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Prayer times

Fajr....4.35; Zuhr...11.45; Asr....3.07;
Maghrib.....5.41; Isha.....7.11

Fasting times

Iftar today 5.41pm - Imsak tomorrow 4.25am

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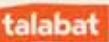
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Katara Ramadan Open Chess begins today

The Katara International Ramadan Open Chess Championship is set to kick off today, at the Hall of Building 15 in the Katara Cultural Village. Organised by the Qatar Chess Association (QCA), the championship will run until March 15, featuring 90 male and female players from 22 countries. The first round of the classical chess competition, which consists of nine rounds using the Swiss system (60 minutes + 30 seconds increment per move), will commence today.

Strong wind, rain forecast for today

Strong wind and thundery rain are expected in Qatar today, the Met office said. The offshore forecast includes high seas too. The minimum and maximum temperatures are forecast in the 19-21C and 23-31C ranges, respectively. Yesterday's (Wednesday) minimum and maximum temperatures were in the 18-21C and 23-31C ranges, respectively. Scattered rain was also observed yesterday in the northern areas and offshore, according to the Met office.

US-Hamas talks on hostage release

The White House confirmed yesterday that a US envoy spoke directly with Hamas to secure American hostages, a break in policy for Washington which considers the Palestinian resistance group a terrorist organisation. "Israel was consulted on this matter, and look, dialogue and talking to people around the world to do what's in the best interest of the American people is something that the President" believes is right, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters.

White House slams Democrat 'insanity'

The White House accused US Democrats of being the "party of insanity and hate" yesterday, after its lawmakers protested boisterously against Donald Trump's address to Congress. Trump on Tuesday evening touted his radical policies in a divisive speech that celebrated his assault on US federal bureaucracy and he said his administration was "just getting started."

FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 to take place from December 1-18

● FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 will be held from Nov 3-27

The dates for two major tournaments to be hosted in Qatar later this year have been set by FIFA.

FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 will kick off on December 1, with the final taking place on December 18, Qatar National Day, whereas the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 will take place earlier between November 3-27. The dates were confirmed at yesterday's FIFA Council meeting.

A total of 16 teams from the Arab world will compete for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 as Qatar gets ready to host it for the second time in a row, after successfully hosting the competition in 2021.

"Qatar will once again bring people together from the region and beyond to celebrate the beautiful game in our football loving nation. The FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 will capture the imagination of millions of football fans from around the region for a second time, while the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 offers a wonderful platform for young players to shine on a global stage," said HE Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, Minister of Sports and Youth, and LOC Chairman for both tournaments.

"We look forward to welcoming players and fans alike into our world-class sporting facilities and providing them with a rich cultural and seamless fan experience. We believe in the ability of sports to bring people together and help break down cultural barriers, something that drives our continuous desire to host major sport-



HE Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, Minister of Sports and Youth

ing events in Qatar," added HE Sheikh Hamad.

The FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 will be the first 48-team FIFA World Cup tournament, with a total of 104 matches played in a matter of 25 days. The youth tournament has previously launched the careers of some of football's most iconic players, and eyes will be set firmly on this edition to see who the beautiful game's next shining star will be. Host Qatar will look to improve



FIFA U-17 World Cup Trophy

on their best finish - fourth place at the 1991 edition.

Information regarding selected stadiums and ticketing for both tournaments will also be released in due course.

The inaugural FIFA Arab Cup in Qatar in 2021 enjoyed tremendous success, attracting fans from across the region and around the world and witnessing some thrilling action on the pitch. Algeria emerged victorious at the end of the tournament, overcoming Tunisia in a hard-fought 2-0 match at one of Qatar's stunning FIFA World Cup 2022 stadiums, Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, on December 18, 2021.

Beyond the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, Qatar will host the 2029 and 2033 editions of the regional tournament. This comes alongside the five consecutive editions of the annual FIFA U-17 World Cup, with the first coming this year.

For all information related to the the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025 and other mega events hosted by Qatar, follow @Road-toQatar on Instagram and X.



PM, Indonesia FM discuss ties, Gaza



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Sugiono, who is visiting the country. They discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them. They also discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, especially the efforts made to maintain the ceasefire agreement in the Strip and deliver humanitarian aid. In addition, they discussed a number of topics of common interest. (QNA)

Cabinet hopes Cairo summit would lead to peace in Gaza

QNA
Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting held yesterday.

Following the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi stated the following:

At the outset of the meeting, the Cabinet applauded the outcomes of the Extraordinary Arab Summit held in Cairo, the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt, on Tuesday with the participation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

The Cabinet expressed hope

that the summit's outcome would contribute to strengthening the Arab stance in rejecting any plans to displace Palestinian citizens from their lands, as well as efforts to end the war in the Gaza Strip, lift the siege on it, and rebuilding it. The Cabinet also expressed hope that the summit's result would support Arab efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in the region and restoring all legitimate rights to the brotherly Palestinian people, foremost of which is their right to establish their independent state on their lands occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On the other hand, the Cabinet praised the Ministry of Justice's Strategy (2025-2030), inaugurated by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. To Page 2

Ukraine, US officials agree to further talks

Reuters
Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday there had been "positive movement" in co-operation with the United States that could lead to another meeting between the two sides soon.

Kyiv is eager to repair ties with its top military supporter against Russia's invasion after Zelensky publicly clashed with US President Donald Trump in the White House last week over how to end the war in Ukraine.

"Today our Ukrainian and US teams began working on a meeting. Andriy Yermak and Mike Waltz spoke," Zelensky said in his evening address, referring to his chief of staff and the US national security adviser.

"There is positive movement. We hope for the first results next week."

Yermak said on X he had "exchanged views on security issues and the alignment of positions" with Waltz, and that they had scheduled a meeting of Ukrainian and US officials "in the near future to continue this important work".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will join EU leaders for



Demonstrators hold placards and wave flags as they take part in a 'Stop Putin - Stop Trump' pro-Ukraine protest, outside the US Embassy in London yesterday.

a Brussels summit today aimed at cementing the bloc's support for Kyiv's three-year fight against Russia's invasion.

"President Zelensky will attend the summit in person," an EU official said on the eve of the summit gathering all 27 leaders

for the first time since Zelensky's White House clash with President Trump upended US support for Ukraine.

US pauses intelligence sharing with Ukraine

The US has paused intelligence-sharing with Ukraine, CIA Director John Ratcliffe said yesterday, piling pressure on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to co-operate with US President Donald Trump in convening peace talks with Russia.

The suspension, which could hurt Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russian missile strikes, followed a halt this week to US military aid to Kyiv. It underscores Trump's willingness to play hardball with an ally as he pivots to a more conciliatory approach to Moscow from what was strong US support for Ukraine.

The pressure appears to have worked, with Trump on Tuesday saying he received a letter from Zelensky in which the Ukrainian leader said he was willing to come to the negotiating table.

"I think on the military front and the intelligence front, the pause I think will go away," Ratcliffe told Fox Business Network.

A source familiar with the situation said the Trump administration had halted "everything" including targeting data that Ukraine has used to strike Russian targets.

Egypt, Qatar ‘optimistic about Gaza ceasefire deal’s second phase’

QNA
Cairo

Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration Dr Badr Abdel Aati has emphasised that Egypt and Qatar have a joint responsibility, along with the United States, to continue pressure to enter into negotiations on the second phase of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Abdel Aati said that the sincere joint efforts made by Egypt and Qatar succeeded in January in reaching a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, which includes three stages. The first stage has been implemented so far. Meanwhile, there is one side trying to avoid its obligations.

He indicated that there are obligations on both sides to the ceasefire agreement and that each side must implement its obligations, especially the Israeli side, to complete this agreement in its three stages. He added that there are obligations under which this agreement is implemented, and each side must implement its obligations. This is necessary.

Abdel Aati pointed out that Egypt and Qatar are counting



on the American role to work on implementing what was agreed upon and to immediately begin, without any delay, the negotiation process for the second phase of the ceasefire agreement. He noted that the Trump administration had a very important role in reaching the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, even before it reached the Oval Office.

The Egyptian minister highlighted the success in releasing a number of hostages, and now the effort must continue and the second and third stages must be implemented until the release of all hostages and remains inside Gaza is completed. In return, Israel will naturally implement its commitments, especially with regard to the full implementation of humanitarian, medical, and shelter aid, and also work to release the agreed number of Palestinian prisoners.

Minister says MWC Doha will consolidate Qatar’s position as digital innovation hub

QNA
Madrid

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai has emphasised that Qatar’s hosting of the Mobile World Congress (MWC Doha) reflects the country’s commitment to being a global hub for digital innovation, noting that this event represents an important opportunity to achieve the country’s digital and economic agenda.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the sidelines of MWC 2025 in Barcelona, Spain, HE al-Mannai said that hosting the conference enhances Qatar’s position as a regional and global hub for innovation and technology, as the event attracts thousands of visitors and participants from around the world, senior executives, experts, and investors in the technology sector, contributing to supporting Qatar National Vision 2030, which focuses on a knowledge-based economy and digital transformation.

He pointed out that the conference will contribute to attracting the largest companies specialised in the field of technology, information technology infrastructure, the Internet of Things, and modern technological fields such as artificial intelligence, data centres, cloud computing, and 5G technologies.

He added that this hosting represents a platform for dialogue and international co-operation



tion between major companies and government agencies to discuss the future of technology. He noted that this will contribute to strengthening and developing the communications and digital transformation sectors in Qatar.

HE the Minister indicated that hosting the conference supports the achievement of Qatar National Vision 2030, through developing human capital by enhancing digital and technological skills through workshops and dialogue sessions and diversifying the economy by encouraging investment in digital and innovative sectors, which reduces reliance on traditional sectors.

He noted that the conference is unique in its kind, as it focuses on the infrastructure of information technology and the Internet of Things. He pointed out that it is expected to contribute to spreading the culture of innovation and technology with a focus on digital inclusion and enhancing sustainable environmental development by adopting clean tech-

nology and sustainable digital solutions in various sectors.

Qatar has achieved remarkable success in hosting global events such as the Web Summit and the Global AI Summit, which has strengthened its position on the international stage. It now seeks to build on this success by enhancing its reputation as a major destination for major technology events, expanding its global reach, and showcasing its progress in digital transformation by highlighting its achievements in artificial intelligence, smart cities, and 5G technologies, in addition to attracting more investments by exploring the Qatari business environment and enhancing knowledge exchange by bringing together decision-makers and innovators to discuss the latest developments in technology, His Excellency said.

HE al-Mannai added that the MWC Doha contributes to consolidating Qatar’s position as a global hub for digital innovation through several aspects, such as attracting global technology leaders, enhancing the country’s digital infrastructure, providing opportunities for Qatari companies to enhance their presence in global markets, and supporting the implementation of the latest digital solutions, which enables the government and companies in the State of Qatar to benefit from advanced technologies in various sectors, in addition to expanding the scope of regional and international co-operation, by signing new partnership and investment agreements with leading countries and companies.

Cabinet: Ministry of Justice’s strategic plan will enhance judicial services

From Page 1

The Ministry of Justice’s strategic plan, which was prepared within the framework of the Third National Development Strategy, aims to develop the legal sector in the country by enhancing judicial services, and strengthening partnerships with members of the legal sector and judicial professions, in a way that serves the legal and judicial system. The plan

also seeks to enhance investment opportunities and sustainable economic development, while building distinguished human competencies in the judicial and legal sector.

The Cabinet also commended the first National Archives of Qatar Strategy (2025-2030), which was launched by HE the Prime Minister. The strategy aims to enhance the documentation system, preserve the leg-

acy of the history of Qatar and the region, and transform historical documents and national archives into a living and renewable memory that contributes to building the future, through multiple strategies that include digitisation, community awareness, and local and international partnerships.

The Cabinet then considered the topics listed on its agenda, approving a draft law regarding min-

isters, and decided to refer it to the Shura Council.

The Cabinet also approved a draft law on lost property and unclaimed money and decided to refer it to the Shura Council.

The Ministry of Interior prepared this draft law to regulate the procedures for dealing with lost property and unclaimed money, ensuring that rights are not lost and encouraging finders to hand over the items they found, thereby

contributing to returning them to their rightful owners.

The Cabinet approved a draft resolution by the Minister of State for Energy Affairs to determine the preventive precautions that stakeholders must take to protect public electrical and water facilities located at the work site or adjacent sites. The preparation of the draft resolution comes in implementation of the provisions of Law No 13 of 2024 regarding the protec-

tion of public electrical and water facilities.

The Cabinet decided to take the necessary measures to endorse an agreement between the governments of Qatar and Sierra Leone regarding the regulation of the employment of Sierra Leonean workers in Qatar, and an agreement regarding the establishment of a joint committee for co-operation between the two governments.

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روبيان ٤٠/٦٠، السعودية
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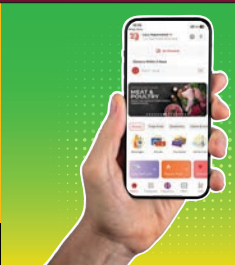
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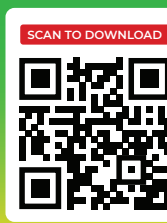


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Freshly-made Ramadan delicacy



Freshly-made Qatayef, a Ramadan delicacy, is a popular item for Iftar during the holy month. The pancakes are also stuffed with nuts, golden fried and dunked in a sweet syrup, or filled with savoury stuffing. As Arabic culinary experts attest, the most tricky part in making Qatayef is getting the batter consistency right. A scene from a Doha outlet yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Sheikha Alya meets UN special envoy

HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met with UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Water Retno Marsudi, at the Permanent Mission's headquarters in New York. During the meeting, they discussed global water-related challenges, including water scarcity and the effects of climate change. The two sides stressed the importance of enhancing international co-operation in water resources management to ensure their sustainability. **(QNA)**



Qatar attends 108th session of OPCW's Executive Council

QNA
The Hague

Qatar participated in the 108th session of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), held in The Hague. Qatar's delegation to the session was chaired by ambassador and representative of Qatar to the OPCW Dr Mutlaq bin Majid al-Qahtani.

In his speech, al-Qahtani affirmed Qatar's firm commitment to supporting the OPCW's efforts to fully eliminate chemical weapons and enhance international security and stability, stressing the importance of transparency and multilateral co-operation in promoting the disarmament of these weapons.

He said Qatar, as an active OPCW Executive Council member, reflects on the progress achieved, the obstacles overcome, and the challenges that remain, primarily the situation in Syria, which requires the members to continue their collective responsibility and effective engagement. He pointed out the need to support the Syrian people for a better future, noting that Syria remains a key focus of the OPCW's mission, and represents a measure of progress and evidence of the strength of cooperative efforts.



He explained that the constructive communication between the OPCW and Syria, with constructive support from Qatar, embodies how continuous diplomacy and purposeful dialogue can enhance confidence in the mission of this organisation.

This initiative was part of broader efforts to facilitate dialogue, mediation, rebuild trust, promote openness and strengthen co-operation, which are essential components of collective quest for peace, security and stability, and Qatar will continue to represent Syria's interests in the organisation until a permanent representative is appointed, he added. Expressing his thanks to all OPCW States Parties for their continued support and spirit of

co-operation, al-Qahtani noted that their contributions were essential in promoting common goals within the OPCW.

He explained the need to build on this momentum to continue strengthening international safeguards against chemical weapons, stressing that their use, including the use of toxic chemicals as weapons, by any party, anywhere, and under any circumstances, whether by a State Party, a non-State Party, or non-governmental entities, is completely condemned and completely inconsistent with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law, stressing the importance of holding accountable those responsible for these violations.

Awqaf organises awareness programmes in Iftar tents

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, in co-operation with the Ministry of Interior (Mol) is carrying out a slew of awareness activities at Iftar tents where the participants are given tips by the officials from General Directorate for Drug Control, General Directorate of Civil Defence, General Directorate of Traffic and Community Police.

According to an official statement from Awqaf, the awareness sessions are presented before the Maghrib call to prayer with the participation of the officials concerned from Mol.

These programmes aim to enhance awareness of security and safety procedures and guidance on proper behaviours at work and in daily life through awareness lectures translated into Urdu.

The awareness sessions cover several topics. The Civil Defence official provides guidance on fire prevention, the importance of providing safety tools such as fire extinguishers and first-aid, in addition to how to act safely in emergency situations while General Directorate for Drug Control focuses on raising awareness of the dangers of drugs, the danger of bringing in legally prohibited drugs and how to report any suspicious activities via the hotline (999).

The Traffic Awareness Department raises awareness among workers and emphasises the importance of adhering to traffic laws such as wearing a seat belt, avoiding distraction with the phone while driving and not exceeding the specified speed limit.



The Community Police educates workers about the importance of integrating into society and introducing them to Qatari customs and traditions in addition to the role of community police in solving personal and financial problems in friendly ways.

Lt Abdullah Saleh al-Shammari from the General Directorate for Drug Control said that participation in the activities of the Iftar tents comes within the framework of the efforts made to spread awareness among members of the communities, especially workers, about the dangers of drugs and their negative effects on the individual and society.

He stated that awareness is not limited to warning against drug abuse but also includes warning about the danger of bringing some medicines and medical drugs from abroad which may be included in the list of prohibited substances in Qatar and may oblige the carriers' legal accountability upon entering the country.

"We are working to clarify these matters to the communities in Urdu, which is the most widely spoken language among workers, to ensure that the message is delivered clearly. We also focus on warning them not to carry luggage or other items without knowing their contents to avoid legal problems," he said.

The General Directorate of Civil Defence is keen, through these awareness lectures in Iftar tents, to guide workers and residents on how to use fire extinguishers and the proper behaviour when a fire breaks out, such as not panicking, evacuating the place safely and immediately contacting the Civil Defence via the hotline.

Awqaf's Iftar tents daily receive a large number of fasting people this year in several areas with high labour populations. The tents provide meals to as many 300,000 fasting people throughout the holy month as part of the 'Iftar Endowment' project.



Qatar, Indonesia hold discussion session



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a bilateral meeting yesterday with the visiting Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono. The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral co-operation, particularly in the political, economic, investment, and developmental sectors. The discussions also covered a range of regional and international issues of mutual interest. Both sides emphasised the importance of strengthening co-ordination on regional and international matters to support stability and development in the Middle East. HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs underscored the deep historical ties between the two countries and reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to further developing these relations across various fields. For his part, the Indonesian FM expressed his country's aspiration to continue enhancing the strategic partnership with Qatar, praising its active role in supporting regional and international issues. **(QNA)**

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MADHU GURUNG

holder of

NEPAL Passport No. PA3332605

QID No. 29652436778

hereby change my name

from

MADHU GURUNG

to

MADHU GOPALI

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Nomas members set for learning trip to Malaysia

Nomas Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, is organising a trip to Malaysia, under the theme 'Knowledge, Literature and the Company of Majid', during the period from March 31 to April 5, for boys from nine to 14 years old. During this trip, participants will learn about Malaysia's Islamic cultural heritage.

Through this trip, the centre seeks to build bridges of human and cultural communication, instil the principles of national identity, and discover the talents of young people. This is in addition to training young people on the importance of teamwork, contributing to building a thoughtful and aware personality, and setting good role models for rising generations.

The trip programme will include visits to some cultural and tourist sites and landmarks in Malaysia in addition to a variety of training courses and workshops as this visit comes within the framework of cultural co-operation between the two countries.

This is within the programme of cultural events that the ministry includes in its annual activities with friendly countries, with the aim of introducing the public to the different cultures of friendly countries.

Nomas aims to preserve heritage, instil national identity in young people, through the activities and training courses it offers as well as to teach them customs and traditions by the most skilled trainers affiliated with the centre.

The centre contributes to the development of young people by investing their free time in learning and practicing many activities related to the heritage, customs and authentic traditions of the people of Qatar. According to Nomas Center, their vision and mission aims to be a professional school and incubator of Qatari culture. To teach young children from 8 to 14 years old the customs and traditions, such as the etiquette of the Majlis, conversation, exchanging the Islamic greeting, respect and honouring guests.



EAA launches ‘Eid Gifts’ campaign



For a second consecutive year, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Education Above All Foundation (EAA), has once again spearheaded the launch of the “Eid Gifts” campaign. The campaign is part of a concerted effort to find immediate and practical solutions to provide humanitarian support for the people of Gaza and Syria.

This campaign, in collaboration with Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), aims to collect brand-new clothes and school bags for the people of Gaza and Syria during the holy month of Ramadan.

EAA Foundation explained in a statement that the campaign began yesterday, and will continue until March 20. Collection points in strategic locations across Qatar are set up to collect new clothes at Education City (Minaretin Center, Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque), Hyatt Plaza, Al Khor Mall, Place Vendome Mall, 3 Mayoral stores and 9 of the LuLu Hypermarkets.

The community is encouraged to participate by purchasing and donating new clothes and school bags at the participating retail locations, where donations are facilitated directly at the cashier. The participating stores will be enhancing the donation efforts, offering significant discounts on clothing to encourage more contributions.

This initiative not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters a spirit of altruism and community engagement, reinforcing the values of compassion and generosity inherent in the Ramadan season.

Mohamed al-Kubaisi, Acting CEO of EAA Foundation, said: “As we enter the second year of the ‘Eid Gifts’ campaign during the holy month of Ramadan, our dedication to making a meaningful difference in the lives of children across Gaza and Syria remains unwavering. This initiative is not just about giving; it is a profound testament to our collective commitment to humanity and the welfare of children, amplified by the spirit of generosity that Ramadan inspires. With robust support from our partners, we continue to extend a hand of solidarity and hope. The enthusiasm and generosity of our communities during this sacred month will empower us to bring joy and dignity to these children’s lives, aligning perfectly with the values of compassion and charity that Ramadan embodies.”

Faisal Mohammed al-Emadi, QRCS Secretary-General, praised the initiative by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. “This co-operation between QRCS and EAA Foundation builds on our joint successes in the past, as part of Qatar ’s outreach to poor and affected people everywhere, especially in Gaza and Syria, where QRCS is redoubling its relief efforts to alleviate their suffering and put a smile on the faces of their children,” said al-Emadi.

“We are confident that the benevolent people of Qatar will flock to donate to this campaign, which we hope will continue in the coming years, towards the ultimate goal of creating nurturing conditions and a safe and decent life for children,” he added. **(QNA)**

Fasting: spiritual, physical well-being

Al-Bukhari, may Allah have mercy upon him, has reported that the Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: “Paradise has eight gates and one of them is Ar-Rayyaan through which none will enter but those who observe fasting.” As-Suyooti, may Allah have mercy upon him, has reported that Al-Haarith Ibn Kalda, may Allah have mercy upon him, stated that: “Imposing abstinence from food” was the essence of medicine. Fasting, in medical terms, may mean a variety of things.

Some healthcare practitioners might recommend juice fasting. This type of fast eliminates all solid foods and the person consumes only fruit and vegetable juices. Others might recommend elimination of all foods except fruits and water for a specified time. Some might even recommend eliminating all foods and drinks for specific periods. The reported purpose for these forms of fasting is to cleanse toxins and poisons from the body and the digestive tract. Islamically speaking, fasting both voluntary and obligatory is an act of worship. Although there may be health benefits, its primary purpose must always be to please Allah.

Alternative medicine views fasting as a detoxification method. This simply means that it is used to purify the body by eliminating “toxins.” This process enhances the healing processes of the body. Fasting generally is perceived to spare any harm to vital organs but uses fatty tissue, etc. for energy production. Naturopathic healthcare practitioners generally proscribe short fasts. Because body temperature may drop during a fast, as does blood pressure, pulse, and respiration, it is considered important to stay warm. Fasting is seen as possible treatment for a variety of disorders and diseases including: obesity, chemical poisoning, arthritis, allergies, psoriasis, eczema, leg ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, bronchial asthma and even depression.

Fasting is a protection for the body and the mind. At-Tirmithi, may Allah have mercy upon him, has reported that the

Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: “Fasting and the Qur’an intercede for a man. Fasting says, ‘O my Lord I have kept him away from his food and his passions by day, so accept my intercession for him.’ The Qur’an says, ‘I have kept him away from sleep by night so accept my intercession for him.’ Then their intercession is accepted.”

Research has shown that fasting can improve the control of diabetes. Another study has shown that fasting improved the health of persons with irritable bowel syndrome and constipation. Another study suggests that fasting may improve cholesterol levels.

Al-Bukhari, may Allah have mercy upon him, has reported that the Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said that Allah said: “All the deeds of the children of Aadam are for them, except fasting, which is for Me and I will give the reward for it.” Al-Bukhari has also reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, narrated that Allah said: “The fast is for Me and I will give the reward for it, as he (who observes the fast) leaves his (sexual) desire, food and drink for My Sake. Fasting is a shield (from Hell) and there are two pleasures for a fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord. The smell of the mouth of a fasting person is better in Allah’s Sight than the smell of musk.”

While both the obligatory fasting during Ramadan and the voluntary fasting during the remainder of the year are acts of worship, they may provide healing to the body. Whatever healing may occur because of fasting is a blessing from Allah, however this should not be the intention or the goal of fasting. Fasting gives us a greater ability to control our desires and emotions. It should not be considered a “cure-all” or a diet programme. Those who fast will receive their reward from Allah as long as their intentions are pure and their fasting is not harmed or nullified by lying, backbiting, or evil deeds.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/mainpage/>



المستشفى الأهلي
AL-AHLI HOSPITAL
A Division of
MediCare Group P.S.C.

ANNOUNCES THE ISSUE OF THE FOLLOWING TENDER:

Tender No.	Subject	Tender Bond (QR\$.)	Closing Date
AAH/TC/06/25	Power Solutions for Block C building – Al Ahli Hospital	Qar. 25,000/-	25th Mar. 2025

- The full documents for the above mentioned tender can be obtained from the PURCHASING DEPARTMENT of Al-Ahli Hospital from Sunday to Thursday, between 9:00AM to 1:00PM upon payment of non-refundable fee of QAR 2500.00 to Accounts Receivables, Finance department Al-Ahli Hospital.
- The tender should be accompanied by a Tender Bond issued by a Qatar Accredited Bank and acceptable to Al-Ahli Hospital. The bond should be valid for 120 days from the submission date of the tender.
- The successful tenderer should submit a performance bond equivalent to 10% of the contract value, which should be valid for 180 days beyond the warranty period.
- The tenders should submit in three (3) sealed envelopes: one (1) envelope for Technical Offer, one (1) envelope for Commercial Offer, and one (1) envelope for Tender Bond.
- Tenders must be addressed to the Chairman of the Tender Committee, clearly indicating the Tender Number and Subject.
- The Last date to purchase the tender documents will be on 16th March 2025.
- The site visit will be on 18th March 2025 at 10.00 am.
- The closing time for the submission of bid Tenders should be no later than 2:00PM of the Closing Date.

For further information please contact: **Purchasing Department**
Phone: **+974 4489 8766** – Fax: **+974 4489 8768**
Email : **henryr@ahlihospital.com**



QATAR FUEL ADDITIVES COMPANY LIMITED
QAFAC

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Tender Committee of QAFAC invites qualified local suppliers to participate in the following Tenders in accordance with QAFAC tendering procedures:

S.N	Tender No.	Description	Collection Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	QTC/017/25	Three (3) Years Call off Contract for Supply of Semi-Skilled Workers for Jetty Operations at QAFAC Plant, Mesaieed	Qrs. 300/-	Qrs. 40,000/-	23 rd March 2025
2	QTC/018/25	Four (4) Years Call off Contract for Supply of Drinking Water at QAFAC Plant, Mesaieed	Qrs. 300/-	Qrs. 18,000/-	23 rd March 2025

Interested companies are invited to collect the above tender documents as follows:

- **Collection Date** : From **Thursday, 06th March 2025** (QAFAC working days from Sunday to Thursday only)
- **Collection Time** : 09:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- **Location** : The Gate, Bay Tower 2, 13th Floor, West Bay, QAFAC
- **Tender Fees** : As shown above, **(non-refundable)** can be paid at QAFAC Doha Office
- **Validity** : Offers must be valid for 120 days from closing date.
- **Bid Bond** : Offers must include a Bid bond issued from a local bank and valid for 120 Days from closing date.
- **Authorization** : Tenders will be issued to authorized company personnel with the following:
 - 1. Official authorization on Company Letter Head
 - 2. Proper Identification
 - 3. Copy of Company's Commercial Registration
 - 4. Focal Point of Contact (**Name, Telephone, Mobile & Email**)

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الأولوية
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/07	Supply and Delivery of Skid Steer Loader with Sweeper Attachment and Quick Coupler Option for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Supplies")	500 QAR	8,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	13 March 2025 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/08	Supply and Delivery of Omron CPE 100 Multifunction Test Set with Associated Software for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Supplies")	500 QAR	5,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	13 March 2025 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/09	Asset Management System Using RFID Tagging System for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	7,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	13 March 2025 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/10	Maintenance Services of Fire Alarm, Fire Suppression and Firefighting System for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	25,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	13 March 2025 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender@gpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit (Up-Samples) to Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID. Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenders shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail Building No. 108, 9th No. 302, Bay Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4450-45111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. **IBAN No. (QA 18 02QA 0000 0000 4250 65111 006)**. Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all bidders without revealing the identity of the originator of the queries/in the form of Tender Bulletin. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@gpmc.qa
- Location of the new building



For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to tender@gpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.gpmc.qa

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (قبرم) (مركزها الرئيسي: الدوحة - قطر - منطقة لوسيل - برج مارينا - رقم 108 | اسبيل الجدي - 33204 | ص.ب 22095 | هاتف: 4447 9411 | 4447 9411 فاكس) | Head Office: Doha-Qatar, Lusail, Marina Tower No.: 108 | CR No.: 33204 | P.O Box: 22095 | Tel.: +974 4447 9411 | رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 QAR | Paid Up Capital 200,000,000 QAR | info@gpmc.qa www.gpmc.qa 200,000,000 درهم قطر المدفوع | رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 | info@gpmc.qa www.gpmc.qa

Al Abdulghani Motors unveils exclusive Ramadan offers on Toyota, Lexus vehicles

Al Abdulghani Motors, the authorised distributor of Toyota and Lexus in Qatar, is celebrating the holy month of Ramadan with an exclusive range of offers until March 30 to provide exceptional value, flexibility, and peace of mind to customers, a statement said.

Customers purchasing the latest Toyota Veloz, Urban Cruiser, and Corolla will receive a 10g, 24-karat gold bar as a special gift, in addition to a comprehensive benefits package that includes a five-year warranty, one year of free comprehensive insurance, free periodic maintenance for one year or 20,000km, and five years of roadside assistance.

The Toyota Fortuner, RAV4, and Camry offer an even greater incentive with a 20g, 24-karat gold bar, alongside the same extensive benefits. For customers

aspiring to own a Land Cruiser or the Lexus LX 600, Al Abdulghani Motors has introduced an exclusive Smart Payment Plan, allowing buyers to pay 50% at the time of purchase and the remaining 50% over two years at a 0% profit rate. This offer is complemented by the 5-5-5 Package, which includes five years of periodic maintenance, a five-year warranty, and five years or 100,000 km of roadside assistance.

Customers can purchase the Prado through the exclusive KEYPLAN. The package includes a 25% downpayment, after which customers will be able to pay 50% over the next three years, and a last payment of 25% at the end of the period, all with a 0% profit rate. The starting monthly instalment is QR2,468.

In addition to Toyota's exclusive deals, Al Abdulghani Mo-



tors is extending its KEYPLAN to select Lexus models. Customers can now purchase the Lexus ES, NX, and RX with a 25% down payment, 50% over three years, and a final 25% payment at the end of the period, all at a 0% profit rate. The package also includes a five-year warranty and

five years of roadside assistance. Monthly instalments start at QR2,415 for the ES, QR2,568 for the NX, and QR3,165 for the RX.

"At Al Abdulghani Motors, we continuously strive to deliver an exceptional ownership experience that aligns with the spirit of Ramadan – a time of gener-



osity and togetherness. These exclusive offers reflect our commitment to providing customers with premium service, flexible financial solutions, and exceptional value, whether they are looking for the reliability of Toyota or the luxury of Lexus," said CEO Abdulghani Nasser

al-Abdulghani. Customers are encouraged to visit showrooms, explore the latest models, and take advantage of these limited-time offers.

For Toyota Offers: Visit Toyota Qatar website or call 800 1800. For Lexus Offers: Visit Lexus Qatar website or call 800 2929.

Fun, healthy way to explore Qatar

Cycling remains a popular outdoor activity in Qatar especially during pleasant weather, offering a fun, healthy, and stress-relieving way to explore the country's ever-expanding network of dedicated bike paths.

More than just a mode of transportation, Visit Qatar noted that cycling provides residents and visitors with a blend of fitness, leisure and social connection. The nation's thriving cycling scene is also credited to substantial infrastructure investments, including a network of cycling lanes that stretches for miles across the country.

Olympic and pedestrian/cycling tracks are equipped with advanced monitoring systems. These devices give cyclists real-time updates on weather, temperature, potential hazards, and notifications about major sporting events. Visit Qatar said the country features a diverse range of routes to suit all skill levels, whether a seasoned cyclist or a neophyte.

From the lush greenery of 5/6 Park, a beginner-friendly 1.1km bike and 1.4km jogging paths also accessible to cyclists, to the scenic coastal route along Al Khor Road, which spans 38km and connects to various stadiums, there is a trail waiting to be explored.

The Guinness World Record-holding Olympic Cycling Track, stretching 33km with 29 underpasses and five bridges, provides a seamless and uninterrupted rid-

ing experience. For those looking to connect with fellow cycling enthusiasts, Visit Qatar said the country's vibrant cycling community offers a welcoming space for individuals of all backgrounds and interests.

Numerous cycling clubs cater to diverse nationalities and riding styles, including the Malaysian Qatar Cycling Community, Qatar Chain Reaction, FitQ, VeloStar, Veloettes, Pinoy (Filipino) Mountain Bikers, Padyak Qatar, Indonesian Fun, Qatar Sandstormers, Qatar Cyclists, Pinoy Roadies, and TriClub Doha.

These clubs provide opportunities for social rides, group training sessions, and a chance to forge new friendships. Visit Qatar also promotes other unique cycling routes such as the Al Abraj Park. It features a distinctive dew drop design and an eco-friendly riding experience, thanks to its trail made of recycled rubber. Aspire Zone Park, meanwhile, boasts a 5km track and a cycle hire scheme to promote a healthier lifestyle.

For speed enthusiasts, the Lusail International Circuit presents a 5.3km motor racing track with bicycles available for hire. Other popular routes include the path connecting Hamad International Airport to the C-Ring Road, the challenging hills of Dukhan, and the beginner-friendly 5km route at Al Bidda Park.

Visit Qatar encourages riders to



5/6 Park.



Lusail International Circuit.

protect their heads by wearing a strong helmet and avoid pedalling in high gear for extended periods to prevent strain on the knees. Getting a proper bike fit is crucial for efficient and pain-free riding, as is selecting the right saddle. Experts

recommend choosing a longer seat with a cut-out for optimal comfort. Additional tips include changing position while riding to prevent numbness, avoiding the use of headphones to maintain awareness of surroundings, and



Al Abraj Park. **PICTURES:** Visit Qatar



Olympic Cycling Track.

wearing reflective gear and using bike lights for nighttime riding. Obeying traffic rules and staying alert to other vehicles are essential for safe cycling. Riders are also

advised to look ahead to anticipate obstacles and stay hydrated by consuming plenty of water, especially during longer rides. (source: Visit Qatar)

Qatari heritage collector starts museum

Heritage researcher Ateeq al-Sulaiti loves the good old days. So after his retirement, he decided to transform his memories from the yesteryear into a personal museum, in which he tells the stories of lives lived by the people of Qatar, with the simple things that were part of their daily lives.

In this interview, al-Sulaiti takes us on a tour inside his museum, which includes old devices, rare publications, and memories engraved in the conscience. He told Arabic daily *Arrayah* that: "after retirement, I found myself yearning for the things I lived with as a child, those that were part of our parents' lives. I started by collecting what I inherited from my parents, then expanded by purchasing heritage items. The museum now includes items from different time periods. My goal was not only to collect, but to document Qatar's memory through these items that bore witness to the stages of societal development."

The museum houses a wide range of collectibles that reflect lifestyles in the past, including old devices such as televisions, radios, and recorders, in addition to telephones in various editions – including the disc phone to the pager and then the first mobile phones. There are also household items such as sewing machines used by mothers in



Ateeq al-Sulaiti

the past, heritage watches, and iron and wooden toys. As for the cultural section, it contains rare Qatari publications, such as old issues of Doha Magazine, Al-Ahd and Al-Fajr Magazine, in addition to copies of the Holy Qur'an dating back to different historical periods. It includes old school books such as 'Tawhid' and 'Figh', on which generations have been raised. The old Qatari calendar, which was prepared by Sheikh Abdullah bin Ibrahim al-Ansari, and included information about religious seasons, weather conditions, and distances between Qatari cities and neighbouring countries.

Al-Sulaiti recalled memories of the radio "as our window to the world and our companion in our daily gatherings. One of the most famous devices that I keep is 'Radio Abu Dhoros', the knobs of



Some of the heritage items in al-Sulaiti's museum.

which were made of ivory and was known for its loud sound. This radio has a special memory in my heart because it used to broadcast the Holy Qur'an from the Grand Mosque in Doha. Al-Sulaiti added: "Television entered our homes in the 1960s, and it was a big event at the time. At first, we used to watch Kuwait TV and Aramco TV, which offered us a variety of programmes, including children's programmes like 'Hattab' and foreign series, es-

pecially cowboy and Indian movies. One of the funny memories associated with television is that we used to adjust the "aerial" manually. He evoked that: "Ramadan in the past had a different character, with simplicity and social solidarity. We used to distribute Zakat al-Fitr to neighbours and relatives in special cloth bags every year. There were also special Ramadan meals cooked on traditional stoves," al-Sulaiti said.

QC distributes food baskets to displaced families in Somalia

QNA
Doha

Qatar Charity has distributed food baskets to displaced families in the outskirts of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. The initiative targets approximately 1,100 families who are experiencing difficult humanitarian conditions.

Director of Qatar Charity's office in Somalia Abdelfattah Adam Malim commented: "We have allocated the aid to displaced families who have lost their livelihoods due to conflicts and drought. We hope that this aid will alleviate their suffering during the holy month of Ramadan, promote values of solidarity and mutual support, and enable them to observe fasting in dignified conditions."

The initiative is part of Qatar Charity's continued relief efforts in Somalia, where it aims to provide food assistance to families affected by humanitarian crises, particularly with the worsening conditions of displaced persons due to conflicts and droughts. The baskets included essential food items that meet the families' needs throughout the holy month, helping them face the challenges related to securing food and promoting the spirit of compassion.



Souq Waqif restaurants enjoy brisk business during Ramadan



The restaurants at Doha's Souq Waqif have been experiencing an increasing turnout of customers for Iftar and Suhoor meals since the start of the holy month of Ramadan. Local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported that the restaurants offer a variety of dishes that reflects the diversity of Qatar residents. The meals also suit different budgets according to the type and amount of food served.

The operators of these restaurants stressed that the unique location of Souq Waqif coupled with the excellent weather conditions have almost doubled the usual turnout of customers during this year. The popular location has a wide collection of restaurants that offer special dishes from around the world such as the Iraqi, Egyptian, Iranian, Indian, European and Arabic cuisines among many others. It has been noted that most customers prefer their main meal to be included within Iftar with various dishes that include meat and chicken in addition to sweets and various types of soups. However, most customers prefer lighter dishes for their Suhoor. Some restaurants serve their meals through orders while others maintain open buffets at a fixed charge.

Doha Festival City teams up with Qatar Charity, Dreama

Doha Festival City, has launched the 'Branches of Kindness' initiative in partnership with Qatar Charity (QC) and a special Ramadan experience, Festival Cares, for the children of the Orphan Care Center (Dreama), — alongside a diverse calendar of Ramadan family activities, exclusive shopping offers, and special Iftar experiences. "Ramadan is a time for unity, generosity, and reflection, and at Doha Festival City, we are honoured to create meaningful initiatives that bring the community together," said Christopher Barton, director - asset management, Qatar, Al-Futtaim Real Estate. "Through our partnerships with Qatar Charity and Dreama, we are reinforcing our commitment to Festival Cares, our corporate social responsibility programme, while offering visitors an engaging and festive Ramadan experience." The 'Branches of Kindness' initiative, located at Centre Court throughout Ramadan, invites visitors to contribute to

QC's Giving Lives On campaign, which supports 4.5mn people in need across 40 countries. Each branch's gift request tag placed on a tree structure represents a charitable cause, including orphan sponsorship, Ramadan food aid, humanitarian assistance for patients, those with no income, the elderly, debtors, and Iftar programmes in Qatar. Shoppers can scan the QR code on the tree to make direct donations via the QC app (qch.qa/appen). "At Qatar Charity, we believe that every act of kindness can create lasting change. We thank Doha Festival City for the 'Branches of Kindness' initiative that provides a powerful opportunity for the community to participate in charitable giving during Ramadan," said resource development manager Ali Ibrahim AlGreeb. As part of its community outreach, Festival Cares is hosting children from Dreama on March 25 for a fun-filled day at Angry Birds World, followed by an Iftar meal at IKEA. To commemorate the occasion, each child will receive a Monopoly



Al-Futtaim Real Estate's Christopher Barton is joined by Qatar Charity's Resource Development Department deputy director Amer al-Besiri and CSR head Marwan Abu Lughod.

game, sponsored by Doha Festival City, and a reading package from Qatar Reads and Qatar National Library.

"At Dreama, we are committed to creating enriching experiences that bring happiness and a sense of belonging to our children,"

said communication and media director Munira al-Boloshi. The mall will also celebrate Garangao, a cherished Qatari

tradition, from March 13 to 15 at the Entertainment Node, in collaboration with Kahramaa's Tarsheed. The programme will feature storytelling, cultural games, and interactive activities, bringing joy to children and families while honouring local heritage. Beyond its charity initiatives, Doha Festival City is offering a rich lineup of Ramadan experiences. Visitors can explore exclusive shopping offers across fashion, beauty, and home decor from top retailers such as Harvey Nichols, IKEA, and Charlotte Tilbury. For Iftar, guests can indulge in specially crafted menus and buffets at some of Doha's most popular dining destinations, including Garden by Belgravia, Asha's, and Yasmine Palace. Families can also enjoy special entertainment offers, including an unlimited play pass at Angry Birds World for QR149, applicable to all rides except Slingshot, Karting, and skill-based games, and a Ramadan deal at Snow Dunes for QR99, a statement added.

Ahlibank partners with talabat

Ahlibank has partnered with talabat to provide exclusive rewards to its Visa credit cardholders. As part of this special promotion, Ahlibank Visa credit cardholders can enjoy a 30% discount on all Talabat orders by using their card and the promo code Ahli30, saving up to QR30 per transaction. The offer is valid until April 6, 2025, a statement said. Abdulaziz al-Khater, Ahlibank chief retail banking officer, said: "At Ahlibank, we are committed to enhancing the banking experience of our customers by offering exclusive benefits that complement their lifestyle. Our



partnership with talabat ensures that our cardholders enjoy greater savings and convenience while ordering during this special time of the year."

For credit card enquiries or applications, visit any Ahlibank branch or call the 24/7 contact centre on 4420 5222 or visit www.ahlibank.com.qa

49 projects from over 20 nations for Qumra 2025

The 11th edition of Qumra, Doha Film Institute's (DFI) annual talent incubator for Arab and international cinema, is set to provide 49 projects by emerging filmmakers from over 20 countries with support and guidance. This year's selection includes 16 projects by Qatari and Qatar-based filmmakers, a statement said yesterday. Participants will engage in in-depth activities with Qumra Masters and leading industry experts, with in-person sessions taking place in Doha during April 4-9, followed by online sessions from April 12-14. DFI CEO Fatma Hassan Alremailhi, said: "For more than a decade, Qumra has served as a career-changing destination for emerging



filmmakers to hone their skills and advance their projects under the guidance of accomplished filmmakers and industry experts. "The diversity of this year's subjects and cinematic approach of the young filmmakers reflects the growing strength of independent cinema. These bold new voices bring to the world stories that matter, promoting a stronger understanding of humanity and our

shared values." Of the 49 selected projects, 37 are recipients of DFI's Grants Programme, while 21 projects are graduates of DFI's year-round training initiatives, including the Feature Script Lab, Filmmaking Lab with Rithy Panh, Producers Lab, and Series Lab, showcasing the Institutes holistic approach to filmmaker development and nurturing creative talent. The public is invited to experience Qumra firsthand through Qumra Master Classes, accessible with the Qumra Pass, and by attending Qumra Screenings. Audiences can enjoy a remarkable selection of feature-length films from the region and around the world, all supported by DFI.

Turkish embassy Iftar for diplomats



The Turkish Embassy in Doha hosted its annual Iftar for diplomats, aimed at strengthening diplomatic relations and reinforcing the values of friendship and co-operation between nations. The Iftar also provided a platform for cultural exchange and constructive dialogue, furthering shared aspirations for regional and global stability and prosperity. In his welcome speech, the Turkish ambassador Dr Mustafa Göksu highlighted the importance of Ramadan as a time for sharing, patience, and unity. He stressed the role of such gatherings in enhancing dialogue and understanding between nations and peoples. The Iftar event was held under the sponsorship of QNB, a statement from the embassy added.

HMC encourages smokers to take advantage of Ramadan to kick the habit permanently

All smokers and users of tobacco and nicotine products have been urged by the Tobacco Control Centre at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) to benefit from the holy month of Ramadan and use it as an opportunity to give up smoking forever.

Dr Ahmed al-Mulla, director of the Tobacco Control Centre — a World Health Organisation collaborating centre for treating tobacco dependence — stressed that fasting is a great way for smokers to overcome their addiction to tobacco and nicotine products. He emphasised that avoiding smoking for extended periods of time during the day strengthens the self-discipline to stop smoking and reduces both psychological and physical dependence on nicotine. "The centre reports a noticeable yearly increase in the number of smokers attempting to quit during Ramadan, and the therapeutic interventions whether behavioural or medicinal, can greatly increase the chances of successfully stopping permanently," Dr al-Mulla noted. Dr Jamal Bashi, smoking cessation specialist highlighted the importance of avoiding habits and behaviours that trigger the urge to smoke. He also suggested participating in social and religious activities, drinking plenty of water, using sugar-free gum in the evening, and using miswak during



Dr Jamal Bashi



Dr Ahmed al-Mulla

the fasting hours. "Withdrawal symptoms from smoking typically appear only during the first week of Ramadan and that most smokers can overcome without medical intervention. However, the Tobacco Control Centre offers medical help to those who have trouble in stopping smoking," Dr Bashi added. Additionally, Dr Bashi warned against certain harmful behaviours that smokers tend to practise during Ramadan, which can be extremely dangerous to their health. Among these is smoking heavily after breaking fast which raises the risk of heart attacks and strokes and can result in a sudden rise in blood pressure. Furthermore, smoking more cigarettes in the evening increases nicotine ad-

diction, making it more difficult to stop after Ramadan. According to Dr al-Mulla, HMC's Tobacco Control Centre offers a wide range of treatments to assist smokers in quitting. These treatments, which are provided through specialised programmes scientifically proven to be successful in assisting patients on their path to quitting smoking, include behavioural therapy, medication-based treatment, and laser therapy. Since its establishment, the centre has successfully treated thousands of smokers. The centre encourages all individuals looking to quit smoking to take advantage of its services during the holy month and book an appointment by calling (40254981 - 50800959).

MoECC launches awareness competition for QU students

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, in collaboration with Qatar University (QU), has launched a competition titled "Student Teams: Awareness Campaign on Environment and Climate Change - Spring of 2025." The initiative aims to encourage students to design and implement innovative awareness campaigns focusing on environmental and climate change issues. Dr Ibrahim al-Muslimani, Assistant Undersec-

retary for Protection and Natural Reserves Affairs, stressed that this competition is part of the ministry's vision to build an informed society that embraces sustainability and environmental protection. He noted that it will help foster creativity and innovation among students while equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary for active participation in preserving the environment and conserving natural resources.

Public Prosecution's Ramadan championship begins



The first edition of the Public Prosecution Ramadan Championship for football and Padel has started with the participation of a large number of employees. Participants expressed their happiness with the initiative, stressing that such events help strengthen communication among colleagues and provide opportunities for entertainment and relaxation away from work pressures, especially in the spiritual and socially bonding atmosphere of Ramadan. The championship will continue for several days throughout the holy month, a statement added.



The first edition of the Public Prosecution Ramadan Championship for football and Padel has started with the participation of a large number of employees. Participants expressed their happiness with the initiative, stressing that such events help strengthen communication among colleagues and provide opportunities for entertainment and relaxation away from work pressures, especially in the spiritual and socially bonding atmosphere of Ramadan. The championship will continue for several days throughout the holy month, a statement added.



France, UK, Germany urge ‘unhindered’ access for Gaza aid

AFP
Paris

France, the United Kingdom and Germany yesterday urged Israel to ensure the “unhindered” delivery of humanitarian supplies to the war-ravaged Palestinian territory of Gaza, warning against using aid as

a “political tool”. A fragile ceasefire since January 19 saw an influx of humanitarian aid into Gaza, before Israel on Sunday announced it was blocking deliveries until Palestinian Hamas group accepted its terms for an extension of the truce.

“We call on the government of Israel to abide by its international obligations to ensure full,

rapid, safe and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance to the population in Gaza,” the countries said in a joint statement.

“A halt on goods and supplies entering Gaza such as that announced by the government of Israel would risk violating international humanitarian law,” they said.

“Humanitarian aid should never be contingent on a ceasefire or used as a political tool.” The three European nations described the humanitarian situation in Gaza as “catastrophic”.

The Gaza ceasefire deal’s first phase ended over the weekend after six weeks of relative calm. They included exchanges of Israeli hostages taken when Hamas

stormed Israel in October 2023 for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

While Israel has said it wants to extend the first phase until mid-April, Hamas has insisted on a transition to the deal’s second phase, which should lead to a permanent end to the war.

Of the 251 hostages taken on that date, 58 remain in Gaza,

including 34 the Israeli military has confirmed are dead. “It is vital that the ceasefire is sustained, all the hostages are released, and continued flows of humanitarian aid to Gaza are ensured,” the three European nations said.

“All hostages must be unconditionally released and Hamas must end their degrading and humiliating treatment,” they added.



Palestinian children queue at a charity kitchen ahead of the Iftar fast-breaking meal during the holy month of Ramadan, near building rubble at the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

South Africa accuses Israel of using ‘starvation’ in Gaza

AFP
Johannesburg

South Africa yesterday denounced Israel’s restriction of aid into war-ravaged Gaza since the weekend, saying it amounted to using starvation as a weapon of war.

A fragile ceasefire since January saw an influx of humanitarian aid into Gaza, before Israel on Sunday announced it was blocking deliveries until Hamas accepted its terms for an extension of the truce.

“Preventing food from entering Gaza is a continuation of Israel’s use of starvation as a weapon of war as part of the ongoing campaign of what the ICJ ruled to be plausible genocide against the Palestinian people,” the South African foreign ministry said in a statement, referring to Pretoria’s case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. “The

people of Gaza are experiencing immeasurable suffering and urgently need food, shelter and medical supplies,” it added.

“South Africa calls on the international community to hold Israel accountable,” it said.

While Israel has said it wants to extend the first phase of the ceasefire until mid-April, Hamas has insisted on a transition to the deal’s second phase, which should lead to a permanent end to the war.

South Africa in December 2023 brought a case before the ICJ, arguing that the war in Gaza breached the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention, an accusation Israel has strongly denied.

Several nations have added their weight to the proceedings, including Spain, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Turkiye, Chile and Libya.

While ICJ rulings are legally binding, the court has no concrete means to enforce them.

South Africa also said it condemned Israel’s offensive in the

occupied West Bank which has expanded to more areas of Jenin city.

At least three people were killed on Tuesday, the Israeli military said although Palestinian officials reported two dead.

The offensive was “a dangerous escalation, and which further threatens the Palestinian quest for self-determination and statehood,” South Africa said.

“The expanded Israeli military presence, now at its highest levels in the West Bank since 2002, signals an intent to re-establish full-scale military occupation,” it said.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and its troops carry out regular raids there.

The current offensive in the northern West Bank began on January 21 around refugee camps regarded as bastions of Palestinian fighters. It has since expanded to more areas and displaced tens of thousands of people and saw the first deployment of Israeli tanks in the territory in 20 years.

Paramilitary shelling of Sudan camp kills 6: activists

AFP
Port Sudan

Paramilitary shelling of a famine-hit displacement camp near North Darfur’s besieged capital of El-Fasher killed six people yesterday, activists in Sudan said.

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), locked in a brutal conflict with the regular army since April 2023, pressed an attack on the Abu Shouk camp, said the local resistance committee, one of hundreds of volunteer groups co-ordinating aid across Sudan.

Yesterday’s shelling came a day after the group reported 80 casualties from artillery fire on Tuesday, although it could not confirm the exact numbers of

dead and wounded. The RSF assault on the camp began on Sunday, the second day of the holy month of Ramadan in the north-east African country.

Civilians had been shopping for Ramadan supplies when shells hit the camp and a crowded market nearby, killing six people, rescuers said.

The attacks come as the RSF keeps up its months-long siege of El-Fasher, the last state capital in the vast western region of Darfur still under army control.

Fighting around the city has seen the army and allied forces repel repeated paramilitary attacks as civilians bear the brunt of relentless shelling.

The RSF holds nearly all of Darfur while the army controls the country’s east and north and

has this year made gains in the capital Khartoum and central Sudan.

The war has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people and uprooted more than 12mn, making it the “biggest humanitarian crisis ever recorded”, according to the International Rescue Committee.

In North Darfur alone, nearly 1.7mn people are displaced.

Around 2mn people face extreme food insecurity, and 320,000 are already suffering famine conditions, according to UN estimates.

Famine has hit three displacement camps around El-Fasher — Zamzam, Abu Shouk and Al-Salam — and is expected to spread to five more areas, including El-Fasher itself, by May.

South Sudan detains oil minister and military officials in threat to peace deal

Reuters
Nairobi

South Sudanese forces have arrested the petroleum minister and several senior military officials allied with First Vice-President Riek Machar, Machar’s spokesperson said yesterday, jeopardising a peace deal that ended a five-year civil war.

The arrests follow intense fighting in recent weeks in the strategic northern town of Nasir between national forces and the White Army militia, a loosely-organised group mostly comprising armed Nuer, Machar’s ethnic group.

The White Army fought alongside Machar’s forces in the 2013-2018 civil war that pitted them against predominantly ethnic Dinka troops loyal to President Salva Kiir.

Petroleum Minister Puot Kang Chol, who hails from Nasir, and the deputy head of the army Gabriel Doup Lam were arrested, while all other senior military officials allied with Machar were

placed under house arrest, said Machar’s spokesperson, Puok Both Baluang.

“As of now, there’s not any reason provided to us that led to the arrest or the detention of (these) officials,” Baluang told Reuters.

South Sudanese troops were also deployed around Machar’s residence, although he had been able to travel to his office yesterday morning, Baluang said.

In the government’s first comments since the arrests, Information Minister Michael Makuei accused forces loyal to Machar of collaborating with the White Army and attacking a military garrison near Nasir town on Tuesday.

Makuei did not comment on the detentions, but said Kiir had vowed that the country would not go back to war.

“The government is in the process of addressing this situation and people should not panic or listen to unfounded and unrealistic wild rumours that are being spread by enemies of peace and stability,”

Makuei said in a statement.

South Sudan’s civil war, which erupted just two years after the country gained independence from Sudan, killed an estimated 400,000 people, drove 2.5mn from their homes and left almost half the nation’s 11mn citizens struggling to find enough food.

A peace deal struck in 2018 has mostly avoided outright fighting between Kiir and Machar’s forces, though localised violence routinely flares up.

Daniel Akech Thiong, senior analyst on South Sudan at the International Crisis Group, said the oil-rich country appeared to be on the brink of war, fuelled by increased access to weapons due to the conflict in neighbouring Sudan.

“The fragile peace that has maintained a delicate balance among competing armed leaders since 2018 is at risk of collapsing,” he said. The war in Sudan has also disrupted South Sudan’s oil exports, which represented 90% of its foreign exchange earnings.

Mozambique police fire on opposition march, leader’s location unknown

Reuters
Maputo

Mozambican police fired on supporters of opposition leader Venancio Mondlane marching in the capital Maputo yesterday, injuring at least 10 people, Mondlane’s team and a human rights researcher said.

A police spokesperson confirmed that law enforcement had dispersed marchers but declined to elaborate.

Mondlane’s supporters gathered hours before President Daniel Chapo signed an agreement with some political parties aimed at ending months of protests over Chapo’s disputed election victory last year.

Mondlane came second in the presidential vote but has been excluded from the talks leading up to the agreement, which is meant to include a review of the



A general view of buses blocking a road in Maputo, yesterday, after police dispersed protesters.

country’s electoral laws.

Analysts say Mondlane’s exclusion means the agreement will likely do little to stabilise the resource-rich Southern African country.

Mondlane’s team said in a statement posted on Facebook

that his whereabouts were not known after police broke up the march. It said 16 people had been injured.

Mondlane did not answer a phone call from Reuters.

In a separate video broadcast live from Mondlane’s Facebook

page, the opposition leader was seen standing in a car moving down a street surrounded by a crowd of people cheering and singing. The sound of gunshots rang out, after which people started running and the video abruptly cut off.

Syria monitor reports 11 killed in ex-Assad bastion, clashes in south

A Syria war monitor said yesterday that four civilians had been killed in a security operation in a former pro-government bastion this week, while clashes in the south had left at least seven security personnel and gunmen dead, AFP reported from Beirut. Restoring and maintaining security across Syria remains one of the most pressing challenges for the country’s new authorities after rebels overthrew longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad on December 8. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said

the security operation in the Datur district of the coastal city of Latakia had killed four civilians — two construction workers yesterday and two “guards at a local school” the day before. Latakia province is a former Assad government stronghold and the heartland of his family’s Alawite minority. State media had said that forces launched the campaign there after “militia remnants” supporting Assad killed two security personnel in an ambush.

CONFLICT Drone strikes wound two in Lebanon

Lebanese official media said two people were wounded yesterday when Israeli drones attacked a vehicle in the south, a day after a deadly raid and despite an Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire, AFP reported from Beirut.

“Israeli drones carried out more than one strike on a vehicle in Ras Naqura, near a rubbish dump” south of a United Nations peacekeeping position, the National News Agency (NNA) said. “Two siblings who were collecting scrap metal” were wounded and taken to hospital, it added. Israel’s military said it carried out a strike on Lebanon that targeted people it alleged were engaged in activities that violated the ceasefire deal.

“Earlier today, a number of suspects were identified loading weapons onto vehicles in the area of Naqoura in southern Lebanon,” it said, adding that the Israeli Air Force “struck one of the vehicles in order to remove the threat”. “The activity of the suspects constitutes a blatant violation of the understandings between Israel and Lebanon,” it said in a statement.

Yesterday’s strikes come a day after Israel’s military said it killed a Hezbollah navy commander in the south, accusing the slain fighter of violating the November 27 ceasefire. The truce largely halted more than a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, including two months of full-blown war during which Israel sent in ground troops. Israel has continued to carry out strikes on Lebanese territory since the agreement took effect.

HEALTH WHO says Uganda’s Ebola caseload rises to 12

Uganda’s Ebola virus caseload has risen to 12, up from 10, with two people who died early last month being considered probable cases, the World Health Organisation said yesterday, Reuters reported from Kampala.

On Saturday WHO reported the death of the latest victim of the outbreak, a four-year-old boy who died last week at the country’s national referral hospital, Mulago. WHO listed the mother of that boy and her other child as probable Ebola cases in its latest weekly bulletin on disease outbreaks.

The mother died on February 6, a few days after giving birth “following an acute illness,” the WHO said, adding that the newborn died on February 12. “No laboratory tests were conducted following their deaths, and they were respectively buried,” WHO said. The four-year-old boy who died on Saturday was taken to four health facilities before his death, and was not a known contact of the outbreak’s first case, WHO said. Uganda declared the outbreak of the Sudan strain of the highly infectious and often fatal haemorrhagic disease in January. Ebola symptoms include fever, headache and muscle pains. The virus is transmitted through contact with infected bodily fluids and tissue. The United Nations has launched an emergency appeal to raise \$11.2mn to help fund the country’s response to the outbreak after the country’s health budget was strained by US cuts to foreign aid. Uganda has launched a trial vaccination programme against the Sudan strain of Ebola.

DECISION

UK drops antitrust probe into Microsoft and OpenAI tie-up

Britain dropped its probe into Microsoft’s partnership with ChatGPT maker OpenAI, saying the software giant did not have the level of control over the AI company that would warrant further investigation. The partnership had come under antitrust scrutiny in Britain and the US. A battle in the startup’s boardroom that led to the exit and return of CEO Sam Altman in 2023 raised questions about the company’s structure. Britain’s Competition and Markets Authority said while Microsoft did acquire material influence over OpenAI in 2019, it had not since gained de facto control and therefore it did not qualify for review under the UK’s merger control regime.

ANNOUNCEMENT

UK not to make payments for Rwanda deportation scheme

Britain yesterday said that “no further payments” will be made to Rwanda for an abandoned scheme to receive deported migrants. “The costly Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda wasted tax-payer money and should not continue,” said a UK government spokesman. “That is why we are bringing the partnership to an end. As stated clearly in notes verbale between the UK and Rwanda, no further payments in relation to this policy will be made and Rwanda has waived any additional payments,” he added. Britain announced last week it was suspending most financial aid to Rwanda for backing the M23 group’s offensive in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

DISPUTE

China ‘monitored’ Philippine supply run to grounded warship

The Chinese coast guard yesterday said it monitored a Philippine civilian boat delivering daily provisions to the “illegally grounded” warship at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal on Tuesday. China and the Philippines claim the territory and frequently clash in its surrounding waters. The resupply missions for soldiers aboard the grounded naval vessel were previously a significant cause of tension between the two countries until they reached a provisional agreement in July on such missions, signalling a de-escalation of tensions. In January, they also agreed to seek common ground and find ways to co-operate despite their territorial disagreements.

OFFBEAT

World’s most accurate clock on sale for \$3.3mn

Resembling a squat, wide fridge, the world’s most accurate clock went on sale for \$3.3mn in Japan yesterday. The “Aether clock OC 020” is so precise that it would take 10bn years for it to deviate by one second, according to its Kyoto-based manufacturer Shimadzu Corporation. Known as a “strontium optical lattice clock”, it is 100 times more accurate than caesium atomic clocks, the current standard for defining seconds, the precision-equipment producer said in a statement. The machine, a box around three feet tall, is small for its kind with a volume of around 250 litres. It can also be used in research fieldwork.

US eyes zero tariff on cars in India trade deal

Reuters
New Delhi

The US wants India to eliminate tariffs on car imports under a proposed trade deal between the two nations, but New Delhi is reluctant to immediately bring down such duties to zero even as it considers further cuts, sources said.

India’s high auto tariffs will feature in formal talks for a bilateral trade deal that are yet to begin, said one of the three sources, all of whom were briefed on the matter, paving the way for American electric vehicle maker Tesla, which is gearing up for an India launch.

Taxes on cars imported into India are as high as 110%, which Tesla chief Elon Musk has criticised as being among the steepest in the world. The EV giant last year shelved its plans to enter the world’s third-largest car market for a second time.

Musk has now found support from US President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly railed against India’s high taxes and in an address to Congress on Tuesday slammed the country’s auto tariffs of more than 100%, threatening reciprocal action. “The US ask is for India to bring tariffs down to zero or negligible in most sectors, except agriculture,” the first source said, adding the expectation on New Delhi eliminating auto tariffs was “clearer than any other”.

A second source said India was “listening to the US” and had not

Tesla’s first India showroom to open in Mumbai

US electric carmaker Tesla has signed a lease deal to open its first showroom in Mumbai, as it moves towards a goal to sell imported cars in India, registration papers show, after it dropped similar plans last year. The papers show the company has signed a five-year lease from February 16, 2025, and will pay rent of about \$446,000 for the first year for 4,003 square feet, almost the size of a basketball court. The rent will increase by 5% every year, with a total expense over five years of over \$2.5mn, according to the registered lease document

provided by analytics firm CRE Matrix. The showroom will be situated in the Maker Maxity building in the business and retail hub of Bandra Kurla Complex near the city’s airport, according to the papers. Reuters reported last month that Tesla had selected locations for two showrooms in New Delhi and Mumbai, days after the carmaker’s chief, Elon Musk, met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the US. Musk is a close ally of US President Donald Trump and is heading up his so-called department of government efficiency. – Reuters

pushed back, adding it would respond with its position on the tariffs after consulting local industries.

The office of US Trade Representative, India’s trade ministry, and the foreign affairs ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

After a meeting between Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, the two nations agreed to resolve tariff rows and work on the first segment of a deal by the fall of 2025, aiming for bilateral trade worth \$500bn by 2030.

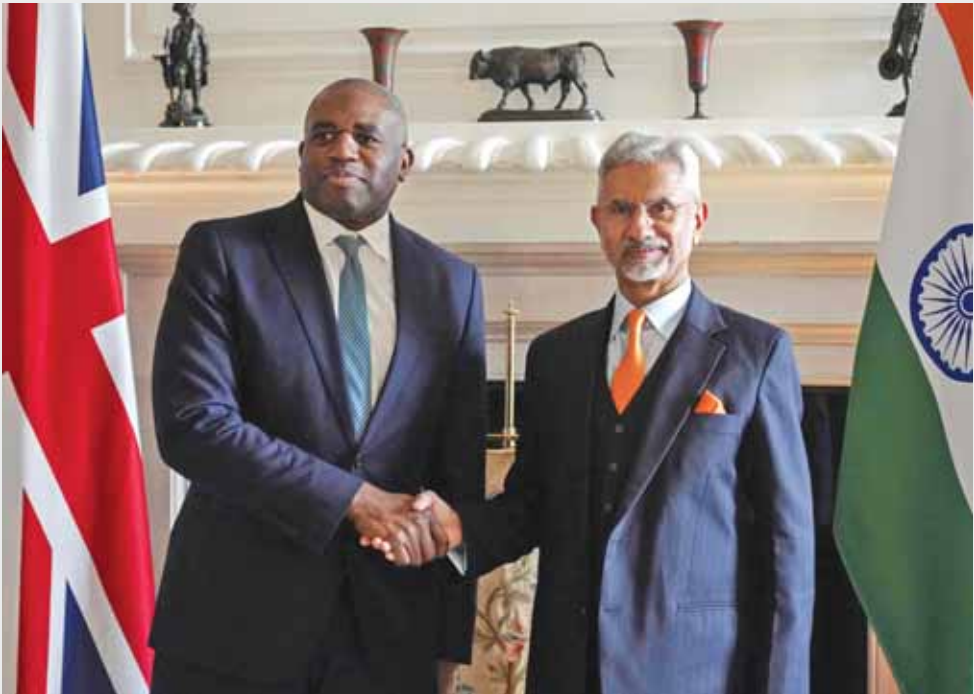
Indian Trade Minister Piyush Goyal is on a nearly week-long trip to the US and on Tuesday met US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick to pursue trade talks. He is also expected to meet the US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

While India is unlikely to relent to US demands to reduce tariffs on auto imports to zero immediately, it has been priming the industry to prepare for a lower tariff regime and be open to competition, said the first source and a fourth person.

Last month, the Indian government met domestic carmakers to decide on any tariff cuts and understand their reservations over taxes going down to zero immediately, the first source added.

India’s 4mn-vehicles-a-year car market is one of the most protected in the world and its domestic players have previously argued against lowering tariffs, saying such a move would dry up investment in local manufacturing by making imports cheaper.

UK foreign secretary meets Jaishankar



Britain’s Foreign Secretary David Lammy (left), meets with the India’s External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar, during a bilateral meeting, at Chevening House, in Sevenoaks, southern England, yesterday.

Reuters
New Delhi

India’s opposition party politicians in the southern states yesterday met to protest plans by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to redraw constituencies based on the 2011 census, on concerns the northern states would dominate in parliament. The protest, led by M K Stalin, chief minister of the wealthy, less populated Tamil Nadu state, has been backed by the national Congress party and over a dozen others in five southern states, which are enjoying faster economic growth than northern

counterparts while keeping a lid on population growth.

Stalin tabled a resolution to ensure that the delimitation exercise, or redrawing of boundaries, be based on 1971 population levels and retained till 2056 to ensure that densely populated northern states taper population growth.

The 1971 census paved the way for the last redrawing of such boundaries and created 543 seats in parliament. Now, leaders from the south want the status quo retained, until a formula providing equal representation is drawn up.

“We are not against delimitation and yet it shouldn’t be a punishment for those who are successful in controlling population,”

said Sarvanan Annadurai, spokesperson of Stalin’s DMK party.

The resolution also sought a constitutional amendment to guarantee proportional representation for all states if the number of MPs increases.

“The voice of southern states cannot be stifled by the Modi government in parliament,” he said, adding that over 15 parties have offered their support and push-back would continue. Southern states have accused Modi’s government of discriminatory practices in the past, including in federal fund distribution, unfair allotment of grants, denial of permission for irrigation projects and for special funds for drought relief.

New Delhi vows to flatten monster garbage pile

India’s capital New Delhi has vowed to clear one of its largest trash piles by next year as part of a plan to eradicate unsightly landfills dotting the megacity’s skyline. Around 32mn people live in greater Delhi, where a slipshod approach to waste management has left numerous landfills with garbage piled up to 200 feet high and visible from miles away. Regular spot fires during the capital’s long and intense summer see the trash mounds turn into toxic conflagrations spilling dangerous chemical fumes into nearby neighbourhoods. Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa told reporters that work was underway to process and dispose of waste at one of the city’s biggest trash piles. By the end of the year, waste at the Bhalswa dump on the city’s northern outskirts “will be reduced to a point where it will no longer be visible” from a distance, he said.

Philippine jet wreckage, bodies of crew found

AFP
Manila

Philippine rescuers yesterday found the wreckage of a fighter jet and the bodies of two crewmen sent to combat communist rebels in a mountainous region of the country’s south.

The FA-50 fighter jet had gone missing a day earlier while on a mission to provide air support for troops fighting guerrillas in northern Mindanao.

Lieutenant general Luis Rex Bergante, commander of Eastern Mindanao Command, said the two crewmen had been found inside the wreckage.

“The bodies were found inside the aircraft. There was an attempt to open a parachute and eject,” he said.

“The aircraft was a total

wreck. The aircraft smashed through the trees in the mountain.”

Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Garelo of the 4th Infantry Division said the wreckage of the missing jet was found on Mount Kalatungan.

Located in Mindanao’s Bukidnon province, the 9,450 feet Kalatungan is the fifth-tallest mountain in the Philippines.

Bergante said bringing the servicemen’s remains down the mountainside was now the top priority.

In a statement, the air force said it had temporarily “grounded its FA-50 fleet” and would “ensure a thorough investigation into the accident,” the cause of which remains unknown.

The crashed jet was one of a dozen FA-50s the Philippines purchased from South Korea in the past decade.

UN plans to halve rations to Rohingya refugees

Reuters
Dhaka

The United Nations has warned it will have to cut monthly food rations to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh from \$12.50 to \$6 next month, unless it can raise funds to avert a measure that would worsen hunger in the world’s largest refugee settlement.

“On Tuesday, I was informed verbally, and yesterday I received the letter confirming a \$6.50 cut, which will take effect from April 1,” said Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Bangladesh’s top official overseeing the refugee camps.

“What they are receiving now is already not enough, so it’s hard to imagine the consequences of this new cut,” he said.

A spokesperson for the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Dhaka, Bangladesh’s capital, said the cuts could be averted if the organisation raised enough money in the coming weeks, adding it was seeking \$81mn.

Bangladesh is sheltering more than 1mn Rohingya, members of a persecuted Muslim minority who fled violent purges in neighbouring Myanmar mostly in 2016 and 2017, in overcrowded camps in the southern Cox’s Bazar district where they have limited access to job opportunities or education.

Roughly 70,000 fled to Bangladesh last year, driven in part by growing hunger in their home Rakhine state.

In a letter to Rahman, the WFP said it had been trying to raise funds to keep the rations at \$12.50 per month but had failed to find donors.

A cut in rations to anything less than \$6 would “fall below the minimum survival level and fail to meet basic dietary needs,” it said.

WFP said \$6 a month would still not allow refugees to meet the “minimum standard” for energy and nutrition and pregnant and breastfeeding women with higher nutrient needs were particularly at risk.

The funding gap was due to a

broad shortfall in donations rather than a decision by the Trump administration in the US to cut foreign aid globally, the WFP said, adding that US support for food aid for the Rohingya had continued.

The US has been the top donor to the refugee response, supporting the UN in providing emergency food and nutrition assistance since 2017.

The head of the UN refugee agency Filippo Grandi said on Friday in a post on X during a visit to Cox’s Bazar that if donor support to the camps “decreases dramatically – which may happen – the huge work done by the Bangladesh government, aid agencies and refugees will be impacted, putting thousands at

risk of hunger, disease and insecurity.”

A previous round of ration cuts to Rohingya in 2023 that reduced the amount of food rations to \$8 monthly led to a sharp increase in hunger and malnutrition, according to the UN.

Within months, they said, 90% of the camp population “struggled to access an adequate diet” and more than 15% of children suffered from malnutrition, the highest rate recorded. The cut was later reversed.

With \$6 monthly, the refugees would receive the equivalent of about 24 Bangladesh taka daily.

“For comparison, a banana costs

around 10-12 taka, and an egg costs 12-14 taka,” said Rahman, the Cox’s Bazar-based official.

Rahman said last month that the US contributed more than 50% of the funds for the Rohingya humanitarian response in 2024, about \$300mn.

The decision by the Trump administration to abruptly halt most US foreign aid and dismantle the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has caused turmoil in the humanitarian sector globally, as US-funded programmes providing lifesaving care for millions of people in countries such as Sudan and South Africa received termination notices.

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GULF TIMES

Romania budget cuts spark backlash on eve of sensitive election

Government cost cuts to curb Romania's chronic budget deficit and avert a ratings downgrade are causing a social backlash that risks boosting support for the far-right pro-Moscow candidate in May's presidential rerun.

Romania's pro-European ruling coalition is scaling back years of spending that has lifted debt by nearly one-fifth of output from pre-pandemic levels just as the new election nears.

Authorities are still assessing whether Calin Georgescu can run again in May, after his surprise victory in a December poll that was annulled over alleged Russian meddling.

Leading in opinion polls, he plans to end support for neighbouring Ukraine, questions the need for European Union funds underpinning the economy, calls US-driven Nato spending pledges "ultra-secondary" and vows to put Romanians first.

Some of the workers affected by the government cuts, which include a freeze on public sector pay and pensions, say that is something the present government is not doing.

"All these measures are taken against us. They always are," said Maxim Liceanu, 49, a clerk at state rail company CFR Calatori, which suspended about 240 services in January, including many commuter lines to capital Bucharest. Travel subsidies for students were also curbed, while cuts in higher-paid overtime work have slashed train mechanic Danut Stoica's monthly income by about one-fifth.

"We stay home instead of meeting our schedule," Stoica, 54, said at a rally in Bucharest.

Elsewhere in the economy, power grid workers have threatened a strike in March over pay curbs, part of a seven-year debt reduction plan agreed with the European Union.

In assessing the prospects for a downgrade, the Fitch ratings agency flagged weaker growth and 'domestic political shocks', while some investors say the new US administration's criticism of Romania over the cancelled election is a further risk factor.

Consumer sentiment has dropped and inflation was running at the EU's second-highest level in January, signalling a cooling off of the consumer boom that has buoyed Romania's economy.

The debt-fuelled largesse of the pro-European ruling coalition has opened up one of the highest current account deficits in emerging markets, S&P Global said, exposing it to possible shocks in investor confidence. The government says it needed to support the economy and shield households and businesses during multiple crises, including war in Ukraine. This year it has stressed that it will lower the deficit via cuts rather than hiking major taxes.

While at 53% of output, Romania's debt is still below the EU average, foreign currencies make up more than half of borrowing, with €13bn of issuance planned for 2025.

"The situation we are facing, and the reason why spreads are high, is that we issue too much," debt agency chief Stefan Nanu said. "Otherwise, we do see investor appetite. Romania is attractive for investors. The key is a lower budget deficit."

Romania's economy slowed sharply last year despite the surge in pre-election spending. US tariffs on Europe could further crimp growth, challenging the government's 2.5% assumption that underpins its deficit reduction drive.

"A potential commercial war between the United States and the EU will create recession in Europe, and then things will get complicated," central bank Governor Mugur Isarescu said.

He said the bank would give the tightly-controlled leu "more flexibility" if political tensions eased later in the year after spending what JP Morgan estimates is over €10bn on interventions in 2024. The bank does not comment on interventions.

A source briefed on an investor meeting said the government showed "a bit higher commitment than in the past" to deliver on the cuts, although investors remain cautious after Romania went from targeting a 5% deficit to a nearly 9% shortfall last year.

Given Romania's low tax revenue, there could be scope for tax hikes. But with state-owned companies paying hefty bonuses and some public sector retirees enjoying lavish pensions while Romanian wages languish among the lowest in the EU, tax hikes are a hard sell.

"Even if improvements are needed to achieve the 7% budget deficit target in 2025, we expect Romania's fiscal policy to be flexible and help it remain a member of the (investment grade) club," Raiffeisen economists said.

"However, the matter remains challenging, as Romania has never had to consolidate its finances to such an extent over a longer period in its recent history."

Fitch Ratings Director Greg Kiss said it was uncertain how long the coalition would last, making the seven-year debt reduction time frame a concern.

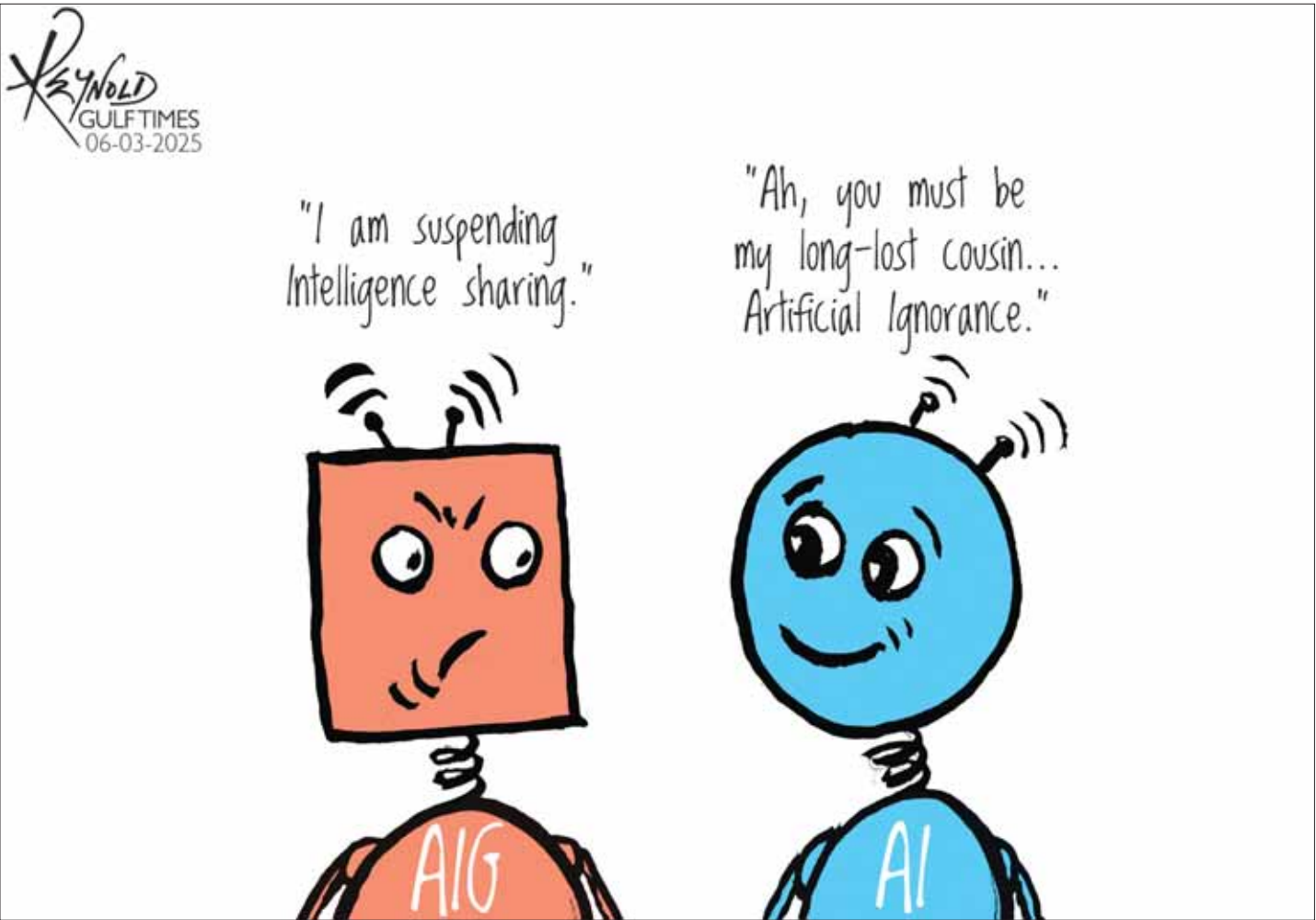
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Revitalising Europe: A new vision for strength, unity

By Harold James
Princeton

Germany's recent election must be understood in the context of broader geopolitical changes. For the first time in Germany's post-war history, the Russian and US governments both openly supported the same German opposition party: the far-right Nazi-tinged Alternative for Germany (AfD). Thus, on the face of it, the result should have brought a sigh of relief. The AfD will not be in power, and the two big traditional parties: the centre-right Christian Democrats (CDU) and the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), will likely form a coalition government.

And yet, no-one can seriously argue that these two parties "won". The CDU's result was its second-worst result of the post-war era, and the SPD's result was its worst. Any government they form will be burdened with the legacy of similar governments that failed to address Germany's economic malaise or respond effectively to the new security environment following Russia's 2014 and 2022 attacks on Ukraine.

The CDU and the SPD are drinking at the proverbial Last Stop Saloon. This may be their final chance to change direction, by returning to what made the German model such a success in the past. National politics must move both lower and higher than the German federal state – lower to the local level, and higher to the European level.

That means returning to subsidiarity: the principle that power is best exercised at the

lowest level where effective decisions can be made. This is particularly important for dealing with the former East Germany, where almost every constituency produced majorities for the AfD. Paradoxically, the AfD performed well after campaigning on immigration and internal security, even though immigrants are scarcer in the east than in the west, and even though many victims of inadequate security were immigrants attacked by right-wing thugs.

For eastern Germans to feel less alienated, the parties that have flourished there – both the far left and the far right – must be involved in devising solutions to local problems, many of which are driven by non-migration issues such as poor education and health care.

At the same time, the next German government will have to Europeanise many other major issues. Considering that Germany shares no borders with a non-EU or non-Schengen (visa-free travel area) country, migration is best addressed at the regional level. If Germans want to limit illegal immigration, they must help to strengthen the policing of other borders – notably those of Finland, Poland, Greece, Italy, and Spain.

The security question – and how to finance its solution – is even more pressing, and it may not be soluble at the EU level, where pro-Russian spoilers like Hungary and Slovakia hold a veto. Still, Germany can join a coalition of the willing to mobilise investments in defence. Or, as the Italian legal scholar Federico Fabbrini proposes, it could help revive the 1952 European Defense Community,

a treaty drawn up and ratified by four of the six original members of the European Economic Community (the precursor to the European Union).

This second option would even allow for non-EU states to join – the scheme was originally drawn up with the aim of bringing in the United Kingdom. Participation by the only two European nuclear powers, the UK and France, will be essential to replace the role once played by the United States.

Beyond these practical measures, Germany also needs an intellectual re-founding. Social democracy and Christian democracy were always Europe-focused movements. In the postwar era, they worked to establish an economic model that balanced markets with the need for rules to limit economic power.

The "social market economy", as it came to be known, is worth revisiting now that both Russia and the US have embraced a radically different model of their own. Under the new Russian and (now) American capitalism, business interests increasingly rely on supportive relationships with government, resulting in a model that is not only deeply unstable, but also unproductive and corrosive.

This new US approach follows necessarily from the return of tariffs, currency wars, and other instruments of economic nationalism and autarky. Since domestic manufacturers tend to be harmed by tariffs, which increase their input costs, they will seek exemptions. While friends of the government will get carve-outs, enemies will not. Over time, such arrangements cannot fail to undermine both economic efficiency and political legitimacy.

The challenge for Europeans is to come up with an effective answer to these changes elsewhere. Simply rolling out an industrial policy to favour or subsidise certain sectors would not be politically sustainable. Instead, the situation demands a return to the original vision of the 1950s European Economic Community, which dismantled tariffs within Europe while ensuring enforcement of competition policies and universally applicable rules.

Intellectually, the new world of power politics – where business is treated as a tool of the state – rests on a rejection of "neoliberalism," which was a long time coming. For his part, Russian President Vladimir Putin started embracing industrial policy more than 20 years ago with his attack on Russia's largest private oil company, Yukos. Since then, his war on neoliberalism has only intensified, with Russian visas being offered to anyone who renounces the "destructive neoliberal ideological agenda." At the same time, the US has been embracing tariffs, subsidies, and industrial policies since Donald Trump's first administration.

But rather than swinging between blind deregulation and aggressive industrial policy, we need a system of rules. If there was ever a time to revive the social market economy that emerged from the 1950s, it is now. – Project Syndicate

• Harold James, Professor of History and International Affairs at Princeton University, is the author, most recently, of Seven Crashes: The Economic Crises That Shaped Globalization.



Christian Democratic Union leader Friedrich Merz looks on as he is greeted with applause by the CDU and Christian Social Union members before the start of their parliamentary fraction meeting following the German general elections, in Berlin, last week. (Reuters)

Greenlanders shrug off Trump’s takeover bid

AFP
Nuuk

Greenlanders yesterday shrugged off US President Donald Trump’s vow to take over the Arctic island, seeing it merely as an opportunity to advance their own independence bid.

In the quiet hallways of the University of Greenland in Nuuk, the capital of the Danish autonomous territory, Trump’s latest remarks that he would take over Greenland “one way or another” left locals largely unfazed, despite his more menacing tone this time.

“For me personally, it’s just something ridiculous he would say, but I wouldn’t take it seriously because he’s basically all talk and no action,” said 23-year-old law student Peter Malik Henningsen.

“That sounds very violent and it’s also very dumb ... because Denmark, and Greenland, is also an ally of America,” he told AFP.

In his first major policy speech on Tuesday since returning to power, Trump underlined his expansionist vision, reiterating the importance of the United States taking over the strategically-located and mineral-rich Arctic island and taking back the Panama Canal.

About a quarter the size of the mainland



Ice is seen floating in the sea off an a cemetery as crosses raise over the blue sky on the northern outskirts of Nuuk, Greenland, yesterday. (AFP)

US, Greenland’s location in the Arctic puts it on the shortest route for missiles between Russia and the US.

Less than a week before general elections in Greenland where independence has dominated the campaign, Trump said he had a message for the island’s 57,000-strong population, whom he de-

scribed as “incredible people”.

“We strongly support your right to determine your own future, and if you choose, we welcome you into the United States of America,” Trump said.

But he then made clear he would not give up if persuasion fails, saying: “One way or the other we’re going to get it,” in-

After 13 years, Malala returns to hometown

AFP
Peshawar

Nobel Peace Prize laureate and education activist Malala Yousafzai returned to her Pakistan home village yesterday, 13 years after surviving an assassination attempt by militants.

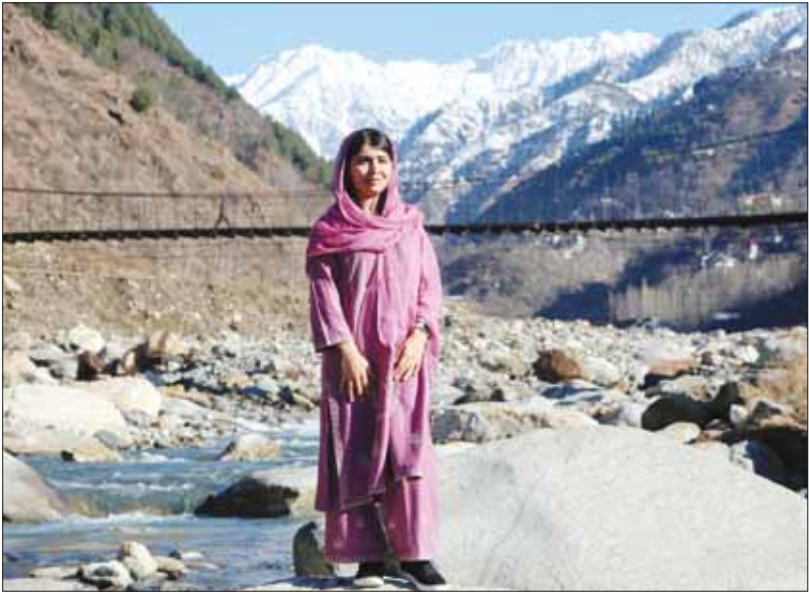
Yousafzai was a 15-year-old schoolgirl when Taliban militants boarded a bus and shot her in the head in the remote Swat Valley near the Afghanistan border.

She has made rare visits to the valley since, but it was the first time she returned to her childhood home in Shangla since being evacuated to the United Kingdom after the attack.

“As a child, I spent every holiday in Shangla, Pakistan, playing by the river and sharing meals with my extended family,” she said on X.

“It was such a joy for me to return there today — after 13 long years — to be surrounded by the mountains, dip my hands in the cold river and laugh with my beloved cousins. This place is very dear to my heart and I hope to return again and again.”

Yousafzai was accompanied by her father, husband and brother for the high-security visit by helicopter which lasted just three hours. Authorities have been cautious in allowing her to return to



Nobel Peace Prize laureate and education activist Malala Yousafzai posing during a visit to her home village in Shangla yesterday. (AFP)

Shangla district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where militancy has soared following the return of the Afghan Taliban in Kabul in 2021.

The area was sealed off for several hours to provide security for her visit yesterday, which included a stop at local education projects backed by her Malala Fund.

“Her visit was kept highly secret to avoid any untoward incidents,” a senior administration official told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

“Even the locals were unaware of her plans to visit.”

The Pakistan Taliban is a separate but closely linked group to the Afghan Taliban and controlled swaths of the border regions at the time Yousafzai was shot. Militants had ordered girls to stay

home, but she continued to secretly go to school and wrote a blog about her experience.

She went on to become an education activist and the world’s youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner at age 17.

In January, she addressed Muslim world leaders at an education conference in Islamabad where she called for action against the Afghan Taliban, who have banned teenage girls from going to school.

Her hometown visit comes in a week marred by violence in Pakistan, with 18 civilians and soldiers killed in an overnight suicide attack on a military compound in the same province.

“I pray for peace in every corner of our beautiful country. The recent attacks, including in Bannu yesterday, are heart-breaking,” Yousafzai said of the attack.

SC rejects Trump bid to freeze \$2bn in foreign aid

A divided US Supreme Court handed a legal defeat to President Donald Trump yesterday, rejecting his bid to freeze some \$2bn in foreign aid payments. The top court, in its first significant ruling on a legal challenge to the Trump administration, voted 5-4 to uphold a lower court order requiring that payments be made on aid contracts that have already been completed. The justices said the federal judge who ordered the resumption of payments for contracts with the US Agency for

International Development (USAID) and the State Department “should clarify what obligations the Government must fulfil.”

Conservatives John Roberts, the chief justice, and Amy Coney Barrett, a Trump appointee, voted with the three liberals on the nine-member Supreme Court. Justice Samuel Alito wrote a dissent that was joined by the three other conservatives.

“Does a single district-court judge who likely lacks jurisdiction have

the unchecked power to compel the Government of the United States to pay out (and probably lose forever) 2bn taxpayer dollars?” Alito wrote.

“The answer to that question should be an emphatic ‘No,’ but a majority of this Court apparently thinks otherwise. I am stunned,” he added.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which has backed several legal challenges to moves by the Trump administration, welcomed the Supreme Court decision.

sisting the island was needed for reasons of national security.

Trump offered to buy Greenland already during his first term as president — in vain. Since returning to the Oval Office in January, he has put the topic back on the agenda, and has this time said he wouldn’t rule out military force to get it.

“Trump is like that, a bit unpredictable at times but I’m not worried,” said another law student, David Jensen.

“We’re part of Nato, the United States are part of Nato, so I’m not worried,” insisted the 20-year-old who hails from one of the northernmost regions of Greenland.

In her office at the university overlooking an ice-covered fjord, political scientist Maria Ackren put Trump’s remarks into perspective.

“There is no panic,” she told AFP. “Here in Greenland, people are very calm, and you take one day at a time.”

“He’s more threatening for the whole world, actually, for the kind of world order that we have,” she said, adding that there “will probably be hard negotiations coming up with Trump.”

Meanwhile, Greenlandic Prime Minister Mute Egede reacted forcefully.

“We don’t want to be Americans, or Danes either. We are Greenlanders. The Americans and their leader must under-

stand that,” Egede wrote in a Facebook post yesterday.

“We are not for sale and can’t just be taken. Our future is decided by us in Greenland,” he said.

In Denmark, of which Greenland has been a part since 1721, authorities have repeatedly rejected Trump’s advances, insisting it is up to the people of Greenland to determine their future.

According to a poll conducted in January, around 85 percent of Greenlanders said they did not want to leave Denmark to join the United States. Only six percent were in favour.

Even Jorgen Boassen, a Greenlandic pro-Trump figure who took part in a highly publicised visit that Trump’s son Donald Trump Jr made to the island in January, is against a US takeover of Greenland.

Greenland “should become a state” in its own right, he told AFP yesterday.

Leaving an election debate on Tuesday evening in Nuuk, even before Trump had made his latest statements, Aputsiaq Inuk Petersen, a hunter, fisherman and switchboard operator, said he was pleased that the Trump administration’s interest in Greenland had propelled the territory onto the world stage.

“It’s good for Greenland,” the 23-year-old said, “because now everyone knows about Greenland and its people.”

Pakistan hails renewed US co-operation after arrest of Kabul plotter

■ Trump thanks Islamabad for move

Reuters
Islamabad

Pakistan highlighted its counter-terrorism co-operation with Washington after the arrest of Mohammad Sharifullah, whom it blames for a 2021 attack on US troops at Kabul airport, in a military operation along the border with Afghanistan.

“We will continue to partner closely with the United States in securing regional peace and stability,” Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said yesterday, hours after US President Donald Trump thanked the country for the arrest, adding Sharifullah was on his way to the United States.

The United States has charged Sharifullah with helping plan the attack and a hearing was scheduled for him in a federal court in Virginia yesterday, according to the US Department of Justice.

The 2021 bombing at Kabul airport killed at least 170 Afghans and 13 US soldiers as they sought to help Americans and Afghans flee in the chaotic aftermath of the Taliban takeover.

The attack was claimed by ISIS-K, the Afghan branch of the Islamic State group.

The US Justice Department has charged Sharifullah with “providing and conspiring to provide material support and resources” to ISIS-K.

“He confessed. This was the planner of that bombing,” White House national security adviser Mike Waltz said in an interview with Fox News.

Sharifullah is in US custody, FBI Director Kash Patel said in a post on X alongside a picture of agents standing in front of the plane that he was due to arrive on.

Pakistan had launched an operation along its Afghan border to capture Sharifullah, whom Sharif described as an Afghan national and top commander for Islamic State Khorasan.

“We thank US President Donald Trump

for acknowledging and appreciating Pakistan’s role and support in counter-terrorism efforts,” Sharif added in another statement.

A spokesman for Afghanistan’s Taliban government said that “the issue is unrelated to Afghanistan” and that the Taliban was also fighting the Islamic State.

Pakistan’s deputy prime minister and foreign minister, Ishaq Dar, had spoken with US national security adviser Mike Waltz on Tuesday, according to a Pakistani foreign office statement.

Dar “reiterated that Pakistan looked forward to building on its longstanding and broad-based relationship with the United States under President Trump and his administration”, it said.

Perennially shifting relations between Islamabad and Washington had been soured by concerns about Pakistan’s alleged support of Afghanistan’s Taliban rulers.

Although Pakistan denies such support, its links with Washington have frayed.

“This is a significant development in that US-Pakistan ties have been in an unsettled state in the nearly four years since the US exit from Afghanistan,” said Michael Kugelman, Director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington D.C.

A Pakistani security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Sharifullah’s arrest was part of wide-ranging joint counter-terrorism efforts.

“Excellent co-operation has been established between Pakistan and President Trump’s new government,” the official added. The US Justice Department said it had caught Sharifullah with the help of the CIA and FBI, without naming Pakistan.

Islamabad is making use of concerns about regional security and counter-terrorism “to engage with Trump, who otherwise has no interest in Pakistan”, said defence analyst Ayesha Siddiqi.

“For now (the arrest) is just to signal to the United States that Pakistan is there and can be relied upon as a partner.”

Germany eyes massive rearmament

Germany is set to ramp up defence spending with the incoming government, saying it wants to invest hundreds of billions of euros to bolster Europe’s security as US guarantees look increasingly fragile.

Likely next chancellor Friedrich Merz said Tuesday he planned to reform the country’s strict constitutional “debt brake” to pump up defence spending and pursue massive infrastructure investments. The announcement came just over a week after national elections and with talks underway between Merz’s conservative CDU/CSU bloc and the centre-left Social Democrats to forge a new governing alliance.

The two sides however agreed to try to rush through the changes before a government is formed, as US President Donald Trump’s public falling out last week with Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky added to the sense of urgency in Europe.

Trump’s moves to open direct talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin have left Europeans feeling their interests could be overlooked in any deal to end the fighting that started with Moscow’s full-scale invasion three years ago. Germany’s EU partners, who are gathering for a key summit today to discuss Ukraine and defence, have been waiting for movement from Berlin after months of political paralysis since the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s government in November. The proposed reform of Germany’s budget rules would see military expenditure

over one percent of GDP exempted from constitutional limits on taking on new debt. In practice, the reform could see Germany’s defence budget double to €100bn (\$107bn) per year, said Manuela Schwesig, a senior Social Democrat involved in coalition talks.

CDU leader Merz and his partners also want to set up a €500bn fund to upgrade Germany’s creaking infrastructure and help drag the country out of two straight years of recession. The size of the investments in consideration were “dizzying”, Markus Soeder, the leader of the CDU’s Bavarian sister party the CSU, said yesterday. But the announcement sent a clear signal: “Germany is defending itself, Germany is arming itself, Germany is renewing itself.”

After coming out on top in last month’s vote, Merz said he had “no illusions” about the US president and has wasted no time in ditching his party’s traditional aversion to debt to boost Germany’s defences.

The constitutional change is set to be rushed through the outgoing parliament, where the conservatives and the Social Democrats would have the necessary two-thirds majority with the Greens. According to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper, the first debate on the reform is planned to take place in the Bundestag on March 13, with the final vote four days later. If the plan succeeds, it could be a “real game changer” and “quickly overcome Germany’s economic stagnation”, said Sebastian Dullien, director of the IMK economic research institute.

US reconsidering Ukraine funding pause

Reuters/AFP
Washington

The White House said yesterday it is reconsidering its pause in funding for Ukraine and talks between the United States and Ukraine over a minerals deal are ongoing.

“I believe what the National Security Council told me in regards to that was ... that they are reconsidering the funding for Ukraine, the pause in the funding,” White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters.

US President Donald Trump paused delivery of military aid to Ukraine late on Monday following a clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last week.

Ukraine said yesterday it planned to hold new talks with the United States after Washington suspended its intelligence sharing, delivering a fresh blow to Kyiv as it battles Russia’s invasion.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been scrambling to contain the fallout from his explosive meeting with Trump, in which the US leader berated him in front of

international media and kicked him out of the White House.

“Today, Ukrainian and American teams began working on an upcoming meeting. We’re seeing forward momentum,” Zelensky said in an evening address, without saying when or where new talks would take place.

Zelensky also said he would join EU leaders for a Brussels summit today.

The United States said earlier it had “paused” intelligence sharing with Ukraine, days after announcing it was also suspending military aid.

The moves have cemented fears in Kyiv and Europe that Ukraine could be forced to accept a peace settlement on terms favourable to Moscow or risk losing US support entirely.

“We all want a safe future for our people. Not a temporary ceasefire, but an end to the war once and for all. With our coordinated efforts and US leadership, this is entirely achievable,” Zelensky wrote Wednesday on social media following a call with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

A day earlier he said he was “ready to come to the negotiating table as

soon as possible to bring lasting peace closer” and that he wanted to “make things right” with Trump.

In an address to US Congress on Tuesday, Trump read aloud from a letter he said he had received from Zelensky in which he said he was ready for peace talks.

Moscow, meanwhile, has refused to rule out giving up any of the land it has captured in its three-year military campaign, and has been buoyed by the suspension of military aid.

The Kremlin welcomed news of the Ukrainian leader’s letter to Trump.

“This approach is generally positive,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in answer to a question from AFP.

However, the Kremlin has repeatedly thrown doubt on whether it would hold talks with Zelensky.

Yesterday, Peskov cited a decree passed by Zelensky that rules out direct negotiations with Putin.

The Ukrainian leader has since said on multiple occasions he would be willing to meet Putin — but only after Kyiv and its Western allies agree on a common negotiating position.



Markets wrestle with Trump’s unconventional debt ideas

By **DaVIDE BARBUSCIA**
New York

Investors are weighing whether Donald Trump might turn to unconventional ideas to try to bring the ballooning US debt under control, after the president insisted he won’t cut popular health and retirement benefits.

Some of Trump’s advisers have espoused unorthodox ideas in recent months, including forcing foreign governments to swap Treasuries for cheaper bonds in order to reduce interest payments and selling residency cards to rich foreigners at \$5mn a pop.

With many officials and economists saying that US debt is on an unsustainable path, investors in US bonds, currency and equities markets are starting to pay more attention to these ideas.

US debt stands at \$36tn, or more than 120% of annual economic output (GDP), and is rising fast as the government spends more than it raises in taxes. Last year, the US budget deficit topped 6% of GDP – though Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said he wants to halve that.

Trump’s new administration has launched aggressive moves to cut federal spending through Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). And it has announced plans to raise additional revenue by imposing heavy tariffs on imports from trade partners including China, Mexico and Canada.

More than half a dozen investors and economists told Reuters the outcome of those efforts to close the deficit remained unclear. And none of the other outside-the-box ideas would have enough impact to bring the fiscal situation under control, they added.

Indeed, a forced debt swap with foreign governments could undermine US credit worthiness and upset the global financial system, they said – torpedoing Bessent’s aim of sharply lowering the yield on benchmark 10-year US Treasuries, which underpins borrowing costs across the economy.

“The prospect for manipulating a long-term yield through some kind of financial or politi-

cal engineering operation is very limited,” said Larry Summers, an economist who served as Treasury Secretary under President Bill Clinton, a Democrat.

An official with the White House’s National Economic Council – the principal group of economic advisors to the president – said that “out-of-the-box thinking is exactly what is required,” blaming the previous Democratic administration for adding to deficits and causing inflation.

Trump, the official said, had moved quickly to “restore fiscal sanity.” The official said a fall in long-term US interest rates in recent weeks was a sign of market confidence in Trump’s policies. As further evidence, the official pointed to a decline in the term premium, which measures what investors charge for holding debt for a longer period of time.

After Trump’s election in November, investors had sold off government bonds amid concerns that his policies – including tax cuts and tariffs – would cause the US deficit to worsen and put the economy on an inflationary path.

But since mid-January, a few days before Trump’s inauguration, the benchmark 10-year Treasury yields have fallen dramatically. The 10-year yield, which moves inversely to price, has dropped to around 4.2%.

The term premium, which in part reflects investors’ feelings about the future size of the debt, has also declined, but it remains firmly in positive territory after being negative for years.

Some investors, however, argue that yields have fallen not because of optimism around the US fiscal trajectory but because Trump’s policies have increased economic uncertainty – hitting consumer and business confidence, and leading to talk of slower or negative growth.

Those worries are showing in stock prices as well, some investors said. The US benchmark S&P 500 has fallen over 4% since Trump’s return to the White House on January 20 against a roughly 1.3% decline for an MSCI index of stocks in more than 40



File photo: Elon Musk listens to US President Donald Trump speak in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC.

other countries.

Niladri Mukherjee, chief investment officer at TIAA Wealth Management, said a “spike in policy uncertainty” may be leading to a soft patch in the economy.

“Campaign promises are one thing, but the devil is in the details when it comes to policy-making,” he added.

Whatever the reason for recent market moves, the Trump administration needs to persuade investors its measures to bring debt under control are working. Otherwise, investor disappointment could prompt a resumption of the bond selloff, raising borrowing costs and hindering the administration’s ability to pursue its agenda.

“The price of bonds, like the price of any financial asset, is primarily determined over time by fundamentals, and the budget deficit is by far the most important fundamental,” Summers said.

In a November paper, economist Stephen Miran, whom Trump has picked to chair his Council

of Economic Advisors, raised the possibility that Trump could use the threat of tariffs and the lure of US security support to persuade foreign governments to swap their Treasury holdings for lower-cost century bonds.

Miran, who served as an adviser to the Treasury during Trump’s first term, wrote the paper before his nomination while working as a senior strategist at Hudson Bay Capital Management, an investment management firm. He is yet to be confirmed.

The idea was part of a series of measures to increase US competitiveness that Miran called the ‘Mar-a-Lago Accord,’ after Trump’s Florida residence. Miran declined to comment to Reuters, pending his confirmation.

Such a debt swap could yield roughly \$100bn in interest costs per year, estimated Julian Bridgen, president of Macro Intelligence 2 Partners, a research firm.

While significant, this would be a fraction of the debt burden. Debt held by the public is expected to

climb to \$52tn by 2035 from \$30tn this year, according to the latest Congressional Budget Office forecasts.

But worries about further forced debt swaps could result in selling pressure on Treasuries, driving yields higher, some investors and economists said – increasing the risk associated with the world’s safest asset.

“Perhaps they could bring political pressure on some people to buy bonds,” Summers said. “But it’s likely to make other people nervous about holding an asset that is supported by political pressure, which tends not to work forever.” The NEC official said Miran’s paper discusses a wide variety of potential options without advocating for any of them, and only Trump could say what he’d adopt.

James Bianco, the head of Chicago-based advisory firm Bianco Research, said Trump has already adopted some measures indicated by Miran, including the use of tariffs as leverage for security agree-

ments and creating a sovereign wealth fund.

“I started to realise a lot of the things that are in that paper are happening,” Bianco said.

Another idea floated by the administration is the “gold card” programme, which Trump and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick have said could help to shrink the deficit. Trump has said the residency plan has the potential to raise trillions of dollars and help pay off US debt.

The projections have been met with some scepticism. Some immigration and wealth advisers say it is unlikely to trigger a major inflow of wealthy global investors because it would open up their global income to US taxes.

An additional subject of market speculation is the idea that the administration could try to make use of the country’s gold stockpile.

At current market prices, the gold held in Fort Knox, Kentucky and other locations would be worth about \$758bn, but it is valued at only \$11bn on the Federal Reserve’s balance sheet due to a 1973 law that set its price, TD Securities, an investment bank, said in a Feb 20 note.

Trump and Musk have said they want to confirm that the gold has not been stolen from the vaults. Bessent has talked about monetising “the asset side of the US balance sheet for the American people,” but said that a gold revaluation was not what he had in mind.

Ed Mills, an analyst at Raymond James, a financial services firm, said Trump might draw on his experience as a real estate developer in any attempt to overhaul the country’s debt.

“Trump has spent his life reorganising and refinancing the debt of the Trump Organisation,” Mills said.

Trump, by his own telling, nearly went bankrupt in 1990 and was forced to ask dozens of banks to change the terms on their loans and forgive some of his debts – an event he’s held up as proof of his negotiating skills and shrewd thinking.

“With Donald Trump you have to expect the unexpected,” Mills said. **-Reuters**

‘Cool head’ approach defines UK PM Starmer’s balancing act over Ukraine

By **Elizabeth Piper**
London

“Cool heads” is the mantra of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer as he tries to heal a rapidly growing rift between the US, Europe and Ukraine.

Starmer, who has played up his role as go-between over Ukraine, faces a diplomatic balancing act to keep both Europe and US President Donald Trump on side and protect Britain from US tariffs that would damage his country’s strained finances.

He has formed an unexpected alliance with French President Emmanuel Macron, a sharp critic of Britain’s departure from the European Union, and a solid relationship with Trump, who UK officials say likes Starmer’s lack of pretension.

“You are a very tough negotia-

tor... I’m not sure I like that, but okay,” Trump told Starmer at a press conference after they met at the White House last Thursday. Starmer had earned his salary with his efforts to end the threat of US tariffs, Trump said, without saying that he had succeeded.

Since Trump upended Washington’s supportive approach to Ukraine earlier this year, Starmer has helped to defend Kyiv’s position while not offending the US leader, who wants a swift peace deal, with or without President Volodymyr Zelensky.

After convening talks with European leaders in London on Sunday, Starmer said Britain, France and others would work on a proposed peace deal to deliver to Trump and “a coalition of the willing” to defend it.

He and Macron hope their leadership can help them rescue their reputations at home and cement

European security as Germany recovers from months of domestic political uncertainty.

But Starmer’s announcement did not say which other nations would offer peacekeepers or step up weapons deliveries quickly.

Some countries have reservations about sending troops – Poland, which a person familiar with national security said was coming under “significant pressure” to send its forces to Ukraine, says no decision will be made before elections in May.

Britain is still hopeful of getting others on board, but time is of the essence, with Trump ramping up the pressure by pausing the delivery of military support to Ukraine.

Starmer urged nations on Sunday “to keep the pace behind these actions,” adding “this is not a moment for more talk – It is time to act”.

A trained lawyer sometimes criticised for a lack of humour,

Starmer’s dispassionate and methodical approach at the White House talks and subsequent meetings in London with Zelensky and European leaders at the weekend, has been widely praised.

“This weekend he has not really put a foot wrong” former foreign minister James Cleverly from the opposition Conservative Party told parliament on Monday.

While Starmer has yet to win US security guarantees for Ukraine, he has worked to repair the unprecedented rift in US-Ukraine relations encapsulated by the heated exchange between Zelensky and Trump in the Oval office last Friday.

A British source said Starmer has been advising Zelensky on what would close the gap with Trump. The Ukrainian leader wrote to Trump on Tuesday saying he was ready to negotiate. Starmer called Zelensky earlier that day,

praising his commitment to securing peace.

It was the surprise phone call between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Feb 12 that spurred Starmer into action. “Time for cool heads,” said a government source at the time, using a phrase that officials repeat.

That prompted a meeting with Trump’s special envoy to the United Kingdom, Mark Burnett, a day later when the US president called in – the first of five phone conversations and one meeting with the US leader since.

Those conversations have been interspersed with calls with Zelensky and Macron, a relationship described by one British official as being presented to Trump as so close he couldn’t get ‘a cigarette paper’ between them”.

Starmer’s team said the British leader had made some progress with Trump, citing the US leader



Britain’s Prime Minister Keir Starmer attends a press conference as he hosts European leaders’ summit at Lancaster House in central London on Sunday.

reiterating Washington’s commitment to Nato’s Article 5, which states that if a member country is attacked, all members will consider it an attack on themselves.

Despite the setbacks, Starmer is ploughing on with drafting a peace plan, while his newly appointed ambassador to the US, veteran Labour troubleshooter Peter Mandelson, keeps the Trump administration on side.

Mandelson, dubbed the Prince of Darkness by the British media for his negotiating skills behind the scenes, suggested on US television on Sunday that Zelensky back the mineral deal with the US and get “back on the same page” as Trump. **-Reuters**

Trump-Zelensky clash exposes rifts in Europe’s rising far-right

By **Thomas Escritt, Angelo Amante and David Latona**
Berlin/Rome/Madrid

Donald Trump’s White House confrontation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is exposing differences within Europe’s burgeoning far-right movement over his plan to end the war between Russia and Ukraine.

They celebrated the US president’s return to power for taking a fringe movement mainstream and have backed billionaire Elon Musk’s call to “Make Europe Great Again” (MEGA). But some on Europe’s far-right are torn about Trump’s dressing-down of Zelensky and

his seeming indifference to the perceived threat Russian President Vladimir Putin poses to democratic Europe.

Trump on Monday froze critical US military aid for Ukraine against Russia’s three-year-old invasion following an explosive public confrontation in the Oval Office last week over a peace plan with Zelensky, who infuriated Trump by insisting the US should provide security guarantees as part of any ceasefire.

A handful of Europe’s far-right figures including Hungary’s Viktor Orban, Germany’s Tino Chrupalla and Italy’s Matteo Salvini have backed Trump emphatically.

Other right-leaning politicians such as Britain’s Nigel Farage and Poland’s Krzysztof Bosak couched their support

with caveats or were openly critical of Trump’s cold-shouldering of Europe and Ukraine while suggesting Kyiv would have to cede territory for peace but demanding no concessions from the Kremlin.

The divergence shows how right-wing populists are far from a cohesive group, curbing their sway in European Union politics and underlining the limits of Musk’s effort to rally the region around his MEGA campaign to promote the anti-EU far right.

“There is a combination of factors that don’t necessarily spur open confrontation with Trump as with the left, but still lead to distance between him and... far-right parties that increasingly accept European integration,” said Alexander

Clarkson, lecturer in European studies at King’s College London.

Nationalist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban sprang to Trump’s defence, supporting the president’s approach to Ukraine peace talks that, so far, exclude Kyiv and Europe.

Trump had “stood bravely for peace – even if it was difficult for many to digest,” Orban said on X after Trump’s tongue-lashing of Zelensky in front of global media.

The far-right, pro-Russia Alternative for Germany (AfD), fresh from its historic second place in last month’s national election, also sided with Trump.

“Since the EU and Germany unfortunately fail as mediators, the USA and Russia must come to an agreement (on

Ukraine),” AfD co-leader Chrupalla wrote on X.

Bjoern Hoecke, leader of the AfD’s most radical far-right wing, said the White House bust-up was Zelensky’s fault after he “decided he had to insult his hosts”.

A source at Spain’s Vox party took a warier stance, saying that overt support for Putin by some of its European counterparts was leaving its voters confused.

“Trump’s unpredictability has left us in disarray,” the source said. “Do we attack Putin or align ourselves with Trump’s view of Putin?” Some, such as the far-right opposition Konfederacja in Poland, where fear of Russian regional domination is deeply rooted in history, blasted Trump and Putin alike. **- Reuters**

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