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## UN General Assembly backs Palestinian bid for full membership

AFP United Nations, US

The United Nations General Assembly yesterday voted overwhelmingly to grant the Palestinians some additional rights in the global body, after their drive for full membership was blocked by the US.

"I have stood hundreds of times before at this podium, but never for a more significant vote than the one about to take place, an historic one," Palestinian ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour said before the vote, his voice full of emotion. He added: "The day will come where Palestine will take its rightful place among the community of free nations."

With the war in Gaza raging, the Palestinians in April relaunched a request dating back to 2011 to become full members of the United Nations, where their current status is that of a "nonmember observer state".

To succeed, the initiative needed a Security Council green light and then a two-thirds majority vote in the General Assembly.

But the US - one of five veto-holding members on the Security

### Qatar welcomes UNGA resolution

Qatar yesterday welcomed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adoption of a resolution supporting Palestine's eligibility of full membership in the international organisation, and recommends that the UN Security Council reconsider the Palestinian request.

Qatar also considered that the vote of 143 countries in favour of the historic resolution represents international recognition of a natural, legal and historical right of the Palestinian people.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's hope that the Security Council would

respond to the UNGA's recommendation, so that Palestine would become a full member state in the United Nations, thus enhancing its position in the international system, enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, and paving the way for a just, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the Palestinian issue.

The ministry renewed Qatar's firm position in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is their right to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. (QNA)

Council and Israel's closest ally - blocked it on April 18.

The resolution, introduced by the UAE, says: "The State of Palestine is qualified for membership in the United Nations in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter and should therefore be admitted."

It calls on the Security Council to "reconsider the matter favourably."

The US, however, opposes any recognition of statehood outside of a bilateral accord between the

Palestinians and Israel, whose current right-wing government is adamantly opposed to a two-state solution.

While the passing of the resolution will "have a profound impact on the future of the Palestinian people," said UAE ambassador Mohamed Issa Abushahab, it "does not do justice to the state of Palestine, as it only grants additional rights, meaning that Palestine will remain an observer state." Page 6

## PM meets Oman's minister of culture, sports and youth



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met Oman's Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al-Said, who is visiting the country, along with his accompanying delegation, for the 33rd Doha International Book Fair. HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani was also present at the meeting. The two sides discussed close fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to develop them. Oman is the guest of honour of the current session of the exhibition, which kicked off on Thursday, and its special pavilion offers a diverse cultural programme that highlights the authentic Omani heritage, intellectual and literary production, and presents popular and artistic performances. (QNA)

## GCC sets June 6 as Gulf Youth Day

QNA Doha

The 40th meeting of GCC undersecretaries of the Ministries of Youth and Sports Committee began in Doha yesterday.

The meeting of the undersecretaries of the Ministries of Youth and Sports in the Gulf Co-operation Council countries comes in preparation for the 37th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Youth and Sports in the Gulf Co-operation Council countries, which will be held today.

The meeting, chaired by Abdulrahman bin Muslim al-Dosari, Adviser to HE the Minister of Sports and Youth, and in which undersecretaries of the Ministries of Youth and Sports in the

GCC countries participated, and Khalid bin Ali bin Salim al-Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs of the General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council, witnessed the setting of June 6 of every year as date for organising the Gulf Youth Day, besides discussing prominent points in this context.

The meeting also discussed a number of topics of common interest in the field of Gulf youth, most notably the structuring of the technical committees affiliated with the Committee of Ministers of Youth and Sports to comply with what was stated in the decision to establish the Ministerial Council in its 150th session.

They also discussed the future work plan of the Committee of

Youth and Sports Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council countries for the years (2024-2030).

The meeting reviewed the General Secretariat's proposal to create unified Gulf projects in the field of youth work, and to assign the planning, co-ordination and follow-up committee of the strategic plan to the Committee of Ministers of Youth and Sports in the GCC countries to prepare the "Gulf Youth Development Index" and develop appropriate implementation plans.

The vision for organising a joint Gulf programme in the field of humanitarian voluntary work for 2024, and the general framework of the Third Gulf Youth Forum, which is scheduled to be implemented this year, were also reviewed. To Page 3



## QFFD's Gaza aid ship docks at Egypt port



A ship carrying nearly 1,400 tonnes of humanitarian aid for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip docked at the Al Arish Port in Egypt yesterday. Provided by the Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD), the ship sailed from the Turkish port of Mersin on May 8 bound for Al Arish Port. Upon arrival, a reception ceremony was held and attended by Qatar's ambassador to Egypt Tariq Ali al-Ansari, Turkiye's ambassador to Egypt, Salih Mutlu Sen, and high-ranking personalities from the Egyptian side, alongside a delegation from QFFD.

As a complement to Qatar-led efforts devoted to aiding Palestinians in Gaza, QFFD affirmed its steadfast support for sending and following up on the arrival of urgent humanitarian assistance. QFFD has also contributed approximately 1,400 tonnes out of the 1,900 tonnes of urgent aid aboard the ship in collaboration with Turkiye. The QFFD-led efforts underscore Qatar's unwavering and historic position in support of the Palestinian resilience and their just cause. (QNA)



## Qatar 'well positioned to be key SAF supplier in Mideast': PwC

By Santhosh V Perumal Business Reporter

Doha should invest in a waste-to-fuel plant to produce sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) for which it is "well positioned" to meet the growing demand and potentially become a key supplier in the Middle East, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Qatar.

Qatar can tackle environmental issues by investing in a waste-to-fuel plant to produce SAF from domestic and industrial waste, reducing emissions in aviation and industrial sectors while improving

waste management, PwC said in its latest report.

Moreover, Qatar has an opportunity to lead in producing and exporting green hydrogen derivatives, responding to the increasing demand for sustainable solutions, it added.

On SAF production, PwC said the initiative is not only environmentally significant but also offers a promising business prospect, given its rising demand in the region.

Notably, neighbouring countries and airlines are increasingly committing to SAF to reduce carbon emissions, with "Qatar well-positioned to meet this demand

and potentially become a key SAF supplier in the Middle East."

Advocating a future-focus strategy, the report said Qatar's future energy strategy emphasises reinforcing its LNG export leadership, broadening energy production diversity, and enhancing decarbonisation.

"By adopting a sector coupling approach, Qatar aims to collectively address environmental challenges across all sectors for increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This comprehensive strategy leverages Qatar's competitive edge to drive its clean energy transition and energy goals," it said.

Qatar's solar power expansion enables the production of green hydrogen, green methanol, and green ammonia, tapping into the growing global demand for clean hydrogen, which is expected to surge by 2050, in line with climate goals.

"Qatar could become a leading supplier of green hydrogen, leveraging its LNG (liquefied natural gas) transport expertise for global distribution, or using it domestically, including in proposed waste-to-fuel plants for nearly emission-free operations," it said, adding green hydrogen can support the production of other eco-friendly

products, enhancing Qatar's decarbonisation efforts.

Besides green hydrogen, the report said, its derivatives like green methanol and green ammonia are gaining traction globally for various uses, including carbon-dioxide-free energy production and as eco-friendly fuels in the maritime and automotive sectors.

"With countries and companies exploring these alternatives to fossil fuels, Qatar has an opportunity to lead in producing and exporting these green products, responding to the increasing demand for sustainable solutions," it said.

Qatar's clean energy strategy

aims to diversify into renewables, targeting a solar capacity increase to 5GW by 2035. This includes producing green hydrogen from solar projects to serve as a backup energy source, enhancing the reliability of renewable energy and reducing fossil fuel dependence.

Green hydrogen is also seen as key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in power generation, hence integrating it into the existing infrastructure, such as in gas turbines and natural gas pipelines, supporting Qatar's broader environmental goals and commitment to advanced energy technologies.

## Commander of the Amiri Guard meets Romania's director-general of Protection and Guard Service

HE the Commander of the Amiri Guard Lieutenant-General Hazza bin Khalil al-Shahwani met with Director-General of the Romanian Protection and Guard Service (SPP) General Dr Lucian-Silvan Pahontu, during his current official visit to the Romanian capital, Bucharest. The Commander of the Amiri Guard participated in the opening of the Center of Excellence for Protection and Guarding Services, in the presence of ambassador of Qatar to Romania Osama bin Youssef al-Qaradawi. A memorandum of understanding was also signed between the Amiri Guard and the Romanian Protection and Guard Service. (QNA)



## Transport minister meets Yutong International Business chairman

HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti met with Chairman of International Business in the Chinese leading global e-bus manufacturer Yutong, Wang Wentao. Co-operation relations between the two sides were discussed during the meeting, in addition to the latest updates on the progress of the strategic partnership to establish a factory to produce e-buses in Qatar's free zones. They also discussed co-operation in joint investments between Yutong and Mowasalat (Karwa). (QNA)



## Qatar, Finland hold 2nd round of political consultations



The second round of political consultations between the ministries of foreign affairs in Qatar and Finland was held in Helsinki. HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in Qatar, Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi and Permanent State Secretary at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Jukka Salovaara co-chaired the round of the political consultations which discussed bilateral co-operative ties between the two countries and ways to strengthen them. The round was attended by ambassador of Qatar to Finland Mohamed bin Abdullah al-Jaber, Director of the European Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saoud bin Abdulla al-Mahmoud, alongside the accompanying delegation. (QNA)



### Official

#### PM greets Solomon Islands counterpart

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Jeremiah Manele on his election as Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, wishing him well and success in his work. (QNA)

#### Qatar chairs meeting of GCC representatives to UN and Unicef

Within the framework of Qatar's presidency of the 44th session of GCC, HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikhha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani held a meeting between Permanent Representatives of GCC countries to the United Nations and Executive Director of Unicef Catherine Russell at the Permanent Mission headquarters in New York. During the meeting, the executive director of Unicef provided a detailed briefing on the catastrophic humanitarian conditions facing children in Gaza, and the risks posed by continuing military operations in Rafah, which directly threaten around 600,000 children seeking refuge there. Russell also highlighted the difficulties faced by children and their families in accessing basic necessities such as food and healthcare amid deteriorating security conditions in the region. For her part, HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, expressed the deep concern of the GCC countries regarding the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and its severe impact on civilians, especially children and women. HE Sheikhha Alya affirmed that GCC countries welcome working and coordinate with Unicef to expand the scope of humanitarian aid in Gaza and facilitate its delivery to those in need, in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. (QNA)

## Shura participates in parliamentary co-ordination meeting in Istanbul



The Shura Council participated in the fifth co-ordinating meeting of parliamentary associations for counterterrorism and the third parliamentary political dialogue on protecting religious sites, symbols, and objects, organised by the UN Office of Parliamentary Participation in Preventing and Combating Terrorism in partnership with the Shura Council. Representing the Council in these events hosted in Istanbul were HE Dr Ali bin Fetais al-Marri and Mohamed bin Fahd al-Muslim, members of the Council. During the fifth co-ordination meeting, the focus was primarily on developing and implementing new strategies aimed at more effectively combating terrorism at all levels. Participants discussed ways to enhance international co-operation in information exchange and bolster technological capabilities to monitor and combat terrorist movements and financing. The meeting also emphasised the importance of developing national legislation in line with international standards to ensure maximum security and protection against terrorist acts while safeguarding the fundamental rights of citizens. (QNA)

## QNA holds training session on editing and media monitoring

QNA  
Doha

Qatar News Agency (QNA) concluded a new training session titled 'Editing and Media Monitoring' at its premises yesterday within a series of training sessions organised with the objective of training national media cadres and upgrading their capabilities in professional media and press fields.

The session saw the participation of 19 journalists, of whom 17 were from QNA and others from a variety of relevant government sectors in Qatar, along with two journalists from the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). The training session came within the QNA's plans dedicated to optimising the performance of the press and media staff in various press and media institutions, through laying out professional training programs in implementation of the outcomes of the 22nd meeting of the heads of news agencies of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries held in August 2023 to reinforce relationships among news agencies in the GCC states, in addition

to executing the GCC General Secretariat's proposal with regard to on-the-job training.

During the five-day session, the editing and media monitoring expert at QNA Ricardo Joachim delivered a lecture that was intended to upscale the participants' skills and imbue them with essential tools and knowledge required to handle all aspects of editing and media monitoring, in addition to training them on methods of monitoring and analysing all types of materials circulated in a variety of media platforms, including visual, auditory, reading and writing.

The themes of the session included many critical aspects in the field of editing and media monitoring spanning from the objectives and techniques of media monitoring to encompass methods of monitoring and analysing diverse media platforms, in addition to extracting indicators and results. Also, the session included a practical training in the techniques of leveraging the artificial intelligence (AI) in drafting professional reports and analysing press trends.

At the conclusion of the session, the trainees submitted graduation theses through producing a media

material for media monitoring so as to gauge the extent of their benefits from this qualitative training in QNA, with editing and media monitoring being a vital speciality amid the rapid progression of media and technology, since understanding and analysing information and media content are critical for any institution that desires to take strategic decisions based on accurate reading of media and public reality.

Subsequently, this extensive session would dramatically optimise the capabilities of trainees in this important aspect of media work after it had provided invaluable opportunity for employees in the participating institutions to broaden their knowledge horizons and hone their skills in this field. They had been trained in effective methodologies to handle and analyse information. It was an opportunity for productive and shared interaction among them, and subsequently added a precious value for the training experience by bearing in mind their needs and providing an environment conducive through using highly equipped training halls at QNA facility.

## Fishing teams to vie for top prizes in Balmasan contest

The organising committee of the first edition of the Balmasan Championship, being organised by Katara - the Cultural Village from May 15-18, has held its introductory meeting. In attendance were captains of the top 15 winning teams in the competitions of the 10th edition of the Senyar Festival 2024, in which 69 teams participated, totalling 850 participants, including 82 from other GCC countries and 80 Qatar residents.

The captains were briefed about the Balmasan Championship, in addition to fishing times, types of fish allowed to be caught, the process of filming and sending video clips to the committee, and the method of calculating points and results. Jihad al-Jaidah, member of the championship's organising committee and head of the judging committee, said that the Balmasan Championship launch ceremony will take place on May 15 at 7am from Old Doha Port when the participating dhows will head to the harbour of Haloul Island, 90km away from Doha.

The competitions will continue during May 16 and 17, between 4.30am and 6.30pm. The championship is named after the place



where the competitions will be held, which is "Heer Balmasan", one of Qatar's largest and most famous fishing grounds rich in oysters and fish. Al-Jaidah explained that the return of the participating dhows will be on Saturday morning to take part in the concluding ceremony at Katara Beach with the participation of the public to crown the winners of the competition.

Said Abdulrahman al-Kuwari, head of Balmasan Championship operations, said the committee will record the measurements and weights of the fish caught by each team at the end of the competition May 17 evening to calculate the points and determine the final results according to the approved schedule.

The conditions of Balmasan are

identical to those of Senyar 2024 competition, and new fish species found in the depths of Haloul Island waters have been added to the new competition.

He pointed out that the fish species have been divided into two groups, the first containing 14 species, while the second is limited to one type (Sheri), noting that each fish species includes a specific number for fishing, as shown in the fishing table.

The team winning the first place in the competition will receive a prize of QR300,000, the second winner QR200,000, and the third, QR100,000. The team catching the largest fish will receive QR50,000. Like Senyar, Balmasan Championship celebrates the original Qatari heritage of fishing and pearl diving.

# 2024 Korea Tourism, Medical and Culture Festival kicks off



KTO's executive vice-president Hakju Lee.

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

The '2024 Korea Tourism, Medical, and Culture Festival' kicked off yesterday at Mall of Qatar, captivating attendees with live performances, interactive activities, and an array of offerings immersed in Hallyu themes, notably K-pop.

Hosted by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Korea and organised by the Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO), the two-day festivity marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Qatar and South Korea. In a press statement, KTO's executive vice-president Hakju Lee said the festival aims to strengthen the growing tourism interactions between the two nations.

"The 2024 Korea Tourism, Culture, and Medical Festival in Qatar aims to enhance the continuously growing tourism exchanges between the two nations. This event underlines the varied attractions of Korean tourism, encapsulated under the theme Korea Tourism, All in One," he said.

Lee highlighted strategic initiatives aimed at enticing more Qatari tourists to South Korea, including the appointment of 10 local travel agencies as 'Private Travel Sellers' tasked with expanding travel options to South Korea. He noted that more than 40 promotional booths, showcasing diverse themes such as travel, medical services, and the Korean Wave, were set up within Mall of Qatar, affording visitors a preview of Korean offerings.

Lee noted a remarkable resurgence of Qatari inbound tourism to South Korea, saying a substan-



Korean traditional music performance enthrall the audience at the opening of the '2024 Korea Tourism, Medical, and Culture Festival' yesterday. **PICTURE:** Joey Aguilar

tial recovery with visitor numbers climbing steadily. In 2022, he said there were 919 visitors from Qatar, marking a 43% rise from pre-pandemic levels. "In 2023, it further increased to 1,866, reaching approximately 87% of the demand seen in 2019. This figure significantly exceeds the overall recovery rate of 63% for inbound tourism in 2023, indicating a rapid rebound in the Qatari inbound market," he said.

Eyeing further growth, KTO plans to intensify promotional efforts, particularly through the organisation of the Qatar Cultural Medical Tourism fair. In addition, partnerships with local outbound travel agencies and airlines will be

strengthened to craft and promote enticing tour packages to South Korea.

The festival's inauguration witnessed a one-of-its-kind performance by K-Travel Junior Leaders, introducing attendees, particularly fans of Korean culture from the MZ generation, to the charm of Korea.

K-pop sensation MCND lit up the stage with a live concert, engaging the audience in the dynamic beats of the Korean Wave.

Attendees were also treated to themed zones, each offering a glimpse into various facets of Korean ingenuity. From the K-Tourism Zone showcasing the best of Korean travel experiences to the

K-Medical Zone offering consultations in traditional Korean medicine, the festival captured the richness of Korean culture and innovation.

In a statement, South Korean ambassador Lee Joon-Ho said: "The year 2024 has been designed as the 'Visit Korea Year' following last year. Witnessing the recovery of international tourism, we have pledged to exert all our efforts to attract visitors to Korea from all over the world this year".

Citing South Korea's diverse landscapes and state-of-the-art medical facilities, the ambassador described South Korea as an unparalleled destination for cultural exploration and medical tourism.



The two-day festivity marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Qatar and South Korea. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam



K-pop sensation MCND lit up the stage at Mall of Qatar with a live performance yesterday. **PICTURE:** Joey Aguilar



## Qatar participates in United Nations Civil Society Conference

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Social Development and Family, participated in the United Nations Civil Society Conference, which concluded in Kenya. Addressing the conference, Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development and Family, Fahd bin Mohamed al-Khayareen, who headed the Qatari delegation to the conference, affirmed Qatar's keenness to ensure effective partnership between its governmental institutions and civil society structures. He expressed appreciation for the services provided by civil society institutions, especially private associations and institutions registered with the Ministry of Social Development and Family, and for their effective role in providing social, humanitarian, health and educational services. **(QNA)**

## QF alumnus graduates with his students

An Education City alumnus has graduated from a Qatar Foundation (QF) partner university last Tuesday along with the students he has been teaching in the Education City. Nayef Alyafei, a 2009 graduate of Texas A&M University at Qatar (Tamuq), has now graduated with an Executive MBA from HEC Paris in Qatar, both QF partner universities.

He has also taught classes at Academyti, a QF school, been a faculty member at Tamuq, and followed his love of visual arts by taking courses with Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, another QF partner university. Alyafei, according to QF website, is the 'embodiment of what it means to be a QF alumnus.'

Beginning his first QF experience at Tamuq for a petroleum engineering degree in 2005, Alyafei says he did not see the potential he had, or know where the future would take him. "The only thing I knew was that I would work hard, and I would let that carry me forward."

"But when I graduated in 2009, it became clear to me that education was my course. I want to contribute to Qatar's growth, and education is a key pillar that improves our society and makes it sustainable."

After pursuing a Master's and PhD degree from Imperial College in the UK, Alyafei returned to Qatar to become the first graduate from QF to return as a faculty member when he took up his role as a professor at Tamuq.

"It means a lot to both myself and my students that we are graduating together," he said. "I have been a professor at Tamuq for nine years, and it's an amazing feeling, to be able to graduate with students you've been teaching."

Seeing QF grow from its establishment to what it is today, Alyafei believes QF has proven it can provide quality and education to anyone. "The ecosystem is what makes everything in QF so accessible," he says. "You have all these incredible schools, universities,



Nayef Alyafei

and facilities in one place, but it is the people who are the essence and core of QF."

"I truly think they have succeeded in unlocking human potential," Alyafei - who has recently moved to Qatar University as associate professor and advisor to the president - says he always tells his students to focus on learning, not grades, but most of all, to make

sure they have fun with their experiences.

"A moment I'll never forget is joining Tamuq as faculty. I remember walking into the room and looking around at the students, and feeling their excitement, and being so happy that I could teach them something tangible that they could use. It gave me the joy that only teaching brings," he added.

## Qatar participates in World Fire Congress in United States



Qatar participated in the World Fire Congress 2024, held in Washington DC, the United States of America. The participating delegation was headed by Director-General of Civil Defence Major General Hamad Othman al-Duhaimi. The conference discussed common global challenges in the field of fires and the search for solutions to them. **(QNA)**

## Traffic Department opens awareness exhibition marking Arab Traffic Week

QNA  
Doha

The General Directorate of Traffic has organised an awareness exhibition to mark the Arab Traffic Week.

Acting Director of Traffic Safety Department, Brigadier Jamal Mohamed A Shraim, and Assistant Director of Traffic Awareness Department Colonel Jaber Mohamed Odaiba along with a lineup of Ministry of Interior officers and stakeholders attended the opening ceremony.

Colonel Jaber Mohamed Odaiba affirmed the General Directorate of Traffic's keenness to annually participate with Arab traffic systems in marking Arab Traffic Week with the aim of raising traffic awareness and communicating with all road users.

Through its comprehensive awareness plan, the General Directorate of Traffic eyes establishing a culture of safe driving, through direct communication with all social groups with the aim of providing them with sufficient information about traffic rules and etiquette in order to achieve the highest levels of road safety.



The exhibition features participation of Civil Defence; Ministry of Interior's Medical Service Department; Juvenile Police Department; Hamad Trauma and Emergency Centre; Ambulance Service; Karwa Academy; and Al Khebra Driving Academy.

The exhibition highlights the safety tools that must be avail-

able when driving a vehicle, the basics of first aid in cases of traffic accidents, the requirements for technical inspection of vehicles, ambulance service procedures, and driving school procedures, in addition to many awareness messages aimed at introducing traffic safety rules and requirements.

## GCC sets June 6 as Gulf Youth Day

From Page 1

The meeting touched on the importance of strengthening international strategic partnerships and dialogues with countries and regional and international organisations in the youth field, and benefit from the experiences

and capabilities available to these countries.

The meeting approved recommendations reached by the joint work teams in the youth field between the Gulf Co-operation Council, Jordan, and Morocco in 2023, the recommendations and results of the work of the technical

committees in the youth field, and the joint programmes, activities and events that will be organised by the Ministries of Youth and Sports.

The recommendations will be presented to the 37th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Youth and Sports in the Gulf Co-operation Council countries.



Winners and participants from the Senior Wing with school officials.

## PISQ hosts Spelling Bee



Winners and participants from the Primary Wing with school officials.

Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) hosted a Spelling Bee at its Primary and Senior wings.

In Grade 1, Muhammad Talha, Muhammad Muhammad Farjaam, and Aimen Shahid clinched the coveted first position. Hasnain Sajid and Hafsa Fahad were second and Essa Abdullah third.

In Grade 2, Muhammad Maaz, Ibadullah Khan, Eshaal Aamir, Muhammad Dameer, Arisa Muneer and Ehal Amir shared the first position.

In Grade 3, Rania Abdullah, Khulood Umer, Aleeza Sajid and

Muhammad Haris were first and Anaya Fatima second.

Grade 4 saw Yousaf Muhammad, Ayesha Shoaib, Duryab Zahra, Maria Idrees, Zara Sabir, Amna Batool, Muhammad Haris, and Kainat Ali securing the top spot. Hammad Khurram and Syed Wadan Ali Shah were second and Abdullah Umer third.

In Grade 5, Hareem Fatima, Zainab Abid, Ayan Kamran, Muhammad Ibrahim, and Abdul Wajid clinched the top spot, while Urwa Usman secured second place.

Grade 6 saw Muhammad

Daryus, Manha Fatima, Muhammad Ayyaz, and Nawal Yasir claiming the first position, followed by Muhammad and Fatima Saqib in second and third place, respectively.

In Grade 7, Faheel Abdullah, Muhammad Hassan and Sumaika Kamal were first, and Muhammad Rafay, Ayesha Mushtaq and Hiba Khalid finished second. Grade 8 saw Muhammad Afroze, Lubaina Intiaz and Maryam Ali in first position and Dua Fatima and Sanan Khan in second and third positions, respectively.

## Champions crowned in Picpa Doha President's Cup badminton tournament



A total of 122 players participated in the third President's Cup badminton tournament organised by the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (Picpa) Doha.

There were five categories in men's division and four in women's division.

Men's division champions were Drake Samson and Juan Miguel Lacanlale (B category), Nazhif Abdul Jaleel and Ralyn Manalastas (C category), Jerome Dave Montero and Richard Robles (D category), Jehmar Tabili and Bryan Cernania (E category), and Arman Adolfo Bulabog and Randel Caerlang (F category).

Runners-up in men's division

were Volalak Lerdvolalak and Cristocar Sanchez (B Category), Jerico Puno and Rodrigo Joaquin Puno (C category), Jeff Emil Balmeo and Nei Canlas (D category), Bernard Reyes and Michael Rullan (E category) and Walter James Agorilla and Von Carillo (F category).

Women's division champions were Kimberly Aksam and Adjerlie Adovas (C category), Manilyn Neptuno and Ivy Angeles (D Category), Nhidz Merindo and Duday Parrera (E Category) and Mary Jean Tomas and April Joyce Ines (F category) while runners-up were Michelle Palatino and Michelle De Leon (C category), Jenny Hizon Malubay and Jian Vergara (D cat-

egory), Chace Arcilla and Lilibeth Handig (E category) and Abigail Sta. Maria and Chryslie Mutyangpili (F category).

Jahmar Tabili and Chace Arcilla were hailed as the 'Most Valuable Player' in men's division and women's division, respectively.

Earlier, in his opening remarks, Picpa Doha president John Vincent Gunita emphasised that the objective of the tournament was to further strengthen and enhance the bonds, build friendships and promote physical wellness and well-being of members, associates, their family and friends. The event was organised by Picpa Doha's head for sports, Rotinie De La Torre.

## Ibn Taymiyyah School wins Wooden Bridge contest



Ibn Taymiyyah Secondary School, Qatar Banking Studies and Business Administration Secondary School, and Al-Shah-Anyiha Secondary School won the first, second and third places, respectively, in the 10th High School Wooden Bridge Competition.

The event was organised by Qatar University's department of Civil and Environmental Engineering from the College of En-

gineering. The aim was to inspire high school students to pursue a career in engineering, focusing particularly on civil engineering. Participating teams were tasked with constructing model wooden bridges, not exceeding 100cm in length and 30cm in width, using a maximum of 130 sticks and glue.

Prof Alaa al-Hawari, head of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, described the

competition as a way to showcase the principles of civil engineering to participants, to highlight its importance to life and industry, and to attract distinguished Qatari students to the civil engineering programme. Dr Wael al-Nahhal, associate professor in the Civil Engineering Department at QU and supervisor of the competition, said 25 secondary schools competed this year.

## IGCSE Qatar toppers feted at PISQ



Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) welcomed British Council officials Simon Greens (cluster exams director Mena South) and Nimrood Garry Disilva (accounts relationship manager, Examination Services) to honour the top achievers in the IGCSE examinations in Qatar. Among them are Muhammad Rafay and Khadija Mansoor, excelling in English as a Second Language and Urdu as a Second Language, respectively. Rafay and Khadija's parents received the certificates. PISQ principal Syed Asif Ali Shah was present.

## Blood donation initiative



A group of Tamil speaking Indian expatriates organised a blood donation event in collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC). The gathering comprised HMC's donor recruitment head Sadikka Ismail Abbas, VVTNS president Thakir, Indian Cultural Centre general secretary Mohan Kumar Duraisamy, Indian Community Benevolent Forum general secretary Varkey Boban, and Sky Tamil director J M Basith.

## ICC hosts community farewell



Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, hosted a community farewell for its managing committee member Sumaa Mahesh Gowda. Ambassador Vipul and a large number of community representatives were present. The envoy appreciated Sumaa for the role she essayed as head of cultural activities. ICC president A P Manikantan highlighted her contributions. School activities head Shantanu Deshpande anchored the proceedings. ICC general secretary Mohan Kumar welcomed the gathering and vice-president Subramanya Hebbagelu proposed a vote of thanks.

## Music, dance event held at ICC



A music and dance event was held at the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) as part of the Wednesday Fiesta. The programme was in association with Kala Saparya, a group of music and dance lovers. ICC officials and community leaders were present.





### Investiture ceremony held at Podar Pearl School



Podar Pearl School, Doha, organised an investiture ceremony, inducting the newly elected student council members for the Al Meshaf and Al Dafna campus for the academic year 2024-25. Principal Dr Maneesh Mangal administered the oath to the new leaders. The board of directors and principal congratulated the head boy, head girl, house captains, vice house captains and prefects. The school's senior leadership team, teachers and parents of the student council members were present.



### MES holds inter-school painting contest



As a part of its golden jubilee celebrations, MES Indian School hosted Golden Canvas-24, an inter-school painting competition for the students of Classes 1-12. A total of 92 students from 17 Indian schools participated across three categories. Varsha Synesh, Sudhir S, Renitha R R, Suresh L H and Kanchan B, members of the faculty from the Department of Fine Arts, MES, co-ordinated the event.

### World Athletic Day celebrated at MES



MES Indian School celebrated World Athletic Day on May 7, showcasing the importance of sport in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, while also fostering a spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship among the participants. The Department of Physical Education conducted various fun-filled events including handball and relay competitions for students. The KG section presented an awareness video. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar felicitated the winners and highlighted the significance of sports in promoting teamwork, character building, perseverance and overall well-being.

### RPS inducts new student council



Rajagiri Public School (RPS) held an investiture ceremony, officially inducting the new student council for the academic year. The chief guest was Capt Hamad Habeeb al-Hajiri, External Branches officer of the Community Policing Department at the Ministry of Interior. Head boy Sai Santosh, head girl Archana Soman, and other student council members were administered the oath by principal Joshy Abraham. The school choir rendered a motivational song.

### MES duo take part in MIA art contest



MES Indian School students Sohan Sandep (4K) and Herschell Libin (4C) received certificate of participation and gift vouchers in the IRSIM Art Competition organised by the Museum of Islamic Art to explore the theme 'Fashioning an Empire: Textiles from Safavid Iran'. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated them.



## BPS felicitates top Indian athletes



Birla Public School (BPS) welcomed Indian athletes Padma Shri Subedar Major Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Jena on May 8.

Chopra is the reigning Olympic champion and world champion in men's javelin throw. Jena is the silver medallist in the men's javelin throw at the Asian Games 2023. They were in town for the Diamond League 2024.

BPS director Lukose K Chacko and principal Dr Anand R Nair, along with the senior leadership team, welcomed the guests.

The event featured felicitations for the athletes and an interview with Chopra. In an interactive session with students, he shared his life experiences, for budding athletes to face challenges in life. Chopra's journey from a student athlete to an Olympian was inspirational for the students.

A classical dance performance, Mudra, by the school ensemble added colour to the occasion. The athletes shared their valuable tips to students representing BPS at the CBSE National level. Qatar Athletic Federation officials were also present.



### DPS-MIS hosts senior school investiture



DPS Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) organised the senior school investiture ceremony 2024-25. Indian embassy second secretary Bindu N Nair, the chief guest, lauded the institution's achievements. She congratulated the newly appointed student leaders, emphasising that these roles are crucial first steps towards practising committed and integrity-driven leadership. School president Yasir Nainar and principal Asna Nafees spoke. A total of 121 students were vested with duties and responsibilities. Head boy Abhimanyu Gupta and head girl Sansriti Sarraf along with other members took the oath of office and pledged to discharge their duties to the best of their abilities and according to their respective portfolios. The ceremony was aired live on Facebook.





# Arab League slams Israeli attacks on Rafah, UNRWA premises

QNA  
Cairo

The League of Arab States has condemned in strongest terms the persistent attacks on the densely populated city of

Rafah by the Israeli occupation soldiers during the past two days which resulted in traumatising and displacing tens of thousands of Palestinians who sheltered in the open adjacent to the shore and are ominously bereft of minimum life essentials.

It considered this situation as a crime to be added to the criminal record of the Israeli occupation that rejects listening to the voice of reason even from closest friends.

In a statement yesterday, Secretary-General of the League of Arab

States Ahmed Aboul Gheit said Israel's constant manoeuvres to thwart a ceasefire agreement and a prisoner swap deal have been exposed to all, since the occupation state is only interested in taking revenge against the Gazans, regardless of any humanitarian and

legal consideration.

The entire world is nearly speaking with one voice on the importance of halting this massacre immediately and it is irrational for the political future to be devoted for one person, Aboul Gheit stressed.

He also condemned the attack on the premises of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Jerusalem by Israeli extremists which resulted in the premises being shut down.

# SA asks World Court to order Israel's pull out from Rafah

Reuters  
Amsterdam

South Africa has asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order Israel to withdraw from Rafah as part of additional emergency measures over the war in Gaza, the UN's top court said yesterday.

In the ongoing case brought by South Africa, which accuses Israel of acts of genocide against Palestinians, the World Court in January ordered Israel to refrain from any acts that could fall under the Genocide Convention and to ensure its troops commit no genocidal acts against Palestinians.

Israel did not immediately

respond to requests for comment. It has previously said it is acting in accordance with international law in Gaza, and has called South Africa's genocide case baseless and accused Pretoria of acting as "the legal arm of Hamas".

In filings published yesterday, South Africa is seeking additional emergency measures in light of the ongoing military action in Rafah, which it calls the "last refuge" for Palestinians in Gaza.

South Africa asked the court to order that Israel cease the Rafah offensive and allow unimpeded access to Gaza for UN officials, organisations providing humanitarian aid, and journalists and investigators.

According to South Africa,

Israel's military operation is killing the Palestinians of Gaza while at the same time starving them by denying humanitarian aid to enter. "Those who have survived so far are facing imminent death now, and an order from the Court is needed to ensure their survival," South Africa's filing said. The war has killed nearly 35,000 people in Hamas-run Gaza, according to health authorities there.

The ICJ, also known as the World Court, generally rules within a few weeks on requests for emergency measures. It will likely take years before the court will rule on the merits of the case. While the ICJ's rulings are binding and without appeal the court has no way to enforce them.

# Dozens arrested at Penn, MIT in latest US crackdowns on Gaza protests

Reuters  
Pennsylvania

Police dismantled protest camps and arrested dozens of pro-Palestinian activists at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania yesterday, in the latest crackdowns on demonstrations roiling US campuses.

Philadelphia officers in riot gear pushed reporters away from the encampment at the University of Pennsylvania before tearing down tents and tossing the belongings of protesters in a trash truck, the student newspaper reported. About 33 people were arrested on the Ivy League campus, Penn's public safety department said.

A similar scene unfolded simultaneously at MIT near Boston, where student journalists reported that riot police arrested at least 10 student protesters before flattening the encampment and discarding their belongings.

The dawn raids were the latest efforts by school and local authorities to end such demonstrations at dozens of universities around the country.

Many university leaders have

called the encampments safety hazards and sought to end them ahead of May commencement ceremonies, which draw large crowds of outside visitors to campuses. Officials at Harvard University yesterday began issuing suspensions to students who were involved in an encampment on the Ivy League school's Cambridge, Massachusetts, campus, according to an Instagram post by the school's Palestine Solidarity Committee.

On Monday, Interim Harvard President Alan Garber said the encampment was disrupting the educational environment as students were taking final exams and preparing for commencement. He said participants faced suspension, restricting them from campus and possibly barring them from taking exams and residing in university housing.

"Disciplinary procedures and administrative referrals for placing protesters on involuntary leave continue to move forward," a school spokesperson said in a statement yesterday, without specifying the number of students suspended.

The protesting students are demanding a cease-fire in Israel's incursion into Gaza and have

demanding their schools divest from companies with ties to Israel. One New York City school affiliated with Columbia University - where protests inspired the nationwide wave of demonstrations - said on Thursday that its board of trustees had endorsed students' divestment calls.

The Union Theological Seminary said in a statement it had decided "to withdraw support from companies profiting from the war" after months of research into its investment portfolio. It added that "our investments in the war in Palestine are small because our previous, strong anti-armament screens are robust."

A similar step was taken by Evergreen State College in Washington state earlier this week, after officials agreed that a college committee would start proposing strategies for "divestment from companies that profit from gross human rights violations and/or the occupation of Palestinian territories."

The agreement was signed by Evergreen representatives and students on Tuesday, and protesters cleared the encampment themselves on Wednesday, according to local news reports.



Palestinians stand near a tent at an area housing internally displaced people, along the coastline in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Hamas group.

# Truckers stuck at Rafah crossing fear food won't reach hungry Gaza

Reuters  
Rafah, Gaza Strip/Arish

Truck drivers stuck at Egypt's border with Gaza say the food they are taking to the Palestinian enclave could spoil as they wait, exacerbating a hunger crisis among Gazans as war rages on.

Israeli forces seized control of the Rafah border crossing this week and are preparing for a widely expected assault on the city next to the frontier where about 1mn people uprooted by the war have been sheltering.

"The closure of the border crossing is not good for all these trucks because these are fridges, which means machine failure doesn't give a warning. If the (fridge) stops working, then all of the food inside will be ruined," said trucker Ahmed al-Bayoumi.

"Here, there's no (technician) available to fix things and then we will have to handle the packages again. In any country in the world, food in fridges has priority to be delivered."

Humanitarian workers sounded the alarm this week over the closure of both the Rafah crossing with Egypt and the Kerem

Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza for aid and people.

Dwindling food and fuel stocks could force aid operations to grind to a halt within days in Gaza as vital crossings remain shut, forcing hospitals to close down and leading to more malnutrition, UN aid agencies said yesterday.

The Israeli military says that what it calls a limited operation in Rafah is meant to kill fighters and dismantle infrastructure used by Hamas, the group that governs Gaza. Those words offer little comfort to idle truck drivers.

"Every day, trucks would go in and out of the border crossing and things were flowing," said truck driver Abdallah Nassar.

"But now that the border crossing is closed, we don't know what our situation is now. And of course, we have food, and these things have expiry dates, and it can go bad."

Most aid for Gaza has been delivered through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings, where aid trucks last entered on May 5.

Before that, several dozen trucks had been crossing through Rafah most days, including the only supplies of fuel going into the enclave.

In April, 1,276 trucks entered through Rafah and 4,395 trucks

entered through Kerem Shalom, according to UNRWA, the UN Palestinian refugee agency.

## NO RELIEF IN SIGHT

The truck drivers face uncertainty as Israel sets out to achieve its goal of destroying Hamas.

Ceasefire talks broke up on Thursday with no agreement to halt the fighting and release hostages captured in the Hamas-led October first week storming of Israel.

More than 34,000 Gazans have been killed in seven months of war, according to health authorities in the Hamas-controlled enclave who say thousands more dead are probably buried under rubble. Much of the Gaza Strip has been reduced to rubble.

Residents described almost constant explosions and gunfire east and northeast of the city yesterday, with intense fighting between Israeli forces and fighters from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. "The aid going into (Gaza) through Rafah and Kerem Shalom border crossings is like a lifeline for the people there," said Mohamed Ragueh Mohamed, head of the north Sinai office of Misr El Kheir Foundation charity. "There's no way of living or for these people to survive except if the aid enters Gaza on daily basis."

# Kuwait's Amir dissolves parliament

Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah said in a televised speech yesterday that he has dissolved parliament, Reuters reported from Cairo.

The Amir also suspended some of the constitutional articles for

a period not exceeding four years during which all aspects of the democratic process will be studied.

The powers of the National Assembly will be assumed by the Amir and the country's cabinet,

state TV reported. "Kuwait has been through some hard times lately...which leaves no room for hesitation or delay in making the difficult decision to save the country and secure its highest interests," the Amir added.

## CRIME

### Nine students kidnapped from university

At least nine students were kidnapped from their classrooms by gunmen at a university in Nigeria's northern state of Kogi, the state government said yesterday, as Africa's most populous nation grapples with widespread insecurity, Reuters reported from Maiduguri. Armed gangs have been causing havoc in northern Nigeria, where they kidnap villagers, students and motorists for ransom, with security forces unable to end the practice. Kingsley Femi Fanwo, Kogi's information commissioner, said the students were studying when gunmen attacked the Confluence University of Science and Technology on Thursday night. He said a search and rescue operation by security agents and hunters who know the local terrain was underway. Kidnappings at schools in Nigeria were first carried out by militant group Boko Haram, who seized more than 200 students from a girls' school in Chibok in Borno state a decade ago.

## TRAGEDY

### Shop wall collapses killing five in SA

Five people died and more than a dozen were injured in a rural South African town yesterday when a shop wall collapsed, local authorities said. Search and rescue operations were continuing at the site in Ngcobo, in the southeastern Eastern Cape province, the provincial health ministry said, AFP reported from Johannesburg. The deadly accident was the second in the country this week after a multi-storey building under construction came crashing down in the southern city of George on Monday, killing at least 12. Eastern Cape health ministry spokesman Mkhululi Ndamase said 14 people were hospitalised following the Ngcobo incident, which he described as "tragic". Several people suffered "spinal injuries, head injuries, pelvic fracture, fractured leg and pelvis", he added. Photos shared by the provincial government showed an excavator removing rubble.

## Hezbollah fires rockets at Israel after deadly strike

Lebanon's Hezbollah group said it fired Katyusha rockets at Israel yesterday in retaliation for strikes, which state media said killed two people in the south of the country, AFP reported from Beirut. Israel and Hamas ally Hezbollah have exchanged nearly daily cross-border fire following the Palestinian group's October first week storming of southern Israel that sparked war in Gaza. Hezbollah fighters fired "a salvo of Katyusha rockets" at Israel's north "in response to the Israeli enemy's attacks on...civilians, most recently in Tayr Harfa," the group said in a statement. In a separate statement, the group also claimed a rocket salvo on an army base in northern Israel, later saying its fighters launched a second attack with "dozens of Katyusha rockets" at troops who were assessing the damage at the base.

# Prince Harry and Meghan talk mental health in Nigeria

Reuters  
Kaduna

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan were greeted with wild cheers, song and dance as they visited a school to talk about mental health in Nigeria's capital Abuja yesterday and the Duke of Sussex later met wounded soldiers in northern Kaduna.

The couple are on their first trip to Africa's most populous nation, prompted by links forged through the Invictus Games, an international sporting event he started a decade ago for military personnel wounded in action. Harry said Nigeria had expressed interest to host the 2029 games.



Wives of military officers wear traditional attire uniform as they stand in line to welcome Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, during their visit to the Nigerian army headquarters in Abuja, yesterday.

The couple were invited to Nigeria by the chief of defence staff Christopher Musa who told them the armed forces faced armed criminal gangs and militants and that improvised

explosive devices presented "the greatest challenge".

The 39-year-old Duke of Sussex then travelled to a military hospital in Kaduna where he met wounded soldiers.

# Solar storm could bring auroras, power and telecoms disruptions

By Issam Ahmed  
AFP

A huge solar storm is heading for Earth, supercharging auroras and bringing possible disruptions to satellites and power grids as early as evening today, US officials say.

Coronal mass ejections (CMEs) – large expulsions of plasma and magnetic fields from the Sun – are predicted to arrive early today US time, the Space Weather Prediction Centre of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said.

The new storm, which is expected to persist through the weekend, comes with the Sun approaching the peak of an 11-year cycle that brings heightened activity.

“We have notified all of our in-

frastructure operators that we coordinate with, such as satellite operators, communication folks... and of course, the power grid here in North America,” space weather forecaster Shawn Dahl told reporters.

The US Federal Aviation administration, however, said yesterday in a social media post that “we do not anticipate any significant impacts to the national airspace system due to the potential geomagnetic storm”.

Unlike solar flares, which travel at the speed of light and reach Earth in around eight minutes, CMEs travel at a relatively more sedate pace, with officials putting the current average at 800km (500 miles).

There are at least seven CMEs in transit, emanating from a sunspot cluster that is about 16 times wider



This picture shows northern lights (*Aurora Borealis*) over the mountain at Utakleiv, in Norway's Lofoten Islands.

than our own planet.

Forecasters expect to have a better idea of just how impactful they

will be once they are around a million miles away.

Fluctuating magnetic fields as-

sociated with geomagnetic storms induce currents in long wires, including power lines, which can potentially lead to blackouts.

In October 2003, geomagnetic storms rated as “extreme” led to blackouts in Sweden and damaged power transformers in South Africa.

Impacts are also possible on high-frequency radio communication, GPS, spacecraft and satellites.

They could also bring auroras – also known as “Northern lights” or “Southern lights”, depending on the hemisphere – to night skies where such phenomena aren't normally visible.

In the United States, this could be as far south as Northern California and Alabama.

The NOAA's Brent Gordon encouraged the public to try to cap-

ture the night sky with their cell phone cameras even if they can't see auroras with their naked eyes.

“Just go out your back door and take a picture with the newer cell-phones and you'd be amazed at what you see in that picture versus what you see with your eyes,” he said.

Officials said people should have the normal backup plans in place for power outages, such as having flashlights, batteries and weather radios at hand.

The most powerful geomagnetic storm in recorded history, known as the Carrington Event, occurred in September 1859, named after British astronomer Richard Carrington.

Excess currents on telegraph lines at that time caused electrical shocks to technicians and even set some telegraph equipment ablaze.

## Trump ex-aide Steve Bannon loses appeal of contempt conviction

Reuters/AFP  
Washington



A US federal appeals court upheld yesterday the conviction of Steve Bannon (pictured), a former top adviser to former president Donald Trump, for defying a subpoena from the congressional panel that investigated the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol.

The ruling brings Bannon a step closer to serving a four-month prison sentence for contempt of Congress, but he can still mount additional appeals.

Bannon was convicted in 2022 of two misdemeanor counts of contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over documents or testify to the House of Representatives committee that investigated the Capitol riot.

He has been allowed to remain free during his appeal.

Bannon, a key figure on the American right, argued on appeal that his lawyer advised him he did not have to comply with the subpoena and therefore he did not intend to commit a crime.

Bannon's argument would “hamstring Congress's investigatory authority”, by making it more difficult to prosecute witnesses who spurn congressional investigations, a three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit found.

A lawyer and spokesperson for Bannon did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

He can appeal the ruling to the full DC Circuit court and the US Supreme Court.

The Democrat-led House panel investigated Trump's efforts to subvert the 2020 election results, which culminated

on January 6, 2021 when a mob of his supporters breached the Capitol in an attempt to stop the formal certification of the vote.

The committee sought information from Bannon, who predicted on a podcast the day before the riot that “all hell is going to break loose tomorrow”.

Bannon refused to co-operate with the committee's probe, which he attacked as politically motivated.

Former Trump trade adviser Peter Navarro is currently serving a four-month prison sentence for defying a subpoena from the same committee.

Navarro, 74, is the highest-ranking former member of the Trump administration to spend time behind bars for actions stemming from the former Republican president's efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Bannon served in the White House as chief strategist for the first seven months of Trump's term, leaving reportedly because of conflicts with other top staffers.

In 2020, Bannon was charged with wire fraud and money laundering for taking for personal use millions of dollars contributed by donors toward the construction of a border wall with Mexico.

While others were found guilty in the scheme, Trump issued a blanket pardon to Bannon before leaving office in January 2021, leading to the dismissal of the charges against him.

## Sixty injured in Buenos Aires train crash

At least 60 people were injured yesterday when a seven-car passenger train collided with a locomotive and an empty train car in Buenos Aires, local authorities said, without giving details of how serious the injuries were.

Firefighters, police and ambulances were at the scene, helping evacuate people and take the injured to hospitals. Television and drone footage showed the trains head-to-head on a road bridge over an avenue in the Palermo neighbourhood of the Argentine capital.

The first car of the passenger train derailed and was damaged in the collision.

State-run train operator Trenes Argentinos said the crash happened at 10.31am (1331 GMT) and an investigation into the cause of the accident would be opened. - Reuters

# General strike launched in Argentina against reforms

AFP/Reuters  
Buenos Aires



An announcement on a screen reading 'Service interrupted due to CGT force measure' is seen at a closed Constitución train station in Buenos Aires during a general strike called by the General Confederation of Labour (CGT).

Argentina's President Javier Milei faced his second general strike in just five months in office, as workers angered by austerity cuts brought the capital to a standstill.

Public transport in Buenos Aires was reduced to a trickle for some 3mn daily commuters, while schools, banks and service stations remained closed, and garbage was left uncollected.

The 24-hour protest was called by labour unions in support of “a dignified wage” for Argentines battling a severe economic crisis, with annual inflation nearing 300% and poverty affecting one in two people.

Some 400 flights had to be cancelled, affecting about 70,000 passengers, according to the ALTA Latin American air transport association.

The port of Rosario, which exports 80% of Argentina's agro-industrial production, was all but paralysed in the midst of its busiest season.

Self-declared “anarcho-capitalist” Milei won elections last November vowing to reduce the Argentine deficit to zero.

To that end, he has instituted an austerity programme that has seen the government slash subsidies for transport, fuel and energy, even as wage-earners lost a fifth of their purchasing power.

Thousands of public servants have lost their jobs.

The CGT union, part of Thursday's strike call, accuses Milei of imposing “a brutal adjustment suffered especially by the lower-income sectors, the wage-earning middle class and pensioners”.

Just weeks after taking office in December, Milei faced his first general strike.

He has also been the target of numerous demonstrations organised by various economic and social sectors – the biggest so far on April

23 when an estimated 1mn people turned out to protest cuts to public universities.

Recent polls showed Milei's popularity hovering between 45-50%, just short of his 56% of votes in his election win – a surprisingly high

vote of confidence given the widespread unpopularity of his cost-saving measures.

The government has claimed some successes: monthly inflation has decelerated from 25% in December to a forecasted 9% for April.

In April, Milei boasted about Argentina's first quarterly budget surplus in 16 years.

He insists his “plan is working” and has said the protests go “against what people voted five months ago”.

However, critics say that Milei's few wins have come at the cost of the poor and working classes, and were unlikely to last.

There are worrying statistics as well. Economic activity declined 3.2% year-on-year in February, and in March, there was a 21% annual slump in industrial manufacturing and a 42% dip in construction.

Leftist former president Cristina Kirchner said the austerity plan amounted to nothing less than a “useless sacrifice of the people”.

Hugo Yasky, secretary-general of the major CTA union, posted on X that the strike was against “a government that only benefits the rich at the expense of the people, gives away natural resources and seeks to eliminate workers' rights”.

The government criticised the strike as unjustified and said it would simply hit people who wanted to work, something reflected on the quiet city streets in Buenos Aires.

“There are many people who want to work and obviously can't get there, so they get a day's pay deducted,” said Walter Fernandez, 44, a worker in Buenos Aires, though he said he himself was managing to get in on his bicycle.

Marcos Rivadero, a 47-year-old designer in the city, was more strident, calling the striking unions “extortionists”.

“They use the people, the people they claim to represent,” he said. “A ghost town, a city like this cannot function. A country cannot function like this with people who live off the state.”

## School board in Virginia votes to restore Confederate names

The education board for a rural Virginia county voted early yesterday to restore the names of Confederate generals stripped from two schools in 2020, making the mostly white, Republican district the first in the US to take such an action.

By a 5-1 vote, the Shenandoah County board overturned its 2020 decision that stripped a public high school and elementary school of their original names honouring three military leaders of the pro-slavery South in the Civil War.

Under the board's action, Mountain View High School will again become known as Stonewall Jackson High, while Honey Run Elementary School will revert to the name Ashby Lee Elementary.

The names belong to some of the most well-known military leaders

of the Confederacy.

Robert E Lee was commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson was a Confederate infantry general, and Turner Ashby was a rebel cavalry commander. All of them were Virginians.

Any funds required to implement the changes must come exclusively from private sources, rather than public revenue.

The vote contrasted with a four-year trend of US schools and other public buildings and institutions removing names and symbols associated with the Confederacy, following protests for racial justice sparked by the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in 2020.

Among more than 60 schools that have abolished Confeder-

ate appellations across the country since 2020, none had reversed course until now, according to the trade publication Education Week, which has tracked the issue.

Still, the issue has remained a point of contention for many political conservatives, particularly among Southern white people, who see Confederate monuments and place names as honouring the South's traditions and history.

Such was the argument posed by locals who spoke at Thursday night's meeting in favour of restoring the Confederate school names.

Speakers on the other side countered that such symbols and memorials are vestiges of a racist ideology that has perpetuated a sanitised “Lost Cause” myth of the Confederacy as well as the Jim Crow era of racial segregation and

discrimination that followed the Civil War.

Many of them noted that Stonewall Jackson High was named in 1959 when it allowed only white people to attend and when Virginia political leaders were still resisting racial integration as ordered by the US Supreme Court under the landmark Brown v. Board of Education ruling.

Thursday's school board debate played out in the seat of Shenandoah County, an overwhelmingly white, heavily Republican jurisdiction in the Shenandoah Valley about 150 miles (240km) northwest Richmond, Virginia, the Confederate capital.

Black people make up fewer than 3% of the county's population, according to 2020 Census figures. - Reuters

## Death toll from floods in Brazil hits 113 as rain returns

Reuters  
Canoas, Brazil

Rains returned to Rio Grande do Sul yesterday as the death toll from historic floods in Brazil's southernmost state reached 113, according to local authorities, climbing from 107 in the previous day.

Storms and floods battering the state, home to some 10.9mn people, have also left more than 337,000 displaced while another 146 people were still unaccounted for, civil defence said.

Heavy rains have caused several rivers and lakes in the region to hit their highest levels ever, while floods blocked streets and disrupted logistics, triggering a shortage of essential goods in certain areas.

Weather forecaster MetSul said that most Rio Grande do Sul cities should see rains this weekend, adding there is a “high risk of storms”. They should persist until Monday, it added in a statement.

In Canoas, one of most affected cities near state capital Porto Alegre, more than 6,000 people were staying in a college gymnasium turned into shelter.



A man collects children's toys swept away by the floods in Guaiba Lake in Porto Alegre.

Aparecida de Fatima Fagundes said she had been struggling to sleep there as she could not stop thinking about “the worst day” of her life. “I keep remembering people crying ‘help’, ‘help’,” she said. “It was horrible.”

State government said more than 385,000 people had no water services, while some 20 cities were out of telecom services.

On Thursday, the federal government an-

nounced a package of aid measures to help Rio Grande do Sul, which included bringing forward payment of social benefits and providing cheaper credit to farmers and companies.

Governor Eduardo Leite said earlier this week that initial calculations indicate that Rio Grande do Sul would need at least 19bn reais (\$3.68bn) to rebuild from the damage, which has extended into farm areas around the capital.

## Flash floods kill 50 Afghans in one day

At least 50 people, mainly women and children, were killed yesterday in flash flooding that ripped through Afghanistan's Baghlan province, in the north of the country, a local official told AFP.

“So far, the number of dead is 50 as per the hospital authorities of Baghlan-e-Markazi district of Baghlan province,” said Hedayatullah Hamdard, the head of the provincial natural disaster management department, adding the toll could rise.

The official explained that heavy seasonal rains sparked the flooding, and residents were unprepared for the sudden rush of water.

Emergency personnel were “searching for any possible victims under the mud and rubble, with the help of security forces from the national army and police”, Hamdard said late yesterday. Dozens of tents, blankets and food were provided to those who lost their homes, the official said.

Since mid-April, flash flooding and other floods have left about 100 people dead in 10 of Afghanistan's provinces, with no region entirely spared, according to authorities. Farmland has been swamped in a country where 80% of the more than 40mn people depend on agriculture to survive.

Afghanistan – which had a relatively dry winter, making it more difficult for the soil to absorb rainfall – is vulnerable to climate change.

The nation, ravaged by four decades of war, is one of the poorest in the world and, according to scientists, one of the worst prepared to face the consequences of global warming.

Afghanistan, which is responsible for only 0.06% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, ranks sixth on the list of countries most at risk from climate change, experts say.

Half of Afghanistan's population lives under the poverty line, and 15mn people are experiencing food insecurity, according to the World Bank. - AFP



## OUTBREAK

**Scotland reports case of mad cow disease**

The Scottish government yesterday confirmed a case of classical bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), known as mad cow disease, at a farm in the southwest of the country, the first British case of the disease in over two years. The government has imposed precautionary movement restrictions at impacted premises and on animals that have been in contact with the case in Ayrshire, it said in a statement. Further investigations to identify the origin of the disease at the farm are ongoing, the Scottish government statement said, adding there was no risk to human health. BSE incidence has markedly decreased over recent years.

## LAW AND ORDER

**UK 'China spying' suspects told to expect trial next year**

Two men, including a former parliamentary researcher, will face trial in London next year on charges of spying for China, a judge said yesterday. Christopher Cash, 29, and Christopher Berry, 32, were charged last month under the UK's counter-espionage Official Secrets Act. They made their first appearance at the Old Bailey Central Criminal Court in London yesterday, where judge Jeremy Baker told them they would go on trial "in the spring or summer of next year". No firm date was set for the case. Neither man entered a plea and both spoke only to confirm their personal details. They were released on conditional bail.

## DISASTER

**Taiwan rattled by 5.8-magnitude quake**

A 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck off Taiwan's east coast yesterday, the island's weather administration said, with no immediate reports of damage. The earthquake shook buildings in the capital, Taipei. The quake, off the coast of Hualien county, had a depth of 10km, the weather administration said. Taiwan has been hit by around 1,400 aftershocks since a 7.2 magnitude quake struck Hualien last month, killing 17 people. Taiwan lies near the junction of two tectonic plates and is prone to earthquakes. More than 100 people were killed in a quake in southern Taiwan in 2016, while a 7.3 magnitude quake killed more than 2,000 people in 1999.

## DECISION

**Seoul turns to foreign doctors as medical strike drags on**

South Korea will allow foreign doctors to work in its hospitals after a rigorous vetting process, the prime minister said, as a strike by junior medics shows no sign of resolution. Thousands stopped working on February 20 to protest government plans to train more doctors, causing chaos in hospitals. The government said this week that doctors with foreign medical licences would be allowed to practice in the country, in a bid to ease service disruptions. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said the government will make sure to "have a thorough safety system to prevent unqualified doctors (with foreign licences) from treating our people".



Activist of the Aam Adhmi Party celebrate at the party headquarters in New Delhi yesterday after India's Supreme Court ordered jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to be released on bail to allow him to campaign in the ongoing national election.

# Opposition jubilant as Modi critic Kejriwal granted bail

Reuters  
New Delhi

India's top court yesterday gave temporary bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a graft case, allowing him to campaign in the ongoing general elections, boosting the opposition alliance of which he is a prominent figure.

The Supreme Court said Kejriwal - a fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi - would be out on bail until June 1, the last day of the nationwide seven-phase vote, and would have to return to pre-trial detention on June 2.

India began voting on April 19 and elections for more than half

of the 543 seats in parliament have now been completed following the third phase of the vote on May 7.

The two areas governed by Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) - the National Capital Territory that includes New Delhi, and the northern state of Punjab - go to the polls on May 25 and June 1 respectively.

Votes will be counted on June 4 and results are expected to be announced the same day.

"This is the victory of democracy," Kejriwal's wife Sunita posted on X after the court order.

AAP members began celebrating on hearing the news, beating drums, dancing and shouting slogans praising Kejriwal and criticising Modi as they gathered out-

side the party office in the capital.

"Today, the Supreme Court has struck a ray of hope in the hearts of the people who love this country, the constitution, and democracy... this is a victory of truth," Delhi Environment Minister and senior AAP leader Gopal Rai said.

Members of the INDIA alliance of more than two dozen opposition parties - Modi's main challenger which includes the AAP - said they were pleased that Kejriwal had received bail.

Mamata Banerjee, chief minister of the eastern state of West Bengal and a key INDIA member, said she was "very happy" Kejriwal got bail. "It will be very helpful in the context of the current elections," she posted on X.

# China diplomats' expulsion sought as sea row with Manila escalates

Reuters  
Manila

The Philippines' national security adviser yesterday called for Chinese diplomats to be expelled over an alleged leak of a phone conversation with a Filipino admiral in a significant escalation of a bitter row over the South China Sea.

China's embassy in Manila had orchestrated "repeated acts of engaging and dissemination of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation", with the objective of sowing discord, division and disunity, Eduardo Ano said in a statement.

Those actions "should not be allowed to pass unsanctioned without serious penalty", he said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian called the comments provocative and said Chinese diplomats in the Philippines had to be allowed to do their job. "China solemnly requests the Philippine side to effectively safeguard the normal performance of duties by Chinese diplomatic personnel, stop infringing and provoking, and refrain from denying the facts," Lin said at a regular press briefing in Beijing.

The office of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and the

foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The two countries have been embroiled in a series of heated standoffs this past year in disputed areas of the South China Sea as the Philippines, emboldened by support from the United States and other allies, steps up activities in waters occupied by China's vast coast guard.

China has accused the Philippines of trespassing and of treachery, while Manila has scolded Beijing for what it says is a policy of aggression and dangerous manoeuvring inside its exclusive economic zone.

The expelling of diplomats could intensify a row that has so far seen heated exchanges, diplomatic protests and the ramming and water-cannoning of Philippine ships at two disputed shoals, the closest of which is more than 850km away from mainland China.

Ano was referring to a news report this week of an alleged leak of a call between a Chinese diplomat and a Filipino admiral discussing a dispute over the South China Sea, which carried a transcript that showed the admiral agreeing to concessions with China.

According to the transcript published by the Manila Times, the admiral agreed to China's proposal

of a "new model", where the Philippines would use fewer vessels in resupply trips to marines stationed at a grounded warship at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, and notify Beijing about the missions in advance.

Reuters has not heard the reported phone conversation and could not verify the contents of the published transcript. The report said the conversation had taken place in January and the transcript was provided by a "ranking Chinese official", which it did not name.

Ano said he backed the defence minister's call for the foreign ministry to take appropriate action against embassy officials, who he claimed recorded an alleged phone conversation in violation of Philippine laws, including its anti-wire tapping act, as well as serious breaches of diplomatic protocols.

"Those individuals in the Chinese embassy... and those responsible for these malign influence and interference operations must be removed from the country immediately," he said.

On Wednesday, Chinese spokesperson Lin said the embassy in Manila had released details about "relevant communications" between the two countries on managing the situation at the Second Thomas Shoal.

**Air India Express staff end strike after flight disruptions**

Air India's budget subsidiary said its cabin crew had ended a strike that caused two days of severe disruptions to its flight schedule and stranded passengers at airports across the country. The airline was taken over by Indian conglomerate Tata Group in 2022 after a government effort to privatise the heavily indebted carrier. Media reports linked the sudden industrial action to staff discontent over new policies on hiring and promotion imposed by its new ownership. Dozens of Air India Express cabin crew staff called in sick at the last minute from Tuesday night, forcing the airline to delay or cancel at least 175 flights in the following days. In a statement, an airline spokesperson said it was working to "swiftly restore" its schedule after a successful meeting with staff. "We are pleased with the progress we made at the conciliation meeting and welcome our cabin crew colleagues back at work," the statement said.

**Sunak visits Oxfordshire plant**

Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt stand with the CEO of Siemens Healthineers, Bernd Montag, during a visit to the company plant in Eynsham, Oxfordshire, Britain, yesterday. Siemens Healthineers new facility in Oxfordshire will design and manufacture superconducting magnets used in healthcare facilities globally for MRI patient scans.

# X 'must take down Sydney stabbing video globally'

AFP  
Sydney

Australia's online watchdog yesterday told a court it was seeking worldwide removal of X posts that show a Sydney stabbing, a test of the social media platform's legal responsibilities and the use of geoblocking.

Lawyers for the eSafety Commission told the Federal Court that X had not taken all reasonable steps to remove 65 video and audio clips of a knife attack on a bishop.

The commission has the power to demand internet companies remove illegal material, such as terrorism content, from their platforms.

Following the stabbing, the commission issued several take-down notices to social media companies.

But the commission claims X only restricted the videos for users in Australia.

Tim Begbie, representing the commission, said that despite X geoblocking the video in Australia, it could still be viewed there using virtual private networks that mask a user's location.

"If, truly, the only step you can take - because of how you have set up your systems and policies - is global removal, then that is a reasonable step," he said.

According to Begbie, while X has policies that allow the global removal of content, it has declined to use them.

"X says that reasonable means what X wants it to mean. Global removal is reasonable because X wants to do it, but it becomes unreasonable when X is told to do it by the laws of Australia."

Begbie said that VPNs were used by a quarter of Australians.

# Labour vows to ditch Rwanda deportation plan

AFP  
London

Britain's main opposition Labour party yesterday pledged to scrap the Conservative government's flagship Rwanda scheme if it comes to power, replacing it with a tougher more joined-up approach to tackling irregular migration.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has staked his political reputation on his plan to "stop the boats", pushing the controversial deportation plan despite opposition from rights groups and judicial rulings.

Labour, which is widely expected

to win the next general election later this year after 14 years in opposition, has been under mounting pressure to say what it will do if it is voted into office.

Immigration has become an increasingly central political issue since the UK left the European Union in 2020, largely on a promise to "take back control" of the country's borders.

Natalie Elphicke, the Conservative MP for Dover, where most of the small boats are brought ashore, this week defected to Labour, saying the government's policy was not working.

In a speech in the town, Labour leader Keir Starmer called Sunak's

"stop the boats" policy an ineffective "gimmick" that was neither a deterrent nor value for money.

More than 8,800 people have crossed the Channel from northern France already this year, while a backlog in asylum claims has left about 52,000 stuck in government temporary accommodation, he said.

The Rwanda deportation scheme, which Sunak hopes to start in July, fails to tackle the issue, Starmer said.

"Only a few hundred people removed, less than 1% who cross the sea in small boats every year...for £600mn," he said, calling it "gesture politics" to satisfy anti-immi-

gration right-wingers.

"We will replace the Rwanda policy permanently," he said, promising a new approach to securing UK borders by tackling the issue "upstream" to smash the people-smuggling gangs behind the crossings.

Central to the policy will be a new "elite" Border Security Command, comprising immigration and law enforcement specialists, as well as the domestic intelligence service MI5, he added.

Money ring-fenced for the Rwanda scheme will be ploughed back into the new force.

Starmer, who oversaw several high-profile terrorism and drug-

smuggling cases during his time as chief prosecutor in England and Wales, said people-smugglers were "no better than terrorists".

Starmer said his policy was tough but pragmatic, stressing there was nothing compassionate in turning a blind eye to a business that allowed children to die in the Channel.

Tougher, pre-emptive powers to deal with them, based on counter-terrorism laws, were needed, he argued, as well as closer co-operation with the UK's European neighbours, including on joint investigations and operations.

In a message to the gangs, he said: "These shores will become hostile territory for you...We will find you,

we will stop you and we will protect your victims...we will secure Britain's borders."

With Brexit, the UK lost its ability to return asylum seekers to EU member states.

Asked if Labour would look to rejoin the scheme, Starmer conceded that the Dublin agreement needed to be replaced "in some shape or form so there can be returns".

But he added that "that does not mean joining the EU scheme", as it was still possible to return asylum seekers to their country of origin.

He declined to set a target for getting the numbers down, but said his government would move quickly to bring in his measures.



## Downside risks for Pakistan remain very high, says IMF

Downside risks for the Pakistani economy remain exceptionally high, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said yesterday, in its staff report on the country, ahead of talks with the fund on a longer term programme.

An IMF mission is expected to visit Pakistan this month to discuss a new programme, ahead of Islamabad beginning its annual budget-making process for the next financial year.

"Downside risks remain exceptionally high. While the new government has indicated its intention to continue the SBA's policies, political uncertainty remains significant," said the fund in its staff report following the second and final review under the standby arrangement (SBA).

The fund added that political complexities and high cost of living could weigh on policy, adding that policy slippages, together with lower external financing, could undermine the narrow path to debt sustainability and place pressure on the exchange rate.

The IMF also said higher commodity prices and disruptions to shipping, or tighter global financial conditions, would also adversely affect external stability for the cash-strapped nation.

The fund stressed the need for timely post-programme external financing disbursements.

Pakistan last month completed a short-term \$3bn programme, which helped avert sovereign default, but the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has stressed the need for a fresh, longer term programme.

Pakistan narrowly averted default last summer, and its \$350bn economy has stabilised after the completion of the last IMF programme, with inflation coming down to around 17% in April from a record high 38% last May.

It is still dealing with a high fiscal shortfall and while it has controlled its external account deficit through import control mechanisms, it has come at the expense of stagnating growth, which is expected to be around 2% this year compared to negative growth last year. - **Reuters**

## Pope Francis urges govts to tackle demographic crisis

Governments have to implement "serious and effective" policies in favour of families to tackle the issues of falling birth rates and ageing populations, Pope Francis said yesterday, urging young people to have confidence in the future.

Speaking at a conference on the growing demographic crisis, Pope Francis said that the number of births is the first indicator of "a people's hope", and that Europe was increasingly turning into "an old, tired and resigned" continent. "Effective policies are urgently needed, courageous, concrete and long-term choices...there is a need for greater commitment from all governments so that the young generations are put in a position to realise their legitimate dreams," the Pope said.

Europe's fertility rate has been stuck around 1.5 births per woman for the past decade. That is above the lows that are seen in East Asia, but far short of the 2.1 needed to maintain population levels.

"There is a fact that a demographics scholar told me. Right now the investments that give the most revenue are the arms factories and contraceptives. One destroys life, the other prevents life...what future do we have? It is ugly," he said.

The Pope said policies should enable mothers not to have to choose between work and childcare, and give young couples a stable job and the possibility to buy a house.

"I know that for many of you the future may seem unsettling, and that amidst declining birth rate, wars, pandemics and climate change it is not easy to keep hope alive. But do not give up, have faith," the Pope said, referring to young people. - **Reuters**

## Three killed as bus crashes into river in St Petersburg

Three people were killed when a bus with an estimated 20 people on board crashed into a river in the northern Russian city of St Petersburg yesterday, officials said. "Rescuers took nine people out of the sunken bus," the emergency situations ministry said on social media. - **AFP**

## Protesters attempt to storm Tesla German plant

Reuters/AFP  
Berlin

Protesters opposed to expansion of US electric vehicle maker Tesla's plant in Gruenheide near Berlin clashed with police as some of them attempted to storm the facility yesterday.

Some 800 people took part in the protest, according to the organising group Disrupt Tesla, which claims the expansion would damage the environment.

A Reuters video showed dozens of people wearing blue caps and face-covering masks coming from a nearby wooded area and attempting to storm the company's premises with police officers trying to prevent them, including by force.

At least one protester was detained.

"Why do the police let the left-wing protesters off so easily?" Tesla chief executive Elon Musk wrote on his social media platform X, adding that the demonstrators didn't manage to break through.

The video also showed medical personnel helping some injured people.



Police officers detain an activist during a protest against the expansion of Tesla Gigafactory in Gruenheide, near Berlin, Germany.

A police spokesman said there were injuries among protesters and police but could not provide figures.

"We are here today to draw attention to the Tesla factory in Gruenheide for the environmental destruction here," Disrupt Tesla spokesperson Ole Becker told Reuters.

The group also wants to highlight environmental destruction in countries like Argentina or Bolivia, brought about by lithium mining, according to Becker.

Lithium is a key resource for electric vehicle batteries.

"We protect the freedom of assembly," Brandenburg police spokesperson Mario Heinemann said, "but we are also responsible for public order and safety. That means we will also intervene when necessary."

The police confirmed that the protesters tried to enter the plant's premises, but were prevented, with several people taken into custody, and that it received a few reports of injuries.

offensive began, as the White House seeks to supply military hardware as quick as possible.

Ukraine's military said it had halted Russia in its tracks but that "fighting of varying intensity" was ongoing.

"Reserve units have been deployed to strengthen the defence in this area of the front," it said.

Russia launched the attack around 5am (0200 GMT), breaking through Ukraine's lines under the cover of armoured vehicles, according to Kyiv.

The White House said that the United States had been co-ordinating closely with Ukraine on Russia's Kharkiv offensive and that it was possible Moscow would make further advances in the coming weeks, but that it did not expect any major breakthrough.

Top Ukrainian officials have repeatedly said they do not believe Russia has the force capacity available to launch a successful operation to capture the city of Kharkiv, home to 1.3mn people.

The Russian defence ministry has not provided any comment but military bloggers reported Moscow had made inroads.

"Active fighting is currently taking place in settlements 1-2km from the border with Russia," Kharkiv region governor Oleg Syngubov said. "We urge people to evacuate in this area."

A local official said that there was "massive shelling" in Vovchansk, a town of about 3,000 people some 5km (three miles) from the Russian border, and that evacuations were under way there and in nearby areas.

Russian shelling killed three people in the

Kharkiv region and two others in the eastern region of Donetsk, another fighting hotspot, local prosecutors said.

"Enemy shelling from various types of weapons has been intensifying in Kharkiv region in the northern area for the last day," Syngubov wrote on Telegram.

"Evacuation routes have been developed since 2022, and a system of humanitarian aid distribution, temporary resettlement," he added.

Vitaliy Ganchev, a Russian-installed official for the Kharkiv region, confirmed that there was fighting near the border and urged civilians to take shelter.

"There is fighting on several parts of the line of contact, including in the border areas of Kharkiv region," he said on Telegram. "In this regard, I ask residents living in these areas to be careful and not to leave shelters without an urgent need."

Russia claimed to have captured at least two villages in the region this week as it seeks to gain ground before new Western aid arrives.

President Vladimir Putin warned in March that he was considering creating a "sanitary zone" in Ukrainian territory adjoining Belgorod, a Russian region frequently targeted by Ukrainian shelling.

Ukrainian shelling on Russian border villages killed at least two people on Thursday, the governors of Russia's Belgorod and Kursk border regions said.

Pro-Ukrainian militias also claimed earlier this year to have stormed Russia's frontier in a series of brazen raids, a source of embarrassment for the Kremlin.

## Oscars Academy launches \$500mn fundraising drive

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has launched a \$500mn fundraising drive.

Named Academy100 - ahead of the 100th Oscars ceremony, set for 2028 - the drive is intended to diversify finances for the group, which plays a key role in fostering new filmmakers and preserving movies, as well as handing out the annual Academy Awards.

It comes at a time when viewership of the Oscars has drastically shrunk, and as the Academy's lucrative, long-standing broadcast deal with ABC for the ceremony telecast is nearing its end.

"The Academy will soon enter its second century, and we want to ensure that we continue to be the preeminent leader of our international film community," said Academy chief executive Bill Kramer, in a statement. "Like all healthy organisations, the Academy needs a sustainable and diverse base of support," he added. Sponsors have already committed more than \$100mn to the campaign, the Academy said. The Academy's members - there are around 10,000 - are invited to join based on their filmmaking achievements.

They range from directors and producers to A-list actors and visual effects artists. Membership has become increasingly international and diverse in recent years.

Academy100 is intended to "deepen our worldwide reach and impact," said Kramer. The group also launched the popular Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles in 2021.

However, despite a slight recent uptick in viewership, audiences for the all-important Oscars ceremony remain well below historical levels. Some 21mn tuned in this year to see *Oppenheimer* fend off rivals such as *Barbie* to win the best-picture award.

Just a decade ago, audiences regularly topped 40mn. - **AFP**

## Georgia to push ahead with foreign agent bill despite 'misled' protesters: PM

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said yesterday that the government would push ahead with the bill on "foreign agents" despite opposition from what he cast as "misled" youngsters who feel "obliged to show resentment" towards Russia.

The legislation, which would require organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from abroad to register as agents of foreign influence, has sparked street protests in Georgia by those who see it as authoritarian and Russian-inspired.

Georgia's envoy to France resigned in protest over the bill on Thursday, becoming the first senior official to do so.

The government says that the law -

which has been heavily criticised by the European Union and the United States - is needed in order to ensure that foreign funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is transparent.

Lawmakers are expected to begin debate on a third and final reading of the bill on Monday.

In an open letter addressed to the "sincere young people" of Georgia and published to his Facebook page, Kobakhidze suggested that the bill's protesters feel "obligated to harbour resentment towards all things Russian" and "mistakenly believe" that the Georgian draft is akin to similar legislation in Russia that has been used to crack down on dissent.

"We will heed the wishes of over 60% of the Georgian voters who firmly and thoughtfully support transparency and, by extension, envision a peaceful future for Georgia," Kobakhidze said.

"Their collective wisdom and discernment reflect the aspirations of the majority and will guide our actions accordingly," he said.

Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder of the ruling Georgian Dream party, has said the law is necessary to stop the West trying to use Georgian as "cannon fodder" in a confrontation with Russia.

The Kremlin has denied any association with the Georgian bill.

Georgia has come under criticism from

Western countries over its treatment of protesters at near-nightly rallies over the past month, where police have deployed water cannon, tear gas and stun grenades to disperse crowds.

Three members of Georgian opposition parties were violently attacked by groups of unidentified men overnight, Georgian media reported yesterday.

"We are aware of increased reports of harassment and physical assault of civil society and opposition activists and journalists," US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Thursday. "We condemn this and we call for a full independent and timely investigation." - **Reuters**

## Pandemic agreement talks reaching end with no deal, say sources

AFP/Reuters  
Geneva

Negotiations to draw up a global pact to help fight future pandemics have ended without a draft agreement, sources close to the process said yesterday.

With the chances fading of concluding a landmark global agreement on handling future pandemics, the negotiations turned yesterday instead to how to keep the process alive.

Shaken by the failures exposed by the coronavirus (Covid-19) - which killed millions, shredded economies and crippled health systems - countries have spent two years drafting an international accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

Despite a common desire for binding commitments aimed at preventing another such disaster, big differences quickly emerged between country blocs on how to go about it.

And though progress has been made on bridging the differences, the clock was always against them.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)'s 194 member states were meant to finish the process in March so the agreement could be formally adopted at their annual assembly, which starts on May 27.

This additional fortnight of talks was crammed in amid hopes of achieving a breakthrough.

Countries did finally begin thrashing out text wording but could not get everything completed in time.

The talks are being conducted behind closed doors at the WHO headquarters in Geneva.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was attending the talks in person, along with the UN health agency's emergencies director Michael Ryan.

WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told a media briefing yesterday that the overtime round of talks "will end later today".

Fuelled by trolleys full of coffee, banan-

as, biscuits and sandwiches, negotiators have been pulling 12-hour days since April 29 to try and find a way through.

Several diplomats were already leaving the building with their suitcases yesterday as the talks neared the end.

"During the past two weeks, negotiators have held extensive discussions on multiple aspects of the proposed agreement, meeting often into the early hours of the morning," Harris said. "Next steps on the way forward will ... be discussed today and they will be announced later."

Non-governmental organisations that were deemed to be relevant stakeholders can follow the process outside the room and are briefed daily by the talks' co-chairs.

"Member states are discussing what the next steps will be," Medicines Law and Policy director Ellen 't Hoen told reporters. "It's fair to say there's progress made. If you look at the outline of the agreement, all the important themes are there."

"But there remain a significant number of thorny issues that simply need more

time. No country as far as we can tell has tried to pull the plug," she said.

James Love, the director of Knowledge Ecology International, said: "There is some room for negotiating right now. I don't think we're really there yet. I don't think it's the worst outcome if they take more time. I also don't think they're going to quit."

The main disputes revolve around access and equity: access to pathogens detected within countries and to pandemic-fighting products such as vaccines produced from that knowledge; and equitable distribution of not only counter-pandemic tests, treatments and jabs, but also the means to produce them.

Each of the draft agreement's 37 articles has been individually thrashed out, with country negotiators breaking off into working groups to try to figure out a consensus.

While general agreement has been found on some articles - without formally signing them off - the core aspects have proved the hardest to negotiate.

The accord, commonly known as a treaty, has also become politicised in some countries.

The existing draft treaty includes a clause asking pharmaceutical manufacturers to reserve 10% of such items to donate to the WHO, and 10% for the agency to buy at affordable prices to distribute in poorer countries during health emergencies.

A report earlier this week in the Britain's *Telegraph* newspaper said that the UK would not sign a treaty the country says would force it to give away a fifth of its vaccines.

An official involved in the talks said while most countries supported a commitment to fairer vaccine access, a fixed percentage was not finalised.

An existing agreement that governs pandemic influenza also has a clause about selling vaccines at affordable prices or donating them to the WHO.

It allows for between 5% and 20% for both options, to allow for flexibility in negotiating with manufacturers.

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**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

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**Deputy Managing Editor**

K T Chacko

**Production Editor**

Amjad Khan

✉ P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar  
✉ editor@gulf-times.com  
☎ 44350478 (News),  
☎ 44466404 (Sport),  
☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)  
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**GULF TIMES**

## Zero-sum logic fuelling rise of Germany's far-right

Over the past year, growing support for the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has raised concerns that Germany is headed toward its most profound political crisis since the end of World War II.

To be sure, the AfD, which was polling as high as 22% nationally earlier this year, has recently been shaken by scandals. But despite these setbacks, the rise of extremist movements across Europe, particularly the shocking victory of Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom in the Netherlands' 2023 election, has caused many Germans to fear that the far-right's political ascent might be unstoppable.

The growing support for parties like the AfD across Europe is often attributed to public anger over immigration and Covid-19 safety protocols, such as lockdowns, mask mandates, and vaccines. The perception that governments are advancing toward a green-energy transition too quickly, potentially hurting some of the poorer segments of their populations, is also blamed. But a 2023 paper by Harvard economist Stefanie Stantcheva and others suggests that the rise of left- and right-wing populist parties is driven by a broader societal shift toward zero-sum thinking.

Stantcheva and her co-authors define zero-sum thinking as the belief that for one group to gain, others must lose. Political populism, online conspiracy theories, and nativist sentiments, the authors note, "all have at their roots in the belief that one group gains at the expense of others – whether it be a global elite, the 'deep state,' or those from other countries."

**Zero-sum thinking is the belief that for one group to gain, others must lose**

Unsurprisingly, the authors identify a link between zero-sum thinking and support for economic redistribution and anti-immigration movements. When wealth accumulation is perceived as coming at the expense of the less fortunate, zero-sum thinkers expect the government to intervene. By contrast, those with a positive-sum

mindset believe that everyone benefits when the rich get richer – a rising tide lifts all boats. Zero-sum thinkers often view immigration as inherently harmful to native-born citizens, making them more likely to support restrictive policies.

What drives zero-sum thinking? The authors find that such sentiments tend to prevail during periods of economic stagnation, when resources are scarce. Conversely, societies experiencing robust economic growth and greater social mobility are significantly less likely to view the political economy in zero-sum terms.

This may explain the recent sharp rise in support for the AfD. Much like other European economies, Germany had barely recovered from the 2008 global financial crisis before being hit hard by the pandemic and the energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Interestingly, the authors find that younger people are more prone to zero-sum thinking than their older counterparts. This tendency is closely tied to economic conditions: when young people face limited job prospects and see little chance of upward mobility, they are more likely to adopt a zero-sum mindset. Young people today, according to the study, are much more likely to have demotivating views, such as the belief that success is more dependent on luck and connections than effort. A recent trend study confirms that German young people have become more zero-sum, with 22% of people between the ages of 14 and 29 reporting that they would vote for the AfD if there were a federal election today, up from 9% in 2022.

The political consequences of this shift remain unclear. While the AfD, which opposes both immigration and redistribution, does not fit neatly into the zero-sum category, a new German party aims to capitalise more consistently on zero-sum sentiments. Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht, established by former members of the far-left Die Linke, is anti-immigration, pro-redistribution, and opposes economic and military support for Ukraine. It is poised to siphon voters away from the AfD, potentially curbing its rise.

Nevertheless, the most effective antidotes to political populism remain robust economic growth, an abundance of opportunities for younger people, and a high degree of social mobility. Unless Germany moves away from zero-sum thinking and re-motivates its young people, reduced innovation and slower growth could cause substantial long-term economic harm.

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# Europe's geoeconomic competitiveness challenge

By Daniel Gros  
Milan

Economists tend not to worry too much about a country's international competitiveness. Cross-border trade and investment generally benefit both sides, and faster growth in one country benefits others, which can tap its expanding market. It is domestic productivity, not the ability to outcompete others, that determines national prosperity. That is why, 30 years ago, Paul Krugman called competitiveness a "dangerous obsession."

From a strictly economic perspective, Krugman was right. But, with the war in Ukraine still raging and China becoming increasingly assertive and despotic, European leaders can no longer view competitiveness through an exclusively economic lens; geopolitical considerations are becoming just as – or even more – important. To paraphrase the American political scientist Edward Luttwak, the "logic of conflict" now supersedes the "grammar of commerce."

Accounting for geopolitics implies a very different standard for assessing an economy. That is because geopolitics is about power, which is necessarily relative. When it comes to power, size matters – but how well people live does not. In other words, in "geoeconomics" – to use Luttwak's term – the economy is a source of power, not necessarily a source of well-being for the population.

This distinction matters, especially for the European Union. From a standard-of-living perspective – measured by GDP at purchasing power parity – Europe has been doing well in recent decades. Even the sluggish eurozone has kept up with the US in terms of per capita GDP growth. In fact, Europe's GDP per capita has been about three-quarters of America's for over a quarter-century.

But the "European way of life" (to use European Commission parlance) is distinctly different from the American way of life: whereas Europeans have more time, Americans have more money. The question of which is better means little to an economist; that is for the individual to decide. From a geopolitical point of view, however, the answer is clear: more money implies more work, more



productivity, more growth, and more power.

So, we are now judging Europe's economy not by how well it enables people to live, but by its size relative to others. And by this measure, the EU is losing ground. At 1% per annum, GDP growth in the EU is the lowest among developed economies, and disappointing growth figures are nothing new. The EU's share of the global economy is declining much more rapidly than the US share.

While this measure is strongly affected by exchange-rate movements, such movements even out over time. At today's exchange rates – which are close to those when the euro was introduced – the US, with its GDP of \$25tn, still accounts for about a quarter of the global economy (roughly \$100tn), whereas the eurozone, with its much smaller \$14tn economy, accounts only for about one-sixth. When the euro was created the difference was much smaller.

The consequences of this decline are far-reaching. For starters, any effort to establish the euro as a viable competitor to the US dollar as the leading global currency is unlikely to succeed. Moreover, the EU's ability to leverage access to its market (the world's largest, as it likes to boast) to advance European geopolitical objectives is declining. In fact, in terms of consumption expenditure, the EU market is

already much smaller than that of the US and is slipping behind China.

Then there is military spending – perhaps the most direct link between raw GDP and geopolitical power. All NATO member states have committed to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence. Many have not reached this goal, but even if they did, stagnating GDP growth would cause military spending also to stagnate. All this would be reflected in the strategic calculus of figures like Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping – likely in highly undesirable ways.

In this context, the fact that European living standards have held up, despite low growth, is no reason for complacency. To maintain and strengthen the EU's geopolitical standing, leaders must find ways to revitalise the economy.

Some already recognise this imperative. Just last month, two former Italian prime ministers, Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi, issued blueprints for reform. The problem is that if there was an easy way to accelerate growth – one that did not carry political costs – it would have been embraced a long time ago. As Barry Eichengreen of the University of California, Berkeley, recently pointed out, Europe needs new ideas.

A second, even more fundamental

problem is that the "logic of conflict" tends to lead to bad economic policy.

In a conflict, a country must defend its own territory. This imperative can easily be translated into policies aimed at defending domestic industries against foreign competition. When Luttwak coined the term geoeconomics in 1990, he recommended that the US protect its manufacturing industry and adopt a more restrictive trade policy. But, as a recent International Monetary Fund study shows, protecting domestic industry is a recipe for stagnation, not growth.

Fortunately, US policymakers did not take Luttwak's advice. Instead, they kept trade largely free (until recently) and allowed manufacturing's share of the US economy to decline. This allowed other parts of the economy – notably, the digital sector – to expand. Today, the US is home to all the global high-tech giants, and it is the undisputed leader in cutting-edge sectors like artificial intelligence.

The lesson for Europe is clear: the logic of conflict should spur leaders to revitalise the EU economy, but it must not dictate how they do it. - Project Syndicate

• Daniel Gros is director of the Institute for European Policy-Making at Bocconi University.

## The rise of the 'Finternet'

By Agustín Carstens and Nandan Nilekani  
Basel

The financial system is ready for a giant leap forward. It's time to explore new frontiers. We foresee a time when applying for a mortgage or a small business loan could be as easy as texting a friend or booking a hotel room online.

There has been some progress on technology to enable such a new reality, as evidenced by the proliferation of mobile-payment apps. But transforming financial services will require creating an entirely new system to match the advances made in communications since the advent of the Internet and smartphones. Today's mobile phones are powerful computers, after all, so it would be a waste not to maximise their use.

To this end, we have drawn on our joint expertise in economics and technology to offer a blueprint for the future financial architecture. What we call the "Finternet" is a vision of multiple financial ecosystems that connect with one another, much like the Internet, in order to give individuals and businesses full control over their financial lives. We foresee a world in which people and companies can use any device to transfer any financial asset – no matter the amount – to anyone in the world. These transactions would be cheap, secure, near-instantaneous, and available to all.

This new system would be particularly important for emerging and developing economies, where large gaps in access to financial services remain despite efforts to bolster inclusion. Many services are simply unavailable or not widely available, particularly to people living in remote areas and with low incomes. And even when



people are able to access financial products, using them is often expensive and slow.

Important breakthroughs in recent years have paved the way for the Finternet. One example is tokenisation, whereby tokens representing digital assets can uniquely identify ownership as well as applicable rules. Another is programmable ledgers, the digital platforms that combine the record-keeping functions of traditional databases with the governance arrangements required to update them.

To unlock the value of financial innovation and build a seamless, interconnected network, we must combine all these elements and break down the current financial system's barriers and silos. Specifically, bringing together different tokenised assets on unified programmable ledgers would drastically reduce the need for lengthy messaging, clearing, and settlement systems that create extra costs, take more time, and limit access to credit and other financial services.

Unified ledgers would also enable "smart contracts," which can trigger an action – transferring ownership of a house, for example – if prespecified conditions are met. They could even bundle together numerous automated transactions. So, in the case of a property transfer, the payment of the purchase price and anti-money laundering checks could happen at the same time and take seconds rather than weeks. Overall, these ledgers would meet – and perhaps surpass – today's regulatory and supervisory standards, while also being faster, cheaper, and more reliable than current systems.

But technology is not enough. Central banks, as the guardians of public money, have a major role to play in the new financial architecture. The money they issue is the vehicle through which all economic transactions are ultimately settled. A digital form of this money is thus a necessary foundation for the Finternet. Commercial banks will also play a crucial role in interacting with consumers, not least by providing

tokenised bank deposits that will form the lifeblood of the Finternet's monetary system.

Moreover, a robust regulatory and supervisory structure must underpin the Finternet. Safeguards such as deposit insurance and public oversight of financial-services providers should be maintained to protect customers and ensure that money has the same value regardless of whether it is issued by a central bank or a commercial bank.

The radical use of new technology could streamline the layers of manual checks now required to comply with rules and regulations. This would enable the creation of products that otherwise might not be developed due to compliance burdens, while also ensuring that the Finternet is not used by bad actors seeking to exploit loopholes.

Making the Finternet a reality will take years, but we must start now. The technology is mature enough, and, crucially, we are not yet locked into rigid institutional frameworks or trapped in "walled gardens" of services created by monopolies. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to redesign the architecture of the financial system, and we should be thinking big and imaginatively, instead of focusing narrowly on individual technologies.

We know where we need to go. Equally important, we have the tools to get there. Now the global financial system just needs its "Neil Armstrong moment" – a small step that represents a giant leap for mankind. - Project Syndicate

• Agustín Carstens, a former governor of the Bank of Mexico, is general manager of the Bank for International Settlements. Nandan Nilekani, co-founder and chairman of Infosys, is founding chairman of UIDAI (Aadhaar).

# QF a homeland – through the eyes of its Alumni

By Noor Al-rawi  
Doha

Graduates of Qatar Foundation universities are closely connected to Education City even after they graduate and begin their professional careers.

Over the past two decades, QF graduated more than 10,000 students that are putting their acquired skills and talents to use in their respective industries around the world, working for world-class organisations, starting their own businesses, engaging with their community, or continuing their lifelong learning journey through further studies.

As QF hosts its Annual Alumni Forum, three of its past graduates reflect on how it helped shape their academic and professional paths.

If Qatar Foundation's ecosystem of education was purely focused on providing academic courses, graduation would represent the point at which the relationship between its students and the organisation ends. But it goes much further.

For every student at Qatar Foundation (QF), Education City provides a holistic, life changing educational and personal experience that creates lasting bonds, as three of its graduates explain ahead of QF's Annual Alumni Forum, which takes place on Saturday, May 11, at Multaqa (Education City Student Center).

Mohamed Khalifa al-Naimi, a graduate of QF partner university HEC Paris in Qatar and co-founder and managing director of the Green Energy Water Treatment Company, highlights the resources that QF devotes to scientific research and honing its students' cognitive, personal and communication skills. "This makes a graduate's life easier and also prepares them to face challenges in a dynamic workforce market, in completing post-graduate studies, or in exploring entrepreneurship," he says.

"What a student at QF can learn, alongside their academic path, is how to cultivate in themselves a culture of self-improvement and renewed ambition, and recognise that only by leaving their comfort zone they will achieve their goals. And for many years, QF has been committed to nurturing these qualities within its students."

Al-Naimi explains that QF constantly provides opportunities for students to expand the horizons of their skills and knowledge and make connections with the community of learning around them. "It also supports our decision-making skills, giving us the tools to accelerate positive change," he says.

After his educational path that led him to both the UK and the US, al-Naimi decided to change his academic path from engineering to business administration, and chose to return to Qatar. "I felt a strong sense of belonging toward QF, which I believe is a transformative environment," he said.

"It has invested extensively in efforts to transfer knowledge to Qatar by embracing prestigious international universities, and by attracting the brightest minds who illuminate the educational paths of young people of different nationalities, it has an impact on the dynamism of the society and economy of Qatar and the region.

"If it had not been for the support I received from QF, I would not have been



Malak Elmoh

**The nature of the student community in Education City, with students of 100 nationalities from different continents, really enriches the environment you learn and interact with. The QF community is an integrated one, so you can learn and take lectures and programmes in various ways**



Mohamed Khalifa al-Naimi

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Khemara Chhorn

**Students and graduates should always invest in communication as much as possible. The best way of doing this is through expanding your network of knowledge and making sure to attend conferences, forums, and workshops featuring experts and academics who have deep knowledge of the dynamics of the labour market and investment opportunities**



able to develop my project in the field of water treatment, and it has also made me a productive member of society. QF supports students not only academically, but also in a social, cultural and sporting context, and its entities are ready to provide support to those who have projects in the field of entrepreneurship and the establishment of emerging companies.

And his message to QF's newest graduates is: "Education and learning should not be a page that is turned after graduation, because academic and professional interests have no ceiling."

Malak Elmoh, a graduate of QF partner university Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), is now responsible for student development at the same university where she once studied. "Being a QF student allows you to obtain a world-class education, but also an opportunity to participate in many different student activities, which nurtures social and communication skills that develop you academically, professionally, and personally," she says.

"The nature of the student community in Education City, with students of 100

nationalities from different continents, really enriches the environment you learn and interact with. The QF community is an integrated one, so you can learn and take lectures and programmes in various ways."

And Elmoh, who also holds a Master's degree in Public Policy from QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University, adds: "Some people see Education City as being just a place filled with universities, without recognising that it is actually a fully-fledged city full of opportunities, activities, and events, from sports to arts and culture.

"When you experience Education City for yourself, you will love it. It's a place that you rarely, if ever, find anywhere else in the world, and it has become my second home. Entering it is like an immersive experience, and it quickly becomes your bridge to advancement and cognitive and professional maturity."

Khemara Chhorn is also a GU-Q graduate, and now Co-ordinator at Cultural Diplomacy Department at Qatar Museums. She explains that building networks is vital for anyone entering the labour market, in Qatar or elsewhere, and says: "Students and graduates should always invest in communication as much as possible.

"Based on my experience, the best way of doing this is through expanding your network of knowledge and making sure

to attend conferences, forums, and workshops featuring experts and academics who have deep knowledge of the dynamics of the labour market and investment opportunities. I was always keen to attend such events and listen to these figures, talk to them, and share my professional interests with them."

"It is no coincidence that my keenness aligned with the way Qatar Foundation regularly hosts a series of conferences and forums that address various topics, most of which respond to the aspirations and passions of many graduates."

What distinguishes QF's educational ecosystem, according to Chhorn, is that it not only offers robust academic curricula and programmes that build students' skills and knowledge, but also builds students' leadership skills. "This is particularly through the way it enables communication between students, graduates, and academics from throughout QF," she says, "and the way in which, at QF, there is the opportunity for sharing information and ideas that can open promising horizons for every graduate looking to enter the workforce market or entrepreneurship."

All graduates of QF's schools and universities are invited to attend the Annual Alumni Forum on 11 May.

To learn more and register, please visit [www.alumniforum.register.qa](http://www.alumniforum.register.qa)





## Fairly booked

The 33rd Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), which runs until May 18 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, is attracting a good number of visitors. Themed *Knowledge builds civilisations*, the event was inaugurated by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani on Thursday. HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani toured the exhibition yesterday. A literary session was addressed by HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari, Minister of State and President of the Qatar National Library (QNL), yesterday. Oman is the guest of honour of this edition of the event, which is witnessing the largest international participation ever, with more than 515 publishing houses from 42 countries showcasing over 180,000 new titles across various fields of knowledge and sciences.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

