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Prayer times
 Fajr...4.32; Zuhr...1.44; Asr...3.08; Maghrib...5.43; Isha...7.13

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Amir hosts Iftar banquet for ruling family members, dignitaries

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted an Iftar banquet for Their Excellencies members of the ruling family and dignitaries on the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan at Lusail Palace yesterday. The banquet was attended by His Highness the Personal Representative of the Amir, Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani; His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani; His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Thani; and HE Sheikh Jassim bin Khalifa al-Thani. Also present were HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and HE the Speaker of the Shura Council, Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem, along with a number of sheikhs and dignitaries. (QNA) Page 2



Palestinian student protester held in US

Agents from US President Donald Trump's administration arrested a Palestinian graduate student who played a prominent role in last year's pro-Palestinian protests at New York's Columbia University, four fellow students said yesterday. The student, **Mahmoud Khalil** at the university's School of International and Public Affairs, was arrested by US Department of Homeland Security agents at his university residence on Saturday.

Sharaa scrambles to contain violence

Syria's leader vowed yesterday to hunt down the perpetrators of violent clashes pitting loyalists of deposed President Bashar al-Assad against the country's new rulers and said he would hold to account anyone who overstepped their authority. The clashes, which a war monitoring group said had already killed 1,000 people, mostly civilians, continued for a fourth day in Assad's coastal heartland. Sharaa accused Assad loyalists and foreign powers that he did not name of trying to foment unrest. The top commander of a Syrian Kurdish armed group had earlier blamed a certain faction for the reported executions of civilians.

Syria's neighbours stress need for stability

QNA
 Amman

Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ayman al-Safadi, stated that the meeting for Syria's neighbouring countries, which was convened in Amman yesterday, deliberated on challenges faced by Syria. During a joint press conference with the foreign ministers of Iraq, Türkiye, Lebanon, and Syria, al-Safadi added that the meeting agreed to maintain Syria's security and denounce any attempts that destabilise security in Syria, highlighting that the conferees underscored that Syria's security and stability are the security and stability of all. The neighbouring countries stressed the importance of helping Syria in reconstruction and concurred in convening the second meeting for Syria's neighbouring



Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi attend a press conference after a meeting in Amman, yesterday.

countries in Türkiye in April 2025. He pointed out that the meeting reached an agreement on a collective effort to combat the ISIS group, emphasising that there is a call for the lifting of sanctions on Syria and strengthening economic and investment co-operation to contribute to its reconstruction. The meeting tackled the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, as there are 1.3mn Syrian refugees in Jordan, he continued, affirming that the final solution to the refugee issue lies in the voluntary return of refugees to their homeland and creating the necessary conditions in Syria to ensure their safe return. **To Page 8**

Israel cuts power supply to Gaza

AFF
 Jerusalem

Israel ordered an immediate halt to Gaza's electricity supply yesterday in an effort to pressure Hamas into releasing the remaining hostages, even as it prepared for fresh talks on the future of its truce with the Palestinian resistance movement. Israel's decision comes a week after it blocked all aid supplies to the war-battered territory, a move reminiscent of the initial days of the war when Israel announced a "siege" on Gaza. The truce's initial phase ended on March 1 and both sides have refrained from returning to all-out war, despite sporadic violence. Hamas has repeatedly called for an immediate start to negotiations on the ceasefire's second phase, which was negotiated by the US, Qatar and Egypt, aiming to end the war permanently. Israel says it prefers extending phase one until mid-April, and halted aid to Gaza over the impasse. Yesterday it ordered a cut in the electricity supply. "I have just signed the order to stop supplying electricity immediately to the Gaza Strip," Energy Minister Eli Cohen said in a video statement. The sole power line between Israel and Gaza supplies the main desalination plant, and Gazans mainly rely now on solar panels and fuel-powered generators to produce electricity. Public Broadcaster Kan reported Monday Israel has drafted plans to ramp up pressure under a scheme dubbed the "Hell Plan". This included following up the aid block



A Palestinian man stands on a balcony in a damaged building where he shelters in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

with "displacing residents from the northern Gaza Strip to the south, halting the supply of electricity and a resumption of full-scale fighting". Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians now live in tents across Gaza, with night-time temperatures often falling to zero degree Celsius. Hamas representatives met mediators in Cairo over the weekend, emphasising the urgent need to resume aid deliveries "without restrictions or conditions", a Hamas statement said. "We call on mediators in Egypt and Qatar, as well as the guarantors in the US administration, to ensure that the occupation complies with the agreement... and proceeds with the second phase according to the agreed-upon terms," spokesman Hazem Qassem, said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said it would send delegates to Doha on Monday.

Amir hosts Iftar banquet for ruling family members, dignitaries



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted an Iftar banquet for Their Excellencies members of the ruling family and dignitaries at Lusail Palace yesterday. (QNA)

Deputy Speaker of Shura Council meets Guinean parliamentarian



HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti met yesterday with the visiting Member of the Transitional National Council (Parliament) of Guinea, Vice-Chairperson of the Parliament's Health, Education, Social and Cultural Affairs Committee, Masoud Barry. The meeting discussed parliamentary relations between the Shura Council and the Guinean Parliament, and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to a host topics of common interest. (QNA)

Ministry holds first national symposium on oral health



The Ministry of Public Health held the first national symposium on oral and dental health, titled "Towards Excellence in Oral and Dental Health."

This event aimed to support and enhance the National Plan for Oral and Dental Health as part of the Third National Health Strategy for 2024-2030.

The symposium aimed to promote health policies related to oral and dental health, fostering research and innovation in dentistry, and enhancing collaboration among stakeholders to improve oral and dental healthcare services in the country.

The symposium, which witnessed the attendance of more than 150 representatives of the senior and middle management of dental services in the public and private sectors, reviewed vital topics, most notably the promotion of oral healthcare using the principles of general dentistry, the development of oral health management strategies, the importance of oral healthcare among the elderly, and awareness of oral diseases that may affect them and their prevention.

On the first day of the symposium, a virtual session was conducted on oral and dental health indicators. The session aimed to review the principles of general dentistry, manage dental injuries, address gum health needs, and discuss orthodontic treatment. It was attended by more than 5,900 professionals working in various dental specialties across the country.

On the second day, a workshop on oral and dental health was held for senior citizens to discuss the

Symposium aimed to promote policies related to oral and dental health, as well as to foster research and innovation

challenges they face in terms of oral health and strategies for integrating oral healthcare for seniors with the various health services provided. The aim was to access integrated healthcare.

The third day of the symposium also included interactive discussions and research presentations with the participation of various health and academic stakeholders such as the Ministry of Interior, Hamad Medical Corp and the Primary Health Care Corp, Qatar University, Doha University of Science and Technology, and Aspetar, where the most prominent achievements of the oral and dental care sector in Qatar during the past decade were reviewed.

On the final day of the symposium, a consultation session was conducted for key stakeholders, including experts and policymakers.

The purpose of this session was to develop a strategic roadmap for oral health governance, integrate policies, and enhance the delivery of future oral and dental care services in the country.

Director of the Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention Programmes Department at the Ministry of Public Health Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al-Thani said: "Over the past decade, health institutions in Qatar that provide oral and dental care services have experienced significant development and increased attention. Services related to oral

and dental health have been enhanced, specialised clinics have been established, and there has been a focus on the early detection of gum disease, tooth decay, and oral cancer."

He added that the Ministry of Public Health has emphasised the importance of enhancing co-operation across various sectors in the country to provide comprehensive oral health care services.

To support and promote oral and dental health among all segments of society in Qatar, the ministry periodically organises national awareness programmes and campaigns in collaboration with partners.

Since 2019, the ministry, through the Department of Non-Communicable Disease Prevention Programmes, has been implementing an annual national campaign for oral and dental health. Additionally, it has launched health programmes aimed at promoting oral and dental health for all members of society.

In this context, the Ministry of Public Health has successfully conducted the third national oral and dental health survey for students aged 12 to 16 years. During this survey, more than 1,700 students from 55 public, private preparatory and secondary schools were examined by a specialised team from various governmental and semi-governmental health agencies. (QNA)

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Ministry praises women's crucial role in education

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) valued the pioneering role played by women in the education sector.

It also stressed its keenness to empower them in various educational and research fields. On the occasion of International Women's Day, the ministry praised the efforts of its female cadres, who contribute effectively to the renaissance of education, as teachers, supervisors or leaders, who are presenting a model to be emulated in dedication and creativity.

The ministry stressed that investing in women's education is an investment in the future of the nation. This is because the teacher, educator and leader contribute to building conscious generations that adhere to their identity and values, and are able to contribute to achieving sustainable development.

The ministry concluded by emphasising its com-



mitment to continue supporting and empowering women in all educational fields, in appreciation of their contributions and pivotal role in shaping a bright future for the coming generations.

SJC marks 4th International Day of Women Judges

QNA
Geneva

The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), in collaboration with the Permanent Delegation of the State of Qatar to the UN Human Rights Council, hosted a celebration marking the fourth International Day of Women Judges. The event took place on the sidelines of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

The SJC delegation was led by Senior Judge at the Court of Appeal, Dr Hessa al-Sulaiti, and included First Deputy President of the Court of First Instance, Fatima al-Mal, Judge Aisha al-Emadi, along with several directors and heads of the Council's specialised administrative units.

A number of national and international organisations participated in the celebration, including the National Human Rights Committee, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the International

Association of Women Judges, headquartered in Washington, DC.

The International Day of Women Judges was officially adopted by consensus during the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, following an initiative proposed by Qatar.

This milestone underscores Qatar's leadership in promoting gender equality within the judiciary and aligns with the objectives of sustainable development and Qatar National Vision 2030.



The View Hospital celebrates International Women's Day

The View Hospital celebrated International Women's Day 2025 under the theme 'For All Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.'

The View Hospital has over 60% women in its workforce and they serve in various roles, from frontline clinicians and nurses to administrators, patient care teams, and specialists, a statement said.

Dr Fatih Mehmet Gul, CEO of The View Hospital, said: "Today, we celebrate the incredible women who are at the core of our hospital's success. They heal, they nurture, they lead, and they do it all with strength and compassion. Their dedication is not just seen in the care they provide but, in the lives they touch every day. The View Hospital stands proud of the extraordinary women who make healthcare possible, and remain committed to supporting and empowering them."

The View Hospital noted that women at the facility are more than just healthcare profession-

als; they are mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends who balance their demanding careers with family life and community roles.

Their resilience, empathy, and unwavering dedication inspire everyone around them, and their impact on the lives of our patients is felt every single day. They are the backbone of the hospital, delivering compassionate care while working collaboratively with their teams to ensure that each patient's journey is a positive one.

The View Hospital prioritises comfort, compassion, and privacy, ensuring that women feel heard and respected throughout their healthcare journey. The female patients have access to a range of specialised services, including breast cancer screenings, fertility treatments, heart health check-ups, and menopause care, all supported by cutting-edge technology and expert medical teams. The hospital empowers women to take charge of their health through

regular screenings, preventive care, and personalised health plans that address their individual needs.

The View Hospital is committed to creating an environment where women can thrive, both personally and professionally. The leadership and staff recognise that when women are supported and empowered, they can achieve extraordinary things.

On International Women's Day, the hospital also recognises the broader impact that women have in shaping healthcare on a global scale. The women of the hospital not only provide exceptional patient care but are also part of a larger movement to advance health equity, promote wellness, and ensure that healthcare systems are built on the values of empathy, collaboration, and integrity. They are leaders in their field, paving the way for future generations of women to step into positions of influence and drive positive change in healthcare, the statement added.

Qatar Charity, LuLu Hypermarket Qatar strengthen partnership

Qatar Charity (QC) and LuLu Hypermarket Qatar have reaffirmed their commitment to humanitarian efforts by renewing their strategic partnership for 2025, with a strong emphasis on their Ramadan philanthropic campaign.

The collaboration enhances LuLu Hypermarket Qatar's role as a key member of QC's Charity Partner (CP) programme while actively supporting the Ramadan initiative 'Giving Lives On' through its 'Shop & Donate' campaign, launched by LuLu Hypermarket Qatar.

Ramadan, a time of giving and solidarity, remains central to this partnership, as both organisations unite to support those in need through impactful charitable initiatives. This renewed collaboration underscores QC's mission to provide vital aid while aligning with LuLu Hypermarket Qatar's dedication to corporate social responsibility and community welfare.

Through the agreement, LuLu Hypermarket Qatar will utilise its extensive marketing platforms to enhance awareness of the CP programme, encouraging increased engagement from businesses and institutions in this meaningful initiative.

As part of the Ramadan campaign, LuLu Hypermarket Qatar will contribute a designated amount to QC, including donations generated through the 'Shop & Donate' initiative.



The official signing ceremony was led by Ahmad Yousef Fakhroo, QC chief marketing officer, and Shanavas Padiyath, regional manager of LuLu Hypermarket Qatar.

During the holy month, 'Shop & Donate' features a selection of over 1,200 supermarket and department store products, with a portion of the sales proceeds dedicated to QC's 'Giving Lives On' drive, ensuring that essential support reaches the most vulnerable.

The official signing ceremony was led by Ahmad Yousef Fakhroo, QC chief marketing officer, and Shanavas Padiyath, regional manager of LuLu Hypermarket Qatar.

Fakhroo lauded LuLu Hypermarket Qatar's continued support, emphasising the significance of corporate contributions to humanitarian causes, particularly during Ramadan. He encouraged companies across Qatar and beyond to dedicate part of their revenue to charitable initiatives, reinforcing a culture of giving during this blessed season.

Padiyath reaffirmed LuLu Hy-

permarket Qatar's commitment to social responsibility, stating, "Ramadan is a time of generosity and unity, and we are honoured to partner with Qatar Charity in this meaningful cause. Through 'Shop & Donate,' we aim to extend our support to those in need and inspire our customers to contribute to this noble effort."

He further highlighted the significance of the co-operation, noting that the joint efforts of LuLu Hypermarket Qatar and QC continue to drive positive change, particularly during Ramadan, when the spirit of giving is at its peak.

The renewed partnership reinforces both organisations' shared vision of making a lasting impact through collective responsibility, ensuring that the holy month is marked by acts of kindness and meaningful support for those in need.

Qatar Computing Research Institute hosts MenaML Winter School



Hamad Bin Khalifa University's Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) and Google DeepMind co-hosted the 2025 Middle East and North Africa Machine Learning (MenaML) Winter School, gathering 141 local and international university students as well as industry professionals for a six-day programme designed to equip them with critical skills in artificial intelligence (AI).

The Winter School featured in-depth lectures, hands-on practical sessions and panel discussions that explored critical topics – including large language models, generative AI, deep learning, and more – as well as challenges and career opportunities for young professionals within the Arab world.

It also explored the application of AI in diverse fields, including education, genomics, biology, and health,

matching Qatar's national challenge for AI practitioners to revolutionise these fields.

Distinguished experts from QCRI, Google DeepMind, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, InstaDeep, and other regional organisations led these sessions, lending invaluable insights to the attendees and contributing to Qatar's growing knowledge hub in AI and computer science.

QCRI Executive Director Dr Ahmed K Elmagarmid commented: "Like our partners at Google DeepMind, QCRI focuses on stakeholders current and future needs in the field of computing. This natural partnership enabled us to help develop talent in AI based in Qatar and throughout the region, which in turn addresses national research priorities and contributes to the country's knowledge-based economy."

Participants also received oppor-

tunities for professional development, including mentorship sessions, networking gatherings, and a poster session where they could showcase their research to their peers and industry representatives.

MenaML was sponsored and supported by a number of world-renowned companies, including Google DeepMind, Google Cloud, Google.org, Malomatia, Dell, PhazeRO, Scale, InstaDeep, Apple, and Qeen.AI, with many hosting booths and engaging directly with the students. MoroccoAI and inzva also served as community partners.

The MenaML Winter School is designed to nurture the next generation of AI leaders and create a network of AI practitioners in the Mena region. The event fosters the exchange of knowledge, formation of new research collaborations, and development of local AI talent. (QNA)

MCIT launches 'Safe's World' series to enhance children's digital awareness

As part of its efforts to enhance digital safety awareness, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has launched the animated series Safe's World, which airs on Qatar TV during the holy month of Ramadan every three days at 2.52pm, starting from the first day of Ramadan.

The series aims to provide educational content tailored for children, highlighting digital risks in an engaging and informative storytelling format that promotes safe and responsible internet and gaming usage.

The 10-episode series covers key topics that children face daily in the digital space, including cyberbullying, privacy protection, and the safe use of social media.

Using a simple and easily understandable approach, Safe's World helps children grasp essential dig-

ital safety concepts in a fun and engaging manner.

The series has been produced to the highest technical standards in collaboration with Nefais Animation to ensure visually appealing and impactful content. This engaging environment attracts children and families, raising awareness of best digital practices and empowering them to navigate modern technology smartly and responsibly.

Director of the Digital Society and Digital Competencies Department at the MCIT Duha al-Buhendi highlighted the importance of using innovative methods for digital awareness, saying: "With the increasing digital risks, it has become essential to educate children through creative approaches that capture their interest and enable them to browse the internet safely.



"Traditional awareness methods may not be sufficient to keep up with the current digital age, so we focus on providing educational content interactively, allowing children to learn cybersecurity fundamentals in an engaging and enjoyable way."

This project falls under the ministry's Safe Space initiative, which aims to raise awareness about digital safety and equip children and families with the skills to navigate the online world securely.

The series was developed in collaboration with IT-Serve Qatar,

the project's executing company, as part of the Digital Safety Support Program led by the ministry's Digital Society and Digital Competencies Department.

This programme strives to introduce innovative solutions to strengthen digital security and educate the community about online risks and protection measures.

Director of Qatar TV Ali Salih Al-Sada expressed the channel's support for this initiative, highlighting the media's role in spreading awareness. He said: "We are proud to broadcast Safe's World on Qatar TV as part of our commitment to delivering educational content that enhances digital awareness. This production is not just entertainment for children – it serves as an educational tool that promotes positive values and helps them engage with the digital world safely and responsibly."

In addition to airing on Qatar TV, episodes will be available online via the Safe Space platform (www.safespace.qa) and YouTube, ensuring broader access for children and families in Qatar and beyond.

Through these initiatives, the ministry seeks to equip children with essential digital skills to navigate online challenges with awareness and responsibility, maximising their benefits from technology in a safe and positive manner.

The ministry continues to develop interactive programmes and fresh educational content that align with the interests of younger generations.

These efforts support Qatar's Vision 2030, which prioritises digital awareness as a key pillar in ensuring sustainable and responsible digital transformation for society. (QNA)

Talk show discusses importance of monotheism

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance, conducted the first session of the 11th Ramadan dialogue programme 'Wa Amenhum mein Khawf', at the Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab Mosque yesterday.

The first session, moderated by Sheikh Moaz Ahmed Yousef al-Qasimi, discussed the importance and position of monotheism (Tawheed) in the Islamic faith as well as key issues and concepts related to the topic.

Dr Ahmed al-Ghareeb, a preacher, addressed the duality of monotheism and empowerment, highlighting monotheistic examples in the lives of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Dr al-Ghareeb discussed the nature of curricula for teaching monotheism, emphasising the need for age-appropriate educational programmes that are accessible to all Muslims, highlighting that the concept of monotheism is a fundamental and unifying issue in Islam. For his part, Dr Turki bin Obaid al-Marri, a faculty member at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies at Qatar University, underscored that awareness of monotheism (Tawheed) preserves the Muslim community's identity and prevents the weakness that some people currently experience.



He emphasised the importance of raising young people with a clear understanding of Tawheed from an early age, noting that this concept is not merely a word or a theoretical exercise. Rather, it entails avoiding any rigid adherence to slogans that end up dividing the

community under the guise of affirming monotheism.

He observed that the community is in a precarious state but remains resilient due to its connection to the Qur'an. Despite severe trials, including recent

events in Gaza, it continues to stand united behind a single principle and a single word of truth.

Addressing the current signs of frailty within the community, Dr al-Marri noted that this weakness manifests on numerous fronts and that these challenges were prophesied by the Prophet (peace be upon him), who foretold the community's tendency to imitate previous nations in every aspect.

He also discussed the notion of freedom, pointing out that some segments of society advocate the principle that one is free so long as no harm is caused to others. He remarked that this idea can be traced back to Aristotle and is prominent in Western thought, often accepted without question by younger generations.

This, he argued, reflects a misunderstanding of freedom as defined within an Islamic framework, since humanity is ultimately bound by Allah's commands and by the principle of monotheism, which is rooted in personal acceptance and conviction rather than compulsion.

He questioned calls for unlimited freedom by citing the verse "There is no compulsion in religion," clarifying that this does not mean people are free

to choose or reject religion arbitrarily; rather, it means that true monotheism must arise from consent and conviction, which cannot coexist with coercion.

He described other contemporary interpretations as misreadings of scripture that align with Western values instead of being grounded in authentic Islamic teachings.

Dr al-Marri said that returning to monotheism (tawheed) entails a renewed commitment to the Qur'an, which he described as the indispensable source of life and salvation for the Muslim community.

Meanwhile, Dr Mutlaq al-Jasser, a professor at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies at Kuwait University, addressed an interpretation of the verse: "Those who believe and obscure not their belief by wrongdoing, theirs is safety; and they are rightly guided."

He noted that some scholars differ on whether these words continue the speech of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) or constitute a direct statement from Allah, favouring the latter view. According to him, the verse promises security to those who believe, uphold monotheism, and avoid associating any partners with Allah. (QNA)

Ministry of Commerce recalls Honda and Mercedes-Benz models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in co-operation with Doha Marketing Services Co, has announced the recall of Honda GL1800 Goldwing, 2018 - 2021 models, because the engine drive gear bolt may break, causing the engine to shut down while driving. The ministry, in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khaled and Sons Automobiles, also announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz

E-Class, S-Class, Maybach 2017-2018 models, because the control unit software of the drive-train does not correspond to the current series production configuration. The ministry said that it will co-ordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out.

Qatar Charity offers Zakat calculation, payment options

Qatar Charity (QC) offers donors easy and fast ways to calculate and pay their Zakat, whether for individuals, companies, or assets, a statement said. It answers inquiries and offers flexible payment options, ensuring convenience and better service.

As Ramadan is a month of generosity, compassion, and supporting those in need, QC reminds donors of the simplest ways to extend their generosity, utilising electronic apps and streamlined services. It also encourages support for its Ramadan campaign "Giving Lives On" being carried out in 40 countries, with a focus on crisis-hit areas, especially Gaza.

The Zakat app is an easy-to-use tool for calculating and giving Zakat according to Islamic guidelines. The app includes a Zakat calculator and fatwas. It can be downloaded through the link: <https://qch.qa/ezakaty> Through QC app (qch.qa/appen), donors can request a home collector to give donations. The app uses GPS to find the nearest collector. It also allows donors to rate the service, ensuring the best experience.

Donors can also reach QC's hotline at 44290000 for assistance with Zakat, donations, or any other contributions. QC has 32 branches across Qatar, including 22 for men and 10 for women. QC also has 94 collection points in shopping malls and other locations, allowing donors to calculate and pay their Zakat. (QNA)

New Muslims take part in Qur'an competition

The Sheikh Abdulla bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center in Doha embraced the tests for the new reverts' category of the Sheikh Jassim bin Muhammad bin Thani Noble Qur'an competition. The event was organised by the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs.

The ministry stated that 278 male and female reverts from 16 African and Asian communities residing in Qatar had registered their names for participation. Member of the organising committee for the competition, Hassan Abdul Salam al-Emadi, highlighted that 16 jury committees supervised these tests, eight of them were devoted to men and eight to women, stating that the jury committee focused on testing the memorisation of the Holy Qur'an and was keen to facilitate the task for them who were actually not proficient in the Arabic language with emphasis on the fundamental Tajweed provisions. Al-Emadi added that 141 male and 137 female contestants, representing a wide range of nationalities are participating in the competition. (QNA)

Ansar Gallery unveils grand Ramadan promotion: Win 3 luxury cars



In celebration of the holy month of Ramadan, Ansar Gallery is rolling out an exciting promotional campaign that promises shoppers an opportunity to win big. Customers can enter a grand raffle draw to win three luxury cars - the JETOUR T-2 Lux V4 2025 - by shopping at select Ansar Gallery outlets. The special Ramadan promotion runs from March 8 to April 8, 2025, culminating in a highly anticipated raffle draw on April 10, 2025. During this period, shoppers who make a single purchase of QAR 500 or more from select sections will receive a free coupon to enter the raffle draw.

Customers can participate by shopping in the furniture, building materials, carpet, and light sections. The promotion is available across multiple branches, including Ansar Gallery Barwa, Ansar Gallery Old Airport, Ansar Gallery Al Khor, Ansar Gallery Old Doha City Branch, Ansar Gallery Old Ansar City - Salwa Road, Ansar Gallery Rayyan, Ansar Gallery City Center, and A&H Tawar Mall (Carpet Section).

This exciting promotion offers a golden opportunity for shoppers to not only enjoy great deals on a wide range of products but also stand a chance to drive home in a luxury vehicle. With multiple participating branches and a variety of eligible shopping categories, customers can maximize their chances of winning while fulfilling their Ramadan shopping needs.

The Transport Company MOWASALAT (KARWA)

Mowasalat (Karwa) announces the following tender:

Tender Ref. No.	Tender Title	Tender Fee	Electronic Tender Fee Payment Dates	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
TC-021-ITC-2025	Supply of Computing Devices on Call-off basis	QAR 1,000	11 to 17 March 2025	QAR 96,863	9 April 2025
TC-022-ITC-2025	Supply of IT Manpower Resources (IT Infrastructure and Technical Support)	QAR 1,000		QAR 84,600	10 April 2025

CONDITIONS:

- Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:
- Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: tenders@mowasalat.com
- Tender documents will be released via email on the next working day after the tender fee payment date to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested.
- Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond:** Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents. *Bids without Tender Bond shall not be considered.*
- Tender validity:** Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.
- Tender documents submission:** Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (IN RED WAX) envelopes addressed to **Secretary - Tender Committee** clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
 - Envelope 1# must include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
 - Envelope 2# must include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
 - Envelope 3# must include the Tender Bond (1 Original) + 3 years Audited Financial Statements.
- Bid Closing Date:** Bid submission deadline is **12.00 noon Doha Local Time** as on the Bid closing date shown above. The 3 envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary - Tender Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Tel.: 4458 8724 Fax: 4458 8850

Supplier Registration

Mowasalat Location

QATAR FUEL ADDITIVES COMPANY LIMITED QAFAC

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

No.	Tender No.	Description	Collection Fees Qrs.	Tender Bond Qrs.	Bid Closing Date
1	QTC020/25	Construction of New Road Access at QAFAC Plant, Mesaieed	300/-	54,000/-	06 th April 2025

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

- Collection Date :** From **Monday, 10th March 2025** (QAFAC working days from Sunday to Thursday only)
- Collection Time :** 08:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Location :** The Gate, Bay Tower 2, 13th Floor, West Bay, QAFAC
- Tender Fees :** As shown above, (**non-refundable**) can be paid at QAFAC Doha Office
- Validity :** Offers must be valid for 120 days from closing date.
- Bid Bond :** Offers must include a Bid bond issued from a local bank and valid for 120 Days from closing date.
- Authorization :** Tenders will be issued to authorized company personnel with the following:
 - Official authorization on Company Letter Head
 - Proper Identification
 - Copy of Company's Commercial Registration
 - Valid In Country Value (ICV) Mandatory

QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/EDU/6929/24 SUPPLY OF BOOKS & EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR AL KHOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (AKIS) ON CALL OFF BASIS	06/03/2025 to 10/03/2025	0	0	17/03/2025

Scope of Work:
To avail the services of a competent CONTRACTOR to source, procure, consolidate and deliver educational Resources on call-off basis (for the below listed) to cater for both curriculums (British and CBSE) run by Al Khor International School.

- British Curriculum (BC) books
- Library books under BC and CBSE
- Curriculum resources

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for **180** calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

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

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



Dukhan Bank sponsors Qatar Triathlon Team's race series

Dukhan Bank has announced its sponsorship of three races in the Qatar Triathlon Team (QTRI)'s 2024-25 season, as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The three races are the Ramadan Duathlon on March 14, the Aquabike Qetaifan Island North League scheduled for May 10, and a third race to be confirmed at a later date.

The announcement was made during a signing ceremony held in Lusail, which was attended by senior representatives from Dukhan Bank and the QTRI, along with key stakeholders and media representatives.

This partnership further strengthens the QTRI's initiatives, which include a variety of programmes.

These programmes include "You Can", focused on integrating individuals with disabilities through sports; "Our Islands", promoting islands in Qatar as tourist destinations via athletics events; "Hafez", fostering environmental sustainability through sports; and "Our Duty", which demonstrates the QTRI's commitment to social responsibility as a core community value.

"We see these races as more than just sporting events; they are vibrant community celebrations that inspire people of all ages and abilities to embrace an active lifestyle," said Dukhan Bank chief marketing and communications officer Talal Ahmed al-Khaja. "Reflecting our commitment to the community, we aim to significantly boost the positive im-

portance of the races on local tourism and related industries, while also supporting initiatives that showcase Qatar's dynamic culture and sporting landscape."

QTRI president Dr Nasser Saqr al-Mohannadi said that the bank's contribution, alongside other sponsors, is vital to the success of these events and our mission to expand triathlon participation among all Qatari community members.

"We seek to raise awareness about the importance of sport, all while fostering a spirit of healthy competition," he said. "Building on our successes over the past nine years, we anticipate this year's races will attract even greater athlete participation and showcase exceptional talent across all age groups."

Al Arabi magazine 'embodies soft power of Arab unity'

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Centre (QPC) organised a lecture on "Al Arabi magazine and its historical role in documenting Arab cities, presented by Professor Abdulaziz al-Buhashem al-Sayed, a researcher in history and heritage.

The evening began with a speech by QPC vice-chairman Professor Abdullah bin Hayi al-Sulaiti.

He stressed that *Al Arabi* magazine, published from Kuwait, played a prominent role in spreading Gulf, Arab and Islamic culture, and contributed to documenting Arab cities and cultural heritage over decades.

Al-Sayed spoke about the journey of *Al Arabi*, the first issue of which was published in December 1958, and how its reach extended from the Gulf, even to remote cities.

He said that the magazine represented the soft power of Arab unity, and was a cultural dream that started from Kuwait to the Arab world.

As the objective was a comprehensive Arab cultural magazine, Kuwaiti poet and writer Ahmed al-Saqqaq spent a whole year touring

Arab capitals to select the magazine's staff.

"All capabilities were harnessed to make the magazine a success from the very first issue," al-Sayed said. "As 30 thousand copies were distributed, and the magazine sought to be a comprehensive cultural platform, it was therefore called 'Diwan Al-Arab'."

He said that the choice of its first editor-in-chief, Professor Ahmed Zaki, who was the Cairo University president at the time, gave the magazine a global vision, one that drew inspiration from the *National Geographic* magazine.

Al-Sayed added that the magazine's sections were carefully chosen to be an integrated cultural, literary and scientific platform.

Articles were written by the most prominent Arab thinkers and writers, such as Naguib Mahfouz, Taha Hussein, Raja al-Naqqash, Anis Mansour, Farouk Shousha, Abdul Wahab al-Bayati, and Ghasan Kanafani.

Al-Sayed explained that the magazine was not limited to spreading Arab culture; its message extended to the younger generations through the publication of the magazine *Al Arabi Al Sagheer*, which was a window for creativity, allocating sections for drawings

by, and innovation for, children.

The symposium also addressed the role of *Al Arabi* magazine in documenting Arab heritage by monitoring the social and economic life, and the urban development of Arab cities. Including Qatar, which received extensive coverage in the magazine, with 7-8 issues covering different aspects of the lives of Qataris.

Al-Sayed referred to the 18th issue of the magazine, published in 1960, which shed light on life in Qatar over 45 pages.

It documented the economic and social life, through the camera lens, of Souq Waqif and the fish market.

It also monitored the divisions of the markets at that time, and the beginnings of Doha Port.

The cover of the issue carried a picture of a Qatari girl named Moza Fakhro.

"The issue also reviewed pearl diving trips, which were one of the most important pillars of the Qatari economy before the discovery of oil," al-Sayed said.

He stressed that the magazine was vital, in terms of documentation and history, at a time when it was not easy to document the history of cities in the region.

"The coverage was not limited

to the markets ... it extended to the environment unique to Qatar," al-Sayed added. "The magazine presented one of the most beautiful documented pictures of the 'Dahl al-Hamam' area, which is one of the most prominent geological landmarks in the country."

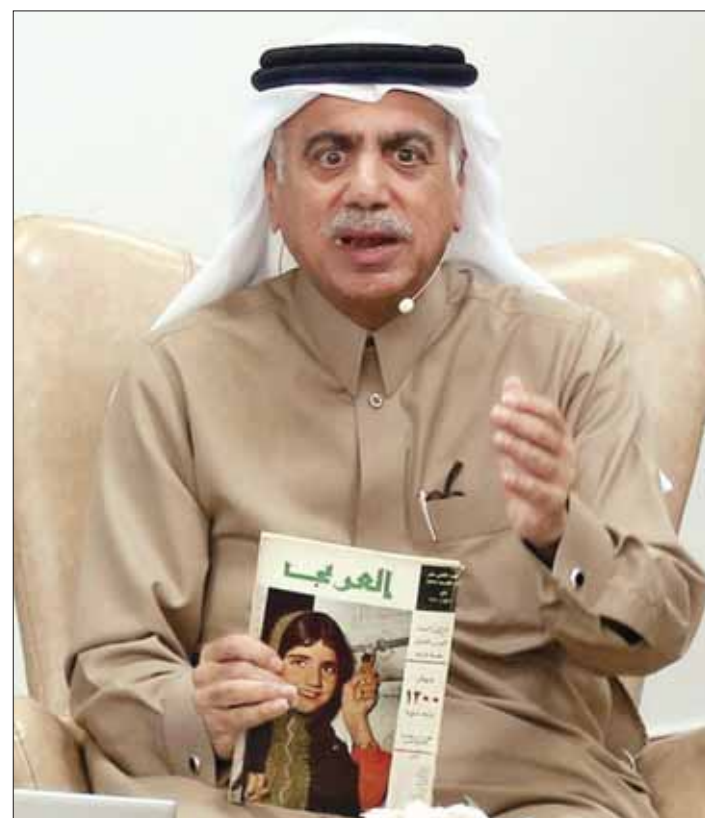
"In addition to the fish market, the vegetable market, and agricultural life, it showed how the local economy depended mainly on Qatari agricultural products," he continued.

The magazine also highlighted Qatari social life, as its crew visited old Qatari majlis, including the taking of rare pictures of a group of more than 50 young Qataris in Al Wakrah.

"The visit of *Al Arabi* magazine team to Qatar coincided with the presence of the Danish archaeological mission," al-Sayed said. "This gave them a unique opportunity to document the antiquities discovered by the mission, in one of the most prominent historical stations that contributed to shaping the features of the ancient Qatari heritage."

He added that the magazine did not ignore the development of education in Qatar during the 1950s.

The magazine documented how the number of schools at that time



Al-Sayed holding the 18th issue of the magazine, published in 1960.

reached more than 84 schools, the development of girls' schools, and how the state became interested in educating its daughters.

This, al-Sayed said, indicated that education was not limited to boys, which reflects the early educational renaissance in the country.

"The magazine also highlighted the efforts of Qatar's founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin

Thani, and his role in preserving the environment and establishing reserves, and the many documentations that highlight a number of facts about the history of Qatar," he added.

"*Al Arabi* magazine has provided a lot of good information to bloggers, researchers and historians who wish to document the various time periods of Qatar," al-Sayed concluded.



لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات
مشروع توسعة مطار حمد الدولي
Tenders and Auctions Committee
HIA Expansion Project

NOTICE OF INVITATION FOR CONTRACTOR PRE-QUALIFICATION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF CARGO TERMINAL 2 AT HAMAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (PROJECT NO. HIAEP-0076)

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY

The HIAE Tender Committee wishes to secure a shortlist of competent Contractors for a forthcoming Invitation to Tender for the construction of Cargo Terminal 2 (hereinafter the "Project") at Hamad International Airport in Doha in the State of Qatar.

As part of this pre-qualification process, the Employer requires interested Contractors to demonstrate capability and experience in delivering similar material handling facilities and logistics facilities with a high-level of automation and interface management with materials handling systems. It is a necessary requirement that Contractors demonstrate relevant experience, capability, understanding and commitment to work with the Employer to achieve outstanding results in the delivery of the Project.

Accordingly, to successfully qualify, Contractors/Joint Ventures are required:

- To possess a Grade A Classification Certificate in Qatar, and
- To have executed a minimum of two (2) projects delivering material handling or logistics distribution facilities more than 100,000 square meters of built-up area in past eight (8) years, and
- To have executed a minimum of two (2) projects having supplied and erected a minimum of 15,000 tonnes of structural steel with a production/erection rate of 1,500 tonnes per month and a minimum of 150,000 cubic meters of concrete with a production/installation rate of 10,000 cubic meters per month in the past five (5) years, and
- To have executed and demonstrated strong capability for delivering a cool chain or similar refrigerated warehousing system within a material handling / logistic distribution facility, and
- To have executed a minimum of one (1) project in the last three (3) years, with a project value exceeding QAR 1.5 billion, and
- To demonstrate that the average workforce (direct employees) of the company exceeds 5,000 for at least three (3) of the previous five (5) years.

THE SCOPE OF THE REQUIREMENT:

Hamad International Airport is expanding its air cargo handling capacity by commissioning the construction of a new fully automated Air Cargo Terminal Facility with multiple levels of floor space totaling circa 260,000 square meters which will house a Material Handling System (by others) with overall handling capacity exceeding 3 million tons of transfer cargo per year. The Project also includes the provision of a 3,200 square meter/10,000ton cooling capacity expansion of the existing Central Utility Plant Facility, and all associated external infrastructure works within the Air Cargo Campus located within the midfield area of Hamad International Airport.

STEP 1 - PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS - COLLECTION

Interested Contractors are invited to collect the Pre-Qualification Application Documentation from MATAR - Major Projects Department located at Ras Abu Aboud Road, Hamad International Airport, Doha, State of Qatar between the dates noted below and during the working hours of 9am to 3pm (Sunday to Thursday). Documents will be available for collection upon receipt of a non-refundable cheque payment (cash will not be accepted) in the amount of QAR 30,000 (Qatari Riyals Thirty Thousand only) payable to Qatar Airways.

Start date for document collection: **9 March 2025**

Last date for document collection: **23 March 2025**

(the last date and time will be strictly enforced)

STEP 2 - PRE-QUALIFICATION APPLICATION - SUBMISSION

The **Closing Date** for submitting the Pre-Qualification Application Documentation is **27 March 2025**, not later than 12:00 noon (Local Doha Time), GMT (+3:00) to:

Chairman of Tender Committee
Hamad International Airport Expansion Tender Committee (HIAETC)
Qatar Airways Group Q.C.S.C.
HIAEP Project Office, Ras Abu Aboud Road, Doha, State of Qatar

All enquiries are to be directed to: HIAETC
Telephone No.: +974 4467 9816

E-mail: hiaetc@hiaproject.gov.qa

MWANI QATAR موانى قطر

AUCTIONS COMMITTEE

AUCTION NO. (MQ /AC/AUCT/17/2025)

FOR SALE OF floating Ponton, tiles, granite, furniture, aluminum windows, coal, firewood, household utensils and other miscellaneous goods

Mwani Qatar Auction's committee announces a public auction for the sale of goods mentioned above according to the following terms: -

Document fees	last Date for		Time & Date of Sale
QAR 500	Document collection	Inspection of Goods	Saturday 09:00 AM 19/04/2025
	16/04/2025	17/04/2025	

- Document collection**
Documents for the above mentioned auction can be obtained from the Finance and Accounting Department of MQ, via Email, Tel No. (40453724/568 - 31265655 / 30121037), after depositing the non-refundable amount mentioned above at MQ A/C No. (0850 - 102030 - 060) at QNB and submitting the bank depositing receipt and copy of Qatari ID for personal bidder / the Commercial Registration for companies . (07:30 - 14:30) .
EMAIL Tender.secretary@mwani.com.qa
- Goods inspection**
Hamad Port , Messaied (CT3 / LCL2) after issuing of gate pass (as per the rules and regulations) For only one person , (07:30 - 14:30) .
- Auction place**
MQ, main building Hamad Port, Messaied, 1st floor
- Successful bidder for any item has to pay 10% of the awarded value in Qatari Riyals by Debit or Credit Card only (cash is not accepted), immediately , and to complete the balance within maximum 5 working days after the Auction date. If the bidder fails to pay during the allocated period, the Auction committee reserves the right to confiscate the deposit and resale the goods without notifying the buyer.
- The inspection permit and the Auction Card will be issued for One person only , after paying the documents fees and port entry permit fees . No inspection will be without the inspection permit and it is not allowed to attend the Auction without the Auction Card.
- Goods will only be delivered to the winning bidder, and the resale is not allowed in the Auction yard.
- Safety measures will be applied at all stages of the auction (preview, sale, receipt of goods) and all bidders must abide by the instructions for tour safety and to facilitate the auction procedures.
- For further information you can call the following number: (55528788, 31330300) during working hours.

February stats show Ashghal meets customer service goals



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) continues to meet its customer service goals while assisting the public and companies and addressing their woes.

According to figures released by Ashghal, during February its official website recorded 2,451 visits and the Customer Service Centre witnessed 717 client visits.

Ashghal's Contact Centre received 5,367 calls while 3,080 requests were submitted through the Customer Service Centre.

The centre offers various communication channels: through the contact centre on "188", via e-mail, customer service centres, the mobile application "Ashghal 247", e-Services portal, social media, Ashghal official website and the media monitoring team.

The public can contact Ashghal by dialling 188 24x7 or visit the Customer Service Centre at Ashghal headquarters and Salwa Road office.

They can also keep up with the news through their official social media accounts.

Ashghal provides all its services to individuals, companies and the government through a standardised online customer zone portal.

Using this portal, visitors can register their information and fill out the online form that is linked to the databases of the concerned authorities to facilitate access to the service and submit requests from anywhere at any time.

Ashghal also monitors public comments received through the radio and local newspapers.

It is possible to upload text, geolocation, photos and documents simultaneously and directly attach them with the notification and service requests to complete the process.

Ashghal receives customers in the customer service centres in both of its branches daily.

HMC marks World Glaucoma Week

The Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) is marking World Glaucoma Week by raising awareness of the serious eye condition and emphasising the high-quality care provided for patients.

As the leading specialist healthcare provider in Qatar, the HMC offers state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment options to ensure early detection and effective treatment and management of glaucoma, helping to preserve vision and improve the quality of life for patients.

Glaucoma is a common eye disease that can lead to irreversible vision loss if not diagnosed and treated in time.

It occurs when the optic nerve, which connects the eye to the brain, becomes damaged due to increased pressure in the eye.

"Glaucoma is often called the 'silent thief of sight' because it can develop without noticeable symptoms in its early stages," Dr Zakia al-Ansari, consultant ophthalmologist and head of the HMC's Glaucoma Unit, explained. "Regular eye examinations are crucial for detecting the condition early and preventing permanent vision loss."

The HMC provides comprehensive and world-class care for glaucoma patients – treating more than 500 patients each month, utilising the latest advancements in ophthalmology.

Through its specialised glaucoma clinics, the corporation offers a multidisciplinary approach that includes highly trained specialists, cutting-edge technology, and personalised treatment plans tailored to each patient's needs.

Dr al-Ansari highlighted the HMC's commitment to delivering the highest quality care.

"At the HMC, we offer a full spectrum of advanced glaucoma treatments, including specialised eye drops, innovative laser procedures, and surgical interventions that help control eye pressure and prevent further vision loss," she said. "Our focus is on early detection, effective treatment, and continuous follow-up to ensure the best possible outcomes for our patients."

The HMC encourages the public to prioritise their eye health by scheduling regular eye check-ups, especially for individuals at higher risk of glaucoma, including those over 40, individuals with a family history of the disease, previous eye injury, previous ocular surgeries or diseases, people who are of African, Asian or Hispanic descent, and patients with underlying conditions – such as diabetes – and those who are very nearsighted or far-sighted.

The HMC recommends that individuals at higher risk of glaucoma should get screened at 35 years of age.

A complete eye exam should be repeated every 1-3 years, less or more often depending on the level of risk and overall eye health.

Glaucoma treatment provided at the HMC often starts with prescription eye drops that help reduce eye pressure by either improving fluid drainage or decreasing fluid production in the eye.

In cases where eye drops alone are insufficient, systemic medications such as carbonic anhydrase inhibitors may be prescribed.



Dr Zakia al-Ansari

PHCC launches awareness campaign on obesity risks

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) marked World Obesity Day by launching an awareness campaign on obesity risks.

Community medicine specialist Dr Sarah Rashid Musa, the head of the Wellness Centre at Rawdat Al Khail Health Centre, stated: "World Obesity Day has been observed globally on March 4 since 2020 to raise awareness about obesity and its associated risks, including diabetes, heart disease, and joint problems."

"This year's theme, *Changing System, Healthier Lives*, highlights that obesity is a complex issue requiring a multifaceted approach rather than just individual efforts," she said.

Dr Musa emphasised the need for collaborative changes across various levels, including healthcare systems, food environments, and public policies.

World Obesity Day calls for adopting healthier lifestyles, implementing policy reforms, and introducing preventive and medical interventions.

As part of the celebration, the Wellness Centre at Rawdat Al Khail Health Centre organised an event aimed at raising awareness about obesity risk factors, complications, and preventative measures.

The campaign featured an awareness booth where brochures were distributed on healthy lifestyles, physical activity, and dietary guidelines during Ramadan.

The event included health screenings conducted in multiple stages.

It began with an assessment of vital signs such as blood pressure and pulse rate, followed by calculating the Body Mass Index (BMI), which estimates body fat based on height and weight.



Waist circumference was then measured, and the screening concluded with a blood sugar test.

Dr Musa said that the health screening is structured in phases to ensure participants received consultations with a doctor or health educator.

During these consultations, participants are provided with a summary of their measurements, indicating whether they were within normal or abnormal ranges.

In addition, discussions are encouraged regarding the implications and necessary follow-up actions.

Personalised recommendations are also given based on individual goals, measurements, and lifestyle factors, including physical activity, nutrition, sleep, mental health, smoking, hydration, and weight management.



QU, healthcare leaders strengthen academic-clinical collaboration

Qatar University (QU) hosted the fourth annual meeting of the Joint Clinical Academic Steering Committee (JCASC), reinforcing its commitment to advancing healthcare education, research, and workforce development in Qatar.

The meeting serves as a platform for strategic discussions among academia, healthcare providers, and policymakers to align healthcare education with national priorities.

The participation of key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), and Sidra Medicine, underscores a collective effort to enhance clinical training, research, and healthcare service delivery through academic partnerships.

QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari stated: "The QU is committed to bridging academic excellence with clinical practice through strong partnerships like our collabora-

tion with healthcare stakeholders. These collaborations ensure that our graduates are well-prepared to meet the growing demands of Qatar's healthcare system."

QU vice-president for health and medical sciences Prof Asmaa al-Thani highlighted the QU Health's role in transforming health professions education.

"Interdisciplinary collaboration between universities and healthcare institutions is essential to achieving excellence in clinical education," she said. "Our goal is to ensure that the QU Health remains at the forefront of health professions training and innovation."

PHCC managing director Dr Mariam AbdulMalik emphasised the integration of primary healthcare into clinical education.

"The inclusion of the PHCC as an educational facility for QU students will provide essential hands-on experience and help develop a workforce that is well-versed in community healthcare needs," she said.

The meeting's key discussions included progress on QU Hospital, a landmark project aimed at bridging academic training with real-world clinical practice.

The expansion of the Hamad Dental Academic Centre was also discussed, with a focus on enhancing dental education and training capabilities.

Additionally, the designation of primary healthcare centres as Clinical Education Facilities was highlighted as a step toward integrating community-based training into medical education.

The meeting reaffirmed a shared commitment to strengthening Qatar's healthcare education ecosystem through greater integration between the QU, HMC, MoPH, PHCC, Sidra Medicine, and other key stakeholders.

Moving forward, the JCASC aims to accelerate the implementation of strategic initiatives that will shape the future of healthcare education and clinical practice in Qatar.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MO ABDUL HOQUE
holder of
BANGLADESH Passport No. EH0485428
QID No. 28505023022

hereby change my name
from
MO ABDUL HOQUE
to
MD ABDUL HOQUE

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MOHAMMED NABEEL ABDUL HANNAN KHALEEL
holder of
Indian Passport No. U7425940
QID No. 31035604565

hereby change my name
from
MOHAMMED NABEEL ABDUL HANNAN KHALEEL
to
MOHAMMED NABEEL ABDUL HANNAN

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MUKTA GIRISH CHANDRA
holder of
Indian Passport No. C6802492
QID No. 29035627553

hereby change my name
from
MUKTA GIRISH CHANDRA
to
MUKTA CHATURVEDI

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SAMPATH DE ALWIS
holder of
SRILANKA Passport No. P0148238
QID No. 27314406750

hereby change my name
from
SAMPATH DE ALWIS
to
PRIYANJI SAMPATH DE ALWIS

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SHERYL GARBO TUBELLO
holder of
PHILIPPINES Passport No. 5475252B
QID No. 28260804046

hereby change my name
from
SHERYL GARBO TUBELLO
to
SHERYL TUBELLO PASION

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, RABUDIN SHESHA
holder of
Nepal Passport No. PA2802869
QID No. 29552419037

hereby change my name
from
RABUDIN SHESHA
to
SHESHA RABUDIN

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

Showers drench Qatar, rain expected today, too



Intermittent showers, ranging from light to heavy and thundery, drenched Qatar yesterday, when the minimum and maximum temperatures were in the 18°-20° Celsius and 20-24C range, respectively. The forecast for today (Monday), according to the Met office, is expected thundery rain associated with strong wind, both inshore and offshore. The expected minimum and maximum temperatures are in the 17-20C and 20-24C range, respectively. The images depict rain scenes from Doha. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen and Shaji Kayamkulam

QRCS launches phase 4 of education support project in Afghanistan

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has launched phase 4 of the project to support children's education in remote areas in Afghanistan, in co-operation with the Afghan Welfare Society.

The latest phase will cover six schools in remote areas, at a total cost of \$272,880, the QRCS said in a statement yesterday.

Building on the success of previous phases, the new phase is aimed at securing the resources and infrastructure to facilitate a suitable educational environment for more than 1,200 students in two Afghan provinces.

To ensure a safe and protected learning space for the students, phase 4 involves the provision of six containers for storage, 54 tents as makeshift classrooms, 600 double seats, textbooks, and teaching aids.

Each student will receive a school bag with basic stationery and supplies.

QRCS personnel in Afghanistan have affirmed that they will continue working to improve education and support children in the poorest areas, despite the geographical and economic challenges.

The representation office of the QRCS in Afghanistan seeks to bridge the educational gap facing children, by providing their immediate needs, while observing its long-term commitment to supporting the education sector in Afghanistan, enabling the next generation to pursue their education and find what it takes to succeed.

The project is a major step towards ensuring that every Afghan child receives good education, regardless of where they are.

It comes at a critical time when many Afghan children are facing numerous obstacles to education. - QNA

Moyses Stevens opens its third Doha branch

Wahet Al Shafahiya, a subsidiary of Alfardan Group, has opened the Villaggio Mall branch of Moyses Stevens, renowned for its exquisite floral artistry and a legacy of excellence since 1876.

The expansion marks the florist's third location in Doha, following the success of its branches at The St Regis Doha Hotel and Place Vendome Mall.

Known as the "King's Florist", Moyses Stevens holds royal warrants and is acclaimed for its pioneering contributions to floral design.

With a rich history rooted in London, the brand has consistently set the standard for innovation and quality in floristry.

The branch at Villaggio Mall comes in response to customer demand for more accessible luxury floral services.

Situated in one of Doha's most luxurious shopping destinations, the new branch promises to deliver the same unparalleled floral arrangements and services that have earned Moyses Stevens its prestigious reputation.

The opening was graced by the presence of Wahet Al Shafahiya chief operating officer Fardan Fahad Alfardan and Moyses Stevens UK director Spale Marcinko.

"We are thrilled to bring Moyses Stevens to Villaggio Mall after the success of the other branches," Alfardan said.

"We aim to provide an exceptional floral experience, and this expansion is a testament to our commitment to meeting the needs of our clients," he said.

"Moyses Stevens holds a Royal Warrant from His Majesty the King, signifying our dedication to providing royal-quality



Fardan Fahad Alfardan with Spale Marcinko leading the official opening ceremony at Villaggio Mall.

services to everyone," Alfardan added.

The Villaggio Mall branch will offer an extensive range of floral arrangements, bespoke designs, and premium services, ensuring that every customer finds the perfect floral expression for any occasion.

Founded in 1876, Moyses Stevens is a prestigious London-based florist known for its exceptional artistry and quality.

More information about Moyses Stevens and its offerings are available from www.moyesflowers.qa

Women's Suhoor and workshop at Sheraton

Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel will hold a women's only Suhoor and workshop on March 11, from 9pm-11pm, a statement said.

The event will be led by the newly appointed host of the Women's Circle, Elizabeth Wood (pictured).

"Introspection and Getting to Know Yourself as a Multifaceted Woman" promises an evening of self-reflection, personal growth, and inspiring conversation.

Guests will have the opportunity to explore different aspects of their identities, share insights, and engage in discussions that foster empowerment.

The ticket price is QR150, with limited spots available.



Qatar Charity distributes food baskets in Chad and Somalia

Qatar Charity (QC) is continuing the distribution of food baskets to the most vulnerable families and those of sponsored orphans across several countries worldwide.

This distribution is part of the QC's "Giving Lives On" campaign, launched at the start of the current Ramadan season (1446 AH - 2025), aimed at promoting solidarity and compassion.

A total of 7,100 families in Somalia and Chad have



benefited from these food baskets.

The Ramadan food basket distribution campaign in Somalia was officially launched by Qatar's ambassador Dr Abdullah bin Salem al-Nuaimi, alongside Somali Minister of Family and Human Rights Khadija al-Makhzumi.

The campaign targeted over 6,200 families facing severe living conditions.

Dr al-Nuaimi commended Qatar Charity's leadership in providing essential aid to the Somali people across various states, praising its efforts in improving living standards and fostering community development.

Al-Makhzumi also praised the initiative, emphasizing that it comes at a critical time when many Somali families are in dire need of food assistance during the holy month of Ramadan.

"This initiative embodies the values of brotherhood, solidarity, and mutual co-operation, reinforcing the bond between nations," she said. "We express our deep gratitude to Qatar Charity and the State of Qatar for their continuous support of struggling families in Somalia."

In Chad, the distribution of Ramadan food baskets was carried out with the involvement of 15 volunteers who were former orphans sponsored by Qatar Charity, having outgrown their sponsorship.

A total of 875 food baskets were distributed, benefiting 6,118 people. - QNA



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The boys' teams competing in the tournament. (Supplied picture)



The girls' teams competing in the tournament. (Supplied picture)

Fame Sports Academy launches 2nd Doha Tours basketball tourney

Fame Sports Academy, approved by the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF) and the Ministry of Sports and Youth, has launched the 2nd edition of its Doha Tours 3x3 basketball tournament.

The tournament continues until March 13 with the participation of eight teams for both boys and girls, in the age categories of U16 and U21 years.

Captain Yassin Ismail, a former professional basketball player, who was a member of the Qatar national basketball team and a 3x3 world champion, is hosted by the academy on the sidelines of the tournament to familiarise them with the particulars of 3x3 matches. He competed for the Qatar national basketball team at the 2007 and FIBA Asia Championship 2009.

Dr Dalia Farrag, marketing consultant at Fame Sports Academy, noted that 3x3 is an easy game and can be played by all,



which is part of the efforts of the academy to encourage the largest possible number of players.

Every day throughout the tournament the participating teams play a number of matches as part of the efforts to enhance the trend to adopt active lifestyle besides fostering their skills in



the game, especially since Qatar is set to host 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup. The academy has also scheduled a number of entertainment activities for the players such as shooting, skills and slam dunk competition. The tournament is hosted by QBF with daily matches from 8.30pm

until its conclusion on Thursday.

Dr Farrag pointed out that the championship is sponsored by Rayyan Water Company and Juniors Company. The winners of the first and second places in each category will get cash prizes and other awards.

Engineer Ahmed Hammouda,



Players vie for the ball during the tournament. PICTURES: Thajudheen

general manager of Fame Sports Academy, has expressed his appreciation to the officials of the QBF for providing the opportunity to participate in organising the Doha Basketball Tour 3x3 for the U16 and U21 categories.

QBF Media Committee chair-

man Dr Khalid al-Qahtani stressed that the second edition of the championship follows the great success of the first edition. He noted that this tournament is one of the most significant basketball events organised in Qatar in this category.

MoECC organises Ramadan football tournament



The second edition of Ramadan Football Championship, organised by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), under the slogan 'For a Sustainable Sports Environment,' will run until March 21 at the University of Doha for Science and Technology, featuring 12 teams of employees and affiliates. The daily matches run from 10pm to 12.15am.

Iran says would consider limited nuclear talks with US

AFP
Washington

Iran said yesterday it would consider nuclear negotiations with the US, but only as they pertained to external concerns of the "potential militarisation" of the programme — rather than a total shutdown.

The post on X by Iran's mission to the UN came a day after the country's supreme leader slammed what he described as "bullying" tactics insisting on negotiations, after US President Donald Trump threatened mili-

tary action. "If the objective of negotiations is to address concerns vis-a-vis any potential militarisation of Iran's nuclear programme, such discussions may be subject to consideration," the post said.

"However, should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear programme to claim that what Obama failed to achieve has now been accomplished, such negotiations will never take place," it continued.

The post was referring to the nuclear accord formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), struck

between Tehran and major powers in 2015 under then-US president Barack Obama.

The deal had offered relief from sanctions in exchange for limits on Iran's nuclear activities.

Trump abandoned it during his first term, in 2018, and reimposed sweeping sanctions on Iran. Tehran abided by the terms for another year before beginning to roll back on its own commitments.

It has since sharply ramped up its enrichment of uranium far beyond the limits set by the JCPOA.

Syria's neighbours stress need for stability

From Page 1

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stressed that Turkey pushes back against the Israeli expansive measures in the region and in Syrian territories alike, emphasising the importance of propping up the new Syrian government.

Syria's neighbouring countries will unite their capabilities in combating ISIS, and it is essential to maintain the civilian population in Syria, Fidan underlined.

Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Fuad Hussein, highlighted that the meeting focused on the threats posed by ISIS in the region, along with the growing number of its mili-

tants in the region. He indicated that combating ISIS is the duty of all.

Syria's stability is contingent upon opening dialogue with various components in the country, as countering ISIS requires not only Syrian efforts but also regional and international cooperation, Hussein highlighted.

He noted that the meeting agreed on setting fundamental principles on how to counter ISIS and ensure it doesn't expand, in addition to establishing a joint operations chamber to share information regarding ISIS and plan actions against it, with the engagement of the leadership in Syria.

Lebanon's Minister of Foreign

Affairs, Youssef Raji, stressed that stability in Syria is very important for stability to prevail in Lebanon, adding that the meeting addressed border demarcation, combating narcotics and arms trafficking, as well as counter-terrorism.

Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Asaad al-Shaibani, emphasised that the meeting underscored the importance of lifting the sanctions on Syria, pending its reconstruction. He highlighted that from day one of resuming power, the new Syrian administration pursued tolerance to ensure the non-flare-up of any armed confrontations.

Al-Shaibani underlined that the Syrian government will never

allow the remnants of al-Assad's regime to destabilise security in the country, adding that every single individual who engaged in destabilising security in the country over the past days would be held to account.

Al-Assad's regime caused the displacement of millions of Syrian people throughout the past years, al-Shaibani stressed, highlighting that all measures taken by the new Syrian government were intended to ensure security and stability in the country.

Syria's government yesterday announced a probe after the killing of Alawite civilians triggered an international backlash against the worst violence since Bashar al-Assad's overthrow.

Mass relocation of Palestinians 'will violate' int'l law

QNA
Geneva

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Balakrishnan Rajagopal has said that the idea of mass deportation of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip is "pure fantasy."

In a press statement, he warned that such an act would be considered "one of the greatest violations of international law in recent centuries."

Rajagopal, speaking on the sidelines of the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, addressed Trump's plan to forcibly relocate Palestinians from Gaza, as well as ongoing ceasefire efforts in the Gaza Strip and its reconstruction.

He emphasised the difficulty of achieving effective reconstruction in Gaza as long as the Israeli occupation persists, with the continued risk of large-scale escalation remaining a threat.

Meanwhile, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, stated that Israel has been targeting the Palestinian people in a genocidal campaign across all the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

She emphasised that any attempt to separate Gaza from the West Bank remains a mere illu-



A Palestinian man reacts as he and others gather to receive bread from a bakery, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

sion. Albanese stressed that the distinction between Gaza and the West Bank is fictitious, adding that Israel has fragmented Palestinian land and people in such a way that it makes people believe Gaza and the West Bank are separate. But no, they are the same. Israel is targeting Palestinians as a people, and this is what defines the crime of genocide.

The genocide that began in Gaza is now spreading to the West Bank, and the Palestinian people are facing the same risks, she added.

Regarding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Albanese stressed that Israel's attacks on the agency are not about denying the Palestinian

right of return but rather about targeting the largest UN body in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel wants to eliminate UNRWA because it stands as a symbol of international presence in Palestine, one that rejects Israel's ethnic cleansing policies.

The rights of Palestinian refugees, including the right of return and compensation, are protected under international law, not contingent on UNRWA's existence, Albanese said.

She added that the call to suspend Israel's UN membership should not be overlooked, given its assaults on UN institutions in the occupied Palestinian territories.

OBIT

SA mourns anti-apartheid playwright

The South African playwright and anti-apartheid figurehead Athol Fugard has died aged 92, authorities said yesterday, AFP reported from Johannesburg. The mayor's office in Cape Town, the western city near Fugard's home, said in a statement that it "mourns the loss of a true patriot", in a tribute to the writer, actor and director after his death on Saturday. Fugard wrote more than 30 plays over seven decades, his most important in the darkest days of apartheid, touching on the raw themes of the regime that ended in 1994. He was acclaimed at home and abroad for plays that exposed the injustices of the apartheid system and challenged its racist taboos, including by putting black and white actors on stage together.

ELECTION

Gabon junta chief faces three challengers

Gabon's military leader Brice Oligui Nguema will face three challengers including a former prime minister in the west African country's April 12 presidential election, according to the candidate list published yesterday, AFP reported. Alain-Claude Bilie By Nze, the last premier under ousted ex-president Ali Bongo Ondimba, is considered the strongest potential opponent to Oligui, who led the coup that ended 55 years of Bongo family rule. Lawyer and tax inspector Joseph Lapensee Essingone and doctor Stephane Germain Iloko Bousseguie round out the final candidates list.

New Zealand's top spy warns on China's influence in the Pacific, backs Five Eyes

Reuters
Wellington

New Zealand's top spy has warned of the security risks posed by China's growing influence in the Pacific and said his agency would ramp up scrutiny of the Cook Islands after the nation deepened ties with Beijing.

Security Intelligence Service director-general Andrew Hamp-

ton said the focus of Pacific nations on economic and transnational crime issues had opened the door for China to sign strategic deals with them that linked "economic and security co-operation".

China wanted to "create competing regional architectures, and expand its influence with Pacific Island countries", posing foreign interference and espionage risks, he said in a speech to the Zealand Institute of Inter-

national Affairs in Wellington. "The People's Republic of China remains a complex intelligence concern in New Zealand," he said. "We think it's important to ensure our Pacific partners are aware of the risks too."

In recent years, Beijing has struck deals with a number of Pacific nations that it says are aimed at boosting economic development in the region.

Last month, Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown

signed agreements with China spanning education, the economy, infrastructure, fisheries, disaster management and seabed mining.

It set off alarm bells in New Zealand, with which the Cooks have constitutional ties that require the two countries to consult on security, defence and foreign policy issues. Hampton said he had travelled to the Cook Islands to share classified intelligence on foreign interference and es-

pionage risks with Brown before the deal was signed, but will now be stepping up its scrutiny of the ties between the Cooks and Beijing.

"With the Cook Islands is developing deeper relationships with other parties, this will necessitate an even stronger focus from my agency on national security risks," he said.

Hampton also reaffirmed New Zealand's involvement in the Five Eyes intelligence sharing network

- which also includes Britain, the US, Canada and Australia - despite concerns over the Trump administration's move to thaw ties with Russia.

The alliance was the "most long-standing and impactful intelligence sharing partnership in our history", he said.

"The sharing of Five Eyes intelligence insights has, without a doubt, enhanced the safety and security of New Zealand."

S Korea offers to freeze medical student numbers to resolve dispute

Reuters
Seoul

South Korea's education ministry has agreed to freeze the number of new medical students at about 3,000 a year, it said, in a bid to end a 13-month dispute involving a walkout by trainee doctors and the boycott of classes.

Thousands of such doctors have walked off the job since February 2024 to protest against a government plan to add more students in medical schools, as both sides disputed the remedies needed to fix the healthcare system in a rapidly ageing nation.

Education Minister Lee Ju-ho set a deadline of the end of March for the return of all trainee doctors if the plan is to go ahead, however.

"Our government's position that the medical school quota should be increased has not changed," Lee said. "But restoring trust between the medical community and the government is also very important."

The long drawn-out dispute led to overstretched emergency care facilities, and delays or cancellations to surgeries.

In a post on Facebook, Park Dan, the head of the Korean Intern Resident Association that represents the trainee doctors, said he felt no need to respond to the government's "threat".

The main lobby group for doctors, the Korean Medical Association, said it was up to medical

students to decide how to respond to the government's offer, but it called the plan to boost the quota a "failed policy" and urged fresh talks.

The offer from the education ministry is a step back by the government after the administration of impeached president Yoon Suk-yeol took a firm line in trying to push through its medical reforms.

The government had planned an increase of 2,000 in medical school admissions from 2025, versus 3,000 now, to meet a large projected shortfall of doctors by 2035.

Authorities have said more doctors were required in remote areas, but many doctors said pay and work conditions were skewing the healthcare system and should be tackled first.

In January, the health ministry said about 90% of trainee doctors had resigned, from 13,531 eligible for hospital appointments. Medical students also walked out of classrooms, and few have returned.

Lee Jong-tae, president of the Korea Association of Medical Colleges, said he believed students would now return to school.

"I am asking all of us to work to have our students come back now," Lee added.

Yoon was impeached over his short-lived imposition of martial law last year. His December 3 decree set a 48-hour deadline for all medical personnel to return to work, including trainee doctors who had left their jobs.

Shahrukh attends IIFA Awards event



Bollywood actor Shahrukh Khan poses as he arrives on the green carpet to attend the Silver Jubilee edition of the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards, in Jaipur, India, yesterday.

Will tighten 'noose' around Taiwan if separatism escalates: China army

AFP
Beijing

China's military yesterday vowed to tighten its "noose" around Taiwan if separatism on the island escalated, warning independence proponents to step back from the "precipice".

Beijing considers Taiwan to be part of its territory and has not ruled out using military force to claim it.

China has increased pressure on Taiwan's authorities in recent years with military drills and frequent dispatches of fighter jets and naval vessels around the island.

"The more rampant 'Taiwan independ-

ence' separatists become, the tighter the noose around their necks and the sharper the sword hanging over their heads will be," army spokesman Wu Qian said in an interview published by state broadcaster CCTV.

"The PLA is a force of action in countering separatism and promoting reunification," said Wu, using an acronym for China's military.

"You've ridden your steed to a precipice of a cliff, but behind you lies land - if you persist in taking the wrong course, you will meet a dead end," he warned.

The comments, made during China's "Two Sessions" annual political gathering, come days after Beijing announced a 7.2% increase to its defence budget in 2025.

The increase, the same percentage as in

2024, will drive the rapid modernisation of China's armed forces as strategic competition with the United States intensifies.

It is above the government's annual GDP growth target of around 5%.

Calling the increase "limited... reasonable and stable", Wu said the extra cash would be used to develop "combat forces in new fields and with new qualities", and to enhance reconnaissance, joint strike and battlefield support capabilities.

China's military spending has been on the rise for decades, broadly in line with economic growth.

The country has the world's second-largest defence budget, but lags well behind the US, its primary strategic rival.

Thousands gather to welcome Nepal's former king

Nepal's former king Gyanendra Shah was welcomed back to Kathmandu yesterday by thousands of supporters who have been staging pro-monarchy demonstrations in the Himalayan republic. The nation became a secular republic in 2008 after parliament abolished the monarchy as part of a peace deal that ended a decade-long civil war in which more than 16,000 people were killed. However, support for the restoration of the monarchy and a Hindu state has grown amid dissatisfaction over political instability, corruption and slow economic development. Shah's supporters cheered and waved Nepal's flag, chanting "Come king, save the nation" as he greeted them at the Kathmandu airport gate. The former king had been touring the country in recent weeks and returned to the capital from Pokhara in central Nepal. "The country faces instability, prices are high, people are jobless, and there is a lack of education and healthcare facilities," said Rajindra Kunwar, 43, a teacher who had joined the crowd.



Security personnel try to control pro-monarchy supporters as they gather to welcome former King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev upon his arrival outside the Tribhuvan International Airport, in Kathmandu, Nepal, yesterday.

India allows export of broken rice to cut stocks

Reuters
Mumbai

India allowed the export of 100% broken rice, the government said in a notification, after inventories reached a record high at the start of February, nearly nine times the government's target.

Exports of 100% broken rice could help reduce stocks in the world's biggest exporter and enable poor African countries to secure the grain at lower prices, as well as support Asian animal feed and ethanol producers that rely on the grade. India had banned exports of 100% broken rice in September 2022 and then imposed curbs on exports of all other rice grades in 2023 after poor rainfall raised concerns over production.

However, as the supply situation improved after the country harvested a record crop, New Delhi removed curbs on exports of all grades except 100% broken rice.

"Now that broken rice exports are allowed, we anticipate exporting around 2mn tonnes of this grade in 2025," said B V Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters' Association (REA).

India exported 3.9mn metric tonnes of broken rice in 2022, mainly to China for animal feed and to African countries such as Senegal and Djibouti for human consumption.

Broken rice is a byproduct of milling, and African countries prefer this grade because it is cheaper than other grades.

Indian broken rice is currently offered at \$330 per metric tonne, compared to approximately \$300 from rival suppliers like Vietnam, Myanmar, and Pakistan, said Himanshu Agrawal, executive director at Satyam Balajee, a leading rice exporter.

"However, these competing countries have limited stocks. As their stocks deplete, buyers will switch to India, and exports will pick up in coming months."

Bangladesh student leader aims to finish what uprising began

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladeshi students who overthrew autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina last year have formed a new political party to finish the work that began with her ouster, the group's leader said.

Nahid Islam, 27, was one of the most visible faces of the youth-led protest campaign Students Against Discrimination, which brought down the curtain on Hasina's iron-fisted rule after 15

years. The sociology graduate resigned last week from the interim administration that replaced her to lead the new National Citizens Party (NCP), arguing that Bangladesh's political establishment lacked the will for far-reaching reforms.

"They were not even interested in the reforms for which young people sacrificed their lives," Nahid said.

"Because we have an obligation to implement what we pledged during the mass uprising and its aftermath, we decided to form a political party," he said.

More than 800 people were killed in last year's uprising, and Nahid was briefly detained alongside other student leaders in an unsuccessful effort to force them to call off the protests.

After Hasina's toppling, he accepted an invitation to join an interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, 84.

Nahid's decision to helm the NCP necessitated his departure from an administration expected to act as a politically neutral umpire while preparing Bangladesh for fresh elections.

Polls are due by March next year and are widely expected to be won by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), one of the country's oldest political forces.

Nahid said that even if he and his comrades could not form the next government, they had inaugurated a political force set to be influential for decades to come.

"Nobody knew that there would be an uprising, but it happened," he said.

"I sincerely hope and I believe that we are going to win this time. But this election is not the end of the world... Our target is to sus-

tain this energy for another 50 or 100 or more years."

The NCP is at loggerheads with its main rival over when the next national election should be staged, with the BNP arguing that fresh polls should be staged as soon as possible to empower a government with a public mandate.

"We are often accused of conspiring to delay the election, but that is not true," Nahid said.

But he added that it was "not possible" to stage an election while the country still faced issues maintaining law and order

after Hasina's ouster. His party are also campaigning for a simultaneous vote to establish a citizens' assembly, to be tasked with root and branch reform of Bangladesh's constitution aimed at ensuring a lasting democracy.

The National Citizens Party has sought to position itself as a big tent party, open to all people seeking to bring forward the spirit of last year's political tumult.

But ructions within the party have already split over into public view since its founding last month.



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GULF TIMES

Historic lunar GNSS breakthrough paves way for Moon and Mars navigation

Life as we know today is unthinkable without the help of Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), a network of satellites broadcasting timing and orbital information used for navigation and positioning measurements. GNSS are used in all forms of transportation: space stations, aviation, maritime, rail, road and mass transit. Positioning, navigation and timing play a critical role in telecommunications, land surveying, law enforcement, emergency response, precision agriculture, mining, finance, scientific research and so on. They are used to control computer networks, air traffic, power grids and more.

It is in this context that Nasa and the Italian Space Agency made a historic achievement on March 3 when the Lunar GNSS Receiver Experiment (LuGRE) became the first technology demonstration to acquire and track Earth-based navigation signals on the Moon's surface. The LuGRE payload's success in lunar orbit and on the surface indicates that signals from the GNSS can be received and tracked at the Moon. These results mean Nasa's Artemis missions, or other exploration missions, could benefit from these signals to accurately and autonomously determine their position, velocity, and time. This represents a steppingstone to advanced navigation systems and services for the Moon and Mars.

"On Earth we can use GNSS signals to navigate in everything from smartphones to airplanes," said Kevin Coggins, deputy associate administrator for Nasa's SCaN (Space Communications and Navigation) Programme. "Now, LuGRE shows us that we can successfully acquire and track GNSS signals at the Moon. This is a very exciting discovery for lunar navigation, and we hope to leverage this capability for future missions."

LuGRE successfully tracked GNSS signals on the Moon, enabling autonomous navigation for future lunar missions

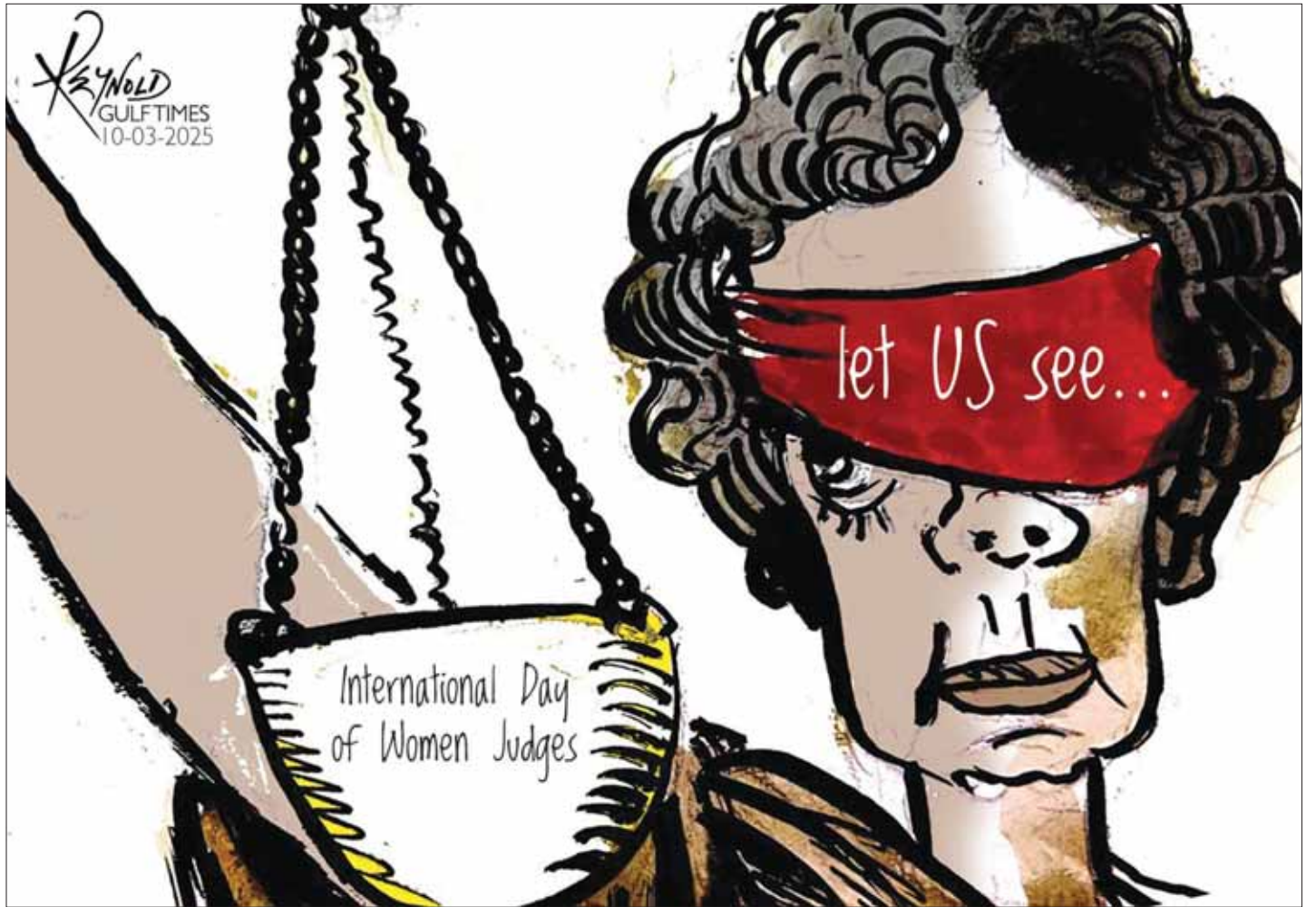
The road to the historic milestone began on March 2 when the Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lunar lander touched down on the Moon and delivered LuGRE, one of 10 Nasa payloads intended to advance lunar science. Soon after landing, LuGRE payload operators at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, began conducting their first science operation on the lunar surface. With the receiver data flowing in, anticipation mounted. Could a Moon-based mission acquire and track signals from two GNSS constellations, GPS and Galileo, and use those signals for navigation on the lunar surface?

Then, at 2am EST on March 3, it was official: LuGRE acquired and tracked signals on the lunar surface for the first time ever and achieved a navigation fix — approximately 362,102km away from Earth. The mission will operate for 14 days providing Nasa and the Italian Space Agency the opportunity to collect data in a near-continuous mode, leading to additional GNSS milestones. In addition to this record-setting achievement, LuGRE is the first Italian Space Agency developed hardware on the Moon, a milestone for the organisation.

The LuGRE payload also broke GNSS records on its journey to the Moon. On January 21, LuGRE surpassed the highest altitude GNSS signal acquisition ever recorded at 337,801km from Earth, a record formerly held by Nasa's Magnetospheric Multiscale Mission. Its altitude record continued to climb as LuGRE reached lunar orbit on February 20 — 391,070km from Earth. This means that missions in cislunar space, the area of space between Earth and the Moon, could also rely on GNSS signals for navigation fixes.

Traditionally, Nasa engineers track spacecraft by using a combination of measurements, including onboard sensors and signals from Earth-based tracking stations. The LuGRE payload demonstrates that using GNSS signals for navigation can reduce reliance on human operators because these signals can be picked up and used autonomously by the spacecraft, even as far away as the Moon.

The LuGRE payload is a collaborative effort between Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, the Italian Space Agency, their industry partner Qascom, and Politecnico di Torino. Funding and oversight for the LuGRE payload comes from Nasa's SCaN Programme office. It was chosen by Nasa as one of 10 funded research and technology demonstrations for delivery to the lunar surface by Firefly Aerospace Inc, a flight under the agency's Commercial Lunar Payload Services initiative.



S Korea policy push springs to life as lowest birthrate rises

By Jihoon Lee and Hyun Young Yi
Seoul

South Korea's birthrate, the lowest in the world, rose in 2024 for the first time in nine years, as more couples tied the knot after pandemic delays, and as policy efforts to incentivise companies and Koreans to embrace parenthood start to pay off.

Nam Hyun-jin, 35, who had her second daughter last August, said she has seen a social shift, driven largely by the government's broadened policy support and more companies joining the efforts.

"The society as a whole is encouraging childbirth more than five years ago when we had our first child," Nam said.

And, more importantly, "it's the company culture of encouraging childbirth that is providing huge help," said Nam, whose employer — Booyoung — started to give out 100mn won (\$70,000) from last year to its employees for childbirth bonus.

That shift in societal norms could prove pivotal in a country that over the past decade has seen its birthrate plummet to the lowest in the world, as women prioritised career advancement over marriage or parenthood due to the rising cost of housing and raising a child.

The stakes are high, as the demographic crisis has become the biggest risk to growth in Asia's fourth-largest economy and its social welfare system, with the country's population of 51mn on track to halve by the end of this century.

In 2024, however, the glum statistics on South Korea's fertility rate turned a corner. It rose to 0.75, still a global record-low, from 0.72 in 2023, after eight consecutive years of declines from 1.24 in 2015 despite billions of

dollars spent by the country to try to reverse the trend.

While the rise mostly reflected an increase from pandemic-disrupted marriages, other numbers suggest it could be more than just a Covid blip and that government policies are having an effect.

Quarterly data showed the number of second newborns, such as Nam's, jumped 12% in the second half of 2024, versus an 11% rise in first-born babies.

"There is a high possibility of further rises (in fertility rate) in coming years, and we are right at the inflection point," You Hye-mi, presidential secretary for population policy, told Reuters.

Last year, now-impeached President Yoon Suk-yeol proposed a new ministry devoted to tackling the "national demographic crisis", aiming for a broader approach from earlier years of less-effective cash-focused support.

Interviews conducted by Reuters over the past week with policymakers, industry experts, economists and Korean mothers credited the government's policy support — in three areas of work-family balance, childcare and housing — and a campaign to encourage business to incentivise employees on parenthood for the positive turn.

The government plans to spend 19.7tn won (\$13.76bn) in the three focus areas this year, up 22% from 2024.

"Korea faces some of the world's most challenging demographics. The government didn't overstate the case when it declared a national demographic emergency in June," says Kathleen Oh, Morgan Stanley's chief Korea and Taiwan Economist.

"The good news is that the sense of urgency appears real, with authorities moving toward structural reforms and away from short-term fixes."

Policy changes over the last

year include employees being paid 100% of their salary for a maximum of six months, if both parents take parental leave, compared with a maximum of three months earlier.

Additionally, the maximum period was extended to 1-1/2 years, from 1 year, if both parents take leave.

Paternity leave has also been extended to a maximum of 20 days from 10 days. The government will pay employees at small and medium sized enterprises (SME) their wages during the leave.

From this year, the government is making it mandatory for listed companies to include their childcare-related statistics in regulatory filings, with incentives for government projects and financial support for SMEs.

The policies appear to be bearing fruit.

In 2024, marriages rose even more sharply, at the fastest pace on record, after climbing in 2023 for the first time in 12 years on a post-pandemic boost. In last year's government survey, 52.5% of South Koreans expressed positive views about marriage, the highest since 2014.

"The government has prepared as much as it could at an institutional level, and now we need more companies embracing it," said Shin Kyung-ah, sociology professor at Hallym University.

Last year Booyoung saw a surge in child births among employees after the construction firm announced the bonus scheme.

"After all, it is for companies to survive. We build apartments, and they will be sold only if there are enough people to live in," said Kim Jin-seong, human resources director at Booyoung.

Booyoung's move was later followed by more incentives from the government, such as tax exemption on childbirth bonuses, and similar efforts by

other companies, including game developer Krafton which is also planning a 100-mn-won scheme.

"We need to make sure to keep the spark alive, which was hard to make, by quickly filling in the blind spots of low-birth policies, such as free-lancers and the self-employed," Choi Sang-mok, the finance minister who is currently serving as acting president, said this month.

For some, however, especially among the younger generation, the "spark" is missing.

"I think it is not that welcomed, because it is difficult and costs a lot of money to get married, have a baby and family in the Korean society," said Kim Ha-ram, 21, a student.

South Korea's last baby boom was in 1991-1996. It now aims to raise the fertility rate to 1 by 2030, which is still far below the rate of 2.1 needed for a steady population.

Hallym University's Shin sees South Korea's temporary workers, the second-highest rate among Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development countries at 27.3%, compared with the average of 11.3%, as a demographic challenge.

"The gap is huge between big and small companies in South Korea, and between those employed permanently and temporarily, so the government needs to be more creative to have the system established for all," Shin said.

Jung Jae-hoon, a professor of social welfare at Seoul Women's University, endorsed Shin's view that companies should do more to complement government efforts.

"Childcare systems are well established now at a society level through government investments, but we still need companies to change to become more family-friendly, which makes it a job half done," Jung said.



Nam Hyun-jin takes care of her baby at her home in Seoul, South Korea, last month. (Reuters)

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Trump won't predict if tariff moves will lead to recession

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump declined to predict whether the US could face a recession amid stock market concerns about his tariff actions on Mexico, Canada and China over fentanyl.

The Republican president, whose trade policies have rekindled fears of worsening US inflation, was asked if he expected a recession this year in a Fox News interview broadcast yesterday.

"There is a period of transition, because what we're doing is very big. We're bringing wealth back to America," Trump told the *Sunday Morning Futures* programme. "It takes a little time, but I think it should be great for us."

Tariffs have been one key concern for investors, as many believe they can harm economic growth and be inflationary. While Trump acknowledged as early as February 2 that his sweeping tariffs could cause some "short-term" pain for Ameri-

cans, his own advisers have repeatedly downplayed any negative impact.

"Absolutely not," Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said yesterday. "There's going to be no recession in America."

Lutnick did acknowledge that the Trump tariffs would lead to higher prices for US consumers on some foreign-made goods, but said American products will get cheaper.

"He's not going to step off the gas," Lutnick said on NBC's *Meet the Press*.

Trump imposed new 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada last Tuesday, along with fresh duties on Chinese goods, after he declared the top three US trading partners had failed to do enough to stem the flow of deadly fentanyl and its precursor chemicals into the United States.

Two days later, he exempted many imports from Mexico and some from Canada from those tariffs for a month, the latest twist in a fluctuating trade policy that has whipsawed markets and fanned worries about US inflation and growth.

It was the second time in two months that Trump has walked back fentanyl-related tariffs on the US neighbours.

"If fentanyl ends, I think these will come off. But if fentanyl does not end, or he's uncertain about it, he will stay this way until he is comfortable," Lutnick said.

White House officials say Canada and Mexico are conduits for shipments of fentanyl - which is 50 times more potent than heroin - and its precursor chemicals into the US in small packages that are often not inspected.

Public data shows 0.2% of all fentanyl seized in the US comes from the Canadian border, while the vast majority arrives via Mexico. In a concession to Trump, Canada appointed a new fentanyl czar last month.

The exemptions for the two largest US trading partners expire on April 2, when Trump has threatened to impose a global regime of reciprocal tariffs on all US trading partners.

Kevin Hassett, director of the White House's National Economic Council, said on ABC's *This Week* that he hoped the

drug-related tariffs can be resolved by the end of the month so the focus can be on imposing the reciprocal measures.

Seesaw tariff announcements have unnerved Wall Street as investors say flip-flopping moves by the Trump administration to roll back levies on trading partners are causing confusion rather than bringing relief.

The Trump trade policies have raised fears of trade wars that could slam economic growth and raise prices for Americans still smarting from years of high inflation.

China said it would "resolutely counter" pressure from the United States on the fentanyl issue after Trump imposed tariffs of 20% on all imports from China.

Democratic senators from two border states criticised Trump's tariff policy as inconsistent and irresponsible.

"These broad, indiscriminate and on-again, off-again tariffs don't help anyone. They don't help farmers. They don't help auto workers. They're a mistake," US Senator Adam Schiff of California said on

ABC. "Pounding Canada as if they're the exact same thing as China - it just creates this chaotic feeling," US Senator Elissa Slotkin, of Michigan, said on NBC.

Trump said he put a hold on tariffs on some goods last week because, "I wanted to help Mexico and Canada," according to the *Sunday Morning Futures* interview, which was taped on Thursday.

The three countries are partners in a North American trade pact that was renegotiated by Trump during his first White House term.

Yet Trump also told the Fox News programme that those 25% tariffs "may go up" and he said on Friday that his administration could soon impose reciprocal tariffs on Canadian lumber and other products.

Separately, US tariffs of 25% on imports of steel and aluminium will take effect as scheduled on Wednesday, Lutnick said during the interview. Canada and Mexico are both top exporters of the metals to US markets, with Canada in particular accounting for most aluminium imports.

Sheinbaum rallies national pride after US tariff reprieve

Reuters
Mexico City

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum told supporters in a massive rally yesterday that dialogue and respect had prevailed in achieving a pause on US tariffs and that the sovereignty of Mexico would always come first.

Sheinbaum, speaking to thousands of people who gathered in Mexico City's iconic Zocalo square for an event aimed at bolstering national pride, highlighted the economic contributions that Mexico and its people makes to the US economy.

"We cannot give up our sovereignty, nor can our people be affected by decisions made by foreign governments or hegemonies. In that case, we will always act immediately," Sheinbaum said, addressing the plaza packed with thousands of people waving flags and holding signs promoting Mexican pride and independence.

"The common history of our countries is marked by numerous episodes of hostility but also by numerous episodes of co-operation and understanding," she added.

US President Donald Trump, who said Mexico and Canada had failed to do enough to stem the flow of the deadly fentanyl opioid and its precursor chemicals into the United States, slapped goods from both countries with 25% tariffs on March 4.

In a cool-headed approach, Sheinbaum said she would wait to announce counter-measures against the United States, including retaliatory tariffs, until yesterday's event.

Two days later, however, Trump said that Mexico would not be required to pay tariffs on any goods that fall under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) trade deal until April 2 out of "respect" for Sheinbaum following a phone call between the two leaders.

Sheinbaum then said yesterday's rally would be a "festival".

"So far it has yielded results and I think it will continue to do so," Sheinbaum said of the "respectful dialogue" with the United States.

"However, we must be aware and informed in case it is necessary for us to again gather in this public square. Do you agree?" she asked the crowd. "Yes!" her supporters enthusiastically shouted in response.



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum raises her fist during a rally at the Zocalo square in Mexico City yesterday. (AFP)

Russia seizes territory in Ukraine's Sumy region

AFP
Kyiv

Russia yesterday announced it had captured territory in Ukraine's Sumy region for the first time since 2022 in a cross-border offensive as Kyiv struggles to hold onto territory in Russia's neighbouring Kursk region.

Russia also claimed the recapture of four new villages in its Kursk border region as its troops pushed on against Ukrainian soldiers who had seized territory there.

Kyiv wants to use the territory it holds in Kursk as a potential bargaining chip in any peace negotiations.

US and Ukrainian negotiators are set to meet for talks in Saudi Arabia next week, with US President Donald Trump's administration keen to secure a ceasefire and a "framework" for a peace agreement.

The United States has cut off Ukraine's access to intelligence sharing and satellite data in a bid to force it to negotiate.

The Russian defence ministry said in a briefing that its forces, in a counter-offensive, had "liberated" the small village of Novenke in Sumy near the border with Kursk.

Russia briefly occupied parts of Sumy at the start of its all-out invasion in 2022 but has not conquered any territory there since.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in mid-February that his forces had entered this part of northeastern Ukraine, a claim branded a "lie" by Kyiv, although it has acknowledged isolated attacks. Novenke is located about a kilometre from Kursk and Russian military bloggers said its capture brought troops closer to blocking a major Ukrainian supply route.

Kyiv has not yet commented on Russia's claim to have captured Novenke. Ukraine's state Centre for Countering Disinformation on Saturday denied reports of a "massive breakthrough" by Russia, saying its own forces were destroying small groups trying to cross the border.

Russia yesterday announced the recapture of the villages of Lebedevka, Malaya Loknya, Cherkasskoye Porechnoye and Kositsa in Kursk, bringing its troops closer to taking back the Ukraine-held town of Sudzha, about 10km away.

Ukraine launched its incursion into Kursk last August, seizing territory as a buffer zone.

But since then, Russia has taken back more than two-thirds of the territory.

A Russian army commander, Aпти Alaudinov, wrote on Telegram on Saturday that "all units have launched a large-scale offensive across all areas on the Kursk section of the front". A Russian military blogger, Yevgeny Poddubny, yesterday wrote that the Kursk incursion "is in its final phase".

Prominent Ukrainian journalist Yuriy Butusov wrote yesterday that holding onto the Kursk territory was no longer tactically justified.

Ukraine's General Staff on Saturday confirmed reports that Russian special forces had used an underground gas pipe to reach the outskirts of the main town controlled by Ukraine in the region, Sudzha.

Kyiv said its aerial reconnaissance had spotted the troops, who were "being detected, blocked and destroyed".

US Secret Service shoots armed man

The US Secret Service shot an armed man outside the White House early yesterday after a confrontation, and the man is now in an area hospital, it said in a statement.

President Donald Trump was not in the White House at the time, as he is spending the weekend at his Florida residence.

Secret Service officials received a tip on Saturday from local authorities that a suicidal person may be travelling to Washington from Indiana and the person's car was found a block from the White House, it said in the statement. The man brandished a firearm as officers approached him and the Secret Service opened fire shortly after midnight local time. The man was taken to an area

hospital and his condition was not known, the statement said, adding that there were no injuries to Secret Service personnel.

Washington's Metropolitan Police said investigators from its internal affairs division were looking into the incident but declined further comment. There have been a series of incidents involving armed men shot by security officers on or near the White House grounds over the years, including the shooting, in 2016, of a man who brandished a handgun at a White House security gate. In 2023, a 20-year-old Indian immigrant named Sai Varshith Kandula unsuccessfully tried to break through the White House's protective barriers in a rented truck.

Taliban kill 4 troops

At least four Pakistani paramilitary troops were killed when local Taliban fighters attacked a security checkpoint in a northwestern border region, a police official said yesterday.

The attack occurred in Kurram district, located on the border with Afghanistan, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where there has been a rise in violence in recent years.

"Heavily armed militants" launched the attack yesterday morning, a police official told AFP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media. At least four security personnel were martyred, and seven others were injured," he said.

French research groups urged to welcome scientists fleeing US

French officials are urging their country's research institutions to consider welcoming scientists abandoning the United States due to President Donald Trump's funding cuts, AFP learned yesterday.

Since Trump returned to the White House in January, his government has cut federal research funding and sought to dismiss hundreds of federal workers working on health and climate research.

"Many well-known researchers are already questioning their future in the United States," France's minister for higher education and research, Philippe Baptiste, wrote in a letter to the country's institutions.

"We would naturally wish to welcome a certain number of them."

Baptiste urged research leaders to send him "concrete proposals on the topic, both on priority technologies and scientific fields".

The government is "committed, and will rise to the occasion", he added, in a statement sent to AFP yesterday.

This week, Aix-Marseille University in the south of France announced it was setting up a programme dedicated to welcoming US researchers, notably those working on climate change. It announced a new programme to welcome scientists who "may feel threatened or hindered" in the United States and want "to continue their work in an environment conducive to innovation, excellence and academic freedom".

Besides the cuts overseen by Trump's

billionaire tech tycoon ally Elon Musk, the US leader has withdrawn Washington from the World Health Organisation and the Paris Climate Agreement.

In protest, scientists rallied in cities across the United States on Friday, with many of their French counterparts in the southwestern city of Toulouse attending a demonstration in solidarity.

In an editorial published in *Le Monde* newspaper, French academics including Nobel Prize winners Esther Duflo, an economist, and Anne L'Huillier, a physicist, denounced "unprecedented attacks" on US science, saying they undermined "one of the pillars of democracy".

The director of France's Pasteur public health institute, Yasmine Belkaid, told French newspaper *La Tribune* in an interview published yesterday that she received "calls every day" from US-based European and American scientists looking for jobs.

For French research, "you might call it a sad opportunity, but it is an opportunity all the same," Belkaid, who once worked as an immunology researcher in the United States, was quoted as saying.

"It is time for us to position ourselves as central players in this research ecosystem, which is necessary for our economic independence." The suspension of some grants has led some US universities to reduce the number of students accepted into doctoral programmes or research positions.

After Poland spat, Musk vows Ukraine can keep Starlink

AFP
Washington

Billionaire industrialist and senior White House adviser Elon Musk vowed yesterday to maintain Ukraine's access to his Starlink satellite network, after a fierce online clash with Poland's outspoken foreign minister.

The United States has suspended military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine after a disastrous February 28 meeting between presidents Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky in the White House.

This has led to fears that Musk, a close Trump ally, might cut off Ukrainian access to his private Starlink communications system, which is used extensively by Kyiv's frontline troops for battlefield communication.

Yesterday, during exchanges on his own X social media platform, Musk promised that this would not be the case, after an online clash with the Polish foreign minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, that drew in US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

"To be extremely clear, no mat-



DICTATING POLICY? Elon Musk. (Reuters)

ter how much I disagree with the Ukraine policy, Starlink will never turn off its terminals," Musk wrote.

"I am simply stating that, without Starlink, the Ukrainian lines would collapse, as the Russians can jam all other communications! We would never do such a thing or use it as a bargaining chip."

Trump's administration is pressuring Zelensky to sign over much of Ukraine's mineral wealth to the United States and to agree to a ceasefire with Russia without clear security guarantees as a prelude to a peace deal.

Musk supports this position and

warned yesterday that Ukraine's "entire front line would collapse" if he turned off Starlink for Kyiv's forces, which have been battling a full-scale Russian invasion since February 2022.

This prompted Sikorski, in a post on X, to warn: "Starlinks for Ukraine are paid for by the Polish Digitisation Ministry at the cost of about \$50mn per year."

"The ethics of threatening the victim of aggression apart, if SpaceX proves to be an unreliable provider we will be forced to look for other suppliers."

Musk responded with scorn, telling the Polish minister: "Be quiet, small man. You pay a tiny fraction of the cost. And there is no substitute for Starlink."

Washington's top diplomat, US Secretary of State Rubio, was also drawn in to the exchange, accusing Sikorski of "just making things up."

"No-one has made any threats about cutting Ukraine off from Starlink. And say 'thank you' because without Starlink Ukraine would have lost this war long ago and Russians would be on the border with Poland right now," he said.

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