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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Amir, Scholz discuss ties, Gaza, Syria

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Olaf Scholz discussed bilateral relations between the two countries. This came during a phone call His Highness the Amir received yesterday from the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. They also discussed regional and international developments, especially in the Gaza Strip, the occupied Palestinian territories, and Syria. In addition, they discussed a host of topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

Seatrade Qatar conference opens

HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani inaugurated yesterday the first edition of the two-day "Seatrade Maritime Qatar" Conference and Exhibition. In attendance were a number of ministers, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Arsenio Dominguez, several senior officials and ambassadors. **Page 2**

Trump to reimpose 'pressure' on Iran

US President Donald Trump plans to restore his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran including efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero in order to stop Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, a US official said yesterday. Trump has accused former President Joe Biden of failing to rigorously enforce oil-export sanctions, which Trump says emboldened Tehran by allowing it to sell oil to fund a nuclear weapons programme and armed militias in the Middle East.

10 killed in Sweden's worst mass shooting

Around 10 people were killed yesterday in a shooting at an education centre in Sweden, including the suspected gunman, with the Swedish prime minister branding it the "worst mass shooting" in the country's history. Several people were also wounded in the violence at Campus Risbergska, a secondary school for young adults in the town of Orebro. "This is the worst mass shooting in Swedish history," Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told a press conference. **Page 11**

PM assures Lebanon of continued support

Qatar to provide gas for Lebanon's power generation

QNA

Beirut

President of the Republic of Lebanon, Joseph Aoun, met yesterday in Beirut, with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani.

At the outset of the meeting, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the President of the Republic of Lebanon, and His Highness the Amir's wishes to Aoun for good health and happiness, and to the government and people of Lebanon enduring progress and prosperity.

For his part, the President of the Republic of Lebanon entrusted HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs with his greetings to His Highness the Amir, wishing him good health and happiness,

and Qatar continued development, growth and prosperity.

The meeting discussed co-operation ties between the two countries and ways to strengthen them, Qatar's support for Lebanon in the field of energy, as well as a range of regional and global issues.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterated Qatar's supportive position for the Republic of Lebanon and its continued support for the Lebanese people.

HE Sheikh Mohammed noted His Highness the Amir's directives to consistently support Lebanon, highlighting Qatar's support for the Lebanese army.

In addition, HE Sheikh Mohammed reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting Lebanon with energy supplies and ensuring the delivery of gas required for electricity generation.

The President of the Republic of Lebanon extended his thanks to Qatar for its constant support

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met the Prime Minister-designate of Lebanon Dr Nawaf Salam in Beirut on Tuesday.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun receives HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani in Beirut yesterday.

of the people of Lebanon, asserting that Qatar's message is one of hope for all Lebanese people.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin

Jassim al-Thani met yesterday in Beirut with Prime Minister-designate of the Republic of Lebanon Dr Nawaf Salam and Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

They discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of regional and international issues. **Page 4**

Israel's West Bank operation displaces thousands

AFP

Ramallah

Israeli military offensives in two West Bank refugee camps have displaced nearly 5,500 Palestinian families since December, local and UN officials said yesterday, amid escalating violence in the occupied territory.

The Israeli military describes its ongoing operations as "counterterrorism" efforts aimed at rooting out Palestinian militancy.

Jonathan Fowler, spokesman for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), said an estimated 2,450 to 3,000 families have been displaced from the Tulkarem refugee camp.

Faisal Salama, head of the camp's popular committee, estimated that 80% of its 15,000 residents have been displaced.

Both Salama and Fowler said

Smoke rises during an Israeli army operation in Jenin.

that obtaining precise figures is challenging because of the security situation within the camp and its fluctuating population.

"The displaced people from the camp are scattered in the suburbs and in the city of Tulkarem itself," Salama told AFP.

Jordan king, Egypt president support Palestinians' rights

QNA

Amman

Jordan's King Abdullah II and Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi affirmed, during a phone call yesterday, close co-ordination regarding various developments in the region, most notably the Palestinian issue.

The two sides reiterated their support for the Palestinian people in achieving their legitimate rights and establishing their independent sovereign state on the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the two-state solution.

They also stressed the need to intensify Arab and international efforts to consolidate the ceasefire in Gaza, as it is the first step towards calming the situation in the region.

The call also touched on the situation in Syria and Lebanon.

AFP adds: Egypt and Jordan, both key US allies, have been under pressure to accept a proposal by US President Donald Trump to "clean

out" the Gaza Strip by sending Palestinians to their territories. Cairo and Amman have issued repeated strong rejections, while making overtures to their Washington ally. King Abdullah on Sunday accepted an invitation to visit the White House later this month, a day after Sisi and Trump exchanged mutual invitations for state visits. Sisi had told Trump the world was "counting on" him for a "permanent and historic peace agreement" to end the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, calling him a "man of peace". Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have also voiced opposition to any forced displacement of Palestinians, while stressing the need to implement a two-state solution to the protracted conflict. Jordan's foreign minister Ayman Safadi had said "any discussion of an alternate homeland... is rejected", while Cairo has repeatedly called the issue a "red line" that would threaten its national security.

QOC to organise Half Marathon on Sport Day

QNA

Doha

The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) has revealed the details of the first edition of its Half Marathon 2025, set to take place on Tuesday, February 11, at Lusail Boulevard as part of Qatar National Sport Day celebrations.

During a press conference held yesterday in the presence of Chairman of the QOC Half Marathon Organising Committee Sheikh Suhaim bin Mohammed al-Thani, Race Director Abdulaziz Ghanem, Head of the Marketing Committee Sheikh Abdullah bin Saud al-Thani, Head of the Communication Committee Abdulla al-Marri, and Lusail Command & Control Center Operation Manager and Representative of Qatari Diar Eman al-Fadala, the committee discussed other sporting events that will be organised on

Officials at the press conference.

this occasion in the Al Adaam Village with the participation of several national sports federations.

The Half Marathon will feature four main categories catering to different age groups and fitness levels. Participants can choose from the 21-km Half Marathon,

the 10-km race, the 5-km race, and a 1-km Fun Run designed for children aged 6 to 14 years.

Addressing the conference, Sheikh Suhaim bin Mohammed al-Thani emphasised QOC's commitment to ensuring the highest technical standards for the race,

guaranteeing a world-class experience for all participants.

He stated that the event aims to promote a strong sports culture in Qatar while encouraging the community to take part in physical activities. He reiterated that the initiative aligns with Qatar Na-

The Half Marathon will feature four main categories catering to different age groups and fitness levels - the 21-km half Marathon, the 10-km race, the 5-km race, and a 1-km Fun Run

tional Vision 2030 and QOC's vision "To Become a Leading Nation in Bringing The World Together Through Sustainable Sport Development."

Eman al-Fadala expressed Qatari Diar's pride in collaborating with QOC for the Half Marathon. She noted that Lusail Boulevard was chosen as the ideal venue, further solidifying Lusail's status as a premier sports destination. **To Page 2**



Qatar, Turkiye sign defence deals



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani met with the visiting Turkish Minister of National Defence Yasar Guler, and his accompanying delegation. An official reception ceremony was held for the Turkish defence minister. During the meeting, the two sides discussed topics of common interest and ways to enhance and develop them. A number of agreements were also signed between Barzan Holding owned by the Ministry of Defence and Turkish MKE and ISFALT companies, owned by the Turkish Ministry of Defence; with the aim of co-operation in defence technology and military manufacturing fields. The meeting and signing ceremony were attended by a number of senior officials and officers from both sides. **(QNA)**



12th AgriteQ opens

Under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah inaugurated the 12th Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition 'AgriteQ 2025' at Katara – the Cultural Village yesterday.

The exhibition's opening was attended by UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment Dr Amna bint Abdullah al-Dahak, as the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment was selected as the guest of honour for this year's event.

The opening was also graced by several ambassadors accredited to Qatar, along with senior officials from governmental institutions, as well as representatives from regional and international agricultural organisations.

HE al-Attiyah emphasised in his speech that this event reflects Qatar's commitment to fostering innovation and sustainable development in the agricultural sector as it is one of the key pillars of comprehensive development in the country.

He also welcomed the participation of the UAE, noting that it reflects the strong fraternal ties between the two countries and strengthens their co-operation in agriculture and food security.

He said this year's edition holds special importance, as it comes after the launch of the National Food Security Strategy 2030, which represents a road map to enhance food security within the Qatar National Vision 2030, through the development of an integrated agricultural system based on increasing local production, supporting farmers, strengthening international partnerships, and implementing innovative solutions to improve productivity and reduce food waste.

Over the past five years, he added, Qatar has witnessed significant progress in agricultural production, thanks to the joint efforts of the public and private sectors, with the country successfully achieving a 50% increase in the production of fresh vegetables, reaching self-suf-



iciency rates of 97% in dairy products, 98% in fresh poultry, and 33% in table eggs.

Additionally, pioneering initiatives such as protected agriculture and modern irrigation systems have been implemented.

HE al-Attiyah touched on various projects launched by the State to support the agricultural sector, including the agricultural services project to raise the quality of the local product, the agricultural digitisation project in co-operation with Hassad Food, programmes to reduce food waste in partnership with Qatar University, and analytical studies in co-operation with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to improve marketing and pricing policies. Minister Dr al-Dahak emphasised that the UAE's participation as an honoured guest in the exhibition reflects the depth of relations between the two countries and close co-operation in the fields of agriculture and sustainable food security promotion.

She noted that the two countries share similar visions on en-

vironmental and climate issues, and ways to meet the challenges of climate change and achieve food security in the region.

She added that AgriteQ 2025 embodies the commitment of the participating countries to develop the agricultural sector through the exchange of experiences and the review of the latest practices and technologies, underlining the need to redouble efforts in light of the suffering of 2.4bn people in the world from severe food insecurity, and 900mn people from severe food insecurity.

She also reviewed some of the leading agricultural projects in the UAE, such as the "Bustanica" farm in Dubai, which is the world's largest vertical farm based on hydroponics, and the "AeroFarms AgX" farm in Abu Dhabi, the largest indoor vertical farm, as well as the launch of the national programme "Plant the Emirates" and the National Agricultural Centre to promote the culture of agriculture and enable the private sector and society to contribute to its development. **(QNA)**

QOC to organise Half Marathon on Sports Day

From Page 1

Extensive preparations have been made to ensure a smooth and safe race, including carefully planned race routes in co-ordination with all relevant authorities. Operational measures include on-site security teams, real-time traffic management, and emergency response coordination managed by the Lusail Command and Control Center, which will oversee all race-related activities.

Race Director Abdulaziz Ghanem detailed the official race schedule, stating that the Half Marathon will start at 6am, followed by the 10-km race at 7am. The 5-km race will begin at 7.30am, with the 1-km Fun Run scheduled for 8.30am.

He highlighted the strong turnout, with more than 100 nationalities already registered, and confirmed that registration will remain open until Feb 9 through QOC's

digital platforms.

Ghanem underscored QOC's dedication to runner safety and comfort, noting that water stations, first-aid points, and other logistical support will be available along the course.

Head of the Marketing Committee Sheikh Abdullah bin Saud al-Thani highlighted the QOC's broader plans for National Sports Day, including a series of diverse activities at Team Qatar Village in Al Saad Plaza, Lusail. "Alongside the Half Marathon, QOC will host a range of sports and entertainment activities in collaboration with several national sports federations. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage in sports such as athletics, football, basketball, handball, shooting, volleyball, boxing, Qatar Paralympic Committee, and martial arts. The event aims to provide an interactive and engaging experience for participants of all ages, reinforcing the importance of an active lifestyle," he said.

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

Doha Port recorded a 33% year-on-year increase in visitor numbers during the last season while continuing to play a leading role in boosting Qatar's maritime tourism sector and strengthening its global presence in the cruise industry, Mwani Qatar CEO Capt Abdulla Mohamed al-Khanji has said.

While addressing the gathering at the opening of the first edition of 'Seatrade Maritime Qatar' Conference and Exhibition yesterday, he said that Qatar has advanced seven positions in the World

Bank's 2023 Logistics Performance Index for trade- and transport-related infrastructure, ranking 19th globally.

He noted that Qatar has improved in logistics service competitiveness and quality, moving up 16 positions since the previous 2018 report to rank 14th globally. "In terms of economic competitiveness, Qatar currently ranks 18th worldwide in foreign trade and 11th in business efficiency. Qatar has achieved remarkable progress across various sectors, including infrastructure projects and their quality—particularly in ports and logistics services," he said.

These figures, according to Capt al-Khanji, reflect Qatar's significant

strides in developing an integrated port infrastructure that supports economic growth and enhances regional and global shipping opportunities.

"Qatar has become a key investment hub, thanks to its strategic location and the vast incentives that position it as a global trade gateway—offering a valuable opportunity for investors and companies looking to expand their operations in the region. Mwani Qatar continuously strives to meet the aspirations of the wise leadership by ensuring highly efficient and environmentally sustainable operations while adhering to the highest quality standards and best practices.

This approach enhances customer

experience and strengthens Qatar's position in global maritime transport, aligning with the Ministry of Transport's strategic plan to establish the country as a thriving regional trade hub," he said.

The speech highlighted the distinguished role that Hamad Port has played since its operational launch in 2016.

"It ranks among the world's top ports in terms of operational efficiency and sustainable infrastructure, establishing itself as a key re-export hub. Over the past year, transshipment volumes at Hamad Port have grown by more than 23% compared to 2023," Capt al-Khanji added.

Al-Attiyah meets UAE minister



HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah met with UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment Dr Amna bint Abdullah al-Dahak on the sidelines of the Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition (AgriteQ) 2025. The meeting addressed ways to beef up bilateral co-operation in areas of common interest, especially the municipal sector. The two sides also deliberated the opportunities for the two countries to exchange expertise. **(QNA)**

Transport minister flags off 'Seatrade Maritime Qatar'

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani yesterday inaugurated the first edition of "Seatrade Maritime Qatar" Conference and Exhibition. In attendance were several ministers, the secretary-general of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and other dignitaries along with experts shipping and maritime services industries.

"Maritime transportation is the artery of world trade and keeping it sustainable using the power of technology and enhanced international co-operation has become a strategic necessity," HE the minister said.

"The Ministry of Transport's hosting of this global event comes amid the continuing growth of Qatar's maritime transportation industry. Qatar has invested significantly into developing the infrastructure projects of that vital industry to achieve remarkable boom at all fronts, particularly regarding commercial and tourist ports and the relevant supportive logistic services."

The speech highlighted the advanced infrastructures and eco-friendly technologies deployed at Hamad Port. "These have contributed to transforming it into a pivotal regional port for re-exportation, hitting high rankings on the WB's Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) as it leapfrogged to 11th globally in 2023 from 38th globally in 2020. MoT's all-out developments at Doha Port have laid the foundation for a robust infrastructure in the cruise industry in step with the highest universal standards to support the plans and revenues of the national tourism sector with giant



HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani along with other dignitaries touring the first edition of "Seatrade Maritime Qatar" Conference and Exhibition yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

cruise ship trips," he said, adding that Al Ruwais Port continues its key role in the regional trade exchange after it had seen sustainable improvements, such as having new quays. HE the Minister noted that Qatar has put together a national strategy for logistic services industry to support supply chains and competitive advantages in regional and world trade, meet the requirements of economic diversification for logistics services and shipping, and boost Qatar's profile as a global hub for shipping, transportation and logistics.

Qatar, HE the minister said, has adopted an approach of overseas investments in commercial ports to improve the competitive capabilities in terms of managing and operating the commercial ports to ultimately achieve sustainable development for the national economy through long-term investments, as the Qatari investment model adopts the principle of permanent partnership.

Neville Bissett, Group CEO of QTerminals said the transforma-

tion of ports into sustainable is one of the most pressing topics in the industry. "QTerminals will have experts participating in panel discussions, offering valuable insights on this topic. As the world continues to navigate the challenges of the 21st century, it is platforms like these that provide a space for innovation, partnership, and the sharing of ideas that will shape the future of our industry," he noted.

The minister and the other dignitaries toured the accompanying exhibition. Day one of Seatrade Maritime Qatar featured four discussion panels on different topics. The two-day event focuses on identifying and addressing the challenges facing the maritime transportation, ports, and logistics industries. By fostering in-depth discussions around key themes that currently dominate the maritime industry's priorities, the event aims to spotlight and shape trends that are likely to significantly impact maritime transportation and logistics both in the Middle East and on a global scale.

Doha Port records remarkable increase in visitor numbers: Mwani Qatar CEO



Mwani Qatar CEO Capt Abdulla Mohamed al-Khanji addressing the gathering at the opening of the first edition of 'Seatrade Maritime Qatar' Conference and Exhibition, yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

The View Hospital’s annual symposium to focus on ‘Innovations in Robotic Surgery’

The View Hospital, in affiliation with Cedars-Sinai, will hold its annual medical symposium, ‘Innovations in Robotic Surgery’, on February 21 and 22, at the Equestrian Club in Doha.

The symposium will focus on transformative advancements in robotic surgery, a field that continues to redefine the future of healthcare and surgical practices, a statement said yesterday.

The event will bring together leading international speakers and distinguished experts from local and regional institutions to share insights, discuss breakthroughs, and explore the latest technologies shaping the industry.

The collaboration with Cedars-Sinai, a leading academic medical institution in the US, further underscores the commitment of The View Hospital leadership to foster global partnerships and advance medical knowledge.

Cedars-Sinai has been named to the Honor Roll for the ninth consecutive year and tied for #1 in California and in Los Angeles in US News & World Report’s “Best Hospitals 2024-25” rankings.

Dr Fatih Mehmet Gul, CEO of The View Hospital, emphasised the significance of this event in the hospital’s commitment to academic excellence and innovation:

“As part of our positioning as an Academic Care healthcare institution, we are proud to host the ‘Innovations in Robotic Surgery’ symposium. This event reflects our dedication to bringing the latest medical technologies and best practices to the GCC medical community, fostering knowledge-



Dr Fatih Mehmet Gul, CEO of The View Hospital.

sharing and collaboration to elevate patient care across the region.”

The ‘Innovations in Robotic Surgery’ symposium will cover an array of subspecialties, including general surgery, thoracic surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, bariatric surgery, gastroenterology, and urology. Attendees will have the unique opportunity to gain hands-on exposure to advanced robotic technologies and techniques that are designed to improve patient outcomes and procedural efficiencies.

Key highlights of the conference include insightful presentations from globally renowned speakers, interactive panel discussions with industry pioneers, live demonstrations of state-of-the-art robotic surgical systems, and invaluable networking opportunities with leaders and innovators in robotic surgery.

“Cedars-Sinai is excited to share

our expertise in robotic surgery and present the latest research and clinical advances,” said Harry Sax, MD, medical director of The View Hospital, in affiliation with Cedars-Sinai, executive vice-chair of the Jim and Eleanor Randall Department of Surgery and associate dean of International Academic Programmes at Cedars-Sinai. “Facilitating knowledge exchange between Cedars-Sinai physicians and our partners at The View Hospital will not only strengthen our ongoing collaboration but elevate the quality of patient care in Qatar and the entire region.”

As part of its commitment to fostering continuous professional development, the conference will provide attendees with 6.5 continuing medical education category 1 credits from Qatar and 6.5 American Medical Association PRA category 1 credits, the statement added.

UDST teams shine at GCC Universities sports tourney



UDST earned third place overall in the tournament.

Teams from University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) have displayed outstanding performance at the 10th GCC Universities Sports Tournament held at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman.

The tournament brought together 17 universities from across the GCC region to compete in seven sports disciplines: athletics, swimming, football, 3x3 basketball, volleyball, badminton, and table tennis.

UDST’s athletes achieved remarkable results across multiple events. In badminton, Muhamed Gayuh, Nihal Mohamed, and Juan Miguel secured a gold medal. In swimming, Youssef Gemie won the gold medal in the 50m freestyle, while the team of Jehan Andres, Youssef Gemie, Abdullah Alkha-

Idi, and Raed Ismail earned a silver medal in the relay.

Alkhalidi also won silver medals in the 50m breaststroke and 50m backstroke, along with a bronze medal in the 100m freestyle by Youssef Gemie. In athletics, Eltayeb Mohamed claimed the gold medal in the long jump.

Meanwhile, the volleyball team achieved the fourth position.

As a result of their performances, UDST earned third place overall in the tournament, marking a significant achievement as the university entered the list of the top three Gulf universities for the first time. The total medal haul of three gold medals, three silver medals, and one bronze not only highlighted the ex-

cellence of UDST’s athletes but also showcased their dedication, talent, and exemplary representation of the university on an international stage.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president UDST stated: “We are immensely proud of the remarkable achievements of our student athletes during the 10th GCC Universities Sports Tournament. These accomplishments reflect the dedication and perseverance of our students and highlight the University’s commitment to supporting athletic talent while promoting health and wellness within our academic community. We are confident that these accomplishments will pay the way for even greater achievements on both regional and international levels in the future.”

Argentina, Chile partners for Qatar’s Years of Culture 2025

Qatar’s Years of Culture (YoC) initiative yesterday announced Argentina and Chile as its partner countries for 2025.

The two nations are enriched by Arab heritage through centuries of migration and cultural exchange as well as a shared enthusiasm for sport, a statement said.

The 2025 partnerships will showcase shared influences – from cuisine to language – while establishing new collaborations across the initiative’s core focus areas of cultural preservation, creative industries, social development, and innovation.

This annual global exchange was launched 13 years ago by Qatar Museums (QM) and Years of Culture Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani to strengthen connections between Qatar and other nations through long-term cultural partnerships rooted in mutual respect and understanding.

Programmes to be featured this year include performances, exhibitions, sporting and culinary events, photography projects, residency schemes, volunteer trips, and more. Past partner countries include Morocco (2024), Indonesia (2023), and the Menasa region, which was celebrated during the initiative’s 10th anniversary and the Arab world’s first-ever FIFA World Cup in 2022. HE Sheikha Al Mayassa, said: “We founded Years of Culture in 2012 to promote respect and understanding between Qatar and other nations, nurturing connections between people and encouraging dialogue through bilateral cultural exchange. Now, building on a foundation of success, we are elevating the initiative to a new level by forming Years of Culture partnerships with two nations within a region of the globe. We welcome Argentina and Chile as the first partners in this new era for the 2025 Years of Culture.”

Argentinian ambassador Guillermo Nicolás said: “For five decades, diplomatic



relations between Qatar and Argentina have been characterised by mutual respect, expanding trade, and complementary economies. This Year of Culture offers

a unique platform to deepen these ties by celebrating our artistic heritage and forging new creative partnerships. We look forward to sharing Argentina’s culture and traditions while discovering Qatar’s diverse offerings.”

Chilean ambassador Patricio Díaz Broughton remarked: “Chile’s innovative spirit has resonated globally, from architectural collaborations such as the upcoming Art Mill Museum in Qatar, designed by Chile’s Alejandro Aravena, to partnerships in sustainable energy. Joining Qatar’s Year of Culture underscores our shared commitment to creativity and sustainability. We are eager to exchange ideas and traditions that highlight the friendship between our nations.”

As in previous years, 2025 will feature volunteer trips organised in collaboration with Reach Out to Asia and QM, enabling students and professionals to participate in community projects in Argentina and Chile. Participants from all three nations will engage in meaningful cultural exchanges, including outdoor activities such as a collaborative cycling tour.

The flagship Photography Journey will return in 2025 to focus on documenting and preserving intangible cultural heritage in Qatar, Argentina, and Chile, the statement added.

Fire Station’s ‘The Traveler is the Narrator II’ expo set for launch



The Fire Station Artist in Residence has announced the opening of the second edition of the “The Traveler is the Narrator II” exhibition, which showcases the experiences of a distinguished group of Qatari female artists who participated in the New York and Paris 2024 residency programme. The exhibition will be held today (Wednesday), at 7pm, in Gallery 4 at the Fire Station. The exhibition includes works by: Saeeda al-Badr, Munira al-Buainain, Fouz Saif, Ghada al-Kuwari, and Sheikha al-Khulaifi, who lived unique experiences in two of the most culturally and geographically diverse cities. The exhibition presents works inspired by the travel experiences that the artists underwent during their residency, and displays their personal perspectives on the cities and situations that influenced them. The works address various issues ranging from the challenges and adventures they witnessed during these trips, providing a deep artistic vision of travel and cultural diversity. Above is a file photo of a previous exhibition at the Fire Station art gallery.

Qatar Living Announces Lucky Winner of the Cherry Tiggo 7 Pro Max Raffle



Qatar Living is thrilled to announce the successful conclusion of its much-anticipated vehicles raffle, where one lucky participant won a brand-new Cherry Tiggo 7 Pro Max.

The grand reveal took place today at Tornado Dune Plaza, West Bay, where attendees gathered to witness the momentous occasion. After months of excitement, Muneef Abdul Rahiman, an Indian expatriate in Doha, emerged as the winner, and drove away with the grand prize.

The raffle, which ran from November 3, 2024, to February 2, 2025, invited participants to enter by posting a paid car ad on the Qatar Living Vehicles website. The overwhelming response from car enthusiasts across Qatar highlighted the platform’s strong engagement and commitment to connecting buyers and sellers.

“We are thrilled to be part of such a momentous occasion and to give back to our loyal community,” said Qatar Living Group CEO Joy Alvarez. “Qatar Living continues to lead the market by offering unparalleled

services, connecting buyers and sellers with ease. The success of this raffle reflects the trust and loyalty we’ve built within our community. We’re grateful for the immense response to this campaign, and we remain committed to providing innovative solutions for all of Qatar’s vehicle needs through our new and improved Qatar Living Vehicles platform.”

Muneef Abdul Rahiman, the lucky winner commented, “My family and I are overjoyed and thrilled to win this stunning car. Just two days ago, my wife was admiring the beautiful blue color of the Chery Tiggo, and now I’m driving away with the exact same car. This is unbelievable, feels like a dream come true. We’re incredibly grateful to Qatar Living for making this happen, and we can’t thank them enough for this amazing win.”

This campaign reinforces Qatar Living Vehicle’s position as the country’s leading destination for vehicle listings, offering unparalleled opportunities for car owners and seekers.

Congratulations to Muneef, and a big thank you to everyone who participated!

Discover Qatar clocks up over 10,500 stopover visitors in Jan

Discover Qatar, the destination management arm of Qatar Airways Group, clocked over 10,500 stopover visitors in January.

This is the first time such a figure is achieved since the Qatar Stopover programme’s relaunch in August 2021, the company said yesterday.

“This achievement reflects Qatar’s growing appeal as a world-class destination and the programme’s growing popularity,” Discover Qatar said.

In January, the programme recorded more than 10,500 visitors, compared to 6,651 in January 2024. This has contributed to an impressive year-on-year growth of 165% between March 2024 and January this year.

The programme has also driven exceptional growth in hotel bookings, with over 100,000 room nights sold so far this year – doubling the figures from the previous year. Qatar Airways Holidays is driving this success as the largest contributor to the programme’s sales, delivering over a third of all bookings, leveraging the marketing strength of Qatar Airways around the globe. Stopover is proving incredibly popular with Qatar

Airways frequent flyers too, with 20% of customers using the popular loyalty currency Avios to pay for their bookings, with logged in Privilege Club members earning Avios and Qpoints with every transaction. Discover Qatar senior vice-president, Steven Reynolds, said: “Qatar Stopover Programme is central to positioning Qatar as a leading global destination, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

“By leveraging Qatar Airways’ extensive network of over 170 destinations and the outstanding travel experiences we offer, we have firmly established Qatar as a must-visit destination. At Discover Qatar, we are committed to delivering tailored packages that combine cultural discovery, world-class hospitality, and unforgettable experiences for travellers from around the world.”

Leading global source markets include the US, the UK, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands. The stopover programme has also received significant support from the travel trade, with particularly strong contributions coming from Australia, South Africa, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and New Zealand, showcasing its wide-ranging appeal to both leisure and business travellers.



PM meets Lebanese PM-designate, Speaker



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday in Beirut with Prime Minister-designate of Lebanon Dr Nawaf Salam. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of regional and international issues. HE the Prime Minister expressed Qatar's aspiration for the completion of the formation of the new Lebanese government to achieve the aspirations of the Lebanese people for progress, development and prosperity. HE the Prime Minister also met in Beirut with Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri. They discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, as well as developments in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese Speaker thanked Qatar for its continuous support to Lebanon since 2006, and its ongoing efforts to rebuild Lebanon. **(QNA)**



Official

Amir sends cables of congratulations to Sri Lankan president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Dr Harini Amarasuriya. **(QNA)**

Al-Misnad meets Jordanian minister



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met separately yesterday in Amman with Jordan's Minister of Planning and International Co-operation Zeina Toukan and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Nancy Namrouqa. The two meetings discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them, strengthening diplomatic, humanitarian and development co-operation, ways to provide humanitarian assistance and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, and developments in Syria, in addition to a number of topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

Jordan's PM meets al-Misnad



Jordanian Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Dr Jaafar Hassan met yesterday in Amman with HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them, as well as enhancing co-operation in providing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. In addition, they discussed a number of topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

PM gets written message from Romania's premier



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a written message from Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received the message during his meeting yesterday with Romanian ambassador to Qatar Nicusor Daniel Tanase. **(QNA)**

Shura Council deputy Speaker meets French parliamentarian



HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti met yesterday with the visiting member of the French National Assembly Amelia Lakrafi. The meeting discussed parliamentary relations between the Shura Council and the French National Assembly and ways to support and develop them. They also discussed a number of topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

New e-services launched for real estate transactions

The Department of Real Estate Registration at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has launched a new package of electronic services, within the framework of the ministry's plan for digital transformation and modernisation of real estate registration and documentation services to achieve leadership in facilitating transactions and keeping pace with the sectoral plans of the Third National Development Strategy to enable citizens, residents and investors to obtain easy and affordable digital services, and enhance the efficiency of the real estate registration and documentation sector.

The updated version of the Sak Application has introduced a new digital services package that includes the following services: issuing a title deed to replace a lost one, issuing a title deed to replace a damaged one, providing property statements, correcting the type of property, correcting the owner's name, handling mortgages, and unwinding mortgages.

The updated version of the Sak Application also provides the possibility of com-

pleting transactions electronically and receiving title deeds through Qatar Post services. The Real Estate Registration Department announced the activation of the QR code feature on the updated title deeds, as this code allows users to many features, such as viewing public data related to the property, once scanned through the phone's camera. It also provides the property location feature using the Geographic information system (GIS), in addition to the ability to view the route of directions to reach the real estate unit via Google Maps.

The QR code also allows viewing additional detailed data related to the owner and the property when scanning it using the Sak Application for smart devices.

The updated version of Sak Application provides easier services and procedures for all MoJ beneficiaries, and will also contribute to enhancing the user experience and improving the digital experience provided to various segments of society, and the new version also included all services, regulations, laws, and applications, including "Absher" service, the real estate

appraiser application "Al-Mothamin", and the real estate bulletin, with the same new interface for the Sak Application, which will provide beneficiaries with searching in one application only.

The application also includes viewing detailed property data and the location of the property by simply scanning the QR code available on the title deed, and pressing the cadastral number.

The upgraded version of the Sak Application allows, for the first time, to complete a number of transactions electronically and obtain the legal editor or paper version of the transaction after the completion of the procedures by Qatar Post.

The automated services encompass the issuance of a title deed to replace a lost or damaged one, correcting the owner's name and property type. These transactions can be handled through Qatar Post, eliminating the need for in-person visits to the ministry or its service offices. Additionally, the new application facilitates property disclosure transactions that can be received via e-mail. **(QNA)**

Gord develops region's first sustainable construction code

Having developed the GCC region's first-ever Sustainable Construction Code, the Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (Gord), a subsidiary of Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company has signed an agreement with the GCC Standardisation Organisation (GSO) for integrating the code into the wider Gulf Building Code.

The agreement was formalised by Dr Yousef bin Mohammed Alhorr, founding chairman of Gord, and Nawaf bin Ibrahim al-Hamad al-Mana, president of GSO, at GSO headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The Gulf Building Code, endorsed by the Ministries of Municipalities and Urban Planning in Gulf States, serves as a comprehensive framework guiding building and construction practices across the Gulf region. The newly developed Sustainable Construction Code, created by experts at Gord draws on the success of Gord's flagship Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) and will significantly contribute to the Gulf's transition to more sustainable urban landscapes.

The Sustainable Construction Code serves as a vital intergovernmental tool, aiming to promote sustainable practices across a broad spectrum. It establishes a baseline set of green building criteria



Dr Yousef bin Mohammed Alhorr and Nawaf bin Ibrahim al-Hamad al-Mana at the signing ceremony.

for a diverse range of construction projects, addressing various facets of sustainability. Initially conceived in 2010, the project was entrusted to Gord, leveraging its extensive expertise and leadership in the sustainability domain.

Dr Alhorr, said: "This achievement marks a significant milestone in our commitment to advancing sustainability and promoting a more environmentally conscious future for the Gulf nations. The Code is designed to ensure wider accessibility and adoption, ultimately promoting the creation of sustainable urban landscapes throughout the region. At the same time, it serves as a starting point toward a holistic green building framework in the future, where sustainability becomes deeply integrated into every facet of the regional building and construction industry."

Al-Mana noted: "Green buildings play a crucial role in helping the GCC region achieve its climate goals by significantly reducing energy consumption, carbon emissions and resource use. To this end, the Sustainable Construction Code represents GCC countries' vision for a greener, more sustainable future.

"We are certain that this unified framework will pave the way for a region-wide transformation of the construction industry, where sustainability is not just an option, but an integral part of every project."

The Sustainable Construction Code offers a multifaceted approach with the flexibility of both prescriptive and performance-based assessments. While its core principles are

derived from GSAS green building framework, Sustainable Construction Code represents a simplified version with reduced requirements. The 55 criteria are narrowed down to 22, each representing key performance indicators for sustainable buildings.

This deliberate simplification ensures ease of adoption and enforceability across all Gulf countries. The code is designed to be accessible to a broad audience, reducing the need for specialized expertise and complex simulations.

The Code is structured into six core chapters. These chapters cover various aspects of sustainable construction, including guidelines for efficient land utilisation and infrastructure planning in Site Planning and Use, recommendations for sustainable and eco-friendly building materials in Material Selection, strategies to optimise energy usage within buildings and promote energy efficiency in Energy Conservation and Efficiency, guidelines for water resource conservation and efficient water use in Water Conservation and Efficiency, a focus on ensuring healthy and comfortable indoor environments in Indoor Environmental Quality, and an emphasis on preserving cultural and historical aspects in building design and construction in Heritage and Cultural Identity.



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/A/STK/6912/24, B30 Material Agreement for Supply of Chemicals without any commitment	05/02/2025 to 02/03/2025	0	25,000	05/03/2025

Scope of Work:

QatarEnergy LNG invites proposal from reputed suppliers for 5 years Material Agreement for Supply Chemicals. For other tender terms & conditions, please refer full tender documents.

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for 365 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:

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

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



A group picture from Shell Eco-marathon Asia-Pacific and the Middle East 2024, held at Pertamina Mandalika International Street Circuit, Lombok, Indonesia.

Students to converge in Qatar for inaugural Shell Eco-marathon in Middle East

Students from around the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East region are just days away from arriving in Qatar for the inaugural Shell Eco-marathon in the Middle East.

The event, hosted under the patronage of Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, in collaboration with Qatar Auto Museum, is being held from February 8-12 at Lusail International Circuit.

In a statement, Rob Maxwell, managing director of Shell Companies Qatar, shared his enthusiasm: "The excitement is building as we get ready to welcome brilliant young minds from around the world to Qatar. This event highlights the country's unwavering commitment to innovation and education, and Lusail International Circuit will provide the perfect

environment for these talented students to showcase their cutting-edge, energy-efficient vehicles.

Shell Eco-marathon is a global academic programme that challenges student teams to design and manufacture energy-efficient vehicles capable of travelling the farthest with the least amount of fuel. The programme aims to push the boundaries of what is technically possible and inspire young people to become leading scientists and engineers of future energy solutions.

Student teams can participate in one of two vehicle classes: Urban Concept or Prototype. Urban Concept vehicles have familiar road car features and more closely resemble passenger cars, while the Prototype category consists of ultra-efficient, lightweight vehicles designed to achieve

record-breaking distances using minimal fuel. The cars are powered by one of three energy sources: internal combustion engine, battery electric, or hydrogen fuel cell. They employ advanced engineering techniques, aerodynamics, lightweight materials, and innovative designs to maximise efficiency. Beyond technical skills, Shell Eco-marathon encourages collaboration, teamwork, and problem-solving among participating students, providing a platform for young minds to showcase their talent, creativity, and passion for engineering and sustainability.

Through Shell Eco-marathon, Shell aims to inspire and support the next generation of engineers, scientists, and innovators in their pursuit of sustainable solutions. More information is available at www.shellecomarathon.com

Commercial Bank partners with Mastercard to host 'exclusive dinner'

Commercial Bank in partnership with Mastercard hosted an 'exclusive dinner' for its Limited Edition World Elite Credit Cardholders at the newly Michelin Starred Idam restaurant by celebrated chef Alain Ducasse. The restaurant is one of just two newly awarded restaurants in Doha.

Shahnawaz Rashid, executive general manager and head of Retail Banking at Commercial Bank, said: "We value the loyalty of our Limited Edition customers, and were pleased to collaborate with Mastercard to offer these affluent cardholders an exceptional culinary evening with many highlights, greatly enjoyed by everyone present."

World Elite Limited Edition is Commercial Bank's exclusive invitation-only segment for affluent customers, offering a suite of banking services tailored to some of the highest spenders in the country.

Erdem Cakar, country manager (Qatar and Kuwait) at Mastercard, said: "Being able to enjoy the phenomenal tastes of a Michelin Star restaurant is



always something special, and Idam by Alain Ducasse was a delightful experience. It gave us a special chance to connect with consumers, mark our partnership with Commercial Bank, and celebrate the new Michelin Guide Doha."

Idam by Alain Ducasse is located at the top floor of the iconic Museum of Islamic Art and features contemporary French cuisine crafted under the vision

of chef Alain Ducasse. Restaurant interior design incorporates Arabic touches inspired by the Islamic golden age with exquisite design by Philippe Starck.

"With the exclusive priceless experience, Mastercard and Commercial Bank wanted to show appreciation to cardholders for their loyalty and to connect them with their culinary passion," a statement said.

DJWE 2025 sets new standard in community social responsibility

This year's Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE), which concludes today (Wednesday), is not just a showcase of luxury but also a testament to how jewellery can transcend aesthetics and become a force for inclusion and change.

Among the most thought-provoking collections unveiled this week is the 'Love Is Blind' line, created by multimedia artist Yousef Fakhroo, in collaboration with H Jewelry and Hairaat Jewellery.

Inspired by the intricate beauty of braille, the collection transforms the language of touch into exquisite jewellery pieces that spell out "love" in Arabic, with each design capturing the essence of romantic sentiment. More than just a creative expression, this collection serves a greater purpose, raising awareness for the visually impaired community in Qatar.

Developed in collaboration with Al Noor Centre for the Blind, the initiative emphasises how jewellery can raise awareness and community social responsibility.

Beyond this powerful initiative, DJWE 2025 continues to showcase how jewellery can be a catalyst for social good, with Education Above All (EAA) leading the way as the philanthropic partner of the exhibition. Returning with an exclusive collection, EAA blends cultural heritage with fine craftsmanship to support its mission of providing education to children worldwide.

EAA's latest collection, Horizons of Heritage, features intricately designed jewellery with proceeds dedicated to its global education initiatives, which have already impacted the lives of over 22mn children and youth worldwide.

Among the standout pieces is the Blue Mosque series, which includes bangles, necklaces, earrings, brooches, and bracelets inspired by architectural artistry. Other notable pieces include Misbaha bracelets and necklaces, diamond and emerald rings, and sterling silver accessories, such as pens and cufflinks. The collection also introduces EAA brooches and cord bracelets, symbolising



the foundation's commitment to education through art and design.

Whether through the tactile elegance of braille-inspired jewellery or the cultural richness of EAA's collection, this year's exhibition demonstrates that jewellery is more than adornment – it is a language of impact.

Organised by Qatar Tourism and presented by Visit Qatar, DJWE remains a cornerstone of Qatar's event calendar, fostering cultural exchange and economic growth. This premier B2B and B2C exhibition offers a unique platform for visitors to explore exclusive collections, connect with industry experts, and participate in networking opportunities.

With the inclusion of both emerging talents and established names, the 21st edition of DJWE reaffirms its status as a hub for



creative collaboration and business innovation.

To register for the exhibition, visit www.djwe.com. To explore the latest events on Qatar's calendar, visit www.visitqatar.com

EAA collaborates with jewellery designer Amrapali at DJWE 2025



Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, has partnered with jewellery designer Amrapali for a special collection being showcased at the annual Doha Jewellery & Watches Exhibition (DJWE) 2025.

The collection, titled 'Bejewelled Horizons', comprises opulent and intricately designed pieces inspired by Qatar's heritage sites combined with traditional Indian craftsmanship.

The partnership represents the Foundation's innovative approach to fundraising – merging high fashion with philanthropy to create sustainable solutions for global education challenges.

The 'Bejewelled Horizons' collection is revered for its vibrant, hand-painted ceramic tile patterns, encompassing architectural styles from Syria, Turkiye, Turkmenistan, and Northern Persia, while Amrapali Jewels' distinctive jewellery draws inspiration from the metal overlays in the stone Jali windows of Amer Fort, Jaipur.



The limited 'Bejewelled Horizons' Collection ranges from £200 for the silver collection and approximately £200-25,000 for the solid gold pieces, reflecting an artful blend of cultural inspiration and luxury.

The collection represents the sixth partnership between EAA and world-renowned jewellery designers, with part of the proceeds allocated to the foundation's far-reaching projects.

Taj Sulaiman, director, Communications and Private Sector Partnerships EAA, said: "This collaboration with Amrapali

Jewels is a testament to the impact we can create when we come together to support children in need. By blending heritage and artistry, this collection helps raise vital funds to provide education for marginalised children, giving them hope and opportunities for a better future."

Amrapali Jewels CEO, Tarang Arora, added: "Amrapali Jewels is excited and honoured to collaborate with Education Above All Foundation. Education is close to our hearts, and it is why many of the unique pieces belonging to our founders, my father Rajiv Arora and Rajesh Ajmera, are displayed in our museum in Jaipur – to continue educating people about the art of jewellery making. Each piece has been meticulously designed specifically for the 'Bejewelled Horizons' Collection, with part of the proceeds dedicated to supporting EAA."

EAA Foundation works in over 60 countries with a network exceeding 100 partners.

Ministry holds 'Qatar World Cup 2022' stamp exhibition on occasion of National Sport Day

The Qatar Philatelic and Numismatic Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, is organising a stamp exhibition titled "Qatar World Cup 2022 Stamps", on the occasion of the National Sport Day (NSD) 2025, in co-operation with the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani Museum.

The exhibition, which opened on Sunday, at the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani Museum, displays until the end of February a collection of Qatar World Cup 2022 stamps, by Mohammed Zantout, a member of the centre, along with a selection of stamps from the first World Cup football tournament under the name

'World Cup' in Uruguay in 1930. The exhibition documents what was accomplished in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, through the stamps that were issued, in addition to medals and postal envelopes, in an invitation to amateurs interested in stamp collection and for visitors to the exhibition, which is open daily.

The Qatar Philatelic and Numismatic Center aims to sponsor and spread the hobby of stamp and numismatic collecting. The centre also aspires to advance it, provide conditions for its members to practice this hobby and to develop it by all means and methods, and to encourage amateurs to participate in exhibitions.



A view from the exhibition.



Winners of National English Language Olympiad honoured

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has honoured the winners of the second National English Language Olympiad (ELO), held under the supervision of the MoEHE's English language department.

In a statement yesterday, the ministry highlighted the event as a major step toward advancing students' capabilities to qualify for international contests and intends to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship and help students acquire knowledge and share culture, in addition to fostering the seamless integration of students within a spurring educational environment.

Head of the MoEHE's English department, Sheikha al-Rumaihi, affirmed that the event featured students engaging in a fervent

competition in a mesmerising environment alongside their peers to showcase their capabilities, highlighting that this year's topic was about sports as a prelude for students to be primed for rigorous competition on the global stage.

The official said that the Moza bint Mohammed Preparatory Independent School for girls and Al Yarmouk Independent Preparatory School for Boys have been qualified to represent Qatar in the international Olympiad of English language, slated to be held in Jordan in May.

The contest results culminated in the Moza bint Mohammed Preparatory Independent School for girls securing first place while the Roqaya Preparatory for Girls Independent School snagged the second place, with Al Khor Primary Independent School for Girls

claiming the third place.

Al Yarmouk Independent Preparatory School for Boys won the first place, while the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys secured second place, and the Saeed bin Zaid Preparatory School for Boys snagging the third place.

The winning schools for boys in the national competition were honoured across various categories, namely the Abu Bakr Asse-deeq Preparatory Independent School (best project), the Ibn Khaldoun Preparatory Independent School (best societal services), the Salah ad-Din Al Ayyubi Preparatory School (highest grade in English language examination), the Doha Preparatory Independent School (exemplary theatrical performance).

For the girls' schools, the Su-



kaynah bint Al Husayn Preparatory School was designated as having the best project, the Qatar Preparatory School was cited for best societal services, the Hind bint Amr Al Ansaria Preparatory School had the highest grade in English lan-

guage examination, and the Fatima bint Al Waleed Preparatory School was lauded for exemplary theatrical performance.

The ELO is a competitive didactic event for competition at the domestic and international levels

that eyes students across various public schools with the aim of advancing their linguistic skills and scientific research, offering an environment conducive for collective work that fuses enjoyment with merits. - QNA



The opening ceremony was led by Dr Hilal al-Rifai.

HMC spreads gynaecological cancers awareness

In observance of Gynaecological Cancers Awareness Month, the Gyne-Oncology and the Patient Family Education units of the Women's Wellness and Research Centre (WWRC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the National Centre for Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) and the Qatar Cancer Society (QCS), is encouraging women to stay informed about the symptoms of gynaecological cancers.

January marked National Gynaecological Cancer Awareness Month in Qatar and this year, the WWRC hosted a campaign to raise awareness on gynaecological cancers in collaboration with the NCCCR, MoPH and QCS.

Under the theme *Together We Can*, the campaign emphasised the importance of community collaboration in raising awareness, promoting early detection, and advancing the prevention of gynaecological cancers.

The awareness campaign focused on cervical cancer and the HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccine while also shedding light on other types of gynaecological cancers, including ovarian, uterine, vaginal and vulvar cancers.

Throughout the event, patients, visitors and staff were educated on the symptoms, risk factors, prevention strategies and the significance of early detection and vaccination.

The opening ceremony was led by WWRC medical director and chief executive Dr Hilal al-Rifai, WWRC head of gynaecology Dr Moayyad Younis, and Dr Afaf al-Ansari, co-lead of Gyne-Oncology at the WWRC.

They were joined by NCCCR medical director and chief executive Dr Mohamed Salem Jaber al-Hassan and key representatives from the MoPH, Primary Health Care Corporation and QCS.

The event was further enriched by the participation of schoolgirls from Qatar Foundation, who played a key role in promoting the importance of HPV vaccination and cancer prevention.

Key highlights of the campaign were educational booths and awareness sessions, role play by Qatar Foundation students, and expert insights.

Dr al-Rifai highlighted the importance of strengthening community awareness around cancer prevention strategies, especially emphasising HPV vaccination.

He reaffirmed the WWRC's commitment to public health initiatives aimed at empowering both healthcare professionals and the public.

Dr al-Hassan reiterated the significance of early detection and proactive healthcare in preventing gynaecological cancers.

Dr al-Ansari emphasised the critical role of early diagnosis and awareness in combating gynaecological cancers.

QC dispatches aid convoy to Syria

As part of its ongoing urgent humanitarian efforts, Qatar Charity (QC) has sent a large convoy consisting of 85 trucks, valued at QR12mn, within the Winter and Reviving Hope campaigns.

The convoy departed from Gaziantep, Turkiye, heading toward the most in-need areas in northern Syria.

The convoy carries essential relief materials aimed at supporting those affected inside Syria and Turkiye, with part of the aid designated for those impacted in Turkiye.

The goal of this convoy is to provide food, heating, and urgent winter needs for tens of thousands of people enduring harsh humanitarian conditions.

The convoy includes 500 tonnes of flour for bread production, 25,000 food baskets, and basic supplies to en-

sure food security for affected families.

It also contains 700 non-food baskets, 2,400 winter clothing kits to help children cope with the extreme cold, and 2,000 tonnes of coal for heating.

Additionally, there are 456 stoves to provide warmth in camps and needy homes.

Khalid al-Yafai, the director of Donor Relations at the QC, stated: "This convoy is part of Qatar Charity's continuous commitment to providing urgent humanitarian aid."

"It reflects our support for the affected people in both Syria and Turkiye, helping them face the severe winter conditions and difficult living circumstances," he said. "We continue our work to meet the basic needs of the affected families, and we encourage philanthropists to support these efforts to



ensure aid reaches as many people as possible."

This convoy is part of the QC's humanitarian efforts that have been on-

going for more than 13 years, benefiting millions of displaced Syrians both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, a statement added.

Ashghal completes the main works of Al Foroush, Al Kharaitiyat (Package 1)

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has completed the main works of the Roads and Infrastructure Development Project in Al Foroush and Al Kharaitiyat (Package 1).

According to a statement from Ashghal, this was in response to the requirements of urban expansion in Al Foroush and Al Kharaitiyat.

The geographical scope of the project covers part of the area located specifically North of Riffa Street, West of Hazm Al Thmaid Street Road and West of Al Mazrouah Road.

Engineer Rashed al-Zeyara, head of Doha City Section at Ashghal's Roads Projects Department, said that the first package achieves extensive improvements that currently serve about 411 plots in the area.

The project will serve the population



growth in the future through the development of internal streets and infrastructure facilities such as drainage networks, rainwater drainage, surface water and others to provide integrated infrastructure services and improve the quality of life of residents.

A total of 17.8km of roads were developed while 655 street lighting poles and traffic safety elements were installed.

Works encompassed the development of infrastructure networks including a drainage network with a total length of 19km, a surface water and rainwater drainage network with a length of 2.7km, and a potable water network with a length of 10.4km.

The remaining works are currently being completed, which include installing signboards and lighting poles in some streets and implementing some works related to electrical cables.

The Ashghal official noted that the high groundwater level in the project area required studying the most appropriate dewatering and drainage solutions before commencing construction work.

"The rocky nature of the area's soil has delayed the completion of some excavation work," he said. "The work required implementing excavations at a depth of approximately 22m below



the ground, which required increasing workers' safety procedures, in addition to the need to co-ordinate with many State institutions to complete infrastructure development work."

Local materials account for 80% of the total materials used in the project.

These include lighting poles and bulbs, drainage pipes, pre-cast manholes, electrical cables, directional signs, and interlock.

This is within the Ashghal's Ta'heel initiative to support local manufacturers.

QCH holds solar observation event as part of competition for schools

The Qatar Calendar House (QCH) has organised a sun and sunspot monitoring event for school students at the Museum of Islamic Art Park (MIA Park), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).

This event is part of the Qatar Astronomy Olympiad for Schools competition. QCH executive director and general supervisor of the competition engineer Faisal al-Ansari said that over 60 schools participated, with a number of more than 300 students.

The students used telescopes and were guided to monitor the sun and sunspots in safe ways, with solar filters used as well as a projection of the sun disk on a white board.

This event comes as one of the required activities within the competition of the 9th Qatar Astronomy Olympiad for Schools, which discusses the Earth and its dimensions in relation to sunspots, and the new version of the competition that was launched in December last year.

Al-Ansari added that this year's competition includes three astronomical projects that stu-



dents will prepare: calculating the size of the Earth compared to sunspots, introducing the cycle of solar activity, and calculating solar activity for the current and future period.

Students from all schools in the preparatory and secondary stages will do the first and second projects, while the last project is limited to secondary students.

In the presence of teachers and students from the participating schools, two workshops were presented by QCH astronomical expert Dr Bashir Marzouk and trainer Hani Al-Dlei, with practical training on how to use telescopes and how to monitor the sun and sunspots using safe methods of observation.

Al-Ansari underlined that during the last week of February, the projects will be received after completion by teachers and students.

The competition comes within the framework of spreading the astronomical culture to students in various independent, international and private schools in Qatar, as the main goal of organising and sponsoring the Qatari Calendar House for this competition is to create a team of students to participate in the International Astronomy Olympiad. - QNA

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, HOUDA HAJJI EP BEN CHABCHAOUB

holder of

TUNISIA Passport No. N285357

QID No. 28078801247

hereby change my name

from

HOUDA HAJJI EP BEN CHABCHAOUB

to

HOUDA HAJJI

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



US Visa Services System updated

The US embassy in Doha has announced the implementation of a new system for US visa appointments, payments, and courier services, effective from February 8.

"This update is part of our ongoing commitment to enhance the efficiency and user experience of our consular services," a statement said yesterday.

To facilitate this transition, certain services will be temporarily unavailable during the update period.

○ Visa Appointment Scheduling Website: Unavailable from February 5-7. Existing appointments will proceed as scheduled.

○ Fee Payment Services: Unavailable from February 4-7.

○ Call Centre Services: Unavailable from February 5-8.

○ Passport and Document Drop-off/Pick-up: Unavailable from February 5-8.

Services will resume through VFS at new locations starting from February 9.

For details on the new locations, please visit <https://qa.usembassy.gov/visas/>

The new visa scheduling system will be operational from February 9, and accessible at <https://qa.usembassy.gov/visas/>

For inquiries, please contact the consular section through the visa navigator at <https://qa.usembassy.gov/visas-navigator/>

Genesis, Hyundai and Jeep models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in collaboration with Skyline Automotive, has announced the recall of Genesis G70, Hyundai Elantra, and Hyundai Veloster models manufactured between 2017 and 2023 as some vehicles might experience warning lamp light up (DTC P0088) and high pressure fuel pump malfunction.

The ministry, in collaboration with United Cars Almana, also announced the recall of Jeep Wrangler and Gladiator 2023-2024 models because the Instrument Panel Cluster (IPC) may become blank, which leads to fail in displaying critical safety information, such as the speedometer or warning lights, increasing the risk of accidents.

The ministry urges all consumers to report any violations or breaches by contacting the Consumer Protection and Combatting Commercial Fraud Department, which receives complaints, suggestions, and inquiries through the following communication channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, ministry's accounts on social media: @mociqatar, ministry's mobile app: MO-CIQATAR available on iOS and Android devices.

West Bank's Jenin camp going in 'catastrophic direction': UNRWA

AFP
Geneva

The Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank is heading in a "catastrophic direction", the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said yesterday, adding that residents had "endured the impossible".

The Israeli military launched a major offensive in the West Bank on January 21 aimed at rooting out Palestinian armed groups from the Jenin area, which has long been a hotbed of militancy.

On Sunday, the army said that it had killed at least 50 fighters since it launched the operation, while the Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah said Israeli forces have killed 70 people in the territory since the start of the year.

The operation has also seen troops levelling buildings in a refugee camp adjacent to Jenin.

"The camp is going into a catastrophic direction," UNRWA spokeswoman Juliette Touma told reporters in Geneva.

"Large parts of the camp were completely destroyed in a series of detonations by the Israeli forces. It is estimated that 100 houses were destroyed or heav-



A Palestinian woman carries an aid box she received from an UNRWA distribution point, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

ily damaged," she said, speaking from Amman.

"The residents of this particular camp have endured the impossible."

She added: "This detonation that happened on Sunday was when children were supposed to go back to school."

"When it comes to UNRWA, 13 schools in the camp and the surrounding areas continue to be closed. That affected 5,000 kids in that area."

Touma said UNRWA's services inside Jenin camp have been interrupted for several months

and stopped completely in early December. UNRWA said it received no prior warning of the detonations, as contact between staff and Israeli authorities is no longer permitted.

After Israel accused UNRWA of providing cover for Hamas fighters, legislation severing ties with the agency came into force on Thursday – a move likely to hamper the agency's vital services after 15 months of war in Gaza.

The agency is banned from operating on Israeli soil, and contact between it and Israeli officials is also forbidden.

Erdogan hails Syria leader's 'commitment' to fight terrorism



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Syria's interim president Ahmed al-Sharaa shake hands during a joint press conference following their meeting at the Presidential Palace in Ankara, yesterday.

AFP
Ankara

Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday hailed Syria's Ahmed al-Sharaa for his "strong commitment" to fighting terror as the newly-installed interim president made his first official visit to Turkiye.

"I would like to express our satisfaction for the strong commitment my brother Ahmed al-Sharaa has shown in the fight against terrorism," he said at a joint news conference after the pair held talks in Ankara.

Turkiye was a key backer of Sharaa's rebels who ousted Syrian strongman Bashar al-

Assad on December 8.

It has repeatedly offered operational and military support to help Sharaa's new government fight against militant groups still operational in war-torn Syria.

Erdogan has repeatedly called for action to root out Islamic State (IS) group militants as well as Kurdish militants based in northeastern Syria whom Turkiye sees as a strategic threat over their ties to its domestic nemesis, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party).

"I told (Sharaa) we are ready to provide the necessary support to Syria in the fight against all kinds of terrorism, whether it be Daesh or the PKK," he said, using the Arabic acronym for IS.

Sudan paramilitaries shell hospital as violence rages nationwide

AFP
Port Sudan

Shelling by Sudanese paramilitaries killed five people just outside one of the last functioning hospitals in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman yesterday, with medical sources reporting escalating violence across the war-torn country.

A medical source in Al-Nao Hospital in Omdurman near Sudan's capital, requesting anonymity for safety reasons, said people volunteering at the facility were among the five dead in the attack.

"The shells landed in the garden adjacent to the hospital," the source said, blaming the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), at war with the regular army since April 2023.

Al-Nao Hospital, which is supported by medical charity Doctors without Borders (MSF), lies in an area controlled by the Sudanese army and has been repeatedly attacked since the start of the war.

Greater Khartoum has been one of the main battlegrounds of the struggle for power between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The fighting, which has already killed tens of thousands and uprooted more than 12 million people, has escalated in recent weeks as the army mounted an offensive

to wrest control of central Sudan and the capital itself.

The RSF has retreated from much of the central state of Al-Jazira but has launched repeated attacks on Khartoum, killing dozens of civilians.

While the army controls the country's east and north, the paramilitaries maintain their hold on nearly all of the western region of Darfur – a vast area the size of France and home to a quarter of Sudan's estimated 50 million people.

In South Darfur state capital Nyala, 1,200 kilometres away from Khartoum, witnesses said the military launched air strikes yesterday for the second day in a row. Some 200 kilometres north, RSF artillery rocked North Darfur state capital El-Fasher – the only major Darfur city not under paramilitary control – with "shells landing on the cattle market", a witness told AFP.

In the face of army victories in central Sudan, the RSF is likely to descend with all its might on El-Fasher in an attempt to consolidate its hold on Darfur, according to analysts.

Despite issuing an ultimatum last month for the army and allied militias to leave El-Fasher ahead of an offensive, the RSF has been repeatedly pushed back by army-allied groups.

But civilians have paid the price, with the paramilitaries regularly

shelling famine-stricken displacement camps around the city.

In the area around El-Fasher, famine has already taken hold in three displacement camps – Zamzam, Abu Shouk and Al-Salam – and is projected to expand to five more areas including the city itself by May, according to a UN-backed assessment.

Across North Darfur state, around two million people are facing extreme food insecurity, while 320,000 are already in famine conditions, according to UN estimates.

United Nations resident and humanitarian co-ordinator in Sudan Clementine Nkweta-Salami said that "the use of starvation as a weapon of war against innocent people in El-Fasher, North Darfur, is appalling." Attack on homes, markets and displacement camps were "a ruthless assault on human life", said Nkweta-Salami, the top UN official in Sudan, calling the escalating violence "relentless".

In South Kordofan state capital Kadugli, 700 kilometres southwest of Khartoum, at least 40 people were killed Monday by artillery fire that the army-aligned government blamed on an unaffiliated rebel group.

Two medical sources told AFP the shelling had come from "outside the city", where a faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu, is posted.

M23 fighters declare ceasefire in DRC's war-torn east

AFP
Goma

Rwandan-backed armed group M23 announced a humanitarian "ceasefire" from yesterday in DR Congo's perennially explosive east, days before a planned crisis meeting between the Congolese and Rwandan leaders.

The M23 and Rwandan troops last week seized Goma – the provincial capital of the mineral-rich North Kivu region that has been blighted by conflict from multiple armed groups for over three decades.

Fighting has stopped in the city, which is home to more than a million people, but clashes have spread to the neighbouring province of South Kivu, raising fears of an M23 advance to its capital Bukavu.

A political-military coalition of groups called the Alliance Fleuve Congo (River Congo Alliance), of which M23 is a member, said in a statement late Monday that it would implement "a ceasefire" from the next day "for humanitarian reasons".

It added that it had "no intention of taking control of Bukavu or other localities", despite the M23 having said last week that it wanted to "continue the march" to the Congolese capital Kinshasa.

In more than three years of fighting between the Rwanda-backed group and the Congolese army, half a dozen ceasefires and truces have been declared, before being systematically broken.

With fears of a regional conflagration spiralling, the Kenyan presidency announced on Monday that Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame would attend a joint sum-



Protesters from the Congolese community living in South Africa march to the European Union Delegation to voice concern about issues regarding the recent conflict in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Pretoria, South Africa, yesterday.

mit of the eight-country East African Community (EAC) and the 16-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the Tanzanian city of Dar es Salaam on Saturday.

A local source in Bukavu told AFP the city "remains calm for the moment", but information suggests the M23 was "reorganising itself with troop reinforcements and weapons to go to the front now that fighting has ceased in Goma".

The University of Goma called on students to come back to class on Monday, signalling a desire to return to normal in the city. At least 900 people were killed in the Goma clashes and 2,880 wounded, according to the UN's humanitarian body.

Tunisia sets sights on becoming world's top seawater therapy spot

AFP
Korbous

With a Mediterranean coastline, natural thermal springs, clement weather and affordability, Tunisia has become the world's second-largest destination for seawater-based treatments known as thalassotherapy.

Now, it is setting its sights on overtaking France to claim the top spot. "The main advantage of Tunisia is its coast and thalassotherapy," compared with neighbouring countries, said Mario Paolo, an Italian, at the Korbous thermal spa, perched on a hill an hour's drive from the capital, Tunis.

A 78-year-old retiree who has lived in Tunisia for the past five years, Paolo said he frequently visits Tunisian thalassotherapy centres "to get back in shape".

"Enjoying sea water and natural springs is not just leisure but also a therapy," Paolo said after a thyme and rosemary oil massage.

Korbous, a coastal town on the Cap Bon peninsula, has historically been one of Tunisia's hot spots for the therapy, which uses sea water and other marine resources.

Thalassotherapy is an "ancestral heritage" for Tunisians, "since



People visit Ain Atrous, a natural hot spring that flows into the sea in the thermal region of Korbous, in Tunisia's northeastern region of Nabl.

hydrotherapy has existed in Tunisia since antiquity, at the time of the Carthaginians and the Romans," Shahnez Guizani, the head of the National Office of Thermalism (ONTH), told AFP.

Other popular thalassotherapy destinations in the country include Sousse, Hammamet, Monastir, and Djerba, which Tunisian news agency TAP said was named the Mediterranean thalassotherapy capital in 2014 by the World Federation of Hydrotherapy and Climatotherapy.

Rouaa Machat, 22, said she travelled from France to Korbous

for a three-day wellness retreat.

"I'm here to enjoy the types of water this beautiful town offers," she said, referring to the use of seawater, spring water, and desalinated water for therapy.

"But I am also here for this," she added, grinning and pointing to the Korbous sea and mountains.

Customers mainly come for the quality of spring water, said Raja Haddad, a doctor who heads the thalassotherapy centre at the Royal Tulip Korbous Bay hotel.

Today, Tunisia boasts 60 thalassotherapy centres and 390 spas, 84% of which are located in



Guests bathe in a thermal pool at a spa in Korbous, in Tunisia's northeastern region of Nabl.

hotels, according to the ONTH.

Tourism accounts for seven percent of the country's GDP and provides nearly half a million jobs, according to official figures.

The sector has seen a decade of setbacks due to terrorist attacks and later the Covid-19 pandemic.

But it has been recovering again as the number of foreign visitors exceeded 10mn last year – a record for the country of 12mn people.

Guizani said thalassotherapy on its own draws about 1.2mn foreign visitors a year, with "70% coming from Europe, including 40 percent

from France". The industry generates approximately 200mn dinars (\$63mn) per year, she added.

That compares with a French thalassotherapy market valued at around 100mn euros last year, according to market research firm Businesscoot.

At a luxury hotel near Monastir, a thalassotherapy centre buzzes with customers despite the cold winter season.

Visitors have come from France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, among other countries.

"As soon as you arrive, you find palm trees and the sun," said Mo-

nique Dicrocco, a 65-year-old French tourist. "It's pure happiness, and it's also worth your money." "Here the therapy is much cheaper than in France, with 1,000 euros a week all inclusive instead of 3,000," she added.

Jean-Pierre Ferrante, 64, from Cannes, said he found "the quality of the water and the facilities just as good as in France".

Kaouter Meddeb, head of the thalassotherapy and spa centre at the Royal Elyssa Hotel in Monastir, said the number of clients has been growing lately.

Yet despite meeting international standards, the sector remains underappreciated in Tunisia, she said.

"There's a lack of communication and promotion," she added.

Experts say more investment is needed in infrastructure. This includes road improvements and air services, they say, as there are few low-cost flights.

But plans are already underway to develop eco-friendly thermal resorts in regions like Beni M'tir, a mountainous village in the northwest, and near Lake Ichkeul south of Bizerte, said Guizani.

"With all the advantages it has, Tunisia is poised to become the world leader in thalassotherapy," she added.



US judge extends block on Trump freeze of federal aid funding

Reuters
Washington

A US judge has extended a pause on the Trump administration's plan to freeze federal loans, grants and other financial assistance, saying it may have "run roughshod" over Congress's constitutional authority over government spending.

US District Judge Loren AliKhan in Washington wrote that a funding freeze outlined in a memo from the White House budget office last week would be "potentially catastrophic" for organisations that rely on federal funding to carry out their missions and provide services to the public.

Her ruling, issued at the request of several advocacy groups, meant the policy is now subject to two temporary restraining orders.

On Friday a federal judge in Rhode Island issued a similar order at the behest of Democratic attorneys general from 22 states and the District of Columbia.

AliKhan had last week ordered a short, administrative pause preventing the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) from moving forward with its policy while she considered whether to issue the longer temporary restraining order.

The OMB had said in its memo that the funding freeze was necessary to ensure funding complied with President Donald Trump's executive orders on immigration, climate change, diversity and other issues.

After first trying to clarify the funding pause, the OMB then fully withdrew its memo last Wednesday.

The Republican president's administration had argued that the withdrawal should have had the effect of ending the lawsuit before AliKhan by a group of advocacy organisations.

However, the judge, an appointee of Trump's Democratic predecessor Joe Biden, said a temporary restraining order was still necessary because funding problems remained and because there was nothing stopping the OMB from reissuing the policy.

She said "furthering the president's wishes cannot be a blank check for the OMB to do as it pleases".

The OMB's memo implicated as much

as \$3tn in financial assistance, she said, "a breathtakingly large sum of money to suspend practically overnight".

The policy appeared arbitrary and may have run afoul of Congress' authority over government spending under the US Constitution, the judge said.

"(The OMB memo) did not indicate when that freeze would end (if it was to end at all)," AliKhan wrote, adding: "And it attempted to wrest the power of the purse away from the only branch of government entitled to wield it."

Her order will remain in place while she considers whether to issue an even longer preliminary injunction.

The US Department of Justice, which is defending the Trump administration's policies in court, declined to comment.

During a hearing on Monday, a lawyer for the advocacy organisations said that some recipients of federal grants were still struggling to access funding despite the memo's withdrawal and the order issued on Friday by the Rhode Island judge.

"We know the policy remains in place," Kevin Friedl, a lawyer for the advocacy groups at the liberal-leaning group Democracy Forward, told AliKhan at the hearing.

A lawyer with the Justice Department, Daniel Schwei, argued that Trump retained the authority to shape funding priorities under executive orders that were not challenged in the lawsuit.

"The president is allowed to direct subordinate agencies and supervise their activities," Schwei told the judge.

Biden signs with talent agency CAA

Joe Biden has signed with the powerhouse talent agency CAA, joining its star-studded ranks of Hollywood actors and sports legends as the former US president explores what comes after the White House.

The Creative Artists Agency (CAA) said in an Instagram post on Monday that they had represented Biden from 2017 to 2020 following his eight-year term as vice-president.

"President Biden is one of America's most respected and influential voices in national and global affairs," said Richard Lovett, co-chairman of CAA, praising the former leader's "commitment to public service."

"We are profoundly honoured to partner with him again."

Biden had published his memoir, *Promise Me, Dad*, and launched a book tour that sold more than 85,000 tickets nationwide during his previous stint with the CAA, the agency said.

One of the world's largest talent agencies, the CAA's roster ranges from actor Meryl Streep and lifestyle mogul Martha Stewart to Japanese baseball star Shohei Ohtani.

According to trade publication *Variety*, it also represents the production company Higher Ground - fronted by Biden's former boss, ex-president Barack Obama and his wife Michelle. - **AFP**

FireAid benefit donations for LA top \$100mn

The star-studded FireAid benefit concerts brought in more than \$100mn for immediate relief efforts and long-term needs in Los Angeles, according to estimates from organisers yesterday.

More than 50mn viewers watched the shows across 28 streaming platforms, they said.

The concerts on Thursday were held at two arenas in nearby Inglewood and featured more than 30 artists from Lady Gaga to Stevie Nicks and Jelly Roll.

In early January, fast-moving wildfires killed 29 people and destroyed large sections of the Altadena and Pacific Palisades neighbourhoods in Los Angeles, displacing tens of thousands of people.

FireAid is still accepting online donations, organisers said. - **Reuters**

FBI agents sue to protect identities

AFP/Reuters
Washington

Two separate groups of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) employees sued the US Justice Department (DOJ) yesterday, seeking to protect the identities of those agents and others who investigated supporters of Donald Trump for storming the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Participants in the riots who were pardoned by Trump on his first day in office have taken to social media to identify prosecutors and agents who worked on their cases.

Trump pardoned about 1,500 supporters hours after taking office on January 20.

The two lawsuits against the Justice Department were both filed ahead of a 3pm deadline imposed by Acting Deputy Attorney-General Emil Bove, ordering FBI leadership to turn over a list of every FBI employee who helped with the January 6 investigation.

Acting FBI Director Brian Driscoll told staff the list would encompass thousands of employees, including himself.

A person familiar with the matter said the FBI handed over the list, which identifies those involved in the January 6 cases by employee ID number, and not by name.

It was not clear what the Justice Department planned to do with it, and a DOJ spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In the first class-action lawsuit, a group of anonymous FBI employees said the Justice Department was trying to identify agents to be fired or otherwise punished.

"Plaintiffs reasonably fear that all or parts of this list might be published by allies of President Trump, thus placing themselves and their families in immediate danger of retribution by the now pardoned and at-large Jan. 6 convicted felons," the lawsuit says.

The second lawsuit, filed by the FBI Agents Association, likewise asked the court to protect employees' identities.

Roughly 140 police officers were assaulted during the attack, with some sprayed with chemical irritants and others struck with pipes, poles and other weapons.

A Justice Department spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Flights carrying migrants to Guantanamo 'underway'

The first US flights carrying detained migrants to America's notorious Guantanamo military base in Cuba were underway yesterday as President Donald Trump's administration cracks down on illegal migration, the White House said.

Guantanamo is primarily known as a detention centre for suspects accused of terrorism-related offences, but the base also has a history of being used to hold migrants, and Trump last week ordered the preparation of a 30,000-person "migrant facility" there.

"Today, the first flights from the United States to Guantanamo Bay with illegal migrants are underway," Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Fox Business.

Trump has launched what his second administration is casting as a major effort to combat illegal migration, trumpeting immigration raids, arrests and deportations on military aircraft.

The president has made the issue a priority on the international stage as well, threatening Colombia with sanctions and massive tariffs for turning back two planeloads of deportees.

The Guantanamo prison was opened in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and has been used to indefinitely hold detainees seized



This image obtained from the US Department of Defence shows US Marines boarding a KC-130J Super Hercules at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, as they deploy to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in Cuba to support Migrant Holding Operations. - **AFP**

during the wars and other operations that followed.

The conditions there have prompted consistent outcry from rights groups, and UN experts have condemned it as a site of "unparalleled notoriety".

Democratic presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden both sought to close the facility, but Congress has opposed efforts to shutter Guantanamo and it remains open to this day.

It still holds 15 people incarcerated for militant activity or terrorism-related offences, among them several accused plotters of the 9/11 attacks, including self-proclaimed mas-termind Khalid Sheikh Moham-med.

However, migrants will be detained in a separate part of the base.

According to US Southern Command, there are some 300 American military personnel at Guantanamo supporting "illegal alien holding operations".

The base has for decades been used to hold Caribbean asylum-seekers and refugees caught at sea, and was used in the 1990s to house tens of thousands of Haitians and Cubans who fled crises in their homelands.

They were accommodated in tent cities, with many eventually sent home after being held at Guantanamo for years.

Thousands of undocumented migrants have been arrested

El Salvador offers to house 'criminals' deported from the US

Reuters/AFP
San Salvador/Washington

El Salvador has offered to house in its jails "dangerous criminals" from anywhere in the world deported by the United States, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said after lengthy talks with the Central American country's leader.

Rubio, who is on his first overseas tour as the US top diplomat, is seeking support from countries in the region for the Trump administration's attempts to deport large numbers of migrants.

He met with El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele and senior officials at Bukele's residence on Lake Coatepeque outside the capital for almost three hours, where they agreed to go beyond El Salvador's acceptance of its own deported citizens.

"Any ... illegal immigrant in the United States who's a dangerous criminal - MS-13, Tren de Aragua, whatever it may be - he has offered his jails, so we can send them and he will put them in his jails," Rubio said, referring to members of criminal gangs.

Yesterday Rubio acknowledged

potential legal issues around El Salvador's offer to take in American prisoners, but said the proposal was worth considering.

"Obviously, we'll have to study it on our end. There are obviously legalities involved," Rubio told reporters a day afterward in Costa Rica. "We have a constitution, we have all sorts of things, but it's a very generous offer."

"No one's ever made an offer like that, to outsource at a fraction of the cost at least some of the most dangerous and violent criminals that we have in the United States," Rubio said. "But obviously the administration will have to make a decision."

As well as smoothing the way for the US to send migrants back to their own countries, Rubio is trying to secure "third country" agreements, in which nations accept citizens of other countries that will not accept deportees.

Cuba and Venezuela, for instance, have frosty relations with the US and have in the past limited the number of deportees they will accept, although the Trump says Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro has agreed to accept back his country's citizens.

Bukele also offered to house



This file picture shows a prison warden at a prison sector, during a tour in the 'Terrorism Confinement Centre' prison complex, which according to El Salvador's President, Nayib Bukele, is designed to hold 40,000 inmates, in Tecoluca, El Salvador. - **Reuters**

criminals who are US citizens or legal residents, Rubio said, although it was unclear whether the US would take up that offer.

More details of the agreement would be forthcoming, he added.

US citizens cannot legally be deported from the United States.

The US State Department's website notes that prison condi-

tions in El Salvador are "harsh and dangerous".

"Overcrowding constitutes a serious threat to prisoners' health and lives," the website says. "In many facilities, provisions for sanitation, potable water, ventilation, temperature control, and lighting are inadequate or non-existent."

Bukele said in a post on X that he had offered the US "the opportunity to outsource part of its prison system".

"We are willing to take in only convicted criminals (including convicted US citizens) into our mega-prison ... in exchange for a fee," he wrote shortly after Rubio's announcement, referring to El Salvador's so-called terrorism confinement centre.

"The fee would be relatively low for the US but significant for us, making our entire prison system sustainable."

Bukele is seen by the Trump administration as a key ally in its migration efforts in the region.

The Salvadoran president has launched an unflinching security crackdown in his country, arresting more than 80,000 people, and bringing the number of homicides down sharply.

His policies are credited by Washington with reducing the number of Salvadorans seeking to enter the US illegally.

Since taking office on January 20, President Donald Trump has stepped up the number of migrants the US deports to Latin America, including using military planes for repatriation flights.

Experts challenge baby killings conviction of UK nurse Lucy Letby

Reuters
London

Lawyers for British nurse Lucy Letby yesterday launched a new bid to overthrow her conviction for killing seven babies, after a group of international medical experts who reexamined evidence used at her trial concluded none had actually been murdered. Letby was convicted of killing the newborns and attempting to murder eight more between June 2015 and June 2016 while working in the neonatal unit of the Countess of Chester Hospital in Chester, northern England. As Britain's

worst serial child killer of modern times, she is serving 15 full life terms in prison and was told she would never be released. Letby, 35, has maintained her innocence throughout but has been refused permission to appeal against her convictions. However, since her trial, medical specialists and other supporters have questioned her guilt, suggesting that expert evidence presented by the prosecution to the jury was flawed. Her lawyer Mark McDonald said new medical findings from the international experts "demolished" the case against her. "There is overwhelming evidence that the conviction is unsafe," he

- **Lucy Letby found guilty of murdering 7 babies**
- **Supporters say nurse's conviction is unsound**
- **Experts query medical evidence used at trial**
- **Letby's previous appeals have been rejected**

said. "If (the experts) are correct, no crime was committed." He has submitted a preliminary application to the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), which examines potential miscarriages of justice. It said work was underway to assess the filing. At her trial, prosecutors said Letby had killed the five baby boys and two baby girls by injecting the infants with insulin or air, or force-feeding them milk.

But University of Toronto Professor Emeritus and neonatal doctor Shoo Lee, who says his research was misused at the trial, told a media conference in London that a group of 14 international experts had examined the medical evidence and concluded it did not show that any babies had been attacked. Instead there had been medical mistakes and failures at the hospital unit. "In summary, ladies

and gentlemen, we did not find any murders," Lee said. "In all cases, death or injury was due to natural causes or just bad medical care." A spokesperson for the CCRC said it was not possible for the commission, whose job is not to determine guilt or innocence, to say how long its review would take. "We are aware that there has been a great deal of speculation and commentary surrounding Lucy Letby's case, much of it from parties with only a partial view of the evidence," a CCRC spokesperson said. In the wake of her conviction in 2023, the government set up a public inquiry to examine how the murders went undetected and

to review the hospital's response to concerns raised by doctors about Letby before her arrest. Cheshire Police are also carrying out two further investigations into Letby, and in December said they had questioned her about the deaths of other children. Police say the guilty verdict against Letby was reached after a trial that had lasted almost a year and following more than a month of jury deliberations. "The case was subsequently reviewed by the Court of Appeal, where three judges unanimously rejected Letby's claim that the evidence was flawed and dismissed her leave to appeal on all grounds," the force said in a statement.

UK to host EU chiefs for summit: Downing Street

AFP
London

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer will welcome European Union chiefs to Britain in May for the first of regular summits designed to reset Britain's relationship with the bloc, Downing Street announced yesterday. Starmer will host European Council president Antonio Costa and European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen on May 19, a spokesman for the British premier told reporters. He added it would be the first of "annual summits" as the Labour leader seeks closer relations with European neighbours following

the rancour of Britain's 2020 departure from the bloc under the previous Conservative government. "The first UK-EU summit will provide an opportunity to make further progress on areas which will deliver tangible benefits for the people of the UK and the EU and further strengthen the unique relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union," the spokesman said. The announcement came a day after Starmer, elected to office last July, became the first UK premier since Brexit to attend a major gathering of all 27 EU leaders in Brussels on Monday. Starmer has vowed to pursue more friendly relations with the European Union

and hopes to strike new agreements with the bloc to help fire up a stagnant British economy. The prime minister has laid out strict red lines however, while the EU has its own demands, raising questions about what exactly the two entities will be able to achieve. Starmer has vowed Britain will not return to the single market or customs union and has ruled out signing up to freedom of movement. He does want improvements to the existing Trade and Co-operation Agreement between the UK and the EU that is due for renewal in 2026. That could include a new veterinary pact to smooth the export of British agricultural goods, while a deal on mutual recognition of pro-

fessional qualifications has also been suggested. The European Commission, meanwhile, has touted the possibility of a youth mobility programme, however the British government has publicly ruled that out. It is more open to joining a pan-European and North African customs scheme which allows for the tariff-free trade of some goods. Access to British waters for fisherman from European countries is also expected to be a sticking point in negotiations. Likely to be top of the agenda at the summit is a proposed defence and security pact which experts view is something reasonably straightforward to agree upon.

Mauritius welcomes prospect of Trump examining Chagos deal

Reuters
Port Louis

Mauritius welcomes the prospect of US President Donald Trump examining a deal reached by Britain and Mauritius over the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, which house a US-British military base, the island nation's prime minister said yesterday. Britain struck the agreement in October to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, while

retaining control under a 99-year lease of the military base on Diego Garcia, the largest island of the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. However, Mauritian Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, who was elected in November, has questioned the deal agreed by his predecessor and it is yet to be ratified. Newly appointed US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has also raised concerns, saying the deal poses a threat to US security, given China's influence in the region. Ramgoolam told lawmakers in

parliament that it would be "better that Trump has a look on the agreement. President Trump is not a wolf. Let him see if the agreement is good or not". "The president has just been elected. I am not in a position to impose a timetable on him. He will look on the issues when he has time," he said while answering questions from opposition lawmakers on the status of the deal. Britain has said it is waiting for the new US administration to review the agreement. Prime Minister Keir Starmer discussed the matter

with Ramgoolam last week, with both leaders reiterating their commitment to a deal, according to a British readout of the call. When Mauritius became independent from Britain in the 1960s, London retained control of the Chagos Islands and forcibly displaced up to 2,000 people to make way for the Diego Garcia base. Some Chagossians have also criticised the negotiations, saying they cannot endorse an agreement they were not involved in and have said they will protest against it.

Modi invited to meet with Trump next week: official

US President Donald Trump has invited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the White House next week, a White House official said, hours after a US military plane departed to return deported migrants to the country. Trump spoke with Modi on Jan 27, when he discussed immigration and stressed the importance of India buying more American-made security equipment and fair bilateral trading ties. India, a strategic partner of the United States in its efforts to counter China, is keen to enhance trade relations with the US and make it easier for its citizens to get skilled worker visas. It is also keen to avoid tariffs that Trump has threatened in the past, citing India's high tariffs on US products. The United States is India's largest trading partner and two-way trade between the two countries surpassed \$118bn in 2023/24, with India posting a trade surplus of \$32bn. — Reuters

Brush with Mona Lisa



A visitor looks at an image of the famous painting Mona Lisa, while enjoying the interactive immersive experience art show Da Vinci Genius, delving into the life and work of Italian polymath Leonardo da Vinci in Mumbai.

Ordinary Chinese stoic in the face of escalating trade war with US

AFP
Shanghai

After China announced retaliatory tariffs against the United States, walkers along Shanghai's waterfront were stoic yesterday in face of both the cold and the prospect of an escalating trade war.

The tariffs on US energy, vehicles and equipment were unveiled minutes after additional levies on Chinese goods announced Saturday by US President Donald Trump came into effect. Tariffs on a wider range of goods were announced by Chinese authorities yesterday. Trump's move was the latest in a trade confrontation between the global superpowers that started

eight years ago, in his first term. Out for a stroll on the last day of China's Lunar New Year holiday, many who talked to AFP seemed largely unfazed by the news. "Now with the regular trade war, such as the restrictions on semiconductors, I think it is good (for China)," said a 48-year-old man surnamed Nian. "We will be autonomous - we will be better," he said, using the ex-

ample of Chinese AI firm DeepSeek, which made headlines recently with a chatbot which can match its American competitors seemingly at a fraction of the cost. US export controls on high-tech chips may have inadvertently fuelled its success, analysts have said, spurring the firm to develop clever ways to overcome them. Nian said that the Chinese econ-

omy could weather the stormy relationship with Washington. "People's lives are basically unaffected, and the domestic demand of so many people (in China) is completely enough," he said. The government has been trying to boost domestic consumption, which has remained stubbornly sluggish post-Covid, dragging on growth. Staring across the similarly slow-

moving grey waters of the Huangpu river, 36-year-old Zhou said he thought most Chinese were nevertheless "relatively confident" about the economy long-term. But "when there is this type of trade war... the most fundamental harm is actually to the interests of normal people", he warned, gesturing to his iPhone as an example of a product he said could be affected eventually.



Catherine, Princess of Wales walks with National Portrait Gallery Director, Victoria Siddall, as she leaves after launching a new project from The Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood, at the National Portrait Gallery in central London yesterday.

Myanmar junta bans possible conscripts from foreign travel

AFP
Yangon

Myanmar's embattled junta has banned anyone eligible for military conscription from leaving the country without permission, as it seeks to shore up its forces fighting rebel groups opposed to its rule. The junta has lost control of swathes of the country to ethnic minority armed groups and other opposition forces in the civil war triggered by its coup d'etat four years ago. A long-dormant conscription law was enforced last year as the army reeled from a string of battlefield defeats to ethnic armed groups and civilian "People's Defence Forces" seeking to oust it from power. A bylaw passed late last month that has only just come to light imposes new restrictions on those eligible to be called up - men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27. "The person who receives the order shall not be allowed to leave for foreign countries without obtaining the permission of the Central Body," section 51 of the bylaw says. The rule applies to those who have been called up and also those waiting for the outcome of appeals for exemption, reduction, or postponement of military service. Breaking the rules can bring a jail sentence of up to three years. The military service law, authored

by a previous junta in 2010 but brought into force only in February last year, requires those called up to serve for at least two years. It also has a stipulation that during a state of emergency, the terms of service can be extended up to five years, and those ignoring a summons to serve can be jailed for the same period. Myanmar has been under a state of emergency since soon after a February 2021 coup, with the junta announcing the latest six-month extension on Friday. Rights groups estimate tens of thousands of young people have fled Myanmar to avoid being called up to the deeply unpopular military. The recent restrictions have affected workplaces in Yangon by driving their employees out of the country, said a senior employee of a private company in Yangon who asked not to be named. "At least six colleagues have resigned from work since the law was imposed," he told AFP. "I worry when they will knock on my door and grab me from home," he said, adding he was looking for a way to leave the country and support his family from abroad. The bloody multi-sided conflict triggered when the junta overthrew the government of Aung San Suu Kyi has left more than 6,000 civilians dead, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

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

Tariff metrics: The ways to achieve Trump’s new plans

Investors across the financial world are weighing the impact of escalating trade war concerns after China’s retaliatory tariffs on the US, even after President Donald Trump agreed to pause tariffs on Canada and Mexico.

Trump has long spoken against the high trade deficit with Canada, Mexico and China that together stands at more than \$480bn.

He has also ramped up his tariff threats to the European Union.

Scott Bessent, Trump’s treasury secretary, provided clues about how his boss might employ new tariffs during his confirmation hearing in early January.

Bessent, a former hedge fund manager who helped his former boss George Soros bet against the currencies of other countries, told senators that people should expect Trump to use tariffs in three ways: to remedy unfair trade practices (which Trump has said would revitalise American industry); to raise revenue for the federal budget (important to help pay for Trump’s plans to extend his 2017 tax cuts), and to use as a lever in negotiations with foreign powers in place of sanctions, which Trump believes have been overused.

Trump has talked about using tariffs to revitalise local manufacturing and stop the US getting “ripped off” by other countries due to trade imbalances.

He’s floated the idea of using a mix of tariffs and incentives such as expedited permitting approval as a way to entice companies to build their facilities in the US.

During his first presidency, he imposed several rounds of tariffs on Chinese goods, the impacts of which are still being assessed.

Income from tariffs could help pay for the tax cuts promised by Trump. He wants to extend reductions in income taxes that were approved in 2017 during his first presidency, many of which are due to expire at the end of 2025.

Trump might use tariffs in three ways: to remedy unfair trade practices, to raise revenue for the federal budget, and to use as a lever in negotiations with foreign powers in place of sanctions

He’s even floated proposals for expanding these tax breaks, for example by exempting tips and social security earnings from taxation. He also aims to slash the corporate tax rate to 15% from 21%.

These measures are expected to lead to a loss in government revenue of \$4.6tn over 10 years. Trump’s tariff hikes, if implemented in full, could bring in as much as \$2.5tn to \$3tn over that same period of time, according to Bessent.

Trump has also become sceptical of sanctions because they drive other countries away from the dollar, and sees tariffs as a way to gain leverage in negotiations, according to Bessent.

Trump’s brief January standoff with Colombia — in which he threatened to impose tariffs over repatriation flights for undocumented migrants — provided a glimpse of Trump’s strategy.

For a few hours, it seemed that a trade war between the US and one of its closest allies in Latin America was inevitable.

Then Trump pulled back on his threat after an agreement was reached between the two countries.

Trade between China and the US — the world’s two largest economies — is vast, totalling more than \$530bn in the first 11 months of 2024, according to Washington.

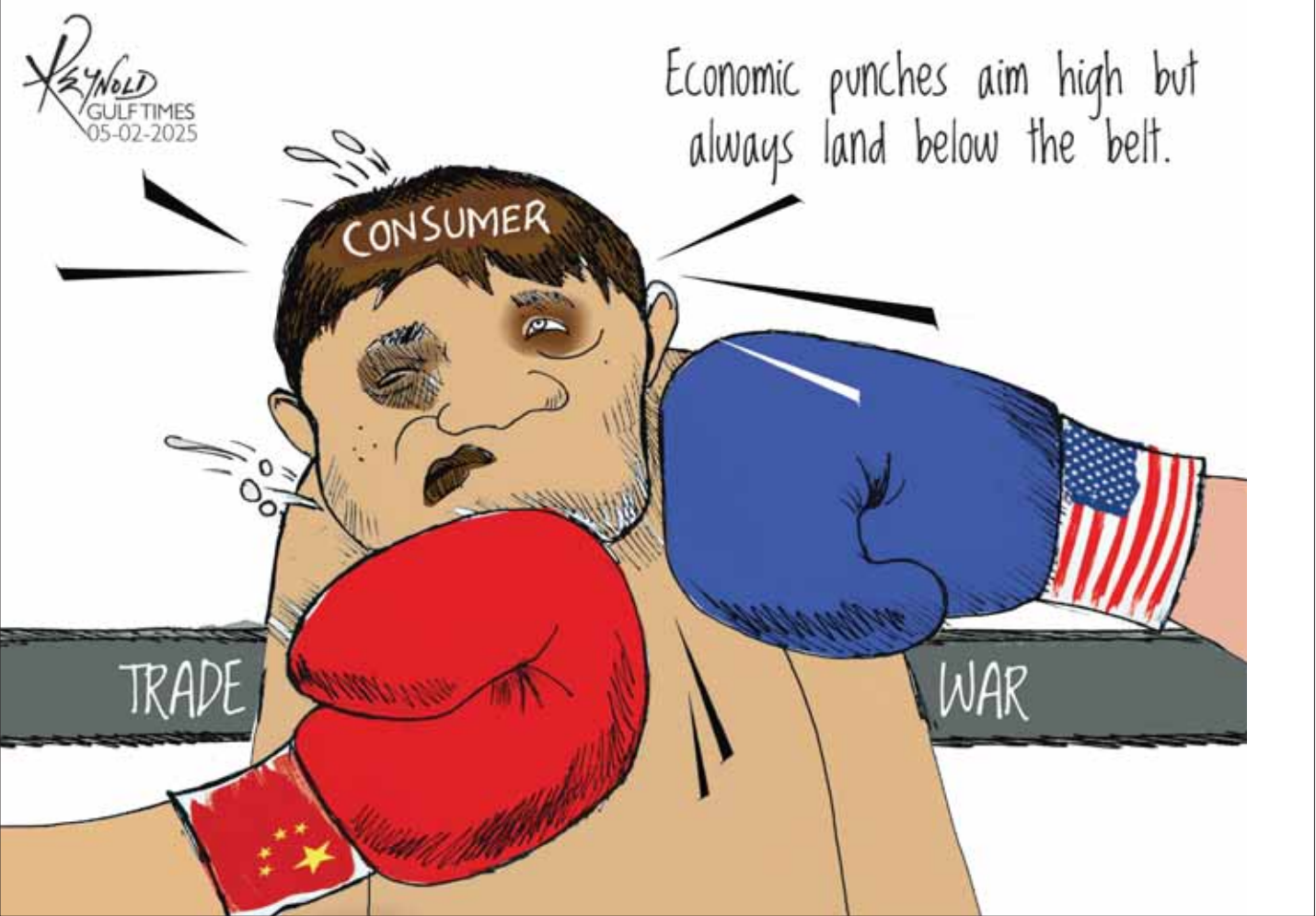
Over that same period, sales of Chinese goods to the US totalled more than \$400bn, second only to Mexico.

According to the Peterson Institute of International Economics, China is the dominant supplier of goods from electronics and electrical machinery to textiles and clothing.

But a yawning trade imbalance — \$270.4bn for January to November last year — has long raised hackles in Washington.

In February 2019, the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco estimated that the tariffs were adding 0.1 percentage point to US consumer price inflation and 0.4 percentage point to a metric that measures the costs for businesses to invest.

Trump said on Sunday the sweeping tariffs that he has imposed on Mexico, Canada and China may cause “some pain” for Americans, as Wall Street and the largest US trading partners signalled hope that the trade war would not last long.



Trump eyes obscure 18th century wartime law for deportations

By Ted Hesson and Kristina Cooke
Washington

President Donald Trump is set to test the limits of his immigration crackdown by invoking a wartime law to deport immigrants alleged to be gang members without court hearings, a broad authority that could supercharge his mass deportation push and potentially sweep in people not charged with crimes.

After taking office, Trump ordered military and immigration officials to be ready by February 3 to implement the 1798 Alien Enemies Act, last used to justify internment camps for people of Japanese, German and Italian descent during World War Two. The move — which would almost certainly face legal challenges — could allow him to bypass due process rights and rapidly remove migrants.

Trump, a Republican, stormed back into the White House promising to deport millions of immigrants in the US illegally — an action he said was necessary after high levels of illegal immigration under Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump issued a flurry of executive actions to redirect military resources to support the mass deportation effort and empowered US immigration officers to make more arrests, including at schools, churches and hospitals — even though those specific measures are unpopular and highly contested by civil and immigrant rights groups.

But even with Trump’s sweeping early actions, his administration will have to contend with overwhelmed immigration courts where asylum cases can take years to resolve. Trump expanded a fast-track deportation process known as expedited removal, but it only applies to those in the US for two years or less and still gives migrants the ability to claim asylum.

The Alien Enemies Act could allow Trump to rapidly deport migrants deemed part of an “invasion or predatory incursion” — a novel use of a law previously only invoked in wartime. Republicans frequently refer to illegal immigration as an invasion and portray migrants as dangerous criminals and “military-aged”.

The White House said on Jan 20 that it was beginning a process to designate criminal cartels and gangs, including the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, as terrorist organisations and to use the Alien Enemies Act to deport alleged gang members.

Hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans arrived in the US during Biden’s presidency, many via legal humanitarian pathways, and deporting them has been challenging due to frosty US-Venezuela relations. On Saturday, Trump said Venezuela had agreed to accept all deportees, but provided few details.

One Trump official who requested anonymity to discuss plans told Reuters in November that the administration would have “a willingness to be creative” when it came to unlocking new enforcement powers.

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

Ken Cuccinelli, a top Homeland Security official during Trump’s first term, expects the use of the Alien Enemies Act would face legal challenges but said the administration should try.

“He would have established, for all time in the future, the presidential authority to utilise that statute in that fashion,” Cuccinelli said.

Opponents argue the law cannot be used simply to step up immigration enforcement outside of an actual conflict.

“Desperate families coming to our border to seek refuge do not constitute an invasion by a foreign government within the meaning of the law,” said Lee Gelernt, a leading attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which has put up legal challenges to many of Trump’s previous moves.

Democratic lawmakers in the US House and Senate reintroduced a bill in January that would repeal the Alien Enemies Act, pointing to its use in the internment of Americans and arguing it violates civil and individual rights.

“We cannot allow antiquated laws to continue enabling discriminatory practices that harm immigrant communities,” Representative Ilhan Omar said in a January 22 statement related to the bill.

The Trump administration is pushing to ramp up detention space, a move that could work in conjunction with the Alien Enemies Act. Trump last week ordered the expansion of a migrant detention site in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to hold up to 30,000 people. Military officials said they would set up a detention site on a space base in Aurora, Colorado, a city Trump has portrayed as controlled by migrant gangs despite pushback from local leaders.

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) stepped up arrests last week, picking up about 1,000 people per day — three times the daily average last year.

The agency has funding to hold an average of 41,500 migrants this year and currently has about 40,000 in custody, according to its figures.

US immigration courts, however, had a backlog of 3.6mn cases at the end of fiscal year 2024, according to the Congressional Research Service, a jam that could hamper deportations.

“Unless he figures out a way to bypass the immigration courts, mass deportation is an impossibility,” said John Sandweg, a former acting ICE director under Barack Obama. “But if Alien Enemies is allowed to go into effect, then mass deportation becomes a potential reality.” Despite his hardline rhetoric, Trump in his first term deported fewer people than Obama, his Democratic predecessor. Biden deported more in fiscal year 2024 than Trump during any single year of his 2017-2021 presidency.

Trump said during his January 20 inaugural speech that he would invoke the Alien Enemies Act “to use the full and immense power of federal and state law enforcement” to target criminals and designate criminal cartels as terrorist organisations.

However, he declined to take those actions right away, instead kicking off a two-week process to prepare for potential implementation.

The more deliberate strategy is a departure from his first term, when he blocked travellers from majority-Muslim countries and caused chaos in airports worldwide.

George Fishman, a former Trump Homeland Security official, said the administration was wise not to immediately implement the most far-reaching enforcement authorities, which he said could make them more likely to prevail legally before the conservative-leaning Supreme Court.

“It may take a little bit longer,” he said, but doing it in this way “will most likely lead to success at the Supreme Court.”



US President Donald Trump gestures to US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff (left) as he signs an executive order to create a US sovereign wealth fund, in the Oval Office of the White House, on Monday. (AFP)

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Sweden school for adults shooting leaves 10 dead

Reuters
Orebro

Around 10 people have been killed in a shooting at an adult education centre, Swedish police said, the deadliest attack to take place in Sweden on what the prime minister said was a “painful day” for the country.

The gunman is believed to be among those killed and a search is continuing at the school for other possible victims, the local police chief told a press conference. The perpetrator’s motive was not immediately known.

“We know that 10 or so people have been killed here today. The reason that we can’t be more exact currently is that the extent of the incident is so large,” local police chief Roberto Eid Forest told reporters.

Forest said police believed the gunman had acted alone and that they did not currently suspect terrorism as a motive, though he cautioned that much remained unknown. He said the suspected gunman had not previously been known to police.

“We have a big crime scene, we have to complete the searches we are conducting in the school. There are a number of investigative steps we are taking: a profile of the perpetrator, witness interviews... Obviously, it’s a significant amount of work,” he said.

Police said they had opened an investigation into murder, arson and an aggravated weapons offence and that the search for possible further victims had continued into the evening.

The shooting took place in Orebro, some 200km west of Stockholm, at the Risbergska school for adults who did not complete their formal education or failed to get the grades to continue to higher education. It is located on a campus that also houses schools for children.

“It is a very painful day for the whole of Sweden,” Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said on X.

“My thoughts are (also) with all of those whose normal school day was turned into fear. Being locked up in a classroom fearing for your life is a nightmare no one should have to experience.”

Maria Pegado, 54, a teacher at the school, said someone threw

open the door to her classroom just after lunch break and shouted to everyone to get out.

“I took all my 15 students out into the hallway and we started running,” she told Reuters by phone. “Then I heard two shots but we made it out. We were close to the school entrance.”

“I saw people dragging injured out, first one, then another. I realised it was very serious,” she said.

A hospital spokesperson told Reuters that out of five patients admitted at the Orebro University Hospital, one had light injuries while four were operated on. Two of the latter were out of surgery and stable while one had serious injuries.

Police said students had been kept indoors at the school that was targeted and at other schools nearby for their safety. Police later began evacuating those who had taken shelter.

Sweden has been struggling with a wave of shootings and bombings caused by an endemic gang crime problem but fatal attacks at schools are rare.

Ten people were killed in seven incidents of deadly violence at



Police officers work at the scene of the Risbergska School in Orebro yesterday following reports of a serious violent crime. (AFP)

schools between 2010 and 2022, according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

In one of the highest-profile crimes of the past decade, a 21-year-old masked assailant driven by racist motives killed a teaching assistant and a boy and wounded two others in 2015.



Trump Junior accused of illegal duck hunting near Venice

Donald Trump Jr (pictured), the eldest son of US President Donald Trump, broke Italian and European Union environmental protection laws when he hunted ducks near Venice in December, according to two Italian Green party lawmakers.

Andrea Zanoni, a member of the Veneto regional assembly, and Luana Zanella, a national parliamentarian, filed two separate parliamentary questions urging regional and national authorities to take action against the alleged offence.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Zanoni said he had seen footage of Trump Jr hunting in a “Natura 2000” EU conservation zone in the Venice lagoon, standing near a dead ruddy shelduck, a protected species.

“The video shows Trump Jr with a ruddy shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) in the foreground, a duck that is very rare in all of Europe and protected by the EU Birds Directive and by the Italian law on the protection of wild fauna... The killing or holding of this animal is punishable by law,” Zanoni said.

Hunting in Italy is legal, but strictly regulated.

In the nearly 6-minute video Zanoni referred to, Trump Jr can be seen on a duck hunting trip in marshlands near Venice promoted by Field Ethos, an outdoors activities brand he co-founded.

“Lots of wigeon, teal (ducks),” he says in the video, describing his hunting spoils. He then says he also caught “a rather uncommon duck for the area, not even sure what it is in English”, before concluding: “Incredible shoot”.

Andy Surabian, a spokesman for Trump Jr, said the hunting party all had proper permits, were hunting in a legally allowed area, and it was unclear how the duck in question was killed.

“Don takes following all rules, regulations and conservation on his hunts very seriously and plans on fully cooperating with any investigation,” Surabian said in a statement.

A voice-over in the Field Ethos video says the expedition took place on private land, and that hunting there occurs no more than once a week and that precautions are taken to respect the local environment.

That video was not dated, although a shorter version was posted on YouTube by Field Ethos on Dec 31, 2024. Italian media reported Trump Jr was in Venice in December with his girlfriend.

Environment Minister Gilberto Pichetto Fratin was quoted as saying by ANSA news agency that he was waiting for a report about the alleged incident after being made aware of it from press reports.

French premier set to survive no-trust vote

AFP
Paris

French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou is expected yesterday to survive a no-confidence vote in parliament, winning some breathing space after less than two months in office but by no means ensuring long-term survival.

Bayrou, a veteran centrist named by President Emmanuel Macron in December to end months of political crisis, on Monday used a controversial constitutional article to ram his cost-cutting budget through parliament without a vote.

But the use of this mechanism, article 49.3, allows the opposition to put forward a no-confidence motion and the bid to topple the government was duly proposed by the hard-left France Unbowed, backed by the Communists and the Greens, to be voted today.

But while Bayrou is nowhere near having a majority in the National Assembly, the Socialists and far-right National Rally (RN) both said they would not back the no-confidence motion.

This gives Bayrou the numbers to survive and see through the budget. But it is unlikely to be the only challenge to his shaky administration in the coming months.

Bayrou, a keen historian who has written a book on his hero French king Henri IV assassinated in Paris in 1610, is well versed in how political ambition can suddenly come to an end.

“Passive support from both the Socialists and Marine Le Pen’s far-right for Bayrou will end once a 2025 budget is fully enacted in the next few days,” risk analysis firm Eurasia Group said, giving a 70-percent chance that the government will “fall in the next few months”.

Jordan Bardella, RN party leader, said his party did not intend to back the no-confidence



French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou attends a session of questions to the government at The National Assembly, France’s lower house parliament, in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

vote adding while “it’s a bad budget... we need a budget”.

“We need to avoid uncertainty because many of our fellow citizens... are extremely worried about possible long-term instability,” he said.

Socialist leader Olivier Faure said his party decided against voting to topple the government over the budget, as it would only have resulted in France having “a prime minister further to the right”, or even “the resignation of a head of state”.

“We chose to give France a budget,” he told the France Inter radio station. The move by the Socialists is a major boost for Bayrou that could mark the end of a broad left-wing alliance including the Socialists and LFI party that had endured since the election campaign. But in a symbolic move, the party leadership decided Monday to propose a separate no-confidence motion after Bayrou referred to migrants “flooding” France, using terminology previously used by the far right.

However, this has little chance of passing as it is expected to be rejected by all right-wing parties.

Bayrou’s predecessor Michel

Warming threatens to expand area of the world too hot for humans

AFP
Paris

Extreme heat will reach dangerous levels – even for younger people – across an area equivalent to the size of the United States if Earth’s global warming hits 2C, scientists warned yesterday.

Climate change is driving an increasing number of deadly heatwaves across the world, exposing a growing number of people to conditions that test the limits of human endurance.

Last year, more than 1,300 people died at the hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia where temperatures hit 51.8C (125 degrees Fahrenheit).

For this study, published in the journal *Nature Reviews Earth and Environment*, researchers looked at global warming and the effects of searing heat on the human body.

They found a significant increase in the area of the world potentially exposed to unsafe temperatures, with people in North Africa and South Asia most at risk.

They considered both dangerous and unsurvivable heat levels – where the body’s core temperature increases to 42C within six hours.

The study concluded that between 1994 and 2023, heat and humidity reached unsafe levels for people aged under 60 in areas equivalent to about two percent of global land area.

For more vulnerable older people, that rose to about 20% of land area.

Lead author Tom Matthews said the research highlights the “potentially deadly consequences” of the Earth’s average temperature rising 2C above pre-

industrial levels. The Paris climate agreement, an internationally binding treaty, aims to limit warming to “well below” 2C and preferably to 1.5C.

Last year was the first to exceed 1.5C on average.

With warming of 2C, researchers found the amount of landmass that would become unsafe for younger adults would triple, to about 6%. Over 60s would be at risk in about a third of the planet’s landmass.

Unsurvivable thresholds, so far only exceeded briefly for over 60s in the hottest regions on the planet, could also affect younger people in hot regions with very high levels of global warming.

“In such conditions, prolonged outdoor exposure – even for those in the shade, subject to a strong breeze and well hydrated – would be expected to cause lethal heatstroke,” said Matthews, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Geography at King’s College London.

Heat stress occurs when the body’s natural cooling systems are overwhelmed, causing symptoms ranging from dizziness and headaches to organ failure and death.

Even lower temperatures can be lethal when combined with humidity, as sweat cannot evaporate off the skin. Europe has so far recorded the highest number of deaths from heatwaves, with more than 70,000 deaths in 2003, 60,000 in 2022 and more than 47,000 in 2023.

Asia has also documented the heavy toll of rising temperatures, including several thousand deaths in India and Pakistan during heatwaves in 2015.

Researchers said heat deaths in Africa were “chronically underreported” but noted extreme heat in Nigeria in 2024.

British conman to be tried for injuring French police

A British convicted conman whose neighbours grew suspicious about his activities after watching a Netflix documentary on his swindling past is to stand trial tomorrow for knocking over two French police officers as he tried to escape from them.

Robert Hendy-Freegard, also known as David Hendy, is the central figure in the documentary *The Puppet Master: Hunting the Ultimate Conman* and the fictional film *Rogue Agent*, both available on Netflix.

In 2005, a London court had sentenced Hendy-Freegard to life in prison for kidnapping, deception and stealing from students and women – from whom he took more than a million pounds – while posing as a spy for MI5, Britain’s domestic intelligence service.

But he was freed in 2009 after an appeals court overturned his conviction for kidnapping, with outraged victims warning he

would strike again.

Hendy-Freegard had been illegally breeding dogs and living on-and-off in the village of Vidaillat in the sparsely populated Creuse region of central France for seven years when police visited in August 2022 to check on the conditions at the kennels.

He turned up in his car “to ask the police officers what they were doing”, a neighbour who witnessed the events told AFP on condition of anonymity.

“They checked his papers but he still had the keys in the ignition. He turned on the engine and fled, hitting the two cops,” the neighbour said.

A policewoman and a policeman were signed off work for 21 and six days respectively after suffering injuries in the car ramming.

Hendy-Freegard managed to escape as far as Belgium but was arrested the following month and then extradited back to France, where he has been in



ACCUSED: Hendy-Freegard.

custody since October 2022.

Hendy-Freegard, now 53, is to be tried in the nearby town of Gueret.

He could be jailed for up to 10 years if found guilty of the violence that incapacitated the public officials.

Long before police turned up to check out the kennels in 2022, Vidaillat residents had for years been alerting the authorities about a woman living there in

“awful conditions” with dogs in an isolated house in the middle of the woods, one neighbour said in 2022.

But the woman who helped breed the beagles at the isolated house told authorities there was no cause for concern, so they did not pursue the case.

However, suspicious nearby residents – mostly retirees – had discovered the true identity of their neighbour – who had assumed a false name – after accessing press articles on the internet about Hendy-Freegard’s criminal past.

And after watching the Netflix documentary about him, they repeated their concerns to authorities.

In the documentary, the son and daughter of a woman called Sandra Clifton – whom some neighbours also recognised from the isolated house – said she had disappeared after meeting him.

Clifton has since returned to Britain.

Hendy-Freegard never explained why he rammed into the police officers.

During the investigation in 2023, his then attorney Juliette Magne-Gandois said he had “always denied any intent to kill anyone”.

She has, however, since said he no longer wished her to represent him.

During his London trial, Hendy-Freegard was said to have lived by the motto: “Lies have to be big to be convincing”.

That trial heard from seven people whose money he used to enjoy luxury cars and five-star holidays.

He had persuaded his victims to believe he was a British intelligence officer and that they were on the run from “terrorists”.

One of them, Sarah Smith, recalled incidents such as being taken to a so-called “safe house” with a bucket over her head, having to hide in cupboards to avoid visitors, and spending three weeks in a locked bathroom with little to eat.

Olympic medallist and QF partner to develop girls’ talent

Qatar Foundation (QF)’s Creating Pathways Programme is set to develop fencing sporting talent among Qatari girls in collaboration with programme ambassador and US Olympic medallist Ibtihaj Muhammad.

The Creating Pathways Programme, launched as part of the QF’s FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 legacy plans, is aimed at encouraging sports for girls aged 12-16, driving home to young people the importance of exercise, nu-

trition and overall wellbeing. Fencing is the third elite sport to be promoted through the Creating Pathways Programme, with track and field and volleyball already being part of the programme.

The fencing track under the Creating Pathways Programme will be delivered by the Qatar Fencing Federation in partnership with the QF.

In a display of skill and sportsmanship during yesterday’s announcement, Muhammad and Tunisian Olympic medallist Inès Boubakri, who is also the head coach at Qatar Fencing Federation, refereed a series of exhibition matches featuring top female players from the Qatar Fencing Federation at the Education City Stadium.

The event highlighted the athletes’ talents while also providing a unique learning opportunity for attendees as the Olympic champions shared their expertise, commenting on the matches and explaining the rules, the point system, and other key aspects of the sport.

Recognised as one of *Time Magazine*’s 100 Most Influential People in the World, Muhammad plays a key role in the broader global con-



QF Vice-Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, Creating Pathways Programme ambassador and US Olympic medallist Ibtihaj Muhammad, and Tunisian Olympic medallist Inès Boubakri are seen with a group of aspiring Qatari fencers at the event yesterday.



Aspiring Qatari fencers in action at the event yesterday.

versation on equality and the significance of sport.

“While there were times when being visibly Muslim in a predominantly white sport was challenging, my faith gave me strength and purpose,” she said. “I wanted to change perceptions and show that Muslim women can be strong, athletic, and competitive while maintaining their religious principles.”

“I hope that the programme will become a space that empowers our girls to believe in themselves and

their abilities,” Muhammad added. “I envision creating a pipeline of female athletes who will go on to compete internationally, coach others, and become leaders in their communities.”

“Beyond just developing athletic skills, I want this programme to empower girls to dream big and pursue their passions fearlessly,” she stated.

“At Qatar Foundation, we believe that empowering women and girls through sports is key to un-

locking their full potential,” said Liz McColgan, the director of Athletics Programmes at the QF. “We believe that sports are essential for women’s physical, mental, and social well-being, helping to build confidence, improve health, and foster community.”

After the exhibition match, Muhammad and Boubakri joined hundreds of women at the QF’s latest Ladies Night sports and fitness event in the Education City Stadium.

QU celebrates Biomedical Sciences Department’s 40th anniversary

Qatar University (QU)’s Department of Biomedical Sciences at the College of Health Sciences has celebrated its 40th anniversary, marking four decades of academic excellence, research innovation, and impactful contributions to the healthcare sector.

Since its inception in 1984, the department has graduated more than 1,000 students, many of whom have gone on to make significant contributions in healthcare, research, and academia.

With a steadfast commitment to advancing knowledge and fostering scientific discovery, the department continues to strengthen the quality and efficiency of healthcare services in the country.

“Since its establishment in 1984, the department has been a cornerstone in advancing knowledge in healthcare and empowering the next generation of scientists,” said College of Health Sciences dean Dr Hanan Abdul Rahim.

“This achievement is a testament to the tremendous efforts invested in establishing and developing this programme over the years, as well as the dedication of faculty members, students, and graduates who have contributed to groundbreaking



Guests and officials at the anniversary celebration.

discoveries and impactful community service,” she said. “Together, we will continue to shape the future of biomedical sciences in Qatar.”

Dr Abdul Rahim also engaged with several distinguished alumni who played a crucial role in the department’s growth, including Health and Medical Sciences

vice-president Prof Asma al-Thani, who is also the director of the Biomedical Research Centre at the QU.

At the ceremony, Dr Khalid al-Ali, adviser to the Minister of Education, reflected on the early days of the department.

He recalled its inception as a small pro-

gramme under the College of Sciences and praised the contributions of staff members who helped establish a strong foundation for the programme.

Dr al-Ali highlighted the department’s progression into an independent unit within the College of Health Sciences and the introduction of master’s programmes

that added a distinctive academic and research dimension.

He also reviewed the department’s achievements, including obtaining prestigious international accreditations, producing generations of skilled graduates who have enriched the healthcare sector, and the recent milestone of enrolling male students in the programme.

Dr al-Ali concluded by commending the department’s continuous expansion over the years, from infrastructure developments to increased faculty members, emphasising that these accomplishments reflect an ambitious vision and collective commitment to supporting education and scientific research in Qatar.

Department of Biomedical Sciences head Dr Maha al-Asmakh welcomed attendees and highlighted key recent achievements, including the approval of the Master’s Programme in Bioinformatics, a step forward in supporting Qatar’s growing biomedical and biotechnology sectors.

She also took the opportunity to honour distinguished individuals and medical institutions that have played a vital role in the department’s progress.

Katara International Arabian Horse Festival continues to draw visitors

The Katara International Arabian Horse Festival 2025 continues to captivate audiences with cultural and artistic events, celebrating the timeless beauty and heritage of purebred Arabian horses.

The festival has drawn an impressive turnout of art enthusiasts, families, and international visitors, all eager to explore the intersection of tradition and contemporary creativity.

One of the festival’s standout events, “Painting on Saddles”, garnered widespread admiration.

Renowned visual artists have transformed natural leather saddles into stunning works of art, using vibrant colours and intricate designs to celebrate the legacy of Arabian horses.

This blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern artistic expression highlights the seamless interaction between art and heritage.

The festival also features large-scale murals that pay tribute to the elegance and majesty of Arabian horses.

Created by artists using diverse techniques – from realism to impressionism – these murals have become a focal point for visitors, providing a picturesque backdrop for capturing memories.

Fostering the next generation of artists, Katara Corniche hosts interactive art workshops for children.

Under the guidance of the artists, young participants learn the fundamentals of drawing horses and creating artistic compositions using colours, paper, and threads.

These workshops have seen enthusiastic participation from families.

The festival is hosting a series of art exhibitions featuring works by a group of international artists.

Among the highlights is “Symphony of Authenticity” by visual artist Ali al-Maamar.

Through a blend of realism, impressionism, and abstraction, al-Maamar captures the deep connection between humans and Arabian horses, presenting captivating works that merge tradition with innovation.

Another must-see exhibition is “Jan Gemrot: In the Realm of Falcons and Horses”.

Known for his realistic yet creatively distinctive style, Gemrot explores themes of Arab culture, focusing on the admiration for horses and falcons.



His technical mastery immerses viewers in his paintings.

The festival extends beyond visual arts to include enriching cultural and poetry evenings.

Notable events include:
• A lecture by Dr Al-Siddiq Omar titled “Horses and Chivalry in Al-Mutanabbi’s Poetry”, which delves into the symbolic relationship between

horses and chivalry in classical Arabic literature.

• A poetry recital celebrating the beauty of Arabian horses through verses inspired by their grace and spirit.

• A dialogue seminar titled “Art and Identity: A Reading in the Works of Visual Artist Ali al-Maamar”, exploring the intersection of art, identity, and cultural heritage.



Snapshots from the festival.

