Mohannadi emphasised the significance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visits and meetings with leaders of fraternal and friendly countries, considering them renewed opportunities to evaluate the level of strategic relations and enhance them with more qualitative bilateral partnerships in various fields, which in turn, contributes to increasing co-operation and integration in pursuit of common interests.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE al-Mohannadi said that the visit of His Highness the Amir will positively impact the bilateral relations between Qatar and these Asian countries. It will open broad and promising prospects for co-operation and partnership in various fields, strengthen opportunities for co-operation and enable the exchange of successful experiences in difference areas, as well as views on matters of mutual interest.

He praised the agreements

signed during the visits of His Highness the Amir which result in positive outcomes in terms of bilateral co-operation and elevating these relations to the level of strategic partnership in various fields.

He further added that based on Qatar's firm belief in the importance of upholding the rule of law to achieve international justice in order to contribute to enhancing international security and peace, the Ministry of Justice pays special attention to legal co-operation agreements with various countries, benefiting from the active diplomacy of the state on both regional and international levels, as well as its participation in international treaties and agreements related to global security, peace, and stability.

He pointed out that the vision of the Ministry of Justice in preparing and reviewing co-operation agreements in the legal field with other countries is based on the wise approach laid down by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, which aims to extend the bridges of co-operation and build stronger ties and relationships with various countries.

He explained that the visits of the Amir represent an opportunity



HE Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa al-Hassan al-Mohannadi speaking to QNA.

to conclude more agreements and MoU in all legal, economic, cultural, and athletic fields, in addition to exchanging experiences, solidifying relations, transitioning from the current stage of co-operation to broader horizons, and opening new avenues for co-operation in promising sectors, especially in economic and commercial fields, ambitious investment partnerships, enhancing legal cooperation, and exchanging experiences in the judicial services sector.

HE al-Mohannadi pointed out the diversity of areas of co-operation outlined in these agreements based on the proposed partnership themes and the existing levels of

co-operation. He mentioned that there are previous agreements being updated and developed, alongside new agreements covering various areas of co-operation that are of interest to Qatar and these countries.

These agreements include aspects of co-operation in the legal field, particularly exchanging experiences in various legal areas, such as sharing successful practices and experiences in legal training and elevating the level of services provided by legal institutions in both countries.

He emphasised the development of bilateral relations in the legal field with these countries, in ad-

dition to the enhancement of legal co-operation and consolidating areas of co-operation at all levels with other countries. He stated that this will undoubtedly open the door to further constructive cooperation and exchange of beneficial experiences for all parties involved.

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs mentioned that Qatar takes pride in its advanced legislative and legal system, which has been achieved by the guidance of the Amir, who made achieving effective justice a priority in government work.

Following the directives of the Amir, the legal sector in Qatar has been able to develop and update its legal and judicial framework, making Qatar's experience exemplary in this field.

He added that the agreements and MoU concluded during the visits of the Amir contribute to enhancing co-operation and exchanging successful experiences, maximising common interests and benefits, and fostering co-operation during times of crises, as well as times of prosperity and peace, while working to establish the foundations of justice.

He pointed out that through

these agreements, Qatar, guided by its moral and humanitarian role, provides support and assistance within the framework of its regional and international partnerships. This includes economic assistance to those affected by wars, conflicts, and disasters, in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law.

Given the serious challenges facing the world today, particularly arising from new international conflicts, everyone needs more co-ordination and legal co-operation to uphold and enforce the rule of law in service of justice, peace, and international security, HE the minister added.

He emphasised that Qatar, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, has succeeded through its steadfast positions and successful mediation efforts in various regional and international conflicts, as well as its contributions to achieving international security, preserving freedoms, combating terrorism, and protecting human rights, in earning a prestigious global status and reputation, making it the trusted and reliable first destination to resolving various regional and international conflicts.

Qatari-Asian ties earn rising significance by virtue of shared interests: analysts

QNA
Doha

THE evolving relations between Qatar and various countries of Asia considerably earn an increasing significance in view of points of commonality and shared interests, along with the international changes that necessitate forging co-operation and partnership for the service of interests of a variety of countries, according to analysts.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), those analysts pointed out that the Asian countries conceive Qatar as a reliable strategic partner to strengthen its plans and strategies in the economic development, thanks to Qatar's pivotal role in securing energy sources, in addition to the fact that Doha is actively and effectively present on the international arena and exerting efforts under its wise leadership to promote peace, stability and development in multiple territories of the world.

Qatar is increasingly interested in its Asian depth and strategy to build international relationships based on an overarching and balanced view that absorbs the

changes and responds to the requirements of the new phase of development in accordance with the Qatar National Vision 2030 that underscores the significance of promoting Qatar's regional role economically, politically, and culturally. Also, to advance the cultural exchange and support dialogue among civilizations and contribute to achieving international security and peace, the analysts highlighted.

International relations expert and consultant Dr Ahmed Ghaith al-Kuwari emphasised that the remarkable momentum in the Qatari-Asian ties reflects the strategic vision of the country's wise leadership in broadening the cycle of Qatar's foreign relations based on an overarching and balanced view that achieves its development goals, serves the development pathways in Asia, and helps promote peace and stability worldwide.

The significance of this relationship stems from Qatar's strategic orientations in serving national interests of the two sides. Qatar eyes economic diversification and taps into promising trade and investment markets within the framework of its plan to reduce depend-

ence on oil and gas, Dr al-Kuwari told QNA, adding that Qatar significantly sees that Asia abounds with promising opportunities to achieve those objectives.

He highlighted that Asian countries aspire to safe energy sources, with numerous countries in the continent striving to draw further Qatari investment to strengthen their economies, offer more job opportunities for their citizens and establish economic structures that are invariably capable of countering the global economic challenges.

Qatar has succeeded in investing in those relations and the entangled interests, along with the elements of strength both in Qatar and the Asian countries based on a myriad of strategic pillars that ensure the interests of Qatar and the other party within a comprehensive vision that supports development, stability and peace in the entire globe, Dr al-Kuwari underlined.

Dr al-Kuwari noted the trips made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to several Asian countries during the few past years which culminated in agreements and memorandums of understanding

that included a variety of critical sectors. He affirmed that this new trip to Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal comes to enhance this effective Qatari presence and lay another foundation for this growing ties.

In conclusion, Dr al-Kuwari affirmed that Qatar earns a global reputation and acceptance in various countries of the world since Qatar has made major contributions to global development, peace, and stability, along with its humanitarian initiatives and positions that support countries in times of crises, stressing that all these factors undergird Qatar's international relations and standing.

For his part, Professor in Security and International Relations at Qatar University Dr Bakil al-Zindani affirmed that Asian countries with active and rapidly growing economies give foremost priorities to relations with Qatar as a pivotal country in securing energy sources, in addition to the economic and political significance set by the Asian countries in forging relationships with Doha.

Speaking to QNA, Dr al-Zindani added that during the past few years, Qatar has largely focused on strengthening ties with Asia, indi-

cating that these ties have varied and included multiple fields such as energy, investment and industry which significantly buttressed the capability of Doha in fostering strategic, economic, cultural, and political alliances with this critical system since Qatar is part and parcel of it.

Qatar has focused on its relations with countries that have robust and emerging economies. This diversity and shared visits during the recent years deepened the thought of decision makers on the fact that drawing on bilateral and diversified relations is foremost importance for Qatar's foreign policy, Dr al-Zindani pointed out.

He deemed that diversity in Doha's foreign relations promotes the international standing of Qatar and grants it a space for comfortable movement at the economic and political levels, pointing out that the Asian system has an economic weight at the global level, alongside a superb standing in the global economy.

He highlighted that according to this reality Qatar employs its soft power more diligently to build partnerships for the service of the two sides' interests.

Dr al-Zindani pointed out that Qatar is committed to forging balanced relationships with a variety of geographical territories, in addition to friendships, partnerships and alliances with all regional and global powers, affirming that this orientation underscores Qatar's keenness and grit to forge productive and balanced relations and constructive alliances in a tumultuous and changing world plagued by competitiveness and polarization.

In conclusion, Dr al-Zindani talked about the points of commonality that exist among Asian countries in terms of history, culture, geography, and civilization, emphasizing that these points give other dimensions to the Qatari-Asian relations, culminating in promoting cross-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogue which is a crucial area for the Qatari diplomacy.

For his part, Director-General of Qatar Press Center, Sadiq Mohamed al-Ammari stated that Asia indubitably represents an important depth for Qatar, because Qatar is part of this continent. Therefore, strengthening the relations between the two sides almost entirely serves their shared interests.

Daam partners with QSC to fund school robotics contest


The Social and Sport Contribution Fund (Daam) has officially partnered with Qatar Scientific Club (QSC), an affiliate of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, to fund its 16th School Robotics Competition. The tournament, a fast-growing event organised annually, aims to cultivate and nurture local talent in the field of robotics and is held in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

This agreement highlights the commitment of Daam, and the joint-stock companies listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange, to support events and activities that align with its development and sustainability objectives in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Set to take place at the Lusail Multi-Purpose Sports Hall from 21-23 April, 2024, the School Robotics Competition anticipates the participation of over 2,000 students across 650 dynamic teams.

This surge, a notable 35% increase from previous editions, vividly highlights the growing interest in robotics and software technology. It also demonstrates the growing abilities of students to discern and analyse challenges facing companies and organisations and to find futuristic and innovative solutions to address them.

The competition aims to foster creativity among students and establish a competitive platform for them to showcase and improve their skills. — QNA



QAPCO
شركة قطر البتروكيماويات
QATAR PETROCHEMICAL COMPANY

QAPCO invites qualified bidders to participate in the following tender:

SI No.	Tender Reference and Description	(i) Deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding	(ii) Tender Fee	(iii) Tender Publication on ARIBA	(iv) Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	Tender No. P04-01-137 Designing, Fabrication and Installation of Raw Water Buffer Tank in QAPCO Plant	24th April 2024	28th April 2024	QAR 750.00	QAR 100,000	19th May 2024 12:00 Noon Doha LT

i. Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and contact details to QAPCO Procurement (procurement@qapco.com.qa) indicating company name, address, telephone, official e-mail, etc. latest by the deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding indicated above.
Reference Number and Description of the tender must be mentioned in the email.
Interested bidders shall be capable to handle all the disciplines: Designing, Fabrication and Installation of the Tank at Site (the Civil Works are optional scope to be decided by QAPCO before award).

ii. Non-refundable tender fee indicated above is payable to QAPCO through QNB account # 0013-001688-060 only at any QNB branch latest by the deadline indicated above. (by 25-Apr-2024 12:00 PM)

iii. Tender link will be sent via email notification from ARIBA system to the confirmed bidders. Tender Document will be accessible only after attaching the proof of tender fee payment in ARIBA by the bidder followed by Qapco approval.
QAPCO shall reply with the access to "ARIBA eSourcing RFP event" along with necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.

iv. **Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee):** Original tender bond must be submitted by hand to the following address latest by the Tender closing date & time:
Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO) Q.P.J.S.C.
P. O. BOX 756, QAPCO Doha Office, Onaiza Area, West Bay, The Gate Mall, Bay Tower 2,
10th and 11th floor, Main Reception in 11th Floor, Doha, Qatar
Tel.: +974 4033 8109/102
Attention: Procurement Group Manager
Bidder to attach copy of tender bond to the offer in ARIBA. Offer without Tender Bond will not be considered.

Clarifications: Communicate queries with tender reference and description to procurement@qapco.com.qa.

Notes:

- ARIBA Registration: Bidders who are not registered in QAPCO are requested to complete the registration process during the tendering period (Details on ARIBA registration can be accessed via QAPCO website www.qapco.com)
- ICV: Effective from 01st July 2023, Bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Law of State of Qatar) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal (<https://icv.qa/en-US/>) by Tender closing date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned / notified) will not be accepted. Local companies that have been established for less than 2 years are exempted from this requirement.

For more information about QAPCO please visit our website: www.qapco.com



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

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

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

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

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

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



Colourful celebration



People celebrate under coloured powder after finishing the 5km Color Run in Beijing, yesterday.

Fighting flares at Myanmar-Thai border as rebels target junta troops

Reuters
Bangkok

Fighting raged at Myanmar's eastern frontier with Thailand yesterday, both governments said, forcing 3,000 civilians to flee as rebels fought to flush out Myanmar junta troops holed up for days at a bridge border crossing.

Resistance fighters and ethnic minority rebels seized the key trading town of Myawaddy on the Myanmar side of the frontier on April 11, a blow to a well-equipped military struggling to govern and facing a test of battlefield credibility.

Witnesses on the Thai and Myanmar sides of the border said they heard explosions and heavy machine gun fire near a strategic bridge from late on Friday into yesterday.

Thai broadcaster NBT, in a post on X, said resistance forces used 40-mm machine guns and dropped 20 bombs from drones to target an estimated 200 junta soldiers who had retreated from a co-ordinated rebel assault on Myawaddy and army posts since April 5.

Myanmar's state-run MRTV in its nightly newscast said the militias and ethnic minority rebels had used excessive shelling and bombing to attack junta troops, and government forces had responded with air strikes to try to maintain stability. It said rebels retreated having sustained many losses.

Reuters could not immediately



Thai soldiers take cover near the second Thailand-Myanmar Friendship Bridge during fighting on the Myanmar side between the Karen National Liberation Army and Myanmar's troops, which continues near the border, in Mae Sot, Tak Province, Thailand, yesterday.

verify the accounts of the fighting. Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin said he was closely monitoring the unrest and his country was ready to provide humanitarian assistance if necessary.

According to figures compiled by Thailand's military and the provincial authority, 3,027 people had yesterday crossed the border to seek temporary refuge in the town of Mae Sot.

Myanmar's military is facing its biggest challenge since taking control of the former British colony in 1962, caught up in multiple, low-intensity conflicts and grappling to stabilise an economy that has crumbled since a 2021 coup against Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's government.

The country is locked in a civil war between the military on one side and, on the other, a loose alliance of established ethnic minority armies and a resistance

movement born out of the junta's bloody crackdown on anti-coup protests.

Thai premier Srettha said he had instructed all Thai agencies to prepare for all situations and would visit the border area on Tuesday. "I do not desire to see any such clashes have any impact on the territorial integrity of Thailand and we are ready to protect our borders and the safety of our people," he said on X.

The capture of Myawaddy and surrounding army outposts is a significant setback for a junta that has been squeezed by Western sanctions, with the town a key tax revenue source and conduit for more than \$1bn of annual border trade.

Thailand's foreign ministry said it hoped the situation would normalise soon and had urged Myanmar's government to ensure fighting did not spill over the border.

with Washington and Seoul claiming Kim has shipped weapons to Moscow, despite UN sanctions banning any such moves.

"The DPRK Missile Administration has conducted a power test of a super-large warhead designed for 'Hwasal-1 Ra-3' strategic cruise missile", KCNA news agency said yesterday, referring to North Korea by an abbreviation for its official name.

North Korea also carried out a test launch of a "Pyoljji-1-2" new-type anti-aircraft missile in the West Sea of Korea", KCNA said, adding that both tests were carried out on Friday afternoon.

Seoul's military said yesterday it detected "several cruise missiles and surface-to-air missiles" fired toward the same body of water, also known as the Yellow Sea, at around 3:30pm (0630GMT) on



This picture released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows the DPRK Missile Administration conducting a test launch of "Pyoljji-1-2" new-type anti-aircraft missiles in the West Sea of Korea.

Friday. It added that it was "closely watching" the North's military activities, and if Pyongyang

"commits a provocation, we will punish it overwhelmingly and resolutely".

'Crisis not over' as eruptions at Indonesia volcano go on

AFP
Jakarta

The threat from an Indonesian volcano that has erupted more than half a dozen times this week is not over, the archipelago's top volcanology official said, as the crater belched another ash tower yesterday.

Mount Ruang, located in Indonesia's outermost region of North Sulawesi province, started erupting late Tuesday, prompting authorities to evacuate thousands on islands near the stratovolcano and closure of the nearest international airport.

The volcano erupted again before midnight Friday and again yesterday afternoon, spewing an ash column 250 metres above its peak, the latest of a wave of volcanic activity, the volcanology agency said.

That forced the country's volcanology agency to warn that major eruptions could still take place, despite the crater calming since it stirred a spectacular mix of lava,

ash and lightning earlier in the week, raining down molten rocks on nearby villages.

"With volcanic earthquakes recorded, this crisis is not over yet," agency head Hendra Gunawan said.

"It indicates magmatic fluid supply is still moving from the depth to the surface. So it's not surprising if eruptions still occur."

The volcano, with a peak 725 metres above sea level, is currently the only one of Indonesia's more than 100 volcanos at the highest alert level of a four-tiered system.

Authorities have kept a six-kilometre exclusion zone around the volcano.

More than 6,000 residents of neighbouring Tagulandang island, home to around 20,000 people, were evacuated outside the exclusion zone, a local official said Friday.

Authorities previously estimated more than 11,000 people would need to be evacuated because of the volcanology agency's warning of volcanic rocks, hot clouds and lava flows.

South Korean doctors reject govt proposal to end strike

AFP
Seoul

South Korea's leading doctors' body yesterday rejected a revised medical reform plan from the government, the initial version of which sparked a strike two months ago.

The ongoing walkout by thousands of trainee doctors has caused chaos in South Korean hospitals, and is in response to a plan to boost annual admissions to medical schools by 2,000 from next year.

The government on Friday offered its first concession, allowing 32 universities to admit as few as 1,000 medical students instead of the initially proposed 2,000 — but the Korean Medical Association (KMA) said the plan must be abandoned entirely within a week.

"Since this is not a fundamental solution, the emergency committee of the Korean Medical Association clearly states that it cannot accept it," Kim Sung-geun, a KMA spokesperson, told reporters.

"For the sake of our country's future and to protect the health of patients currently suffering,

we ask the president...to discuss this again from square one." Kim

said "one week is left" to find a solution. The government claims its plan will alleviate doctor shortages for an ageing society, but medical professionals and trainees say it will diminish the quality of education and health-care. The strike, which began on February 20, has forced hospitals to cancel essential treatments and surgeries.

On top of the trainee doctors, who play a key role in emergency procedures and surgeries at general hospitals, more than 50% of the country's medical students have also filed for a leave of absence, according to the education ministry. The KMA warned that if the government does not relent, medical students will likely be forced to repeat a year, senior doctors at general hospitals will start to resign on April 25, and the healthcare system could "collapse".

The government's Friday offer came after President Yoon Suk-yeol's conservative ruling party suffered a crushing defeat in parliamentary elections this month. Initially, there was public sympathy for the government, but polls leading up to the April

10 election indicated that the mood had shifted.

Nearly 60% of people surveyed in a Dong-A Ilbo poll said the government should adjust the scale and timing of its reform plan. The main opposition Democratic Party has also criticised Yoon and urged him to revise the reform plan.

The government had previously warned of legal consequences if doctors did not return to work, and suspended the medical licences of two KMA officials purportedly for instigating the walkout.

Proponents of the plan say opposing doctors are simply trying to safeguard their salaries and social status.

Patients with severe illnesses said they are in a "state of dismay" following the KMA's announcement yesterday.

"Patients who were hopeful for a quick resolution now find themselves watching the situation unfold with despair," said Kim Sung-ju, the head of the Korean Cancer Patients Rights Council.

"We are overwhelmed by worry and fear as we question how much longer we can withstand this draining ordeal."

China says AUKUS risks nuclear proliferation in Pacific

China's foreign minister yesterday accused Western powers in the AUKUS security pact of provoking division and risking nuclear proliferation in the South Pacific, AFP reported from Sydney.

On a weekend visit to strengthen Beijing's ties with Papua New Guinea, Foreign Minister Wang Yi lashed out at AUKUS, which provides for the United States and Britain to equip Australia with nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines. The three-way AUKUS agreement "runs counter" to a South Pacific treaty banning nuclear weapons in the region, he told a news conference in Port Moresby. AUKUS also "raises serious nuclear proliferation risks", the Chinese foreign minister told reporters after meeting with his Papua New Guinea counterpart Justin Tkatchenko.

In recent years, Beijing has tried to chip away at US and Australian influence across the South Pacific, including in Papua New Guinea. The Pacific Islands, while small in population, are replete with natural resources and sit at a geostrategic crossroads that could prove strategically vital in any military dispute over Taiwan. Australia is by far Papua New Guinea's largest donor, but Chinese firms have made solid inroads into markets in the impoverished but resource-rich nation. The Chinese foreign minister seized on a recent announcement by the AUKUS nations that they are considering co-operating with Japan on military technology. Under the AUKUS agreement, the partners plan to develop advanced warfighting capabilities such as artificial intelligence, undersea drones and hypersonic missiles.

North Korea tests 'super-large warhead': state media

AFP
Seoul

North Korea has tested a "super-large warhead" designed for a strategic cruise missile, state media said yesterday, the most recent test since UN sanctions monitoring against the nuclear-armed nation was upended last month by Russia.

The announcement comes after Russia in March used its UN Security Council veto to effectively end UN monitoring of violations of the raft of sanctions on Kim Jong-un's government for its nuclear and weapons programme.

Analysts have warned that North Korea could be testing cruise missiles ahead of sending them to Russia for use in Ukraine,

with Washington and Seoul claiming Kim has shipped weapons to Moscow, despite UN sanctions banning any such moves.

"The DPRK Missile Administration has conducted a power test of a super-large warhead designed for 'Hwasal-1 Ra-3' strategic cruise missile", KCNA news agency said yesterday, referring to North Korea by an abbreviation for its official name.

North Korea also carried out a test launch of a "Pyoljji-1-2" new-type anti-aircraft missile in the West Sea of Korea", KCNA said, adding that both tests were carried out on Friday afternoon.

Seoul's military said yesterday it detected "several cruise missiles and surface-to-air missiles" fired toward the same body of water, also known as the Yellow Sea, at around 3:30pm (0630GMT) on

Friday. It added that it was "closely watching" the North's military activities, and if Pyongyang

"commits a provocation, we will punish it overwhelmingly and resolutely".

Scottish independence supporters seek to inject life into faltering campaign

AFP
London

Scottish independence campaigners marched in Glasgow yesterday as they try to reignite flagging support for self-rule before a UK general election due this year that is expected to deal a blow to their cause.

A series of setbacks, including a fraud scandal involving Scotland's former first minister Nicola Sturgeon, have left the independence movement at arguably its lowest ebb in recent memory.

The march comes after Sturgeon's husband, Peter Murrell, was charged on Thursday for the embezzlement of £600,000 in donations meant for independence campaigning. Murrell, the 59-year-old former chief executive of the ruling pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP), was charged more than a year after he was first arrested.

Sturgeon, who resigned as the devolved UK administration's first minister and SNP leader in February 2023, was arrested in June last year, but released without charge.

On Friday, she described her husband's situation as "incredibly difficult," with current First Minister Humza Yousaf calling it a "really serious matter indeed".

Sturgeon had established herself as one of the figureheads of the independence movement alongside then Scottish first minister Alex Salmond ahead of an independence referendum in 2014. Scotland voted against in-



Scotland's First Minister Humza Yousaf (centre-right) and Scottish actor Martin Compston (centre-left) join a march in support of Scottish independence in Glasgow, yesterday.

dependence, with 55% of electors choosing "No", but Sturgeon, 53, put the matter back on the table in 2016 after the UK voted to leave the European Union.

She argued Scotland was being forced out of bloc against its will as Scots had voted overwhelmingly to remain in Europe.

Sturgeon's self-assured leadership and excellent communication skills during the Covid-19 pandemic – in contrast to the perceived chaos under former prime minister Boris Johnson's Westminster government – saw support for Scottish independence climb above 50% in 2021.

After being refused another referendum by successive prime ministers, Sturgeon took the issue to the UK's top court.

But in November 2022, judges

ruled against the Scottish government, saying that the power to grant a referendum was a "reserved" matter for the UK government. For Westminster, the Supreme Court's ruling was the final word on another Scottish independence referendum.

Sturgeon, who was accused of overplaying her hand, resigned soon after.

Support for independence has since fallen to between 41 and 43%, according to three opinion polls taken in April.

Current SNP leader Yousaf has vowed to continue the push for independence at the UK general election, which is expected to be held in October or November.

He says the SNP will claim "a mandate for independence negotiations" with the British govern-

ment if it wins at least 29 of the 57 seats up for grabs in Scotland.

The party currently has 43 MPs in Scotland but is expected to lose several to a resurgent Labour Party, which is tipped to form the next government.

The SNP has a seven-point lead over Labour in voting intentions, according to the polling agency Ipsos, but that is down from 12 points a year ago.

"At the next election, page one, line one of our manifesto will say 'vote SNP for Scotland to become an independent country,'" Yousaf told cheering delegates at an SNP conference in Aberdeen in October last year. Yousaf has also vowed to rejoin the EU as fast as possible, but that won't happen anytime soon with independence not currently on the horizon.

Tesla's Elon Musk postpones India trip, aims to visit this year

Reuters
New Delhi

Elon Musk postponed a planned trip to India where he was to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, citing obligations at his Tesla automaker and saying he aimed to reschedule the visit for later this year.

"Unfortunately, very heavy Tesla obligations require that the visit to India be delayed, but I do very much look forward to visiting later this year," Musk posted on his X social media platform.

Reuters reported the postponement yesterday, citing four people familiar with the matter. The trip was to have included the announcement of plans for the electric vehicle (EV) maker to enter the South Asian market, Reuters has reported.

The CEO and the prime minister are both at critical junctures.

Tesla could have used the India announcement to try to reassure investors after months of share-price declines and the news on April 15 that it would lay off more than 10% of its global workforce.

Musk is expected to face tough questions from analysts when Tesla announces quarterly results on Tuesday about falling sales, rising competition from Chinese EV makers and the fate of key future Tesla products.

Reuters reported on April 5 that

Tesla had halted development of its long-awaited affordable EV, often called the Model 2. Musk posted that "Reuters is lying" after the report, without citing any inaccuracies. He has not spoken further about the model, leaving investors clamouring for clarity.

Rohan Patel, a Tesla public policy executive who, according to sources, was one of those leading the company's India entry plans, also resigned this week.

Musk would have arrived today, two days after the start of India's nation election, in which Modi is forecast to win a rare third term. Modi wants to highlight progress toward promises of making India a global manufacturing hub.

After Reuters reported Musk's India trip plans on April 10, he posted on X that he was "Looking forward to meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India!" In New Delhi, Musk was expected to announce an investment of \$2-3bn, mainly to build a factory in India, after the government announced a policy lowering high tariffs on imported cars if companies invest locally, Reuters has reported.

He was also expected to meet executives from several space startups in New Delhi. Musk is awaiting Indian government regulatory approvals to begin offering his Starlink satellite broadband services in the world's most populous country.

UK rules out youth mobility deal with EU

AFP
London

The UK government has ruled out any post-Brexit deal with the EU that would make it easier for young Britons to live, study and work in the bloc, a government spokesman said yesterday.

The European Commission this week called for the 27 EU nations to open negotiations on a "youth mobility scheme" for UK citizens aged 18-30. But the UK, which has individual youth mobility schemes with 13 countries, including Australia, Canada, San Marino, Iceland and Monaco, said it preferred bilat-

eral arrangements with individual countries over an EU-wide deal.

"We are not introducing an EU-wide youth mobility scheme - free movement within the EU was ended and there are no plans to introduce it," a government spokesman said.

The UK was open to agreeing youth mobility schemes with its "international partners", including individual EU member states.

The opposition Labour Party has also ruled out the possibility of an EU-wide scheme, saying it would seek to improve the UK's working relationship with the bloc within its red lines - "no return to the single market, customs union or free movement".

PM Sunak 'sets Britain back on climate change'

Reuters
London

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has set Britain back on tackling climate change and must do more on heating and industrial emissions to stop slipping behind other nations, the head of the government's advisory body has said.

Chris Stark, who will step down as chief executive of the independent Climate Change

Committee next week, told the BBC broadcaster that UK climate policy had become less ambitious. "That is extremely hard to recover," Stark said, according to excerpts from the interview due to air today. "I think it's set us back."

Under pressure to address cost-of-living concerns and trailing the opposition Labour Party before an election later this year, Sunak has outraged environmental campaigners by watering down some measures to reach net zero emissions. He says delaying targets for

changing cars and domestic heating are pragmatic moves needed to maintain the consent of the British people, with the country's commitment to reach net zero by 2050 still intact.

Stark, who has run the committee since April 2018 but will now join consultancy the Carbon Trust as chief executive later this year, said Britain needed to do more work on how homes were heated and industrial emissions managed, as well as in the farming and transport systems. "I definitely feel we're at risk," he said.

Alpine Eagle 41 XP TT (Tech Titanium) in grade 5 titanium

Mechanical perfection revealed



With Alpine Eagle, Chopard has created a contemporary sporty-chic collection with a pure design and sophisticated aesthetic. The collection now welcomes a new ultra-thin timepiece providing full visibility across the entire intricate mechanical workings of L.U.C Calibre 96.17-S. This movement measuring a mere 3.30 millimetres thick, featuring subtly openworked components in an elegant play on contrasting materials and finishes, showcases the finest expertise and innovation cultivated within Chopard Manufacture. The 41 mm-diameter titanium case benefits from the extreme lightness of a metal boasting tried and tested resistance. Its optimal proportions and modernist design infuse this model with an undeniably technical character, while remaining faithful to the collection's sporty look.

Inspired by a historical Chopard model, the Alpine Eagle collection has been constantly enriched since its launch by new horological achievements.



The mainplate and bridges are moreover sandblasted, a finish that contrasts with the satin-brushed and polished surfaces of the case and bracelet, directing the gaze towards the movement. In the same spirit, they are then black rhodium-plated to create a new contrast that highlights the gilded gear trains. This technical aesthetic - unprecedented for Alpine Eagle and enabled by the expertise developed over the years in the Chopard Manufacture workshops - blends in brilliantly with the collection's sporty-chic codes. **A timepiece in grade 5 titanium: a material boasting tried and tested resistance**

The Alpine Eagle 41 XP TT is entirely made of grade 5 titanium, which is a slightly darker shade than steel and further accentuates the sporty, rugged identity of the Alpine Eagle, while providing such a light feel that one almost forgets the watch is on the wrist. Combined with a blend of aluminium and vanadium, the properties of grade 5 titanium make it particularly resistant to corrosion and salt water: from steep peaks to the depths of the sea, the Alpine Eagle 41 XP TT remains the finest ally of extreme sports enthusiasts.

The optimal proportions of an ultra-thin timepiece

The proportions of the Alpine Eagle 41 XP TT watch have been optimised thanks to its thin movement: maintaining a total 41-millimetre diameter, the case is just 8 mm thick, while the flanks and bezel have been trimmed down compared with a classic Alpine Eagle 41 model, thus providing a wider opening onto the dial. These exquisitely pleasing proportions, which Chopard reserves for exceptional models, endow the timepiece with an aura of graceful elegance. The Alpine Eagle 41 XP TT also remains true to the aesthetics of the collection, inspired by the power of Nature and nurtured by Chopard's visionary spirit.

Alpine Eagle: reinterpreting an icon

Envisioned by three generations of gentlemen in the Scheufele family, the Alpine Eagle collection is a modern reinterpretation of the St. Moritz watch, the first horological creation designed by Chopard's now Co-President, Karl-Friedrich Scheufele, in the late 1970s. With its pure, assertive design, Alpine Eagle enriches this heritage with powerful inspiration drawn from Nature. A round case with raised stylised flanks, a crown engraved with a compass rose, a bezel with eight functional indexed screws: Alpine Eagle is a token of refined and resolutely contemporary elegance.

The latest of these is the introduction within an Alpine Eagle timepiece of a movement developed by Chopard Manufacture, L.U.C Calibre 96.17-S. In the name Alpine Eagle 41 XP TT, the '41' refers to the diameter of the case; 'XP', for extra-plat (ultra-thin), expresses the slimmest of the movement and the watch; while 'TT' evokes the terms 'technical' and 'titanium' that are both strongly featured in the model's design. Chopard thereby orchestrates a fruitful encounter between the mechanical logic of its workshops and the sporty elegance of the Alpine Eagle collection.

L.U.C 96.17-S: a Chopard Manufacture movement

The ultra-thin L.U.C Calibre 96.17-S combines the technical sophistication and aesthetic refinement underpinning Chopard Manufacture's approach to

watchmaking. An evolved version of the first L.U.C movement, it features an off-centre micro-rotor in 22-carat gold, whose high inertia ensures the efficient winding of two barrels. Stacked in accordance with Chopard Twin technology, these barrels store the energy required for a total 65-hour power reserve.

In the absence of a dial, in order to reveal the mechanism's inner workings to the full, the mainplate and bridges are openworked in a manner following the curves of the case opening, creating concentric spaces around the movement's centre and thus providing a chance to admire the components in action. This approach is a signature Chopard touch reflecting the Maison's wish to adopt an approach distinct from traditional openworking techniques.



Moscow says US aid to Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan will 'exacerbate global crises'

AFP/Reuters
Moscow

Moscow has slammed the approval by the US House of Representatives for an aid package to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.

"The allocation of US military aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan will exacerbate global crises," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Telegram. She called aid for Kyiv "direct support for terrorist activities" and that the aid "to Taiwan, it is interference in China's internal affairs. To Israel, it is a road straight to escalation and an unprecedented rise in tension in the region".

Earlier yesterday Russia's presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the decision to provide aid to Ukraine "will further enrich the United States of America and ruin Ukraine even more, by killing even more Ukrainians because of the Kyiv regime", state news agency Tass reported.

Lawmakers in the US House of Representatives passed legislation in a rare session yesterday that provides aid to Ukraine and Israel, bolsters Taiwan while also threatening a ban on TikTok if it fails to divest from Beijing (see report on Page 8).

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed news that US lawmakers had passed the massive aid package as Kyiv and Moscow denounced each other over the latest exchange of deadly air strikes.

"Today, we received the decision we expected: the US support package we fought so hard for," said Zelensky in his evening

address. "And it is a very significant package that will be felt by our soldiers on the frontline, as well as by our towns and villages suffering from Russian terror."

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba thanked US lawmakers and called it "a bad day for Putin".

Zelensky and Kuleba both expressed hopes the package would quickly pass the US Senate for approval by US President Joe Biden.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) chief Jens Stoltenberg also welcomed the news.

"This significant boost in aid will supplement the tens of billions of aid being provided to Ukraine by European Allies," he said.

EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel also welcomed the vote in a joint statement: "Ukraine deserves all the support it can get against Russia."

"The US and Europe stand together on the side of freedom - against Putin's war of terror," Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock wrote on X, formerly Twitter, calling it a "day of optimism".

Earlier in the day Kyiv and Moscow accused each other of deadly strikes on civilians overnight.

Russian strikes killed three people in central and northeast Ukraine, according to local officials.

In Russia's western Belgorod region, cross-border Ukrainian attacks killed three people, said the local governor.

Ukrainian drones killed two people in Russia's Belgorod border region, its governor said early yesterday, while shelling



Firefighters work at the site in Odesa where residential buildings were damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine.

later in the day fatally wounded a pregnant woman.

A residential building and a barn in the village of Poroz, near the frontier, has been "completely burned down", Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said. Another building was severely damaged.

"Tragically, two civilians died - a woman who was recovering from a fractured femur, and a man who was caring for her," Gladkov wrote on Telegram.

He later said Ukraine shelling of the village of Novaya Tavolzhanka, had killed a pregnant woman and her unborn child.

"Doctors did everything possible to save both mother and child. But to great grief, the woman and the unborn baby died from their wounds," he said.

A Russian attack killed a man in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region, while artillery strikes on residential buildings in the northeastern city of Vovchansk left two others dead, officials said.

Russia fired at least seven missiles at Ukraine overnight, two of which were shot down by air defences.

Ukraine has in recent months pleaded for more air defences from its Western allies as it struggles to fend off a surge in deadly attacks on civilian infrastructure.

A source in Ukraine's defence sector told AFP that Kyiv had targeted eight Russian regions overnight in a "large-scale" drone strike.



A handout picture released by the Russian defence ministry shows a demonstration flight of military drones at a training range in the Moscow military district.

It was aimed at "energy infrastructure that feeds Russia's military-industrial complex".

"At least three electrical substations and a fuel storage base were hit and caught fire," the source added, in a "joint operation" of Ukraine's SBU security service, army, and military intelligence.

Russia's defence ministry said it had intercepted 50 Ukrainian drones overnight, some of them hundreds of kilometres from the border, including near the capital Moscow.

Video posted on social media purportedly showed a large blaze at a fuel depot in Russia's western Smolensk region, an attack the governor confirmed was caused by the drones.

"Air-defence forces shot the aerial vehicles down," Governor Vasily Anokhin said. "However, as a result of falling debris, a tank with fuel and lubricants caught fire."

Kyiv has ramped up strikes on Russian oil and gas facilities in recent months, part of what it calls "fair" retaliation on infrastructure used to fuel Russia's war.

Thousands protest in Canaries over mass tourism

AFP/Reuters
Madrid

Tens of thousands of demonstrators hit the streets of Spain's Canary Islands yesterday to demand changes to the model of mass tourism they say is overwhelming the Atlantic archipelago.

Rallying under the slogan *The Canary Islands have a limit*, demonstrators began protesting at midday (1100 GMT), with flag-waving crowds packing the streets of the main towns across all of the archipelago's seven islands.

An estimated 57,000 people joined the protests, Spanish media reports said, citing the central government's representative in the islands.

Chanting and whistling, they waved a sea of placards and banners emblazoned with slogans like "The Canary Islands are not up for sale!" or "A moratorium on tourism" while others simply said: "Respect my home."

The protests were called by some 20 social and environmental groups who say tourist overcrowding perpetuates an economic model that harms local residents and damages the environment.

They want the authorities to limit the number of visitors and have proposed introducing an eco tax to protect the environment, a moratorium on tourism and to clamp down on the sale of properties to non-residents.

"We are not against tourism," one woman demonstrator named Rosario Correo told Spain's TVE public television. "We're asking that they change this model that allows for unlimited growth of tourism."

Last year, 16mn people visited the Canary Islands, more than seven times its population of some 2.2mn, which the collective says is unsustainable for the archipelago's limited resources.

"We're tired of the overcrowding, of low salaries, of not having houses to live in and seeing our land bought by foreigners because they have the money to buy our grandparents' land that we can't afford," 59-year-old teacher Nieves Rodrigues Rivera told AFP.

The constant influx of visitors was exacerbating the housing crisis by pushing up rents, said 22-year-old student Antonio Samuel Diaz Garcia.

"We're seeing holiday homes invading our



People gather during a demonstration for a change in the tourism model in the Canary Islands, in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain.

villages which pushes rents up and makes it increasingly difficult for young people like us to leave home," he told AFP. "We're also seeing tourism destroy the biodiversity here."

Large crowd of protesters also held parallel rallies of support in Madrid and Barcelona, public television said.

Anti-tourism protests have multiplied in recent months across Spain, the world's second-most visited country, prompting authorities to try to reconcile the interests of locals and a lucrative sector that accounts for 12.8% of Spain's economy.

The islands, which lie off the northwestern coast of Africa, are known for their volcanic landscapes and year-round sunshine attracting millions of visitors every year, with four in 10

residents working in tourism - a sector which accounts for 36% of the islands' GDP.

Before the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic brought the global travel industry to its knees in 2020, overtourism protest movements were already active in Spain, notably in Barcelona.

After travel restrictions were lifted, tourism surged with Spain welcoming a record 85.1mn visitors last year.

Canary Islands president Fernando Clavijo said on Friday he felt "proud" that the region was a leading Spanish tourist destination, but acknowledged that more controls were needed as the sector continues to grow.

"We can't keep looking away. Otherwise, hotels will continue to open without any control," he told a press conference.

Togo constitutional changes spark calls for popular protests

Reuters/AFP
Lome

Some of Togo's opposition parties and civil society groups have renewed their calls for widespread popular protests a day after lawmakers approved constitutional changes likely to extend the 19-year rule of President Faure Gnassingbe.

In a statement, the Dynamique Pour la Majorite du Peuple (DMP) opposition coalition and other signatories said the changes, relating to presidential term limits and how presidents are elected, were a political manoeuvre to allow Gnassingbe to extend his tenure for life.

"What happened at the National Assembly yesterday is a coup d'etat," they said in the statement that reiterated calls for the population to mobilise against the changes. "Large-scale action will be organised over the next few days to say 'no' to this constitution."

In Friday's vote, lawmakers unanimously approved an amended charter under which the president will no longer be elected by universal suffrage, but by members of parliament.

Togo's parliament had already adopted the new constitution on March 25, but Gnassingbe asked lawmakers to vote again after the reform sparked opposition criticism of a "constitutional coup".

The second reading was passed with 87 lawmakers present all agreeing to the new system.

"Togo has just turned a new

page on its way towards a more inclusive and participatory democracy. This is a satisfaction and a source of pride for us," Kouamele Anate, a lawmaker from Gnassingbe's ruling UNIR party, told reporters after the vote.

The amendments also introduce a parliamentary system of government and shortened presidential terms to four years from five, with a two-term limit.

The changes do not take into account time already spent in office, so could enable Gnassingbe to stay in power until 2033 if he is re-elected in 2025, a highly likely scenario as his party controls the parliament in Togo, where Gnassingbe's father and predecessor Gnassingbe Eyadema seized power via a coup in 1967.

Several other African countries, including the Central African Republic, Rwanda, the Congo Republic, Ivory Coast and Guinea, have pushed through constitutional and other legal changes in recent years allowing presidents to extend their terms in office.

West and Central Africa have witnessed eight military coups in the past three years.

In Togo, violent police crackdowns on political demonstrations have been routine under Gnassingbe - re-elected in a 2020 landslide disputed by the opposition - as they were during his father's long rule.

The new constitution also creates a new role, president of the council of ministers, with extensive authority to manage government affairs.

Bomb threat at Denmark airport

A man was arrested in connection with a bomb threat late yesterday morning that forced the evacuation of Denmark's second largest airport, police said.

"The evacuation has proceeded calmly and as expected, with travellers following our instructions," police inspector Michael Weiss said in a statement. Flights to and from Billund airport in central Denmark were suspended during the operation.

Police are also investigating whether there is a link between this bomb threat and the bombing of an ATM in Billund around 4am yesterday. Billund airport is near the headquarters of the manufacturer of Lego toy bricks and the Legoland theme park.

"Following an alert about a bomb at Billund airport, police in southeast Jutland have arrested a man," Danish police said in a statement. The airport reopened at 7pm (0500 GMT), but several flights were cancelled or delayed during its closure. - AFP/Reuters

Another 29 killed in ongoing Afghanistan rains

AFP
Kabul

Ongoing downpours have killed another 29 people in Afghanistan over the past four days, the government disaster management department said yesterday.

Afghanistan was parched by an unusually dry winter that desiccated the earth, followed by a two-week streak of downpours in most provinces that has caused sporadic flash flooding.

Disaster management department spokesman Janan Sayeq said that "29 people lost their lives because of rains" between Wednesday and yesterday, with fatalities spread across ten provinces.

Seven others have been injured over the same period, the official said, while 72 houses have been damaged or destroyed, and more than 2,500 acres of agricultural land swept away.

More than 100 people have been killed in flooding this month, according to official figures, whilst more than 25,000 families have required aid as a result of the deluge.

The United Nations last year warned that "Afghanistan is experiencing major swings in extreme weather conditions".

After four decades of war, the country ranks among the nations least prepared to face extreme weather events, which scientists say are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change.

At least 25 people were killed in a landslide after massive snowfall in eastern Afghanistan in February.

Meanwhile, around 60 were killed in a three-week spate of precipitation ending in March.



CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

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



Longer periods of above-target global inflation may surge policy tightening

Greater geopolitical instability and a more extreme climate threaten to lead to more supply shocks in future, increasing the chances of global inflation spiking up. Global supply chains often get disrupted because of geopolitical instability such as conflicts or trade disputes. Similarly, extreme weather events like hurricanes, droughts, or floods disrupt agricultural production and logistics.

These disruptions generally lead to shortages of goods, driving up prices due to increased demand relative to supply.

Instability in key regions result in increased costs of production due to factors such as higher transportation costs, tariffs, or sanctions. Similarly, extreme weather events damage infrastructure or agricultural lands, leading to increased production costs.

These increased costs are often passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for goods and services.

“Over the longer-term, we expect inflation to average around 2%, though this will include longer periods above target than was the norm post-financial crisis,” according to Oxford Economics.

After a period of exceptionally low and stable inflation in the 2000s and 2010s, several factors – especially greater geopolitical instability and a more extreme climate – could lead to more supply shocks in the future. This increases the chances of inflation spiking up.

According to Oxford Economics, an AI-driven productivity boom, if it happens, would likely dampen inflation

“Whether inflation will be generally higher or just more volatile will depend on the economic backdrop and how central banks respond. We expect higher policy rates on average, partly because domestic demand is unlikely to be as persistently weak as in the 2010s, so a repeat of the last decade’s private sector deleveraging and fiscal austerity seems unlikely,” Oxford Economics noted.

At the same time, the chances that strong demand will pose a risk of persistently high inflation

seem overblown. More spending on defence, the greening of the economy, and ageing doesn’t automatically mean bigger budget deficits.

But if they do rise, then policy rates would likely be higher to offset the effect.

Although deglobalisation could add to inflationary pressures, analysts see this as a risk rather than an inevitability. Meanwhile, despite the recent strength of inflation, real wage rises have generally lagged productivity growth since 2019.

Another factor that could add to inflation overshoots is how firms respond to demand and supply shocks. It is possible they are now more inclined to raise prices.

But the post-Covid lockdown resilience of demand to price hikes may have reflected exceptional factors that won’t be repeated. Meanwhile, an AI-driven productivity boom, if it happens, would likely dampen inflation, Oxford Economics says.

Despite the severe post-pandemic inflation overshoot, advanced economy central banks belatedly showed a resolute commitment to keeping longer-term inflation expectations anchored. Aggressive hikes proved that central banks were prepared to risk recession to bring inflation back to target.

As a result of this and subsiding headline inflation, long-term inflation expectations have quickly fallen back.

Although greater geopolitical instability and extreme climate events invariably contribute to inflationary pressures, the actual impact will depend on a range of interconnected factors, including the severity and duration of disruptions, policy responses, and broader economic conditions.

That said, longer periods of above-target global inflation may lead to more policy tightening in future.

To Advertise

✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

Display

☎ 44466621 ☎ 44418811

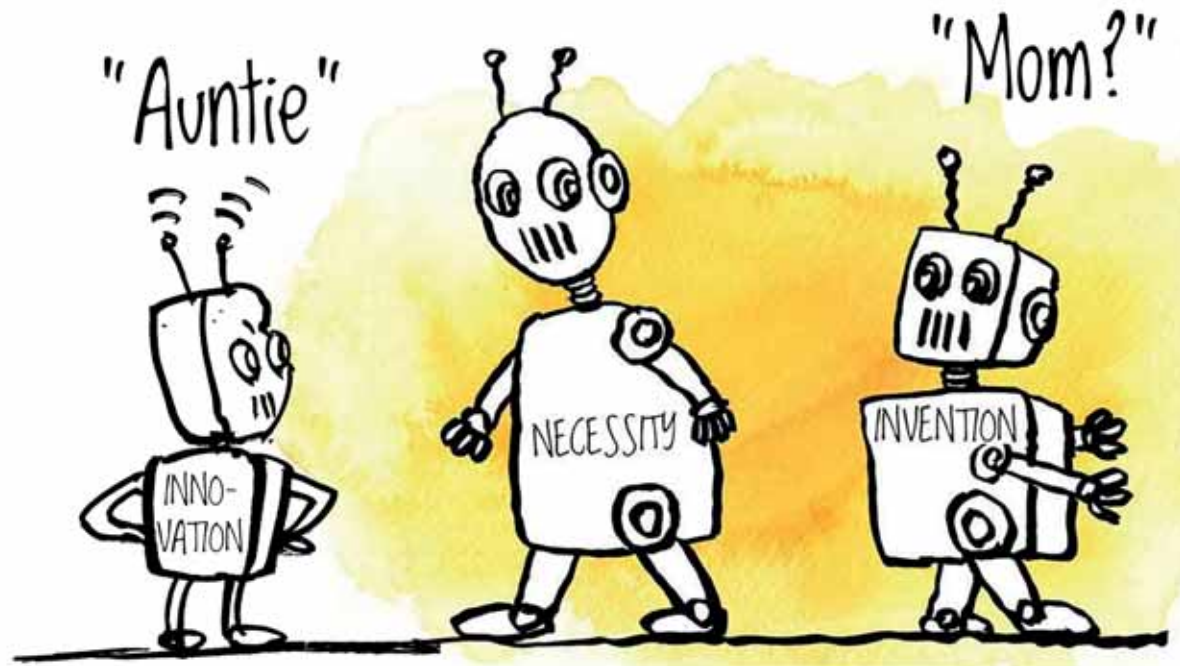
Classified

☎ 44466609 ☎ 44418811

✉ gtcad@gulf-times.com

Subscription

✉ circulation@gulf-times.com



World Creativity and Innovation Day

Losing hope of rescue, some Europe solar firms head to US

By Sarah McFarlane and Riham Alkousaa
Frieburg (Germany)

European governments due to move to support their solar power manufacturers this week will be too late to stop solar panel maker Meyer Burger packing up a German factory to send production to the United States.

The plant in Freiberg in eastern Germany closed in mid-March with the loss of 500 jobs, as the Swiss-listed firm joined a growing list of European renewable energy manufacturing factories shutting down or moving. In the past year, at least 10 have said they are in financial difficulties.

On a recent visit to the site, giant white robotic arms hung dormant over empty wooden pallets as workers prepared the last production line for shutdown. Talks with the German federal government to try to secure a future for the factory ended without success in late March, a company spokesperson told Reuters.

Germany’s economy ministry said it was aware of the “very serious situation” of German companies and has been examining funding options with the industry for over a year. It agreed to give Meyer Burger an export credit guarantee for equipment produced in Germany to be used at the US factories, which will help a site nearby but won’t save the Freiberg one.

The closure, which in one sweep reduced European solar panel production by 10%, comes despite a boom in wind and solar energy in Europe. Additions to renewable energy capacity, including solar panels, are running at record pace, according to data from the International Energy Agency.

But Europe-based

manufacturers that supply those panels are being crushed by competition from China and the US, whose governments give more support to their producers.

The situation poses a dilemma for European governments keen to fight climate change: Either offer more support to ensure local production can stay competitive, or allow the unfettered flow of imports to keep up the pace of installations. A meeting in Brussels between European energy ministers will make a gesture of support for the struggling industry.

China is expanding solar output and now accounts for 80% of the world’s solar manufacturing capacity. The cost of producing panels there is around 12 cents per watt of energy generated, compared with 22 cents in Europe, according to research firm Wood Mackenzie.

US subsidies announced as part of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act allow some renewable energy manufacturers and project developers to claim tax credits, which are attracting businesses from within the European Union and beyond.

Meyer Burger says its plans include a solar panel factory in Arizona and a solar cell factory in Colorado.

“We made a bold move in the absence of any industry policy support in Europe and shifted a solar cell expansion project from Germany to the US,” its chief executive Gunter Erfurt told Reuters in an interview.

Similarly, battery company Freyr which operates mostly in Norway, has stopped work at a half-finished plant near the Arctic Circle and is focusing on plans for a plant in the US state of Georgia after Washington announced the policy.

Freyr said in February it had changed its registration to the US from Luxembourg.

“We did spend quite a bit of time trying to really make sure that we weren’t committing a

mistake,” said Birger Steen, chief executive of Freyr. The company first hunted for support from Norwegian or European governments.

“We got to the point where we concluded that that form of policy level response was not forthcoming.”

Asked to comment, Norway’s ministry of trade and industry said that it had launched an industrial policy framework targeting energy transition technologies including solar and batteries, but did not directly address questions about additional funding for the companies in this story.

The European Commission is embarking on a voluntary charter for governments and companies to sign in support of solar manufacturing plants. Industry association Solar Power Europe will coordinate company signatories. But the charter, which says that buyers of solar panels should include some domestic production in what they buy, is not enforceable, Solar Power Europe said.

Michael Bloss, EU parliament member for Greens, launched a petition earlier this month calling for action at a European level to rescue panel manufacturers.

Bloss says he is pushing for the European Commission to set up a €200mn euro (\$213mn) fund to buy up unused European-made solar panels, but Europe has been unwilling to pursue that. The European Commission declined to comment.

“We are – in headlines and Sunday speeches – very much in favour of creating our own solar industry, but then in action, nothing happens,” Bloss told Reuters.

“The charter will be more like a political declaration signed by member states, solar companies and the Commission, it’s more long term, it has no immediate effect.”

In February, European policymakers adopted the

Net-Zero Industry Act, a set of measures including a target to produce 40% of the region’s clean tech needs by 2030.

The previous month, the EU also approved almost \$1bn of German state aid for a Swedish battery producer, Northvolt, to help it set up a production plant in Germany after Northvolt threatened to take its business to the United States. It was the first time the bloc made use of an exceptional measure allowing member countries to step in with aid when there’s a risk of investment leaving Europe.

But aid for ongoing operations has not been forthcoming, amid political disagreement over how much public funds should go to struggling businesses.

Decisions about supporting industries or firms like Meyer Burger are down to member states, a spokesperson for the European Commission told Reuters. Germany’s economy and climate ministry believes aid to maintain an existing company like Meyer Burger would not be legal “if there is a lack of market prospects from the company’s perspective,” a spokesperson told Reuters.

Potential customers – renewable energy installers that depend heavily on cheap Chinese imports – have also pushed back against any new subsidies for local panels, arguing such moves could hurt them by causing consumers to postpone orders as they wait for the subsidies to kick in.

More than a year’s worth of low-price imported panels sit in European warehouses awaiting installation, according to consultancy Rystad Energy and solar panel makers. Reuters could not independently verify that estimate.

That backlog could grow as Chinese capacity continues to expand, Rystad says: If all the plans Chinese firms have announced go ahead, China’s industry will be able to make twice as many panels as are expected to be installed worldwide in 2024, said Marius Mordal Bakke, senior analyst at Rystad.

Dresden-based Solarwatt is carrying six to nine months of stocks, up from around six weeks, its chief executive Detlef Neuhaus told Reuters in March.

The company laid off around 10% of its employees last year and says its local panel production is running at roughly one-third of capacity.

“This industry is so important for the future, we cannot allow that we are losing all our competence,” said Neuhaus.

Analysts say it’s not clear what support could actually help, because firms like Meyer Burger produce a fraction of the volumes made by those in China, or planned in the US.

“They are tiny, so they will always struggle with volume, not just to compete with Chinese producers but also with US producers,” said Eugen Perger, senior analyst at Research Partners AG. – Reuters



An employee works on a photovoltaic thermal energy module at the solar energy company Sunmaxx in Ottendorf-Okrilla near Dresden, Germany, last month. (Reuters)

Qatari talent to be showcased at Innovation by Design Summit



Dana Alfardan



Nayef al-Ibrahim



Hamad al-Amari



Shaika al-Nassr

Several prominent Qatari innovators and entrepreneurs will be featured as speakers and panellists at the Innovation by Design Summit at Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD)'s Doha Design District on April 24.

The summit will explore various aspects of design and its impact on society, with sessions covering topics such as biophilic design, sustainable materials, artificial intelligence (AI) in content creation and business, circular design, immersive museum experiences, and the potential for a

global Middle Eastern design language.

The event, being hosted by Msheireb Properties and Fast Company Middle East, will also delve into the role of urban planning in creating people-centric cities, the interplay between technology and creativity, and the importance of designing for the experience economy and Gen Z.

Notable Qatari speakers will include designer Abdulrahman al-Muftah, composer and songwriter Dana Alfardan, Msheireb Museums exhibitions and programmes manager Fahad al-Turky, entrepreneur and comedian Hamad al-Amari, Snoonu founder and chief executive Hamad Mubarak al-Hajri, Qatar Scientific Club head of robotics and AI Mohamed al-Qassabi, Ibtechar founding partner and chief executive Nayef al-Ibrahim, and Museum of Islamic Art director Shaika al-Nassr.

Their participation will highlight the growing influence and contributions of Qatari innovators in the global design landscape.

Msheireb Properties senior director of corporate communications, Dr Hafiz Ali Abdullah, said: "Design has the power to change the world. By bringing together brilliant minds from Qatar and around the world, we want to inspire and empower the next generation of designers and innovators to create solutions that positively impact our communities and the planet."

Ibtechar founding partner and chief executive al-Ibrahim shared his thoughts on the role of technology in creativity: "As we navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of design and innovation, it is crucial to recognise the potential of technology as a tool for empowerment."



Hamad Mubarak al-Hajri



Abdulrahman al-Muftah

"By harnessing the power of AI and other emerging technologies, we can push the boundaries of creativity and develop solutions that address the challenges of our time," the engineer said.

The Innovation by Design Summit will culminate with the launch of the Msheireb Award for Innovation in Design, a global initiative celebrating exemplary design-driven solutions across four categories: human-centred design, sustainable design, technology-powered design, and lifestyle and luxury design.

The award was created to champion design thinking as a catalyst for positive change, offering a platform for ideas that address individual, community, and global challenges.



Mohamed al-Qassabi



Fahad al-Turky



7th edition of Coffee, Tea and Chocolate Festival concludes

The 7th edition of 'Coffee, Tea and Chocolate Festival' concluded at the Old Doha Port yesterday. The 10-day event hosted more than 50 companies offering an array of popular and signature beverages and sweets and transformed the popular venue into a hub of gastronomic delight and entertainment. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

