

Insurance made simple

Visit qic.online

QIC

**GULF TIMES**

FRIDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13307

March 7, 2025  
Ramadan 7, 1446 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

Unlock Daily Free Gifts this Ramadan

vodafone

**ROBSON** The first Paint product that obtained Qatar Quality Mark

Robshield Topcoat Matt by ROBSON PAINTS

Used as Exterior Coat - Matt

www.npfqatar.com Tel: 44601602

BOOKING AVAILABLE

**IFTAR BUFFET**

**HOT CHICKEN**

30460715 / 44632073

**RAMADAN THOUGHT**

Those who spend their wealth (in Allah's Cause) by night and day, in secret and in public, they shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (Qur'an 2:274)

**Prayer times**

Fajr...4.35; Zuhr...11.45; Asr...3.07; Maghrib...5.42; Isha...7.12

**Fasting times**

Iftar today 5.42pm - Imsak tomorrow 4.24am

**FOR RENT**

**INDUSTRIAL CATERING & FOOD STORAGE**

Ideal for High end catering

- Cloud Kitchen
- Food Storage

(2500 pallet: chiller / freezer / ambient)

Contact: 55601482

**talabat**

Proud to stand with local brands for a thriving Qatari market!

QATAR PRODUCT

selfdrive

**NOW RENT A CAR**

STARTING FROM

**1199** PM

QAR

KNOW MORE!

# MCIT, Microsoft sign deal to support digital innovation, startups

**QNA**  
Doha

As part of its efforts to enhance digital innovation and support the growth of startups in the country, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has signed a partnership initiative with Microsoft to promote digital innovation and empower entrepreneurs in the ICT sector.

The partnership initiative was signed by Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Industry Affairs at MCIT Reem al-Mansoori and General Manager of Microsoft Qatar Lana Khalaf.

This partnership initiative supports startups participating in MCIT's key programmes, including TASMU Accelerator, which attracts international growth-stage startups, the Digital Incubation Center, which nurtures early-stage tech startups, and Scale Now Programme, which enables digital entrepreneurs and startups to expand locally and internationally. These efforts align with the objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030.

Through this partnership initiative, MCIT and Microsoft will work together to support entrepreneurs by providing essential resources, mentorship, and access to the latest technologies, allowing them to develop their businesses and adapt to the evolving digital economy. The partnership initiative will also foster joint collaboration to empower startups in Qatar by leveraging Microsoft's advanced technologies, global resources, and expertise.

Additionally, the initiative includes specialised workshops, in-depth training sessions, and comprehensive mentorship programmes that contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of startups and strengthening the digital entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The partnership initiative aims to develop specialised programmes to equip entrepreneurs with essential digital tools, provide strategic guidance, and offer



Ministry of Communications and Information Technology signs co-operation initiative with Microsoft to support digital innovation.

hands-on support. It also grants access to valuable resources such as the Microsoft Founders Hub, which encourages startups to adopt advanced technologies and facilitates access to specialised support from Microsoft's local experts.

Additionally, structured mentorship sessions will be launched, covering diverse topics such as business strategies, market access, and essential skills development.

The initiative will enable startups to utilise advanced tools such as cloud computing services, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics, enhancing their ability to develop innovative solutions that meet local and global market demands.

Commenting on the initiative, Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Industry Affairs at MCIT Reem al-Mansoori stated: "The partnership initiative with Microsoft marks a significant step toward achieving the goals of the Digital Agenda 2030. Through this initiative, we aim to leverage our expertise and resources to enable startups to innovate and expand, contributing effectively to Qatar's digital economy."

She added: "This initiative reflects our continuous commitment to building a competitive and integrated ecosystem that supports the growth of startups and the digital entrepreneurship environment according to the highest global standards, enhancing the national economy's

readiness for the digital future and solidifying Qatar's position as a global hub for innovation and technology."

General Manager of Microsoft Qatar Lana Khalaf commented: "We are pleased to partner with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to drive innovation and support the growth of digital native in Qatar. At Microsoft, we are committed to empowering entrepreneurs with the tools, resources, and strategic guidance they need to succeed in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape."

She continued: "This partnership exemplifies our dedication to enabling startups to leverage our cutting-edge technologies and expertise to transform their ideas into impactful solutions, fostering further innovation from Qatar to the world."

This partnership initiative further reinforces MCIT's commitment to establishing Qatar as a regional leader in technology and innovation. By supporting digital transformation and accelerating startup growth, the initiative plays a pivotal role in building a knowledge-based economy in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030. In this regard, MCIT and Microsoft remain dedicated to supporting the startup ecosystem by fostering networking opportunities and facilitating collaboration between entrepreneurs, industry experts, clients, and potential partners.

## PM attends GCC FM's meeting with Egypt's FM in Saudi Arabia



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, participated in the third joint ministerial meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs of the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt Dr Badr Abdel Aati, which was held yesterday in Makkah Al Mukarramah. The meeting dealt with ways to enhance strategic relations and joint work in many areas that would contribute to achieving joint interests, and the continuation of consultation, co-ordination and exchange of views on regional and international issues of common interest, especially developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and ways to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid to the Strip without obstacles, in addition to discussing ways to support and enhance stability in the region. (QNA)

## Mahaseel a big draw with fresh local farm produce



An array of local fresh produce and agricultural products on display at Mahaseel Festival, taking place every Thursday, Friday and Saturday until April 3 at Katara's southern area. PICTURE: Joey Aguilar

**By Joey Aguilar**  
Staff Reporter

The 10th edition of Mahaseel Festival at Katara Cultural Village continues to draw a large number of shoppers eager to purchase high-quality, locally-sourced agricultural products at competitive prices.

Open every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 7pm to midnight until April 3, the festival at Katara's southern area is organised in col-

laboration with the Department of Agricultural Affairs at the Ministry of Municipality.

"The festival has been incredibly popular since opening day. Here, we offer premium fresh produce from local farms at reasonable prices. We even offer discounts for bulk orders," said a vegetable vendor.

Participating companies showcase an array of agricultural crops and dairy products, from fresh vegetables and fruits to meat, local dates, honey, poultry, and dairy products. **To Page 2**

## Ukraine truce talks to be held in Saudi



King Philippe of Belgium greets Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky at the Royal Palace, in Brussels yesterday.

US President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, said yesterday he is in discussions with Ukraine for a peace agreement framework to end hostilities with Russia and that a meeting is planned next week with the Ukrainians in Saudi Arabia. "We're now in discussions to co-ordinate a meeting with the Ukrainians," Witkoff told reporters at the White House. He said it would likely be in Riyadh or Jeddah. Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky had acrimonious talks at the White House on February 28 but since then the two sides have resumed work on a revenue-sharing minerals deal.

**COMMUNITY**  
See Pages: 6 & 7

# Israel again weaponising starvation in Gaza: UN experts

## Arab Gaza plan a good-faith first step: US envoy

**AFP**  
Geneva/Washington

A group of UN human rights experts said yesterday that Israel is again "weaponising starvation" in Gaza by blocking humanitarian aid after the first phase of a ceasefire deal expired.

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 resistance group Hamas accepted its terms for an extension of the ceasefire. The group of more than 30 experts



A Palestinian family sits for a group Iftar meal, in Gaza City yesterday.

specialists in various fields who are mandated by the UN Human Rights Council but do not speak on behalf of the United Nations - said the Israeli action breached international law. A US envoy yesterday praised

Egypt for coming up with a new Arab plan on Gaza, without endorsing details of the proposed alternative to Trump's calls to displace Palestinians en masse. "We need more discussion about



A drone view shows houses destroyed during the Israeli offensive in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza Strip.

it, but it's a good-faith first step from the Egyptians," Steve Witkoff, Trump's Middle East pointman, told reporters. Witkoff said Trump had suc-

ceeded in "now encouraging other people in the Middle East - Middle Eastern world - to present proactive proposals for what we might consider," he said.

## OIC meeting on Palestine in Jeddah today

The Organisation of Islamic Co-operation will hold an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers today in Jeddah, to discuss the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, and the plans for annexation and displacement from their land. The organisation stressed in its statement issued yesterday that this meeting comes to confirm the rejection of the policies of displacement, annexation, aggression and destruction, and sends a clear message to the world that the Palestinian cause remains the central issue of the Islamic nation. (QNA)



## PM attends joint meeting of GCC foreign ministers in Makkah



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated in the third joint ministerial meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs of Egypt Dr Badr Abdel Aati, which was held yesterday in Makkah. The meeting dealt with ways to enhance strategic relations and joint work in many areas that would contribute to achieving joint interests, and the continuation of consultation, co-ordination and exchange of views on regional and international issues of common interest, especially developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and ways to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid to the Strip without obstacles, in addition to discussing ways to support and enhance stability in the region. (QNA)

Official

### Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Ghana

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Ghana President John Dramani Mahama on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. (QNA)

# EAA Foundation, Unicef partner to support learning for out-of-school children in Sudan

QNA  
Doha

Education Above All (EAA) Foundation and Unicef announced a new programme to support over 158,000 out-of-school children in Sudan to access quality education, learn and develop life-skills through the provision of safe learning spaces with in-person and e-learning facilities, alongside health, and child protection services.

In a statement, EAA said that Sudan is the world's largest education crisis. With more than 5mn children displaced, and schools frequently targeted or damaged, only 13% of school-aged children are enrolled or regularly attending school. The use of at least 3,000 schools as shelters for displaced families has further restricted access to education for millions of children across the country.

In this context, executive director of EAA Foundation's Educate A Child programme Dr Mary Joy Pigozzi said: "EAA Foundation and Unicef have partnered globally for over 13 years, helping more than 5mn children around the world to overcome the bar-



riers to education. In Sudan, we are committed to ensuring that children are given the opportunity to access education, can remain in education, continue learning, and build a brighter future, despite the challenges that they face." For his part, Unicef Representative to Sudan Sheldon Yett said: "Uprooting children from their homes and disconnecting them from learning, can have devastating consequences for their well-being and futures. Thanks to Unicef's longstanding partnership with EAA Founda-

tion, including this new commitment, we can continue delivering much-needed learning opportunities and other critical services to children displaced by conflict."

This new project between Unicef and EAA Foundation's Educate A Child, valued at \$3.3mn will support children to resume their education, despite the ongoing challenges they face, by creating safe and accessible learning spaces. Bringing children back to learning will contribute to addressing the learning crisis in Sudan.



## Msheireb Properties hosts Ghabga for stakeholders

Msheireb Properties, Qatar's leading sustainable property developer, hosted a Ramadan Ghabga for its stakeholders. The event brought together partners, retailers and commercial tenants at Barahat Msheireb in Msheireb Downtown Doha. Commenting on the occasion, engineer Ali al-Kuwari, CEO of Msheireb Properties, said: "Without the commitment of our stakeholders, we would not have succeeded in making Msheireb Downtown Doha the thriving hub of creativity, entrepreneurship and business it is today. This Ramadan gathering was an opportunity to express our gratitude and to look forward to a prosperous year ahead."

The evening featured an exceptional culinary experience crafted by renowned Qatari chef Abdulla al-Khalidi, alongside an innovative art installation titled 'Roots of Unity' by Qatari artist Abdulaziz Yousef, presented through Metaverse technology. The creative showcase reflected the event's theme celebrating how strong partnerships, like family bonds, create the foundation for community success.

"We want every person who comes to Msheireb Downtown Doha to have a positive experience," engineer al-Kuwari said. "While much of that is within our control, there is a lot that relies on our partners. Improving on this and becoming a destination



for social interaction remains one of our core goals, and it was important to share this vision with our stakeholders," he added.

## New issue of Al-Sahafa published

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

Al Jazeera Media Institute has published issue 36 of Al-Sahafa (Arabic for journalism) magazine, under the title: 'Journalism in transitional stages: From authority to society'. The issue discusses various Arab and international experiences on the relationship between democratic transition and the roles of journalism from the perspective of its impact on journalistic practice.

The magazine's editorial, titled 'So that what happened does not happen again', addresses the challenges facing the media during periods of political and social change. It highlights the importance of a free and independent press capable of conveying facts and contributing to building democratic societies, providing justice to victims, and political upbringing to build the state.

The issue included 14 articles on various topics, including an article by writer Arabi al-Masry titled: 'The origins of media transition in Syria'; while writer Zainab Afia explored how the Syrian press can liberate itself from the legacy of the past.

Writer Ahmed Haj Hamdo confirmed in an interview with Syrian journalist and writer Yarab al-Issa that the media of



Cover of Al-Sahafa magazine new issue.

the regime and the media of the revolution are not suitable for the new Syria. While writer Abdul Latif Haj Muhammad addressed the subject of the digital museum of the "Islamic State", highlighting the role of careful journalism in serving justice.

Youssef Fares wrote about journalism after the genocide in Gaza, noting that the war ended but other wars began. While Muhammad al-Naas investigated the history of Libyan journalism and "the spirit of Gaddafi" and his heavy legacy that affected journalism after the revolution.

Omar Labshirih also discussed the experience of Moroccan journalism in the transitional phase, and touched on what is known as "pockets of resistance". While Jabreen Ahmed Issa reviewed the

role of the media in Rwanda as a partner in genocide and reconciliation.

Aisha Gharbi highlighted the Tunisian experience in her article: "The aborted media transition in Tunisia". In the rest of the issue's articles, Hassan Akram wondered whether journalism degrees in Iraq were sufficient to enter the job market.

Kawthar Saleh wrote about the role of AI as a news editor, highlighting the findings of her research in the Al Jazeera Fellowship on the "NewsGPT" website. While writer Afrah Taj al-Khatim discussed the question of professionalism in the awakening of electronic journalism in Sudan. Abdul Majeed al-Faraji addressed the impact of social media on the European elections.

## Mahaseel a big draw with fresh local farm produce

From Page 1

Popular items at the festival include fresh produce such as cucumbers, bell peppers, tomatoes, corn, and a variety of green leafy vegetables. Free-range eggs, various animal meats, honey, and quail eggs are also proving to be top sellers.

Qatar resident Aisha, a regular visitor to Mahaseel, lauded the organisation of the event, saying: "I buy my vegetables here because it offers great value for money and allows me to save on food expenses. My family and I also enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the festival and the opportunity to explore Katara on the weekends while the weather is pleasant!"

The festival also features a dedicated section offering home-cooked food and sweets. Green thumbs are also catered to, with a wide selection of indoor and outdoor ornamental plants and flowers available for purchase from various farms and plant nurseries.



A wide selection of ornamental plants available for purchase from various Qatari farms and plant nurseries at Mahaseel Festival. PICTURE: Joey Aguilar

Organisers underlined the importance of holding an event like Mahaseel, which aims to support domestic agricultural production and contribute to Qatar's food security. In addition, it also seeks to provide a unique and enriching experience for visitors while preserving the traditional

market ambiance. The festival also continues to witness an increasing participation of Qatari farms, apiaries, and national food companies, highlighting its effectiveness as a marketing platform for showcasing and selling locally produced fresh goods and products.



## Awqaf to begin tests for participants in Sheikh Jassim Qur'an contest today

**QNA**  
Doha

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs announced that the tests for participants in the New Muslims category of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani Holy Qur'an Competition will begin today (Friday), after 265 male and female participants from nine nationalities within the expatriate communities in Qatar registered.

The organising committee of the competition clarified that the New Muslims tests will take place at Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center. The New Muslims category includes three levels of memorisation: Level 1: Memorisation of Surah Al-Fatiha and the shorter surahs up to Surah Al-Qari'ah; Level 2: Memorisation of Surah Al-Fatiha and half of Juz' Amma up to Surah Al-A'la; and Level 3: Memorisation of Surah Al-Fatiha and the entire Juz' Amma. The establishment of a category for New Muslims reflects the organ-

ising committee's commitment to integrating them into the Islamic community, fostering brotherhood and solidarity among them, as well as reinforcing the correct concepts of Islam and teaching them its etiquette and rulings. The committee highlighted its efforts to encourage new Muslims to learn the Arabic language, due to its importance in understanding the Qur'an, and its work to strengthen their faith through participation in such spiritual activities. The New Muslims category is organised in collaboration with

the Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center, which focuses on serving expatriate communities in Qatar, promoting the understanding of Islam with its moderate approach, teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, and caring for and educating New Muslims about their religion. This competition provides New Muslims with an opportunity to acquire correct religious knowledge, strengthen their connection to the Qur'an, and encourage them to continue learning and memorising the Holy Qur'an.



## MoECC campaign eliminates 27,934 invasive Myna birds

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's (MoECC) Wildlife Development Department is continuing its efforts to control the invasive Myna bird.

As part of the National Campaign to Combat the Invasive Myna Bird, the department has eliminated 27,934 birds since the campaign was launched. MoECC, in a statement yesterday, said that 9,934 birds were hunted from November 2024 to January 2025. A total of 434 cages were used in 27 sites to trap the birds.

The initiative is carried out as per the plan to protect local ecosystems and ensure sustainability. The efforts are initiated in the wake of the damage caused by the Myna to local plants and birds and its negative impact on the ecological balance, it was explained. "The wide use of cages contributed to a noticeable decrease in the number of birds in the targeted areas while enhancing the effectiveness of the procedures followed to reduce the impact of this invasive bird on the local environment," the statement added.



## Ramadan Sports Festival 2025 at Aspire

The 11th edition of the Ramadan Sports Festival 2025, organised by Aspire Zone Foundation until March 18, continued with a group of diverse sports competitions. The festival includes nine different sports held daily from 9pm until midnight at Aspire Zone. The Embassies Football Championship kicked off

on Stadium No. 4 at Aspire with the participation of 24 teams divided into 8 groups. Group A: Tunisia, Tajikistan, Malaysia, Group B: Jordan, Nepal, Syria, Group C: Somalia, China, Mali, and Group D: Iran, Qatar, Algeria, Group E: Iraq, Chad, Eritrea, Group F: Spain, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Group G: India, Indonesia,

Sudan, and Group H: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kenya, Thailand. Today, the Eritrean Embassy team will meet the Iraqi Embassy team, while the Ethiopian Embassy team will take on the Spanish Embassy team, and the Sudanese Embassy team will face the Indian Embassy team. **(QNA)**

## Awqaf launches initiative to support autistic persons

The General Directorate of Endowments at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf) has announced an initiative to support people with autism to develop their abilities and enhance their motor skills.

The announcement came during a joint press conference by Awqaf and Qatar Autism Society. It was attended by Eng Hassan Abdullah al-Marzouqi, director-general of the General Administration of Endowments and Saad bin Mohammed al-Ghanem, vice-president of Qatar Autism Society.

Al-Marzouqi explained that the strategic partnership between Awqaf and the Qatar Autism Society comes with the support of the Endowment Bank for Family and Childhood, the Endowment Bank for Health Care and the Endowment Bank for Scientific and Cultural Development.

The partnership, according to him, aims to contribute to serving autistic persons and helping society discharge its duty of providing care for them. He appreciated the vital role



played by the society noting there is a fruitful co-operation between the two parties to realise Awqaf's motto 'endowment is a community partnership'.

Al-Ghanem expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Qatar Autism Society for Awqaf and the donors.

He explained that a total of 1,600 autistic persons benefit from the activities of the society while taking part in its workshops and courses during morning and evening. The Qatar Autism Society head-

quarters is located in the Al-Qatifiya area and consists of two floors on a land area of 1,225sq m. It has a swimming pool, places for holding activities and a number of rooms used as workshops for teaching manual skills in addition to administrative offices.

Al-Marzouqi said that endowment work is a community partnership and an ongoing charity urging the benefactors to participate in endowment activities by Awqaf.

## QRCS continues to support humanitarian sectors in Gaza

**QNA**  
Gaza

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has confirmed the role of the multidisciplinary Lifeline 1 convoy that recently arrived in Gaza, which includes a specialised medical delegation, in providing medical interventions to those injured and affected by the recent Israeli aggression and improving health services that were greatly affected by the occupation's destruction of the health sector in the Strip.

Assistant Secretary-General for Relief and International Development at QRCS and head of the medical delegation Dr Mohamed Salah Ibrahim pointed out that the convoy includes volunteer doctors in the specialties of neurosurgery, orthopaedics, hand surgery, and palliative care specialist. They began their work immediately upon their arrival at the Palestinian Ministry of Health hospitals to follow up on medical cases and prepare for surgical operations for the injured and sick. He explained that the selection of medical specialties in the convoy came at the request of the Ministry of Health in Gaza and its basic needs.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Ibrahim emphasised that the work of the medical delegation will have positive and significant effects on the injured and affected, especially those with serious wounds, burns, as well as bone and nerve injuries.

He noted that the medical delegation would be a window of hope for the injured and sick, and would contribute to improving health services in the Strip in light of the occupation's targeting and destruction of hospitals during the aggression, and the great shortage

of medicines and medical supplies necessary for the hospitals to operate.

He said that the Lifeline 1 convoy, which will continue its work inside the Strip for two weeks, consists of a number of doctors from Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and volunteer doctors from outside Qatar. It represents a part of the ongoing efforts made by QRCS to develop the health sector system in Gaza. He noted that the medical convoys are among the important and strategic projects that the QRCS is working on, as coordination is underway for a number of others in the coming period.

Regarding his assessment of the living and humanitarian situation after the delegation entered the Gaza Strip, Ibrahim described the situation as very bad and difficult. He said that what they saw of destruction and devastation in all parts of the Gaza Strip made them sad. What is there is something that the people of the Strip cannot live with, and does not provide them with any of the services that are supposed to be basic services.

He noted that he saw nothing but destruction, as all sectors of life, whether health, education, or services, were targeted, as there is nothing the residents could benefit from.

He added that people in Gaza live only on the aid they receive from abroad, which is barely enough to meet their great needs, especially food, winter clothing, shelter, and heating supplies, especially in light of the closure of the crossings and the pressure exerted by the occupation on Gaza, in addition to other needs that are not simple and require more support than what is currently being provided. He warned of the danger and repercussions of the Israeli en-



ty continuing to close the crossings and prevent the entry of aid into the Strip.

The head of the convoy highlighted the significant negative effects of the occupation's decision to close the crossings and stop the entry of aid on the work of QRCS, as large quantities of aid were sent from Qatar to Jordan, but they have not yet been brought into Gaza, and nothing can be brought in. He pointed out that the aid includes medicines for cancer patients, medical supplies, and food supplies, stressing that the closure of the crossings is dangerous if it continues for long periods, which requires QRCS to think about planning again and work on coordinating with local organisations and institutions inside the Strip to provide whatever services and aid can be supplied from inside Gaza if they exist.

He also pointed out that the focus of QRCS's work and plans in the Gaza Strip for the next phase will be on three sectors, including shelter, health, and water, while continuing to focus on relief as well. He considered water to be one of the most destroyed sectors due to the war, to the point that most

of the water stations and wells that were present in Gaza have become destroyed, and what remains of them needs to be rehabilitated or an alternative found, especially for drinking water.

Dr Mohammad Salah Ibrahim has underscored the catastrophic state of the health sector in the Gaza Strip, revealing that most hospitals and health centres have been either completely or partially destroyed, rendering them inoperative.

He emphasised the urgent need for immediate medical intervention, stressing that even if the war ceases, lives remain at risk due to the critical conditions of many patients requiring urgent treatment.

Any delay in providing medical aid, he warned, would inevitably lead to further loss of life.

Speaking on how the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) assesses humanitarian needs in Gaza, Dr Ibrahim explained that QRCS relies on multiple key approaches, including field visits, reports prepared and validated by its representative office in Gaza, and urgent response plans in coordination with international organisations.

He noted that QRCS's field team

in Gaza is in constant co-ordination with officials from key sectors such as health, development, shelter, and water.

Through these collaborations, QRCS has identified urgent needs and developed emergency response plans tailored to the current crisis. He further highlighted that the organisation is working closely with local authorities to determine the best course of intervention in the post-ceasefire phase.

Dr Ibrahim also highlighted QRCS's longstanding presence in Gaza, where it has been operating since 2010.

He pointed out that the organisation has forged strong working relationships with local and international entities and has implemented impactful projects, most notably the Specialized Surgeries Building at Al-Shifa Hospital - one of the largest and most significant healthcare initiatives undertaken by QRCS in Gaza.

Regarding QRCS's humanitarian initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan, Dr Ibrahim stated that, in response to the wishes of donors and supporters, the organisation is prioritising the distribution of Iftar and Suhoor meals for fasting individuals. He revealed that QRCS has already begun distributing approximately 500,000 hot meals and 110,000 food parcels to those in need.

Addressing QRCS's response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Dr Ibrahim told QNA that the organisation was among the first humanitarian institutions to act swiftly in alleviating the suffering caused by the Israeli aggression. Particularly in the health sector, QRCS launched an immediate intervention by procuring available medical supplies from the local market at the onset of the war.

These essential supplies were

promptly delivered to the Palestinian Ministry of Health to help address urgent medical shortages. He stressed that QRCS has mobilised aid from multiple sources, including through the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border and other crossings via Jordan.

The organisation has facilitated the continuous flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, including food supplies, medicines, medical equipment, tents, winter relief packages, and hygiene kits. Additionally, QRCS financed the purchase of large quantities of water from Egypt and Jordan to be transported into the besieged Strip. Dr Ibrahim expressed his deep appreciation for the generosity of the Qatari people in supporting QRCS's relief efforts for Gaza, acknowledging their unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The head of the Lifeline 1 convoy also warned that Israel's decision to ban the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) would have severe repercussions on humanitarian efforts in Gaza. He noted that UNRWA has been the primary provider of essential services to the population, and its suspension would trigger a major crisis, disrupting the delivery of vital assistance and worsening the already dire humanitarian situation.

In conclusion, Dr Ibrahim expressed his satisfaction with the positive impact of Qatar's grant to supply Gaza with large quantities of fuel. He highlighted how this initiative has significantly benefited hospitals, essential service stations, and international relief organisations operating in the Strip, ensuring that critical infrastructure remains functional amid the ongoing crisis.

## Details for Nishan Ramadan shooting tournament unveiled

**QNA**  
Doha

The Qatar Shooting and Archery Association revealed the details of the Nishan Ramadan Shooting Championship, set to take place at the Lusail Shooting Complex during the holy month.

The championship is held un-

der the patronage of HE the President of Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani and will feature more than 250 participants, including members of the Qatari national team and amateurs.

The announcement was made during a press conference held at the association's headquarters, attended by the tournament's director Sheikh Mohammed bin Salman

al-Thani, head of the technical committee for the championship Noorah al-Hakami, and Director of Programs at the Social and Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM) Hassan Yousef al-Obaidly.

In a press conference, the tournament's director Sheikh Mohammed bin Salman al-Thani emphasised that Nishan is one of the largest Ramadan and community tournaments of the season.

He noted that this year's prize pool has been increased to QR550,000, surpassing last year's awards, and expressed gratitude to Daam for sponsoring the tournament for the second consecutive year.

He added that thanks to the efforts of the Association, Al Rami Sports Club, and the vital support of Daam, the Nishan Championship has already succeeded before

its commencement, drawing more than 250 participants across amateur categories, including men, women, over-16, juniors, and, for the first time, a senior category for participants over 65 years old.

The senior category's competition, involving air pistol and rifle events, will be held on March 12 with over 40 competitors.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Salman al-Thani concluded by highlight-

ing the significance of the Nishan Championship for the association, as it plays a vital role in identifying and nurturing young Qatari talent in shooting sports, providing them with the experience necessary to join national teams.

The championship also serves as excellent preparation for Qatari national team players ahead of upcoming international competitions.



# QF launches 'Reyada' initiative to nurture leadership talent

Qatar Foundation (QF) has launched the "Reyada" initiative in partnership with HEC Paris and Duke Corporate Education (Duke CE), a leading custom education provider and support organisation to the US's Duke University.

The initiative aims at nurturing current and future QF leaders to take excellence to a higher level, with the ultimate aim being to broaden this leadership pathway across Qatar.

Established in the year that marks the QF's 30th anniversary, the programme is designed to develop a sustainable pipeline of top-

calibre talent that supports the QF's future growth and impact in key sectors.

Areas that the programme will focus on include aligning leadership qualities with the QF culture, exposing participants to both local and global leadership and corporate trends through immersive learning experiences, and honing non-technical skills – such as people management – through a process known as leadership multitasking.

As Reyada becomes established, it is intended to be scaled beyond the QF to support talent development and help to cultivate a fu-

ture-ready workforce for Qatar.

"At Qatar Foundation, we believe that leadership is not just about holding a position – it's about shaping the future with vision, resilience, and integrity," QF Human Capital director Hamad F Dalmouk said.

"Through Reyada, we will sculpt the ideal leaders of tomorrow and elevate current leaders by equipping them with the skills, mindsets, and cultural awareness needed to drive meaningful impact, resulting in a brand new, next-generation leadership pool that brings benefit both within and beyond QF," he said. "This initia-



Dalmouk with Dr Chetty and Dr de Holan.



tools needed to navigate complexity, foster innovation, and lead with purpose," he said.

"Our partnership with Qatar Foundation is grounded in a shared belief that human potential is the world's most valuable resource," said Duke Corporate Education chief executive Dr Sharmila Chetty.

"Leadership is more essential now than ever in today's complex, fast-evolving digital landscape," she said. "We are honoured to collaborate with the QF to cultivate resilient leaders who prioritise humanity in their pursuit of progress."

Built to reflect the QF's core

values of excellence, innovation, integrity, community, and rootedness, Reyada will develop leadership competencies such as inspiring others, pioneering disruptive innovation, communicating and influencing, and demonstrating ownership and drive.

It will focus on cultivating human and leadership-centric skills such as strategic insight, psychological safety, and inclusivity, with aspects of risk awareness, resilience, and digital leadership – including disruptive leadership – that are key for any leader to possess in the face of current and future trends. – QNA

## Qatar University's College of Sharia hosts first Annual Scientific Forum

The Research and Studies Unit at Qatar University (QU)'s College of Sharia and Islamic Studies organised its first Annual Scientific Forum, with various activities and a large attendance of faculty members, students, and guests.

College dean and the general president of the forum, Dr Ibrahim bin Abdullah al-Ansari, who welcomed the gathering, highlighted the significance of showcasing research in a scientific forum where scholars and researchers can exchange diverse academic perspectives, enriching intellectual discourse through engagement with experts in the field of Sharia sciences.



Research Unit head Dr Aziz El-Bittoui, the general supervisor of the forum, said in his address that the event came in response to the college's 2024-28 strategic

plan to bring about a qualitative shift in Sharia research and Islamic studies, addressing issues with a problematic or interfacial dimension, and responding to

national and global research priorities, in co-operation with stakeholders. Prof Abdullah al-Hetari, director of the first edition of the forum, presented

an overview of the event's agenda, which included a showcase of research projects, strategic plans, and achievements.

These were presented by the heads of the three research projects: Prof Amar Benboudina, Prof Hamid Goufi, and Prof Mohammed Bichi.

The forum featured three scientific sessions, with contributions from 15 faculty members, who presented articles and academic publications published in 2024.

Additionally, graduate students participated in a session, where they presented their thesis topics related to ongoing research projects.

## Katara inaugurates 'Soul of Gold' exhibition by Turkish artist Hatice Yetis



Katara – the Cultural Village has inaugurated the "Soul of Gold" exhibition by Turkish artist Hatice Yetis.

Held in Hall 2 of Building 18 at Katara, the exhibition's inauguration was attended by Turkish ambassador to Qatar Dr Mustafa Goksu along with several cultural and artistic figures and a group of art and Islamic heritage enthusiasts.

The exhibition, taking place during the holy month of Ramadan, is part of Katara's efforts to promote cultural and artistic exchange and highlight Islamic arts as a bridge for communication between peoples.

"Soul of Gold" celebrates the aesthetics of Islamic gilding art

and presents a contemporary vision of traditional Turkish Islamic gilding.

The exhibition features over 30 paintings by Hatice Yetis and her students, combining Ottoman authenticity with modern artistic touches in a visual experience that reflects the spiritual harmony and golden beauty characteristic of this ancient art form.

Dr Goksu praised the "Soul of Gold" exhibition, considering it a cultural bridge that links Turkiye and Qatar through traditional Islamic arts.

Artist Yetis said that gilding art is not just decoration; it is a visual language that reflects contemplation and inner peace.

She said that she strives

through her works to blend Ottoman traditions with modern visions and bring this art to new generations around the world.

The artwork featured in the exhibition employ various gilding techniques.

They also use gouache, golden acrylics, and watercolour for the backgrounds.

The Rumi technique achieves harmony with the Arabic script and calligraphy styles, with some works incorporating real gold along with gold leaf.

Yetis specialises in classical Turkish gilding art.

Over the past years, she has taught gilding at the Yunus Emre Institute Turkish centre in Qatar and participated in numerous



art events, including the Spring of Art Festival organised by the Ministry of Culture.

Yetis also took part in the "Bridge of Nations" project organised by the Ministry of Social Development and Family, where she conducted art workshops for children with special needs. – QNA

## Qatari women are 'active contributors in all sectors'

International Women's Day, observed annually on March 8, is an occasion celebrating women's contributions worldwide.

It serves as a reminder of their dedication and influence across all aspects of life.

For Qatari women, this day highlights their achievements and reaffirms their vital role in the nation's development.

Qatari women have flourished under the support of the country's wise leadership, guided by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

The state has implemented policies, legislation, and institutions aimed at empowering women and enhancing their capabilities, positioning them as key partners in Qatar's sustainable development.

Qatar National Vision 2030 and the national constitution uphold their rights, ensuring equal opportunities and enabling them to assume leadership and decision-making roles.

The government has established specialised centres and initiatives to protect women's rights, provide education and employment opportunities, and secure a dignified life.

These efforts have facilitated their rise to key positions, reinforcing their impact in various fields.

Qatar actively celebrates occasions such as International Women's Day and Gulf and Arab Women's Days, underlining its commitment to gender equality, fairness, and the protection of women from discrimination and violence within the framework of a cohesive society.

A discussion on Qatari women's progress is incomplete without acknowledging the profound contributions of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF).

**Qatari women are ministers, ambassadors, senior officials, academics ... they hold senior positions in many fields**

Her global influence extends beyond Qatar, advocating for women's empowerment, education, and social development.

Under her leadership, the QF has spearheaded initiatives in education, science, health, and cultural heritage, recently marking its 30th anniversary.

Prominent Qatari women leaders continue to emphasise the nation's commitment to gender advancement.

HE the Chairperson of the Na-

tional Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah and HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti have highlighted the achievements of Qatari women.

HE al-Attiyah has praised the leadership's dedication to ensuring women's success in senior government and international roles, emphasising their growing influence in decision-making.

She noted that the state's comprehensive support system has empowered women to actively contribute to Qatar's progress, adding that the government's initiatives in education, health, employment, and professional development have been pivotal in fostering women's leadership capabilities.

Furthermore, HE al-Attiyah commended Her Highness Sheikha Moza's instrumental role in advancing women's rights and launching transformative initiatives on local, regional, and international levels.

As Qatar continues to champion women's empowerment, the nation stands as a model of progress, showcasing the indispensable role of women in shaping its present and future.

As a result of all this increasing interest in women in Qatar and at

different stages of their lives, in addition to the establishment and foundation of various agencies and institutions that serve them, raise their capabilities, and enhance their empowerment, Qatari women have held senior positions in the country.

They are the ministers, Qatar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Qatar's ambassador to the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, ministry undersecretaries and assistant undersecretaries, and they have also held the position of Qatar University president, in addition to other senior positions in the economic, diplomatic, educational, cultural, literary and many other fields.

Qatari women have played an active and influential role in all international events hosted by Qatar, such as the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the recent Web Summit Qatar 2025.

HE Dr al-Sulaiti stressed that Qatar has been keen to provide a supportive environment that provides Qatari women with wide opportunities in education, training, and rehabilitation, which has enabled them to achieve high academic achievement rates, with female university graduates exceeding 70%.

National policies have also contributed to enhancing the role of women in the labour market, with their participation rate exceeding 37%, while Qatari women occupy 30% of decision-making positions.

HE al-Sulaiti noted that Qatari women continue to advance in various sectors, as their percentage in specialised jobs exceeds 52%.

She praised the pioneering role played by Her Highness Sheikha Moza in supporting Qatari women and being a role model through her pioneering efforts in the field of education and development, and launching initiatives aimed at empowering women locally, regionally, and internationally.

HE al-Sulaiti said that the Shura Council affirms its commitment to



supporting policies and legislation that enhance the role of women and devote their active participation in various fields.

Ibtihaj al-Ahmadani, a member of the Board of Directors of the Qatar Chamber and president of the Qatari Businesswomen Forum, meanwhile emphasised the significant support that Qatari women have received from the wise leadership, enabling them to participate actively in society, assume senior government positions, and engage in business and investment sectors, proving their capability and right to these opportunities.

She highlighted the strong presence of Qatari women in the business world, noting their substantial contributions to the national economy through entrepreneurship and ambitious investment projects.

Al-Ahmadani congratulated every woman who has contributed, and continues to contribute, to societal development and economic progress.

She underscored the importance of celebrating this occasion as a tribute to women's achievements across various sectors and as recognition of their pivotal role in building a prosperous and sustainable future.

Al-Ahmadani further stressed the Qatar Chamber's commit-

ment to supporting and empowering women in the private sector by fostering an environment that encourages their economic participation, highlighting the Chamber's adoption of initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of businesswomen, facilitating the growth of their enterprises, and boosting their contributions to national development.

She said that empowering women in entrepreneurship is a key pillar of sustainable development, expressing her aspiration for more initiatives and opportunities that enable women to realise their ambitions and contribute to both the national and global economy.

She also reviewed the efforts of the Qatari Businesswomen Forum in empowering women as a critical component of sustainable development.

The forum serves as a platform uniting Qatari businesswomen and entrepreneurs who play an active role in strengthening the Qatari economy and enhancing the private sector's role in national development.

The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in 1975 as a tribute to women's contributions and to acknowledge their economic, political, and social achievements worldwide. – QNA

## Qatari women demonstrate leadership across multiple sectors, says Labour Ministry official

A Ministry of Labour (MoL) official has hailed Qatari women's labour force participation as a national priority aligning with Qatar National Vision 2030 and sustainable development goals.

Assistant Undersecretary for National Manpower Affairs in the Private Sector Sheikh Abdulrahman Ali al-Badi told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the occasion of International Women's Day (on March 8) that the MoL is implementing projects and programmes to boost female labour force participation, especially in the private sector, by creating an attractive work environment and strengthening policies that ensure equal opportunities and remove obsta-

cles to their involvement across professional fields. She hailed Qatar's great support to empower women, based on the vision of its wise leadership that laid the foundations for justice and equal opportunities, stressing that Qatari women's achievements are the result of continuous efforts and well-thought-out policies that have contributed to strengthening their role in all sectors.

Al-Badi called on Qatari women to continue working, giving and benefiting from the opportunities available in the private sector as a fundamental pillar of economic development, stressing that the country relies on their ambition and creativity. – QNA



## Pearl Island Ramadan Football kicks off today

The third edition of The Pearl Island Ramadan Football Championship kicks off today.

Running until March 19, the championship will take place at Tempa Arena, a statement said.

The first edition featured 12 teams, expanding to 16 teams in the second edition, and now reaching 24 teams from various districts and communities.

The championship is held in an atmosphere that aligns with the spirit of Ramadan, transforming the Fanar Firouz area into a hub of competition and excitement for players, fans, and families alike.

The organising committee has introduced a dedicated fan zone, providing

a space for supporters to cheer on their favourite teams, while a children's play area ensures families can enjoy the event together.

To enhance the fan experience, the championship will feature accompanying entertainment activities, promotional events, and special competitions designed to engage spectators and amplify the competitive spirit.

More than just a football tournament, this event is a celebration of community, sportsmanship, and the Ramadan spirit.

"We are delighted to launch the third edition of the Pearl Island Ramadan Football Championship, as we remain committed to delivering high-quality sport-

ing events that enhance the community lifestyle on the island," public services executive director (engineer) at The Pearl master developer United Development Company (UDC), Abdul Latif al-Yafei, said.

"This tournament is more than just a football competition; it is a platform that brings together people from different backgrounds to celebrate the holy month, foster social connections, and enjoy a distinguished sporting atmosphere that aligns with the UDC's vision of enriching the experience for residents and visitors alike," he said.

As the championship kicks off today, The Pearl Island has invited everyone



to be part of this exceptional event that combines competition, entertainment, and the Ramadan spirit.

"Whether you are a football enthusiast or simply looking for a unique sporting

and social experience, the Pearl Island Ramadan Football Championship guarantees an unforgettable experience as part of this holy month's festivities," the statement added.

# Al Mujadilah Centre a 'hub for Muslim women' in Ramadan

Al Mujadilah Centre and Mosque for Women executive director Dr Sohaira Siddiqui has said that the centre is a hub for Muslim women in Qatar during the holy month of Ramadan, combining worship, learning and research, in an environment that celebrates the role of women and provides them with space for growth and development.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), she stated that Al Mujadilah Centre, a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), has organised over 100 programmes and activities since its opening last year.

Dr Siddiqui said that the centre will continue offering a diverse range of religious, developmental, and social programmes during Ramadan.

She explained that the programmes offered include rigorous courses for memorising the Qur'an, reflections on its chapters, and studying selected Hadiths, in addition to providing support to Muslim women who are new to Islam.

Dr Siddiqui added that the centre provides an opportunity for women and girls to perform Tarawih prayers, receiving Muslim females aged nine and above, and organises female-only Qiyam al-Layl prayers in the last 10 days of the holy month.

Friday prayers are also held at the mosque, led by one of the imams of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, and are available to both men and women.

A special Iftar for female university students is also planned for March 20.

Dr Siddiqui said that the centre's programmes are promoted through the centre's website and social media channels, in particular on Instagram and WhatsApp, to ensure reaching the largest possible number of beneficiaries.

The centre, she said, seeks to provide comprehensive and diverse programmes that address women's needs, with religious programmes like courses in memorising and contemplating the



Qur'an, and development programmes that focus on developing personal and life skills.

Al Mujadilah Centre and Mosque also seeks to strengthen community ties between women through purposeful social events and meetings.

The official highlighted Al Mujadilah Centre includes a research department, which attracts female scholars and researchers from around the world to discuss issues relevant to Muslim women, particularly during the annual Jadal Summit, which aims to provide a platform for interactive dialogue and the exchange of ideas among academic researchers.

Dr Siddiqui stressed that research plays a central role in the centre's vision, serving as a des-

ignation for leading research on Muslim women's histories, experiences, and contemporary challenges.

She added that the centre supports projects in various fields, including Islamic studies, law, ethics, and the health and well-being of Muslim women.

Dr Siddiqui outlined the five key principles guiding the research projects funded by Al Mujadilah Centre.

The first principle is that the research is led by women for women, offering Muslim female researchers a platform to present their ideas and findings in an environment that celebrates their active participation.

The second principle focuses on advancing and highlighting the

diversity of Islamic heritage, emphasising pluralism, debate, and continuous renewal in Al Mujadilah Centre's research.

The third principle, she said, promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, recognising that the challenges faced by Muslim women require a comprehensive approach across various academic and applied fields, such as Islamic sciences, mental health, and social sciences.

The fourth principle emphasises the relevance of research findings to women's daily lives, aiming to address the real-life needs and aspirations of Muslim women.

The fifth principle ensures that research outcomes are accessible and impactful, reaching both academics and non-specialist women interested in exploring women's issues from a broader scientific and cultural perspective.

Dr Siddiqui also spoke on the importance of external collaboration in enhancing the impact of Al Mujadilah Centre, noting the centre's participation in international conferences and events to exchange knowledge and build partnerships.

She mentioned discussions at events organised by the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) and the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH), addressing topics such as family values in the Qur'an and the mental well-being of Muslim women.

Dr Siddiqui further mentioned that the centre collaborates with Earthna (a member of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development), to highlight sustainable development goals from an Islamic perspective, focusing on traditional and innovative practices led by Muslim women.

In conclusion, she said that Al Mujadilah Centre aspires to build a community where women draw inspiration from the significant roles women have played throughout Islamic history, with the mosque serving as a centre for study, dialogue, and worship. - QNA

## Ramadan 'an opportunity to make lifestyle changes'

Dr Lina Majed  
HBKU



Muslims around the world observe Ramadan fasting as an annual practice of worship where healthy and able individuals refrain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset.

Ramadan is about prayer, reflection, and charity, and offers an opportunity to enhance physical and mental health.

Self-disciplined acts favouring the reduction of unhealthy behaviours such as smoking are vital.

Although health benefits of fasting have been reported, lifestyles tend to change drastically during the Holy Month.

This is often associated with decreased physical activity, increased sedentary behaviour, and reduced sleep, all of which constitute important risks for health.

These changes are influenced by cultural practices emphasising family time and meal gatherings from the cannon firing at the break of fast ("Iftar") to the early calls of Suhoor.

The country comes to life post-Iftar, and most activities and shopping centres operate until the late hours to provide opportunities to enjoy the Holy Month after the Taraweeh (evening) prayers.

Being moderately active in Ramadan has been shown to lead to better coping with fasting, better hydration status, and helping to maintain physical fitness and mental well-being.

Some definitions and distinctions are required. Physical activity is considered any bodily movement that increases our energy expenditure above the resting level and includes daily tasks such as carrying grocery bags, doing the dishes, or house chores.

Exercise on the other hand is a structured form of physical activity with a goal to improve health, fitness, or performance.

Exercises include yoga or aerobics, jogging, cycling, and rowing. Finally, sport is a physical activity that includes aspects of competition and is governed by a specific set of rules and regulations, such as football or tennis.

While these terms are often used interchangeably in the context of health, the specific distinctions need to be acknowledged.

For a sedentary person who is finding difficulties committing to an exercise programme, focusing on reducing sedentary time and making more physically active choices can have significant positive impacts on health and motivation.

Physical inactivity is the fourth leading cause of mortality worldwide.

Sedentary behaviour is further associated with higher risk of all-cause mortality and chronic diseases.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that adults engage in at least 150-300 minutes per week of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity (MVPA) and perform muscle-strengthening exercises at least two times per week.

Physical activity recommendations for children and adolescents require them to engage in at least 60 minutes of daily MVPA for health benefits.

All individuals are advised to reduce their sedentary time. It is nevertheless important to note that sedentary time and physical activity can act as independent components, whereby benefits from physical activity can be moderated by the time we spend sitting.

Research studies have demonstrated that even among those who meet the WHO physical activity guidelines, extended periods of uninterrupted sitting can still pose health risks.

For example, a person that engages in 150 minutes of physical activity per week can still be at an increased risk after sitting eight hours at work.

Those who lead sedentary lifestyles need to pay special attention to the independent influence of each component on their health.

Strategies to reduce sedentary time include breaking up sitting time regularly with short bouts of movements whether in the workplace or at home in front of the TV.

Other strategies include investing in a standing desk for work or substituting sitting with light-intensity or relaxing activities.

When it comes to Ramadan, the Qatar National Physical Activity Guidelines also contain recommendations specific to adults fasting during the Holy Month.

In sum, light-to-moderate intensity activities are generally favoured for fasting individuals, and correspond to activities that are subjectively perceived as "fairly light or easy" to "somewhat hard".

For healthy adults, the best time to programme a structured physical activity session is 2-3 hours after Iftar.

This window offers an optimal time for proper hydration and avoiding any potentially negative effects of sustained effort.

Sessions performed before sunset (Iftar) should ideally not exceed 60 minutes and aim to end just before Iftar to allow ingestion of food and fluids within the ideal recovery period.

Accumulating shorter bouts of activities at any time of the day is also a great alternative to a single session, offering similar health benefits.

Targeted activities usually involve most of the body parts (large muscle groups) like walking, jogging, cycling or swimming.

For non-experienced exercisers, sessions should start gradually and also include warm-up and cool-down phases especially if the activity includes high intensities or loads.

As a general rule, any physical activity should be immediately terminated in cases where the fasting person feels dizzy, nauseous, or uncomfortable.

For people living with certain chronic conditions like diabetes or hypertension but nevertheless fasting, it is important to schedule a consultation with a physician before engaging in structured physical activity.

For many people, fasting exacerbates disengagement from activities that require physical effort.

Recommendations concerning physical activities required for health remain safe and important to follow during Ramadan.

To overcome feelings of fatigue or lack of motivation, it is advisable to focus first on making more active choices throughout the day and try to be less sedentary at home.

Ultimately, any minute of being active is better than none for your health, particularly during Ramadan.

Dr Lina Majed is an assistant professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)'s College of Health and Life Sciences (CHLS).



## Arabic sweets, a Ramadan favourite

Arabic sweets - a favourite during Ramadan, along with chocolates of various types - displayed in a Doha outlet yesterday.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam







# Amuaaq discussion with Italian Muslim scholar

AMU Alumni Association Qatar (Amuaaq) held a discussion with Italian Muslim scholar and author of many books on Islam, Dr Sabrina Lei in the Qatar Charity community centre in collaboration with Indian Friends Circle.

Dr Lei was awarded in 2022 by Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue for her exceptional work in promoting interfaith understanding in Italy, a statement said.

She has translated Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English translation of the Holy Qur'an into Italian language and over 50 Islamic classics including Sahih Bukhari & Muslim. She is currently the director of the Rome-based Tawassul International Centre for Publishing, Research & Dialogue.

The programme started with a

recitation from the Holy Qur'an by Zarah who also spoke about the importance of the holy month of Ramadan and how to reconnect with the Holy Qur'an in this month.

Amuaaq president Dr Nadeem Zafar Jilani welcomed the guests and introduced the topic, 'Message of Holy Qur'an in the age of Islamophobia'. He gave a brief introduction of the speaker and lauded the work she is doing in Italy along with her Aligarian husband Abdel Latif Chaliandi for spreading the peaceful message of Islam.

Dr Sabrina Lei emphasised the need to adopt the way of patience in the wake of provocation and deal with Islamophobia by engaging in dialogue. She also reiterated the need to return to the original source which is the Holy Qur'an to

find solutions of our times. Dr Lei also answered questions from the audience after her speech. A display of her prominent books was also made on the occasion.

Earlier Amuaaq ladies wing vice-president Dr Ashna Nusrat welcomed Dr Lei on stage. A vote of thanks was proposed by Amuaaq vice-president Faisal Naseem while chairman Jawed Ahmad said it was nice to hear Dr Lei for a second time in Doha.

Prominent residents who attended the programme included Azim Ahmed, Farman Khan, Farukh Farooqui, Mamnoon Ahmad Bangash, Nayeem Aman, Imaduddin, Ghazala Yasmeen, Ambar Arif, Sadia Farooqui, Dr Sikandar Aftab, Najmul Hassan - President Jamia Alumni Association, Noor Muhammad, Osama Shamsi, Dr Saad Mahi, and Siraj Ahmed.



## New management committee for ICC



A P Manikantan



Shantanu Deshpande



Abraham K Joseph



Afsal Abdul Majeed



Pradeep Pillai



Biswajit Banerji



Nandini Abbagouni



Rakesh Wagh



Ravinda Prasad



Sandeep Sriramareddy



Anu Sharma



Venkappa Bhagavatula

Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) under the aegis of embassy of India, Qatar, has recently constituted a new management committee for the 2025-2026 term. Led by president A P Manikantan, the committee comprises elected and nominated office-bearers.

The committee has Shantanu Deshpande (vice-president), Abraham K Joseph (general secretary), Afsal Abdul Majeed and Pradeep Pillai (secretaries), Biswajit Banerji (head of finance), Nandini Abbagouni (head of cultural activities), Rakesh Wagh (head of

human resources, administration and consular), Ravindra Prasad (head of affiliation), Sandeep Sriramareddy (head of IT, Social Media), Anu Sharma (head of educational activities), and Venkappa Bhagavatula (head of in-house activities).

## MES team participates in Global Innovation in Sustainability Summit

A delegation of 35 students from MES Indian School participated in the Global Innovation in Sustainability Summit, held at Qatar Academy.

The event served as a vital platform for young leaders to explore innovative solutions for a sustainable future, aligning with Qatar National Vision 2030, which emphasises environmental development as a key pillar of national progress.

The event focused on crucial themes such as climate change mitigation, renewable energy, sustainable development, and technological advancements in environmental conservation.

MES students engaged in panel discussions, interactive workshops, and networking sessions, exchanging ideas with global sustainability experts and peers from various institutions.

An exhibition, where innovative projects and sustainable solutions were showcased, proved to be the highlight of the summit.

The school management along with principal Dr Hameeda Kadar applauded the teachers and students for their enthusiasm and meaningful contributions to the summit. The teachers' in charge of the event were Jency George, in-charge, Campus Care Force and Ajnu Ali.



## Free medical camp held



About 320 individuals benefitted from a free medical camp organised by Indian expatriate forum Bharathi Mandram in association with Atlas Medical Centre, Barwa Village. Indian embassy first secretary Dr Vaibhav A Tandale was the chief guest. Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) advisory council chairman P N Baburajan, Indian Community Benevolent Forum advisory council chairman K S Prasad, Indian Sports Centre president E P Abdulrahman, ICC general secretary and Bharathi Mandram founder secretary Mohankumar, Samanvayam president Kumal Singh Dabi, past president Ravindra Prasad, Bharathi Mandram medical camp co-ordinator Ram Prasad and co-ordinator Vijoo were present. Co-ordinators Karthik Kadapa welcomed the gathering and Raja Ayothiraman proposed a vote of thanks.

## Spotting sunspots at MES Indian School



With an objective of fostering curiosity, exploration and record changes in sunspots on an image of the sun, the students of MES Indian School participated in an activity organised by Qatar Calendar House (QCH), as a part of the Qatar Astronomy Olympiad. The observing session was led by QCH astronomer Dr Bashir Marzoke, who explained the significance of sunspots in solar studies. Students learnt about solar flares, sunspot cycles, and the impact of solar activity on Earth. School president B M Sidhique, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, key functionaries and teachers were present.

The event was co-ordinated by physics teacher Sanooja Shyamala under the guidance of Boys' Section head Mohammed Ilias, and Department of Physics head Dr Shajikumar.

## New officials for Niarc Qatar Chapter

Niarc Qatar Chapter general body elected its new office bearers for 2025-2027. Chief patron - Ashraf K P (managing director, WellCare Group), chairman - Shanahas Edodi, general secretary - Sayed Jafar Munafar, treasurer - Roji Mathew, vice-chairmen - Khalid C P, K K V Mohammed Ali Shahjar Ali, C K M Koya, organising secretary - Rasikh K V, secretaries - Mohammed Ali, Nabeel, Mansoor Ali, internal auditor - Siraj Abdul Khader, event management convener - Mustafa M V, public relations convener - Faisal Moosa, youth service



Shanahas Edodi



Jafar Munafar



Roji Mathew

convener - Nadeem Manar, advisory committee chairman - Hamid M T, vice-chairman -

Raman Nair, advisory committee members - Tah Hamza, Basheer V P, Sayyid Taha Burgavi.

## Qget celebrates Qatar Environment Day 2025

The Qatar chapter of the alumni organisation for Thrissur Government Engineering College (Qget), celebrated Qatar Environment Day 2025 through their initiative, 'Grow Your Green Food' (GYGF), at the community farming area.

Qget president Tomy Varkey officially inaugurated the celebrations, marking a commitment to sustainability and environmental awareness.

Treasurer Varghese, in his keynote address, hoped that the celebrations and activities of Environment Day will inspire the new generation to love the earth, realising that those who nurture the soil are the ones with gentle minds.

GYGF young farmers Juan Imaan and Ihsan planted saplings, symbolising hope for a greener future. Members of GYGF and Qget office-bearers Greeshma, Gopal Rao, Nischal P G, Johnson



Baby, Kevin Johnson, Ashlyn Johnson, Mohideen, Rasheeda, Pradosh, Irshad Shafi, Sajeev

Kumar V K, Priya Johnson, Robin Jose, Lovebin, Aparna, Rajesh and Abhilash led the pro-

gramme. GYGF general convener Dias Thottan gave guidance for the activities.







## High fliers



A flight of feral pigeons soar into a pleasant winter sky in Doha, enjoying the breeze and sun, while going round in circles. These birds live in flock-oriented colonies and enjoy taking group exercise together during part of the day. **PICTURE:** Gulf Times news editor Bonnie James (Instagram: the.explorer7).

# Events and activities mark QU's Qatar Environment Day celebrations

Qatar University's (QU) College of Arts and Sciences celebrated Qatar Environment Day, which falls on February 26, by organising various events and activities.

This year's event was held in collaboration with QU's Facilities and General Services Department –Environment and Sustainability Section, the Center for Sustainable Development, the Biology Teaching Society, and the Inclusion and Special Needs Support Center at the university.

The event witnessed broad participation from QU students, faculty members, and students from various schools across the country. The theme for this year's Qatar Environment Day was "Together for a Sustainable Environment."

Prof Mohammed AlGhouti, head of the Biological and Environmental Sciences Department at QU, emphasised the significance of preserving the environment as an invaluable resource for

current and future generations.

"Our theme this year, 'Together for a Sustainable Environment,' is a sincere call for collective action and co-operation among individuals and public and private institutions to achieve sustainable development goals that ensure the preservation of our biodiversity and natural resources. Qatar has placed great emphasis on environmental issues, making it a key focus of Qatar National Vision 2030.

"Celebrating this day reaffirms our strong commitment to environmental protection, raising awareness about the importance of adopting sustainable practices in our daily lives, and our shared responsibility to preserve our natural resources for future generations."

During the event, a variety of initiatives and projects aimed at achieving sustainable development and environmental protection were explored. These included transforming organic waste into nutrient-rich agricultural



soil and promising initiatives to harness natural resources, such as algae, for the production of eco-friendly biofuels.

The event also highlighted the negative human impacts on the environment, including pollution and resource depletion,

while discussing practical solutions to mitigate these effects. The discussions emphasised the role of individuals as active part-

ners in environmental conservation, encouraging both individual and collective initiatives that contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development.

Dr Wardh Saber Garab, president of the Biology Teaching chapter and a representative of the QU Alumni Association, stated that the event serves as an important platform to instil environmental awareness and foster scientific thinking among students and the university community.

"The interactive activity 'Discover the Environmental Culprit' allowed participants to analyse sources of environmental pollution and explore their impacts on ecosystems and living organisms. The enthusiastic engagement of students during the event highlights the ongoing need for initiatives that connect theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Investing in sustainable environmental awareness is a collective responsibility."

## QU holds educational astronomy trip

Qatar University's (QU) Student Housing and Residential Life Department, in collaboration with the Astronomy Club under the Student Activities Department, and in partnership with the Qatar Calendar House, organised a scientific trip to the Astronomy Camp in Al-Aamriya.

Students participated in various astronomical activities designed to expand their scientific knowledge and enhance their passion for astronomy.

The activities included observing four planets through a telescope, engaging in scientific discussions about the solar system, and gaining hands-on knowledge about stars and constellations.

The trip also featured a detailed explanation of the 'Stellarium' application used for sky exploration, a visit to the astronomy exhibition, and the screening of scientific videos from the Qatar Calendar House.

Kholoud al-Hammadi, director of the Student Housing and Residential Life Department at QU, highlighted that such activities encourage students to interact with each other, fostering a spirit of collaboration and teamwork.

Abdullah Hamed al-Mulla, director of Student Activities at QU, underscored the importance of extracurricular activities in enhancing



students' skills and shaping their personalities.

"We believe that learning is not confined to classrooms but extends to practical activities that open new horizons for students. Through this trip, participants had the opportunity to explore astronomy in an engaging and practical way, which deepens their passion for science and technology."

Student Razan al-Hemidi, president of the Astronomy Club, described the trip as an exceptional experience that combined learning

and enjoyment under a sky filled with stars. She noted that participants had the chance to explore the wonders of astronomy by observing planets and stars through telescopes, in addition to engaging in scientific workshops.

She expressed her enthusiasm about the students' engagement in the activities, which fuelled their interest in astronomy and their desire to delve deeper into the field. "We hope this trip marks the beginning of a series of events in collaboration with the Qatar Calendar House."

## PAS-Q to organise fifth mass Iftar on March 14

As part of its ongoing community services and tradition, the Pakistan Arts Society-Qatar (PAS-Q) will organise its fifth mass community Iftar at the main campus of Pak Shamaa School and College in Mesaimmeer on March 14.

All community members (men only) are invited to attend the Iftar, PAS-Q chairman M A Shahid made the announcement during the general body meeting held in the presence of president Muhammad Abrar Hussain, vice-president Taher D Hussain and committee members. "We would like to invite people from all walks of life to join us for this special event. We will contact institutions like schools, socio-cultural organisations, and business and contracting organisations to join us in this grand event," Shahid said.



M A Shahid

"There are many community members who are not listed on PAS-Q community circular list and might be interested in joining events hosted by PAS-Q. We request them to contact us on WhatsApp number 5581 5912 to receive the link for registration", added Shahid.





## ANGER

**India slams security breach during minister's London visit**

India yesterday condemned a security breach during its foreign minister's visit to London when a protester broke through a police cordon, stood in front of the minister's car and tore the Indian flag before being taken away. India's foreign ministry said it expects Britain to live up to "diplomatic obligations" and called the group of protesters a "small group of separatists and extremists". Videos posted on social media showed a handful of protesters waving flags of a Sikh separatist movement called Khalistan and shouting slogans outside think tank Chatham House in London on Wednesday where Foreign Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar was speaking.

## CONTROVERSY

**New Zealand sacks senior diplomat after Trump jibe**

New Zealand sacked its top diplomat in London after he made a "deeply disappointing" remark questioning Donald Trump's grasp of history, High Commissioner to the UK Phil Goff questioned whether the US president "really understands history" during a panel discussion about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The comments were "deeply disappointing", said a spokesman for New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters. "They do not represent the views of the NZ government and make his position as high commissioner to London untenable." Peters later said he would have fired Goff if he made the same remarks about any other world leader.

## LAW AND ORDER

**Lanka police seek public help to arrest fugitive chief**

Sri Lanka's police issued a public appeal yesterday to locate their fugitive chief, who has been missing since a court order for his arrest following the death of an officer. Spokesman Buddhika Manatunga said they had been unable to find inspector-general of police Deshabandu Tennakoon despite deploying several special units. "We urge the public to provide any information about his whereabouts," Manatunga told reporters in Colombo. "We also warn that anyone harbouring the IGP will be prosecuted for obstructing justice." Manatunga admitted that the failure to locate their own chief had "undermined public confidence in the police force".

## DEMAND

**Japan's union group seeks biggest wage hike in 30 years**

Japan's largest labour union group is seeking the biggest salary hike for its workers in over 30 years as both the government and central bank look for signs of sustainable wage growth to drive the economy. Rengo, which has about 7mn members, said yesterday its member unions are seeking an average wage hike of 6.09% for this year, the first time in 32 years that its request has topped 6%. Its demand could mean another year of sizeable wage increases in Japan's annual labour-management talks, which Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba sees as key to Japan's economic progress.

# Fast-delivery firms face India antitrust case over discounts

Reuters  
New Delhi

Indian consumer products distributors have filed an antitrust case against big fast-delivery businesses of Zomato, Swiggy and Zepto, calling for an investigation into alleged deep discounting practices, legal papers show.

India's e-commerce sector has faced intense scrutiny over how products are priced online. An antitrust investigation last year found Amazon and Walmart's Flipkart favour select sellers and resorted to "predatory pricing", which hurts smaller retailers. The companies have denied the allegations.

Quick commerce, in which companies deliver consumer products within 10 minutes from neighbourhood warehouses, is popular with customers but has upset smaller retailers as shoppers use apps to order everything from milk to pulses. Bernstein estimates India's quick commerce sector will reach \$35bn in 2030, from \$200mn in 2021.

The All India Consumer Products Distributors Federation (AICPDF), in a case filing with the Competition Commission of India, has asked for an investigation into many business practices of Zomato's Blinkit, Swiggy's instamart, and Zepto, including how discounts are doled out.

"An alarming trend of predatory pricing and deep discounting prac-

tices by Q-commerce platforms resulted in unfair pricing models," said the group's filing.

The filing could increase headaches for Zomato and Swiggy. A separate CCI investigation last year found their food delivery businesses breached competition laws. The case is ongoing.

The watchdog will review the case filing and can order its investigation unit to look at the matter closely. This can take several months and may require companies to explain their businesses. It can dismiss the case if it finds no merit in it.

AICPDF has 400,000 distributors as members, who supply products of brands such as Nestle, Unilever and Tata to 13mn retail shops across India.

A recent Datum Intelligence survey of 3,000 Indian quick commerce shoppers showed 36% had reduced shopping at supermarkets and 46% cut back purchases from small independent stores.

In its filing, AICPDF said local brick-and-mortar stores "cannot match" the quick commerce giants' discounts. It compared online and offline pricing of 25 products, including of Nestle and Hindustan Unilever.

A variant of a Nescafe coffee jar which a small independent Indian retailer receives from companies for about Rs622 (\$7.14) is offered for Rs514 on Zepto, Rs577 on Swiggy Instamart and Rs625 on Blinkit, according to the filing.



Debris lies near the damaged buildings after the accidental bombings in Pocheon, South Korea, yesterday.

## South Korea jets accidentally drop bombs on homes, 15 hurt

Reuters  
Pocheon, South Korea

South Korean fighter jets accidentally dropped eight bombs on a civilian district yesterday, injuring 15 people and damaging houses during military exercises in Pocheon, the Air Force and fire agency said.

The fire agency said in a statement that 15 people were wounded, including two who were seriously hurt.

Pocheon is about 40kms northeast of Seoul, near the heavily militarised border with North Korea.

"There was a sudden loud roar of a fighter jet, then an explosion rang out.. When I went to the scene, there were about four houses that were halved from the damage, people hurt," said Oh Moung-su, a 65-year-old resident.

"Dusk and smoke rose into the sky, water gushed out of a pipe. People in a vehicle going to a construction site were injured - some of

them couldn't even get out of the car. Another was outside the car covering his eye."

South Korea's Air Force said eight 225kg Mk82 bombs from two KF-16 jets fell outside the shooting range during joint live-fire exercises. "We are sorry for the damage caused by the abnormal drop accident, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery," the Air Force said in a statement.

The accident was due to a pilot entering incorrect co-ordinates, said a military official who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the matter. The official said that the two jets then dropped four bombs each, with all of them detonating.

Authorities would suspend live-fire exercises until there was a clear understanding of what went wrong, but the incident would not affect major joint South Korean and US military exercises due to begin on Monday, the official said.

Residents in the area have protested about the disturbance and potential danger from nearby training grounds for years.

Photographs from the scene showed a house hollowed out by the impact, shattered windows and a building strewn with debris.

Security camera footage aired on local TV also caught the moments leading up to the incident, with a pickup truck driving on a tree-lined street before the area is consumed by a large explosion.

"The unthinkable has happened," said Pocheon city mayor Baek Young-hyeun, who urged the government and military to come up with measures to prevent any further civilian damage.

The defence ministry said earlier yesterday that South Korea and US forces were holding their first joint live-fire exercises in Pocheon, linked to annual military drills due to start next week.

The Freedom Shield joint drills, which will run from March 10 to 20, aim to strengthen the readiness of the alliance for threats such as North Korea, the Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said before the accident.

**Modern slavery cases in Britain reach record high**

The number of potential modern slavery victims in Britain rose to a record last year, official statistics showed yesterday, highlighting a growing crime that experts say requires the government to undertake urgent policy reforms. Home Office figures showed there were 19,125 referrals of potential victims into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) - Britain's system for identifying and protecting victims - in 2024, surpassing the 2023 record of around 17,000.

Modern slavery, which can include human trafficking, slavery, servitude or forced labour, has been rising globally due to a mix of poverty, conflict and migration, affecting millions of people.

"These statistics are not just numbers, they are individuals with voices, voices that the government need to listen to," said Britain's independent anti-slavery commissioner Eleanor Lyons.

"A cross-government modern slavery strategy is needed that will enable law enforcement to prioritise tackling this crime."

**William visits mental health charity**

Britain's Prince William gestures as he speaks during a visit to the Mental Health Innovations (MHI), a charity established in 2017 by The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales, in London, Britain, yesterday.

## UK 'two-tier' sentencing rules for minorities flayed

AFP  
London

The UK opposition leader yesterday backed the justice minister over scrapping new guidance for judges requiring them to consider a convict's background, including their ethnicity, when deciding jail terms.

Under new guidelines - due to come into force from April - a pre-sentence report examining a defendant's circumstances will usually be needed before handing out punishment for someone of an ethnic, cultural or faith minority. The reform drawn up by the independent Sentencing Council would also be applied to other groups such as young adults aged 18-25, women and pregnant women.

The Labour government's Secretary of State for Justice Shabana Mahmood told parliament on Wednesday she was concerned the new guidance was inherently unfair.

"As somebody from an ethnic minority background, I do not stand for any differential treatment before the law for anyone," she said.

"There will never be a two-tier sentencing approach under my watch or under this Labour government," she added.

She later said on X she would be writing to the Sentencing Council "to register my displeasure and to recommend reversing this change to guidance". Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokesperson yesterday said he "backs her comments".

Leader of the opposition Conservatives Kemi Badenoch called on Mahmood to act urgently.

"If the Justice Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, doesn't want a two-tier criminal justice system she should change the law and the Conservatives will back her," she said on X. "Ministers should decide, not quangos. Labour need to grip this," she added.

The Conservatives' justice spokesman Robert Jenrick branded the new rules "outrageous" and "blatant bias".

# Philippines' Palawan approves 50-year ban on new mining permits

AFP  
Manila

The local government in a resource-rich Philippine province has unanimously voted in favour of a 50-year ban on new mining permits, a decision its supporters said cannot be over-ridden by Manila.

Palawan province, a UNESCO "biosphere reserve" known for its diverse flora and fauna, has become a hotbed for mining as

the national government seeks to widen its market share for minerals like nickel, a key component of electric vehicle batteries.

But locals have increasingly pushed back against new mine proposals, with environmental groups and activists pointing to effects ranging from deforestation and flooding to the displacement of Indigenous peoples.

There are currently 11 mines operated in Palawan, but scores of applications are pending.

Environmental lawyer Grizelda

Anda, who worked in support of Wednesday's vote, said Manila would not be able to legally over-rule the local government's decision, which now awaits the governor's signature.

"The (Philippine Mining Act of 1995) provides that you have to get the endorsement of the LGU (local government unit)," she said.

The new permit ban also imposes a 25-year pause on applications to renew or expand mining licences.

Existing mines can continue "as long as they do not increase their

production" or move into new areas, Anda added.

"This is a really big win not just for the people but for the environment, especially Palawan, which is our last frontier here in the Philippines," said Jonila Castro, a spokesperson for the Manila-based Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment.

"We hope that many other provinces will have the same moratorium."

Palawan resident Jade Cabasag, 23, said she was one of about

100,000 people who had signed a petition in favour of it.

"We value our environment," she said, adding she was proud she could help in her "own little way".

But the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines criticised the vote, saying in a statement yesterday that the environmental concerns were overblown given laws it said provided "stringent" safeguards.

The decision would also limit "the country's ability to plan and strategise about its mineral wealth at a time when the global demand

for critical minerals is rising", it said.

"The Philippine government has a responsibility to the people to develop its mineral resources responsibly for the good of the many. Palawan cannot and should not limit the national government's ability to do so."

But mid-term elections in May, when 10 of the Palawan board's 11 members are up for re-election, could see the new ban undone if there is a dramatic shift in the body's makeup.



# European rocket carries out first commercial mission

Europe's new Ariane 6 rocket successfully carried out its first commercial mission yesterday, placing a French military satellite into orbit to give the continent a new independent access to space. After delays including a last-minute postponement on Monday, the heavy-lift rocket blasted off into rainy skies from the Kourou space base in French Guiana. Around an hour after the launch, the control centre burst into applause as the rocket released the satellite into orbit. "We could not have dreamed of a better scenario, that was a perfect launch," said David Cavallioles, head of Arianespace, operator of the rocket launcher. "A new era now opens for France's European space programme."

The launch came as Europe seeks to strengthen its defences amid doubts about co-operation with the United States under new US President Donald Trump. The launch means that Europe can now independently put large satellites into orbit for the first time since Russia pulled its heavy Soyuz rockets after invading Ukraine in 2022.

Ariane 6 was initially scheduled to enter service in 2020, but repeated delays meant the rocket did not blast off for the first time until July last year. Its first commercial mission put the French military satellite CSO-3 satellite into orbit at an altitude of around 800km above Earth. CSO-3 completes a network of three French military imaging satellites, with the first two launched in 2018 and 2020 on Soyuz rockets. European Union countries have 10 military satellites – five French and five Italian – compared to "hundreds" for the United States and China, French General Philippe Steininger said. Britain also has its own military communications satellite system. "Europe must ensure its own security," European Space Agency's space transportation director Toni Tolker-Nielsen said in Kourou this week. While five Ariane 6 launches are planned this year, Tolker-Nielsen said up to 12 could be carried out a year in the future. An attempt to launch the mission on Monday was called off just 30 minutes before lift off due to a problem on a fuel



The Ariane 6 rocket lifts off from Europe's spaceport, on a delayed mission to carry a French military observation satellite towards orbit, in its first commercially operational launch, in Kourou, French Guiana yesterday. (Reuters)

pipes, Arianespace said. Other planned launches in December and February were also scrubbed. Postponed launches are common for new rockets. The latest

test flight of the world's biggest rocket, SpaceX's Starship, is also scheduled for launch later Thursday after a last-minute postponement on Monday. The European space industry has struggled to remain competitive with Elon Musk's SpaceX, which has become increasingly dominant when it comes to launching satellites. And SpaceX is only expected to become more central to US space efforts now that the billionaire Musk has become a prominent adviser to Trump. Europe has struggled in space since Ariane 6's predecessor Ariane 5 retired in 2023, Russia pulled its Soyuz rockets and an accident grounded the smaller Vega-C launcher for two years. But with Vega-C resuming flights in December and Ariane 6's first commercial launch, European space efforts are looking for a boost. Given the military role of the satellite, heavy security was deployed at the spaceport on the northern coast of South America, with French fighter jets deployed to patrol the surrounding skies.

# CIA jettisons unspecified number of new officers

Reuters  
New York/Washington

The Central Intelligence Agency fired a slew of recent hires this week, three people familiar with the matter said, cuts that current and former US intelligence officers warned would risk damaging US national security.

The firings under US President Donald Trump's new CIA director, John Ratcliffe, come as Trump presides over massive federal workforce reductions overseen by billionaire Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

The recent CIA hires, known as probationary employees, worked across a number of different portfolios and were fired because of performance issues, a person familiar with the matter said. The person declined to say how many were dismissed, but said it was more than a few.

"At CIA, we are reviewing personnel within their first two years of service at the Agency," a CIA spokesperson said in a statement. "For some personnel, that process will result in termination. Our officers face unique pressures from working in situations that are fast-paced and high-stakes. It's not for everyone."

In some other agencies, however, federal workers who were fired for alleged poor performance as part of Trump's remaking of the federal government received excellent performance reviews before they were terminated, according to interviews and documents seen by Reuters.

The probationary employees who were terminated had only been working for the agency for two years or less, the sources said. The firings were first reported by the *New York Times*.

A person familiar with the matter said members of the House and Senate intelligence committees were not informed – as is customary – that the dismissals had begun. Members would be seeking more information from the agency in the coming days, the person said on condition of anonymity.

The firings of CIA probationary employees started earlier this week after a federal judge in the Eastern District of Virginia ruled on a lawsuit involving officers who had been temporarily assigned to diversity initiatives in the Biden administration. The ruling allowed the CIA to fire employees at will.

## Pope 'stable' after nearly 3 weeks

Ailing Pope Francis's condition is "stable" and he has not suffered a fresh breathing crisis, the Vatican said yesterday, as the 88-year-old nears three weeks in hospital with pneumonia. The Argentine pontiff, head of the worldwide Catholic Church since 2013, has been in Rome's Gemelli hospital since February 14. "The clinical conditions of Pope Francis have remained stable compared to the previous days", the Vatican said in an evening medical bulletin. There had been no repeat of Monday's respiratory failure, it said, and the Pope's blood work "remained stable". Francis continued with his breathing exercises and physiotherapy, did not have a fever, and managed to do a bit of work in both the morning and afternoon, it said. The Vatican has been providing twice daily updates on the Pope's health, a morning one on how the night went, and an evening medical bulletin. But yesterday it said that "in view of the stability of the clinical picture, the next medical bulletin will be released on Saturday".

# EU agrees on defence surge and support for Ukraine

Reuters  
Brussels

European leaders yesterday backed plans to spend more on defence and pledged to continue to stand by Ukraine in a world upended by Donald Trump's reversal of US policies.

"Europe must take up this challenge, this arms race. And it must win it," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said at a special defence summit in Brussels.

"Europe as a whole is truly capable of winning any military, financial, economic confrontation with Russia – we are simply stronger," Tusk said. The EU leaders hailed the European Commission's proposals this week to give them fiscal flexibility on defence spending, and to jointly borrow up to €150bn (\$160bn) to lend to EU governments to spend on their militaries.

In a joint statement agreed by all 27 member states, the leaders called on their governments to examine these proposals in detail urgently.

The Brussels summit takes place against a backdrop of dramatic defence policy decisions driven by fears that Russia, emboldened by its war in Ukraine, may attack an EU country next and that Europe cannot rely on the US to come to its aid. "I want to believe that the United States will stand by us. But we have to be ready if that is not the case," French President Emmanuel Macron said in an address to the French nation on the eve of the summit.

He stressed that Russia had become a threat for all of Europe, remarks that drew strong criticism from Moscow.

The EU leaders also voiced support for Ukraine, but that statement was agreed without

Hungary's nationalist leader Viktor Orban, a Trump ally.

In their statement, the 26 other EU leaders stressed that there can be no negotiations on Ukraine without Ukraine, and vowed to continue to give it aid, according to a recent draft.

"We are here to defend Ukraine," the chairman of the meeting Antonio Costa said as he and European Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen, both smiling broadly, warmly welcomed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the summit, in sharp contrast with the clash between Trump and Zelensky in the Oval Office last week. But decades of reliance



European Council President Antonio Costa (right) and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (centre) confer with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as he arrives at the Special European Council to discuss continued support for Ukraine and European defence at the EU headquarters in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

on US protection, divergences on funding and on how France's nuclear deterrence could be used for Europe showed how difficult it would be for the EU to fill the void left by Washington after it froze military aid to Ukraine.

Washington provided more than 40% of military aid to Ukraine last year, according to Nato, some of which Europe could not easily replace. Some leaders still held out hope, in public at least, that Washington could be coaxed back into the fold.

"We must ensure, with cool and wise heads, that US support is also guaranteed in the coming months and years, because Ukraine is also dependent on their support for its defence," Germany's outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz said. The summit statement did not directly address Zelensky's call for EU leaders to support the idea of a truce between Russian and Ukrainian forces in the air and at sea. Zelensky told the EU leaders such a truce would be a chance to test Moscow's will to end its three-year invasion.

In a sign of the gravity of the moment, Macron said France was open to discussing extending the protection offered by its nuclear arsenal to its European partners.

This was met with cautiously positive re-

actions. Some, like Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda, said such a "nuclear umbrella would serve as really very serious deterrence toward Russia." Poland said the idea was worth discussing while some, like the Czechs, stressed the need to keep the US involved.

Trump has said Europe must take more responsibility for its security and that the US would not protect a Nato ally that did not spend enough on defence.

His decision to shift from staunch US support for Ukraine to a more conciliatory stance towards Moscow has deeply alarmed Europeans who see Russia as the biggest threat.

Underlining the level of concern, the parties aiming to form Germany's next government on Tuesday agreed to lift constitutional limits on borrowing to fund defence spending.

Elsewhere in Europe, Norway will more than double its financial pledge to Ukraine this year while also hiking its own defence spending, the prime minister said.

Norway, home to the world's largest sovereign wealth fund with assets of \$1.8tn, has seen soaring income from gas sales to Europe as a result of Russia's 2022 Ukraine invasion, and faces pressure at home and abroad to increase its aid.

# Musk should use 'scalpel' not 'hatchet' in govt cuts: Trump

President Donald Trump responded yesterday to growing criticism over unprecedented cuts to the US government overseen by his billionaire adviser Elon Musk, saying they should be carefully targeted. "We say the 'scalpel' rather than the 'hatchet,'" Trump posted on his social media platform Truth Social. The president's message represents the first significant move to rein in the power accorded to Musk, as his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) works toward gutting federal staffing and spending. DOGE's cost-cutting campaign has faced increasing resistance on multiple fronts, including court rulings and some pressure from lawmakers. "DOGE has been an incredible success, and now that we have my Cabinet in place, I have instructed the Secretaries and Leadership to work with DOGE on Cost Cutting measures and Staffing," Trump posted. "As the Secretaries learn about, and understand, the people working for the



Elon Musk leaves a meeting with House Republicans in the basement of the US Capitol building in Washington. (AFP)

various Departments, they can be very precise as to who will remain, and who will go." Trump confirmed reports in the US media that he had convened his cabinet in person yesterday to deliver the message that they, not Musk, were in charge of their departments. Trump told his team, with Musk in the room, that the tech billionaire was

authorised to recommend firings and other cuts but not to enforce them, according to Politico. "It's very important that we cut levels down to where they should be, but it's also important to keep the best and most productive people," the president said, adding that follow-up cabinet meetings on DOGE would come every two weeks.

# Portugal faces spectre of early polls over PM row

Portugal's Prime Minister Luis Montenegro is facing the possibility of returning to the polls in a few weeks, just one year after coming to power. Montenegro, of the centre-right Social Democratic Party (PSD), took office in March 2024 but has been mired in controversy and pressure from the opposition over a conflict of interest row involving a family company. Earlier this week, Portuguese media reported that a service company run by Montenegro's wife and children had contracts with several private companies including Solverde, a hotel and casino group which receives concessions from the state. Solverde said Wednesday that it had terminated the contract, and Montenegro announced that the family business would now be run and managed by his children. The Communist Party, accusing Montenegro's government of political and economic collusion, tabled a censure vote that took place on Wednesday. Montenegro's second since his party won the largest share of the vote in legislative elections a year ago. Although he survived the vote, Montenegro announced he would seek a vote of confidence from parliament – where he does not have an absolute majority. The government adopted the confidence vote motion yesterday, publishing a text following a cabinet meeting stating that it was for the "stability" of the country. "I feel that I'm fully in office," Montenegro said on his arrival in Brussels, where he is due to attend a summit on Ukraine.





**CHAIRMAN**

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiah

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

**Deputy Managing Editor**

K T Chacko

- ✉ P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
- 📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
- 🐦 twitter.com/gulftimes\_Qatar
- 📷 instagram.com/gulftimes
- 📺 youtube.com/GulftimesVideos



## AI will not supercharge GDP growth

Everyone knows that artificial intelligence is a hugely powerful technology with immense economic implications. US equity prices reflect not only confidence in the prospects of technology companies but also a belief that AI will fuel a broader boom. The growth-obsessed UK government views AI development as a top priority, and everyone at the World Economic Forum in Davos this January wanted to hear from the world's AI leaders.

We have been here before. In the 1960s, computers were too enormous and expensive to be used by anyone but the largest government agencies and businesses. Yet so great were concerns about "automation" that US President Lyndon Johnson launched an inquiry into the danger that computer-based technologies might "eliminate all but a few jobs." It wasn't to be. By the 1970s, there was no sign of a productivity surge, and fears of mass technological unemployment subsided.

Personal and business computer use then soared in the 1980s; but by 1990, as the economist Robert Solow famously observed, Information Technology (IT) was "everywhere but in the productivity statistics." With mobile phones, the internet, ever-expanding hardware capacity, and growing software capabilities promising a new connectivity-based productivity revolution, everyone at the World Economic Forum in 2000 wanted to hear from the leaders of "Information and Communications Technology" (ICT). Cisco CEO John Chambers predicted that ICT would enable the US economy to grow by 5% per year for the foreseeable future, and that "The internet will form half of gross domestic product by 2010."

Then there was "big data," "the digital economy," "machine learning," and now artificial intelligence. None, so far, has had any measurable impact on medium-term growth rates. A case can be made that generative AI, owing to its self-learning capability, represents more than just another stage of technological development. But there are still two reasons why it, too, may not show up in growth data.

### The hope that it will unleash a sustained increase in measured productivity and GDP growth is probably a delusion

First, a large and probably growing share of economic activity involves a zero-sum struggle for competitive advantage with no positive impact on either measured growth or human welfare. Using basic internet search, and now sophisticated large language models, lawyers are increasingly able to analyse every possible precedent before presenting their arguments. But if the opposing law firm can do the same, the result is an arms race in which neither party has a durable advantage.

For at least two decades, experts have warned that after the steady decline of manufacturing jobs, professional services such as the law would be next in line for automation. But employment and pay in the field of commercial

law continue to grow. Similarly, marketing departments can use AI to produce ever more targeted and effective communications to influence consumer choice. If their competitors are doing the same, however, there is no benefit to end consumers, and no boost to GDP.

Conversely, AI will almost certainly deliver huge human-welfare benefits almost for free. The late Martin Feldstein, writing in 2017, correctly observed this phenomenon at work in the previous three decades of remarkable IT and ICT progress. By then, smartphones boasted many thousands of times more processing power and memory than the biggest computers of the 1960s, enabling vastly more communication, data storage, video and image sharing, and so forth. Yet the share of GDP accounted for by the telecoms sector had hardly changed, leading Feldstein to conclude that "low growth estimates fail to reflect the remarkable innovations in everything from healthcare to internet services to video entertainment that have made life better during these years."

Likewise, Google DeepMind's AlphaFold Protein Structure Database (which predicts a protein structure from its amino acid sequence) is set to accelerate drug discovery while slashing the cost of research. But once drugs come off patent, their prices fall toward their marginal cost of production, and their contribution to measured GDP collapses.

If, by 2070, an AI-enabled acceleration of knowledge acquisition has furnished us with a wonder drug that gives everyone a 100-year life of perfect health, and which is produced in wholly automated factories powered by cheap nuclear fusion, it will count for almost nothing in global GDP. The more powerful a technology, the more rapidly it disappears from measured GDP.

At the same time, AI will have massive potential to exacerbate the harms to human welfare that previous generations of ICT have already produced. For good or ill – or merely as an enabler of ever more intense zero-sum competition – AI will have a pervasive and perhaps transformative impact on society. But the hope that it will unleash a sustained increase in measured productivity and GDP growth is probably a delusion. – Project Syndicate

**To Advertise**

✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

**Display**

☎ 44466621  
☎ 44418811

**Classified**

☎ 44466609 ☎ 44418811  
✉ gtcad@gulf-times.com

**Subscription**

✉ circulation@gulf-times.com

© 2025 Gulf Times. All rights reserved



## Return of austerity: Harsher, riskier, more devastating

By Mark Blyth  
Providence

What do Rachel Reeves, Javier Milei, and Elon Musk have in common? All are preaching the gospel of austerity as a necessary cure for what ails their respective economies.

Hence, Reeves, the United Kingdom's Chancellor of the Exchequer, has tightened rules for government spending and investment, despite the fact that fiscal constriction has been a major cause of the country's problems over the past 15 years. Similarly, Milei has framed austerity as the price Argentina must pay for 20 years of overextension. He argues that defeating inflation is the only path to prosperity, even if doing so deepens an already deep well of poverty.

And for Musk, the United States supposedly needs austerity to spare it from bankruptcy. This argument is just a ruse: states with sovereign currencies, especially the main global reserve currency, cannot go bankrupt. Musk's obvious motivation for slashing public budgets is to make room for tax cuts, and to fire public employees who do not share his agenda.

The last time we heard the drumbeat of austerity was during the global financial crisis. In the US, the prescribed response took the form of a milquetoast "sequester" (spending caps). But in Europe, the fiscal tightening went much further, destroying a decade's worth of growth, undermining public investment, and contributing to many of the problems that the continent is still struggling with today.

What was obviously a failure of private finance was rechristened a crisis of runaway state spending. Bilateral loans to the European Union's periphery states were little more than disguised bailouts of core countries' banks "paid for" by fiscal contractions. Those offering elaborate arguments about the expansionary power of fiscal tightening were denying the obvious: When the private sector is trying to save and the public sector does the same, the economy inevitably will shrink, and the debt stock will grow larger as a share of GDP.

This was the essence of Europe's self-defeating experiment with austerity in the 2010s. By 2016, even the European Commission had begun to change its tune; and by the time that Covid-19 had struck, the days of "growing the economy by shrinking it" seemed to be over. How wrong we were.

As John Quiggin argued at the time, austerity is a zombie idea: It cannot be killed, because it is immune to empirical refutation. The wisdom of the Covid crisis – when the sound response was to bail out the economy in the face of a global shutdown – thus became another "runaway debt crisis" that threatens to bankrupt the state.

Back in the 2010s, austerity in

the EU was supposed to stabilise public finances by "restoring confidence" in the bond market. But cutting spending when the economy was already in recession simply compounded the problem. Fear of inflation owing to "all that spending" quickly turned into fear of deflation and declining confidence. Austerity in a recession simply produces more recession and unemployment. We have known that since the Brüning Chancellorship in Weimar Germany.

But what about austerity under other conditions? The current cases of the US and Argentina are interesting in this regard. For its part, the US is nowhere near a recession. The economy is powering ahead and facing inflationary pressures. In addition to freeing up fiscal space for tax cuts, another possible explanation for pursuing austerity under such conditions concerns geopolitics and global imbalances.

When Joe Biden took office in early 2021, he kept most of Donald Trump's tariffs in place and embarked on a path of "green" reindustrialisation. Now that Trump is back in power, he is raising tariffs further to force adjustments in exporting economies, and replacing Biden's green reindustrialisation strategy with a fossil-fuelled approach.

But this isn't the whole story. Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) are pursuing the long-held Republican (and libertarian) dream of dismantling the modern administrative state. They would much prefer the nineteenth-

century state, which used tariffs both to protect domestic industry and raise government revenue. The implication is that Silicon Valley's tech lords will reprise the role played by the robber barons during the Gilded Age. Thus, austerity is being dusted off for a whole new set of purposes.

Argentina, by contrast, faces permanent high inflation without real (inflation-adjusted) GDP growth. More than a dozen stabilisation plans have come and gone, and Milei has achieved what seemed impossible: a broad electoral coalition in favour of austerity.

Milei owes his success (so far) to the distributional politics of permanent inflation. The Peronists lost their long hold on the poor and the working class because these are the voters who spend the greatest share of their incomes on consumption, and rising prices consistently eroded their purchasing power.

The Peronist coalition managed to shelter unions from inflation by indexing wages accordingly, and the professional classes sheltered themselves with US dollar holdings. For a while, this arrangement was sufficient for Peronists to win elections. But those without these protections suffered falling consumption, and poverty increased year after year. Milei offered a way out. He would embrace austerity, destroy the Peronist networks, disrupt the middlemen, and deregulate everything. It would hurt for a while, but it would crush inflation and destroy Peronist

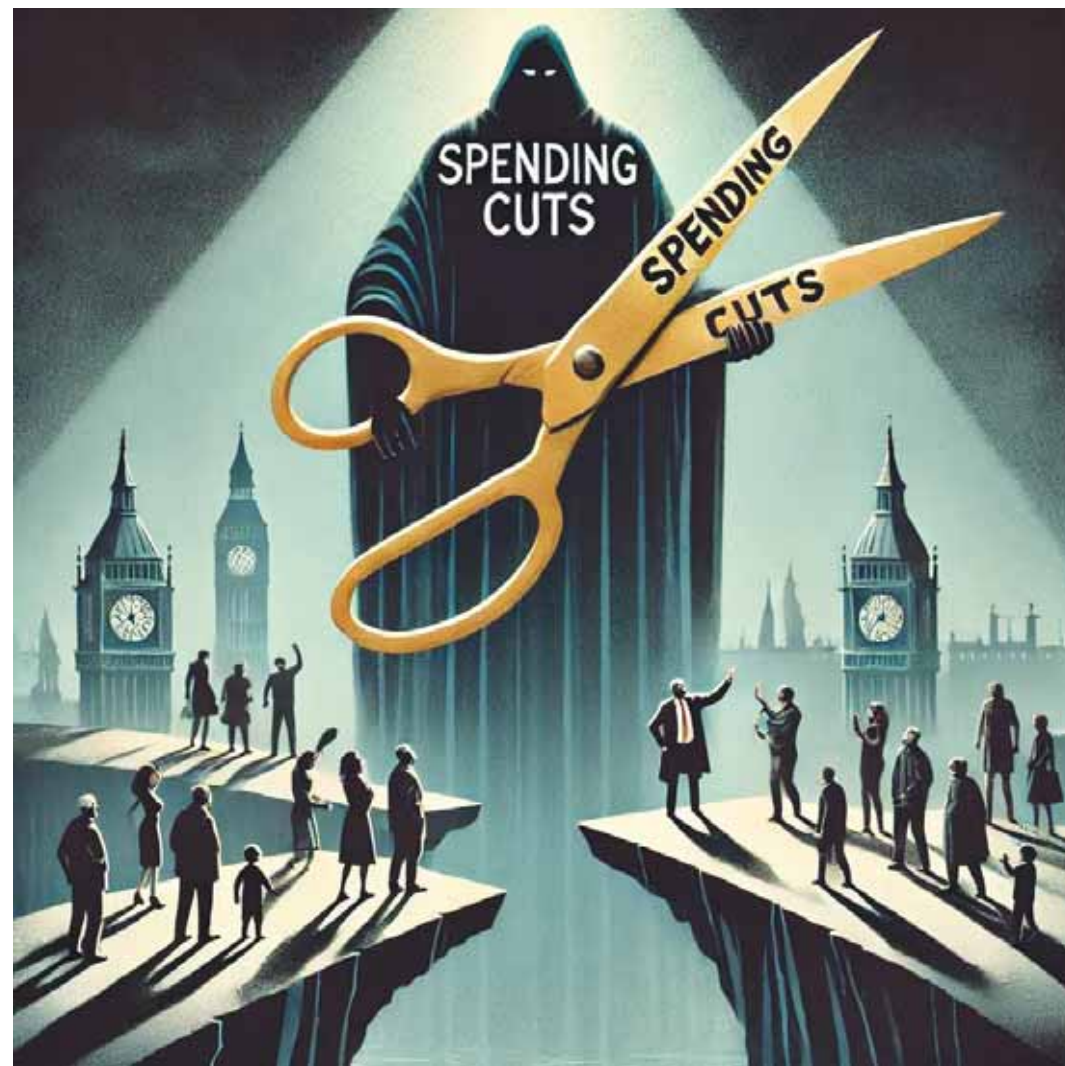
insiders' ability to protect themselves. Their pain would be your gain. Thus, austerity has become a form of schadenfreude politics, much like the war on federal employees and other "elites" in the US.

Will it work? In Argentina, if the point is to defeat inflation despite rising poverty, then yes, it is working. But it will be electorally sustainable only if lower inflation leads to more investment and rising real wages. If it leads to ever deeper poverty for those who voted for it, Milei will lose his base.

In the US, if the goal is to dismantle the administrative state, austerity will work. But in a country where 53% of counties – most of them Republican-leaning – are dependent on government transfers for a quarter or more of their incomes, it may backfire badly. Still, if Republicans get \$4tn worth of tax cuts for the top 10%, the scheme might just be worth it.

Austerity is back, but this time it is not just a bad idea. It is also a political weapon and a dangerous redistributive tool. – Project Syndicate

• Mark Blyth, Professor of International Economics and Director of the Rhodes Centre for International Economics and Finance at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University, is the co-author (with Nicolò Fraccaroli) of the forthcoming *Inflation: A Guide for Users and Losers* and the author of *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*.







# Fasting and purification of soul

**O** you who believe! Observing saum (the fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become the pious. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:183)

The goal of fasting is to attain *Taqwa* or God-consciousness and fear of Allah. The ability to tame the unruly tendencies of one's inner self on one hand, and the cultivation of one's will power, on the other, are very important in the process of purification of the soul. This is because during fasting in Ramadan, there are many opportunities, blessings and means that one can avail and utilise so that one's soul is purified.

First, forgiveness of sins has a very positive result in purifying the soul. The accumulation of sins for the whole year produces in the conscience a sense of endless guilt and the feeling of one's sins are being forgiven is a relief in one's weary heart. Have you ever wondered how people cannot sleep at night because they have wronged someone or quarrelled with someone? This heavy burden upon a believer's soul is relieved once reconciliation takes place. Similarly, Allah subhanahu wa taala, in His mercy forgives the fasting people whereby relieving him of the guilt of his past sins against Allah. The Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said:

Whoever fasts in Ramadan having Iman and Ihtisab, his past sins will be forgiven for him. (Agreed upon by Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith stipulates two conditions in order for the sins to be forgiven. The fasting person must of course be a *Mu'min*. Ihtisab carries with it three meanings: having firm resolve, hoping for the reward, and being pleased with the act not considering it a heavy burden.

Secondly, one should feel that he is doing a deed that is very dear and special to Allah. Every deed of son of Adam has an equivalent reward of 10 to 700 times, except fasting which will be rewarded by Allah *Al Kareem*, the Most Generous.

Third, fasting purifies the soul by cultivating the much needed virtue of patience. There are three categories or facets of patience: Being patient in performing the obligations, being patient in avoiding the prohibitions and being patient in times of calamity. All of these three are trained in the fasting person by performing the obligatory act of fasting, avoiding vice, filthy, senseless, sinful actions and being patient in difficulties that might happen while fasting.



Fourth, fasting reminds him the true purpose of his creation and the meaning of Islam. That to worship Allah, one must inevitably submit to His will first; that Allah comes first before one's own desires. Especially for those who are living in non-Muslim countries experience the temptation where everyone is eating and drinking while you are holding yourself because you want to follow what Allah wants.

Fifth, everything seems to slow down during Ramadan (especially in Muslim countries), and one doesn't have the usual energy to do the fruitless things. Hence one is left with more free time to think and ponder. This leaves a person with more time to ponder over his life and possibly the wrong things he has done.

Sixth, feeling and doing the act yields more certainty that witnessing it. How many times we have seen pictures of malnourished children in Africa and felt pity for them, yet one still cannot feel how it is to starved and taste the pangs of hunger in one's stomach. This in turn should turn on the switch of gratefulness in us for the blessings of Allah.

Seventh, fasting makes us realise our potential as human beings. Some of us think that the obligations and prohibitions of Islam are overwhelming or inapplicable especially in non-Muslim societies so we involve ourselves in haram activities thinking that we cannot do anything about it. But in Ramadan, we only haven't abstained from the *haram* but from the *halal* as well. If we have the strength to abstain from the *halal* then all the more so we have the will power to abstain from the *haram*? Allah is not unjust that He would prohibit things from us that we cannot avoid. This is especially true for the smokers! In fact fasting is a sort of training for the gradual weaning from the addictive effects of smoking.

Eighth, turning to Allah and realising one's need for Him. If Allah takes away our most fundamental needs as human beings then who is there to help us. Imagine if Allah takes away our sense of taste or sense of satiety. Having been born with all the complete senses and limbs makes us forget that ultimately these are not really ours. This reality is vividly demonstrated

in people with illness such as stroke patients with hemiplegia or paralysis of one's side of the body. His left hand is there still connected to his body, he can see it, yet he cannot move it on his own and sometimes might not even feel that it is there. *Subhanallah!*

Ninth, we have heard the hadith of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*: Whoever guarantees me what is between his jaws/beard [the tongue] and what is between his legs [sexual organs] I guarantee him Paradise [Bukhari]. Don't you see? Being fasting makes us more conscious of what we say and more careful in our interactions with the opposite sex.

Tenth, fasting again makes us remember that we are not here just to eat and drink; that our existence is not just mere fulfilment and gratification of our basic desires; that we are here for a more sublime purpose, which is to worship Allah. In other words we eat not just to live but to worship the Creator. This is what separates us from the modern, secular materialistic people where they eat to live or even worst, some of them actually live

to eat. For the first time in human history, there are more obese people in the world than those who are starving.

Eleventh, fasting is a chance to demonstrate sincerity to Allah. All types of worship are visible to others even giving charity secretly whereby the receiver knew that somebody gave him secretly. However in fasting nobody knows if you really fasted or secretly ingested food to your mouth except Allah. Sincerity in actions is a fundamental prerequisite in the acceptance of deeds and consequently success.

Twelfth, fasting helps to cure the disease of the 'desire for more'. When one thinks that he is able to survive with only one and half meal a day and this is his real needs. Some of us has this self-made needs, a make believe that we ourselves concocted. How many of us say things like "I can't live without smart phone or a V8 engine powered vehicle or a three-storey villa"? We misallocate our resources at the expense of other more important things.

Ultimately, *Taqwa* have a big role in all of this. This will power to do the things that Allah has ordered us to do, this self-restraint that bridle us to avoid what Allah has prohibited for us, and this love for Allah, doing what is beyond the obligatory. Fasting in Ramadan and its Taraweeh incorporates all of these aspects, purifying our souls and making us closer and closer to Allah. "Allah the Almighty has said: For whoever has mutual animosity with a friend (*wali*) of Mine, I declare war upon him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved more to Me than the religious duties that I have imposed upon him; and My servant continues to draw near to Me with superegregatory works such that I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which strikes, and his leg with which he walks. Were he to ask me, I would surely give him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. (Bukhari).

[This article is adapted from the Book *Purification of the Soul* by Jamaluddin Zarabozo.]

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



## Generosity during Ramadan

**S**pending charity removes sins as water extinguishes fire... charity extinguishes the wrath of Allah... charity shades the person on the Day of Resurrection. There are many other great virtues for spending in charity, and since the month of Ramadan is the month of generosity, we will address this topic from different perspectives:

Ramadan is the month of obedience and the performance of good deeds, and the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was the best of mankind and the most obedient to his Lord, yet he used to increase his acts of worship during this blessed month.

Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was the most generous of all people, but the time he spent the most was during the month of Ramadan, and he used to increase his recitation of the Qur'an, prayers, mentioning Allah and *I'tikaaf* (i.e. residing in the mosque with the intention of worship)".

The companions were distinctly generous during the month of Ramadan. Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "There is a difference between being generous in charity and being wasteful: a generous person spends his charity in proper channels, whilst the wasteful person might spend extravagantly in places where it is not needed, and be very poorly in places where spending is direly needed."

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was the bravest person and the most generous." [Al-Bukhari & Muslim]

Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, stated: "The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was the most generous of all the people, and he used to reach the peak in generosity in the month of Ramadan when Jibreel met him. Jibreel used to meet him every night of Ramadan to teach him the Qur'an, and when he met him, he, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, would be more generous than the strong uncontrollable wind (i.e. in readiness and haste to do charitable deeds)." [Al-Bukhari & Muslim] Ibn Hajar, may Allah have mercy upon him, said comment-

ing on this narration: "This added generosity resulted from the virtue of the month, the one with whom he reviewed the Qur'an and the thing being reviewed (i.e. the Words of Allah)."

Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, counted ten levels of generosity, and they are as follows:

**Sacrificing one's soul:** Getting killed for the sake of Allah is the most paramount rank.

**Utilising one's position:** This is the second best rank as in this case generosity makes a person favour fulfilling the needs of others over his personal interest and status.

**Sacrificing comfort:** A generous person exhausts himself and sacrifices his comfort and sleep for others.

**Offering ones knowledge:** This is one of the noblest ranks of generosity, and it is better than sacrificing ones wealth because knowledge is more honorable than wealth. Never will a stingy person be able to benefit from any knowledge if he possessed any, and it is from the wisdom of Allah that He only grants this knowledge to generous people who will be willing to offer it to others and benefit them with it. Generosity in this field is to teach the one who asks you what you know and to answer people's queries.

**Utilising one's prestige:** This is by interceding to people and facilitating their affairs with those in charge.

**Sacrificing physically:** Abu Tharr, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "When you get up in the morning, charity is due from every one of your joints. There is charity in every ascription of glory to Allah (i.e. by uttering *SubhaanAllah*); there is charity in every declaration of His Greatness (i.e. by uttering *Allahu Akbar*); there is charity in every utterance of praise of Him (i.e. by uttering *Al-Hamdulillah*); there is charity in every declaration that none is worthy of worship except Allah (i.e. by uttering *Laa ilaaha Illa Allah*); there is charity in enjoining good; there is charity in forbidding evil. Two *Rak'ah* of *Dhuhaa* (Forenoon prayer) is equal to all this (in reward)." [Muslim]

**Sacrificing one's honour:** This is by forgiving someone for badmouthing and backbiting you.

This reflects ones purity in the heart and grants peace of mind and serenity.

**Being patient:** This is another honorable rank that benefits the person more than sacrificing his wealth. This rank grants the person support from Allah and leads to others holding him in high esteem, as only selected people are able to endure patiently when others harm them.

**Being cheerful with others:** Abu Tharr, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "Do not belittle any good deed, even meeting your Muslim brother with a cheerful face". [Muslim] This is one of the heaviest deeds on the scale.

Not longing to possess what others have: This is the best type that reflects ones contentment with the decrees of Allah and imposes ones respect on others.

**Delaying Zakat until Ramadan:**

Allah Has prescribed Zakaah on those whose wealth reaches a certain amount and made paying Zakat one of the pillars of Islam. When a full lunar year elapses whilst one possesses such wealth, then he is obliged to pay Zakat. In case of agriculture, it is due when plants yield fruits. It is not permissible to pay it in payments, nor is one allowed to delay Zakat until the month of Ramadan unless there is a dire need. Ibn Qudaamah and Ash-Shaafi'ee, may Allah have mercy upon them, are of the opinion that: "Zakat must be paid immediately when it becomes due and one is not permitted to delay it whilst able to unless he fears a certain harm to afflict him due to paying it."

When asked about delaying the payment of Zakat until the month of Ramadan, Shaykh Al-Uthaymeen, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Zakat, like any other good deed, is preferred in virtuous times unless it becomes due, then a person must pay it immediately. If ones full lunar year elapses on the month of Rajab, for example, then he should not delay it until Ramadan and must pay it in Rajab."

## Ramadan's 3D training: physical, mental and spiritual

**B**efore a marathon runner competes in the Olympics, he undergoes years of intense training - both physical and mental [2D - two-dimensional]. He must maintain a healthy diet and exercise to make sure his body is fit. He must also become mentally prepared to ward off all sense of fatigue and failure during the race. After every practice, his sport becomes easier to him until he is ready to compete. Then after he competes, he trains for years again, preparing for the next Olympics.

Similarly, our Lord, The Most Exalted, has given us the holy month of Ramadan as a month of training. Unlike the runner, our training is three-fold: physical, mental, and spiritual [3D - three-dimensional]. Ramadan trains us for life, which is our means to Paradise. In Arabic, the word "Ramadan" means "scorching and burning". The name highlights the intensity of the training since, according to scholars, we physically and mentally scorch and burn our sins and faults. By the month's end, if our intentions were pure, we have bathed ourselves in a pool of spirituality.

Most people think first of the physical aspect of fasting, which for Muslims is a foundation for the mental and spiritual benefits. Hunger and thirst physically remind us of Allah's blessings, which before the fast we had a tendency to take for granted. Fasting also provides us with numerous health benefits. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "The son of Adam never fills a container worse than his stomach." [Ahmad and others]

When we deprive the stomach of food and drink from dawn till dusk, we improve our digestion and blood pressure, to name a few of the many physical benefits. The acts of physical restraint during Ramadan improve our self-control for the rest of the year. We must not resume eating gluttonously and wastefully. We must maintain physical consciousness to appreciate Allah's favors and make acts of worship easier for us.

Ramadan's mental aspect is more difficult, but the strong physical foundation also helps to sharpen our focus and strengthen our will. This training is an example of striving with one's inner desires. It exposes our flaws and can help eliminate or reduce them.

Mental restraint is especially important now, when Islam is being maligned and we must respond with that which is better. Patience and mercy are among the virtues we strengthen during Ramadan. With the combined physical and mental training we get in Ramadan, we can improve our relations with Muslims and non-Muslims as we strive for perfection.

A three-dimensional consciousness: physical, mental, and spiritual that Muslims throughout history attest it enhances one's relationship with Allah, wipes clean our slate of sins and allows us to reap great reward. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi*

*wa sallam*, stated that Allah declared: "All deeds of the son of Aadam are for him except for fasting, it is for Me. And I will reward him for it." [Muslim] But we need to remember again the concept of training.

The heightened spiritual consciousness that we gain during Ramadan ameliorates our life to a three dimensional level: every action we make transforms from being a habit (physical and mental components of what we do) to becoming an act of worship when under the umbrella of spirituality. It is true, some may say, that spirituality always has that effect - Ramadan or not. But in Ramadan, this spirituality is more conscious, deliberate and intense.

A time for spiritual nourishment and self-inspection, Ramadan heralds a classic opportunity to draw closer to Allah and to bask in the many blessings that accompany the month. Commitments ranging from the recitation and study of the Qur'an to increased charity to regular Taraweeh attendance are commonly made to reap the rewards of the fasting month.

To this effect, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, once said: "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell coming out from the mouth of a person observing fast is better with Allah Almighty than the smell of musk. (Allah says about the fasting person): 'He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.'" [Al-Bukhari]

Further, with Satan chained and the gates of Paradise thrown open, the race for good deeds begins in every Ramadan. Yet, as people dive into the anxiously awaited month of spiritual gains, they realise that it comes with its own set of challenges. Indeed, just as our everyday test is to practice Islam while living in the world, this annual retreat-of-sorts is all about maximising our worship while juggling the demands of our daily lives.

So, along with the fasting and all the plans, chores need to be taken care of, work must be attended to, and children's needs have to be fulfilled. In order to avoid frustration due to neglecting one's Ramadan goals or hardship caused by abandoning certain tasks and routines, a happy medium must be strived for. Striking this balance will not always be easy since it entails rescheduled days, little sleep, and a shift in priorities.

However, the results far outweigh the struggle, a feeling of contentment that we made our very best effort to capture the true essence of Ramadan. Allah Almighty says (what means): "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." [Qur'an 2:183]

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



# WIN A **CHANGAN** CS35 PLUS 2025

## In Only Four Steps

- 1 Scan the QR Code and Answer the question in the comments
- 2 Tag 2 friends who love challenges and follow @gulftimes & @gulftimestoday
- 3 ❤️ Like the post
- 4 📌 Share the post on your story & tag us

Winner\* will be announced at the end of this month

Scan the QR Code  
to participate in  
Ramadan Quiz Challenge!



Our Platforms

**GULF TIMES**



\*\* COLOUR OF THE CAR MAY VARY

\* Terms & Conditions Apply -  
Competition open to Qatar residents only