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BUSINESS | Page 2

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Amir, Colombia president eye new vistas

■ Two leaders hold official talks on bilateral ties, regional and international issues





His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held a session of official talks at his office in the Lusail Palace yesterday with Colombian President Gustavo Petro.

At the outset of the session, His Highness the Amir welcomed the president and the accompanying delegation, wishing them a pleasant stay. He stressed the significance of the relationship between the two countries, hoping the visit will push the bilateral co-operation toward broader horizons to achieve the aspirations and interests of the two peoples, wishing the Qatari-Colombian relations more development and growth.

The Colombian president voiced his thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for the warm reception and hospitality, expressing his keenness to promote co-operation and development between the two countries and push them toward broader horizons across various fields.

During the session, they discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and strengthen them across various fields, especially in economic, investment, and energy fields. In addition, they discussed a number of regional and international topics of common concern.

The session was attended by HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan, Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi; HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi; HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai; HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Sheikh Faisal bin Thani al-Thani; HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi; and a number of senior officials.

On Colombia's side, the session was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Laura Sarabia; Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Luis Carlos Reyes Hernandez; Minister of Mines and Energy Andres Camacho Morales; Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation Yesenia Olaya Requene; and a number of members of the official delegation accompanying the President.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir and the president held a bilateral meeting, where they discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to develop and advance it.

His Highness the Amir hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of the visiting president and his accompanying delegation. **(QNA)** **Pages 3,5**

Amir hails growing ties

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani affirmed that co-operation between Qatar and Colombia reflects the level of their growing relations and the aspirations of the peoples of the two countries. Posting on his official X account, His Highness the Amir said that he met with President of Colombia Gustavo Petro within the framework of the common aspiration to enhance the economic partnership between the two friendly countries. His Highness added that the mutual visits and bilateral co-operation reflect the level of the growing relations between the two countries, expressing hope to increase trade co-operation and enhance mutual investments in a way that achieves common interests and aspirations for the benefit of the two friendly peoples. **(QNA)**



Qatar exempts 86% of industrial activities from environmental permits

Qatar has simplified environmental permits for industrial facilities, exempting 86% of the industrial activities from the need of environmental permits. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change jointly launched the new initiative through which as many as 861 industrial activities are exempted from environmental permits. **Business Page 1**

Trump unveils 'reciprocal tariffs'

US President Donald Trump inked plans yesterday for sweeping "reciprocal tariffs" that could hit both allies and competitors, in a dramatic escalation of an international trade war that economists warn could fuel inflation at home. Speaking in the Oval Office, Trump said he had decided to impose the reciprocal duties, telling reporters that US allies were often "worse than our enemies" on trade. In particular, he singled out the European Union for being "absolutely brutal" in its trade ties with Washington.

Dozens injured in Germany 'attack'

Police arrested an Afghan asylum seeker at the scene of what German leaders labelled a car ramming "attack" that injured dozens, some seriously, in the southern city of Munich yesterday. The carnage came on the eve of a high-profile security conference in the Bavarian city and amid a heated immigration debate ahead of February 23 elections following a spate of similar attacks. **Page 9**

Trump-Putin 'deal' alarms Kyiv, EU

Kyiv and its European allies demanded yesterday that they be included in any peace negotiations, after US President Donald Trump spoke by phone with Russia's Vladimir Putin and said Ukraine could neither have all of its land back nor join Nato. "We, as a sovereign country, simply will not be able to accept any agreements without us," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. "Any quick fix is a dirty deal," European foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. **Page 9**

COMMUNITY
See Pages: 6 & 7

Ministry of Culture to launch Saudi Cultural Week at Darb Al Saai

The Saudi Cultural Week is set to commence at Darb Al Saai in Um Salal during the period February 18-21, the Ministry of Culture announced.

Organised in partnership with the Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Culture, the event is part of the efforts to boost the bilateral cultural co-operation through holding a raft of activities that highlight the prolific Saudi cultural legacy with the participation of a contingent of Saudi specialists in the areas of art and heritage.

The event is an opportunity to offer a superb experience for the public to interact with the rich Saudi heritage through showcasing diverse exhibits that highlight aspects of the Saudi culture, in addition to helping them internalise the Saudi cultures and fostering the domestic and international intercultural dialogue and honing the talents in a wide diversity of creative fields.

The Ministry of Culture's Culture and Arts Department's Director Abdulrahman Abdullah al-Dulaimi said the event is not merely an exhibition of innovation but intends to pay tribute to a one cultural root, underlining that the Qatari-Saudi culture intersects, in terms of mores and arts, thereby making this week an incredible experience that reflects the shared identity and accentuates the rock-solid cultural relationship between the two nations.

Al-Dulaimi added that he believes in the fact that culture is the robust tool to shore up bonds among peoples, serving as the strong vehicle to understand the other, highlighting that this cultural week is an opportunity to grasp a profound legacy that ranges from popular arts to the modern innovation and stories bequeathed by forebears to contemporary artistic experiences that reflect the spirit of renewal.

Qatar and Saudi Arabia not only share geographical boundaries, but deep feelings, traditions and cultural values, al-Dulaimi noted, affirming that he looks forward to having an event that bolsters this shared legacy to nurture the domestic cultural scene with an experience that highlights the Saudi creativity and entrenches the notion of culture as a vehicle for forging rapprochement among peoples.

The cultural week features a range of cultural institutions, including the Saudi Literature Publishing Translation Commission (MOC), the Theatre and Performing Arts Commission, the Heritage Commission, the Music Commission, the Film Commission, the Architecture and Design Arts Commission, the Libraries Commission, the Fashion Commission, and the Culinary Arts Commission.

Additionally, participating in this event are Royal Institute of Traditional Arts, alongside the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Global Center for Arabic Calligraphy. All are set to contribute to the creative presentation of Saudi culture, showcasing its rich artistic heritage.

The '2025 Year of Handicrafts' initiative from Qatar debuts in this global participation by featuring a pavilion showcasing the cultural year and the significance of handicrafts.

The initiative intends to raise awareness of handicrafts as a key component of Saudi culture, with innovators demonstrating their skills and engaging directly with the audience.

The Prince Mohammed bin Salman Global Center for Arabic Calligraphy is poised to organise an Arabic calligraphy exhibition to showcase items in glass displays, including calligraphy pens, pressed paper, and silk thread ink, in addition to featuring a video introducing the centre's strategy, goals, and its role in preserving Arabic calligraphy. **(QNA)**

Hamas 'willing to move ahead with ceasefire'

Hamas signalled yesterday that a crisis threatening to unravel the Gaza ceasefire deal could be avoided despite uncertainty over the number of hostages due to be released tomorrow and disagreements over aid supplies.

The 42-day ceasefire has appeared close to failure this week as Israel and Hamas each accused the other of violating the agreement sealed last month with the help of Qatari and Egyptian mediators and US support.

Hamas said it did not want the deal to collapse, though it rejected what it called the "language of threats and intimidation" from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump. They have said the ceasefire should be cancelled if the hostages are not released.

"Accordingly, Hamas reaffirms its commitment to implementing the agreement as signed, including the exchange of prisoners according to the specified timeline," Hamas said in a statement.

Hamas, whose Gaza chief leader Khalil al-Hayya is visiting Cairo for talks with Egyptian security officials, also said both Egyptian and Qatari mediators would press on with efforts "to remove obstacles and close gaps".

Israeli government spokesman David Mencer later told reporters that three hostages must be released – alive – by Hamas tomorrow for the ceasefire to continue.

QATAR

Amir receives written message from Maldivian president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a written message from President of Maldives Mohamed Muizzu, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. The message was received by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi during his meeting with Minister of Islamic Affairs of the Republic of Maldives Dr Mohamed Shaheem Ali Saeed. **(QNA)**

PM meets deputy PM for Economic Affairs at Afghan Caretaker Govt



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs at the Caretaker Government of Afghanistan Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who is visiting the country. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the challenges facing the brotherly Afghan people, and ways to support them in facing those challenges. HE the Prime Minister affirmed the State of Qatar's firm support for all segments of the brotherly Afghan people, and its continued efforts to achieve security, stability, prosperity and decent living in Afghanistan. **(QNA)**

Minister of Interior holds phone call with Syrian counterpart

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani held a phone call yesterday with Interior Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic Ali Abdulrahman Keda. During the call, they discussed aspects of joint co-operation between the two sides in security fields. **(QNA)**

Qatar condemns attack in Afghanistan and run-over accident in Munich

Qatar strongly condemned and denounced the attack that took place in Kabul, Afghanistan, leading to one death and multiple injuries. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated the State of Qatar's stance rejecting violence, terrorism, and criminal acts, regardless of the motives and reasons. The ministry voiced the State of Qatar's condolences to the victim's family, the caretaker government, and the people of Afghanistan, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

■ Qatar strongly condemned the run-over accident that took place in Munich, the Federal Republic of Germany, leading to one death and multiple injuries. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated the State of Qatar's stance rejecting violence and criminal acts targeting innocent people, affirming its full solidarity with Germany in all the measures it may take to maintain security and stability. The ministry voiced the State of Qatar's condolences to the victim's family, the government, and the people of Germany, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. **(QNA)**

Qatar participates in ministerial conference on Syria

QNA
Paris

Qatar participated in the Ministerial Conference on Syria, held yesterday in Paris. Representing the State of Qatar at the conference was HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi.

In his speech before the conference, HE the Minister expressed his gratitude to the French Republic for hosting this important meeting, stating that this conference comes at a time when crucial developments in Syria are being witnessed, marked by optimism for the future, reconstruction, and stability after years of destruction, killing, and displacement.

He emphasised that the prospects for the future hinge on this pivotal phase to achieve the aspirations of the Syrian people for progress and prosperity, stressing the need for all international partners to work together responsibly to support the Syrian people in attaining their legitimate goals. He also pointed out that experience has shown that Syria's stability and unity are crucial not only for the Arab region but beyond.

HE al-Khulaifi reaffirmed the importance of preserving Syria's unity, sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, condemning all violations it is subjected to, especially in the current context. He reiterated support for all relevant international resolutions condemning the Israeli occupation of Syrian territories and called on the international community to uphold its responsibilities in curbing the unjustified and illegal escalation that undermines efforts to support Syria's unity and independence.

Furthermore, he reaffirmed Qatar's unwavering support for the Syrian people and their choices, stressing that the only path forward lies in an inclusive political process that preserves Syria's social fabric, builds its national institutions with efficiency and national interest in mind, and unifies its forces under civilian leadership to safeguard the country's territorial integrity.

HE al-Khulaifi welcomed steps aimed at restructuring the Syrian state and enhancing consensus and unity among all Syrian parties, as well as the announcement of the Preparatory Committee for the National Conference, adding that Qatar looks forward to the next steps in this regard, working towards a comprehensive national path that defines the priorities of the phase and paves the way for a peaceful transition of power through a political process agreed upon by Syrians.

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also underscored the importance of implementing transitional justice and holding accountable those responsible for human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed against the Syrian people. He reiterated the need for intensified international efforts to support



the Syrian people through humanitarian aid and initiatives aimed at addressing the devastation caused by the crisis over the years, while also removing obstacles that hinder international donors from providing the necessary support.

GCO team holds specialised workshops

QNA
Doha

The second annual Government Communication Forum wrapped up yesterday, following two days of extensive discussions. The event, organised by the Government Communications Office (GCO), brought together communications and media professionals from across government and semi-government entities to discuss strategies to strengthen Qatar's government communication framework.

Leading specialists from government entities, prominent media institutions, and social media influencers engaged in rich discussion sessions focused on advancing government communication strategies.

This year's edition also featured an expanded programme of specialised workshops led by the GCO team, which supports the office's mission to develop local talent in communications and media, in



alignment with the Third National Development Strategy.

HE the Director of the Government Communication Office Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani highlighted the forum's continued success, saying: "This edition reflects GCO's commitment to strengthening Qatar's government communication ecosystem. We continue to build on our progress, adopting best practices to enhance communication strategies across all sectors."

"The GCO spares no effort in leveraging its resources to support government institutions in communications, ensuring alignment between government activities and state messaging while fostering consistency and co-ordination among all state entities," he added.

This year's expanded agenda featured additional sessions and



workshops alongside new activities designed to address national priorities and keep pace with the rapidly evolving media landscape.

Discussions explored key themes, including digital-age communications tools, the impact of digital platforms on communications, and the importance of government investment in artificial intelligence. This year, participants included representatives from ministries, government entities, and leading global media platforms, including Google and Snapchat.

Discussions also examined ways to enhance co-operation between government and semi-government institutions to maintain a unified national narrative.

The event also saw dedicated sessions highlighting the importance of visual identity in shaping public perception and the need for official institutions to maintain a cohesive communication approach that aligns with Qatar's national objectives.

Complementing this, a series of workshops provided practical training on professional photography, smartphone content creation, strategic branding, media monitoring, and digital campaign management.

Additionally, the second edition featured several distinctive additions, most notably the GCO Hub, which highlighted the office's continuous efforts in supporting Qatar's government communication system while showcasing the state's achievements across all sectors.

Held annually, the Government Communication Forum serves as a strategic platform for communications professionals across government institutions to exchange expertise, discuss emerging trends, and reinforce Qatar's position as a leader in government communications.

95 companies from region and beyond take part in international dates exhibition at Souq Waqif

The Third Souq Waqif International Dates Exhibition started yesterday at the Eastern Square of the Souq Waqif, featuring 95 companies from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Oman, Pakistan, and Sudan.

Held under the supervision of the Celebrations Committee of the Private Engineering Office (PEO) the exhibition aims to promote the dates industry and enhance commercial co-operation between producers, suppliers and traders from different countries.

The exhibition, according to a statement from PEO, also represents an ideal opportunity to acquire the best types of dates before the advent of Ramadan, during which dates are of particular importance.

The exhibition, open to the public until February 24, from 9am to 12noon and from 3.30pm to 10pm daily, offers a wide range of products, including luxury dates and their derivatives. Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi, general supervisor said the exhibition, said: "We are proud to see the participation of 95 companies specialised in the production and manufacture of dates from seven countries. This reflects the growing importance of this event as an international platform for exchanging experiences."



Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi



The exhibition features 95 companies from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Oman, Pakistan, and Sudan. **PICTURES:** Noushad Thekkayil



The Third Souq Waqif International Dates Exhibition is running until February 24.

PHCC centres serve 4,465 visitors on NSD

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) announced that during the National Sport Day (NSD) holiday on Tuesday, its 20 designated health centres received a total of 4,465 visitors, including both citizens and residents. This includes 3,324 patients who visited general medicine and family medicine clinics, while general dentistry clinics received 142 visitors.

Additionally, Urgent Care Units across 12 health centres — namely Al Mashaf, Al Sadd, Abu Baker Al Siddiq, Al Ruwais, Al Sheehaniya, Al Kaaban, Gharrafat Al Rayyan, Rawdat Al Khail, Muaither, Umm Slal, Leabaib, and Al Karaana — handled 504 cases, each managed according to its urgency.

PHCC also ensured the availability of specialised clinics, including ophthalmology, ENT (ear, nose, and throat), dermatology, and pre-marital screening. During the holiday, the ophthalmology clinic served 52 patients, the ENT clinic attended to 39 patients, and the dermatology clinic received 45 patients at Leabaib and Rawdat Al Khail health centres.

The pre-marital screening clinic welcomed 10 visitors at Leabaib and Al Mashaf health centres. PHCC's Community Call Centre provided 169 virtual consultations — both video and voice — to patients who contacted the 16000 helpline without a prior appointment. This service ensures rapid access to urgent medical consultations and prescription issuance by specialised doctors in the shortest possible time.



Amir, Colombia president seek to push bilateral co-operation to broader horizons





His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held a session of official talks at his office in the Lusail Palace with President of Colombia Gustavo Petro. His Highness the Amir welcomed the president and the accompanying delegation, wishing them a pleasant stay. The Amir stressed the significance of the relationship between the two countries, hoping that the visit will push the bilateral co-operation toward broader horizons to achieve the aspirations and interests of the two peoples, wishing the Qatari-Colombian relations more development and growth. In turn, the Colombia president voiced his thanks and appreciation to the Amir for the warm reception and hospitality, expressing his keenness to promote co-operation and development relations between the two countries and push them toward broader horizons across various fields.

Fire Station: Artist in Residence opens its studios for the public

QNA
Doha

The Fire Station: Artists in Residence programme has announced the opening of its studios to the public with two events on Feb. 16 and 19.

The first event, a special session for schools in Qatar, will be held during the morning, while the second event, an open studio evening, is dedicated to art enthusiasts to explore the iconic Fire Station building and meet artists participating in the current season of the artist residency programme, which includes the curator programme and the artist residency programme for pioneers, as the evening offers visitors a rare glimpse into the creative process.

Director of the Fire Station: Artists in Residence, Khalifa al-Obaidli said in remarks that the open studio evenings represent the ongoing commitment to strengthening meaningful connections between artists and the community.

By welcoming students and the public into our creative spaces, we create valuable opportunities for dialogue and inspiration, contributing to the development of the thriving art scene in Qatar.

As a leading centre for artistic development in Qatar, the Fire Station: Artist in Residence continues to play a vital role in nurturing local talent and creating platforms where artists can engage directly with the community. Such events embody the mission of making art accessible to all, as well as providing opportunities for artists participating in the residency program to share their creative journey with diverse audiences. For her part, head of Residency at the Fire Station: Artist in Residence, Saida al-Khulaifi, indicated that Open Studios are an integral part of the programme's mission to encourage artistic dialogue in Qatar and create a warm environment where the artistic process is accessible to all, allowing for a fruitful exchange between creators and the community.



"By welcoming students and the public into our creative spaces, we create valuable opportunities for dialogue and inspiration, contributing to the development of the thriving art scene in Qatar"

National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking signs agreement with SJC



The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT) and the Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen co-operation in the fight against human trafficking and facilitate the exchange of expertise and relevant information.

The MoU was signed by HE the Minister of Labour and Chair of NCCHT, Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri, and HE the President of the SJC and President of the Court of Cassation, Dr Hassan bin Lahdan al-Hassan al-Mohannadi. This agreement aims to enhance joint efforts and establish a comprehensive framework that supports both national and international initiatives to combat human trafficking and protect the rights of victims. It aligns with the best judicial and administrative practices, as well as applicable laws, regional agreements, and international treaties. Under the MoU, the two parties will collaborate on exchanging expertise, strengthening efforts to combat human trafficking, and developing mechanisms to protect victims. The agreement also aims to foster enhanced co-ordination among judicial, governmental, and relevant organisations, with the goal of bolstering support for victims and ensuring effective protection. **(QNA)**

Qatar chairs preparatory committee meeting for Council of Arab Interior Ministers in Tunisia



Qatar yesterday chaired the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 42nd session of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers, which was held in Tunisia. HE the Legal Adviser to the Minister of Interior, Maj Gen Dr Abdullah Yousef al-Mal presided over the meeting while the Ministry of Interior's delegation was headed by Director of Human Resources Department, Maj Gen Khalifa Nasr al-Nasr.

The meeting discussed a host of security topics, including a report on the work and recommendations of the conferences and meetings held with the 41st and 42nd sessions of the General Secretariat of the Council, as well as a report on the work and recommendations of the joint meetings held between the two sessions. **(QNA)**

Healthy Kids Village opens in Lusail



Huda Mohsen al-Wahedi



Lusail City is hosting the Healthy Kids Village, an initiative organised by the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) in collaboration with Qatari Diar, until Sunday at Food Arena on Lusail Corniche.

Designed to promote health awareness among children of all ages, the village will be open from 4pm to 10pm daily. Huda Mohsen al-Wahedi, executive director of Corporate Communications Directorate at PHCC, emphasised that this initiative provides a valuable opportunity for children and their parents to enjoy an environment that combines health and entertainment.

The village will offer children gifts, engaging recreational games, and free medical screenings, including oral and dental check-ups, as well as biometric measurements to monitor their overall health.

The event will feature specialised doctors, including family physicians and psychologists, to provide consultations tailored to the target age group. This aims to enhance children's awareness of their physical and mental well-being.

Nutritionists from PHCC, alongside dental professionals and oral health specialists, will also highlight the importance of proper nutrition through interactive activities designed to instil health concepts in a fun and educational manner.

This initiative is part of the ongoing efforts of PHCC and Qatari Diar to promote a culture of health among future generations and encourage children to adopt a healthy lifestyle from an early age. Admission to the event is free for families.

With Qatari participation, Islamic World Culture Ministers Conference 2025 concludes in Jeddah



The 13th Conference of the Ministers of Culture of the Islamic World 2025 concluded yesterday in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with the participation of a delegation from the Ministry of Culture (MOC) headed by MOC's Assistant Undersecretary for Cultural Affairs Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Ali. The final statement of the Conference, which was held under the theme "Impact of Culture on Socio-Economic Development," included the Jeddah Declaration, which outlined a unified vision to enhance the role of culture in socio-economic development, protect Islamic heritage, face global challenges, commitments and recommendations to strengthen co-operation between Islamic countries in cultural fields, in addition to supporting initiatives that promote cultural rights, preserve heritage and combat illicit trafficking in cultural property. Among the most important points contained in the declaration are the promotion of cultural rights and the right to access culture, the protection of heritage in the Islamic world, coping with climate change and the role of culture, the development of cultural policies, and the use of modern technologies in the development of the cultural sector. The "Jeddah Declaration" is a strategic document that defines the course of cultural co-operation between Islamic countries, focusing on the protection of heritage, the promotion of cultural rights, and keeping pace with technical development in cultural development. **(QNA)**

QATAR

M7 open day tomorrow

M7, Qatar's leading creative hub for fashion, design, and technology, is holding its first ever open day tomorrow, from 10am to 6pm, at Msheireb Downtown Doha. The open day will be especially valuable for students, designers, artists, and anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the creative industry, a statement said.

It offers an opportunity to meet the team behind M7, network with other creatives, and explore the building's unique spaces. Attendees will also have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience, acquire new skills, and connect with industry professionals, all while discovering how M7's network can unlock new opportunities for career growth, collaboration, and creative innovation. Throughout the day, attendees can participate in a wide array of interactive workshops and activities, including M7 Info Sessions, a chance to create their own



home accessory, and the opportunity to take a professional headshot. A complimentary day pass will be provided, along with a F&B pop-up offering refreshments throughout the day. M7 serves as a hub for designers and creatives, fostering collaboration with Resident Partners including Studio 7, Scale 7, FROMM, Workinton, The Cutting Studio and Profiles. Attendance is free. To register for the event, please visit: https://m7.org.qa/en/calendar/m7-open-day/

MIA takes 'Atlas Splendors' outdoors

The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) is taking its popular exhibition 'Atlas Splendors: A Journey Through the Heritage of Morocco' outside its walls in the heart of Doha with the 'Atlas Splendors: Beyond the Museum' initiative. Part of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture programme, the initiative introduces the arts and traditions of Morocco to the public through outdoor installations and live performances throughout Old Doha Port (ODP), Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD) and the MIA Park.

Featuring some 200 rare and never-before-seen artefacts, 'Atlas Splendors' highlights Morocco's culture and heritage across five themed sections, from its diverse landscapes to its dynastic history, to its exquisite craftsmanship and musical heritage.



Visitors to the Old Doha Port will find an installation of Moroccan carpets draped over the colourful building, evoking the vibrant souks and mountainous landscapes of the Atlas region. Performers will also roam the streets displaying larger-than-life versions of the exhibition's key pieces, bringing Moroccan cultural heritage to life in unique and engaging ways.

Public events schedule: February 15: Launch of the 'Outside the Museum Walls' initiative at the ODP with an installation of carpets and large-scale copies of some of the exhibits.

February 22: The moving events featuring large-scale pieces continue at MDD.

February 28: Activities conclude at the MIA Park, while carpet installations continue at the ODP until the exhibition closes on March 8.

Visitors can interact with the installations, take photos and scan QR codes to move from public events to the full-length "Atlas Masterpieces" exhibition on display at the MIA.

To ensure maximum community participation, MIA has launched a "Find It and Win It" challenge on social media. Participants who locate the items on display at the event, take a photo of them, and share it on social media, tagging MIA, will have the chance to win a gift voucher from In-Q Store worth QR1,000.

QFFD signs $100mn loan agreement with GCC Interconnection Authority

QNA
Muscat

Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) has signed a loan agreement with the GCC Interconnection Authority to finance the expansion of the electricity grid in the brotherly Sultanate of Oman, as part of efforts to enhance regional co-operation and sustainable development. The total project cost is estimated at $560mn, with the fund contributing a loan of $100mn.

In a press release, QFFD said: "This project is a strategic step toward the integration of the GCC energy networks and a vital strategic initiative aimed at enhancing the integration of regional energy grids, increasing the reliability and sustainability of electricity systems in the region."

The project will provide significant benefits for Oman and the GCC countries, achieving savings of hundreds of megawatts from additional generation capacities, thereby reducing the need to build new power plants. It will also facilitate and enhance electricity exchange between GCC countries and Oman, increasing the flexibility of electrical systems and improving their stability. Additionally, it will reduce operational costs by cutting down the operational expenses of connected countries and generate significant annual financial savings. An important benefit of the project is its contribution to reducing carbon emissions, supporting environmental conservation goals.

Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals, Eng Salim bin Nasser al-Oufi confirmed that the signing of the financing agreement represents a strategic step within the GCC energy integration policies. He pointed out that the project enhances energy security and sustainability, supporting the GCC countries' plans to develop energy infrastructure in an efficient and reliable manner.

He also praised the central role of the GCC Interconnection Authority in implementing joint interconnection strategies, emphasising that this project strengthens the stability of electrical networks and supports the GCC's drive toward integrated energy markets. He added that the contribution of QFFD reflects the importance of partnership in financing vital energy projects that contribute to sustainable development and enhancing the flexibility of the regional electricity system.

The project will provide significant benefits for Oman and the GCC countries, achieving savings of hundreds of megawatts from additional generation capacities, thereby reducing the need to build new power plants

For his part, Undersecretary of Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the GCC Interconnection Authority, Mohsen bin Hamad al-Hadrami noted that the electricity interconnection project is one of the most important infrastructure projects approved by the GCC leaders. Since its operation in 2009, the electricity networks of GCC countries have been linked to a shared Gulf network, aimed at maintaining energy security for the electricity grids of GCC countries and achieving the highest levels of reliability, dependability, and efficiency.

The Authority has successfully avoided power outages in member states' networks by providing immediate support to transfer required energy through the interconnection network, with more than 2,800 support cases provided since the system's inception, he pointed. He added that the Authority is keen to meet the growing requirements of electricity networks in all GCC countries.

It has prioritized the expansion and development of the electricity interconnection between member states and the region's electricity networks, leading to the implementation of several major projects to expand the grid, including the direct interconnection with the Sultanate of Oman. These projects will raise the capacity of the GCC interconnection network and provide member states with increased capacity in emergency situations.

Al-Hadrami pointed out that this project is a strategic step towards the integration of Gulf energy networks and a vital initiative to increase the reliability and sustainability of electricity systems in the region. It responds to global calls for energy infrastructure development and sustainable development goals.

In turn, CEO of the GCC Interconnection Authority, Eng Ahmed al-Ibrahim, said that the project, which is expected to begin construction in the second half of 2025 and enter into service in the first half of 2027, will effectively contribute to improving network stability by reducing the impact of major outages and ensuring continuous operation under various conditions.

He added, "The project will enable the networks to accommodate growing loads and support future expansions. It will also significantly contribute to accommodating renewable energy sources by enhancing the network's ability to receive electricity produced from clean sources such as solar and wind energy, supporting the environmental goals of the GCC countries. It will also play a significant role in increasing energy exchange and trade between GCC countries and providing electricity trade opportunities for GCC countries, especially Oman, with the Republic of Iraq."

He further added that the financing agreement is a continuation of the ongoing co-operation between the Authority and the Fund in the current phase of the electricity grid expansion, in addition to the southern Iraq interconnection project. There are three major projects to enhance interconnection with Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman, with a total cost exceeding $1bn.

Al-Ibrahim commended the ongoing co-operation between the Authority and the Fund, which enhances the Fund's contribution to financing infrastructure projects in the GCC countries to achieve sustainable development goals.

On the other hand, Director General of Qatar Fund for Development, Fahd bin Hamad al-Sulaiti stated that the signing of the agreement is part of Qatar Fund for Development's commitment to strengthening the economies of Arab and developing countries by providing the necessary financing and loans to implement development programmes. "This initiative is based on a shared belief in the importance of regional co-operation, with energy being a fundamental element to achieving stability and economic and social development in our countries," he said.

This project reflects the Qatar Fund for Development's continuous commitment to enhancing regional partnerships and efforts to support sustainable development, contributing to building a prosperous and stable future for the GCC countries and the Arab nations in the region.



Katara unveils monument designating it as City of Arabic Novels

The Katara's Cultural Village Foundation yesterday inaugurated the monument of Katara as a city of Arabic novel at its premises between buildings 14 and 15. Katara takes pride in having the fine artist Fatma al-Shebani as the designer of monument, which was crafted from bronze, weighing 450kg, and took a month to complete.

Artist al-Shebani highlighted that the monument features a book christened with the phrase Katara, the city of the Arabic novels, resting on a monument base. Above, a hand holds a rope that reaches deep into the book, an epitome of creative spirit of Qatari masterpieces, akin to the image of pearl divers plunging into the profound depths of the sea to unearth its hidden treasures.

This inauguration signifies ALESCO's formal designation of Katara as the City of the Arabic Novel. The monument promotes Katara's initiative in devoting a world novel week to be annually observed during the period Oct 13-20. In 2025, Katara prize for Arabic fiction marks its 20th anniversary with approximately 17,000 participants across six categories, notably published and unpublished novels, studies in novel criticism, unpublished young adult novels, unpublished historical novels, as well as Qatari novels.

To date, over 250 titles have been published, including translations into English and French for 169 winners. **(QNA)**

beIN Sports to broadcast Match for Hope live

beIN Sports, the region's leading sports network, will broadcast the second edition of the annual football fundraiser Match for Hope, live and free-to-air in 24 countries across the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) today. Organised by Q Life, the cultural platform under the International Media Office (IMO), all proceeds raised from the event at Stadium 974 in Doha will go towards helping provide disadvantaged people and communities the chance of a brighter future.

Following a hugely successful inaugural Match for Hope last year, the 2025 edition will feature a host of famous former players, including Andres Iniesta, Thierry Henry, Andrea Pirlo, and Mubarak Mustafa, as well as renowned digital content creators such as KSI, Chunkz, Adam Waheed, and AboFlah. The two teams will be managed by former PSG and Tottenham coach Mauricio Pochettino and Arsenal's legendary ex-manager Arsene Wenger.

beIN's free-to-air news channel, beIN Sports News, will provide world-class Arabic studio coverage and analysis starting at 7.30pm, led by beIN Sports presenter Mohamed Kidan and social media influencer Ahmed Pato, a beIN statement said. When the match kicks off at 8pm, Arabic commentary will be provided by beIN's Asya Abdullah who will make history as the first female commentator on a beIN Sports football broadcast. She will be joined by Othman Alqraini on commentary.



Meanwhile, beIN presenter Nathalie Rantisi, accompanied by influencers Abdullah al-Ghafri and Mohammed Adnan, will bring viewers all the action from inside the stadium. Reporter Hamad Nawaf will also share fan reactions from outside the venue. beIN presenter Ali Shaheen will engage with football legends participating in the event. Arabic coverage will be mirrored live on beIN's official YouTube channel. Live English coverage of the match will be available on beIN Sports English.

Match for Hope 2025 will once again donate proceeds to the Education Above All Foundation (EAA), the global foundation founded, which aims to transform lives through education. Match for Hope 2024 raised more than $8.8m for EAA, to help support more than 70,000 out-of-school children.

Shafallah Center to hold 'Fabric of Art' cultural initiative

Shafallah Center for Persons with Disabilities has unveiled the first initiative of Shafallah as the bridge of nations and fabric of art. The initiative is organised in collaboration with the Bridging Nations Foundation and the French Academic Society of Arts, Sciences and Literature, in co-ordination with the Embassy of the French Republic to the State of Qatar.

In a statement, the centre highlighted that the technical workshops of this initiative are set to launch during the period Feb.16-20, at Qatar Museums. Executive Director of the Shafallah Center Maryam Saif al-Suwaidi stated that the fabric of art exhibition intends to hold three-day workshops on art paintings that would be produced by 17 teams, with each team introducing a young disabled individual, alongside a professional artist to compete in the first three places. The topics of these paintings address the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the expo highlighting the importance of socialisation in improving the life of persons with disabilities and its connection to social development, in addition to including them in the community to engage in many activities, such as art, al-Suwaidi noted.

Al-Suwaidi added that the five-day activities of the initiative commence with the opening ceremony, followed by a three-day intensive work during which participants co-operate to showcase an art painting that reflects their shared vision.

She indicated that the initiative is not an art event, but rather an invitation to shore up cultural bonds and reinforce co-operation through arts to have a profound role in empowering disabled individuals. In addition, the initiative features 17 disabled artists, including 11 from Al Shafallah Center for Persons with Disabilities, 4 from Best Buddies Qatar, and 2 from Al-Noor Center for the Blind, thus representing a wide diversity of abilities and talents, in collaboration with Qatar-based professional artists, including those from Matafi Artists' Residence alongside other artists statewide. **(QNA)**

CCQ approves three new courses

The Board of Trustees of the Community College of Qatar (CCQ), chaired by Dr Hessa bint Sultan al-Jaber, in its first meeting of 2025, approved three new academic programmes designed to meet labour market demands and enhance the quality of education.



The new courses are the Associate Diploma in Aircraft Structural Engineering Technology, the Associate Diploma in Aircraft Electronics Engineering Technology, and the Associate Diploma in Digital Media, a statement said. "By leveraging the college's resources and capabilities, these programmes aim to deliver unique academic offerings in partnership with leading national institutions in the labour market.

This initiative is designed to empower students to achieve their professional aspirations and foster their academic development."

GCC chief stresses support for Syria

Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi has confirmed that the GCC countries have been and remain a primary supporter of the Syrian people, not only through the provision of urgent humanitarian relief but also in their commitment to a clear stance regarding the political solution in Syria, which can only be through a genuine transition that preserves its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and meets the aspirations of the Syrian people for security, stability, and a dignified life, in accordance with international references and relevant Security Council resolutions.

This was stated during his speech at the Paris Conference on Syria, hosted by France yesterday.

"We believe that the Syrian people deserve a better future – one where their dignity is respected, their sovereignty safeguarded, and where every citizen finds the opportunity to live in peace and security," Albudaiwi stated. "We view this conference as an important step to co-ordinate visions and enhance co-operation among partners. It comes at a moment that requires all of us to show courage and express a firm commitment to the principles that safeguard the security of the people and their basic rights."

The official affirmed the GCC's full readiness to work with the Syrian transitional government and international partners to build a safe and prosperous future for Syria.

Albudaiwi stated indicated that the Council began its efforts from the early events that accompanied the regime change in Syria by holding an extraordinary ministerial meeting for the foreign ministers of the Council in Kuwait on December 26 last year.

Albudaiwi stressed that Syria's future cannot be built in the presence of foreign interventions or chaos, as it was before.

Syria cannot be a starting point for any terrorist acts or a haven for terrorist organisations, nor a point for drug trafficking to neighbouring countries, causing instability and insecurity in the region.

He praised the steps taken by the Syrian transitional government to maintain civilian safety, prevent bloodshed, achieve national reconciliation among various components, and its recent decision to dissolve militias and armed factions, limiting the use of arms to the state.

Albudaiwi also noted that achieving stability in Syria requires empowering it economically, which cannot be achieved without lifting the sanctions imposed on it. – ***QNA***

Qatar, Colombia show promise for comprehensive partnership

Qatar and Colombia enjoy strong and solid relations which have witnessed remarkable development for decades, launching promising areas and horizons for the economies of the two countries.

These relations are based on common interests and mutual respect, in addition to many agreements signed between the two countries.

The mutual visits between Doha and Bogota, especially at the leadership level, demonstrate the two countries' keenness to strengthen bilateral relations and develop co-operation in various fields.

The visit of Colombian President Gustavo Petro to Qatar is an important step towards achieving a broader strategic partnership, including in economy, trade, tourism and investment, in addition to enhancing political and diplomatic co-operation.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will meet Petro at the Amiri Diwan, where they will discuss relations between the two countries and ways to support them and develop co-operation mechanisms.

His Highness the Amir has been to Colombia twice on official visits, in July 2016 and in November last year as part of a tour of several Latin American countries that included Brazil and Costa Rica.

The two governments have signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in tourism, ports, sports, and news exchange to strengthen bilateral engagement across various sectors.

Colombia has expressed interest in developing initiatives to support health and education, particularly in remote areas and conflict-affected regions.

A joint statement issued during the November 2024 visit said: "Both sides agreed to advance discussions toward a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Colombia presented a roadmap for negotiations, building on discussions held during COP 28 in Dubai in December 2023. To strengthen trade and investment ties, both countries agreed to establish a dialogue between Colombia's National Tax and Customs Authority (DIAN) and its Qatari counterpart to enhance co-operation in taxation and customs matters."

The statement emphasised the importance of achieving a permanent and sustainable cessation of hostilities, upholding international law and international humanitarian law regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, securing the release of hostages, and alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Colombia commended Qatar's diplomatic role in promoting regional peace and stability, including its mediation efforts.

Qatar appreciated Colombia's steadfast support for a two-state solution and its opposition to illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

As part of the bilateral visits between the two countries, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani visited Colombia in February 2013 as part of a tour that included Peru and Ecuador.

Several agreements and MoUs were signed, including one between the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Colombian Chamber of Commerce.

In October last year, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo at the Amiri Diwan.

During the meeting, they reviewed the co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and enhance it, as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Additionally, the first round of political consultations between the foreign ministers of both countries was held in Bogota in October to strengthen political co-ordination.

HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi met Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo in Doha in October to review bilateral relations and energy co-operation.

In December, Qatar and Colombia signed an MoU to enhance and develop co-operation in the fields of education, higher education, and scientific research.

As part of the co-operation and consultation between the two countries in international forums and issues, representatives of the governments of Qatar, Colombia, and Finland emphasised in January 2022 the need for the swift implementation of the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda worldwide.

This was highlighted in a high-level statement issued by the representatives of the three governments at the conclusion of the High Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes, which was held virtually from January 19-21, 2022.

Colombia is located in the northwestern part of South America, covering an area of 1,138,000sq km, with a population of over 52mn.

It is known for its geographical diversity that includes the Andes mountains and the Amazon basin.

It is the only country in South America that has coastlines on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

Colombia is the third-largest economy in South America and one of the largest producers of coffee and flowers in the world.

It is rich in natural resources such as oil, coal, gold, and nickel.

Oil accounts for about 45% of its exports, making it one of the most important pillars of the Colombian economy

Key industries in Colombia include information technology, which is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world, as well as shipbuilding, electronics, automobiles, and petrochemical industries.

Colombia is also one of the largest producers of emeralds in the world, and Colombian emeralds are famous for their high quality and distinctive pure green colour.

The Colombian government encourages foreign investment by offering tax incentives and establishing special economic zones, which helped attract global companies to invest in the country. – ***QNA***

Qatar takes part in Jeddah culture ministers' conference

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Culture, participated yesterday in the 13th Conference of Ministers of Culture in the Islamic World, held in Jeddah on February 12-13 under the theme *The Impact of Culture on Social and Economic Development*.

Qatar's delegation was led by Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Ali (***pictured***), the assistant undersecretary for cultural affairs at the Ministry of Culture.

Al-Ali said in his speech during the 13th Conference of Ministers of Culture in the Islamic World: "We are pleased to be among you today in this important cultural forum, which aims to enhance co-operation and cultural integration between the countries of the Islamic world."

"We appreciate the opportunity to hold this conference on this good land with which we have historical relations and strong cultural ties," he said. "I can only extend my sincere thanks to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the warm welcome and hospitality."

Dr al-Ali said that the meeting comes at a time when the importance of joint cultural work is growing, in particular with regards to sustainable development.

Qatar has, he said, paid great attention to developing culture and enhancing its role.

The official added that during its presidency of the conference, Qatar made strenuous efforts to achieve the pillars of the "Doha Declaration on Renewing Cultural Work in the Islamic World", which has been "a basic reference for us in protecting, preserving, valuing and digitising heritage".

"This has included documenting and archiving national heritage, in addition to preparing multiple files to register heritage elements on the World Heritage List, as an expression of our deep awareness of the connection between heritage and our national identity," Dr al-Ali said.

"We have sought to provide unlimited support for community and youth initiatives, to highlight



the role of the creative economy in achieving sustainable development goals, including the development of the publishing industry and the prosperity of craft sectors," he added.

Hour and Hour joins QNSD activities

The Hour and Hour programme participated in the Qatar National Sport Day (NSD) by organising the Think and Answer cultural competition and various activities, in Darb Al Saad in Lusail, in co-operation with the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC).



Sheikha Asma honouring al-Yafei.

The competition, conducted by Abdullah Mubarak and Faisal al-Balushi, included questions and gifts for the audience, in addition to sport shows and popular games.

Following the event, Sheikha Asma al-Thani, the director of the International Co-operation Sector at the QOC, honoured Hour and Hour chief executive Tamani al-Yafei for her efforts and contribution to the success of the NSD activities.

"Based on our interest in sports and participation in events held in the country, we were keen to contribute to establishing the concept of sports culture for all by participating in the QNSD events," said al-Yafei. "We seek to contribute to raising awareness of the importance of replacing an unhealthy lifestyle with a more active one, in order to maintain health and reduce health risks."

QPO's Gulf folk music concert today at MDD



In partnership with Msheirib Properties, the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) is set to present a concert featuring Gulf folk music today at 7.30pm, in Al Baraha Square at Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD).

The programme will include premieres of compositions by the QPO's deputy executive director and noted vocalist and composer Dr Nasser Sahim (***pictured***), who plays a vital role in safeguarding Qatar's traditional musical heritage.

The concert has a variety of styles, including Liwa dances, Adsani music, Al Fareesa Ashoury, and Khamari music.

This fusion of Gulf folklore integrates various performing arts, such as traditional music, dance, and theatrical performances.

"Through my deep passion for Qatari music and heritage, I am proud to have played an active role in merging Qatar's musical culture and folklore with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra in an innovative musical form that blends the spirit of Gulf authenticity with classical orchestration," Dr Sahim said.

"Through my work, I have endeavoured to build a musical cultural bridge that reflects Qatar's artistic identity and presents it to the world in a modern style without losing its traditional lustre," he said. "I have reworked Gulf folkloric pieces with orchestral arrangements that enhance their artistic value and give them a new dimension from which future generations can be inspired by the spirit of creativity and pride in their musical identity."

"This musical fusion is not just a fleeting artistic experience, but a step towards establishing a global Gulf musical legacy that is able to continue and evolve, while preserving the essence of Qatari culture and its place among the peoples," Dr Sahim added. "I believe that music, as a force that brings people together, can be a way to take our cultural heritage to new horizons that reflect our diversity And culture richness."

QPC holds mobile video shooting workshop

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Centre (QPC) organised a workshop on mobile video shooting (I Reels), presented by trainer Hussein al-Sada (professional director and photographer), over the course of four hours, with the participation of 25 male and female participants.



Part of the workshop in progress.

The workshop was held at the QPC, and was aimed at developing the capabilities of participants who are photography enthusiasts, and provide them with visual culture skills using smart devices through the basics of video shooting, montage solutions and colouring secrets.

At the end of the workshop, QPC vice-chairman Abdullah bin Hayi al-Sulaiti distributed certificates of attendance to the participants in the workshop.

QPD director-general Sadiq Mohammed al-Amari spoke about the role of the centre in developing skills in various journalistic arts.

"The workshops address how to use smart devices professionally and professionally and adapt them to produce a professional image or video," al-Sada said.



Kahramaa wins award

The Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) has won the 'Interactive Corporate Communication Award for Semi-Governmental Entities for the year 2024'. The honour was presented at the Government Communication Forum 2025, which concluded yesterday. The achievement reflects efforts in developing interactive corporate communication strategies and enhancing interaction with the public through multiple channels, in line with the best international practices, a statement said.



Culture ministry organises Al Baraha event in Al Khor Park

The Ministry of Culture organised Al Baraha activities at the Heritage Park in Al Khor, which will continue for three days. The ministry's Theatre Affairs Centre participated with puppet theatre and offered several workshops for children, while the Nomas Centre provided training for children in Qatari customs and heritage.
Event co-ordinator Mona al-Mujalli stated that Al Baraha is an event that enhances community partnership, and is organised to reach everyone.
The activities included events reflecting Qatari heritage, traditional dishes, and Qatari traditional foods, as well as theatrical performances inspired by heritage. – ***QNA***

Ministry urges visitors to enjoy nature reserves without tampering with fences

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has urged the visitors of open and green desert areas to enjoy the natural reserves while preserving them and avoid littering or lighting fires directly on the ground.

The ministry stressed that removing or displacing the fences surrounding the reserves is a violation of the law, and will subject offenders to legal accountability.

Necessary measures will be taken against violators in accordance with applicable regulations.

The ministry clarified these fences do not obstruct the visitors from accessing the reserves and were installed to protect them and maintain their ecological balance, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the beauty of the wilderness responsibly and sustainably.

The fencing project is part of the efforts to protect these areas from encroachments, prevent vehicle



entry, and preserve the environmental and natural heritage to ensure its sustainability for future generations.

Accordingly, the ministry called on members of the public to co-operate and adhere to the approved measures for environmental protection, highlighting the importance of reporting any violations through the unified contact centre at 16066.

COMMUNITY

LIS celebrates inaugural Grade 12 farewell, graduation



Loyola International School (LIS) marked a milestone with its first-ever Grade 12 farewell and graduation ceremony, held at the Oasis Campus.

Noted corporate trainer Manzoor Moideen was the chief guest.

He encouraged the graduates to embrace communication, resilience, and lifelong learning as they step into the next chapter of their lives.

LIS managing director Anup Chakravarthy, and director of operations Sarat Koduru, emphasised the school's commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals and expressed confidence in the students' ability to excel in their future endeavours.

Principal Bhavna Sonkamble reminded the graduates of their lifelong connection to the school, saying, 'Once a Loyolite, always a Loyolite.' The event also provided a platform for parents to express their gratitude. One parent shared heartfelt appreciation for the school's dedication to academic excellence and holistic development, acknowledging the transformative impact LIS has had on their child's growth.

The valedictorian speeches by Ahmed and Sanika reflected a bright outlook on the future, filled with hope, ambition, and gratitude for the experiences and lessons learned at LIS. The ceremony concluded on a celebratory note with a cake-cutting ceremony and a group photo.

QATAR NATIONAL SPORT DAY CELEBRATION

KWA-Q hosts badminton tournament



As part of the celebration of Qatar National Sport Day, Kottar Welfare Association – Qatar (KWA-Q) hosted a badminton tournament. Team Mohamed Ehaab and Shahul Hameed lifted the winner cup and Team Shahul Hameed and Ahamed Rasik the runner-up cup.
The inaugural ceremony had Indian Sports Centre management committee member Kavitha Mahendran as the chief guest. She was honoured by KWA-Q advisory committee member Mowlavi Hafiz Imaduddeen Umari. KWA-Q officials Mubarak, Mohamed Badardeen, Anwar, Shaik Ahamed, Zahith, Syed Ibrahim, and Mohamed Shiffan Sameem organised the tournament.

Run challenge at Noble International School



As part of the Qatar National Sport Day celebrations, Noble International School successfully organised a 1km run challenge. Students from various Indian schools participated in the challenge flagged off by the chief guest, Salem Amer al-Badri, Qatar international athlete.
Other distinguished guests included Al Sadd Sports Academy head coaches Marouene Mansour and Ahmed Abou Jalalah.
Management members, principal Dr Shibu Abdul Rasheed and other officials were present.

Shantiniketan Indian School emerged as the overall champion, while MES Indian School and Noble International School secured first and second runner-up positions, respectively. The overall championship trophy was presented by the school's finance director Shoukath Ali Taj.



DPS Modern Indian School's Kindergarteners celebrate 24th annual day



DPS Modern Indian School's Kindergarteners celebrated their 24th annual day with a performance titled 'The Blue Umbrella – Unfolding the Magic of Emotions.'

The show, inspired by Ruskin Bond's The Blue Umbrella and Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, blended emotions, innocence, imagination, and curiosity. Through music, dance, and drama, 500 young performers transported the audience to a magical realm.

Kindergarten headmistress Najla Bukhari gave the opening address. The school's silver jubilee logo was released on the occasion.

Principal Asna Nafees highlighted that the annual day, centred around a meaningful theme, is a sincere effort by young students to convey a meaningful message on understanding and managing emotions. The special guest, Madhura Joshi, assistant vice-president, Commercial Banking, QNB, lauded the efforts of the students, teachers, and parents in bringing the extraordinary celebration to fruition.

School vice-president George Thomas spoke. President Yasir Nainar extended his best wishes through a video message.

MES cricketers runners-up in Women U19 T20 League



The Girls' Cricket Team of MES Indian School emerged runners-up in the Women U19 T20 League conducted by Qatar Cricket Association. This is a significant achievement, especially after 14 years since their last similar success in the tournament for the school, a statement said. The team, captained by Maria Theresa Jacob, had Mariam Sameer and Afsal Sakeer as coaches. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the team on their outstanding performance, acknowledging their success as a major milestone in the school's sports history.

Rajagiri Public School ceremony honours Class of 2025



Rajagiri Public School celebrated the accomplishments of its graduating class of 2025 with the 'Au Revoir' Graduation Day Ceremony.

Managing director George Jacob was the chief guest, joining other dignitaries, faculty, parents, and students.

The ceremony commenced with the traditional lighting of the lamp.

Academic director Dr Prasanth Palakkapillil urged the graduates to embrace the future with confidence. The symbolic lighting of the candle, was led by administrative director, Jinsu Aju.

Vice-principal, S Radhakrishnan, led the oath-taking ceremony, solidifying the graduates' commitment to the school's values.

Board of Directors member, Dr Aju Abraham, reinforced the graduates' potential for success. Students shared heartfelt reflections on their time at Rajagiri, reminiscing about their shared experiences.

Principal Joshy Abaham offered a touching blessing, while the head boy and head girl expressed gratitude to the school community. Teachers and parents offered their blessings, wishing the graduates well in their future endeavours.

KEF TM annual speech contest



The KEF Toastmasters Club, a corporate club in District 116, hosted its annual speech contest recently. Winners will advance to the Area 15 contest. The event was led by Ajinas, Mazhar Hussain, Sareetha Sivanantham, Sakthi Sukhnani, Remi Raji, and Hamna Azad. The chief judges Shabari Prasad and Sajeev Krishnan were supported by a panel of judges.

She Speaks TM club launched



She Speaks Toastmasters club is one of the new Toastmasters club chartered in District 116, Qatar. The club is aligned under Area 15 in Division D. The demo meeting was graced by Toastmasters International regional 8 adviser Jennifer Ghosh and District 116 director, Sabeena M K. The president of the new club, Shainy Kabeer, opened the meeting. Division D director Smitha Bindu, Area 15 director Nivedita Ketkar and Naila Rizwan handled various tasks.

A bird's-eye view



A dove chick takes in the surroundings from its nest on a bougainvillea plant in a Doha garden, during a winter morning. Doves are all-season prolific breeders. **PICTURE**: *Gulf Times* news editor Bonnie James (**Instagram**: the.explorer7).



Karwan-e-Urdu Qatar holds international Mushaira

Karwan-e-Urdu Qatar held its sixth award function ceremony and international Mushaira recently. Eminent Urdu poet Farhat Ehsas, who presided over the event, was bestowed with a lifetime achievement award carrying a cash prize of Rs100,000 for his contribution to the Urdu poetry.

Karwan-e-Urdu Qatar general secretary Rashid Alam Rashid welcomed the gathering. Thanaullah Abdul Rahman, a businessman and Urdu lover, was the chief guest, while Rajesh Kumar Mishra, founder of Atulyam Infratech, India, was the guest of honour. A large number of Indian and Pakistani lovers of Urdu language and culture attended the literary event.

The event began with a recitation of the Holy Qur'an by Farooque Nadvi, followed by the welcome address of Karwan-e-Urdu Qatar chairman Azim Abbas, an entrepreneur. He also thanked the visiting poets from India and Pakistan and all the sponsors for their wholehearted support and generous contribution for the remarkable evening.

Farhat Ehsas, Mansoor Usmani, Tahir Faraz, Jawaid Saba, Ateeq Anzar, Ali Zaryoon, Dr Anil Choubey, Sapna Moolchandani, Zawar Hussain Zayer, Rashid Alam Rashid and Tariq Faiz recited their poems. Mansoor Usmani conducted the Mushaira.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Karwan-e-Urdu Qatars vice-president Shahid Khan. Before the start of the event the late Hassan Abdul Kareem Chougle was remembered with a two-minute silence.





350 attend CPR training

About 350 people attended a training programme titled 'Cardiac arrest: The value of seconds'.

Dr Rasheed Pattath, senior consultant in Cardiothoracic ICU, Heart Hospital, Hamad Medical Corporation, was the key note speaker and trainer.

Fifty of the participants got hands-on training in imparting cardio pulmonary resuscitation. Dr Prathibha Ratheesh welcomed the gathering. Naseeha Majeed introduced the speaker. Sajna Mansoor proposed a vote of thanks. Majeed Nadapuram facilitated the event technically.



Expo Crescendo '25 at Mesis



The spirit of innovation was in full bloom at MES Indian School's Abu Hamour Branch (Mesis) as students took centre stage at Expo - Crescendo '25, a showcase of student ingenuity, featuring a range of innovative projects. From live demonstrations to intricate working models, each project was evaluated for its originality, problem-solving approach, and real-world impact. The young innovators were lauded by the school principal and chief convener of the event, Pramila Kannan.

WORLD

CO-OPERATION

UK and China revive stalled talks during FM meeting

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in London yesterday, in the latest sign of improving ties between the two countries. The meeting saw the pair revive the so-called UK-China Strategic Dialogue, a bilateral forum that was last held in 2018 before it stalled as relations soured. "After seven years time, I'm sure that this will be conducive to the study, improvement and stabilisation and development of our relations," Wang told Lammy. "I hope that through this dialogue, we can deliver on the important common understandings between our two leaders," he added.

TRAGEDY

Suspected gas blast kills four at Taiwan department store

A suspected gas explosion in a Taiwan department store killed at least four people and injured 29, authorities said yesterday, with the force of the blast spraying large pieces of debris over the street below. The blast happened in the food court on the 12th floor of the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store in the city of Taichung, the National Fire Agency said. The floor was closed for construction work at the time of the incident, the agency said. Video posted on social media showed the moment of the explosion, with cladding and other debris flying off the building and dust billowing from inside.

DATA

Australia's 50 richest now control $243 billion

The combined wealth of Australia's 50 richest people has climbed nearly 10% to $243bn in the past 12 months, Forbes said yesterday, with mining magnate Gina Rinehart topping the list again. Forbes said technology executives capitalised on the sector's continued growth, while mining fortunes were bumpier in the last year due to falling commodity prices and rising costs. Rinehart, who controls Hancock Prospecting, saw a 4% decline in her wealth to $29bn but retained her title as the country's richest person. Property tycoon Harry Triguboff reclaimed the second spot after a five-year gap, with his net worth rising to $18.8bn.

WEATHER

Severe cyclone builds near Australia's mining hub

A severe tropical cyclone was rapidly building strength off Australia's minerals-rich west coast yesterday, whipping up destructive winds and forcing the closure of a global iron ore-shipping hub. Government forecasters said Cyclone Zelia was expected to build into a category five system – the strongest on the scale – before making landfall today afternoon. Port Hedland, one of the world's largest iron ore loading ports, has cleared vessels and shut down in anticipation. "It will continue to rapidly develop and then start moving towards the coast," Bureau of Meteorology forecaster Dean Narramore said.

India 'expects $200mn missile deal with Manila this year'

Reuters
New Delhi

India expects to sell short-range missiles to the Philippines this year in a deal worth more than $200mn, Indian sources said, for New Delhi's second major defence export contract with Manila as tension grows with China.

The Akash missile system developed by India's defence research body has drawn interest from the Philippines, which has told New Delhi it would make an order in the fiscal year that begins in April, three sources pointed out.

All the sources spoke on condition of anonymity as the matter is a sensitive one.

The surface-to-air missile system with a range of up to 25km was exported to Armenia last year in a $230mn deal, the sources said, adding that the Philippine sale is expected to be bigger than the Armenian deal.

However, they did not reveal the number of missiles and accompanying systems, including radars, involved.

India's Bharat Dynamics Ltd, the manufacturer of the missiles, was one of the exhibitors at last year's Asian Defense and Security Exhibition in Manila.

The company and India's defence ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

A Philippine defence spokesperson, Arsenio Andolong, declined to comment on the specifics of any deal or on plans for procurement, but said the country's armed forces had "manifested it requires these capabilities".

The expected deal would follow India's $375mn sale of the mid-range BrahMos supersonic cruise missile to the Philippines in 2022.

The purchase comes at a time when the Philippines is building its military strength as tension escalates with Beijing on overlapping claims in the busy waterway of the South China Sea, where the two have clashed in recent years.

India is the world's biggest arms importer but is stepping up domestic production and boosting defence exports to counter China's military strength and influence in its neighbourhood after their troops clashed on the Himalayan border in 2020.

The Philippines' armed forces chief said on Wednesday the country was looking to buy more military hardware to modernise its arsenal, including additional BrahMos missiles from India and at least two submarines.

"We are getting more of this (BrahMos system) this year, and in the coming years," General Romeo Brawner said in a speech to business figures in the Philippines, but did not mention the Akash missile system.

Queen Camilla visits Middlesbrough community centre



Britain's Queen Camilla visits Middlesbrough's International Centre to meet representatives of local community groups, voluntary services and police officers working to reduce knife crime in the town, in Middlesbrough, Britain, yesterday.

India raises budget for human spaceflight mission to $2.32bn

Reuters
Bengaluru

India has expanded its Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission to include building and operating a national space station, planning two crewed and six uncrewed missions by 2028, a minister said yesterday.

Gaganyaan, meaning "sky craft" in Hindi, is India's first human spaceflight mission. It aims to launch a habitable space capsule into a 400km orbit and safely return it with a splashdown in the Indian Ocean.

The mission will demonstrate India's capability to send astronauts into space and bring them back, a milestone achieved so far only by the US, Russia, and China. The nation announced its plan for a space station last year.

Outlining the Gaganyaan mission's expanded tasks, deputy minister Jitendra Singh told parliament the mission's budget had risen to Rs201.93bn ($2.32bn). It had earlier received budget approval of about $1.1bn, and was originally planned as a project with one crewed and two uncrewed missions.

Various test flights and assemblies are under way.

The ambitious mission, which was originally announced in 2019 with a target to send Indian astronauts into space by 2022, has faced delays, primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, and additional safety measures.

The delay has also been caused by a global shortage in the supply of electronic components, equipment suitable for use in space, extra test missions, safety checks for astronauts, and a change in the spacecraft's design to keep its weight within the carrying capacity of the rocket, Singh said in a written answer to questions raised in parliament.

The development of India's own life support system crucial for sustaining astronauts in space is also taking longer because it is a new technology and could not be sourced from abroad as planned, he added.

The country is aiming to have an operational Bharatiya Antariksh Station by 2035 and sending an Indian crewed mission to the Moon by 2040.

India and Pakistan exchange fire across Kashmir border

Indian and Pakistani troops have exchanged fire across the heavily militarised Kashmir frontier that divides the two nations, with at least four casualties reported by the Pakistani side yesterday.

Pakistan state broadcaster PTV, citing unnamed security sources, said Wednesday's incident injured two soldiers and two civilians, all from that country.

Unnamed Indian security officials told broadcaster NDTV that Pakistani troops had fired unprovoked, prompting India's forces to return fire.

Pakistan's military declined to comment. India army officials did not respond to a request for comment.

The incident comes two days after two Indian army soldiers were killed by an improvised explosive device in the region.

A border ceasefire agreement signed by the neighbours in 2003 has largely held in the decades since, but both frequently accuse the other of breaching it.

Tulip Festival in New Delhi



A woman takes photographs of tulips during the annual Tulip Festival in New Delhi yesterday.

Adani quits $442mn Lanka power project

AFP
Colombo

Indian conglomerate Adani Group has withdrawn from a troubled $442mn wind power project in Sri Lanka after the island nation's government sought to renegotiate the deal.

Sri Lanka's Board of Investment (BoI) said yesterday it had received a letter from Adani Green Energy Ltd saying it had decided to "respectfully withdraw" from the project.

A BoI official said the government was yet to respond to the sudden pull-out by the Indian company, which had pledged last month to invest up to $1bn on renewable projects in Sri Lanka.

Adani said in a statement yesterday that they were pulling out of the wind power project as well as two other projects to set up power transmission lines.

"We remain committed to Sri Lanka and are open to future collaboration if the government of Sri Lanka so desires," it said in a brief statement.

The withdrawal followed a decision by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's administration to revoke a power purchase agreement with Adani Group in order to negotiate lower energy costs.

Dissanayake's party had strongly criticised the deal as "corrupt" and wanted it renegotiated.

Adani told the BoI that it had spent about $5mn on "pre-development activities" relating to the proposed 484-megawatt plant on Sri Lanka's northwestern coast.

Sri Lanka's previous government had signed a 20-year deal to buy electricity from the Adani wind power plant at 8.26 US cents per kilowatt.

Australia, China trade blame over fighter jet incident

AFP
Sydney

Australia yesterday said that a Chinese fighter jet dropped flares near an Australian air force plane patrolling the South China Sea, accusing Beijing of "unsafe" military conduct.

Beijing swiftly hit back, accusing the Australian plane of "violating Chinese sovereignty and endangering Chinese national security".

China claims almost all of the South China Sea, despite an international ruling in 2016 concluding this has no legal basis.

The Australian plane was flying a "routine" surveillance patrol over the contested waters on February 11 when the Chinese aircraft approached, Canberra's defence department said yesterday.

The Shenyang J-16 strike jet "released flares in close proximity" to the Australian Poseidon surveillance plane, it added, calling the incident "an unsafe and unprofessional manoeuvre that posed a risk to the aircraft and personnel".

The department said the Australian government had "expressed its concerns" to China over the incident.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said that "without Chinese permission, the Australian military aircraft deliberately intruded into the airspace around China's Xisha Islands", Beijing's name for the Paracel Islands.

"China's measures to expel the aircraft were legitimate, legal, professional and restrained," Guo said.

He added that Beijing had "lodged solemn representations" with Canberra to demand an end to "infringements and provocations".

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said the flares passed within 100 feet of the aircraft, which typically carried around nine people.

No one was injured but Marles said the move posed the "potential for significant damage".

He told Sky News that officials had voiced their displeasure with their Chinese counterparts in Canberra and Beijing.

The rebuke coincided with the arrival of three Chinese navy vessels in waters northeast of Australia's mainland.

Defence department officials said a Chinese frigate and a cruiser had been spotted near Australia's "maritime approaches" with a supply tanker in tow.

Marles said it appeared to be unrelated to the aircraft incident but the Australian navy had sent its own frigate to shadow their voyage.

"Australia respects the rights of all states to exercise freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with international law, just as we expect others to respect Australia's right to do the same," the defence department said.

"Defence will continue to monitor the activities of the task group in Australia's maritime approaches with a combination of capabilities, including air and maritime assets."

The mid-air incident is the latest in a string of episodes between China and Australia in the increasingly contested airspace and shipping lanes of Asia.

A Chinese fighter jet was accused of intercepting an Australian Seahawk helicopter in international airspace last May, dropping flares across its flight path.

In 2023, a Chinese destroyer was accused of bombarding submerged Australian navy divers with sonar pulses in waters off Japan, causing minor injuries.

The divers had been sailing on an Australian navy frigate, the HMAS Toowoomba, tasked with supporting sanctions enforcement efforts in Japan's exclusive economic zone.

"Australia expects all countries, including China, to operate their militaries in a safe and professional manner," the defence department said yesterday.

Turkiye fines Adidas because of unclear advertising

AFP
Istanbul

Turkiye has hit German sporting equipment giant Adidas with a fine of more than $15,000 for failing to inform customers that one of its flagship footwear models contained a proscribed material.

The Muslim-majority country's advertising regulator slammed Adidas for describing its "Samba OG" trainers – which has been sported in recent years by models Kendall Jenner and Bella Hadid – as made from "real leather", without specifying it came from a proscribed animal.

In a ruling seen by AFP yesterday, it said the use of materials "contrary to the religious sensibilities of the majority of society must be clearly mentioned" in advertisements and product descriptions.

The regulator fined the company 550,059 Turkish lira (about $15,200).

Contacted by AFP, Adidas admitted it had "updated" the specification on its website, without commenting on the fine.

Kyiv, EU caught off-guard after Trump-Putin call

Reuters/AFP
Kyiv/Brussels

Ukraine and its European allies have demanded that they be included in any peace negotiations, after US President Donald Trump spoke by phone with Russia's Vladimir Putin and said Kyiv would neither get all its land back nor join the Nato.

Russia's financial markets soared and the price of Ukraine's debt rose at the prospect of the first talks in years to end Europe's deadliest war since World War II.

Trump's unilateral overture to Putin, accompanied by apparent concessions on Ukraine's principal demands, raised alarm for both Kyiv and the European allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) who said they feared the White House might make a deal without them.

"We, as a sovereign country, simply will not be able to accept any agreements without us," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

He said that Putin aimed to make his negotiations bilateral with the United States, and it was important that this not be allowed.

The Kremlin said plans were under way for Putin and Trump to meet, possibly in Saudi Arabia.

Ukraine would "of course" participate in peace talks in some way, but there would also be a bilateral negotiation track between the United States and Russia, said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

European officials took an exceptionally firm line in public towards Trump's peace overture, saying that any agreement would be impossible to implement unless they and the Ukrainians were included in negotiating it.

"Any quick fix is a dirty deal," European foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. She also denounced the apparent concessions offered in advance.

"Why are we giving them (Russia) everything that they want even before the negotiations have been started?" said Kallas. "It's appeasement. It has never worked."

Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte, a former Dutch prime minister adept at smoothing over differences between Europe and Washington, said it was important that Moscow understand the West remained united, noting that Ukraine had never been promised that a peace deal would include alliance membership.

A European diplomatic source said ministers had agreed to engage in a "frank and demanding dialogue" with US officials – some of the strongest language in the diplomatic lexicon – at the annual Munich Security Conference beginning today.

On Wednesday Trump made the first publicly acknowledged White House call with Putin since Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion, and then followed it up with a call to Zelensky.

Trump said he believed both men wanted peace.

However, the Trump administration also said openly for the first time that it was unrealistic for Ukraine to expect to return to its 2014 borders or join the Nato alliance as part of any agreement, and that no US troops would join any security force in Ukraine that might be set up to guarantee a ceasefire.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, who unveiled the new policy in remarks at Nato headquarters, said yesterday that the world was fortunate to have Trump, the "best negotiator on the planet, bringing two sides together to find a negotiated peace".

Kremlin spokesman Peskov said Moscow was "impressed" by Trump's willingness to seek a settlement.

Russia seized Ukraine's Crimea peninsula and its proxies captured territory in the east in 2014, before its full-scale invasion in 2022 when it captured more land in the east and south.

Ukraine pushed Russian invaders back from the outskirts of Kyiv and recaptured swathes of territory in 2022, but its outmanned and outgunned forces have slowly ceded more land since a failed Ukrainian counter-offensive in 2023.

Relentless fighting has killed or injured hundreds of thousands of troops on both sides – there is no reliable death toll – and pulverised Ukrainian cities.

Meanwhile, there has been no narrowing of positions on either side.

Moscow demands Kyiv cede more land and be rendered permanently neutral in any peace deal; Kyiv says Russian troops must withdraw and it must win security guarantees comparable to Nato membership to prevent future attacks.

Antonio Costa, who heads the European Council representing the EU's 27 nations, warned against settling for a deal that did not neutralise Russia's threat to Europe.

"Peace cannot be a simple ceasefire. Russia must no longer be a threat to Ukraine, to Europe, to international security," he said.

US aircraft carrier collides with merchant ship

The *USS Harry S Truman* aircraft carrier collided with a merchant vessel in the Mediterranean Sea, the US Navy said yesterday.

The warship's collision with the *Besiktas-M* took place late the previous day while the carrier was operating near Port Said in Egypt, US Sixth Fleet spokesperson Commander Timothy Gorman said in a statement.

The collision "did not endanger the *Harry S Truman* (CVN 75) as there are no reports of flooding or injuries".

"The propulsion plants are unaffected and in a safe and stable condition," Gorman said, adding that the incident was under investigation.

The statement did not mention the condition of the *Besiktas-M* after the collision.

Shipping websites listed the merchant ship as being a bulk carrier that flies the Panamanian flag. – ***AFP***

Dozens hurt in car ramming attack in Munich, ahead of federal election

Reuters/AFP
Munich

At least 30 people were hurt when a car driven by an Afghan asylum-seeker ploughed into a crowd in Munich yesterday in what the state premier said was probably an attack, putting security back in focus before next week's federal election.

The suspected attack came hours before international leaders including US Vice-President JD Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky were due to arrive in the southern German city for the Munich Security Conference.

"We currently believe that we have at least 30 people injured, some of them seriously," said a police spokesperson.

Police said a white car had approached police vehicles that were accompanying a demonstration of striking workers, before speeding up and slamming into people.

One shot was fired at the suspect and it was unclear if he was wounded, police added.

Officers detained the 24-year-old driver. They said his motive was unclear.

"It was probably an attack," the Bavaria state premier, Markus Soeder, told reporters.

The Bavarian interior minister, Joachim Herrmann, said the suspect had been known to police for drug and shoplifting offences.

His asylum application had been rejected, said Herrmann, but he had not been forced to leave due to security concerns in Afghanistan.

News outlet *Der Spiegel*, citing security sources, reported that the suspect was believed to have posted Islamist content online before the attack.

The suspect was said to have arrived in Germany in 2016 at the height of the mass migrant influx to Europe.

Immigration and security issues have dominated campaigning ahead of the February 23 election, especially after other violent incidents in recent weeks, with polls showing the centre-right conservatives leading followed by the far-right.



Police takes pictures of a car that was driven into a crowd in Munich. – ***Reuters***

In December, six people were killed in an attack on a Christmas market in Magdeburg and last month a toddler and adult were killed in a knife attack in the Bavarian town of Aschaffenburg.

Immigrants have been arrested over both attacks.

Conservative Friedrich Merz, frontrunner to be Germany's next chancellor, declared that safety would be his top priority.

"We will enforce law and order. Everyone must feel safe in our country again. Something has to change in Germany," Merz posted on X.

Merz has accused Social Democrat Chancellor Olaf Scholz of being soft on immigration and last month, he even broke a taboo by winning a parliamentary vote on asylum with the support of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The AfD, in second place in polls, also seized on the incident, with co-leader Alice Weidel focusing on the driver being an Afghan asylum-seeker.

"Should this go on forever? Migration turnaround now!" she posted on social media platform X.

Scholz said the perpetrator could not hope for leniency.

"He must be punished and he must leave the country," said Scholz.

About four hours after the incident, the street where it took place was strewn with items of clothing and bags, a broken pram, a shoe and a pair of glasses.

People in the crowd had been taking part in a strike held by the Verdi public sector workers' union whose leader, Frank Werneke, expressed shock but said he had no further details.

Bavaria's interior minister said he did not suspect there was a connection to the Munich Security Conference, which starts today.

RFK Jr is confirmed as US health minister

Robert F Kennedy Jr, a vaccine critic who endorsed President Donald Trump after abandoning his own presidential bid, has been confirmed by the US Senate as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), overcoming resistance from the medical establishment and members of Congress.

Known widely as "RFK Jr", the 71-year-old nephew of the late president John F Kennedy secured the nomination by a vote of 52-48, becoming the latest contentious addition to President Donald Trump's cabinet.

Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky was the lone Republican joining all 47 Democrats to vote against Kennedy, who had made pledges to protect existing vaccination programmes in a bid to secure votes of hesitant lawmakers.

The confirmation paves the way for him to be sworn in to the job overseeing multiple high-profile agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Once Kennedy is sworn in, Trump will sign an executive order to establish a MAHA commission, named for Kennedy's "Make America Healthy Again" movement, and will direct the new HHS secretary "to investigate this chronic crisis plaguing our country", White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said on Fox News.

Kennedy, 71, is an environmental lawyer who has long sown doubts about the safety and efficacy of vaccines that have helped curb disease and prevented millions of deaths for decades.

He will now run an HHS department that directs more than $3tn in healthcare spending.

Opponents argued that he is unfit for the job.

Last year, 77 Nobel Prize winners penned an open letter to the Senate opposing his nomination, warning that his confirmation could put public health "in jeopardy". – ***Reuters/AFP***

Blast near Kabul govt offices kills two, injures three

Reuters
Kabul

A suicide bomber killed one person and wounded three in an attack near government offices in Kabul yesterday, an official spokesman said, the second explosion in Afghanistan this week.

The attacker was also killed.

Security guards had identified him and shot him as he approached the intended target, the ministry of urban development and housing, detonating the explosives, the interior ministry said.

No group has taken responsibility for the attack, which took place in a busy part of the capital housing administrative and government offices, and foreign embassies including the US embassy.

That site has been vacant since American and other foreign forces withdrew from the country in 2021.

This attack is the second this week after a suicide bomber detonated explosives strapped to his body outside a bank in northeastern Afghanistan on Tuesday, killing at least five people.

The Taliban government has declared security its highest priority since returning to power and analysts say they have had some success.

However, the Islamic State group remains active, targeting Taliban officials, visitors from abroad and foreign diplomats.

Suspect held over German asylum shelter attack plot

Police have arrested a suspect over a plot to bomb a German asylum-seeker shelter, prosecutors said yesterday, amid an inflamed debate on migration ahead of a general election.

Prosecutors in the eastern city of Dresden said they had "received an anonymous tip-off on February 12 that a 21-year-old German man from the Meissen area had armed himself with explosives, with plans to carry out an attack on a shelter for asylum-seekers in Senftenberg", in neighbouring Brandenburg state.

Investigators searched two properties in the Meissen area on Wednesday evening, seizing "two pyrotechnic objects, knuckle dusters, folding knives" and various other weapons.

"The 21-year-old suspect has been taken into provisional custody," said the statement, from police and prosecutors. – ***AFP***

Syrian migrant drama opens Berlin international film festival

AFP
Berlin

German director Tom Tykwer said yesterday that his latest movie about a Syrian immigrant aimed to encourage people to stop "isolating" themselves, as it opened Berlin's international film festival.

The Light, screening out of competition at the Berlinale, tells the story of a Berlin family whose lives are upended when they hire a domestic worker from Syria.

The movie marks a return to feature filmmaking after a long hiatus for Tykwer, 59, who has been focusing on the acclaimed German television series *Babylon Berlin*.

In *The Light*, the Engels family – Tim, Milena and their teenage twins – are all immersed in their separate worlds as they navigate the complexities of modern life.

However, when the enigmatic Farrah, recently arrived from Syria, is placed in their home as the new housekeeper, they find themselves slowly starting to reconnect.

"Everyone is in their own aquarium with their head stuck in it," Tykwer said. "They are stuck with their heads under water and then some energy comes from the outside and pulls them out and enables them look at each other again."

He said the film aimed to show that better communication can help people to relate personally but also "politically".

"We have to approach each other again and stop isolating ourselves so much," he said.

The Berlinale, which ranks with Cannes and Venice among Europe's top festivals, serves as a key launchpad for films from around the world.

US writer and director Todd Haynes will head up the jury at this year's edition, with 19 pictures vying for the festival's Golden Bear top prize.

Haynes said yesterday that the world was in a "state of particular crisis" and that filmmakers had witnessed the return of US President Donald Trump "with tremendous concern, shock".

Haynes said he hoped the Berlinale, which has a reputation as the most political of the big international film festivals, would serve as a forum for digesting global events.

"This festival has always had a strength of conviction and an openness to a challenging and political discourse and bringing that into the filmmaking, and what's happening in the world right now has put an extra urgency to all of that," he told reporters.

This year's Berlinale winds up on February 23, the same day as a snap election in Germany, called after the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's governing coalition late last year.

The campaign ahead of the election has been bitterly divisive, with the far-right AfD surging in the polls.

Last year, Berlinale organisers made headlines by barring five previously invited AfD politicians and telling them they were "not welcome".

Films in competition at the Berlinale include *Dreams*, from Mexican director Michel Franco, about a Mexican ballet dancer, and *What Does that Nature Say to You*, from South Korean arthouse favourite Hong Sang-soo.

Hollywood director Richard Linklater will present *Blue Moon*, starring Ethan Hawke, 11 years after Linklater won Berlin's Silver Bear for Best Director for *Boyhood*.

Police charge couple with murder over death of child maid

AFP
Islamabad

A Pakistani couple appeared in court yesterday accused of murdering a child maid, who the police authorities said they beat with a rolling pin for allegedly stealing chocolate.

Thirteen-year-old Iqra, who had only one name, was taken to hospital in the garrison city of Rawalpindi on Tuesday in a critical condition and later died of severe injuries.

A spokesman for Rawalpindi police said that Rashid Shafiq and his wife Sana, who also goes by one name, were charged with murder and remanded in custody for four days to allow for an investigation.

"Initially it was ascertained that the lady used a rolling pin for torture," spokesman Sajjad ul Hassan told AFP. "The victim had multiple fractures; legs, ankle, arms, head."

"All this happened due to a missing chocolate," the officer added.

It is illegal in Pakistan to employ individuals under the age of 15 but it remains a common practice, with impoverished parents often sending their young daughters to work.

Iqra's father Sana Ullah, who lives in a rural Punjab village, told AFP that his daughter had been working with the couple for the past 22 months, during which they paid him 8,000 rupees (around $28) a month.

COMMENT

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GULF TIMES

East Asia braces for Trump 2.0

The first two weeks of US President Donald Trump's second term were marked by a flurry of directives and executive orders. As expected, he wasted no time withdrawing the United States from the 2015 Paris climate agreement, just as he did during his first presidency. He withdrew the US from the World Health Organisation as well, and soon initiated a sweeping deportation campaign, using tariffs to pressure Colombia into accepting military planes carrying deported Colombian citizens.

While controversial, the deportation of undocumented immigrants – particularly those with criminal records – has broad public support. Other Trump initiatives, such as his renewed push to purchase Greenland and regain control of the Panama Canal, have been more polarising, and his decision to rename the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America has raised eyebrows in the US and abroad.

True to form, Trump has also introduced a raft of new tariffs. Most notably, he followed through on his campaign threats and announced a 10% tariff on imports from China. Before assuming office, Trump threatened to impose tariffs of up to 60% on Chinese goods.

But Trump's tariff offensive is not confined to traditional adversaries. In addition to China, he imposed 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau responded by pledging "forceful but reasonable" retaliation, though his ability to follow through is limited. In early January, Trudeau, with his popularity plumbing new lows, announced his resignation. Trump's threats and relentless mockery – including the suggestion that Canada become the 51st US state – did not help, further undermining Trudeau's already fragile political standing.

Trump has also announced plans to impose tariffs on Taiwan-made semiconductors, prompting emergency talks among Taiwanese policymakers. Taken together, these moves confirm what has long been apparent: geopolitical alliances mean little to Trump unless they serve his immediate interests.

True to form, US President Donald Trump has also introduced a raft of new tariffs

Curiously, Trump has remained silent about Japan and South Korea, America's two major allies in East Asia. Neither country was mentioned in his inauguration speech or in any of his subsequent statements and policy announcements. Both could find themselves under renewed pressure soon enough, given that Trump has been calling for them to spend more on defence since his first term. For the time being, however, Trump's apparent lack of interest in Japan and South Korea could work in their favour.

It is certainly a welcome relief for South Korea, which is in the midst of a domestic political crisis following the impeachment and arrest of former president Yoon Suk-yeol. Since South Korea does not have a vice-president, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo initially stepped in as acting president after Yoon was impeached for briefly declaring martial law. But Han himself was impeached two weeks later, leaving his deputy Choi Sang-mok to assume the roles of acting prime minister and president. Amid this political turmoil, Choi's ability to push back against potential demands from Trump is severely constrained.

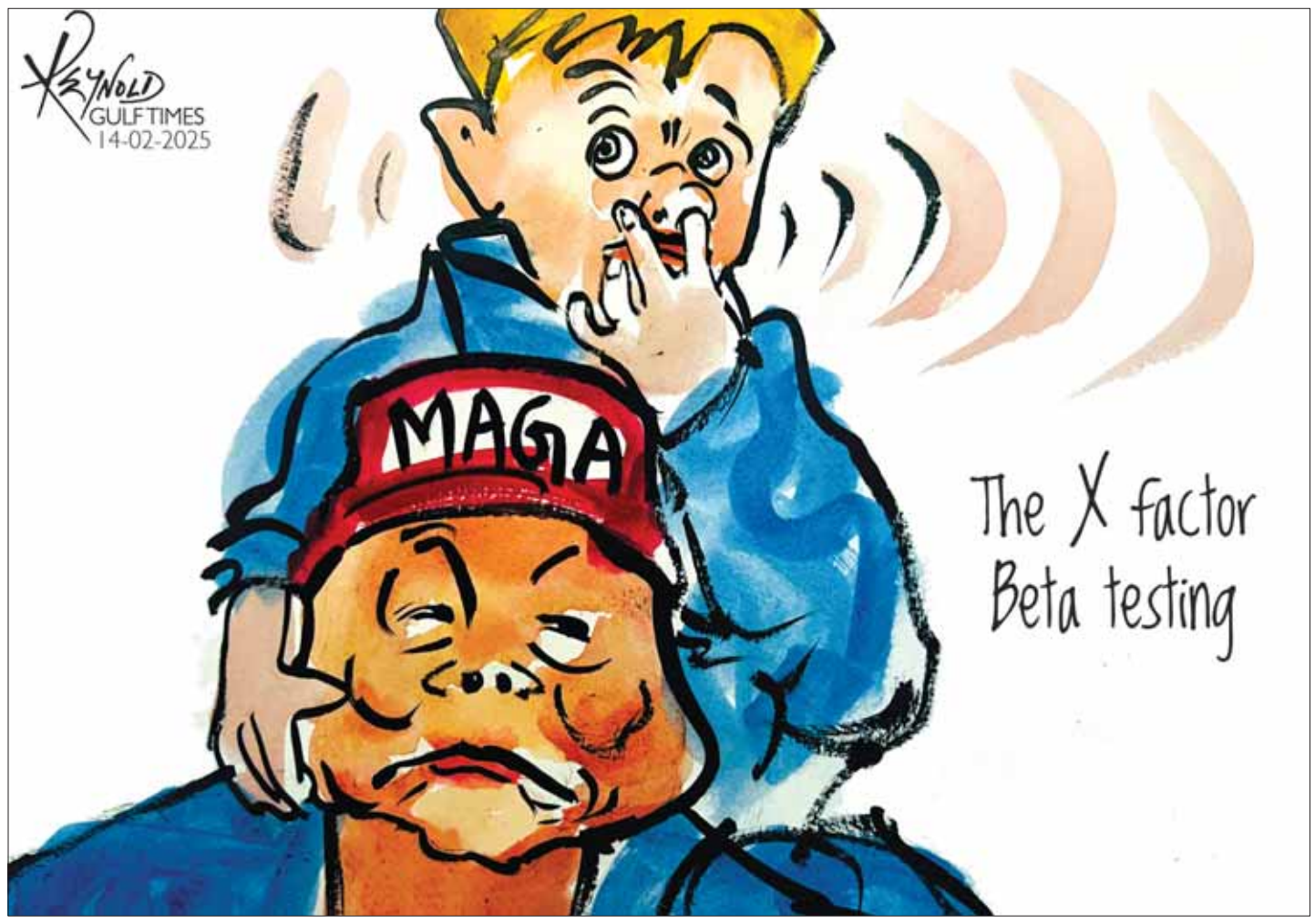
The Japanese government, for its part, is treading carefully, seeking to maintain a close relationship with Trump while considering possible concessions to avoid being hit by tariffs. Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru's first meeting with Trump is this week, three months after the US presidential election in November. Ishiba congratulated Trump after his victory, but their phone call lasted only five minutes – a stark contrast to Trump's 12-minute call with then-South Korean President Yoon and 25-minute conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron.

During Trump's first term, Japan's then-prime minister Shinzo Abe cultivated a strong relationship with the US president, bonding over their shared love of golf and establishing himself as a trusted ally in international forums like the G7. Ishiba, who is not a golfer, lacks this personal rapport, as well as the negotiating skills that led Trump to see Abe as a reliable partner.

Moreover, Abe was a political powerhouse. By securing a historic third term as leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, he solidified his image as a strong and popular figure. By contrast, Ishiba has limited influence over the LDP and the Diet (the Japanese parliament's lower house). As the head of a minority government, he has expressed a willingness to work with opposition parties to pass key legislation – an approach that may strike Trump as a sign of weakness. Given Ishiba's tenuous hold on leadership, Japan may come to view Trump's indifference as a blessing. — Project Syndicate

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Qatar Radio amplifies climate awareness on World Radio Day

Director of Qatar Radio Mohammed Nasser al-Mohannadi affirmed that the radio has produced many specialised and thematic programmes to discuss the most prominent environmental issues and challenges, as well as ways to address the negative effects of climate change, which impact human lives.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency on World Radio Day, which falls on Feb 13 each year, al-Mohannadi explained that Qatar Radio had produced several special programmes addressing climate change, including a programme that discusses the role of radio in the issue of climate change, in collaboration with the Radio Tunisienne, in addition to a documentary episode documenting the radio's relationship with climate change and its role in raising awareness about the issue's repercussions, its effects, and how to reduce the damage gap caused by it.

Al-Mohannadi pointed out that among the programmes produced by Qatar Radio on this occasion is a special episode, which takes the listener back to 1946, when the UN Radio was launched. The episode also highlights the idea of celebrating World Radio Day, which was proposed by the Spanish Radio Academy to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), as an annual reminder of the important role of radio, he added.

Furthermore, Qatar Radio airs short awareness segments on environmental and climate change issues throughout the day within its programming plans, he noted.

He emphasised Qatar Radio's commitment to participating in the global celebration of World Radio Day, which this year is under the theme "Radio and Climate Change." He noted that Qatar Radio plays an important role in producing programmes that serve the theme of the year, as it began early preparations with a specialised team as soon as the theme was announced, working to develop ideas and concepts and implement them in the best possible way to ensure that the message reaches all listeners and achieves its desired goals.

He also highlighted that the radio had actively engaged with the theme of the year, given the global attention to the phenomenon of climate change. This focus aligns with Qatar Radio's message of confronting the challenges and negative effects of climate change that affect human lives, he said. The Radio discusses the issue in all its dimensions, whether by shedding light on Qatar's strategic plans in this field or through the awareness-raising efforts to increase public awareness of environmental issues in general and climate change in particular, he pointed out.

Al-Mohannadi revealed plans to expand broadcasting reach and engage a wider audience through programme exchanges between the Arab States Broadcasting Union in general and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) radios in particular. This would provide the opportunity to deliver the media message to a larger number of target audiences both in Qatar and abroad.

He underlined that Qatar Radio contributes to discussing environmental and climate change issues through its various programmes, whether live or recorded, stressing that every program cycle hosts specialists and experts in this field to discuss the main challenges and work on addressing environmental challenges in the best possible way. He also emphasised that awareness of these issues is constantly increasing, demonstrating the significant role that radio plays in influencing audiences and raising their awareness of such critical issues that impact people's lives.

Qatar Radio constantly works on providing specialised and thematic programmes to shed light on the phenomenon of climate change by co-operating with all relevant parties, particularly the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, as well as specialised centres, to address all matters related to environmental and climate change issues. It also hosts experts and specialists in this field who share their experiences and knowledge in addressing climate change challenges, he said.

Al-Mohannadi stressed that the radio strategy is based on distinguished and attractive production to discuss environmental challenges and the negative effects of climate change, given the importance of the issue that must be addressed from several aspects, including informative and awareness-raising aspects, in addition to enhancing co-operation with the relevant authorities to contribute to raising environmental issues and ways to confront the repercussions of climate change.

He said that Qatar Radio has many platforms on social media for its programmes in general and for such types of programmes that discuss environmental issues in particular, noting that these platforms are invested in presenting special programmes and short, interesting illustrated materials to attract different categories of listeners.

He said that the Qatar Radio is working to benefit from modern technological means, especially AI technologies, in order to reach different segments of society and expand the listener base. He pointed out that there is great awareness among all age groups of the importance of preserving the environment due to its great impact on human lives.

Regarding Qatar Radio's future plans in the environment field, al-Mohannadi said that the plan is based on presenting more awareness programmes that aim for a better environmental life. He added that their radio and social media platforms are used in interactive ways that enables them to deliver their message to all followers.

In this context, Qatar Radio's efforts are integrated with global efforts to reduce this phenomenon by discussing and analysing all news related to the seriousness of the climate change and how to confront it. For example, it was discussed how 2024 was the hottest in history and that in 2025, there is a need to combine efforts, co-operation and integration between all media outlets to reduce this dangerous phenomenon.

Al-Mohannadi said that the message Qatar Radio emphasises is that a clean environment is a legacy inherited from our fathers and grandfathers, which must be kept that way so it can be a healthy environment for future generations. Therefore, Qatar Radio continuously and consistently highlight Qatari projects and initiatives that have a large and strong presence in all fields and in all international forums related to environmental issues and climate change, through programmes, websites, and correspondents.

The Director of Qatar Radio stressed the radio's keenness to allocate a large space to inform its listeners of the projects, initiatives and efforts undertaken by Qatar in relation to protecting the environment, combating climate change and confronting its challenges for a better future for humanity.

The celebration of World Radio Day was proposed the Spanish Radio Academy and was officially presented by the Permanent Delegation of Spain to Unesco at the 187th session of the Executive Council in Sept 2011. Unesco approved it on November 3, 2011 at its 36th session, and World Radio Day was approved in December 2012 by the UN General Assembly. Unesco aims to allocate a World Radio Day to raise awareness among the general public and media professionals of the importance of radio. **(QNA)**



The glory to faith

Haaroon Ar-Rasheed, may Allah have mercy upon him, once stood looking at the sky when he saw a cloud passing by. He addressed it saying, "Rain wherever you wish, for your fruit will certainly come to me anyway." This means that the cloud would have rained either on an Islamic land or on a non-Islamic one. In the first case, Muslims would have benefited from this rainwater in agriculture and in drinking; in the second case, Muslims would have also benefited from this rainwater in the form of *Jizyah* (a tax) that would be paid to them by non-Muslims. This example shows the state of glory, which the Muslims reached in the past when they applied their religion and worked for it. Nowadays, Muslims are certainly required to pursue the means of glory.

Glory here refers to power, victory, high standing and invincibility. It is a word which denotes that a person cannot be overcome or humiliated. Ibn Al-Jawzi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said:

Some of the scholars of *Tafseer* (Qur'anic exegesis) said, "In the Qur'an, glory is used in three different senses.

It is used to signify might, as in the verse (which means):

• {"By the might of Pharaoh, indeed it is we who are predominant."} [Qur'an 26:44]

• {By Your might, I will surely mislead them all} [Qur'an 38:82]

It is also used to signify honour, as in the verse (which means): {Do they seek with them honor [through power]? But indeed, honor belongs to Allah entirely.} [Qur'an 4:139]

Finally, it is used to signify dispraised pride as in the verse (which means):

• {And when it is said to him, "Fear Allah ," pride in the sin takes hold of him.} [Qur'an 2:206]

• {But those who disbelieve are in pride and dissension.} [Qur'an 38:2]

From the above, it is noticed that there is praised glory and dispraised glory. Praised glory is that which pertains to Allah The Almighty, to His Messenger, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention) and to the believers. This is real and permanent glory since it is from and with the support of Allah The Almighty who cannot be defeated or resisted. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And to Allah belongs [all] Honour and to His Messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.} [Qur'an 63:8].

On the other hand, the glory of the disbelievers is, in fact, humiliation and disgrace. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And they have taken besides Allah [false] deities that they would be for them [a source of] honour. No! Those "gods" will deny their worship of them and will be against them opponents [on the Day of Judgment].} [Qur'an 19:81-82].

Many people pursued the wrong way to glory, victory and enablement. Some of them pursued it through money and forgot that money is only a *Fitnah* (trial) and a loss if one does not give the right that Allah The Almighty has to it. Moreover, this money might be a means of humiliation. Al-Hasan may Allah have mercy upon him said, "By Allah, Allah The Almighty humiliates whoever glorifies money." Indeed, we have seen a many examples of that in life.

Other people seek glory through their positions and prestige. This may enable them to achieve temporary glory. However, if this is not established on justice and good reputation, then it certainly will not last. Indeed, many a leader and president were enjoying glory and then became captives in prisons, and their glory turned into humiliation.

What is even more dangerous is when a person seeks glory through the disbelievers, i.e. by allying himself with them, even if this is against the Muslims' interests. This is no more than an illusion. In fact, it is an instant humiliation, and the first people to turn against such people would be his 'allies' from the disbelievers. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {Give tidings to the hypocrites that there is for them a painful punishment - Those who take disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do they seek with them honour [through power]? But indeed, honor belongs to Allah entirely.} [Qur'an 4:138-139] Consequently, throwing one's self in the arms of the disbelievers is the shortest way to dishonour and humiliation because these disbelievers would not accept from us anything less than disbelief. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion.} [Qur'an 2:120].

Other people still seek glory through their ancestors and tribes, even if they were misguided. In a Hadeeth on the authority of Abu Rayhaanah, may Allah be pleased with him, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "If a person attributes himself to nine of his disbelieving forefathers, seeking through them glory and pride, he will be their tenth in Hell."

Hence, the unquestionable truth is that a person who seeks glory must demand it from Allah The Almighty through obeying Him and avoiding disobedience. 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab, may Allah be pleased with him, summarised this wonderful meaning in a few words; He said, "We were the most humiliated people, but Allah The Almighty has honoured us with Islam. If we demand honor through any means other than Islam, Allah The Almighty will humiliate us."

Ibraaheem ibn Shaybaan, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Honour lies in modesty, glory lies in piety, and freedom lies in contentment." When a Muslim lives in obedience to Allah The Almighty, he lives in honour and dignity. He may be afflicted, but nevertheless he has a strong sense of honor. This appeared clearly in the life of the righteous predecessors, may Allah be pleased with them, even in the darkest moments and in the severest and hardest situations.

Situations which indicate the glory of the righteous predecessors

When Bilaal, may Allah be pleased with him, was tortured in Makkah in its hot desert and a great heavy boulder was put on his chest, not to make him abandon his faith but only to stop blaspheming his peoples false gods or to keep silent, the honor of faith showed in his words when he repeated, "Allah The One, Allah The One." This remained as an eternal anthem which the generations have chanted throughout history. In addition, the words of Bilaal, may Allah be pleased with him, poured despair into the souls of those who tortured him. So, who was honourable in this scene? Was it this weak, tortured slave or the arrogant disbelievers?

The story of 'Abdullaah ibn Huthaafah As-Sahmi, may Allah be pleased with him, when he was taken captive by the Romans is another example. The king of the Romans tried to entice 'Abdullaah to abandon his religion, but he refused. The king offered him half of his money but he refused. Then, he imprisoned him, tortured him and did not give him any food or water except some pig meat and wine. After three days, they brought him out and found that he had eaten nothing of it. When he was asked why had he not eaten any of it, he replied, "By Allah, Allah The Exalted made it lawful for me because I was under duress, but I would never let you gloat over Islam." Then, the king asked him to kiss his head in return for releasing him but Ibn Huthaafah, may Allah be pleased with him, said that he would only do so if all the Muslim captives were released. The king accepted and Ibn Huthaafah, may Allah be pleased with him, kissed his head.



He then returned to the Commander of the Believers 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab, may Allah be pleased with him, with all the Muslim captives. 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, stood up and kissed the head of 'Abdullaah ibn Huthaafah, and said: "It is a duty upon every Muslim to kiss the head of Ibn Huthaafah."

Also, Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah may Allah have mercy upon him was prosecuted and imprisoned. When he was thrown in prison, he recited the words of Allah The Almighty (which mean): {And a wall will be placed between them with a door, its interior containing mercy, but on the outside of it is torment.} [Qur'an 57:13]. This is the glory of faith and the pride of Islam which make a person the most honorable one through the obedience of Allah The Almighty. Even if all people on earth stood against such a person, he would still derive his honor and glory from Allah The Almighty who can never be defeated. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {Whoever desires honour [through power] - then to Allah belongs all honour.} [Qur'an 35:10].

The state of humiliation which prevails in many aspects of our lives nowadays is the result of religious innovations, sins and remoteness from the Shari'ah of Allah The Almighty. This is supported by the *Hadith* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, where he said: "Humiliation and disgrace are the fate of whoever disobeys my order." A major reason behind this humiliation is the state of disagreement and disunity that the Muslims experience. Our enemies take advantage of us one by one; they strike one of us today and another tomorrow while Muslims take no action, as if what happens to our brothers does not concern us. History testifies that we were never like this in the past. When a Muslim woman, who was taken as a captive by the Romans in 'Amooriyyah, screamed for help uttering her famous scream, "*Wa Islamaah*" (Oh My Islam!), Al- Mu'tasim may Allah have mercy upon him answered her call with full concern, "Labbayki [at your disposal]" and prepared an army which heavily defeated 'Amooriyyah and rescued the Muslim woman from the hands of the disbelievers. We should ask ourselves here: what tie was there between Al-Mu'tasim and that woman except the tie of faith?

Article source: http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/

islamweb.net English

Dignity: The trait of the righteous

Praise be to Allah, The Exalted. May peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), his family, Companions, and whoever follows his example.

It is becoming of a Muslim to adhere to all that adorns him of noble traits and shun all that disgraces and discredits him.

One of the noble traits that are befitting of a Muslim is *Waqaar* (dignity). We can (fairly) say that dignity is a moral attribute generated by the adherence to a number of noble morals, such as forbearance, serenity, composure gentleness, and steadfastness. This is why it was defined as: "Deliberateness towards the realisation of wants."

Al-Jaahith defined it as follows: "Refraining from idle talk, futility, unnecessary gesturing and movement, keeping anger in check, listening attentively before asking questions, deliberateness in giving answers, guarding against haste, and promptness with regard to all matters."

The pure Islamic *Shari'ah* was keen on adorning the believers with dignity. With regard to establishing one of the key obligations in Islam, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, urged the Muslims to adhere to dignity. He, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "If you hear the *Iqaamah* (second call to prayer), walk to the prayer with tranquility and dignity, and do not hasten your pace (to join the congregational prayer). Perform of the prayer what you catch up with (i.e. with the Imaam) and complete what you missed."

If lay-Muslims are required to adhere to dignity, then the scholars and devout Muslims are required to adhere to it with greater reason. Such was the practice of the scholars of the righteous predecessors. An example is Imaam Maalik, may Allah have mercy upon him; whenever he related *Hadith* to his students, he would clean himself, wear perfume, comb his beard, and put on his best apparel. Allah, The Exalted, bestowed upon him a great share of dignity, so much so that the following verses of poetry were composed about him (translation of the meaning): "He would at times not answer the questions directed to him, and the questioners would not dare to remind him out of awe of him, and they would keep their heads down. He was endowed with the light of dignity and the honour of piety; revered like a king without being one."

Adhering to dignity was the advice that Ibn Mas'ood, may Allah be pleased with him, gave to those who are devoted to the Qur'an. He said: "The one who memorises the Qur'an should be oft-weeping, sad, wise, forbearing, and serene. He should not be harsh, heedless, (lazy), loud, or rough."

Al-Hasan Al-Basri, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "A man would pursue knowledge, and soon it would show in his earnest fear of Allah, decorum, sayings, gazes, and righteousness."

When a person's heart is alive and his face is adorned with bashfulness, he is prompted to adhere to dignity. He reveres other people, and they revere him in return, and he becomes characterised by dignity.

The more a person venerates and glorifies his Lord, the more people revere him. Whoever glorifies and venerates Allah, The Exalted, He will instill the love and reverence for him in the hearts of people.

On the other hand, the one who takes the Rights of Allah lightly, and the reverence for his Lord weakens in his heart, thus emboldening him to commit sins and transgress against His Limits and neglect His Commands and Obligations, Allah, The Exalted, will not cast reverence for him or awe of him into people's hearts. Even if some people revere him to avoid his evil, it is a false reverence that is founded on hatred rather than love or admiration.

Finally, let us ponder over these beautiful verses composed by an Arab poet (translation of meaning): "Speak the truth, refrain from vain and idle talk, and do not use vulgar language or promote suspicions. Be dignified; speak less, and think more. When you speak, do not give prolonged speeches; do not hasten to answer a question without deliberation, and do not answer a question that was not directed to you."

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The path towards true belief

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said: "No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Islam, through its instructions and legislations, was keen to organise people's relation with their Lord the Almighty, in order for them to attain happiness in both this life and the Hereafter. At the same time, Islam legislates what governs people's relations amongst each other, in order for love and harmony to prevail in the Muslim community. This can be achieved only when each individual is keen to protect and guard the welfare of others just as he would his own, and only then will the Muslim community become strongly bonded and well-established.

For this great objective to be fulfilled, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, guided his nation to accomplish the principle of solidarity saying: "No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself", clarifying that for faith to become deeply rooted in the heart one must love good for others just as he likes to attain it himself, whether it is to be blessed with bounty or relieved from an agony; this is the path towards a perfect level of belief in one's heart.

If we ponder the above narration, we find that accomplishing such a state of belief requires the soul to possess a high degree of excellence and good manners when dealing with others. In this state a person overlooks mistakes, perseveres regardless of the harm others may afflict on him and forgives ill treatment. Additionally, he shares the joy and sadness of his fellow Muslims; he visits the sick, comforts the needy, sponsors the orphan, provides for the widow and offers help to others and cheers them with a smile.

Just as he likes people to be happy, he also wishes that they prosper in the Hereafter, and thus he always strives to guide them to the right path, whilst remembering the saying of Allah (what means): "And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, 'Indeed, I am of the Muslims.'" [Qur'an 41: 33]

The narration also goes beyond the boundaries of the Muslims to cover wanting good to reach disbelievers. He likes that Allah blesses them with the bounty of belief and that Allah rescues them from the darkness of associating with Allah and disobedience. This meaning is substantiated with the narration in which the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "Being a true Muslim is achieved by loving for people what you love for yourself". [At-Tirmithi]

Indeed, we have the best example in our Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*. Once the Prophet advised Abu Thar, may Allah be pleased with him: "O Abu Thar! I see that you are a weak person, and I love for you what I love for myself, so never be in charge of (even as little as) two people, or be responsible for an orphan's wealth". [Muslim]

Our Salaf (righteous predecessors), may Allah have mercy upon them, took upon themselves the implication of this Prophetic advice, and were very sincere in its implementation in the best manner. Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I pass by a verse in the Book of Allah, and wish that all people would have the knowledge I have about it."

Another such example is that once Wasi' Ibn Muhammad, may Allah have mercy upon him, wanted to sell his donkey and the man who was buying it from him said to him: "Do you think it is good for me". He replied: "Had I not thought so, I would not have attempted to sell to you in the first place."

These two examples and many more reflect the loftiness in faith these people reached which yielded such results.

One of the implications of the narration we are addressing is that a Muslim should not want for others what he hates to happen to himself. This forces the person to shun many bad qualities, like envy, spite, selfishness, stinginess and other dispraised qualities which he would hate people to use when dealing with him.

Finally, one of the fruits of practically applying this great narration is that a virtuous community would be established for the Muslims when its members enjoy common love and a strong bond between them, so that they resemble one strong body that cannot easily be defeated. Thus, the Muslim nation would achieve the sought-after prosperity.

Article source: http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/

Modesty is a part of faith

It was related on the authority of Abu Mas'ood al-Badri, may Allah be pleased with him, that: "The Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "One of the admonitions of the previous prophets which has been conveyed to people is that if you have no shame, you can do whatever you wish." [Al-Bukhari]

Explanation of the *Hadith*:

The saying of the Messenger : "...If you feel no shame, you can do whatever you wish" is in the command form, and can be looked at from two angles, each conveying a distinct meaning:

(1) The first is that it is a form of threat and a challenge thrown down against those who engage in inappropriate behaviour. Such people have no shame in front of Allah and therefore, no matter what course they take, it would not make any real difference. In this case, it would be as if the *Hadith* is stating: "If you do not feel any shame from doing these prohibited acts, then do whatever you wish..." Modesty is the quality that prevents one from immodest behaviour, and the lack of it will only cause one to increase in distancing himself from Allah and make him indifferent to creed or deed.

(2) The second meaning pertains to doing that which is lawful. That is, if the action that one is about to do is not within the category of the unlawful, and we are not ashamed of doing the act in front of Allah or the people, then we are free to do it. However, if we are ashamed to do it, then we should not. The *Hadith* gives a measuring stick by which we can evaluate actions, both privately and publicly.

Thus, the first explanation relates to a lack of consciousness regarding Allah and the second is regarding the opposite, which is to be conscious of Allah and of His watching over a person and his actions.

The former explanation relates to an unbridled *Nafs* (base desires and lower self), whereas the latter implies observance of due constraint over it, so that it does not embark on the road to destruction.

Modesty is of two types:

Modesty is either natural or acquired. Natural modesty means that the individual has this quality by nature and does not need to exert any effort to acquire it. Acquired modesty, on the other hand, is attained by those who possess knowledge concerning Allah, being cognisant concerning His Greatness, Proximity and His Inspection of all that they do.

Points related to modesty:

1. Modesty is one of the most honourable attributes and is a consistent virtue found in all the various laws sent down to each prophet and messenger.
2. It is one of the most perfect and desirable characteristics to possess and an excellent state to be in.
3. Modesty only brings good to individuals and is an indication of faith.
4. Bashfulness and shame is in direct opposition to indecency and shamelessness.
5. Modesty is an element of faith, and indecency has no relation to it.
6. Modesty adorns one's nature and personality and is indicative of his being Islamically cultured and refined.
7. Indecency, on the other hand, shows that one lacks virtues and is uncouth, dishonourable and uncultured.
8. We are obligated to guard ourselves against indecency and from acting indecently or uncultured, as qualified by Islam.
9. We must never misconstrue bashfulness or shyness with cowardice - Islamically they are far from synonymous.
10. Modesty, as mentioned, is a root virtue. One of the fruits of modesty is chastity.
11. There is no modesty when it comes to teaching the laws of Islam or searching for the truth.

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QATAR



Abdulaziz al-Mawlawi addressing the opening ceremony.





Fireworks at the event.

A skit during the ceremony.
PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

QIFF 2025 kicks off with fireworks

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

A dazzling display of fireworks over the Doha Corniche along with presentations by celebrity chefs from around the globe marked the opening of the 14th edition of the Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) organised by Visit Qatar.

Held at Hotel Park on Wednesday, the opening ceremony of the 10-day long QIFF was in the presence of HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji, chairman of Qatar Tourism and chair of the Board of Directors of Visit Qatar.

The QIFF 2025, set to be the largest and most exciting edition to date, will feature over 100 local vendors, 27 international restaurants and cafes and plenty of entertainment shows.

Running until February 22, the QIFF 2025 showcases global and local flavours while also reflecting Qatar's vision to strengthen its position as a leading destination for cultural exchange and tourism.

Visitors can indulge in the world's finest flavour and explore new culinary trends.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Visit Qatar chief executive Abdulaziz al-Mawlawi said that the festival brings together international experts and local talents and food lovers from all over the world.

"It reflects our vision of strengthening Qatar's place as a global destination in the food and hospitality sector," he said. "It also confirms the core role played by the restaurants and hospitality sectors in the development of tourism in Qatar."

"The festival is part of our ambitious strategy to provide exceptional experience to visitors and residents alike," al-Mawlawi added.

Emphasising the QIFF's significance in positioning Qatar as a premier global destination, he said: "The Qatar International Food Festival has evolved into a global platform that celebrates culinary excellence while reflecting Qatar's rich cultural diversity and commitment to innovation."

"Its continued success underscores the pivotal role of the hospitality and dining sectors in advancing Qatar's tourism landscape, serving as a key driver in delivering world-class experiences," al-Mawlawi noted.

Among the highlights of this year's festival is the experience of the epitome of culinary excellence at the Michelin Guide Village, where visitors can savour creations from some of the world's finest Michelin-star chefs.

At the QIFF Ring, which is a competition Arena, visitors will witness chefs cook and compete on stage.

The Cooking Studio will welcome renowned chefs from both Qatar and abroad, hosting interactive workshops and cooking classes.

For those seeking a truly unique experience, Dinner in the Sky offers an exhilarating dining adventure suspended 50m above the ground, providing guests with stunning views of the entire festival and the Doha skyline.

This year's festival location is divided into immersive districts, each offering unique dining experiences and interactive activities.

The Flavours within Qatar section celebrates Qatar's culinary landscape and showcases both traditional street food and fine dining, while the Latin Food District offers dishes such as tacos, empanadas, and ceviche, providing a taste of Latin America.

The International Flavours District brings together global street food and gourmet flavours, while the Healthy Corner focuses on plant-based and sustainable cuisine.

The Coffee & Bakeries Corner serves as a haven for coffee and dessert enthusiasts, offering artisanal coffee and a wide range of sweet treats.

The QIFF VIP Area provides an exclusive, luxurious dining experience with gourmet food, personalised service, and top-tier decor, offering a refined atmosphere for guests seeking a premium experience.

Families are also invited to enjoy daily movie screenings, kids' workshops within QIFF Juniors, and other engaging outdoor activities, offering entertainment for visitors of all ages.

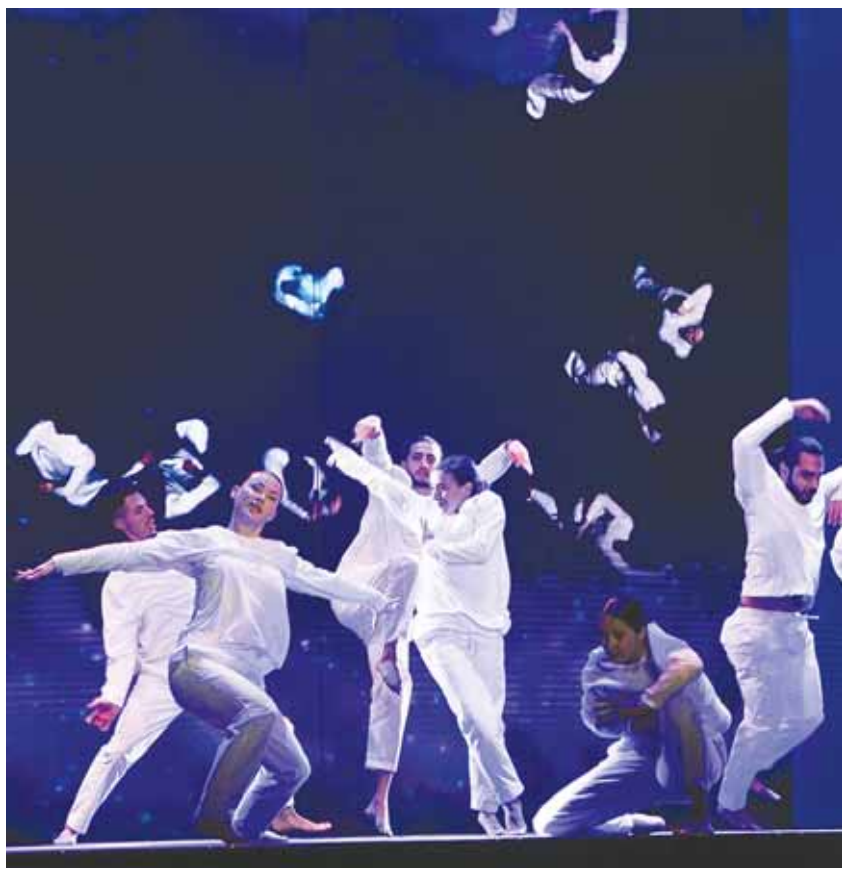




A street food stall.



International chefs on the occasion.



A performance during the opening ceremony.



