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Amir, Deputy Amir and PM condole with Saudi king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the death of Prince Mansour bin Badr bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, to condole the death of Prince Mansour bin Badr bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. (QNA)

Blinken to head to Saudi for talks

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will hold talks in Saudi Arabia tomorrow and Tuesday on efforts to reach a Gaza ceasefire and prevent a larger regional conflict, the State Department said. Blinken, who will depart today, will meet with ministers from the bloc of Gulf Arab states on his first trip to the region since the long shadow war between their regional rival Iran and US ally Israel escalated into direct conflict.

Mona Lisa could get a room of her own

The *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci, the world's most famous portrait, could get a room of its own in the Louvre, the museum's president said yesterday. Such a move would give visitors, many of whom visit the Louvre for the iconic painting alone, a better experience, Laurence des Cars told the France Inter broadcaster. Page 11

Russia in 'massive' missile attack

Russia launched a "massive" missile strike at Ukraine overnight, damaging four power plants in the latest barrage targeting the country's energy supply, officials in Kyiv said yesterday. Page 11

Gulf Air to resume flights to Iraq

Bahrain's national carrier, Gulf Air, will resume flights to Iraq after a four-year suspension, the Bahraini news agency said yesterday. Bahrain's flights to Iraq were suspended in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic, the agency said.

23rd batch of wounded Palestinians arrives in Doha for treatment



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir welcomes in Doha, yesterday, the 23rd batch of the Palestinians wounded in the Gaza Strip, within the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, devoted to treating 1,500 Palestinians from the enclave. Page 6

'Constant terror' in Rafah as Gazans face Israeli invasion

AFP
Rafah (Palestinian Territories)

Palestinians in Rafah told AFP yesterday they were living in "constant terror" as Israel vows to push ahead with its planned assault on the south Gaza city flooded with displaced civilians.

Most of Gaza's population is sheltering in Rafah at the very south of the territory after fleeing Israeli bombardment elsewhere.

The Israeli army insists it will carry out a ground assault to eliminate Hamas fighters, despite an international outcry and concern for the roughly 1.5mn Palestinians sheltering in Rafah, many in tents.

34,388 Palestinians killed so far

At least 34,388 Palestinians have been killed and 77,437 others injured in Israel's military offensive on Gaza since October 7, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement yesterday. Some 32 have been killed and 69 others wounded over the past 24 hours, the ministry said.



Mourners react next to the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. (Reuters)

"We live in constant terror and fear of repeated displacement and invasion," said Nidaa Safi, 30, who fled Israeli strikes in the north and came to Rafah with her husband and children.

"We think about it all day long," she said.

Even before Israel's forces begin the expected assault, they have been carrying out devastating air strikes.

An overnight strike on a house in Rafah killed a four-month-old baby, her mother, father, and two brothers, relatives and neighbours told AFP.

Hospital officials in Rafah said more than a dozen people were killed during the night.

"Every day we hear news about a Rafah invasion and that it's a certain fact, on top of the bombardments we witness and hear," Safi said. "Fear is controlling us, we don't know how to think anymore."

Her family has now decided to leave for Deir al-Balah, in centre of the Gaza Strip. Safi said they hoped to "flee Rafah before they kill us". Page 7

Qatar National Renewable Energy Strategy launched

●Kahramaa plan aims to increase, diversify utilisation of renewable energy sources

The Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa) has launched the Qatar National Renewable Energy Strategy (QNRES). With 22 key energy actors in Qatar, the strategy, according to an official statement, is a step that reflects the efforts of Kahramaa to enhance its work in the field of renewable energy uses.

The aim is to develop policies and strategies related to a more sustainable future to achieve Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third Qatar National Development Strategy 2024-2030.

"QNRES aims to increase and diversify the utilisation of renewable energy sources, specifically solar energy in Qatar and integrate them into the energy mix while considering the high-quality solar energy resources in the country. The country's global horizontal radiation level is among the highest in the world, with a rating of more than 2,000kWh generated per square meter per year," the statement said.

The QNRES also aims to increase large-scale renewable power generation to about 4GW by 2030. QNRES recommends the installation of distributed solar generation up to around 200MW by 2030. This distributed generation capacity

will enable more localised power generation reducing strain on the centralised grid infrastructure and enhancing energy resilience.

Launching the strategy is considered an ambitious step that will benefit the energy sector in the future in terms of economic advantages, environmental impact and energy security. Reducing CO2 emissions through sustainable policies and trends will enhance environmental sustainability and contribute to improving air quality. In terms of CO2 emissions reduction, the recommended power mix will have a significant impact in reducing 10% of Qatar's total annual CO2 emissions from the power sector. It will reduce the Carbon intensity in Qatar's annual CO2 intensity by 27% for each unit of electricity produced.

In terms of economic advantage, it is expected to reduce the average cost of electricity generation by 15% by 2030 due to the cost-competitive solutions. Diversifying the generation sources promotes energy security, enhancing stability in the energy sector. The QNRES recognises the importance of ensuring that the transition to renewable energy does not compromise the reliability and resilience of the electricity system. Page 4

US internal memo points to Israeli 'violation' of international law in Gaza

Some senior State Department officials in internal memo told Secretary of State Antony Blinken they do not find "credible or reliable" Israel's assurances that it is using US-supplied weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law, according to an internal State Department memo reviewed by Reuters. A joint submission from four bureaus — Democracy Human Rights & Labour; Population, Refugees and Migration; Global Criminal Justice and International Organisation Affairs — raised "serious concern over non-compliance" with international humanitarian law during Israel's prosecution of the Gaza war.

The assessment from the four bureaus said Israel's assurances were "neither credible nor reliable." It cited eight examples of Israeli military actions that the officials said raise "serious questions" about potential violations of international humanitarian law. Page 7

HMC in new plan to enhance patient booking system

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) affirmed that it has undertaken an initiative to enhance the entire booking system, covering every aspect from referrals to appointment scheduling, including e-triage and in-calling processes.

This effort reflects the corporation's ongoing commitment to improve patient access to healthcare services, ensuring a more streamlined and effective experience for all.

Led by HMC's Center for Patient Experience and Staff Engagement (CPSE), a set of system changes were implemented following the review to HMC's Referral and Booking Management System (RBMS) with patients now seeing tangible improvements throughout because of the changes, HMC highlighted in a statement yesterday.

Chief of Patient Experience and Director of Hamad Healthcare Quality Institute Nasser al-Naimi said one of the cornerstones of

HMC's success in optimising outpatient care has been the strategic centralisation and decentralisation of its operations, adding that while the Referral and Booking Management System (RBMS) management is centralised, operations were decentralised across various healthcare facilities.

This means that hospitals have more control of booking appointments for their patients and helps to avoid unnecessary delays. This approach ensures that the capacity of clinics matches the demand, effectively reducing waiting times for appointments, he outlined.

He added that the RBMS enhancements have been rolled out across major HMC facilities, including the Ambulatory Care Center, Hamad General Hospital, Al Wakra Hospital, Al Khor Hospital, Qatar Rehabilitation Institute, Aisha bint Hamad Al-Attiyah Hospital, Women's Wellness and Research Center, the Bone and Joint Center, and the Hamad Dental Center.



Nasser al-Naimi

The project is now concentrating on expanding RBMS services by incorporating Patient Care Assistants. This initiative aims to boost clinic utilisation and streamline the process of booking follow-up appointments directly from the physician's room, thereby enhancing overall patient care and efficiency, al-Naimi pointed out.

Al-Naimi said the changes to



the RBMS have delivered significant improvements and patients are now receiving their appointment dates faster than ever before, following referral to HMC.

"The system changes are making a positive impact on patient care. We have significantly increased the number of patients having their appointment date confirmed within seven days of referral and significantly reduced

the number of patients with pending referrals," he said.

He highlighted that a remarkable increase in the number of patients receiving their first appointment within seven days of referral. The figures rose from 3,315 in February 2022 to 10,723 in January 2024, an increase of 224%.

An impressive 91% increase in the number of patients seen within two weeks of referral, with

numbers rising from 6,815 in February 2022 to 13,005 in January 2024, al-Naimi affirmed.

For her part, Executive Director of Nursing at Hamad General Hospital Khadija al-Shukaili said: "The transformation of the RBMS involved a comprehensive reforming and operationalising our speciality clinics efficiently through direct engagement of services' stakeholders. This initiative was aimed at increasing utilisation of our current capacity and prioritising our patients' needs and care."

"By strategically redirecting referrals in partnership with multiple stakeholders with HMC and PHCC, we have successfully streamlined patient demand and relieved considerable pressure on central Doha hospitals, especially Hamad General Hospital. These multiple initiatives and partnerships have ensured that patients receive the right care at the right service and facility thus reducing the appointment waiting time," she highlighted. (QNA)



The delegates at the 50th Arab Labour Conference in Baghdad.



HE Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri speaking at the conference.

Labour minister participates in opening of 50th Arab Labour Conference in Baghdad

QNA
Baghdad

HE the Minister of Labour and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organisation Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri participated in the opening session of the 50th Arab Labour Conference in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, being organised by the Arab Labour Organisation from April 27-May 4.

The opening was attended by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shi'a al-Sudani, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Iraq - Chairman of the Conference Ahmed al-Asadi, Director-General of the Arab Labour Organisation Fayez Ali al-Mutairi and representatives of the three production parties in the Arab countries (governments, employers and workers) according to the principle of tripartite representation and a number of relevant Arab and regional organisations.

Addressing the conference opening, HE Dr al-Marri stressed that the convening of the 50th session of the Arab Labour Conference confirms 50 years of a firm and solid relationship between the Arab Labour Organisation and the three production parties of the Arab countries, noting that the relationship is based on mutual understanding, respect, support and assistance to achieve the ob-

jectives of the Arab Labour Organisation.

During his speech at the opening of the conference, HE the minister said that the 50th session of the Arab Labour Conference comes under exceptional circumstances that the Arab nation is going through, pointing out that the situation in the Gaza Strip is still burning and the economic crisis continues to cast its shadow on labour markets and employment issues in the Arab countries.

The chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organisation expressed his hope that the conference will come out with decisions and recommendations that contribute to achieving the aspirations of peoples in securing decent work opportunities and achieving a balance between creating more job opportunities, preserving the rights of workers to decent working conditions and reaching more secure, stable and just labour markets.

He explained that during the past year, the Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organisation discussed many important statutory, financial, administrative and technical issues, in addition to reviewing in its report the situation of workers and the people of Palestine in the occupied territories, where it condemned the crimes committed by the occupation authorities against workers and the people of Palestine as war crimes

The 50th session of the Arab Labour Conference addresses vital issues that directly impact labour markets in the Arab region, labour issues in the Arab world, the director-general's report on the future of human resources in light of the technological revolution

and genocide.

The chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organisation called on the international community and all peace-loving forces to provide the necessary protection for the unarmed Palestinian people, stop this unjust war immediately and hold the perpetrators of these brutal crimes accountable before international courts, stressing the continued support for the Palestinian cause until the Arab people in Palestine obtain their freedom and establish their independent state on their land.

HE the minister pointed out that the Board of Directors reviewed the financial position of the organisation in terms of contributions and arrears to member states and the reports of the Financial and Administrative Supervisory Authority and auditors on the final accounts of the Arab Labour Office in Cairo and the institutes and centres affiliated to the organisation for the fiscal year ending on 31 December 2023, noting that the Board adopted the ambitious plan presented by the Arab Labour Organization for the

years (2025-2026), which we hope for your co-operation and support for its implementation.

He noted that the board discussed the report on the activities and achievements of the Arab Labour Organisation, which highlighted the outstanding activities and hard work exerted by the organisation to implement a wide range of activities and events that benefit the three parties of production in the Arab countries.

HE Dr al-Marri, Minister of Labour and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organisation, attended the high-level meeting of representatives of government delegations to the Arab Labour Organisation, where a number of reports on the work of the committees stemming from the Arab Labour Organization were reviewed.

The 50th session of the Arab Labour Conference addresses vital issues that directly impact labour markets in the Arab region, labour issues in the Arab world, the director-general's report on the future of human resources in light of the technological revolution, and the challenges facing human resources

in Arab countries in light of technological progress.

The director-general's report reviews how to prepare the workforce of the future, with a focus on training and continuing education to enhance the skills needed to adapt to technological changes, the balance and integration between technology and the human element, and the impact that technology can have on creating new job opportunities and improving working conditions.

The conference will address the development of policies to enhance productivity and sustainability in the Arab labour markets, including the analysis of factors that will contribute to enhancing the work environment and stimulating economic growth, as well as looking at ways to improve and develop policies, and the required roles of the three production parties and the Arab Labour Organisation.

Qatar, represented by HE Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri, Minister of Labour, presides over the Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organisation following its election last October for a one-year term ending in October 2024.

Amir congratulates Netherlands king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the occasion of his country's national day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to Dutch PM Mark Rutte on the occasion.

Amir greets president of South Africa

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa on the occasion of his country's Freedom Day.

Amir greets president of Sierra Leone

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of Sierra Leone Dr Julius Maada Bio on the occasion of his country's independence day.

Amir congratulates president of Togo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Togolese Republic Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe on the anniversary of his country's independence day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to PM Victoire Tomegah Dogbe on the occasion. **(QNA)**

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Healing Hands Essay Competition

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Calling all Qatari high school students! We are pleased to announce the annual Healing Hands Essay Competition, which encourages young people to share their views on becoming a doctor in Qatar. Four lucky winners will receive the 'Doctors of the Future Summer Scholarship'—a fully funded, experience of a lifetime which offers the chance to visit prominent research laboratories and learn from distinguished faculty at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York and Cornell University in Ithaca, upstate New York!

Essay topic: Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies aimed at the healthcare sector have exploded exponentially in recent years. New AI technologies include chatbots to diagnose patients based on symptom algorithms, software to analyze unstructured medical data and give doctors real-time insight into their patients' conditions, and predictive analytical tools that scan complex datasets to identify new drugs. These technologies hold great promise, but some have cautioned the healthcare policymakers about adopting untested technologies without deeply considering potential ethical problems.

For this year's essay, identify a specific AI technology and analyze its significance for healthcare. How can this technology enhance the experiences of doctors and patients? Should we embrace this technology, or should we be more cautious? What are some of the ethical problems we should consider?

Write an 800-word essay in English to explore this topic. Please note that the submission deadline is: **April 30, 2024.**

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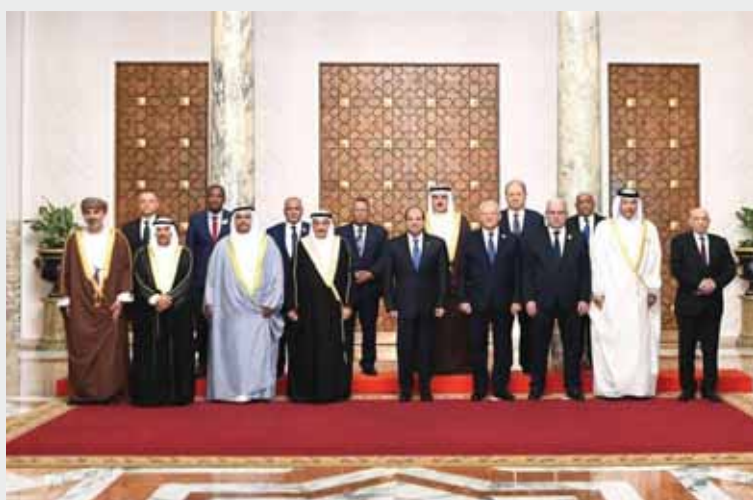
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Egyptian president meets Speaker of Shura Council, Speakers of Arab councils and parliaments



President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi met with HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem as part of his meeting with the Speakers of Arab councils and parliaments participating in the sixth conference of the Arab Parliament that was hosted by Cairo yesterday. The meeting reviewed a number of topics related to parliamentary efforts aimed at strengthening joint Arab action as well as the most prominent topics on the conference agenda. (QNA)

Shura Council Speaker highlights Qatar's interest in AI, cybersecurity

QNA
Cairo

HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem highlighted the importance that Qatar, under the directives of its wise leadership, attaches to artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and setting legal frameworks to manage their use.

This came during his chairmanship of the Shura Council's delegation to the 6th conference of the Arab Parliament and Speakers of Arab Councils and Parliaments held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on Saturday. The conference is held to discuss and issue a draft document for an Arab parliamentary vision for the safe use of AI.

HE the Speaker pointed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's emphasis on and call for the need to hold an international conference to regulate cybersecurity in international law at the 73rd and 74th sessions of the United Nations General Assembly held in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

He underscored Qatar's efforts to solidify national digital infrastructure and ensure the safety of

the state's vital interests by forming the National Cyber Security Agency.

He added that Qatar has supported a United Nations' decision to set a comprehensive international convention to counter cybersecurity crimes, in addition to establishing the Qatar Computing Research Institute in order to meet local needs and enhance Qatar's leading international standing in the field. HE the Speaker said that the state has adopted Qatar's National AI Strategy in accordance with the Qatar National Vision 2030, to ensure the country's economic and strategic future.

HE al-Ghanem stressed the importance of the draft document being worked out, however, pointing to member states' divergence in opinions and positions regarding AI legislation. HE the Speaker of the Shura Council continued by saying that AI receives international interest due to AI's impressive role in serving humanity and facilitating life. He added that as the case with other forms of knowledge and sciences, AI also poses challenges and risks, particularly with regard to its military misuse which has the potential of threatening world peace and security, something on which special-

ists are working on understanding and mitigating.

HE al-Ghanem stressed the need for parliamentarians to work with AI experts and specialists on drafting a comprehensive legislative convention on the safe use of AI in all fields. He said that Arab AI experts and specialists must be benefited from in conducting research and studies in the field, as well as in preparing a report on the benefits and risks of AI use, and ways for its safe use, to then be presented to the Arab Parliament's general secretariat and distributed among member states to guide their national AI legislations.

He expressed hope that the conference succeeds in making decisions and setting procedures for a unified comprehensive vision on AI. In his speech, HE the Speaker touched on the suffering of the brothers in Palestine because of the brutal aggression that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, denouncing the crimes of genocide and forced displacement committed by the occupation forces in the Gaza Strip and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories.

He denounced the international silence regarding the barbaric crimes committed by the occupation forces, and the inability of



HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met in Cairo yesterday with Chairman of the Shura Council of Bahrain Ali bin Saleh al-Saleh on the sidelines of his participation in the sixth conference of the Arab Parliament. The meeting tackled a number of topics related to parliamentary co-operation between Qatar and Bahrain as well as ways to enhance them and reviewed the most prominent topics discussed during the Arab parliament conference. (QNA)

the United Nations agencies concerned with protecting international peace and security and their inability to stop the brutal aggression and hold the occupation accountable for its heinous crimes.

He stressed the need for parliamentarians to act by forming a parliamentary committee or creating a mechanism that brings

together parliamentarians to stop this brutal aggression that disregards all international laws.

Pointing to what the world is witnessing these days in relation to student demonstrations in several universities, which began in the US and extended to a number of countries, he explained that the authorities handling of those dem-

onstrations through repression and arrest reveals the false claim of some countries regarding the protection of freedoms and human rights. He said that he feels pain and bitterness when he sees the failure of 2bn Muslims to influence the UN resolution and the positions of the countries supporting the occupying entity.

INVITATION TO SUBMIT PREQUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS

Invitation to Submit a Pre-Qualification for the Provision of Soft Facilities Management Services at Ras Bufontas and Umm Alhoul Free Zones

The Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) would like to invite competent and experienced local companies to a Pre-Qualification for the following Project:

Project Title and Number	High Level Description of the Tender
Provision of Soft Facilities Management Services at Ras Bufontas and Umm Alhoul Free Zones. Tender No: QFZ/2023/001	The selected Service Provider will provide the Soft Facilities Management Services on planned maintenance routine frequencies of a 3 Year Contract duration for QFZ roads and infrastructure locations across Parcels 'A' & 'B' at Ras Bufontas and Parcel 'A' at Umm Alhoul Free Zone sites. The selected Service Provider will be required to provide the planned and Call-off Soft Facilities Management Services, in accordance with management plan and programme and under direction of the Facilities Management Agent on behalf of QFZ. The Soft Facilities Management Services consist of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Litter Picking. Beach Cleaning. Pest Control. Road Sweeping. High Pressure Jetting & Scrubbing. Cleaning of Street Furniture, Wayfinding, Traffic Signage.

Eligibility of Tenders:	Pre-Qualification Fees
In order to pre-qualify, tenderers must be able to demonstrate the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to demonstrate compliance with local Qatar trading requirements. Experienced Facilities Management Service Provider with similar previous experience necessary skills with fully capable and sufficient resources to successfully deliver the requirements of the scope of services. Proof of ability to provide and maintain a Tender Bond of QAR 200,000 for duration of the tender from a registered bank in Qatar. 	A fee of 2,000 QAR is applicable to obtain this Pre-Qualification questionnaire. The Pre-Qualification Fee must be paid and confirmed by QFZ prior to the issue of the Pre-Qualification Documents (Please mention the name of your company upon making bank deposit or transfer) The Pre-Qualification Fee is payable to the following bank account: Name of Account: FREEZONE Bank Name: Masraf Al Rayan Account No.: 0003 115500 205 Account Type: Special Term Investment Account Swift Code: MARFQAQA IBAN No.: QA21MAFR000000000003115500205

Issue of Pre-Qualification Documentation:
 The Pre-Qualification Documents shall only be issued in soft copy from the following email address contracts@qfz.gov.qa. Participants are required to submit their expression of interest to the same email address, along with proof of payment of the Pre-Qualification Fee to be able to receive the Pre-Qualification Documents.

Closing of Date for Submission of Pre-qualification Questionnaire:
 Pre-qualification documentation must be submitted to QFZ not later than 22 May 2024 and must be submitted in accordance with the instruction in this notice.



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MoI carries out mock train crash drill operation at Al Wakra Metro station



The Public Transport Security Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) conducted a mock train crash drill at Al Wakra Metro station with the participation of several entities, the MoI said in a statement yesterday. The Operations Management at the General Directorate of Civil Defence, General Directorate of Traffic, Southern Security Management, Emergency Police Department, Central Operations Management, along with the Ambulance Service at Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar Rail, and RKH Company, the operator of Doha Metro, participated in the drill, the statement said. Exercise officer from the Public Transport Security Department First Lieutenant Ghanim Mohamed al-Malki said the department has been keen to carry out emergency exercises for Doha Metro and Lusail Tram based on a timeline specifically set for this purpose with the participation of the MoI departments and other entities so as to be in full alert, in addition to enhancing co-operation and inspecting the measures taken to secure railways infrastructure. **(QNA)**



Al-Khulaifi attends ministerial meeting on Gaza peace efforts



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi participated in Riyadh yesterday in a ministerial co-ordination meeting, which brought together the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the State of Palestine. The meeting discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories and ways to strengthen regional and international efforts for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid without obstacles into the Strip. **(QNA)**

Qatar National Renewable Energy Strategy launched

From Page 1

To achieve this, the strategy uses a balanced approach that combines large-scale renewable energy installations with the use of high-efficiency thermal generation powered by natural gas. Kahramaa's role as a leading force in the QNRES is to regulate and define RE regulations, issue licenses and monitor compliance while executing a detailed RE deployment programme and managing stakeholder interaction. The roles also include preparing and issuing tendering documents and supporting research and innovation initiatives. In preparation for the launch of the distributed renewable energy programme, Kahramaa recently started receiving applications for accredited solar panels and inverters from distributors and manufacturers. All technical regulations, contractors' and consultants'

qualification procedures and how to submit applications will be subsequently announced. QNRES will implement net billing for distributed renewable energy generation, enabling prosumers to sell surplus power generated to the grid at a fixed price. A bidirectional meter on the customer's premise measures electricity consumed and surplus exported to the grid, and Kahramaa credits the consumer account for surplus to offset future consumption. This will result in lower electricity bills and encourage investments in solar photovoltaics. "With the participation of all stakeholders in Qatar's energy sector, we aspire to achieve the best results for which the strategy has been developed and seek to encourage stakeholders and concerned entities to launch initiatives, scientific research on renewable energy, and call for cooperation among all to build a sustainable future," the statement said.

Sale Announcement

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MoEHE hosts session of 'Illuminations' initiative to promote reading habit

QNA
Doha

The 8th session of the 'Illuminations' initiative launched by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) under the theme of 'best friend' discussed themes that included reading for learning, self-development, and joy, reading in the digital age, reading and society, role of libraries and platforms in encouraging reading habit, as well as challenges and suggested solutions to promote the culture of reading.

The initiative was a conversation platform that primarily aimed to gather educators in panel discussions that tackled pedagogical and academic issues of shared concern to ultimately reach effective and inspirational development ideas, in pursuit of employing the outcomes of these sessions to enhance the MoEHE's plans and educational policies.

The 8th session of the Illuminations initiative was held to mark the World Book and Copyright Day on April 23, which is observed each year, and was attended by several MoEHE officials, over 500 students from both genders, alongside teachers, parents, and school principals. Addressing the session, CEO of Rosa Publishing House and head of Qatari Forum for Authors at the Ministry of Culture Dr Aisha Jassim al-Kuwari commended the initiative as a new illumination to explore innovative solutions for a lot of issues, praising the MoEHE's celebration of the World Book and Copyright Day to catalyse students into reading and introduce the rights and duties of authors.

Dr al-Kuwari reviewed the role performed by the publishing houses to catalyse the society into reading, noting the close relationship between reading and writing. She said that to be stellar writers, people should also be

stellar readers, affirming that the key mission was to make reading a lifestyle in the society, because Qatar deserves the best of erudite citizens who access learning sources.

She underscored the importance of printed books despite digital advancement, noting the sheer number of young authors in Qatar as an indicative of the criticality of the reading community, assuring the young people who are concerned about the social media platforms that overtly compete with the printed book.

The 8th session of the Illuminations initiative was held to mark the World Book and Copyright Day on April 23

DR al-Kuwari highlighted that these platforms are merely ancillaries and not alternatives for books and are only utilised to introduce the released versions. Dr al-Kuwari revealed that authenticity, accuracy, and objectivity are the key criteria for book selection and publication, adding that books represent a qualitative addition to the knowledge-based community.

She explained that there is a supervisory technical committee that determines the book publication criteria, calling for promoting the role of libraries through beneficial events to create a momentum for reading. CEO of Rosa Publishing House stressed the importance of concerted efforts to create a knowledge-based community through promoting the culture of reading which remained a shared responsibility among all individuals, as well as community and state institutions, lauding the students' experience with reading as highlighted in the session, which is essentially supportive for creating authorship, publication and strengthening the culture of reading in the society.



Long-time Doha resident dies in Kerala

Long-time Doha resident Noufal Keelath (47) died in Kannur, Kerala, yesterday, community sources said. He was a businessman for the past 25 years. He leaves behind his wife and a daughter. The burial will take place at Peringathur Juma Masjid and a special prayer for the departed soul will be held in Doha today.

Announcement of Isolation and change of the liquidator

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution of

Qatar Mice Development Institute Link W.L.L.

It has been resolved to Isolate the previous liquidator and appoint:

**The Liquidator
Rami Mohammad Ali Qudah**

**Deloitte & Touche
Qatar Branch**

In order to complete the liquidation of

Qatar Mice Development Institute Link W.L.L. (the "Company")

(Under Voluntary Liquidation)
Commercial Registration No. (61936)

A well-known F&B company in Qatar is hiring:

HR Manager
Job Type: Full-time

An Experienced Human Resource Manager is required by an established F&B company. The candidate must be a people person with experience in recruitment, payroll systems, PRO tasks, able to manage a small team of administrators.

The candidate should also have experience in on-boarding and inducting new recruits.

The mandatory requirements are an ability to speak, read and write in Arabic, as well as English.

All candidates should have the following:

- > 5 years' experience as a HR Manager in Qatar.
- > A bachelor degree or qualification in Human Resource Management.
- > Sound knowledge of Qatari Labor Law.
- > Good MS Office Skills.
- > Good time management and organizational skills.
- > An understanding of Oracle would be an advantage.

Candidates must be available in Qatar
Please send your CV to: qassp@qassp.com.qa

Announcement of Isolation and change of the liquidator

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution of

Middle East Conference and Fintech Exhibition W.L.L.

It has been resolved to Isolate the previous liquidator and appoint:

**The Liquidator
Rami Mohammad Ali Qudah**

**Deloitte & Touche
Qatar Branch**

In order to complete the liquidation of

Middle East Conference and Fintech Exhibition W.L.L. (the "Company")

(Under Voluntary Liquidation)
Commercial Registration No. (62500)



Qatar Chemical Company Limited

Al Dafna - Amwal Tower - First Floor
P.O. 24646 Doha / Qatar - Tel. 44847111 - Fax 44847695
Website: www.qchem.com.qa

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/TA/25/24	EQUIPMENT DECONTAMINATION SERVICES FOR Q-CHEM II & RLOC TA2025 & Q-CHEM TA 2027	QR 318,500/-	12:00 hrs on 22 nd July 2024
Brief Scope: Contractor to perform decontamination and chemical cleaning activities of identified equipment during TA2025 for Q-Chem II, RLOC and TA2027 for Q Chem.				
2.	QC/TC/P/50/24	Five Years Stocking and Supply Agreement of Xylene for Q-CHEM II on Call-Off basis	QR 45,500/-	12:00 hrs on 27 th May 2024
Brief Scope: Five Years Stocking and Supply Agreement of Xylene for Q-CHEM II based on DAP Q-Chem II Warehouse (Incoterms 2020) on Call-Off basis.				

Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email
For each tender pay a **non-refundable document fee (cash only) of QR 1,000/-** Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) - Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative via email to tadvertising@qchem.com.qa In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, **official email address**, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**

B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email
Tender documents issuance from **28th April 2024 to 2nd May 2024, 8am-12noon.**

C. Proposal details
Proposals should be valid for 240 days from the tender closing date.

D. Submission of Proposals
Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.

GQCCA to host second Baraha Luxury Classic Cars expo at MDD

The Gulf Qatari Classic Cars Association (GQCCA), in partnership with Msheireb Properties, is set to host the second edition of the Baraha Luxury Classic Cars Exhibition at Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD) from tomorrow (Monday).

The five-day exhibition will showcase a diverse collection of luxury classic cars from various historical eras, with some dating back to the 1920s, a statement said.

GQCCA chairman HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani commended the productive collaboration with Msheireb Properties in developing and organising the exhibition.

"The Baraha Luxury Classic Cars Exhibition is rapidly growing and establishing itself as a vital heritage and cultural event that must be preserved and en-

couraged to continue its progress, both locally and internationally," he stated.

"The second edition of the exhibition will feature extensive participation from classic car collectors who will showcase their most luxurious and historically significant vehicles," he added.

GQCCA vice-president, Omar Alfardan, highlighted: "The Baraha Luxury Classic Car Exhibition represents an opportunity for classic car owners to display their cars to the public, and provide for enthusiasts to view them."

Alfardan also praised the association's great co-operation with Msheireb Properties in organising the major exhibition, which is an important step towards creating a heritage and tourism forum that highlights classic cars and its cultural significance. "It is one of the most annually awaited exhibitions



HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani



Engineer Ali Mohamed al-Kuwari

to take place in the country."

The exhibition serves as a significant tourist attraction, offering visitors a unique opportunity to learn about these rare and timeless automotive gems. Qatar is home to over 4,000 classic cars representing various models, some of which are extremely rare and date back to the 1920s or even earlier.

The event also aims to raise

awareness within the Qatari community about the GQCCA's role as a sponsor and supporter of classic car owners, while highlighting the private sector's contribution to the country's tourism industry.

Engineer Ali Mohamed al-Kuwari, CEO of Msheireb Properties, expressed gratitude to the GQCCA for choosing Baraha Msheireb as the venue for the exhibition. He

emphasised the expected success of the event, attributing it to the prime location of Msheireb Downtown, which has become a landmark that seamlessly blends heritage with modernity.

"The Baraha Luxury Classic Cars Exhibition is one of the most important events, as it highlights a significant era in Qatar's history that witnessed great development across all fields, to which these classic cars have contributed," stated al-Kuwari. He also stressed the importance of the GQCCA's ongoing efforts to sponsor and organise more events and exhibitions in the future. The GQCCA aims to introduce the Qatari community to its activities as a sponsor and supporter of classic car owners, while encouraging investment in these vehicles and shedding light on their history in Qatar. The association strives to provide a distinct and at-

tractive environment to preserve classic cars as a heritage, ensuring that this cultural legacy is maintained by a professional and knowledgeable generation.

The acquisition of classic cars represents a cultural heritage that must be preserved, not only in Qatar but worldwide. The association seeks to promote and support classic car enthusiasts and owners who collect artistic and engineering masterpieces manufactured by the most prestigious and largest car companies in the world, considered invaluable to collectors and enthusiasts alike.

In a major step to support this important sector, the General Committee of the International Federation of Classic Cars (FIVA) recently approved the GQCCA's membership unanimously, acknowledging its success and endeavours, the statement added.

QU opens Fall semester admissions online

The Admission Department at Qatar University (QU) announced yesterday that it will embark on receiving applications for undergraduate admission online for the Fall semester 2024, for students transferring from other universities and second degree students, starting from today (April 28) until May 8.

The QU pointed out that the online application for new students, visitors, and students studying courses will begin on May 13 until July 3.

QU's Director of the Admission Department Lulwa al-Rubaie stated that applicants are required to achieve at least 70% of the secondary certificate average when applying for the faculties of arts, sciences, engineering, management, economics, law, Shariah, Islamic studies, education, health sciences, and nursing; 85% as a minimum for applicants to the faculties of medicine and dentistry; and 80% as a minimum for applicants to the college of pharmacy. She highlighted that online application for scholarships for the Fall semester 2024 will be opened from May 13-July 3, and include excellence grants, grants for children of the GCC states who have a Qatari secondary certificate, distinguished performance grants, and a grant for children of QU staffers.

New students can apply via the online admission application, while registered students can apply via the self-service system (My Banner), with the need to upload the required documents during the announced application period, pointing out that decisions to accept scholarships will be announced on August 5, said al-Rubaie, and outlined that QU admission depends on the principle of competition between applicants, and that achieving the minimum level in the secondary certificate does not mean that the student will be accepted in the first attempt, but rather admission is made according to the absorptive capacity of each college separately. She indicated that the admission application process is finalised by completing the online application on the university's website and uploading the required documents electronically, on condition that the documents are uploaded before the specified deadline. Al-Rubaie added that students who meet the minimum admission requirements can apply via the QU's website, as it is not required from Qatari public and independent secondary school students who obtained a high school diploma in 2016 or later, to submit their high school diploma to QU. She highlighted that QU will directly receive their results in the public secondary school from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). For applicants from other universities, al-Rubaie highlighted that they must bring with them a list of the original college study grades attested by the competent authorities, along with copies of them to ensure consistency, and they shall be submitted to QU prior to the end of the submission deadline. She indicated that the admission decisions for students transferred from other universities and second degree undergraduate students will be announced on June 2, and Aug 5 for new students. (QNA)

INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
QF-RFQ-480	Oracle Licenses & Subscription Renewal Services Agreement for 3 Years	1,000.00	100,000.00	26 th May 2024, 2:00 PM
CO-RFQ-154	Design, Engineering, Supply & Commissioning of HVAC (VRV) units for Al Shaqab	1,000.00	N/A	28 th May 2024, 2:00 PM
HBKU-RFQ-110	Provision of Book summary content (English & Arabic) services for QF-HBKU on call-off basis for 3 years with option to extend up to 1 more year	500.00	N/A	26 th May 2024, 2:00 PM

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement & Program Management Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

1) **Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tenders. Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

Tender Fee: Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.

All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.


Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from 28th April until 2nd May 2024.

2) All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.

3) Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.

- The commercial bid must be valid for 180 days from Bid Closing Date.
- The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for 180 days from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents).
- The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
- Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>



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 (non-refundable)	(iii) Tender Publication on ARIBA	(iv) Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	Tender No. P01-01-477 Supply of 3 Tons & 5 Tons capacity Forklifts with commissioning. Forklifts are diesel engine driven (water cooled)	1 st May 2024	QAR 500.00	7 th May 2024	QAR 35,000	29 th May 2024 12:00 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.

ii. Non-refundable tender fee indicated above is payable to QAPCO through QNB account # 0013-001688-060 only at any QNB branch latest by 1st May 2024

iii. Tender link will be sent via email notification from ARIBA system to the confirmed bidders. Tender Document will be accessible only after submitting the evidence of the tender fee payment by the bidder to QAPCO Procurement (procurement@qapco.com.qa). 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.
Onaiza Area, West Bay,
The Gate Mall, Bay Tower 2, Floor 11
Tel. : 4033 0000 / 4033 8102
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



Limited Tender Committee announces the following tender:

Sr. No.	Tender Ref. No.	Description	Tender Bond (QAR)	Tender Fee Non-Refundable (QAR)	Bid Closing Date and Time
1	LTC005-24	Outsourcing Technician for General Maintenance	30,000	1,000	19-May-2024 (13:00 Hrs)

Tenderer must fulfill all the below pre-qualification requirements to be considered eligible for the tender.

- Tenderer should have a minimum of 5 years of experience specializing in providing manpower services for large organizations.
- Provide evidence demonstrating capability to supply qualified and experienced personnel as per scope of work within two weeks after the contract starts.
- Technicians provided must meet the criteria outlined in job descriptions provided in the tender.
- Tenderer is required to be classified "B" as minimum by Ministry of Finance, State of Qatar.
- Provide evidence of ISO 9001-2015 certification.
- Demonstrate ability to efficiently mobilize and demobilize resources in accordance with terms of the contract.

- Tender documents can be collected from Procurement & Contracts Directorate, Building, behind Al Jazeera Media Institute Building, TV Intersection Area, beside Al Yarmouk Petrol Station, Doha by submitting an authorization letter showing the tender number and ID number of collecting person under the company letterhead, after paying the tender fee at QIB Branch inside Al Jazeera Support Services building.
- Tender documents are to be collected from 28-Apr-2024 to 02-May-2024, between 07:00 AM to 01:00 PM.
- The technical offer must be submitted with a Tender Bond issued by a Qatari Bank or by a bank operating in Qatar and should be valid for a period of 180 days from bid closing date.
- The offer must be valid for a period of 180 days from the Bid Closing Date.
- The Technical and Commercial offers shall be submitted as per the instructions in the tender documents which shall bear the tender number and bid closing date.
- The last date for accepting the Tender offers shall be 13:00 Hrs of the bid closing date.
- For more information, please call 44897131.

www.aljazeera.net www.aljazeera.com

Liquidation Announcement

"2"

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution

To Liquidate

Medi Q Life Trading L.L.C. (the "Company")

(under Voluntary Liquidation)

The Liquidator
Rami Mohammad Ali Qudah

Deloitte & Touche
Qatar Branch

Announce the liquidation of

Medi Q Life Trading L.L.C.

Commercial Registration No. (132298)

Any party who has any claims from this Company should send a registered letter, including all supporting documents, to
P.O. Box 431, Doha – Qatar,
within the remaining legal period of 25 days.

23rd batch of injured Palestinians arrives in Doha for treatment



The 23rd batch of the Palestinians wounded in the Gaza Strip arrived in Doha, yesterday, to be further treated within the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, and devoted to treating 1,500 Palestinians from the enclave. Additionally, several Palestinian brothers holding the Qatari ID were evacuated from the Gaza Strip after they had been trapped due to the war and were previously unable to exit the enclave. HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir welcomed the 23rd batch of the Palestinians upon their arrival in Doha. The initiative of treating the injured Palestinians comes within the unwavering support of Qatar and its steadfast efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the current humanitarian conditions. (QNA)

HMC concludes Sealine Clinic after serving over 1,260 patients



Around 1,260 patients were treated this season.



Prof Aftab Mohamed Omar

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)'s Sealine Medical Clinic has concluded its services for this year's camping season.

The clinic, operating for the past 14 years, provided treatment for around 1,260 patients this season.

Hassan Mohamed al-Hail, chief communications officer at HMC and project manager of the Sealine Hamad Medical Clinic, thanked the medical teams, including

doctors, nurses, ambulance service and administrators, who participated in securing the camping season.

He also valued the efforts of the ministries concerned for their continued support, particularly in allocating a place for the clinic close to the beachfront as in the past years.

Prof Aftab Mohamed Omar, chief, Emergency Departments at HMC and the medical director of

Sealine Medical Clinic, pointed out that required services were provided to beachgoers and campers in the Sealine area.

The Emergency Department at Al Wakra Hospital and Hamad Medical Corporation were also fully prepared to receive patients and treat urgent and critical cases, he added.

Saleh al-Meqareh al-Marri, assistant executive director for Am-

bulance Services for Emergency and Events Planning at HMC, said two regular ambulances and two off-road ambulances were permanently present during the camping season.

The clinic treated 816 cases of injuries, including accidents, falls, wounds and fractures, alongside 444 medical cases related to respiratory and cardiac problems, as well as minor sunburns. Additionally, 629 emergency cases were transferred to hospitals via ambulances or Life Flight.

Ambulance personnel were deployed according to pre-defined work plans and daily operations outlined in advance by the Emergency and Events Planning Department of the Ambulance Services Management. This was in line with the objectives and medical coverage plans for the Sealine area.

Ambulance services also allocated a fixed site for their vehicles and personnel, in addition to mobile units along the main road.

EAA holds annual youth conference



The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation's Reach Out to Asia (Rota) programme concluded its 15th annual Empower Youth Conference yesterday, with the participation of over 200 participants from Qatar and abroad.

The two-day event had the theme, 'The Role of Youth in Times of War and Conflict'. The opening ceremony started with a dialogue involving renowned Palestinian journalist Ahmed Hijazi and moderated by Noor al-Thani, EAA youth advocate, who facilitated an intimate discussion about the dire situation in Gaza.

Another highlight was a panel discussion titled 'Relief Efforts in Perspective: Qatar's Role in Regional Conflicts', featuring Ahmed al-Rumaihi, director of external affairs at Qatar Charity; Sahr Mohyudin, senior protection officer at UNHCR; Dr Moataz al-Fegierey, head of the Hu-

man Rights Programme at Doha Institute for Graduate Studies; and Sarah Keshaihs, enterprise development officer at Silatech; with Salwa Kuwari, EAA youth advocate, serving as the moderator.

The conference also included messages from conflict zones such as Palestine and Sudan, delivered through a short film titled 'The Power of Youth in Times of War and Conflict!'

EAA's executive director for Rota, Abdullah al-Abdulla, said: "At Empower 2024, we are dedicated to harnessing youth's vibrant energy and innovative spirit to address some of the most pressing global challenges. This conference is not just an event; it's a platform for young voices to shape their future and influence the global discourse on peace and conflict resolution. We believe that empowering our youth is investing in a brighter, more resilient future."

VCUarts Qatar senior students showcase fashion collections

Senior students graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) this year, presented their collections at a fashion show recently.

Nine senior students from the Qatar Foundation (QF) partner university showcased their designs under the title, 'Behind the Seen' for an audience that included their families and friends, in addition to the VCUarts Qatar community.

The event was also attended by US ambassador, Timmy Davis, representatives of the American embassy in Doha, members of the International Council for Arts Deans, staff from the VCU Richmond campus, and prominent personalities from Qatar's creative sector.

The collections reflected the various sources the designers drew inspiration from - child-



A glimpse from the fashion show.

hood dreams and imagination; traditional Omani designs and punk; Qatar's beige and gold-hued desert landscapes; the crisp lines and clean edges of origami; saree draping styles from Sri Lanka; ready-to-wear; and styles from the Jazz era.

Christopher Fink, chair, Fashion

Design, VCUarts Qatar, said: "The play on words 'Behind the Seen' signals an exploration of what lies beyond the surface. In a twist to the traditional ramp-based presentation, attendees were whisked off into a creative studio transformed into an enchanting atelier, giving them a glimpse of the indi-

vidual inspirations and meticulous processes of the senior students. Mood boards, intricate sketches, meticulous pattern-making and graceful drapes made for an immersive journey that told the story of the evolution of every collection. The result was an unforgettable immersive experience." The names of the collections, and the respective designers, were: "Serenity" by Wadha al-Attiya; "Omani Punk" by Alfutoon al-Said; "Draped Dunes" by Maha al-Rabaan; "Ambiguity Unfolded: Fluidity Meets Structure" by Fatima al-Siddiqi; "Babylon" by Aatikah al-Thani; "Active Undercover" by Amna al-balam; "Desert Rose" by Asma Alkubaisi; "Ceylonese" by Aanji Speldewinde; and "Jazz Era Arabified" by Emman Alshouti.

Following the show, special awards were presented to senior and junior fashion design students.

QC's 'Writers of the Future' winners to be announced



The judging committees for the seventh edition of the 'Writers of the Future' programme of Qatar Charity (QC) will soon announce the winners from the various categories, a statement said yesterday. Children's writers, those interested in education, Arabic language instructors, and professors from Qatar University (QU) participated in judging the works of students at all levels of education (primary, middle, secondary, university, and those with special needs). The participants comprised 241 schools from all educational levels for boys and girls, Al Noor Center for the Blind and the Auditory Education Complex, as well as QU, University of Doha for Science and Technology, Community College, Lusail University and universities in Education City.

Rising temperature drives campers to wind up early

The significant increase in temperature over the past few days has led a large number of Qataris to conclude their camping season earlier than scheduled, local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported.

The winter camping season, which started in November 2023, was scheduled to end on April 30.

A considerable number of campers have headed to their camping sites to dismantle the tents, remove the

portable cabins, and to clean their areas in preparation for handing them over to the environmental inspectors affiliated with the relevant authority.

Some campers told the daily that they had to end their camping sooner than desired due to the noticeable rise in temperature. They pointed out that the camping season this year went smoothly, especially in the land sites, thanks to the efforts of the relevant authority, besides

providing for an adequate number of trash bins in various locations near the campers. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has updated the terms and conditions related to the camping process in all areas of the country, as part of its vision for a sustainable camping season to preserve the local environment. This has been done in particular to maintain the distinctive green cover and biodiversity within the targeted areas.



ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **FAHIM RASHEED AMBALATH VEETIL PATTATH**

holder of
Indian Passport No. R2279051
QID No. 30135601375

hereby change my name

from

FAHIM RASHEED AMBALATH VEETIL PATTATH

to

FAHIM RASHEED

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **BB GIRL PENGAL PENERO**

holder of

Philippines Passport No. P4569169B
QID No. 27960820130

hereby change my name

from

BB GIRL PENGAL PENERO

to

JANICE PINGAL PENERO

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **SANIL RAJEEVAN**

holder of

Indian Passport No. UO135720
QID No. 27835622128

hereby change my name

from

SANIL RAJEEVAN

to

SAJEEV RAJEEVAN

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

QU organises workshop on desalination technologies



Some of the participants at the workshop.

Qatar University's (QU) Water Technology Unit at the Centre for Advanced Materials (CAM), in collaboration with the Unesco Chair on Desalination and Water Treatment, organised an advanced training course on "Advances in Pretreatment

Technologies for Desalination and Water Treatment", over two days. The advanced training course, which aimed to equip participants with cutting-edge skills and knowledge in desalination and water treatment technologies, was attended by engineers and process operators from the Qatar Electricity & Water Company (QEW) and Kahramaa. Prof Mariam al-Maadeed, vice-president for Research and Graduate Studies at QU, said the course marks a significant milestone in the efforts of QU to enhance water treatment capabilities. Prof Mohamed Irshidat, director of the CAM at QU, emphasised the pivotal role of the initiative in enhancing the competencies of the desalination industry workforce. Prof Syed Zaidi, Unesco Chair Professor and co-ordinator of the Water Technology Unit, also spoke.

Justice ministry 'has embarked on preparing executive regulation, real estate laws'

Assistant Undersecretary for Real Estate Registration and Documentation Affairs at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Saeed Abdullah al-Suwaidi has affirmed that the MoJ embarks on setting the executive regulation and decisions for the Law No 5 of 2024 regulating the real estate registration to finalise the measures of activating the provisions of the new law.

The official stated that the law has created an array of new provisions in their entirety in real estate registration, which primarily ensure the citizens' rights and ownership of their real estate and property, as well as private investments conducted by citizens and non-citizens.

Al-Suwaidi pointed out that by virtue

of the provisions of the new law, customers will be able to sell and purchase property online via SAK application soon and enforce the real estate registration measures as stipulated in the law electronically, in accordance with the regulations and measures issued by a decision from the Minister of Justice.

This is in addition to providing the feature of notating judicial rulings on the real estate page as soon as they are issued to avoid fraud, giving more transparency to transactions, and informing the parties of all real estate data, which will contribute to reducing real estate disputes.

The law has dedicated a special ruling for the registration measures, authenti-

cation of signatures, so that a register is created in the Real Estate Registration Department at the MoJ in which registration applications are recorded with serial numbers according to the order in which they are submitted, and in which requests for obtaining documents and certificates are recorded.

The assistant undersecretary stated that the law also stipulates that the procedures for registration or authentication of signatures are conducted upon request of the concerned parties or their surrogates, according to the forms of documents prepared by the Real Estate Registration Department for this purpose, as per procedures and conditions stipulated in the law

and its later executive regulations.

The new law has been formulated in 55 articles to supersede the law that has been enforced for 60 years, the official said, with overarching and crucial adjustments that will make a paradigm shift in the field of real estate registration, in addition to saving records, documents and indexes related to real estate registration.

The official indicated that the new legislation helps register unregistered properties and the objections submitted regarding them and decide on the ownership rights to unregistered properties expropriated for public benefit, in addition to organising the powers of the Real Estate Registration Committee, and procedures

for updating real estate registry data.

Al-Suwaidi said that law regulates the procedures for separating and unifying real estate and the specific penalties for anyone who achieves a registration for a real estate or illegally transfers, alters, or cancels any real right on it, in addition to permitting conciliation in the crimes stipulated before filing the case or during its consideration and prior to deciding on it with a final ruling.

The law also stipulates that the Real Estate Registration Department shall embark on finalising the data pertinent to the description of real estate and its types based on the documents submitted by the concerned parties. - QNA

Leaked US memo says Israel may be violating international law

By Humeira Pamuk
Reuters

Some senior US officials have advised Secretary of State Antony Blinken that they do not find "credible or reliable" Israel's assurances that it is using US-supplied weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law, according to an internal State Department memo reviewed by Reuters.

Other officials upheld support for Israel's representation.

Under a National Security Memorandum (NSM) issued by President Joe Biden in February, Blinken must report to Congress by May 8 whether he finds credible Israel's assurances that its use of US weapons does not violate US or international law.

By March 24, at least seven State Department bureaus had sent in their contributions to an initial "options memo" to Blinken.

Parts of the memo, which has not been previously reported, were classified.

The submissions to the memo provide the most extensive picture to date of the divisions inside the State Department over whether Israel might be violating international humanitarian law in Gaza.

"Some components in the department favoured accepting Israel's assurances, some favoured rejecting them and some took no position," a US official said.

A joint submission from four bureaus - Democracy Human Rights & Labour; Population, Refugees and Migration; Global Criminal Justice and International Organisation Affairs - raised "serious concern over non-compliance" with international humanitarian law during Israel's prosecution of the Gaza war.



Children attend class at a makeshift school in a camp for displaced Palestinians in Deir El-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip.

The assessment from the four bureaus said Israel's assurances were "neither credible nor reliable".

It cited eight examples of Israeli military actions that the officials said raise "serious questions" about potential violations of international humanitarian law.

These included repeatedly striking protected sites and civilian infrastructure; "unconscionably high levels of civilian harm to military advantage";

taking little action to investigate violations or to hold to account those responsible for significant civilian harm and "killing humanitarian workers and journalists at an unprecedented rate".

The assessment from the four bureaus also cited 11 instances of Israeli military actions the officials said "arbitrarily restrict humanitarian aid", including rejecting entire trucks of aid due to a single "dual-use" item, "artificial" limitations on inspections as well as repeated attacks on humanitarian sites that should not be hit.

Another submission to the memo reviewed by Reuters, from the bureau of Political and Military Affairs, which deals with US military assistance and arms transfers, warned Blinken that suspending US weapons would limit Israel's ability to meet potential threats outside its airspace and require Washington to re-evaluate "all ongoing and future sales to other countries in the region".

Any suspension of US arms sales would invite "provocations" by Iran and aligned militias, the bureau said in its submission, illustrating the push-and-pull inside the department as it prepares to report to Congress.

The submission did not directly address Israel's assurances.

Inputs to the memo from the Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism and US ambassador to Israel Jack Lew said they assessed Israel's assurances as credible and reliable, a second US official said. The State Department's legal bu-

reau, known as the Office of the Legal Adviser, "did not take a substantive position" on the credibility of Israel's assurances, a source familiar with the matter said.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said the agency does not comment on leaked documents.

"On complex issues, the Secretary often hears a diverse range of views from within the Department, and he takes all of those views into consideration," Miller said.

When asked about the memo, an Israeli official said: "Israel is fully committed to its commitments and their implementation, among them the assurances given to the US government."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Biden administration officials repeatedly have said that they have not found Israel in violation of international law.

Blinken has seen all of the bureau assessments about Israel's pledges, the second US official said.

On March 25 Miller said the department received the pledges.

However, the State Department is not expected to render its complete assessment of credibility until the May 8 report to Congress.

Further deliberations between the department's bureaus are underway ahead of the report's deadline, the US official said.

USAID also provided input to the memo.

"The killing of nearly 32,000 people, of which the GOI (Government of Israel) itself assesses roughly two-thirds are civilian, may well amount to a violation of the international humanitarian law requirement," USAID officials wrote in the submission.

USAID does not comment on leaked documents, a USAID spokesperson said.

'Constant terror' in Rafah as Gazans face Israeli invasion

From Page 1

Others are unable to bear the thought of being uprooted again.

Samah Deeb, 32, has decided to wait before leaving. "The thought of displacement again makes me extremely terrified, because I've fled so many times," she said.

Before travelling to Rafah, she had already left home and taken shelter at the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City.

"Just the thought of having to work on another tent and transfer all of our belongings and the new expenses it will cost is unbearable," she said. "There is nowhere else safe, and nowhere else after Rafah to go."

Deeb said she was monitoring the news closely. "At any moment they tell us to evacuate Gaza, we will leave like the rest of the people but we pray to God they won't invade Rafah and force us to relive the suffering of displacement," she said.

Qasim Abu Nahl, a 40-year-old from Gaza City, said he had already been displaced four times.

"Moving from one place to another has been incredibly hard for us," he said.

"We spent nearly two weeks enduring heavy bombardment, shells, and smoke bombs" at the city's Al-Rantisi Hospital before fleeing to Nuseirat in the centre of Gaza "with nothing but the clothes on our backs," he said.

He said he fled bombing in Nuseirat and went to the southern city Khan Yunis, which "became overcrowded and increasingly dangerous" before he arrived in Rafah.

"We don't know if we'll be safe tomorrow or not," he said. "Every day brings new unsettling news about Rafah."

Resident Noor al-Farah, 56, has been packing clothes, food and firewood with her husband and children in preparation.

"I am mentally exhausted from the worrying news and waiting for the unknown," she said.

She has been unable to find anywhere outside Rafah for her family to stay, and said she was afraid of snakes in displacement camps.

Gazans living in Rafah's camps have also had to contend with unbearable temperatures as a heatwave takes hold.

Intisar Ramadan Ghaban said life inside a hot tent in fear of an Israeli invasion was like a "new death".

The 61-year-old said she had already been displaced from Gaza City and Nuseirat refugee camp before reaching Rafah.

"Invasion of Rafah is what we fear the most," she said. "We fear the day will come when they tell us to get out, but until then we don't know where we'll go."

"Will they give us a warning in advance? Or will we leave urgently without knowing what's going on, carrying only ourselves without anything else? Or will it be under heavy bombardment?"

"We have no idea," she said.

Mali court not 'competent' to rule on political crackdown

Mali's constitutional court has declared itself "incompetent" to examine a case calling for the military junta's suspension of political party activity to be annulled.

In a document seen by AFP yesterday, the court also ruled "inadmissible" a request from associations for magistrates and prosecutors to find that Mali was in a legal and "institutional vacuum" and to set up a roadmap back to elections.

Both court rulings were dated on Thursday.

The West African nation has been ruled by juntas since back-to-back coups in 2020 and 2021, with the worsening security situation aggravated by armed religious militant and separatist groups.

Juna chief Colonel Assimi Goita this month issued a decree suspending the activities of political parties and banning media coverage of the parties in the name of maintaining public order.

The restrictions were imposed after the regime failed to keep a pledge to hand over to a civilian government by March 26.

Under pressure from regional bloc Ecowas, the junta had promised to organise presidential elections in February. - AFP

Nigeria landmine blast kills 11

Eleven militia fighters working alongside Nigeria's military to battle religious militants were killed yesterday in the country's northeast when their vehicle hit a landmine on a highway near the border with Cameroon, two militia sources told AFP. Militants in Nigeria are increasingly resorting to planting mines on highways to target military and civilian convoys after they were pushed back from territory they once controlled during the early years of the country's more than 15-year Islamist insurgency.

The militia fighters were escorting a civilian convoy from the town of Gamboru in Borno State to the regional capital Maiduguri when around 1230GMT their vehicle drove over a landmine suspected to have been planted by religious militants at Damno village, the two sources said. - AFP

Kenya flood death toll hits 76

Seventy-six people in Kenya have lost their lives to floods triggered by torrential monsoon downpours since March, the government said yesterday, warning residents "to brace for even heavier rainfall". Flash floods have submerged roads and neighbourhoods, leading to the displacement of more than 130,000 people across 24,000 households, many of them in Nairobi, government spokesman Isaac Mwaura said yesterday. - AFP

Chopard Alpine Eagle XL Chrono

In ethical 18-carat rose gold
A high-precision chronograph movement

The Alpine Eagle collection of sporty-chic timepieces is interpreting its flyback chronograph in a 44 mm-diameter model entirely crafted in ethical 18-carat rose gold. Like the entire collection, this model remains strongly inspired by the power of the eagle and the beauty of the Alps. Its Bernina Grey dial is a veritable tribute to the colour of Alpine rocks. The three patents for its Chopard 03.05-C chronometer-certified movement with flyback function testify to innovations enhancing its accuracy as well as its smooth handling.

A cutting-edge chronograph movement

Beating at the heart of all the Alpine Eagle XL Chrono models, the Chopard 03.05-C movement developed and assembled by the artisans in the Manufacture is one of the world's most innovative chronograph movements. It has a 60-hour power reserve and features an elaborate design guaranteeing accurate adjustments and optimal use of the chronograph functions. Equipped with a column wheel, it is also enhanced by several technical innovations that have earned Chopard three patents stemming from the boldness of its R&D teams.

First of all, it is equipped with a unidirectional gear drive system that prevents energy losses while ensuring rapid automatic winding, a function much appreciated in the inherently energy-hungry chronograph category. In addition, its vertical clutch ensures accurate time-measurement starts. This chronograph calibre is also of the flyback variety, enabling smooth successive timing operations thanks to three pivoting hammers with



elastic arms facilitating zero-setting of the hands.

Equipped with a stop-seconds function enabling accurate adjustments of the watch, the Chopard 03.05-C movement is chronometer-certified by the Official Swiss Chronometer Testing Institute.

Inspired by Nature

Drawing on the Alps' inherent creative strength and beauty, the design of the Alpine Eagle collection is linked to the aesthetics of its dials, whose texture is reminiscent of an eagle's iris. The collection's colour palette is a direct reference

to Alpine hues. Witness this Bernina Grey model named after the rock of the eponymous mountain range, a site renowned for its natural splendours, including the towering 4,000-metre Piz Bernina straddling the border between Switzerland and Italy.

The seconds hand with its arrow-shaped tip flies over a highly legible display punctuated by snailed counters. The hands and hour-markers are coated with Grade XI Super-LumiNova®, a treatment offering the advantage of retaining the same intensity over the years, while naturally more luminous than traditional Super-LumiNova®.

The tachymeter scale bearing discreet red 100, 160 and 240 graduations appears on the inner bezel ring. It is divided into four steps, with different intervals of 5, 10, 20 or 40 km/h per line. This arrangement facilitates reading the average speed measurements and contributes to the dial's overall aesthetic dynamic.

From the case to the in-house bracelet, crown

and bezel, this Alpine Eagle XL Chrono model is entirely crafted in ethical 18-carat

rose gold. As part of Chopard's Journey to Sustainable Luxury, the fine gold used to produce the Alpine Eagle watches is 100% ethically sourced, as indeed are all the Maison's watch and jewellery creations since July 2018. One of the rare Manufactures to have had its own precious metals foundry for several decades, Chopard is thus in a position to control its value chain in order to offer creations conveying a more reasonable approach to

stewardship of the Earth. Reinterpreting an icon Devised by three generations of men in the Scheufele family, the Alpine Eagle collection is a modern reinterpretation of the St. Moritz watch, the first horological creation by Karl-Friedrich Scheufele in the late 1970s. With its pure and assertive design, Alpine Eagle enriches this heritage with powerful inspiration drawn from Nature. A round case with stylised flanks; a crown engraved with a compass rose; a bezel with eight functional indexed screws; as well as textured dial with deep hues and luminescent indications: Alpine Eagle embodies impeccable elegance expressed in a resolutely contemporary manner. Today, in addition to its chronographs, the collection offers a variety of complications, from a high-frequency movement to a flying tourbillon and an extra-thin model with small seconds indication bearing the Poinçon de Genève.



Cooling initiative amid heatwave



A vehicle of the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) sprays water along a busy road to lower the temperature amidst a heatwave in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday.

20 Cambodian soldiers killed in ammunition base explosion

AFP
Phnom Penh

Twenty Cambodian soldiers have been killed in an ammunition explosion at an army base, Prime Minister Hun Manet said yesterday.

The blast at around 2.45pm (0745 GMT) at the army base in Kampong Speu province to the west of the capital also wounded several soldiers, according to the PM, with the army saying that an entire truck of munitions had exploded.

"I am deeply shocked to receive the news of the ammunition explosion incident," Hun Manet said in a statement on Facebook, expressing his "deepest condolences" to the families of those killed.

It was not immediately clear what had caused the explosion. Pictures on social media showed a destroyed one-storey building wreathed in smoke, with residents of a nearby village also sharing images online of broken windows.

Other images showed what appeared to be civilians, including a child in diapers - with cuts and gashes being treated in hospital.

Munitions accidents are not uncommon in Cambodia, which is awash with ammunition following decades of civil conflict - accidents that are exacerbated by frequently lax safety standards.

Cambodia's army said the incident was a "warehouse ammunition explosion", that had destroyed a truck fully loaded with weaponry.



Smoke billows from the warehouse following an explosion at an army base in Kampong Speu province, yesterday.

An office building as well as nearby barracks were destroyed, with 25 nearby homes also battered by the resulting explosion.

In his statement, Hun Manet said he had ordered the defence minister and the commander-in-chief of Royal Cambodian Armed Forces to urgently arrange funerals for the soldiers who died.

He also said that the families of those killed would receive roughly \$20,000 each, while injured soldiers would get \$5,000.

Cambodia is littered with discarded ammunition and arms from decades of civil war from the 1960s. In 2005, five Cambodians were killed and three injured after an explosion in a major military arms depot some two kilometres outside the northwestern town of Battambang. It was unclear what had caused the explosion and resulting fire.

Deaths from mines and unexploded ordnance are more frequent, with roughly 20,000 people killed in Cambodia since 1979 and twice as many wounded in landmine and unexploded ordnance accidents.

In 2018, an Australian and a Cambodian were killed when war-era ordnance exploded during a de-mining training exercise in southern Cambodia.

Clearance work continues to this day, with the government vowing to clear all mines and unexploded ordnance by 2025. Only last week four people were also killed by unexploded ordnance (UXO), according to the Cambodian Mine Action Centre.

Last year thousands of pieces of UXO left over from the civil war were unearthed inside a north-eastern school, including some 2,000 explosives.

Ireland's asylum-seeker influx shows UK Rwanda plan having impact: Sunak

AFP
London

An influx of asylum seekers into Ireland from the UK is evidence that London's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda is acting as a deterrent, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said.

Ireland's Minister of Justice Helen McEntee told a parliamentary committee this week that she estimates around 80% of those applying for asylum in her country came over the land border with Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK.

Sunak told Sky News, in comments released yesterday but that will air today, that it showed his controversial plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda was "already having an impact" as a



British PM Rishi Sunak.

deterrent. "Illegal migration is a global challenge, which is why you're seeing multiple countries talk about doing third country partnerships," Sunak told Sky News.

"But what it also shows, I think, is that the deterrent is...

already having an impact because people are worried about coming here," he added.

"If people come to our country illegally, but know that they won't be able to stay there, much less likely to come, and that's why the Rwanda scheme is so important." The Rwanda bill cleared its final parliamentary hurdle on Monday, after a marathon tussle between the upper and lower chambers of parliament lasting late into the night.

Sunak hopes the bill will prevent asylum seekers from trying to enter the UK illegally by making small boat crossings of the Channel from northern Europe. Immigration is set to be a key issue in a general election due this year, with Sunak's Tories currently languishing in the polls.

UK Conservative lawmaker Poulter defects to opposition Labour

Reuters
London

British member of parliament Dan Poulter has defected from the ruling Conservative Party to the opposition Labour Party, in a blow to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak ahead of a set of local elections that could put further pressure on his leadership.

Sunak's Conservatives are trailing Labour by around 20 points in opinion polls ahead of a national election expected this year, and the timing of the defection appeared designed to damage the government further ahead of Thursday's local votes.

Poulter said the government's record on the state-run National Health Service (NHS) - one of Sunak's five priorities for the country

- meant he could no longer represent the Conservatives.

"It is abundantly clear to me that the Labour party alone has the will and the trust to restore and reform the NHS. That's why we need a Labour government," Poulter said in an article in the Observer newspaper, adding he would stand down at the coming election. Labour leader Keir Starmer said it was "fantastic" to welcome Poulter to the party.

"Across the country more and more people are switching to Labour because they know only this changed Labour Party can deliver the change Britain needs," he said in a statement.

Poulter is the second Conservative lawmaker to defect to Labour since the last election, after Christian Wakeford switched in 2022 over former Prime Minister Boris Johnson's conduct around

rule-breaking parties during Covid-19 lockdowns.

Sunak has faced a tough time trying to recover Conservative fortunes after the premierships of Johnson and Liz Truss tanked the party's poll ratings, and has blamed strike action by doctors and other health workers for throwing his pledge to cut hospital waiting lists off track.

But Poulter said the government had put ideology ahead of pragmatism in dealing with the industrial disputes, leaving patients to bear the brunt.

A spokesperson for the Conservatives said Poulter's defection would be "disappointing news" for his constituents, adding the government had increased funding for the NHS.

"What Dan says is wrong as Sir Keir Starmer has no plan for our NHS," the spokesperson said.

US regulator gathering information on Indian spices after alleged contamination

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is gathering information on products of Indian spice makers MDH and Everest after Hong Kong halted sales of some of their products for allegedly containing high levels of a cancer-causing pesticide, Reuters reported from Hyderabad.

"The FDA is aware of the reports and is gathering additional information about the situation," an FDA spokesperson told Reuters. Hong Kong this month suspended sales of three MDH spice blends and an Everest spice mix for fish curries. Singapore ordered a recall of the Everest spice mix as well, saying it contains high levels of ethylene oxide, which is unfit for human consumption and a cancer risk with long exposure. Reuters is the first to report the US FDA's review of alleged contamination of Indian spice products. MDH and Everest did not immediately respond to

Reuters requests for comment on this matter. Everest has previously said its spices are safe for consumption. MDH has not responded to queries about its products so far. MDH and Everest spices are among the most popular in India and are also sold in Europe, Asia and North America. India's food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), is now checking the quality standards of the two companies, following the moves in Hong Kong and Singapore. India's Spices Board, the government's regulator for spice exports, said on Wednesday it had sought data on MDH and Everest exports from authorities in Hong Kong and Singapore, and was working with the companies to find the "root cause" of the quality issues as inspections started at their plants. In 2019, a few batches of MDH's products were recalled in the US for salmonella contamination.

Five dead in China after tornado rips through Guangzhou

At least five people were killed and 33 injured after a tornado struck the Chinese city of Guangzhou yesterday, state media reported. China's official Xinhua news agency said that the tornado hit the Guangdong Province capital, in the country's south, around 3pm (0700 GMT). The extreme weather was the latest to hit the country's industrial heartland. Guangdong, China's most populous province, is home to 127 million people and thousands of factories that power the nation's export sector. AFP reported from Beijing. Some 141 factories were damaged, though no houses had collapsed, Xinhua reported. Images published by state media showed dark skies in the middle of the day. Social media images showed damaged cars and uprooted trees. Earlier this week, torrential rains in Guangdong caused serious flooding, leaving four dead. According to state media, it was the worst flooding some parts of the province had seen since the 1950s. Tornadoes are not unusual in China. In September, 10 people were killed after a tornado struck Suqian, Jiangsu Province, in the country's east. In 2021, two tornadoes struck the country in one day, killing 12, including eight in Wuhan.

'Everyone sits out': Yangon parks offer heatwave relief

AFP
Yangon

As the sun sets on another scorching Yangon day, the hot and bothered descend on the Myanmar city's parks, the coolest place to spend an evening during yet another power blackout.

A wave of exceptionally hot weather has blasted Southeast Asia this week, sending the mercury to 45C (113F) and prompting thousands of schools to suspend in-person classes.

Even before the chaos and conflict unleashed by the military's 2021 coup, Myanmar's creaky and outdated electricity grid struggled to keep fans whirling and air conditioners humming during the hot season.

Now, infrastructure attacks and dwindling offshore gas reserves mean those who cannot afford expensive diesel generators must face at least eight hours daily at the mercy of the scorching heat.

For many in the city of some



People gather in a park during an electricity blackout in Yangon.

8mn, relief comes only at night and outdoors with the metropolis' parks offering natural shade and blissful breezes.

"My parents can't stay inside their house in the afternoon," one Yangon resident said, as she visited Inya lake late Friday.

"They have to go outside and sit under the shade of trees." The woman said her parents warn her about going outside in the weather, urging her to cover up, and added: "I feel this year is far hotter than last year." Mya Aye, 62, said she comes to the park every day when the power goes

off at 5:00pm. "The weather at home is so hot that neither the children nor the elderly can stay," she said. Across swathes of Myanmar's arid heartland day temperatures on Thursday were 3-4C higher than the April average, according to the country's weather monitor.

In Chauk in Magway region, the temperature reached a blazing 45.9 Celsius on Wednesday, the office said.

Back at the picturesque lake, one man told AFP he and his family had travelled from the northern part of the city as they

could not remain at home because of the heat.

"Even if we sit outside, the sun's rays are very hot and we can't sit anywhere," he said.

"After 10:00am in the morning, it's getting hotter and we can't stand it," he said, adding that older people were particularly impacted. "Elderly people are not going outside because of the heat and they just stay inside. After the sun is gone, they come out," he explained.

The frequent power outages only made the situation worse, he said, with homes emptying each evening. "When there is a power blackout everyone sits out on the street until 9:00 or 10:00pm," he said.

Global temperatures hit record highs last year and the UN's World Meteorological Organisation said Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace, with the impact of heatwaves in the region becoming more severe.

Scientific research has shown climate change is causing heatwaves to be longer, more frequent and more intense.

Philippines denies deal with China over disputed shoal

The Philippines yesterday denied a Chinese claim that the two countries had reached an agreement over an escalating maritime dispute in the South China Sea, calling the claim propaganda, Reuters reported from Manila. A spokesperson at China's embassy in Manila said on April 18 that the two had agreed early this year to a "new model" in managing tensions at the Second Thomas Shoal, without elaborating. Philippine Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said yesterday his department was "not aware of, nor is it a party to, any internal agreement with China" since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took office in 2022. Defence department officials have not spoken to any Chinese officials since last year, Teodoro said in a statement. China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Teodoro's comments outside office hours. Beijing and Manila have repeatedly clashed in recent months at the submerged reef, which Philippines says is in its exclusive economic zone but which China also claims. The Philippines had accused China of blocking manoeuvres and firing water cannons at its vessels to disrupt supply missions to Filipino soldiers stationed in a naval ship which Manila deliberately grounded in 1999 to bolster its maritime claims. China claims almost the entire South China Sea.

US paramedic jailed over death of man during arrest

AFP/Reuters
Los Angeles

One of two paramedics who injected a young black man with ketamine as he was put in a chokehold by US police has been sentenced to 14 months in jail with work release and probation, in the final chapter of a case that became a clarion call in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Jeremy Cooper had been convicted in December of criminally negligent homicide over the death of Elijah McClain, an unarmed 23-year-old who died several days after a struggle with police in Colorado.

He had suffered a cardiac arrest in the ambulance in the moments after his forceful arrest.

At a court in Colorado on Friday, Cooper, 49, was given 14 months in jail with work release, and four years' probation, US media reported.

Work-release programmes typically require convicts to spend nights and weekends in jail, though they are free to leave for work during weekdays.

Fellow paramedic Peter Cichuniec was convicted of criminally negligent homicide and assault by drugging.

He was sentenced last month to five years in prison, the mandatory minimum for the assault conviction.

Paramedics rarely face charges in such cases. Sheneen McClain, Elijah's mother, walked out of the courtroom when a tearful Cooper rose to say he was directing sorrowful comments to her son.

She later returned to give her own statement before the court and told Cooper to never invoke her son's name.

She said the law enforcement culture that permits young black men to be killed with greater frequency than their white counterparts will not change until deep shifts take place.

"America will never be what it could be because it does not look at all its citizens as one race - the human race," Sheneen McClain said.

She then touched her right hand to her chest and lifted it skyward, choked back tears and concluded: "Long live Elijah McClain, always and forever!"

The episode unfolded in August 2019 when police in the city of Aurora responded to reports of a "suspicious" black male "acting weird" in



This picture taken in 2020 shows protesters in Denver marching to call for justice for Elijah McClain.

the street and wearing a ski mask.

McClain's family later told media that he had been out buying iced tea, and often wore the mask to stay warm because he suffered from anaemia.

One officer said McClain, who was unarmed, had reached for another officer's gun. No evidence was produced to support this claim.

They grappled with him and while they were restraining him Cichuniec and Cooper injected him with ketamine.

During the trial, the paramedics' lawyers argued that their clients had simply followed protocol in administering a drug approved in Colorado for people in an "agitated state".

Prosecutors countered they had ignored their training in handling distressed patients.

McClain's death occurred months before the killing of another black man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis in May 2020, but drew renewed attention soon after as protests against police brutality swelled.

A celebrity-backed campaign led to a special investigation in which three police officers were ultimately indicted, along with the two paramedics.

Two of the police officers were acquitted,

while the third officer was sentenced in January to 14 months behind bars.

Colorado has undergone significant police reforms since the killing of McClain and the following year's racial justice protests ignited by the killing of Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Politicians and experts say more must be done.

"It should not be the way that we have to make policy, to do so based on someone being murdered, like Elijah McClain," said Colorado state Representative Leslie Herod. "But when Elijah McClain was murdered, we were able to make a lot of progress in a lot of areas that people wanted to ignore or say did not happen here in Colorado."

Herod said one of the most impactful measures of a sweeping 2020 police reform bill she co-sponsored spelled out that officers have a duty to intervene if they see a colleague committing civil rights violations.

Herod said she is now focusing on providing whistleblower protections for police officers, and said new laws are needed to ensure, for example, that independent bodies investigate allegations against police.

Pasteurised milk 'safe' from bird flu: officials

AFP/Reuters
Washington

Milk sold in US stores is "safe" from the bird flu because pasteurisation effectively kills the disease, American health authorities have said, following spread of the infection among herds of cows.

An outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has made its way through dairy cattle herds across the country and infected one human, who had mild symptoms.

On Thursday the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reported that initial results from a nationally representative commercial milk sampling showed about one in five retail milk samples tested positive for viral fragments, with a higher proportion in areas where herds are infected.

The FDA had announced earlier this week that thanks to the pasteurisation process the virus was unlikely to present a health risk via milk.

However, it said additional tests were needed.

Preliminary results indicated "pasteurisation is effective in inactivating HPAI", the FDA said in its press release on Friday.

Bird flu was previously detected in raw milk, which health authorities have long advised against consuming.

Though the H5N1 strain of HPAI has killed millions of poultry during the current wave, affected cows have not fallen severely sick.

According to the FDA's Friday release, information from US health officials continues "to show no uptick of human cases of flu and no cases of H5N1, specifically, beyond the one known case".

There is no evidence of human-to-human bird flu transmission at this time, but scientists fear a mutation in the virus could allow it to pass among people.

The FDA did not say how many milk products it had tested but added that it plans to do more testing on 297 products from 38 states.

One person, a Texas farm worker, has been confirmed to have bird flu and suffered conjunctivitis in the current outbreak following exposure to dairy cows.

Both the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Friday that the current overall public health risk is low, but is higher for those

with exposure to infected animals.

The US Department of Agriculture has confirmed milking cows in Colorado tested positive, following earlier infections in Texas, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Idaho, New Mexico, North Carolina and South Dakota.

Congress members' push for a stronger response added pressure on federal agriculture and health authorities still seeking to confirm how the H5N1 virus is spreading and its potential risks to people, one month after the first detection in a Texas dairy herd.

An analysis of US Department of Agriculture data by a University of Arizona scientist offers new evidence that the first known H5N1 outbreak in dairy cattle is more far-reaching than the 34 herds in nine states that have officially tested positive.

"Containing this before it spreads among humans is critical. Given lessons learned from (the coronavirus pandemic), this federal response is insufficient," Republican US Senator Mitt Romney said in a post on X.

Some lawmakers, including Romney, have made a bipartisan push to reauthorise legislation known as the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act that lapsed last year and is aimed at bolstering the nation's response to pandemics and other public health threats.

The virus in the human case is significantly different from the bird flu virus samples taken from infected cattle that were made public by government officials last weekend, said Dr Michael Worobey, an evolutionary biologist from the University of Arizona.

The difference between the genetic sequences of the worker's virus and the 239 other samples provided indicate that "this was a very longstanding, widespread epidemic", he told Reuters.

The Texas Animal Health Commission said it did not receive the location of the worker's farm or obtain samples of that herd to test because of the person's confidentiality.

"I think the sequences out there probably aren't representative of everything that's circulating," said Dr Richard Webby, a virologist at St Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis.

A CDC spokesperson said in an e-mail "there are always some subtle changes in genetic sequences when flu viruses move from host-to-host", but said data points to the virus emerging from birds to infect cows and then transmission to the human.

US intelligence believes Putin 'probably didn't order' Navalny's death

AFP
Washington

US intelligence agencies believe that while the Russian president was ultimately responsible for the death of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, he didn't order it to take place when it did, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported yesterday.

The finding, which the WSJ said was based on both classified intelligence and an analysis of public facts, raises new questions about Navalny's death in a remote Arctic prison camp, which led to a new round of sanctions against President Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Among those facts was the timing of the opposition leader's death in mid-February, which overshadowed Putin's re-election a month later.

While the new finding does not question Putin's responsibility for Navalny's death, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other US intelligence agencies believe that the president probably didn't order it "at that moment", the Journal said, quoting people familiar with the matter.

It said that some European officials, briefed on the US finding, were sceptical that the 47-year-old dissident could have been targeted without Putin's prior knowl-

edge, given the tight controls in today's Russia.

President Joe Biden and several other world leaders have publicly expressed little doubt about the matter.

"Make no mistake. Putin is responsible for Navalny's death," Biden said after the stunning news of the death emerged.

The Russian prison service said that Navalny collapsed on February 16 after a walk at the isolated camp. It said attempts to revive him failed.

Navalny had seemed relatively healthy and in good spirits when seen in a video just a day earlier.

A week before that, he reportedly had been the subject of high-level talks over a potential prisoner swap that could have freed him.

Navalny had been serving a 19-year prison sentence on charges he and his backers insist were fabricated.

He had earlier survived a poisoning that US and other investigators blamed on the Kremlin. Russian officials have denied culpability in the poisoning or in his death.

A number of prominent Kremlin opponents have died, been jailed and or forced into exile in recent years.

Reached by AFP, the National Security Council declined to comment on the report.

Attack in Chile leaves three police officers dead

Three military police officers were killed in an ambush early yesterday in a restive region of southern Chile, authorities said, in the worst such violence in years.

"This morning we received the grave and painful news of an attack in Arauco province in which three Carabineros were killed," President Gabriel Boric announced on the social media platform X.

He travelled to the area with a large contingent, including top military and congressional officials and the president of the Supreme Court, and later declared three days of national mourning.

In Santiago, hundreds of people gathered outside the presidential palace to protest the killings.

The bodies of the three officers were found in a burned-out armoured patrol vehicle on a road near the city of Concepcion, some 500km (300 miles) south of capital Santiago. They appeared to have been shot.

The area had been militarised after a series of arsons, mostly attributed to radical groups of Mapuche, Chile's largest Indigenous group, which has demanded the restitution of ancestral lands.

The attack occurred as Chile's Carabineros, or military police, were celebrating the 97th anniversary of their founding.

"This was not coincidental, it was not random," said Ricardo Yanez, director-general of the Carabineros.

The attack came the same week that Hector Llaitul, a leader of CAM, one of the groups that has claimed the arson attacks, was convicted of "attacks against authority" and related crimes. He faces up to 25 years in prison.

Boric denounced those behind the latest attack as "terrorists" and told fellow Chileans, "we will find the whereabouts of the perpetrators of this terrible crime".

Earlier this week Boric's administration had announced that violent incidents in Arauco had been cut in half since he took office in March 2022. - AFP

Scores of tornadoes lash central US plains states

AFP
Washington

Dozens of tornadoes struck the central United States on Friday, razing homes, knocking down power lines and injuring at least three people, authorities said.

More than 70 tornadoes were recorded across the country by the National Weather Service (NWS), most of them around Omaha, a transportation hub in Nebraska.

Images from storm chasers posted on social networks showed immense black twisters sweeping across the sky, turning over earth, dust and materials in their path.

In the Omaha suburb of Elkhorn, the storms razed numerous homes, blew off roofs and stripped trees of leaves.

"Emergency personnel continue to check damaged houses and assist any injured citizens," Omaha police posted on social media platform X.

Further south, near the Nebraska state capital of Lincoln, a tornado struck an industrial shed.

The 70 or so people inside when the roof collapsed were evacuated, but three suffered non-life-threatening injuries, Lancaster County authorities said at a news conference.

To the northeast of Lincoln, near Waverly, powerful storm winds toppled a train from its tracks, the officials said.

About 11,000 households were without power in Nebraska, according to tracking site Poweroutage.com.

The NWS, which issued numerous urgent tornado warnings in several central US states on Friday, warned that powerful storms would continue this weekend in the central plains,



A drone view shows emergency personnel working at the site of damaged buildings in the aftermath of a tornado in Omaha, Nebraska, in this still image obtained from social media.

extending as far south as Texas.

Tornadoes, weather phenomena that are as impressive as they are difficult to predict, are

relatively common in the United States, especially in the central and southern parts of the country.

New York returns 30 pillaged relics worth a total of \$3mn to Cambodia, Indonesia

New York prosecutors said on Friday that they had returned to Cambodia and Indonesia 30 antiquities that were looted, sold or illegally transferred by networks of American dealers and traffickers.

The antiquities were valued at a total of \$3mn, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said.

Bragg said in a statement that he had returned 27 pieces to Phnom Penh and three to Jakarta in two recent repatriation ceremonies, including a bronze of the Hindu deity Shiva ("Shiva Triad") looted from Cambodia and a stone bas-relief of two royal figures from the Majapahit empire (13th-16th century) stolen from Indonesia.

"We are continuing to investigate the wide-ranging trafficking networks that...target Southeast Asian antiquities," Bragg said in the statement.

"There is clearly still much more work to do." During Bragg's tenure, the Antiquities Trafficking Unit has recovered nearly 1,200 items stolen from more than 25 countries and valued at more than \$250mn. - AFP

Mexican wins \$28 Cartier earrings battle

A Mexican man has claimed a victory over French luxury brand Cartier, saying an error allowed him to buy two pairs of earrings for \$28 that were supposed to cost nearly \$28,000.

After a four-month struggle, doctor Rogelio Villarreal said he had finally received the jewellery, which he accused the company of refusing to deliver after his online purchase in December.

Cartier declined to recognise the purchase and offered Villarreal a refund, as well as a bottle of champagne and a passport holder as compensation, according to a company letter shared by the doctor.

However, Villarreal refused and decided to take the case to Mexico's consumer protection agency, which ruled in favour of the doctor. - AFP



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GULF TIMES

Prospects brighten for global treaty on responsible use of plastics

Plastics offer several benefits that have contributed to their widespread use in various industries and daily life in all corners of the globe.

Lightweight plastics can be moulded into a wide range of shapes and forms, making them suitable for diverse applications across industries such as packaging, construction, healthcare, automotive, electronics, and consumer goods.

Many plastics are durable and resistant to corrosion, moisture, and chemicals, making them suitable for long-term use in various environments.

While plastics offer numerous benefits, their environmental impact and sustainability concerns underscore the importance of responsible use, recycling, and the development of alternatives to mitigate their negative effects on the planet.

Since the 1950s, 9.2bn tonnes of plastic have reportedly been produced, of which 7bn tonnes have become waste, filling up landfills and polluting lakes, rivers, the soil and the ocean.

Plastic pollution is a significant threat to ecosystems worldwide. Plastic debris harms marine life through ingestion and entanglement, disrupts habitats, and leaches harmful chemicals into the environment.

Plastics contain toxic additives, and when they break down into microplastics, they can be ingested by humans through food and water, potentially causing health issues such as hormone disruption and the transfer of pollutants.

The sheer volume of plastic waste overwhelms waste management systems globally. Improper disposal leads to littering, clogged drainage systems, and increased costs for waste management.

The production, transportation, and disposal of plastics contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating climate change.

Plastic production and waste are set to triple by 2060, and up to 37mn metric tonnes of plastic pollution could be entering oceans every year by 2040

and waste are set to triple by 2060, and up to 37mn metric tonnes of plastic pollution could be entering oceans every year by 2040. This is leaving a legacy of environmental impacts for future generations.

Negotiators from 176 countries are now gathering in Ottawa, Canada, for the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which is hosted by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment to advance the development a global agreement, by the end of 2024.

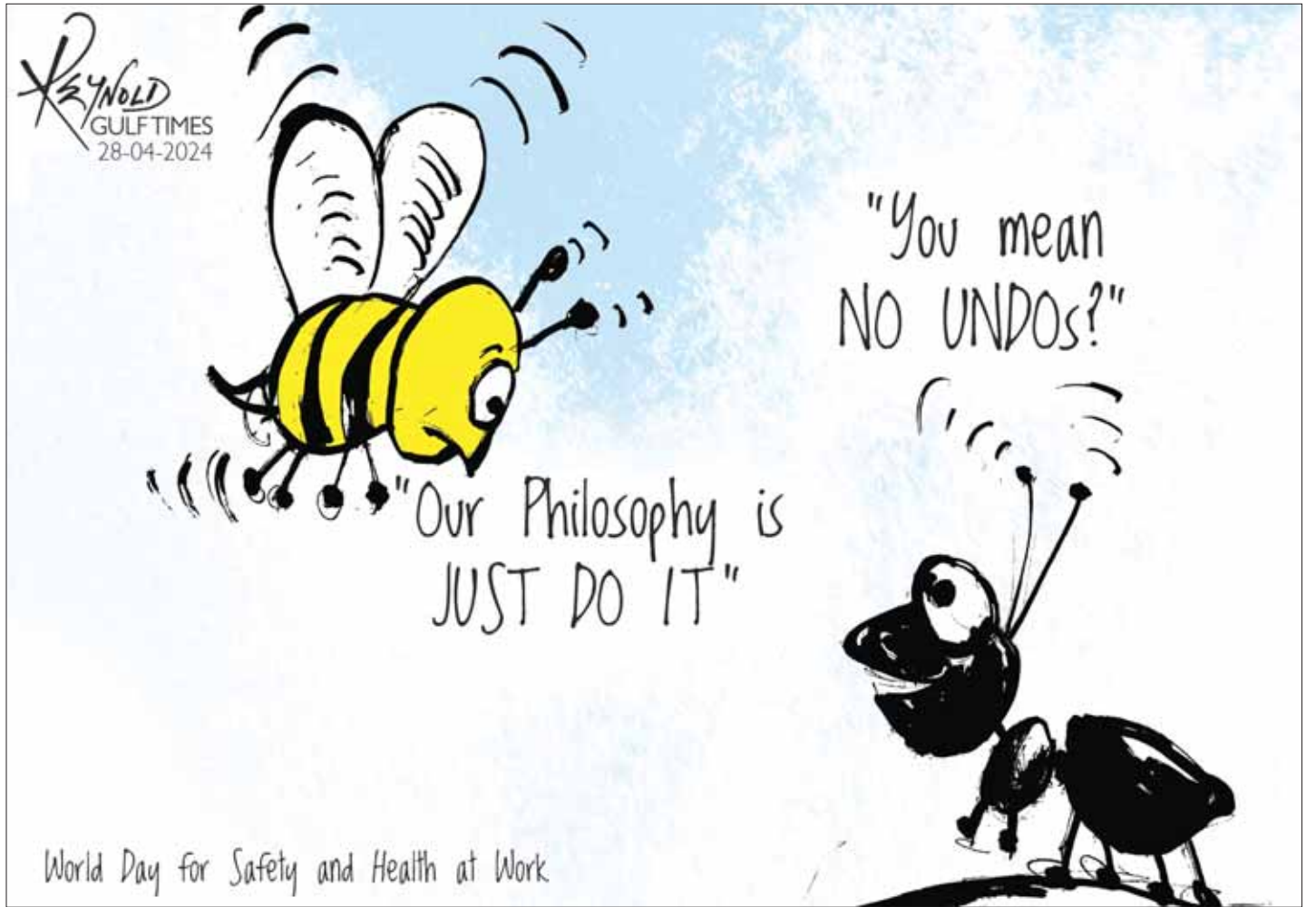
Already several countries have clamped domestic ban on harmful single-use plastics, implemented a comprehensive plan to reduce plastic waste and pollution, and moved towards a circular plastics economy.

According to the summit host Canada, plastic pollution costs more than \$2tn every year, a burden that is largely held by local communities. Without new and effective control measures, and increased international cooperation, the global plastic pollution crisis will intensify.

Greenpeace Canada noted the global plastics treaty has the potential to stop the plastic pollution crisis at the source - if governments truly step up and uphold their responsibility to the people, environment, wildlife, and the climate. Ambition needs to be more than just words.

According to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, "Plastics know no border. Every living being and every part of the planet is harmed by plastics and their production. To beat plastic pollution, we need a strong plastics treaty that upholds human rights and addresses the full life cycle of plastics."

Addressing problems because of plastics contamination requires comprehensive strategies that encompass reduction, recycling, innovation in alternative materials, policy interventions, and global co-operation.



World Day for Safety and Health at Work

Risk for some of America's most productive farmland

By PJ Huffstutter and Christopher Walljasper
Jasper County, Indiana

Dave Duttlinger's first thought when he saw a dense band of yellowish-brown dust smearing the sky above his Indiana farm was: I warned them this would happen.

About 445 acres of his fields near Wheatfield, Indiana, are covered in solar panels and related machinery - land that in April 2019 Duttlinger leased to Dunns Bridge Solar LLC, for one of the largest solar developments in the Midwest.

On that blustery spring afternoon in 2022, Duttlinger said, his phone rang with questions from frustrated neighbours: Why is dust from your farm inside my truck? Inside my house? Who should I call to clean it up?

According to Duttlinger's solar lease, reviewed by Reuters, Dunns Bridge said it would use "commercially reasonable efforts to minimise any damage to and disturbance of growing crops and crop land caused by its construction activities" outside the project site and "not remove topsoil" from the property itself. Still, sub-contractors graded Duttlinger's fields to assist the building of roads and installation of posts and panels, he said, despite his warnings that it could make the land more vulnerable to erosion.

Crews reshaped the landscape, spreading fine sand across large stretches of rich topsoil, Duttlinger said. When Reuters visited his farm last year and this spring, much of the land beneath the panels was covered in yellow-brown sand, where no plants grew.

"I'll never be able to grow anything on that field again," the farmer said. About one-third of his approximately 1,200-acre farm - where his family grows corn, soybeans and alfalfa for cattle - has been leased.

The Dunns Bridge Solar project is a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources LLC, the world's largest generator of renewable energy from wind and solar. Duttlinger said when he approached NextEra about the damage to his land, the company said it would review any remedial work needed at the end of its contract in 2023, as per the terms of the agreement.

NextEra declined to comment on the matter or on what future commitments it made to Duttlinger, and Reuters could not independently confirm them. Project developer Orion Renewable Energy Group LLC directed questions to NextEra.

The solar industry is pushing into the US Midwest, drawn by cheaper land rents, access to electric transmission, and a wealth of federal and state incentives. The region also has what solar needs: wide-open fields.

A renewable energy boom risks damaging some of America's richest soils in key farming states like Indiana, according to a Reuters analysis of federal, state and local data; hundreds of pages of court records; and interviews with more than 100 energy and soil scientists, agricultural economists, farmers



Solar panels stand on sandy soil located on Dave Duttlinger's farmland that he leased to Dunns Bridge Solar LLC in Wheatfield, Indiana. (Reuters)

and farmland owners, and local, state and federal lawmakers.

Some of Duttlinger's farm, including parts now covered in solar panels, is on land classified by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the most productive for growing crops, according to a Reuters analysis.

For landowners like Duttlinger, the promise of profits is appealing. Solar leases in Indiana and surrounding states can offer \$900-1,500 an acre per year in land rents, with annual rate increases, according to a Reuters review of solar leases and interviews with four solar project developers. In comparison, farmland rent in top corn and soybean producers Indiana, Illinois and Iowa averaged about \$251 per acre in 2023, USDA data shows.

Farmland Partners Inc, a publicly traded farmland real estate investment trust (REIT) has leased about 9,000 acres nationwide to solar firms. Much of that ground is highly productive, said Executive Chairman Paul Pittman.

"Do I think it's the best use of that land? Probably not. But our investors would kill us if we didn't pursue this," he said.

Some renewable energy developers said not all leases become solar projects. Some are designing their sites to make it possible to grow crops between panels, while others, like Doral Renewables LLC, said they use livestock to graze around the panels as part of their land management. Developers also argue that in the Midwest, where more than one-third of the US corn crop is used for ethanol production, solar energy is key for powering future electric vehicles.

Some agricultural economists and agronomists counter that taking even small amounts of the best cropland out of production for solar development and damaging valuable topsoil impacts future crop potential in the United States.

Common solar farm construction practices, including clearing and grading large sections of land, also can lead to significant erosion and major runoff of sediment into waterways without proper remediation, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Justice Department.

Solar development comes amid increasing competition for land: In 2023, there were 76.2mn - or nearly 8% - fewer acres in farms than in 1997, USDA data shows, as farmland

is converted for residential, commercial and industrial use.

In response to Reuters' findings, USDA said that urban sprawl and development are currently bigger contributors to farmland loss than solar, citing reports from the Department of Energy and agency-funded research.

No-one knows how much cropland nationwide is currently under solar panels or leased for possible future development. Land deals are typically private transactions. Scientists at the United States Geological Survey and the US Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory have been compiling a database of existing solar facilities across the country. While that project is incomplete and ongoing, Reuters found that around 0.02% of all cropland in the continental US intersected in some way with large-scale, ground-based solar panel sites they had identified as of 2021.

The total power capacity of the solar operations tracked in the data set represents over 60 gigawatts of electric power capacity. In the following two years, solar capacity has nearly tripled, according to a December 2023 report from the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) and Wood Mackenzie.

To better understand future land-use patterns, Reuters analysed federal government data to identify cropland that USDA classified as prime, unique, or of local or statewide importance. Reuters also reviewed more than 2,000 pages of solar-related documents filed at local county recorders' offices in a small sample of four Midwestern counties - Pulaski, Starke and Jasper counties in Indiana, and Columbia County in Wisconsin.

The counties, representing an area of land slightly bigger than the state of Delaware, are where some of the nation's largest projects are being developed or built. The sample is not necessarily representative of the broader United States but gives an idea of the potential impact of solar projects in farm-heavy counties.

Reuters found the percentage of these counties' most productive cropland secured by solar and energy companies as of end of 2022 was as follows: 12% in Pulaski, 9% in Starke, 4% in Jasper and 5% in Columbia.

Jerry Hatfield, former director of USDA Agricultural Research Service's National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment,

said Reuters' findings in the four counties are "concerning"

"It's not the number of acres converting to solar," he said. "It's the quality of the land coming out of production, and what that means for local economies, state economies and the country's future abilities for crop production."

More than a dozen agronomists, as well as renewable energy researchers and other experts consulted by Reuters, said the approach to measuring solar's impact was fair. The news agency also shared its findings with six solar developers and energy firms working in these counties. Three said Reuters' sample size was too small, and the range of findings too wide, to be a fair portrayal of industry siting and construction practices.

By 2050, to meet the Biden Administration's decarbonisation targets, the US will need up to 1,570 gigawatts of electric energy capacity from solar.

While the land needed for ground-based solar development to achieve this goal won't be even by state, it is not expected to exceed 5% of any state's land area, except the smallest state of Rhode Island, where it could reach 6.5%, by 2050, according to the Energy Department's Solar Futures Study, published in 2021.

Researchers at American Farmland Trust, a non-profit farmland protection organisation which champions what it calls Smart Solar, forecast last year that 83% of new solar energy development in the US will be on farm and ranchland, unless current government policies changed. Nearly half would be on the nation's best land for producing food, fibre, and other crops, they warned.

Five renewable developers and solar energy firms interviewed by Reuters counter that the industry's use of farmland is too small to impact domestic food production overall and should be balanced with the need to decarbonise the US energy market in the face of climate change. Doral Renewables, the developer behind the \$1.5bn Mammoth Solar project in Pulaski and Starke counties, does not consider corn or soybean yields in its siting decisions.

Instead, the company looks at the land's topography, zoning and closeness to an electrical grid or substation - and tries to avoid wooded areas, ditches and environmentally sensitive areas, said Nick Cohen, Doral's president and CEO.

Shifting corn acres for solar? "I don't see it as replacing something that is vital to our society," Cohen said. Solar can make farmland "more productive from an economic perspective," he added.

Indiana farmer Norm Welker says he got a better deal leasing 60% of his farmland to Mammoth than he would have growing corn, with prices dipping to three-year lows this year.

"We've got mounds of corn, we're below the cost of production, and right now, if you're renting land to grow corn - you're losing money," Welker said. "This way, my economic circumstances are very good." - Reuters

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Italy summons Russian envoy over Ariston subsidiary takeover

AFP
Rome

Italy has summoned Russia's ambassador after Moscow announced it was putting a subsidiary of Italian heating firm Ariston under the "temporary management" of state energy giant Gazprom.

"The government requests clarification on the matter of the nationalisation of the Ariston Thermo Group," Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on X.

He said he asked the top official in Italy's foreign ministry to summon Russia's ambassador, adding that Rome was "working also with Brussels, in conjunction with Germany," after Bosch was also targeted.

Tajani earlier said he had spoken to Ariston's top managers and Rome "stands alongside businesses, ready to protect them in all international markets".

An EU spokesman condemned the move as "yet another proof of Russia's disregard for international law and rules" and called on Moscow to reverse it.

The move was announced in a Russian decree published on Friday and signed by President Vladimir Putin.

It transfers control over 100% of the shares in Ariston Thermo Rus, owned by Ariston Holding NV, and 100% of shares in BSH Household Appliances, owned by BSH Hausgerate GmbH, to Gazprom Household Systems, a subsidiary of Gazprom.

In a statement, Ariston Group said it had been active in Russia for almost 20 years and had "very correct relations with the local institutions".

It said it was "extremely surprised" by the decree, of which it said it had no advance notice.

"While we wait for an expla-

nation on the unexpected action, we are assessing its implications, including from a governance and managerial standpoint," it said.

Since invading Ukraine, Moscow has taken the Russian subsidiaries of a number of Western companies - notably French food giant Danone and Danish brewer Carlsberg - under what it calls "temporary management control".

It cast the moves as a response to Western sanctions on Russian companies.

Western officials and some of the companies have blasted Moscow's "nationalisation" of private property.

Ariston Group has a water heating manufacturing facility located outside St Petersburg, with around 200 direct and indirect employees, producing products for the local market.

The company said there was also "a local product development centre of excellence and a commercial head office in Moscow, co-ordinating around 100 employees also active on local commercial branches" throughout Russia, operating under the Ariston brand.

The group had a turnover of about €100mn in Russia in the 2023 financial year, it said, and held a "significant asset base".

The EU spokesperson said yesterday: "Russia confirms to be an unpredictable actor also in the economic field, and has created a business climate which is arbitrary and hostile towards foreign investors."

"The European Union calls on Russia to reverse these measures and seek acceptable solutions with European companies targeted by them."

BSH Hausgerate told AFP that it is in discussions with Gazprom Household Systems and would not be making any other comments for the time being.

Russia hits Ukrainian energy sites in 'massive' attack

AFP
Kyiv

Russia launched a "massive" missile strike at Ukraine overnight, damaging four power plants in the latest barrage targeting the country's energy supply, officials in Kyiv said yesterday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called on Kyiv's Western partners to supply more air defence systems to protect his country's skies, as the air force said it shot down 21 of 34 incoming missiles.

Moscow has launched some of its biggest ever strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities in recent months, knocking out a significant chunk of production, and triggering blackouts and energy rationing across the country.

Ukraine has also said that it targeted two oil refineries and a military air base in southern Russia during its own wave of overnight drone attacks.

"Thirty-four Russian missiles overnight. We managed to shoot down some of them. But the world has every opportunity to help (us) shoot down every missile and every drone," Zelensky said in a post on Telegram.

Energy facilities were hit in at least three regions - including Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk in the west, hundreds of kilometres from the front line - Energy Minister German Galushchenko said in a Facebook post.

One of the missiles landed 15km (nine miles) from the Polish-Ukrainian border, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk said.

Kyiv says Moscow is escalating attacks from the air and on land ahead of nationwide celebrations on May 9, when Russia marks victory in World War II, and while Ukraine awaits the arrival of crucial US weapons.

The DTEK power operator said equipment at four of its thermal power plants was "severely damaged" in the overnight strikes.

State electricity operator Ukrenergo said it had disconnected its main overhead power line in the west of the country as a preventative measure.

Officials urged people and businesses to limit their power usage. "We ask all consumers to consume electricity sparingly. Industry is asked to maximise electricity imports and use alternative power sources," Ukrenergo said in a statement.

The head of the western Lviv region called on residents not to use kettles, irons, washing machines and microwaves in peak evening hours.

At least two people were killed in separate shelling attacks on the northeastern Kharkiv region and southern Kherson region, Ukrainian officials said.

The spate of missile and artillery attacks also injured more than a dozen.

Russia's defence ministry said yesterday that over the last week it had carried out 35 "group strikes" against Ukrainian energy sites, military factories, railway facilities, air defence systems and other targets.

On Friday the US announced a \$6bn package of military supplies to Kyiv to include key air



A family sleeps while taking shelter inside a metro station in Kyiv during a Russian missile strike.

defence munitions and artillery rounds.

Ukraine launched its own massive drone attack on Russia's southern Krasnodar region overnight.

A Ukrainian defence source told AFP that it had hit two oil refineries and a military airfield in the region, just east of the annexed Crimean peninsula.

"Ukrainian drones struck the atmospheric distillation columns of the Ilsky and Slovyansky refineries. These are key technological facilities," the source said.

Russian officials in the Krasnodar region reported a fire at an oil refinery in the town of Slavyansk-on-Kuban.

The refinery partially suspended operations as a result, Russian state media reported, citing a company representative.

Videos and photos on social media showed a large fire raging overnight at the site after a series of blasts.

Moscow said Ukraine had launched one of its largest ever attempted drone attacks on the Krasnodar region.

"Air defences destroyed and intercepted 66 Ukrainian drones over the territory of the Krasnodar region and two over the Crimean peninsula," the defence ministry said.

The governor of Russia's Belgorod border region said later that five people were injured when a Ukrainian drone fell on a road a few kilometres from the border.

Kyiv has hit several oil refineries in western Russia in recent months, despite reports of concern in Washington that the strikes could be seen as escalatory and might drive up global oil prices.

Ukraine says targeting Russia's vital energy sector is legitimate as it is a source of fuel and funds for the Russian army.

Latvians asked to turn their basements into air-raid shelters

Authorities in Latvia called on residents to use yesterday's annual "Big Clean-up Day" to turn basements into air-raid shelters, with many in the Baltic country concerned they could be Russia's next target.

The former Soviet republic, now a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) and the European Union, has a 214km (133-mile) border with Russia, and has been one of Ukraine's most reliable supporters since Russia's invasion.

"We call on everyone during the big clean-up, but also afterwards, to ensure that your cellars and your basements can be used as shelters in case of emergencies," said Vilnis Kirsis, mayor of the capital Riga.

Gints Reinsons, head of a Riga civil defence commission, said "the basements of public buildings, schools, retirement homes, hospitals, and town halls will be inspected by the authorities who will prepare them to serve as hiding places in the event of an attack".

He told the TV24 station that the goal was to prepare a hundred anti-bomb shelters a month through the end of the year.

Since 2008, thousands of Latvians have gathered each spring to participate in a national clean-up day, a tradition that has now been followed by Baltic neighbours Lithuania and Estonia. - AFP

Finnish MP suspected of firearm offence

A Finnish far-right MP is suspected of shooting a firearm outside a Helsinki nightclub, the populist Finns Party secretary said. "One of our party's MPs was ... implicated in an incident in Helsinki," Harri Vuorenpaa wrote on X, formerly Twitter, on Friday night. "The course of events is currently unclear. Police are investigating and we are waiting for further information," added Vuorenpaa. According to the *Seiska* newspaper, two members of parliament were on a night out in the capital on Friday when one fired a gun after leaving the Bar Ihku nightclub. Several media said MP Timo Vornanen had been arrested. Vornanen is a police officer who enjoys hunting during his time off, according to his personal website. - AFP

Spanish prime minister's supporters turn out and beg him to stay

AFP/Reuters
Madrid

Thousands of supporters of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez rallied at the headquarters of his Socialist party imploring him not to step down over a graft investigation against his wife.

The 52-year-old premier, who has been in office since 2018, stunned Spain on Wednesday when he put his resignation on the line after a Madrid court opened a preliminary investigation into suspected influence peddling and corruption against his spouse Begona Gomez.

Sanchez said he would suspend all public duties until he announces his decision tomorrow.

The normally hyperactive premier has since remained out of sight and silent.

According to Madrid city authorities, the crowd rallying yesterday to beg Sanchez to stay on numbered around 12,500.

Supporters held up placards saying "Spain needs you", "Pedro don't abandon us", and shouted slogans such as "Pedro leader".

"I hope that Sanchez will say on Monday that he will stay," said Sara Dominguez, a consultant in her 30's, adding that his government had "taken good steps for women, and the minorities".

Jose Maria Diez, a 44-year-old



Supporters gather and wave flags during a demonstration called in support of the Spanish prime minister, in front of the PSOE party headquarters in Madrid.

government official who came from Valladolid in northern Spain to express his support, said there is a real possibility that the far-right could take power if Sanchez quit.

"This will mean a step backwards for our rights and liberties," he warned.

"I hope he continues, because Spain has to continue with him. If not, it scares me. We are afraid of what could come," Leonor Rome-

ro, 56, a councillor from Huelva, southern Spain, told Reuters.

"He must continue. I think he is not going to resign. He will leave us orphans," Jose Luis Trigo, 74, a pensioner, said.

Inside the party headquarters, there were similar passionate appeals.

"Pedro stay. We are together and together we can ... take the country forward, Spain can't step back,"

said Budget Minister Maria Jesus Montero, the government number two.

"Today all democrats, all progressives, are summoned to Madrid against a pack whose only aim is to overthrow a democratic and legitimate government," said Felix Bolanos, the minister of the presidency, justice and parliamentary relations.

At one point, Socialist leaders

took to the streets to thank those gathered.

"They won't succeed," government spokeswoman Pilar Alegria told the crowd.

The court opened the investigation into Sanchez's wife in response to a complaint from anti-corruption pressure group Manos Limpias (Clean Hands), whose leader is linked to the far-right.

The group, which has presented a litany of unsuccessful lawsuits against politicians in the past, said on Wednesday that its complaint was based on media reports and could not vouch for their veracity.

While the court did not give details of the case, online news site El Confidencial said it focused on links Gomez had to Spanish tourism group Globalia when carrier Air Europa was in talks with the government to secure a huge bailout.

The airline sought the bailout after it was badly hit by plunging passenger numbers during the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis.

At the time, Gomez was running IE Africa Centre, a foundation linked to Madrid's Instituto de Empresa (IE) business school, which had signed a sponsorship agreement with Globalia in 2020.

Spain's public prosecutor's office on Thursday requested the dismissal of the investigation, which Sanchez said was part of a campaign of "harassment" against him and his wife waged by "media

heavily influenced by the right and far-right".

If Sanchez decides to remain in office, he could choose to file a confidence motion in parliament to show that he and his minority government are still supported by a majority of lawmakers.

If he resigns, an early election could be called from July - year after the last one - with or without Sanchez at the helm of the Socialist party.

The right-wing opposition has accused the prime minister of being irresponsible for putting the country on hold while he mulls his decision.

"I ask all citizens not to be fooled. Spain does not have a problem, the one who has a judicial problem is Sanchez, his government, his party and his circle. Let them solve it," Alberto Nunez Feijoo, the leader of the opposition conservative People's Party (PP), told a meeting in Tarragona in Catalonia.

A survey, carried out for the PP by the polling company Sigmadors, found 54.1% believed Sanchez's period of reflection was a "political strategy" to gain support before the Catalan elections on May 12 and European Parliamentary elections in June.

Some 56.4% of the 1,527 people questioned, said they believe Sanchez will not resign tomorrow while 21.2% said they thought the prime minister will call for a motion of confidence in parliament.



Visitors take picture of the *Mona Lisa* by Italian artist Leonardo Da Vinci, on display in a gallery at the Louvre in Paris.

Mona Lisa could get a room of her own

The *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci, the world's most famous portrait, could get a room of its own in the Louvre, the museum's president said yesterday.

Such a move would give visitors, many of whom visit the Louvre for the iconic painting alone, a better experience, Laurence des Cars told the France Inter broadcaster. "It's always frustrating when you don't give visitors the best possible reception, and that is the case for the *Mona Lisa*," she said.

"A better solution seems necessary to me today," des Cars said, adding that the Louvre was in contact with the culture ministry about potential solutions.

The Louvre, the world's most popular museum, welcomed close to 9mn visitors in 2023.

Des Cars said that 80% of them - 20,000 people per day - braved the crowd to catch a glimpse of the *Mona Lisa*'s enigmatic smile, often taking selfies in front of the painting.

The *Mona Lisa* currently hangs in the Louvre's Salle des Etats (State Room), the museum's biggest, in a protective glass case, but Da Vinci's masterwork is not alone there.

It is accompanied by works by 16th-century Venetian masters, and across the room hangs the Louvre's biggest painting, *The Wedding at Cana* by Paolo Veronese. - AFP

Pre-medical students from WCM-Q explore Aspetar

More than 50 pre-medical students from Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) embarked on a journey into the world of sports medicine during a recent visit to Aspetar, Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital.

Their objective was to gain a deeper understanding of how biomechanics is applied in diagnosing and treating athletes.

The students undertook a tour of various hospital departments, ranging from the movement and assessment analysis laboratory and hydrotherapy pools to the altitude dormitory and climate chamber, the podiatry and virtual reality sections, the motion capture lab, and the medical imaging facilities.

The students also had the privilege of

meeting prominent figures at Aspetar, including chief executive Dr Abdulaziz Jaham al-Kuwari.

"As the leading specialised orthopaedic and sports medicine hospital in the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region, we're thrilled to welcome future doctors from the WCM-Q to our facilities," Dr al-Kuwari said. "This visit provides a unique opportunity for students to gain early exposure to sports medicine, and we look forward to hosting similar educational excursions in the future as part of our partnership with Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar."

One participating student noted: "The exposure to cutting-edge technology and interdisciplinary teamwork at Aspetar has greatly enriched my understanding of



The WCM-Q students at Aspetar.

sports medicine, providing invaluable insights into patient care and rehabilitation."

WCM-Q professor of physics Dr Mohamed Yousef emphasised the pro-

gramme's focus: "We are dedicated to providing our students with diverse opportunities to broaden their knowledge of physics principles in healthcare."

"Our visit to Aspetar offered a unique platform to witness firsthand how these principles are applied in treating and preventing sports injuries," he said.



Snapshots from the exhibition at Katara.



Katara Antique Exhibition and auction are big draws

The Katara Antique Exhibition, running until April 30, is attracting visitors with the open auction among the highlights.

Katara - the Cultural Village general manager Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti toured the exhibition on Friday, accompanied by a number of diplomats.

The second day of the auction featured 16 antique artefacts, including five carpets. One of them was a 150-year-old Turkish silk

carpet. The others included those woven in wool and silk, handcrafted by Caucasian, Afghan, and Turkish tribes.

The auction also offered four prayer beads made of rare materials: two of green malachite, one of natural amber, and one of white jade.

A Limoges Royal Victorian-style vase adorned with natural roses and a knife made of yellow and red brass from Morocco, dating back to the late 19th century, were also sold at the

auction, alongside a ceramic plate adorned with Arabic calligraphy, and a decorated Mamluk-style pitcher.

The Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani Museum Collectibles Pavilion also attracted many visitors to the exhibition, featuring rare carpets from various civilisations, in addition to antique swords, bronzes, and various types of soldiers' helmets used in ancient wars before the invention of firearms.

Mannai launches World's No. 1 New Energy Vehicles Brand, BYD

The Katara Hall at Raffles Doha was the stage for one of Qatar's most significant and impressive automotive brand launches. It was a momentous occasion as it was the launch of BYD, the world's Champion of New Energy Vehicle (NEV) brand by Mannai, BYD's proud partner and sole Distributor in Qatar.

Such a milestone occasion deserved a spectacular show and fittingly, the event was graced by the presence of HE Jassim bin Saif bin Ahmed Al Sulaiti, Minister of Transport, the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Qatar, HE Cao Xiaolin, along with other foreign ambassadors and Qatari dignitaries, BYD and Mannai senior officials, the media fraternity and other esteemed invitees in attendance.

Interestingly, the event featured a stunning show to unveil BYD, the brand, and the car models being launched. Opening with a visual introduction to BYD highlighting the importance of a 'green technology' and BYD's commitment to the cause, it went on to showcase key facts of BYD's pre-eminence in the EV sector and then proceeded to a spectacular reveal sequence, model by model. A unique element of the show was a conversational Q & A exchange on stage engaging the audience not only with the brand and product highlights but also imparting awareness about Electric Vehicles and how they are different from Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) Vehicles.

BYD's status as the world's biggest manufacturer is backed by record sales of over 3 million cars worldwide in 2023, more than any other EV brand! And it is showing no signs of slowing down. Its exports grew by 334% in 2023. It is reported that in the history of automobiles, no other brand has had such an explosive growth in such a short period of time!

BYD is credited with perfecting the three core technologies of new energy-powered vehicles - batteries, motors and electric control.



The event specifically highlighted the role of BYD's patented BLADE BATTERY, which has proved to be a game-changer. Today it is the industry benchmark for safety, durability and performance with BYD giving an 8-Year Warranty on them. It has successfully withstood the most rigorous of tests, particularly the Nail Penetration Test and the Drive-over Test, where a 46-ton truck was driven over it!

The event showcased five BYD models:

1. The All-Electric, All-Wheel-Drive, Dual-Motor BYD SEAL (Sedan)
2. The All-Electric BYD ATTO3 (SUV)
3. The world's largest selling EV in its class / The Plug-in Hybrid EV BYD QIN PLUS DM-i (Sedan)
4. The compact bestseller / The All-Wheel Drive, All-Terrain BYD SONG PLUS DM-i (SUV)
5. (SUV)
6. BYD's latest / The All-Wheel-Drive, Dual-Motor BYD HAN (Sedan) BYD's flagship model.

Mannai's decision to partner with BYD comes at a key moment in time. Qatar, which is already going electric in its public transportation is ready for mainstream passenger EVs which BYD had made a reality the world over. Hitherto EVs were a novelty or premium purchase, but BYD has overcome that more than well, making the EV dream tangible and real and accessible. Mannai's bold step reflects its ethos and its discerning approach, not only in partnering brands that prioritize quality and reliability, but also those on the forefront of technological innovation and sustainability. Mannai is upbeat about this partnership as it believes it is one that has been founded on similar values. Values that have the best interests of the customers in mind. Together, they are bound to elevate Qatar's 'green' presence on the world map. BYD, after all, is an acronym for "BUILD YOUR DREAMS".

