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BUSINESS | Page 1

CI ratings ‘international testament’ to strength of GWC business model: Sheikh Abdulla

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US-Russia talks in Istanbul tomorrow

The United States and Russia will hold talks tomorrow in Istanbul on restoring some of their embassy operations that have been drastically scaled back following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, the US State Department said. "There are no political or security issues on the agenda, and Ukraine is not – absolutely not – on the agenda. These talks are solely focused on our embassy operations," State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said.

Musk blasts Trump tariff adviser

Billionaire Elon Musk blasted President Donald Trump's senior trade adviser Peter Navarro as "truly a moron" and "dumber than a sack of bricks" yesterday in a growing rift over the US tariff policy that has rocked the world. The extraordinary public spat came after Navarro described the Tesla boss and so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) chief as "not a car manufacturer" but "a car assembler" who relies on imported parts. **Page 6**

44 die in nightclub roof collapse

Rescuers raced to find survivors yesterday among the rubble of a Dominican Republic nightclub where at least 44 people died and dozens were hurt in an early-morning roof collapse. **Page 6**

Dignitaries, experts attend Doha Islamic Finance Conference



The 11th Doha Islamic Finance Conference was held here yesterday under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani. Titled 'Integration of Blockchain and AI: The Future of Islamic Finance', the event was attended by dignitaries and experts including HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Sheikh Faisal bin Thani al-Thani, HE the Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, Ghanem bin Shaheen bin Ghanem al-Ghanem, Qatar Financial Centre CEO Yousuf Mohamed al-Jaida, International Islamic Fiqh Academy Secretary-General, Prof Dr Koutoub Sano, and Chairman of the Conference's Higher Organising Committee, Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti. **Business Page 3**

UN chief rejects Israeli plan to control Gaza aid

Reuters
United Nations

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday rejected a new Israeli proposal to control aid deliveries in Gaza, saying it risks "further controlling and callously limiting aid down to the last calorie and grain of flour."

"Let me be clear: We will not participate in any arrangement that does not fully respect the humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality," Guterres told reporters.

No aid has been delivered to the Palestinian enclave of some 2.1mn people since March 2. Israel has said it would not allow the entry of all goods and supplies into Gaza until Palestinian resistance group Hamas release all remaining hostages.

COGAT, the Israeli military agency that co-ordinates aid, last week met with UN agencies and international aid groups and said it proposed "a structured monitoring and aid entry mechanism" for Gaza.

Israel last month resumed its bombardment of Gaza after a two-month truce and sent troops back into the enclave.

"Gaza is a killing field – and civilians are in an endless death loop," said Guterres as he again called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, a permanent ceasefire, and full humanitarian access in Gaza.



France's President Emmanuel Macron speaks in front of humanitarian aid destined to Gaza, at the Egyptian Red Crescent warehouse in Arish, Egypt yesterday.

Resumption of aid top priority: Macron

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday called the rapid resumption of aid into Gaza a "top priority" during a visit to the Egyptian city of El-Arish, a key transit point for supplies to the war-battered Palestinian territory. "The situation today is intolerable," Macron said near the border with Gaza, calling for the "resumption of humanitarian aid as quickly as possible". Since March 2, Israel has blocked the entry of humanitarian aid into the territory. **Page 5**

Cabinet decisions fostered national development: PM

QNA
Doha

The Cabinet was keen during the first quarter of 2025 to adopt policies that support sustainable development by boosting economic diversification, investing in talent, and raising the efficiency of state institutions, said HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani.

HE Sheikh Mohammed affirmed that the Cabinet sought to align these efforts with Qatar's international commitments in the areas of economic co-operation, sustainability, and regional stability, in line with the Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) and the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The Cabinet meetings in the first quarter of this year witnessed several decisions that reflected Qatar's vision and plans to build a prosperous and sustainable future, in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

These decisions focused on a range of modernisation and development issues, primarily stimulating the growth and diversification of the national economy, enhancing quality of life, and raising the efficiency of state institutions, in line with the objectives of the NDS3 (2024-2030).



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani

The Cabinet's General Secretariat unveiled that during the first quarter of 2025, 15 decisions were issued on Sustainable Economic Growth, four on Fiscal Sustainability, and 10 on Future-Ready Workforce.

The decisions also included five on Cohesive Society, 23 on Quality of Life, six on Environmental Sustainability, and 18 on Government Excellence. **(QNA)**

Qatar welcomes Oman's hosting of US-Iran talks

Qatar welcomed yesterday Oman's hosting of high-level talks between the United States of America and Iran due on Saturday. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's hope that the talks will lead to a sustainable agreement that enhances security, stability, and peace in the region and opens new horizons for regional co-operation and dialogue. The Ministry expressed Qatar's

appreciation for Oman's diplomatic efforts aimed at bringing the two parties closer together. It also affirmed Qatar's firm belief that dialogue is the optimal option for resolving international crises and conflicts, and its support for all regional and international efforts aimed at establishing peace and enhancing co-operation between countries to achieve global security and stability. **(QNA)**

Minister inaugurates Surgi Art Hospital

HE the Minister of Public Health Mansour bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud inaugurated the Surgi Art Hospital, which has a capacity of 49 beds, including 22 wards for inpatients. HE the Minister toured the hospital and was briefed on the various medical services it provides. The private hospital consists of various medical departments, including medicine, general medicine, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, dentistry, dermatology, and otolaryngology, in addition to the surgery department. On this occasion, the Ministry of Public Health affirmed its commitment to supporting the private health sector and working to increase its participation in providing high-quality healthcare services in Qatar. **(QNA) Page 12**

Qatar playing its role in solving global crises: al-Misnad

QNA
Doha

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad has highlighted the unprecedented global challenges of today, ranging from conflicts that make no distinction between civilians and combatants to waves of mass displacement, pointing to blatant violations of international humanitarian law, such as the obstruction of humanitarian and food aid, the targeting of vital infrastructure and humanitarian workers, and restrictions on organisations operating in conflict zones.

Speaking during the opening of the two-day Humanitarian Leadership Conference (HLC 2025), organised by the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies in collaboration with the Center for Humanitarian Leadership at Deakin University in Australia, HE al-Misnad remarked that the world today faces interwoven and escalating crises, where no sooner does one humanitarian crisis subside than it is replaced by another, harsher one.

She added that with every crisis, innocent victims are deprived of their right to development, and even their right to a dignified life, stressing that with the widening scale of suffering and the growing number of victims, humanitarian

response can no longer be the responsibility of one country or entity alone; it requires collective action, comprehensive co-operation, and serious political will.

HE the Minister emphasised that from its moral and humanitarian responsibility, Qatar believes in the necessity of mobilising international efforts to confront these crises, prevent violations, and establish peace, adding that Qatar, firmly committed to the principles of international humanitarian law, works closely with regional and international partners to protect civilians, ensure aid reaches those in dire need, and activate legal accountability mechanisms at the international level.



HE Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad speaking at the Humanitarian Leadership Conference (HLC 2025) in Australia.

HE al-Misnad noted that despite increasing challenges in humanitarian work, such as funding shortages and heightened risks faced by relief workers, which have forced many organisations to scale back their operations, Qatar has continued to play its role in numerous crisis areas worldwide, including Palestine and Sudan and other countries.

On the occupied Palestinian territories, she reiterated that the recent military escalation in Gaza has once again exposed the fragility of the international system in protecting civilians, noting the systematic targeting of infrastructure and civilian facilities, with thousands of children and women among the casualties. **To Page 12**

QIIB awards McLaren supercars to Visa card campaign winners

QIIB hosted an event to award two luxury McLaren supercars to the winners of its Visa credit and debit card promotional campaign, which ran from December 1, 2024 to February 28 this year.

QIIB deputy chief executive Jamal Abdullah al-Jamal handed over the keys of a “McLaren Artura” to the first winner, Dr Abdulrahman Hassan Ali Abousebeeb, and a “McLaren GT” to the second winner, Ahmed Abdullah Hassan Ibrahim al-Ibrahim.

The event was attended by senior QIIB executives and a number of guests.

With a combined value exceeding QR2mn, this exceptional campaign reflected QIIB’s commitment to offering its clients an experience defined by prestige and luxury, a statement said.

The initiative targeted Visa cardholders from the “Wajaha” and “Deyafa” categories, who became eligible to enter the draw by spending a minimum of QR50,000 during the three-month promotional period.

“We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the two winning clients on receiving their exceptional prizes,” said al-Jamal.

“At QIIB, we take great pride in offering rewards that genuinely reflect our appreciation

for our clients’ trust and loyalty,” he said.

“The ‘Wajaha’ and ‘Deyafa’ card payment campaign successfully achieved its intended objectives,” he said, adding: “We witnessed significant interest and participation from our clients, especially since the campaign was designed with standards that ensured flexibility and allowed for maximum client engagement.”

“It also focused on promoting digital payments, in line with the bank’s strategic direction to support digital transformation and provide innovative solutions to our clients,” al-Jamal said.

“The success of this campaign and the strong interest it sparked among clients are a clear reflection of the trust they place in QIIB – in our products, services, and exclusive offers,” the official stated. “It also drives us to continue launching meaningful campaigns that truly enhance their banking experience and unlock new opportunities for rewards and benefits.”

The winners of the Visa credit and debit card promotional campaign were previously announced in a draw held at the bank’s headquarters, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and senior officials from QIIB.



Jamal Abdullah al-Jamal handing over the keys of a ‘McLaren Artura’ to Dr Abdulrahman Hassan Ali Abousebeeb, and a ‘McLaren GT’ to the second winner, Ahmed Abdullah Hassan Ibrahim al-Ibrahim.

NU-Q’s Media Majlis Museum to co-host 53rd IKT Congress

The Media Majlis Museum at Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) and NYU Abu Dhabi are hosting the 53rd annual congress of the International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art (IKT) until April 14, marking the event’s first-ever edition in the Gulf region.

The congress brings together curators, museum directors, and leading figures in contemporary art for a dynamic exchange of ideas on curation, digital innovation, and artistic practice.

The programme began yesterday at the NU-Q with a three-day session.

The next stops are Abu Dhabi (April 11-12), Dubai (April 13), and Sharjah (April 14).

Participants will engage in a curated series of exhibitions, symposiums, discussions, and guided tours, offering a rare opportunity for collaboration and cross-cultural dialogue among the region’s foremost art institutions and professionals.

“We are excited to bring the IKT Congress to the Gulf for the first time and to co-host part of this important gathering on campus,” said NU-Q dean and chief executive Marwan M Kraidy.

“Collaboration is at the heart of what we do,

and this partnership creates new opportunities for curators, scholars, and artists to exchange ideas and engage with our community,” he said. “It’s an opportunity to facilitate local and global conversations in contemporary art and curation, and we look forward to the meaningful discussions it will spark.”

The Doha programme features a symposium on *Disrupture: Perspectives from the Arabian Peninsula*, examining how curators, artists, and institutions in the Gulf contribute to contemporary discourse.

The opening remarks were delivered by Kraidy, followed by a keynote address on *Beyond Centre and Periphery* by artist Oraib Toukan, and two panel discussions.

The first panel, on *Museums in the Making*, chaired by Zeina Arida, director of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, explored the development of museum spaces and their impact on artistic and cultural engagement.

The panellists were Sheikha Alanood al-Thani, Lina Ramadan, Meriam Berrada and Caroline Hancock.

The second panel on *Unlearning and Relearning*, led by Alfredo Cramerotti, director of The Media Majlis Museum and IKT president, examined shifting approaches to curation.

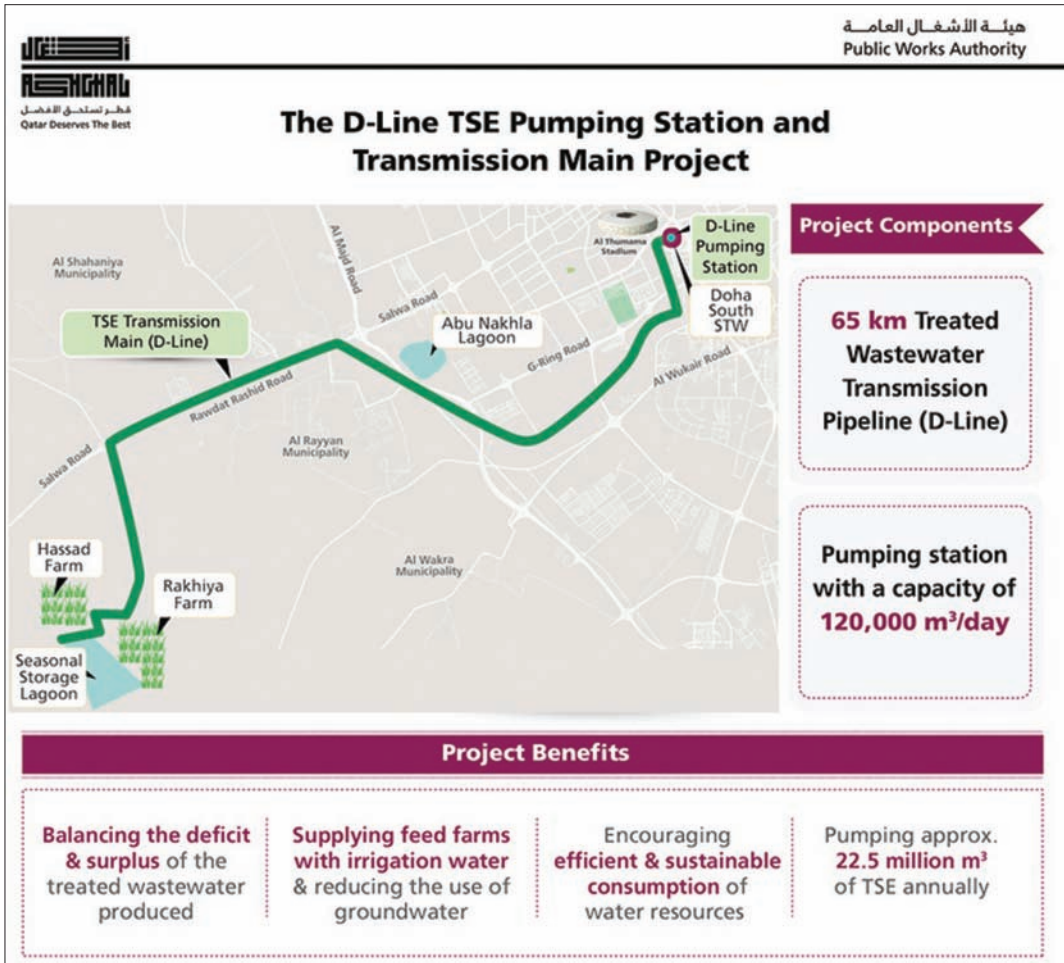
The speakers were Tirdad Zolghadr, Nadine Khalil, Effat Fadag, Holiday Powers and Miguel Blanco-Carrasco.

Cramerotti underscored the significance of the event, saying: “Art, curating knowledge, and interdisciplinarity are at the core of the Media Majlis Museum.”

“It’s an honour to explore these topics in the Gulf context with esteemed guests and international curators,” he said. “The IKT Congress 2025 offers a valuable platform for gaining new perspectives and addressing critical issues central to our museum’s work and exhibitions.”

Moving to Abu Dhabi, the symposium will continue with a keynote address on *Museum Booms and Micro-ecologies*, presented by Mana Ataya, museums adviser to the Sharjah Museums Authority.

The symposium will feature a segment of rapid-fire case studies featuring well-renowned personalities, including Salwa Mikdadi; founder of Al Mawrid; Bana Kattan, curator at Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; Stephanie Rosenthal, director at Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project; Vilma Jurkute, executive director of Alserkal Initiatives; and Pradeep Sharma, director of arts, culture and heritage at Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.



Ashghal’s D-Line project to be completed by year-end

The Treated Sewage Effluent (TSE) Transmission Main and Pumping Station (D-Line) project will be completed by the end of this year, according to the official website of the Public Works Authority (Ashghal).

Once functional, the station will irrigate farms and reduce groundwater consumption remarkably.

The project will pump approximately 22.5mn cubic metres of treated wastewater annually, which is to be reused to supply feed farms with irrigation water while reducing the use of groundwater.

“The project aims to transfer treated wastewater from the Doha South Sewage Treatment Works (STW) in Nuaija area to the Seasonal Storage Lagoons, with the aim of balancing the deficit and surplus of the treated sewage water and achieving its optimal use,” it is explained.

The project includes the construction of a pumping station with a capacity of 120,000 cubic metres/day, which will pump the TSE flow from the Doha

South STW to the seasonal storage lagoons.

This is in addition to the mechanical, electrical and related equipment works.

The D-Line project passes through the Rakhiya farms while serving to meet its irrigation needs.

The project is part of the public authority’s efforts to benefit from treated wastewater and encourage efficient and sustainable consumption of water resources.

This is in line with the sustainable development objectives and the Qatar National Environment and Climate Change Strategy, which includes reusing 100% of treated wastewater by 2030.

The project consists of a 65km-long TSE transmission pipeline that starts at the existing Doha South Sewage Treatment Works and to be laid along the main service route of Salwa Road, passing through the Rakhiya farms and surrounding areas and up to the TSE Storage Lagoons where excess treated wastewater is stored.

Qatar Cultural Week kicks off in Baku tomorrow

The Ministry of Culture is organising the Qatar Cultural Week in Azerbaijan, from April 10-13, in the capital, Baku, with the participation of a select group of Qatari artists, craftsmen, and creators.

This event comes within the framework of the ministry’s ongoing efforts to promote cultural exchange and build bridges of communication between peoples.

It also comes within the context of the growing relations between Qatar and Azerbaijan.

Qatar Cultural Week aims to highlight the Qatari identity and introduce Azerbaijani and international audiences to Qatar’s heritage.



Through a packed programme of activities, the cultural week provides a platform for cultural interaction and exchange of experiences between creative people from both countries.

Qatar Cultural Week includes a series of artistic and heritage events that highlight various aspects of Qatari culture.

Preserving Cultural Crafts programme concludes with collection display at M7

M7, Qatar’s premier creative epicentre for fashion, design, and technology, has announced the conclusion of a year-long collaboration aimed at preserving the heritage of Sadu weaving and modernising it to fit into today’s world of design.

In partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and Family and NAMA, M7 worked by connecting the weavers with designers to create unique pieces, currently on display at Studio 7 in M7 until April 11.

This initiative marked the first collaboration between M7 and the ministry, with the goal to expand Doha’s community of weavers, modernise the Sadu craft, and encourage designers to incorporate it into their work, ensuring the preservation of this vital cultural practice.

The first step was to foster a new generation of Sadu weavers, beginning with the ministry organising a training programme for women to learn the craft.

M7 then facilitated partnerships between designers and artisans to create collaborative pieces, which are now on display and available for purchase at Studio 7.

The pop-up showcases works from talented designers, including Qatar-based Meshael al-Nuaimi (Mhefhef), Brand (MEDD), and international guest designer Abdelgader El Tayeb, a previous Fashion Trust Arabia Prize winner for Debut Talent.

The programme not only preserved traditional crafts like Sadu weaving, but empowered individuals to master the craft, and transition from consumers to professional craft owners.

The designers’ collections beautifully blend the heritage of Sadu weaving with contemporary design elements, bridging Qatar’s traditions with modern expression.

Through the Preserving Cultural Crafts pro-



gramme, M7 facilitated connections with designers and the weavers to create a diverse range of contemporary pieces.

This initiative played a crucial role in integrating traditional craftsmanship with modern design, ensuring Qatari heritage thrives and is celebrated for future generations.

This programme not only highlighted the talents of local designers but also aligned with M7’s mission to empower the creative community, inspire local talent, and support the next generation of Qatari design innovators. – QNA

Qatar’s ambassador re-elected as FAO Council vice-chairperson

Qatar’s ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Agencies based in Rome, Khalid bin Youssef al-Sada, was re-elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Council, during the opening of the council’s 177th session. During the

session, the council will discuss the humanitarian and food conditions in Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Myanmar, and the Congo, in addition to issues related to the organisation’s General Conference, which will be held from June 28 to July 4. (QNA)

Philippine president meets Qatar’s envoy



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met yesterday with Qatar’s ambassador Ahmed Saad al-Hamidi. The meeting discussed bilateral relations. (QNA)

Libyan Presidential Council VP meets Qatar’s ambassador

Vice-President of the Presidential Council of Libya Abdullah al-Lafi met in Tripoli with Qatar’s ambassador Dr Khaled Mohammed bin Zabin al-Dosari. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation between the countries. (QNA)



National Council of Austria president meets Qatar’s envoy

President of the National Council of Austria, Walter Rosenkranz, met with Qatar’s ambassador in Vienna, Jassim Yacoub al-Hammadi. The meeting discussed co-operation between the countries. (QNA)



Qatar gets ready to host ‘Build Your House’ expo from April 28

The sixth edition of ‘Build Your House’ (BYH) returns to Qatar, alongside the inaugural ‘Inspire Exhibitions 2025’, creating a platform for home construction, interior design, and innovative building solutions.

Scheduled at the Qatar National Convention Centre from April 28 to May 1, 2025, the exhibitions will bring together homebuilders, consultants, suppliers, and key industry leaders to help anyone who is interested in designing and building their dream home.

The event will feature prominent governmental entities, such as the Ministry of Municipality, the Ministry of Social Development and Family, Kahramaa, and the Civil Defence of Qatar. Their presence provides valuable insights into regulatory processes, approvals, and essential services, demonstrating the government’s support in facilitating a seamless home-building journey.

This year’s exhibition will showcase the latest advancements in luxury home construction, high-end interior design and bespoke living solutions for Qatari homeowners. Complementing BYH, Inspire Exhibitions will feature a diverse range of premium home decor, unique gifts and elegant furnishings that elevate modern living. Together, these events create a refined and com-



The previous edition of BYH featured over 250 exhibitors and co-exhibitors, hosted more than 40 speakers, and generated QR800mn in deal value.

prehensive experience, offering inspiration and tailored solutions for those building their dream homes in Qatar. Visitors will have access to the ‘Mostashari’ programme, a free-to-join initiative that offers aspiring homeowners access to personalised consultations with expert advisors, guiding them through every stage of their home-building journey – from architecture and design to innovative construction techniques. Visitors will be able to directly talk to top industry professionals, providing tailored advice on everything from permits and materials to layout and design –

ensuring each visitor leaves with a clear, confident path towards building their dream home.

The previous edition of BYH featured over 250 exhibitors and co-exhibitors, hosted more than 40 speakers, and generated QR800mn in deal value. This year’s event is expected to surpass these achievements, offering even greater opportunities for networking and business growth.

Visitors can register for free at <http://buildyourhouseqatar.com/home/visit> to attend BYH and Inspire Exhibitions 2025 and explore the latest trends in home building and design.

Arab, global filmmakers laud Qumra 2025



Nicolas Khoury, Zahraa Ghandour, Yanis Koussim, Hasan Hadi, Erige Sehiri and Zoulikha Tahar attend Projects Interview Qumra Mena Projects on day four of Qumra 2025.



Pablo Perez Lombardini, Hamed Zholfaghari, Helene Harder and Guillermo Garcia Lopez attend Projects Interview Qumra International Projects on day four of Qumra 2025.

Emerging Arab and international filmmakers presenting their projects at Qumra 2025 lauded the industry event for supporting powerful stories from script to screen.

They said Qumra provides a space for collaboration, community, and critical exposure. Pablo Perez Lombardini, now in the final stages of his debut film *The Reserve* (Mexico, Qatar), said: “Qumra provides us with valuable relationships for our current and future films. It makes you feel like you are part of a community and has surpassed expectations.”

Helene Harder, the French-German director of the documentary *Fatna, a Woman Named Rachid* (France, Morocco, Belgium, Qatar), said: “Doha Film Institute (DFI) helps create buzz and knowledge around our films”. Hamed Zolfaghari, the Iranian

filmmaker blending reality with fantasy to capture the clash of past and present in his documentary, *Once Upon a Time in Shiraz* (Iran, France, Norway, South Korea, Qatar), said: “Without an audience, there’s no film. Qumra is helping us get our audience by working to gather distributors, sales agents, and broadcasters, which enables us to reach our audience internationally.”

Whether tackling issues of immigration, displacement, or inequality, the emerging filmmakers all spoke of deeply personal perspectives. Emphasising the power of cinema to inspire change, they described years-long journeys of development requiring persistence, patience, and trust-building with under-represented communities.

Madrid-born Guillermo Garcia Lopez spent three years living



Helene Harder’s *Fatna, a Woman Named Rachid* (France, Morocco, Belgium, Qatar).

among the concerned community to gain their confidence ahead of shooting his feature film *Sleepless City* (Spain, France, Qatar).

“When society wants to exclude a community, they take away electricity, water, but also culture,” he said. He found creative ways to involve everyone. “We were doing film workshops with the kids, making films with phones, and later had a short film in Cannes, which we consider a success for representation and visibility.”

Qatari filmmakers praise DFI’s supportive role

Qatari and Qatar-resident filmmakers have emphasised the vital role played by the Doha Film Institute (DFI) in supporting their creative projects and cinematic endeavours, helping them take their ideas to a global stage and guiding them along the right path to confidently contribute to the creative industry.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the filmmakers praised the Qumra Film Forum a cinematic incubator for emerging talents from the Arab world and beyond as a testament to DFI’s commitment to nurturing new voices in cinema from Qatar and around the world. They highlighted the value of the forum’s 11th edition, which offered them expert guidance and insights at various stages of their filmmaking journey.

They noted that the mentorship sessions, workshops, and panel discussions delivered by international cinema professionals during Qumra helped them better understand essential tools for honing their skills and developing their projects. These sessions also provided opportunities to connect and exchange experiences with leading names in the global film and creative industries.

Dr Jamal Rashid al-Khunji, director of the documentary *My Wallfish Mino*, currently in production, told QNA that the film’s title refers to a rare and elusive fish, with “Mino” meaning “fish” in Swahili. He shared that he began working on the film five years ago, and that the Doha Film Institute supported the project throughout all its stages financially and creatively including through Qumra and its global

network of experts. He added: “The Doha Film Institute has enabled us to bring our local voices to the global stage and to break prevailing stereotypes about Qatari youth. This responsibility motivates us to showcase the beauty of our country whether through drama, documentaries, or other genres.”

Through his film, al-Khunji aims to explore family relationships from the perspective of an Arab man. “The conversations I have with my mother and children are moments that usually happen behind closed doors. The film dives into themes that are rarely discussed, and I wanted to challenge stereotypical portrayals of men in this region. There are many indirect messages aimed at society.”

For her part, director Jawaher al-Thani, who is working on the feature film *Sari and Ameera*, said the project is currently in production. She added that she is also working on another feature film, a passion project that has taken ten years to write.

Jawaher remarked that Arab cinema is currently experiencing “a surge of brilliance and is carving out its place in the global film industry.” Commenting on her focus on desert-themed films, she said: “The desert holds a rich history and heritage that deserves to be explored and shared with the world.”

Filmmaker Nadia al-Khater is participating in Qumra with her film *Like a Meteor*, which tells the story of a warrior-poet confronting his past.

“I work with many young people, and I see the talent pool expanding day by day,” al-Khater said.



Meanwhile, Maryam al-Mohannadi, a student at Northwestern University in Qatar, is presenting her film *Fate and Destiny*, which revolves around a young woman seeking to separate from her husband a decision that leads to a tense confrontation with her mother.

Maryam said she wanted to explore a topic that is both common and complex divorce encouraging audiences to reflect on its causes, as it is a subject with global relevance.

For her part, filmmaker Amina al-Banai, director of *Inside the White Canvas*, said that narrative filmmaking has always been a passion of hers, and that the Doha Film Institute (DFI) played a key role in helping her train in screenwriting and directing techniques.

Al-Banai shared that her film addresses the topic of mental health, especially after observing how many young people have

become emotionally stagnant due to over-exposure to technology and social media, which often leaves them feeling helpless and depressed.

Photographer and director Iman Mirghani, in her film *Villa 187* (Sudan, Qatar), explores a deeply personal theme tied to memory and place, depicting the emotional pain of leaving the home her family lived in for thirty years.

Meanwhile, director Mohammed Fakhro presents his comedy *Salfa*, which follows a Qatari food blogger who signs up for an artificial intelligence app that promises to boost his follower count. “The film touches on traditional societal expectations of who we are today, contrasted with the digital pressures imposed by global trends,” he explained.

The animated film *The Sad Boy*, by N&L&S, tells the story of a young boy overwhelmed by sorrow and painful memo-

ries. The filmmaker noted that this marks her first experience directing an animated film, describing it as “an emotional journey that connects viewers to the character’s internal struggles, emphasising the need for empathy and healing.”

Among the intergenerational Qatari stories featured is *Abu Fanous* (Qatar Morocco), directed by Ameera Abu Jbara and Houria al-Haddad. It follows an elderly grandfather who tries to protect his grandson from a mysterious and frightening presence in the dark.

Other Qatari-linked artistic projects include *Ghafa* (Lebanon, Qatar) by Tony al-Ghazal, which centres on a meticulous watchmaker racing against time to create the perfect watch for his only daughter; and *Sifting* (Yemen, Qatar) by Afnan Taj, which tells the story of a seasoned maid named Sita, who secretly rummages through packed belongings in search of a precious keepsake before it is lost forever.

The project *I Am You* (Lebanon, Qatar) by Myriam Salloum explores how psychological inheritance passes through generations, manifesting in various aspects of life and often leading to devastating consequences.

In *Bil-Filastini* (Jordan, Qatar), director Obadah Jarabi follows a man’s journey to find a home for his family, addressing complex themes of identity, belonging, and the refugee experience. Meanwhile, *Voices of Silence* (Colombia, USA, Qatar) by Sebastin Delascasas tells the story of a son struggling to come to terms with his mother’s illness and the evolving meaning of home. (QNA)

Palestinian support gathering in Libya



People hold placards and Palestinian flags during a demonstration in support of the people of Gaza at Martyrs Square in Tripoli, yesterday.

French president says resumption of aid to Gaza ‘top priority’

AFP
El-Arish

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday called the rapid resumption of aid into Gaza a “top priority” during a visit to the Egyptian city of El-Arish, a key transit point for supplies to the war-battered Palestinian territory.

“The situation today is intolerable,” Macron said near the border with Gaza, calling for the “resumption of humanitarian aid as quickly as possible.”

Nearly all of Gaza’s 2.4mn residents have been displaced – many multiple times – by Israel’s devastating military campaign, launched in response to the October 2023 storming of Israel led by Palestinian Hamas group. Israel resumed its assault on Gaza on March 18, following a nearly two-month-long ceasefire. Since March 2, it has blocked the entry of humanitarian aid into the territory after disagreements with Hamas over how to proceed with the truce after its first phase expired.

When asked about US President Donald Trump’s proposal to take over the territory and redevelop it into what he has called the “Riviera of the Middle East”, displacing its Palestinian residents, Macron said “it’s not a real estate project”.

“The reality is that you have two million people locked up... After months and months of bombing, of a terrible war, tens of thousands of people have lost their lives,” said the French president. “You have tens of thousands of children who are



Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and French President Emmanuel Macron talk to medics at a ward for Palestinian patients at El Arish Hospital, close to the border with the Gaza Strip, in Arish, yesterday.

mutilated without families. This is what we’re talking about when we talk about Gaza.”

Alongside his Egyptian host Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Macron earlier toured a hospital in the port city, 50 kilometres west of the Gaza Strip, and met with medical professionals and sick and wounded Palestinians evacuated from Gaza.

Carrying a bouquet of red roses to give to patients, the French president visited several wards as well as a play area for children. His office said the trip was aimed at piling pressure on Israel for “the reopening of crossing points for the delivery of humanitarian goods into Gaza”. He also condemned an Israeli attack last month that killed 15 medics and aid workers, according to the UN and Palestinian rescuers.

“Above all, humanitarian workers must be protected when they intervene, because they are

not stakeholders” in the conflict, Macron said. Emergency department doctor Mahmud Mohammad Elshaer said the hospital had treated around 1,200 Palestinian patients since the Gaza war began in October 2023. “Some days we can receive 100 patients, others 50,” Elshaer said, adding that many had limbs amputated or sustained eye or brain injuries.

In Cairo, Macron, Sisi and Jordan’s King Abdullah II called for an “immediate return” to the ceasefire.

The three leaders met on Monday to discuss the war and humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of Gaza’s 2.4mn people. In a joint statement on Monday, the heads of several UN agencies said many Gazans are “trapped, bombed and starved again, while, at crossing points, food, medicine, fuel and shelter supplies are piling up, and vital equipment is stuck” outside of the blockaded territory.

Iran says agreement can be reached if US shows goodwill

AFP
Tehran

Iran said yesterday a new nuclear deal could be agreed with the United States provided Tehran’s longtime foe shows sufficient goodwill in upcoming talks, but warned it would never accept coercion. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meanwhile warned that “the military option” would become “inevitable” if talks between Washington and Tehran drag on.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran’s principal aim remained the lifting of sweeping US sanctions. Their reimposition by President Donald Trump in 2018 has dealt a heavy blow to the Iranian economy. Trump made the surprise announcement that his administration would open talks with Iran during a White House meeting on Monday with Netanyahu, whose country is an arch foe of Tehran.

Trump said the talks would be “direct” but Araghchi insisted his negotiations with US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff on Saturday would be “indirect”. “We will not accept any other form of negotiation,” Araghchi told official media. “The format of the negotiations... is not the most important thing in my view. What really counts is the effectiveness or otherwise of the talks.

“If the other side shows enough of the necessary willingness, a deal can be found... The ball is in America’s court.”

Speaking Monday in the Oval Office, Trump said he was hopeful of reaching a deal with Tehran, but warned that the Islamic republic would be in “great danger” if the talks failed.

Following a meeting with Trump, Netanyahu said in a video statement yesterday that “we agree that Iran will not have nuclear weapons”.

“This can be done in an agreement, but only if... they go in, blow up (Iran’s) facilities, dismantle all the equipment, under American supervision”, he said, adding that if talks drag on, “then the military option becomes inevitable”.

Netanyahu was a bitter opponent of the 2015 agreement between Iran and Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States which Trump later abandoned.

In a column in the *Washington Post* yesterday, Araghchi wrote: “To move forward today, we first need to agree that there can be no ‘military option,’ let alone a ‘military solution”.

“For its part, the United States can show that it is serious about diplomacy by showing that it will stick to any deal it makes. If we are shown respect, we will reciprocate it,” he continued.

Trump’s announcement came after Iran dismissed direct negotiations on a new deal to curb the country’s nuclear activities, calling the idea pointless.

The US president pulled out of the last deal in 2018, during his first presidency, and there has been widespread speculation that Israel, possibly with US help,



Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said Iran’s principal aim remained the lifting of sweeping US sanctions.

might attack Iranian facilities if no new agreement is reached.

In Iran, some appeared wary but hopeful that the talks would yield results.

“Given the intense pressure on the population today, it seems that government officials have realised that the only solution is to negotiate directly with the United States,” said lawyer Fatemeh Rezaei, 28.

“I hope these negotiations will lead to a (positive) outcome and that we will all get through this situation safe and sound.”

Trump issued a stern warning to Tehran.

“I think if the talks aren’t successful with Iran, I think Iran’s going to be in great danger... because they can’t have a nuclear weapon,” he said.

In an interview with US network NBC late last month, Trump went further, saying: “If they don’t make a deal, there will be bombing.”

China and Russia held consultations with Iran in Moscow yesterday, after which the Kremlin welcomed the planned talks.

Key Iranian ally Russia welcomed the prospect of negotiations for a new nuclear accord, which would replace the deal with major powers that was unilaterally abandoned by Trump in 2018.

“Of course, this can only be welcomed because it can lead to de-escalation of tensions around Iran,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, adding that Moscow “absolutely” supported the initiative. China called on the United States to “stop its wrong practice of using force to exert extreme pressure” after Trump threatened Iran with bombing if it fails to agree a deal.

As the country that withdrew from the nuclear deal, “the United States should demonstrate political sincerity (and)... mutual respect,” its foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.

Troops shoot dead Palestinian woman in West Bank: ministry

AFP
Hares

The Palestinian health ministry said Israeli troops killed a 30-year-old woman near the West Bank city of Salfit yesterday after what the army described as an attempted stabbing.

The ministry reported the death of Amana Ibrahim Mohammed Yaqub, 30, “who was shot by (Israeli) forces near Salfit”, south of Nablus.

An AFP journalist reported

seeing a lifeless body under a foil blanket by the roadside at the scene of the attack.

Yaqub was a lawyer and mother of three from nearby Biddya, said the village’s mayor, Ahmed Abu Safiyeh. The Israeli military said yesterday that Israeli settlers set fire to a Palestinian event hall overnight in the area of Biddya, and that no injuries were reported.

An AFP journalist reported most of the hall was burned to the ground, and that settlers left graffiti in Hebrew on nearby walls.

The area around Salfit and Biddya is dense with Israeli settlements, including the town of Ariel.

Since the start of the Gaza war in October 2023, violence has soared in the occupied West Bank. Israeli troops and settlers have killed at least 918 Palestinians in the territory, according to health ministry figures. Palestinian attacks and clashes during military raids have killed at least 33 Israelis, including soldiers, over the same period, according to Israeli figures.

Three US men serving life terms over DRC coup bid sent back

AFP
Kinshasa

Three Americans whose death sentences for a foiled coup were commuted to life imprisonment have been repatriated to the United States, the Congolese presidency announced yesterday.

The trio, aged between 23 and 37, were among 37 people sentenced to death over the alleged May coup attempt, in which armed men attacked a minister’s home before heading to presidential offices.

On May 19, dozens of armed men attacked the home of the current president of the National Assembly, Vital Kamerhe, at night. They then went to a building housing President Felix Tshisekedi’s offices waving flags of Zaire, the country’s name under ex-dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who was overthrown in 1997.

They filmed themselves proclaiming the end of the regime.

The alleged plot was led by Christian Malanga, a Congolese man who was a “naturalised American” and who was killed by security forces.

The three men sent back were

are Marcel Malenga, Christian Malanga’s son; Tyler Thompson, a friend of Marcel Malenga; and Benjamin Reuben Zalman-Polun.

They will serve their sentences in the US, Tshisekedi’s spokeswoman Tina Salama said in a message posted on X.

The DRC government lifted a moratorium on the execution of the death penalty in March, in effect since 2003, sparking outrage among human rights organisations. More than 100 death sentences have since been handed down, but no executions have taken place to date.

Anthrax kills 50 hippos in Africa’s oldest nature reserve

AFP
Goma

Anthrax poisoning has killed about 50 hippos in Virunga, Africa’s oldest national park located in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s troubled east, the head of the park said yesterday.

It is caused by a spore-forming bacterium, *Bacillus anthracis*, which survives for decades in soil where animals that died of anthrax or were carriers were buried. It is transmissible to humans and potentially fatal in its inhaled form.

The hippopotamuses were found floating in a river south of Lake Edward, which separates the DRC from Uganda, park director Emmanuel de Merode said.

The local office of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) in the North Kivu province, where the hippos were found floating, recommended precautionary measures including avoiding eating bushmeat.



A dead hippo lies in the water due to anthrax killing the animals in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo, in this undated handout picture released yesterday.

“Although this disease mainly affects wildlife, it poses a potential risk of transmission to humans as well as domestic animals,” said the body, which manages national parks in the DRC.

Virunga was established in 1925 and is renowned for its wildlife, particularly mountain gorillas,

and magnificent landscapes. It is also located at the heart of the conflicts that have been tearing the eastern DRC apart for the past 30 years. Hippopotamuses and other mammals have already fallen victim to anthrax several times in Virunga and other nature reserves in Africa.

Nigerian celebrity jailed for abusing banknotes

A Nigerian court yesterday jailed a popular make-up artist for six months for abusing the national currency by throwing bank notes in the air at his wedding, the anti-graft agency said, AFP reported from Lagos. Celebrating with bank notes, known as “spraying”, is common at Nigerian weddings and parties, but prohibited by law for insulting the

national naira currency. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) said in a statement that a federal high court in the northern city of Kano jailed Abdullahi Musa Huseini, also known as Amuscap, for six months for naira abuse. It said he threw one hundred 1,000 naira notes, together worth about \$63, at his wedding in December.



US ‘should maintain current military presence in Europe’

The top US general in Europe said yesterday that the United States should keep its military presence on the continent as it is now, as the Pentagon reviews its global footprint under President Donald Trump.

The US military had more than 100,000 troops in Europe following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, but US Army General Christopher Cavoli said that the number had been reduced to 80,000.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has

said that Europe should not assume that the US presence will last forever.

“It’s my advice to maintain that force posture as it is now,” Cavoli told lawmakers during a House Armed Services Committee hearing.

He said the military had periodically reviewed its troop levels in Europe since 2022 when Washington poured thousands of troops into the continent, but he had recommended against bringing troop levels down.

“I have consistently recommended throughout that period to maintain the forces we surged forward, and I would continue to do so if asked,” he added.

European belief in the US as the continent’s ultimate protector against any attack from Russia has been severely shaken by Trump’s attempted rapprochement with Moscow and heavy pressure on Kyiv as he seeks to end the war.

The potential changes in the US military presence in Europe come amid concerns

there over the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato), the transatlantic alliance that has been the bedrock of European security for the past 75 years.

Asked if there were any plans to move forces from Nato’s eastern flank, Cavoli said that troops frequently move around, but added: “The principal locations where we have forces right now, that’s where they are, and that’s where I’m planning to keep them.”

During the hearing, both Republican

and Democratic lawmakers said it would be a mistake to remove troops from Europe.

Ultimately what happens with US forces in Europe will be a decision made by Hegseth and Trump.

Russia’s war in Ukraine has left hundreds of thousands of dead and injured, displaced millions of people, reduced towns to rubble and triggered the sharpest confrontation for decades between Moscow and the West. – **Reuters**

US Supreme Court blocks order reinstating fired federal workers

Reuters/AFP
Washington

The US Supreme Court has blocked a judge’s order for President Donald Trump’s administration to rehire thousands of fired employees, acting in one dispute over his efforts to slash the federal workforce and dismantle parts of the government.

The court put on hold San Francisco-based US Judge William Alsup’s March 13 injunction requiring six federal agencies to reinstate thousands of recently hired probationary employees while litigation challenging the legality of the dismissals continues.

Alsup had said that the justification of “poor performance” given for the mass firings was a “sham” and he ordered the departments of the Treasury, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Defence, Energy and Interior to reinstate fired probationary employees.

It was the latest decision in recent days in which the Supreme Court, which has a 6-3 conservative majority, sided with the Republican president.

Probationary workers typically have less

than a year of service in their current roles, though some are long-time federal employees in serving new roles.

The practical effect of the Supreme Court decision will be limited given that five agencies covered by Alsup’s decision – all but the Department of Defence – are defendants in a separate lawsuit in Maryland.

In that case, a federal judge also has ordered the administration to reinstate thousands of probationary workers at 18 federal agencies, but only if they live or work in Washington, DC, or the 19 states that sued over the mass firings.

The Supreme Court’s decision may have an immediate impact on probationary Defence Department employees and those at the five other agencies who are based in states not involved in the Maryland case.

The Pentagon has not said how many probationary employees it removed or brought back, but it said previously it was aiming to remove about 5,400 probationary civilian employees.

The Supreme Court in its brief and unsigned order said the nine non-profit organisations that were granted an injunction in response to their lawsuit lacked the legal standing to sue.

The court said that its order did not address claims by other plaintiffs in the case, “which did not form the basis of the district court’s preliminary injunction”.

Liberal Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson publicly dissented from the decision.

A coalition of nonprofit groups and labour unions, as well as the Democratic-governed state of Washington, sued the US Office of Personnel Management, the agency that manages the federal civilian workforce, claiming that it did not have the authority to direct firings by agencies or to falsely state they were for performance reasons.

The coalition of plaintiffs called yesterday’s decision “deeply disappointing” but said the setback was only momentary, vowing to be “back in court tomorrow” to pursue alternative grounds for relief.

“There is no doubt that thousands of public service employees were unlawfully fired in an effort to cripple federal agencies and their crucial programs that serve millions of Americans every day,” the coalition said in a statement.

Trump and billionaire adviser Elon Musk have moved quickly to shrink the federal

bureaucracy and remake the government.

Eric Engle, head of the local union chapter representing roughly 85 recently reinstated employees of the Bureau of the Fiscal Service in Parkersburg, West Virginia, expressed concern that the ruling could mean those employees will be fired again because West Virginia was not one of the 19 states that sued in the Maryland case.

“This is a nightmare for these poor people. One of them I know who works in my area literally just got back to her desk behind mine an hour prior to this announcement,” said Engle, who is the chief steward of National Treasury Employees Union Chapter 190 and an employee of the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, part of the Treasury Department.

“If the president can just ignore civil service protections and unions with the legal right to represent bargaining unit employees have no standing in court, then millions of us are already living under a dictatorship,” Engle said.

The administration had urged the Supreme Court to lift Alsup’s order, contending that the judge had overstepped his authority in directing the reinstatement of 16,000 employees.

Trump can pursue deportations under 1798 law: apex court

The US Supreme Court handed President Donald Trump a victory on Monday by lifting a lower court order barring the deportation of undocumented Venezuelan migrants using an obscure wartime law.

However, the nation’s top court also said that migrants subject to deportation under the 1798 Alien Enemies Act (AEA) must be given an opportunity to legally challenge their removal.

The 5-4 decision by the conservative-dominated Supreme Court will allow the Trump administration to resume deportations for now that had been blocked by a federal district court judge.

Trump invoked the AEA, which has only previously been used during wartime, to round up alleged Venezuelan gang members and summarily deport them to a notorious maximum security prison in El Salvador.

Attorneys for several of the deported Venezuelans have said that their clients were not members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, had committed no crimes and were targeted largely on the basis of their tattoos.

The 1798 law authorises the president to deport, detain or place restrictions on individuals whose primary allegiance is to a foreign power and who might pose a national security risk in wartime.

District Judge James Boasberg issued temporary restraining orders barring further flights of deportees under the AEA after planeloads of Venezuelan migrants were sent to El Salvador on March 15.

The Supreme Court lifted Boasberg’s orders but mostly on technical grounds related to venue – that the group of Venezuelan migrants who sued to prevent their removal are in Texas while the case before Boasberg was brought in Washington.

Chief Justice John Roberts and four other conservative justices voted to lift the district court order’s temporarily barring the deportations using the 1798 law.

The three liberal justices and Justice Amy Coney Barrett, a Trump appointee, dissented.

“The President of the United States has invoked a centuries-old wartime statute to whisk people away to a notoriously brutal, foreign-run prison,” Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said.

“For lovers of liberty, this should be quite concerning,” she wrote. – **AFP/Reuters**



A drone view shows the site of the collapsed nightclub in Santo Domingo. – **Reuters**

At least 44 dead in Dominican Republic building roof collapse

Rescuers raced to find survivors yesterday among the rubble of a Dominican Republic nightclub where at least 44 people died and dozens were hurt in an early-morning roof collapse.

Some 400 rescue personnel combed through the ruins as trapped people cried out for help from the debris of what was the Jet Set nightclub in the Caribbean nation’s capital Santo Domingo.

Dozens of ambulances ferried the injured to hospital, as scores of people gathered clamouring for news of their missing loved ones, who included renowned Dominican merengue singer Rubby Perez.

Perez, 69, was on stage when there was a sudden blackout and the roof came crashing down, according to eyewitness reports.

“It was sudden. I thought it was an earthquake, so I threw myself to the ground and covered my head,” Enrique Paulino, Perez’s manager, told reporters. “One of our saxophonists is dead, we tried to get to the area where Rubby was but there was too much debris there.”

Perez’s daughter Zulinka told re-

porters that she had managed to escape after the roof collapsed, but he did not.

After many desperate hours without news, Zulinka later said she had confirmation that her father was “alive”, though injured and still trapped in the debris.

Local media said there were between 500 and 1,000 people in the club when disaster struck.

Among the dead was the governor of the Monte Cristi municipality, Nelsy Cruz, who succumbed to her injuries in hospital, according to President Luis Abinader.

“Forty-four dead according to preliminary data so far. We continue to work,” Juan Manuel Mendez, director of the Emergency Operations Centre (COE), told journalists several hours into the operation.

He said the number of injured exceeded 100.

“As long as there is hope for life, all authorities will be working to recover or rescue these people,” said Mendez.

Iris Pena, a woman who had attended the show, told SIN television how she escaped with her son.

“At one point, dirt started falling like

dust into the drink on the table. I asked the security officers... whether the ground had shaken,” she said.

“A stone fell and cracked the table where we were, and we got out,” Pena recounted, adding: “The impact was so strong, as if it had been a tsunami or an earthquake.”

Dozens of family members flocked to hospitals for news.

“We are desperate,” Regina del Rosa, whose sister was at the concert, told the Dominican channel SIN. “They are not giving us news, they are not telling us anything.”

At the scene, meanwhile, helicopter images revealed a large hole where the club’s roof once was.

A construction crane was helping lift some of the heavier rubble as men in hard hats dug through the debris.

The authorities have issued a call for Dominicans to donate blood.

“We are rescuing all the people we can save alive and recovering those bodies we find along the way. But we have focused on people we can rescue alive because we hear them asking for help,” Mendez said.

“The main objective is to save lives,” Abinader said as he arrived at the scene.

The Instagram page of the Jet Set club said it has been in operation for more than 50 years, with shows every Monday until the early hours.

Yesterday the club issued a statement saying that it had “collaborated fully and transparently with the authorities to help the victims and clarify what happened”. – **AFP**

Mexico reports first human death from H5N1 bird flu

A three-year-old girl has become Mexico’s first human fatality from H5N1 bird flu, health officials said yesterday.

The girl from the state of Coahuila died of multiple organ failure after infection with the virus, Coahuila Health Minister Eliud Aguirre said, adding that there were no other known cases of infection.

“We are monitoring all individuals who had close contact with the patient and conducting tests to determine if they are infected. So far, no one has tested positive,” Aguirre said.

Cambodia has reported two deaths due to H5N1 this year, including that of a toddler in February who had slept and played near a chicken cage where about 15 birds died.

The United States has reported one death, in January.

Infections in humans can cause severe disease with a high mortality rate, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The UN agency says that human cases detected so far are mostly linked to close contact with infected birds and other animals, and contaminated environments.

Last year, the UN’s health body warned that patchy surveillance was hampering its ability to manage the risk to humans posed by the H5N1 strain.

The WHO called on all countries to step up surveillance and reporting in animals and humans, and for nations to share samples and genetic sequences. – **AFP/Reuters**

DOJ crypto enforcement team disbanded

The US Justice Department (DOJ) is disbanding its National Cryptocurrency Enforcement Team and ordering prosecutors to narrow crypto investigations to focus on drug cartels and terrorist groups, according to a memo seen by Reuters.

The memo from Deputy Attorney-General Todd Blanche, sent out to employees late on Monday night, accused former Democratic president Joe Biden’s administration of pursuing a “reckless strategy of regulation by prosecution” of the digital asset sector.

The unit, known as NCET and launched in February 2022 as part of the administration’s bid to combat fraud and illicit finance, investigated and co-ordinated cases including one against Binance and its founder Changpeng Zhao, who pleaded guilty to violating laws designed to prevent money laundering.

However, under President Donald Trump, whose family is building its own crypto enterprise, the US government has been reversing course on crypto.

The Republican promised to make the United States the “crypto capital of the planet”.

Going forward, Blanche said, the department will prioritise investigations into “individuals who victimise digital asset investors, or those who use digital assets in furtherance of criminal offences such as terrorism, narcotics and human trafficking, organised crime, hacking, and cartel and gang financing”.

Any ongoing investigations “inconsistent” with this new policy “should be closed”, Blanche wrote.

A Justice Department spokesperson could not be immediately reached for comment.

Blanche cited one of Trump’s executive orders as the basis for his directive.

That executive order calls for the government to help ensure that both individuals and private sector companies can access “open blockchain networks without persecution”.

Trump, who courted the sector on the 2024 campaign trail, has called for easing crypto regulations.

Since he took office, regulators have begun swiftly rolling back the government’s efforts to rein in the industry.

Crypto is a sector in which Trump and his family now have a stake. Reuters previously reported that the Trump family has a claim on 75% of net revenues from token sales by World Liberty Financial, a crypto venture. – **Reuters**

Musk calls Trump aide ‘dumb’ in spat

Billionaire Elon Musk has blasted President Donald Trump’s senior trade adviser Peter Navarro as “truly a moron” and “dumber than a sack of bricks” in a growing rift over the US tariff policy that has rocked the world.

The extraordinary public spat came after Navarro described the Tesla boss and so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) chief as “not a car manufacturer” but “a car assembler” who relies on imported parts.

Musk, the world’s richest person, has signalled his opposition to the president’s new import tariffs that have rolled markets.

“Navarro is truly a moron. What he says here is demonstrably false,” Musk posted on his X social network, under a clip of Navarro saying that Tesla imported batteries, electronics and tyres, and that Musk “wants the cheap foreign parts”.

Musk doubled down in a series of other messages, saying that “Tesla has the most American-made cars. Navarro is dumber than a sack of bricks”.

The White House played down the row.

“Boys will be boys and we will let their public sparring continue,” Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told a briefing when asked if the spat would harm the White House’s messaging on tariffs. “Look, these are obviously two individuals who have very different views on trade and on tariffs.” – **AFP**

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

CRIME

UK teens convicted of killing 80-year-old dog walker

A 15-year-old boy and 13-year-old girl were found guilty yesterday of killing an octogenarian grandfather. The teenagers, who cannot be named because of their ages, were convicted of the manslaughter of 80-year-old Bhim Kohli following a six-week trial. The court was told the boy racially abused Kohli and slapped him in the face with a shoe as the pensioner walked his dog in a park in Braunstone near Leicester, central England, on September 1. The girl encouraged the attack and laughed as she filmed it on her phone, the trial heard. The pair are due to be sentenced on May 20.

LAW AND ORDER

Bangladesh ex-prosecutor arrested for attempted murder

Bangladeshi police yesterday said they arrested a lawyer who served as a senior prosecutor at a court that sentenced Islamist leaders to death under the rule of ousted hardline prime minister Sheikh Hasina. The case is the latest in a string of detentions of people who had held senior positions during Hasina's rule, who is herself wanted on charges of crimes against humanity for the killing of hundreds of protesters during the unrest that toppled her government last August. Tureen Afroz was arrested on Monday night on charges of attempted murder, in a case linked to the student-led uprising, said Muhidul Islam, police deputy commissioner in Dhaka.

DECISION

Lanka parliament votes to impeach jailed police chief

Sri Lanka's parliament opened an impeachment process yesterday to remove the island's controversial police chief, who turned himself in last month after more than two weeks on the run. Inspector-general Deshabandu Tennakoon is already in custody over a botched drug bust that led to the death of an officer and wounded another. Legislators voted unanimously yesterday in favour of a resolution calling for a formal investigation into his conduct. Tennakoon was appointed police chief in November 2023, despite Sri Lanka's highest court ruling that he had tortured a suspect in custody. He is accused of authorising the ill-fated raid in 2023.

DEFENCE

S Korea fires shots at N Korean soldiers

South Korea's military said it had fired warning shots after North Korean soldiers violated the military demarcation line before returning. "Our military conducted warning broadcasts and warning shots after about 10 North Korean soldiers crossed the military demarcation line (MDL) in the eastern area of the demilitarised zone (DMZ) around 5pm local time," the joint chiefs of staff (JCS) said in a text message to reporters. "Our military is closely monitoring the North Korean military's activity and taking necessary measures according to the operational procedures," JCS said. Some of the North Korean soldiers were armed, according to the South Korean military.

Australia ready for Trump tariffs, says PM Albanese

AFP
Sydney

Australia is ready for the impact of Donald Trump's trade tariffs, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday in a first television debate before tightly contested May 3 elections.

The US president's "act of economic self-harm" will dampen global growth, 62-year-old Albanese said as he faced right-leaning opposition leader Peter Dutton.

The US tariffs – including a 10% levy on Australia – present a challenge but "no country is better prepared", the centre-left Labor Party leader told a televised town hall debate in Sydney.

Australia will be able to seize trade opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region, Albanese said.

"We'll continue to negotiate, of course, with the US looking for a better deal for Australia because reciprocal tariffs would, of course, be zero, because we don't impose tariffs on US goods."

Dutton, a 54-year-old former policeman, suggested he would show a stiffer backbone.

"The prime minister of the day should have the ability and the strength of character to be able to stand up against bullies, against those that would seek to do us harm, to keep our country safe," he said.

After suffering a decline in the polls towards the end of its three-year term, support for Albanese's Labor Party appears to be creeping higher in the final stretch to election day.

Latest surveys give his party a narrow lead in the polls as it offers

tax cuts and cheaper healthcare to struggling Australians while condemning Trump's imposts on trade.

Dutton's Liberal-National Party coalition is courting voters with promises to lower the excise on fuel for a year and to reserve a portion of local gas production for Australia.

The opposition leader rejects accusations that he has adopted aspects of the Trump playbook for the campaign.

With an election slogan of 'Let's Get Australia Back on Track', Dutton initially vowed to axe 41,000 public service jobs and end work from home for Canberra-based public servants in a drive for efficiency.

But he retreated from both schemes this week, saying he "made a mistake" with the return-to-office plan, and that the job cuts would be made over time as people leave of their own accord.

Voters consistently cite the cost of living as a top concern, with annual inflation still running at 2.4% in December – down from a 2022 peak of 7.8%.

The starkest difference between the prime minister and his opponent is their approach to climate change.

Albanese's government has embraced the global push towards decarbonisation, warning of a future in which iron ore and polluting coal exports no longer prop up the economy.

His election catchcry is "building Australia's future" – an agenda that includes big subsidies for renewable energy and green manufacturing.

Dutton's signature policy is a US\$200bn scheme to construct seven industrial-scale nuclear reactors while slowing the rollout of solar and wind-generated energy.



Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex leaves the High Court, in central London, yesterday after a court hearing.

Harry's lawyer tells court UK security stance 'unjustified'

Reuters
London

Prince Harry made a rare public appearance in Britain yesterday at London's Royal Courts of Justice to fight the government over changes made to his security after he stepped down from royal duties, which his lawyer branded unjustified.

Harry, King Charles' younger son, is trying to overturn a decision by the Home Office – the ministry responsible for policing – which decided in February 2020 he would not automatically receive personal police security while in Britain.

Last year, the High Court in London ruled the decision was lawful, but the Court of Appeal

agreed to hear the case following a direct application from Harry's lawyers.

He arrived smiling and waving for the two-day hearing.

His lawyer Shaheed Fatima told the court the agency which protects royal and public figures had treated Harry, the Duke of Sussex, on a "bespoke" basis not applied to anyone else.

"It means he has been singled out for different, unjustified and inferior treatment," she said, adding he was not seeking to be treated as he was when a working member of the royal family.

The prince, 40, listened intently as the packed courtroom heard mainly technical legal submissions.

In written submissions, Harry's lawyers said Al Qaeda had recently

called for him to be murdered, and he and his American wife Meghan had been involved in "a dangerous car pursuit with paparazzi in New York City" in 2023.

It was not clear if Harry, now living in California, would be seeing any of his family from whom he has become estranged since his public criticism of his relatives and royal aides.

The court case coincided with the airing of Meghan's new podcast in which she revealed she had been diagnosed with postpartum pre-eclampsia after giving birth to one of the couple's children.

Harry's trip also comes amid a high-profile, bitter dispute with the chief executive of his charity Sentebale, which he founded in honour of his late mother, Princess Diana.

Sophie Chandaoka has accused him of bullying and racism, while Harry, who stepped down from his role at the charity, has called what happened "heartbreaking".

The duke, along with other senior royals, had received full publicly-funded security protection before he stepped back from his royal duties in March 2020.

The Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures, known as RAVEC, then decided Harry would no longer receive the same level of protection.

The government's lawyer James Eadie said the decision was not that personal security should not be provided, but it would not be on the same basis due to the duke's change of status and moving abroad.

Philippines adds speedy warship to maritime arsenal

The Philippines took possession of the first of two corvette-class warships with "advanced weapons and radar systems" yesterday as it faces growing pressure from Beijing in the disputed South China Sea. The arrival of the 3,200-tonne BRP Miguel Malvar is part of a two-ship deal with South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries in 2021. Its sister ship, the BRP Diego Silang, was formally launched in Ulsan, South Korea, last month but has yet to begin the journey to the Philippines. Corvettes are small, fast warships mainly used to protect other vessels from attack. The arrival of the ship marked "a critical step toward developing a self-reliant and credible defence posture", the Philippine defence department said in a statement. It follows months of confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety despite an international ruling its assertion has no merit. "(The) Miguel Malvar is here today



The newly-acquired corvette from South Korea, BRP Miguel Malvar, docked shortly after arriving at Philippine navy's naval operating base in Subic town, Zambales province, north of Manila.

not only to serve as a deterrent and protector of our waters but also as an important component in joint and combined operations" with allies, Philippine defence chief Gilberto Teodoro said at a Subic

Bay naval base ceremony. The deal for the two ships was first unveiled in 2021, five years after Hyundai Heavy Industries had won a contract to build two new frigates for the Philippine navy.

The military said last month that the two corvettes would "significantly enhance the country's naval capabilities amid growing security challenges in the West Philippine Sea".

Lanka passes law to recover stolen assets

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka's government introduced sweeping legislation yesterday to recover stolen assets and pave the way for the prosecution of high-profile politicians from previous administrations, among others.

The Proceeds of Crime bill was passed unanimously in parliament, where the leftist government of President Anura Dissanayake enjoys a two-thirds majority after elections last year.

"This is a historic day for Sri Lanka," Justice Minister Harshana Nanayakkara told the assembly. "This is the first bill of the new government."

He said the bill had been in the works for nine years, but the new administration had accelerated it to deliver on a promise

to pursue politicians who had bankrupted the country.

It allows for the seizure and confiscation of ill-gotten wealth even without a criminal conviction, and it can be applied to unexplained assets accumulated in the past.

The legislation is also in line with an International Monetary Fund bailout programme that the island nation entered into in early 2023, after declaring bankruptcy.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46bn foreign debt in April 2022 after running out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports, such as food, fuel and medicines.

Months of street protests led to the resignation of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, a younger brother of Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ruled for a decade until January 2015.

King Charles, Camilla to mark 20 years of marriage today

AFP
London

King Charles III and Queen Camilla will celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary in Rome today, a union that once scandalised public opinion and shook the monarchy.

The couple, who have known each other for over 50 years, will have little time to enjoy their milestone in private.

After a busy day, they will be the guests of honour at a banquet organised as part of their four-day state visit to Italy.

On Monday, the couple released

three official anniversary photographs to mark the occasion, taken at the official residence of the UK ambassador to Italy.

In a post on their Instagram account, they wrote: "We are so looking forward to celebrating our 20th wedding anniversary in such a special place and with such wonderful people!"

Since February 2024, the 76-year-old king has been undergoing treatment for an unspecified cancer.

He spent a brief spell in hospital last month when he suffered side effects related to his treatment.

But the monarch insisted on carrying on with the trip to Italy with Camilla, 77, whom he often calls his

"beloved wife". They are a close-knit couple, of "similar ages, similar friendships", said royal expert Richard Fitzwilliams. "And she's got a similar sense of humour."

"She makes him laugh. That's so pivotal at a time of crisis," he said.

"You can imagine him being a most impatient patient" who is difficult to persuade to drop his workaholic ways.

Their marriage, after a long and scandalous affair – much of which was conducted while Charles was married to Princess Diana – had to contend with "huge constitutional, political, religious, not to mention familial hurdles that needed to be overcome before

they married", Fitzwilliams said. At the time of their wedding, public opinion was unfavourable. Affection for Diana, who died in a car crash in Paris in 1997, was still keenly felt.

According to one poll, 70% of people were opposed to him marrying Camilla. Queen Elizabeth II, Charles's mother, also took time to accept Camilla.

The question of whether a future king could marry a divorced woman had stirred constitutional experts for years.

The then archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, refused the couple a religious marriage amid opposition from Church of England

leaders because both were divorced.

Mindful of the sensitivities, the statement announcing the marriage was careful to specify that when Charles became king, Camilla would be known as "princess consort" and not queen.

Queen Elizabeth was not present at the civil wedding on April 9, 2005, at Windsor town hall, attended by around 30 guests including Charles and Diana's two sons, princes William and Harry.

She did, however, attend a blessing at Windsor Castle's St George's Chapel and hosted a reception for the bride and groom.

She acknowledged in her toast that her son had overcome "terrible

obstacles" to marry the woman he loved.

Charles first met Camilla in the early 1970s and was immediately captivated by the amusing, down-to-earth woman from an affluent family.

A brief romance ensued, which he ended when he joined the Royal Navy.

Camilla, then 25, married another suitor, the dashing army officer Andrew Parker Bowles, in 1973.

In 1981, a 32-year-old Charles married Diana Spencer, 12 years his junior.

Among the guests at the wedding at St Paul's Cathedral were Camilla and Andrew.



China boosts Indian rapeseed meal purchases

Reuters
Mumbai

China has bought 52,000 tonnes of Indian rapeseed meal in the past three weeks - four times the amount Beijing imported from India in the whole of 2024 - after Chinese authorities

imposed a 100% retaliatory tariff on Canadian imports, industry sources said.

India's rapeseed meal exports will help China, the world's top consumer, replace imports from Canada while easing pressure on local rapeseed prices in India, which is sitting on large stockpiles of the widely used animal feed.

"Chinese buyers started showing interest in Indian rapeseed meal in the last few weeks due to tariffs on Canadian supplies," said an official with a leading rapeseed meal exporter. China imposed a 100% retaliatory tariff on rapeseed meal and oil imports from Canada starting on March 20.

China bought Indian rapeseed

meal for prompt shipments at \$220-235 per metric tonne, on a cost and freight basis, said the sources, who declined to be named because they were not authorised to speak to media.

India, the world's third-largest rapeseed producer, has struggled to export significant amounts of rapeseed meal to China because of higher

prices. In 2024, China imported 2.02 million metric tonnes of rapeseed meal from Canada, 504,000 tonnes from the UAE, and 135,000 tonnes from Russia, according to customs data. It bought only 13,100 tonnes from India.

India exported more than 2mn tonnes of rapeseed meal, but China accounted for less than 1%.

"Chinese demand is huge. If its current buying momentum continues in the next few months, it could emerge as one of the biggest buyers of Indian rapeseed meal," said one of the sources.

South Korea, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Vietnam traditionally account for the bulk of India's rapeseed meal exports.

India overhauls teaching in Himalayan monasteries to counter China influence

Reuters
New Delhi

India is preparing to roll out its first school curriculum for Buddhist monasteries this month, aiming to unify education programmes and foster patriotism in Himalayan religious centres near its border with China.

India received an influx of Tibetans in the 1950s that led to many new institutions being set up, but now it seeks to insulate religious learning from China's influence.

"We are trying to inculcate Indian identity through education to make sure China can never control our monasteries in the Himalayas," said Maling Gombu, a Buddhist worker of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"Thousands of children living and studying in remote monasteries deserve education recognised and certified by India," added Gombu, one of a team promoting Indian Buddhist traditions and national education in Arunachal Pradesh.

The border state is claimed by China, but New Delhi rejects this.

About 600 monasteries scattered across the northern states of Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and the regions of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh offer training in four types of Tibetan and Indian Buddhist traditions.

They also teach modern subjects and English, but the courses lack consistency outside a national education effort that aims to weld an overarching identity from India's patchwork of languages and religions.

"The education taught by monks or nuns is not acknowledged outside monasteries," said Rajeev Kumar Singh, a director of the education ministry's National Institute of Open Schooling.

Singh, who has worked on the new curriculum that caps a five-year assessment effort, said it hoped to prepare Indian and Tibetan students for academic life in India.

"They (Tibetans) are free to learn Tibetan history and their tradition, but they should learn about India as they reside here and require proper education to secure jobs."

A government document showed that 20 monasteries near the 3,000km border with China have agreed to adopt the new curriculum, with the rest to be phased in later in the year.

While authorities negotiate individually with monasteries to take up the syllabus, they also need time to print up new textbooks and locate teachers to staff the schools, most in sparsely-populated areas, officials said.

But monks in some monasteries, such as the Gontse Garden Rabgye Ling in Arunachal Pradesh, say their syllabus is carefully curated to meet the needs of children who may become preachers.

"We don't think introduction of government-mandated syllabus is required in our monastery as it can break the rhythm designed since the 1970s," said Geshe Dondup, a teacher at the monastery, home to about 300 students this year.

Tens of thousands of Tibetans

sought refuge in India where their spiritual leader and Nobel Peace laureate, the Dalai Lama, fled as Chinese troops crushed an attempted uprising in their homeland in 1959.

About 75,000 Tibetan refugees now live in settlements managed by the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), which controls some monasteries directly, though not those outside the Tibetan tradition.

Reuters reviewed the first batch of textbooks prepared for monasteries by education ministry officials and Indian Buddhist scholars, which delve into India's modern and ancient history, and the nation's role in Tibet's freedom struggle.

The texts also emphasise mathematics, science and computer training, besides mandatory studies in English, Hindi and the native Bhoti language.

The CTA's education minister, Tharlam Dolma, said monastery schools have historically been managed by monks and nuns based on their funding, and the CTA lacked governance rights over them. An official in the Dalai Lama's office did not comment.

India will begin offering funds to monasteries to recruit teachers, pay stipends to monks and pave the way for annual examinations.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a home ministry official said streamlining education in monasteries in far-flung strategic areas was part of a larger plan to fence off institutions from China's influence.

Dubai crown prince meets Modi



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks with Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the UAE, during their meeting in New Delhi yesterday.

China reaches out to India after tariffs row

India's Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said India's discussions with the US on a potential bilateral trade agreement are "moving in the right direction"

Reuters
New Delhi

India and China should stand together to overcome difficulties in the face of tariffs imposed by US President Don-

ald Trump's administration, the spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in India said yesterday.

"China-India economic and trade relationship is based on complementarity and mutual benefit. Facing the US abuse of tariffs... the two largest developing countries should stand together to overcome the difficulties," spokesperson Yu Jing said in a post on X.

Meanwhile, India's Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said yesterday India's discussions with

the US on a potential bilateral trade agreement are "moving in the right direction".

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar held a call on Monday to discuss US tariffs on India and how to make progress towards a "fair and balanced trade relationship," the state department said.

Jaishankar also said on social media earlier that he had spoken to Rubio about the early conclusion of a bilateral trade deal.

India not to raise petrol, diesel retail prices despite tax hike

India yesterday raised excise duty on petrol and diesel without passing on higher costs to consumers, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said, a move that would boost the government's tax collection amid falling global oil prices. The hike in excise tax would be absorbed by state-controlled fuel retailers and will not be passed on to consumers, Puri said at a press conference. Higher tax collection from the state-owned and the private fuel retailers would help New Delhi partly compensate state companies that incurred a revenue loss of Rs413.80bn (\$4.83bn) in 2024-25 on local sales of cooking gas at below market rates, he said. The government has raised the excise duty on a litre of petrol and diesel by Rs2 each from April 8, taking the effective tax to Rs13 and Rs10, respectively. Indian refiners annually sell 160bn litres of petrol and diesel, oil secretary Pankaj Jain said, indicating that the government will raise at least Rs320bn.

Congress chalks out future roadmap at CWC meeting in Ahmedabad



Indian National Congress (INC) party leaders Rahul Gandhi (left), president Mallikarjun Kharge (centre) and Sonia Gandhi attend a party meeting in Ahmedabad, India yesterday. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) began deliberations yesterday in Ahmedabad to discuss the party's future plans, key nation matters, internal organisation and preparations for upcoming elections. In the opening remarks at the CWC meet, Kharge slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), saying that the "communal division is created by the BJP to divert attention from basic issues."

Indian police arrest 'fake doctor' linked to seven deaths

AFF
New Delhi

Indian police yesterday arrested a man accused of impersonating a respected London-based cardiologist, days after a probe into the deaths of seven patients.

The alleged scammer, who practised at the private Mission Hospital in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, has been charged with cheating and forgery, police superintendent

Shrutkirti Somvanshi told reporters.

"His documents have been found to be fake... The accused doctor has been arrested by our team," Somvanshi said.

The detained man gave his name as "Narendra John Camm", the same as that listed on the hospital's website, written in Hindi.

A mugshot published in local media showed him with bleached yellow hair.

The arrest came days after the National Human Rights Com-

mission launched a probe into the deaths of seven patients at Mission Hospital this year.

All seven people had undergone angioplasty surgeries by the arrested man.

Local media said he had impersonated a real cardiologist in Britain called John Camm, an emeritus professor of clinical cardiology at St George's University of London.

There is no suggestion of any wrongdoing by the British-based Camm, who said the case had been "very disconcerting".

Camm, said that the man had "claimed at various times to both be me, and to have been trained by me at St George's Hospital in London".

Camm said he and colleagues had made repeated efforts to stop the fraudster over the past five years.

"I discovered that there was little that I could do about it, but younger colleagues, who were active on social media on the Internet did their best," Camm wrote from London.

"Indian physicians and car-

diologists quickly rumbled that this man has nothing to do with me and attempted to 'shut him down'."

Camm said that reports of the fraudster had recently been "relatively quiet, and I thought that they had been successful".

He said news of the arrest was "upsetting to me and probably much more so to the relatives of patients" who may have suffered.

Rajendra Shukla, Madhya Pradesh deputy chief minister, said harsh action would be taken against the detainee if found

guilty. The scandal emerged after the family of one of the patients who died came forward to complain.

"As soon as my mother died, the doctor vanished," her son Nabi Qureshi was quoted as saying by broadcaster NDTV.

Reports of individuals posing as doctors are rife in India, especially in rural areas where a large population is illiterate.

Authorities have cracked down on fake doctors in recent years, raiding clinics and making arrests.



Afghan refugees embrace each other before leaving for Afghanistan at a bus stand in Karachi yesterday. (AFP)

Pakistan expels over 8,000 Afghans in fresh drive

Reuters
Islamabad

Pakistan has expelled more than 8,000 Afghan nationals in the past week in a fresh repatriation drive after the expiry of a March 31 deadline, the UNHCR said yesterday.

All Afghan nationals who have no legal documents to stay or those holding Afghan Citizen Cards had been warned by Islamabad to return home or face deportation.

Authorities say they have set up temporary centres in various cities to house the Afghan nationals before transporting them to Torkham border crossing in northwest Pakistan.

At least 8,906 Afghan nationals have been deported since April 1, the UNHCR said in a WhatsApp message.

Islamabad says the drive is part of a campaign called the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan launched in late 2023.

Pakistan has in the past blamed militant attacks and crimes on Afghan citizens, who form the largest portion of migrants in the country. Afghanistan has rejected the accu-

sations. Kabul has termed the repatriation as forced deportation.

“There is no doubt that the forced deportation of Afghan migrants and this unilateral action is against all international, Islamic, and neighbourly principles,” Abdul Motalib Haqqani, a spokesman for the Afghan ministry of migration and repatriation, said in a statement yesterday.

“Since this matter concerns two countries, it is essential to work on a mutually agreed mechanism to ensure the dignified return of Afghans to their homeland,” he said.

Pakistan says it plans to accelerate the drive to repatriate the roughly 4mn Afghans who crossed the border during 40 years of armed conflict in their home country and after the Taliban seized power in 2021.

Human rights groups have raised concerns.

“Pakistan is abandoning its international commitment to not send people back to where their rights are at risk,” said Fereshta Abbasi of Afghanistan Human Rights Watch.

“All countries hosting Afghan refugees should maintain the position that Afghanistan is unsafe for returns.”

Ukraine says captured two Chinese fighting for Russia

AFP
Kyiv

President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that Ukrainian troops had captured two Chinese citizens fighting alongside Russian forces, adding Kyiv would demand an explanation from Beijing and a reaction from its allies.

Moscow and Beijing have in recent years boasted of their “no limits” partnership and deepened political, military and economic co-operation since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

“Our military captured two Chinese citizens who fought in the Russian army. This happened on the territory of Ukraine – in the Donetsk region,” Zelensky said in a post on social media.

“We have the documents of these prisoners, bank cards, and personal data,” Zelensky said in a post that included a video of one of the alleged Chinese prisoners.

The video showed a man wearing military fatigues with his hands bound, mimicking sounds from combat and uttering a small number of words in Mandarin, during an apparent interview with a Ukrainian official not pictured.

At one point he is heard saying the word “commander”.

A senior Ukrainian official told AFP that the prisoners were likely Chinese citizens who were enticed into signing a contract with the Russian army, rather than being sent by Beijing.

They were captured “a few days ago,” the source said, adding there may be more of them.

“Nothing is completely clear yet. When they are delivered to the SBU (Ukraine’s security service) and at least interrogated, we will understand,” the source added.

The source sent images of ID cards linked to one of the pris-



This handout video grab published on the official Telegram channel of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday shows, according to the Ukrainian president, one of two Chinese soldiers he said were captured by Ukrainian forces in the Donetsk region. (AFP)

oners, which showed the date of his birth as June 4, 1991 and said he belonged to the Han ethnicity – the majority ethnic group in China.

There was no immediate response to the claims from either Moscow or Beijing, but Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga said on social media that China’s charge d’affaires had been summoned for an explanation.

“Chinese citizens fighting as part of Russia’s invasion army in Ukraine puts into question China’s declared stance for peace and undermines Beijing’s credibility as a responsible permanent mem-

ber of the UN Security Council,” Sybiga said.

China presents itself as a neutral party in the conflict and says it is not sending lethal assistance to either side, unlike the United States and other Western nations.

But it is a close political and economic ally of Russia, and Nato members have branded China a “decisive enabler” of Moscow’s invasion, which Beijing has never condemned.

US President Donald Trump has been pushing for a speedy end to the war since taking office, but his administration has failed to reach a breakthrough.

Kyiv has repeatedly urged Beijing to pressure Moscow to end its invasion, which has cost tens of thousands of lives and so far failed to achieve the Kremlin’s core objectives.

Zelensky said Kyiv had evidence that “many more Chinese citizens” are fighting alongside Russian forces and that he had instructed his foreign minister to find out how China intends to respond.

He said the capture of the two men and Moscow’s involvement of China in the conflict were “a clear signal that Putin is going to do anything but end the war”.

Zelensky also demanded “a reaction from the United States, Europe, and everyone in the world who wants peace” in his post online.

“I think the United States should pay more attention to what is happening today,” he said separately at a press conference in Kyiv.

The war in Ukraine, now grinding through its fourth year, has attracted thousands of foreign fighters to both sides.

Ukraine has been urging its Western partners to respond to the Russian deployment of thousands of North Korean troops to the western region of Kursk.

Ukraine has been struggling to hold ground after launching an offensive on the border region last year.

“The North Koreans fought against us in the Kursk region, the Chinese are fighting on the territory of Ukraine. And I think this is an important point that we need to discuss with our partners, I think urgently,” Zelensky added in the press conference.

Kyiv, which dispatched its then-foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba to China last year, has been seeking to deepen ties with Beijing.

Zelensky appointed a new ambassador to China this week.

Pak army vows to protect investors in major mining sector

Reuters
Islamabad

Pakistan will provide robust security to protect the interests of investors and partners, its army chief told a minerals conference yesterday, amid heightened unrest in key mineral-rich province Balochistan. Pakistan is hosting a two-day mines and minerals conference with delegates from countries including the United States, China and Saudi Arabia, as well as companies including Barrick Gold and Woods Mackenzie. It is seeking to attract investments in its natural reserves, which are estimated to be worth \$6tn.

“Pakistan’s army will ensure a robust security framework, (and) proactive measures to protect the interests and trust of partners and investors,” General Asim Munir said.

“You can count on Pakistan as a reliable partner.”

The conference comes weeks after insurgents hijacked a train carrying over 400 passengers, including soldiers, in volatile Balochistan, which borders Iran and Afghanistan.

The majority of Pakistan’s mines, including Reko Diq, which houses one of the world’s largest undeveloped deposits of copper and gold jointly owned by Barrick Gold and Pakistan, are located in the south-western province. Barrick Gold estimates Reko Diq has the potential to generate \$74bn in free cash flow over 37 years.

Ethnic Baloch separatists, who have long been running an insurgency in the region, oppose any foreign investment which they say is an attempt by Islamabad to solidify its hold through external players on their regional resources.

They have been fighting for decades for a greater share of local resources, but some of their armed groups now say they will not settle for anything less than a separate homeland.

France detains man after death threat to judge in Le Pen case

French authorities yesterday detained a 76-year-old man over a death threat against the judge who presided over the panel that sentenced far-right leader Marine Le Pen to an election ban, prosecutors said.

The bombshell judgement, which could crush the 56-year-old’s dream of winning the French presidency in 2027, stunned France’s political establishment and infuriated many in her National Rally (RN) party.

Since the conviction, the judges who handed down the decision have received threats, and the head judge Benedicte de Perthuis is under police protection, including increased patrols and regular rounds around her home. The man being held, “On his X account, he had posted the following: ‘What this (slang) deserves,’ along with a photograph of a guillotine,” the public prosecutor’s office told AFP.

Le Pen last week was handed a partly suspended jail term, a fine of €100,000 (\$109,000) and an immediate ban on taking part in elections for five years after being convicted for a scheme under which the EU Parliament paid assistants who were actually working for her party.

The court ruled that Le Pen was at the “heart” of the system of embezzlement of public funds. A total of 24 people have been convicted, in addition to her party. In his reaction to the judgement, President Emmanuel Macron told members of the government that the French judiciary was “independent” and that “judges must be protected”, according to an official present at the meeting last week.

Germany poised for coalition deal as Trump tariffs add urgency

Reuters
Berlin

Germany’s conservatives under chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz yesterday looked set to reach a deal with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) to form a government aimed at reviving growth in Europe’s largest economy despite global turbulence.

Two sources told Reuters that a deal could be reached today, echoing a *Bild* newspaper report saying there was determination to reach a deal yesterday.

Merz’s Christian Democrats (CDU) will head the new administration alongside their Bavarian CSU sister party, with the SPD as junior partner.

The government will take charge at a time of global turbulence in an escalating trade war sparked by US President Donald

Trump’s sweeping import tariffs, which could stoke inflation and have raised fears of a global recession.

Merz, who called Trump’s US an unreliable ally after winning the election in February, has also vowed to build up defence spending as Europe faces a hostile Russia, and to support businesses struggling with high costs and weak demand.

German economic institutes have cut back their forecast for this year’s growth to 0.1% from the 0.8% they had expected in September, sources told Reuters yesterday.

Germany has endured two years of contraction already and the tariffs are a sharp blow to its highly export-focused economy.

Merz’s coalition would be the only possible two-party majority that excludes the far-right Alternative for Germany, which all other parties have pledged to

shun, even though it came second in the election.

Merz this week told Reuters that Trump’s tariffs underscored the need for Germany to rebuild its competitiveness, after a bruising period in which the AfD drew level with his conservatives in an opinion poll for the first time.

Soon after winning the election, Merz pushed through a constitutional amendment that would allow him to unleash a borrowing bonanza to fund a big boost in defence and infrastructure spending.

But the move, while providing his new government with a massive windfall, received criticism from some of his own supporters for pivoting away from a promise of fiscal rigour.

In a new poll by the Forsa institute, 60% of respondents said Merz was not fit to be chancellor, including 28% of CDU/CSU voters.

Cruise to showcase last Mission: Impossible at Cannes

Tom Cruise is set to return to the Cannes Film Festival to present the latest and last episode of his *Mission: Impossible* series, joining Robert De Niro and French actress Juliette Binoche among the confirmed A-list attendees.

Cruise’s presence, three years after he lit up the French Riviera while promoting *Top Gun: Maverick*, marks a major coup for festival organisers.

Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning is one of the most hotly awaited blockbusters of the year and is set for release in cinemas worldwide from May 17. “After nearly three decades of thrills, stunts and twists, *Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning* promises to deliver an unforgettable cinematic experience,” the festival said in a statement.

On Monday, they announced that De Niro, star of *Taxi Driver* and *Godfather Part II*, would be given an honorary Palme d’Or at the opening ceremony of the world’s premier film festival on May 13.

Cannes president Iris Knobloch and long-time director Thierry Fremaux will unveil the selection of in-competition films

and other major premieres at a press conference in Paris tomorrow. The industry is buzzing with speculation about who will attend one month before the red carpet rolls out on the seafront Croisette in Cannes.

Cinemas are desperate for some stardust and sparking new films after a series of expensive Hollywood flops this year.

These include Disney’s live-action *Snow White*, superhero sequel *Captain America: Brave New World* and bizarre sci-fi movie *Mickey 17*.

The much-hyped A *Minecraft* Movie, released last week, was panned by critics but might help to lift the gloom after a record-breaking opening weekend in the United States.

The head of the Cannes jury this year is French screen legend Juliette Binoche, who will hand out the famed Palme d’Or for best film.

Around 20 movies are set to compete in the top category, looking to emulate the success of last year’s winner, *Anora* by Sean Baker. Terrence Malick, who won the Palme d’Or for *The Tree of Life* 14 years ago, has been tipped to return with a long-awaited project inspired by



US actor Tom Cruise poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the UK Premiere of the film *Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One* in London in 2023. (AFP file photo)

biblical stories. Other festival veterans could also return, such as Jim Jarmusch (*Broken Flowers*, *Dead Man*), whose latest film stars Cate Blanchett and

Adam Driver. Wes Anderson, 55, has also assembled yet another star-studded cast for his latest film, featuring Benicio Del Toro, Tom Hanks and Scarlett Johansson.

Johansson, 40, could bring a breath of fresh air to the festival by presenting her directorial debut, *Eleanor the Great*. Another actress-turned-director, Kristen Stewart, 34, has also recently completed her first feature film.

Experts have also suggested the new master of American horror, 38-year-old Ari Aster – known for his chilling films *Hereditary* and *Midsommar* – could make his Cannes debut with a movie starring Joaquin Phoenix and Emma Stone.

Three French female directors, Julia Ducournau (2021 Palme d’Or winner for *Titane*), Rebecca Zlotowski (*Other People’s Children*, *An Easy Girl*) or Alice Winocour, who has made a film about Paris Fashion Week starring Angelina Jolie, have also been named as contenders.

Exiled Russian filmmakers such as Kirill Serebrennikov, Andrey Zvyagintsev and rising talent Kantemir Balagov could also feature. The festival has yet to announce its opening film on May 13 or the full composition of the jury.

Mission: Impossible will screen on the second day, May 14.

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GULF TIMES

Plunging sales and stock rout: Tesla has problems galore

Just as the carnage in financial markets worsened on Monday, taking the three-day wipeout in global equity value to about \$9.5tn, Tesla Inc's stock extended losses with shares having fallen 55% from a record high reached in mid-December.

Tesla's stock had surged following President Donald Trump's election victory, which many expected to be a boon for the company, given CEO Elon Musk's proximity to the then president-elect.

Instead, Musk's involvement in political controversies both in the US and abroad has repelled some car buyers and spurred protests against the company.

Tesla has reported first-quarter vehicle deliveries that failed to meet drastically lowered expectations, falling to the lowest level since 2022.

Several analysts had lowered their estimates for Tesla's sales and earnings in recent weeks, even before the company reported weak vehicle-delivery numbers.

While Tesla is seen as relatively insulated from the 25% tariffs announced by Trump on imported autos, Musk has warned the company won't be unscathed.

Tesla sales had started slowing even before Musk really threw his weight around in US politics. Since he's taken a starring role in the Trump administration and become a cheerleader for Europe's far-right, the company's fortunes have taken a turn for the worse.

The electric vehicle maker's deliveries fell to a three-year low in the first quarter as Musk went to work, dismantling US government agencies and went all-in to support anti-immigrant populist politicians.

China's BYD, short for Build Your Dreams — is on a tear, with sales soaring 58% in the first quarter

A decentralised movement called Tesla Takedown has emerged with organisers calling for a boycott of the company's products.

At the same time, Musk says he's having "great difficulty" running his businesses while also tending to his work in Washington.

The most dramatic declines in Tesla sales have happened in Europe, where sales fell 43% in the first two months of the year.

In Germany, the situation was particularly stark, with sales plummeting 62% through March — likely the result of potential buyers being put off by Musk's vocal support for the far-right Alternative for Germany party.

In China, the world's biggest EV market, shipments from Tesla's Shanghai plant — destined for elsewhere in the country as well as for export — plunged 49% in February to the lowest since July 2022.

For the time being, numbers for the US, where Tesla derives almost half of its revenue, are harder to come by. Kelley Blue Book, an American market researcher, estimates that the company sold only 43,650 vehicles in February, among its lowest monthly totals over the last three years.

While Tesla is still the most popular EV brand in the US, its market share has fallen from more than 75% in 2022 to under 50% as of 2024, according to KBB.

One company that's defying Tesla's current trajectory — China's BYD, short for Build Your Dreams — is on a tear, with sales soaring 58% in the first quarter.

Musk has taken a less-is-more approach to Tesla's lineup. BYD, by contrast, offers more models, and most of them sell for less than Musk's most popular vehicles.

And then there's the impact of Musk's political activities.

The starkest sign that Musk's close links to Trump and the Republican Party were beginning to drag on Tesla came from California — a Democratic stronghold — where its registrations fell in all four quarters last year.

Since the US election in November, the backlash has only grown.

One of Wall Street's most bullish Tesla analysts slashed his price target for the stock by 43%, citing a brand crisis created by Musk and Trump's trade policies.

"Tesla has essentially become a political symbol globally," says Daniel Ives, a Wedbush Securities analyst who's rated the carmaker's shares a buy for the last four years. "It is time for Musk to step up, read the room, and be a leader in this time of uncertainty."

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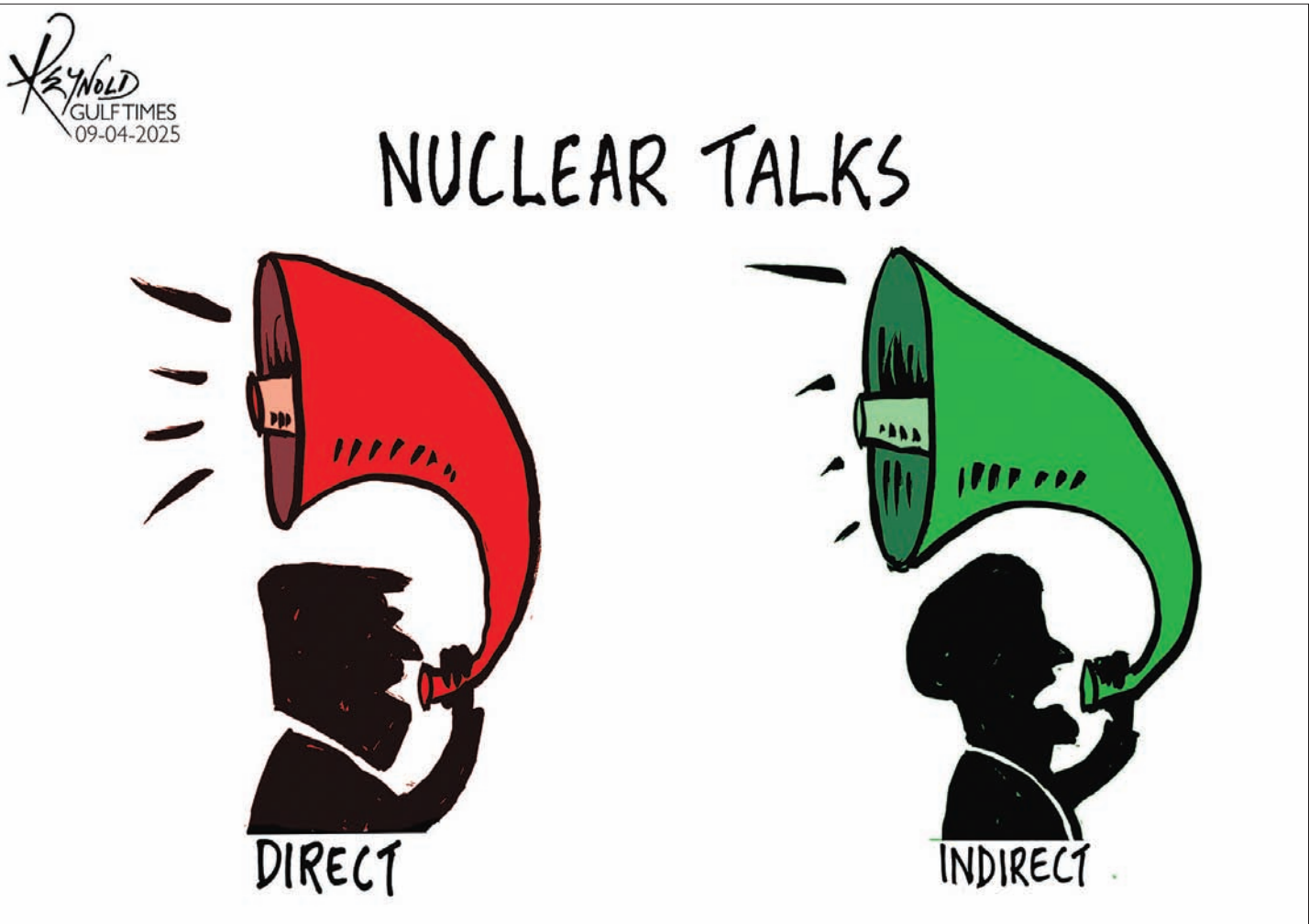
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Americans can't win from Trump's trade war

By Nancy Qian
Rome

The world is reeling from US President Donald Trump's "Liberation Day", when he announced the highest US tariffs in more than a century. The United States is hiking taxes on imports from almost every country in the world. Shoes made in Bangladesh and sold to American wholesalers for \$20 will now cost at least \$27. A machine part that General Motors imports from Europe for \$200 will now cost at least \$240. The White House's new, supposedly "reciprocal" tariff increases range from 11% for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to 50% for Saint Pierre and Miquelon and Lesotho.

For the European Union and China, which already faced US tariffs, the rate is rising by an additional 20% and 34%, respectively. In the immediate aftermath, global markets have plunged, triggering fears of a global recession.

The Trump administration says that the tariffs are part of a plan for bringing manufacturing jobs and production back to the US, and to balance US trade, which is currently in deficit. While economists and policymakers have mixed feelings about whether, and when, trade deficits actually matter, it is worth noting that the US deficit, which has persisted since 1976, did grow at a faster rate after the North

American Free Trade Agreement in 1994.

But the White House's explanation of how it set the new tariff rates was based on unfounded premises and wrong assumptions. First, it simply assumes that all trade deficits are due to unfair trade practices. If Canada sells more to the US than the US sells to Canada, the Canadians must be "ripping off" Americans. But this premise ignores natural economic forces. While US policymakers have accused China of devaluing its currency and subsidising its exporters, and the EU of using regulation as a non-tariff barrier, trade deficits can also arise from comparative advantage and multilateral relationships.

For example, the US buys raw materials and critical metals from the DRC, but the DRC buys cheap manufactured goods from India, because it cannot afford the higher-quality, relatively more expensive US-made products. These trade flows imply a bilateral deficit for the US vis-à-vis the DRC, even in the absence of any unfair practices. Switzerland has almost no tariffs, but the Trump administration will now impose a 32% tariff on its exports to the US.

Similarly, the White House assumes that every bilateral trade deficit should be zero, which makes no sense in a multilateral global economy. If Canada sells timber to the US, and the US sells services to Europe, and Europe sells machines to Canada, each

bilateral trade relationship will exhibit an imbalance, despite perfectly fair, mutually beneficial rules and practices.

Making matters worse, the White House's tariff formula assumes that factors like exchange rates and US exports to other countries will not change after the tariffs take effect. This would have been a reasonable supposition only if the US had imposed limited, targeted tariffs on select countries. Instead, the White House rolled out sweeping, massive, indiscriminate tariffs, and the US dollar duly suffered a record-breaking loss of value relative to other currencies.

The administration also seemed to assume that other countries would not impose retaliatory tariffs, even though they obviously must do so, if only for domestic political reasons. The EU, Canada, and China have already announced counter-measures, and others are likely to follow. The result will be a reduction in US exports.

Yet another faulty assumption is that tariffs are mostly paid for by foreign exporters. The White House claims that Americans will shoulder only 25% of the additional costs. But the well-known study used to justify this number actually finds that, in the trade war with China during the first Trump administration, Americans paid for almost 100% of the tariff hikes. So, even by the White House's own formula, tariffs should be one-fourth of what was announced. In fact, nearly all of the economic researchers cited by the White

House have said that their work has been misrepresented.

The introduction of such a radically disruptive policy using made-up numbers and no cogent economic rationale has pulled the US and global economy into uncharted territory.

For the Trump administration, the key question is whether manufacturing jobs and production will return to America. When the Reagan administration targeted Japanese autos in the 1980s, it did succeed in getting Japanese carmakers to move some production to the US. But the current tariffs are unlikely to help Americans. Manufacturing, which is much more automated now than it was in the 1980s, requires fewer workers. And since the current tariffs have been applied to the entire world, they can motivate other countries to deepen their own trading relationships and weaken the US' bargaining position.

Trump's "Liberation Day" tariffs have undermined America's biggest advantage. The US may be the world's largest economy, but it is only 26% of the global economy. It cannot win if the rest of the world is united against it. — Project Syndicate

• Nancy Qian, Professor of Economics at Northwestern University, is Co-Director of Northwestern University's Global Poverty Research Lab and Founding Director of the China Econ Lab.



US President Donald Trump delivers remarks on tariffs in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington, DC. (Reuters file photo)

Limited options push China into trade ‘war of attrition’ with Donald Trump

By Laurie Chen, Kevin Yao and David Kirton
Beijing/Shenzhen

Beijing, feeling boxed into a corner by the United States’ intensifying tariff assault on China and any country that buys or assembles Chinese goods, is bracing for an economic war of attrition.

Washington last week imposed import tariffs of at least 10% on almost the entire world, and much higher levies on countries such as Vietnam, where Chinese factories have been shifting production. This drew retaliation from China, followed by new threats of escalation from US President Donald Trump.

“Whoever surrenders first becomes the victim,” said a Chinese policy adviser, asking for anonymity due to the topic’s sensitivity. “It’s a matter of who can hold out longer.”

China has no great options, though. It will court other markets in Asia, Europe and the rest of the world, but this may not be much of an escape valve.

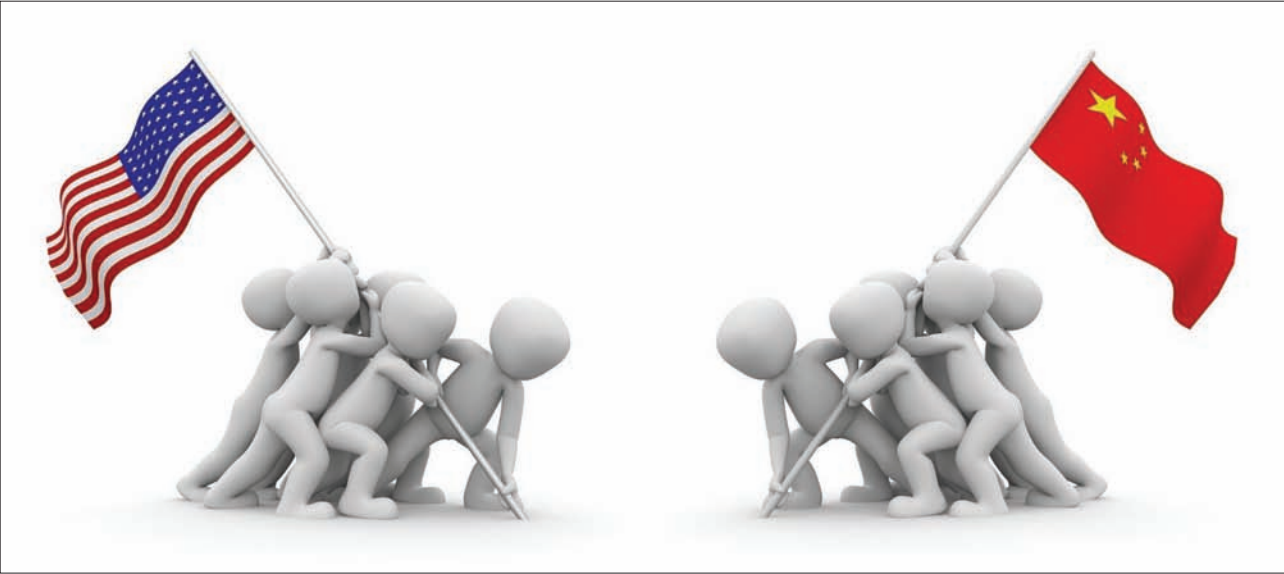
Other countries have much smaller markets than the US, and local economies are also taking a hit from the tariffs. Many are also wary of allowing more cheap Chinese products in.

Domestically, a currency devaluation would be the simplest way to cushion the tariffs’ impact but that could trigger capital outflows, while also alienating trade partners China may try to court. China has so far allowed very limited yuan depreciation.

More subsidies, export tax rebates or other forms of stimulus could be on the cards, but this also risks exacerbating industrial overcapacity and fuelling more deflationary pressures.

Analysts have advocated for years for policies that would boost domestic demand.

But despite Beijing’s declarations,



little has been done to meaningfully increase household consumption, given that the bold policy shifts that would be required could prove disruptive to the manufacturing sector in the short term.

Hitting back with its own tariffs and export controls may not be very effective, given China ships to the US about three times as much in goods than around \$160bn it imports. But it may be the only option if Beijing believes it has a higher pain threshold than Washington has.

So far China has responded to last week’s additional 34% US tariffs with a similar blanket counter-levy. As Trump threatened escalation with an extra 50% hike, Beijing vowed to “fight to the end”.

“China cannot inflict as much pain on the US as it receives, since it runs the big trade surplus and, rare earths aside, still has more to lose from export controls,” said Arthur Kroeber, head of research at Gavekal.

“But that is now beside the point. The signal from Beijing’s move is that it will

push back on US efforts at domination, and that it is perfectly happy to settle into a war of economic attrition.”

‘Precision strikes’

Besides its own sweeping tariffs, Beijing can use its control over some strategic commodities and parts of the corporate world to hit Washington where it hurts the most.

China offered a taste of that on Friday, when it added seven rare earths to its export control list, a move that threatened to cut off the supply of materials US defence and technology sectors depend on.

Beijing retains the option to expand the controls to 10 other rare earths or ban exports to the US outright.

In the corporate world, Trump has expressed interest in a spin-off of short video app TikTok’s US business.

But China also has leverage there, thanks to rules it implemented in 2020 that require the company to obtain a technology export license before

transferring its “secret sauce” algorithm abroad.

China indicated it would not approve the deal following the tariff announcement, sources told Reuters.

Beijing can also target US companies with sanctions or add them to an unreliable entity list, which so far includes mainly firms which it says sell arms to Taiwan. US drone maker Skydio, which had sourced its batteries from China, is one such company facing Chinese sanctions.

“Our strikes are ‘precision strikes’” said Wu Xinbo, director at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University.

“The main priority is maintaining restraint and the next is using asymmetric methods,” said Wu, adding these include export controls.

Political gamble

With Washington and Beijing trying to inflict increasing pain on each other and the rest of the world seen as collateral

damage in their trade war, it is hard to imagine how a grand deal to de-escalate would look like.

Economists say Trump’s goal of balancing trade with China is unfeasible in the short -to- medium term, given that one side is the world’s leading producer while the other is the biggest consumer.

China, hit earlier this year by a 20% tariff hike justified by fentanyl precursors rather than its trade surplus, is confused about what Trump specifically wants and rejects attempts of containment, even as it declares readiness for talks.

“China does not view the US measures as conducive to creating the right atmosphere for negotiations,” said Bo Zhengyuan, partner at China-based consultancy Plenum.

If a quick deal proves elusive, then it may turn into a battle of political wills, where some analysts believe Beijing has the upper hand.

Thousands of protesters gathered in Washington and cities across the US at the weekend to protest against Trump, who is also facing heavy criticism from Wall Street for the global market turmoil his tariffs caused.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is unlikely to face similar resistance in his tightly controlled country, and can line up monetary and fiscal stimulus for later this year to ease some of the social stress if needed.

“Ultimately, it becomes a game of which country can actually manage its own population more effectively to manage the subsequent economic consequences from this trade war,” said Zhiwu Chen, professor of finance at HKU Business School.

“Trump has to face, or at least Republican politicians have to face a lot of electoral pressure, and the American media are still pretty much free,” he said. “So I think Trump’s ability to fight politically with China is not that great.”

– Reuters

Tariff-whipped Wall Street wonders: will Trump blink?

By Davide Barbuscia
New York

Investors are trying to game out how much tolerance US President Donald Trump has for stock market losses after his latest tariff policies ignited a more than 10% wipeout on Wall Street, with some still holding out hope of eventual relief. A so-called “Trump put” – the option market equivalent of a presidential backstop for equities – underpinned Trump’s first term, as he frequently cited stock market strength as proof his policies were working. Over the course of his first presidency the S&P 500 benchmark rose 68% and scaled record highs, while Trump cheered its progress, tweeting more than 150 times about the stock market. This time around, hope that such a Trump Put still exists is evaporating, or at the least, investors are coming around to the view that Trump is much more inclined to ride out sharp falls. The S&P and Nasdaq are down over 15% and 20% since his inauguration in January respectively.

“The whole notion of tariffs and trade policy has been such an integral part of Donald Trump’s psyche, I don’t see it abandoned,” said Michael Rosen, chief investment officer at Angeles Investments, who said any pain level likely to cause Trump to change course remained a long way away. Previous assumptions that Trump’s pro-business agenda would buoy risk assets similarly had already been fading as his trade policies rattled investors over the past few weeks.

But the more aggressive-than-anticipated tariffs unveiled on April 2 deepened the market selloff, leaving investors questioning whether the Trump put was gone, or might eventually reappear through tariff rollbacks after any trade deals.

For Bob Elliott, chief executive officer and chief investment officer of Unlimited Funds, the selloff still had a long way to go before any policy turnaround.

“It takes 20-30% declines in stocks to get there. So the decline so far is not big enough,” he said.

Some were more hopeful the market fall could eventually induce a change of course.

“I don’t think (Trump) is going to be highly tolerant of massive stock market declines – he’ll see his popularity tank, and it will endanger his whole agenda,” said Kevin Philip, partner at Bel Air Investment Advisors. “I don’t see any way out of this if he doesn’t come up with deals or reasons to change course.”

The huge market falls – not seen since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 – even caused speculation online that Trump was intentionally “crashing” the market to force the US Federal Reserve to lower interest rates while making stocks more affordable to middle-class investors. Trump on Friday retweeted a social media post bearing the caption “Trump is Purposely CRASHING The Market” and featuring images of the president pointing at a large downward red arrow and of him signing executive orders at the White House. Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One on Sunday, Trump said he was not intentionally engineering a market selloff and the rout was the result of a “medicine” needed to fix the US trade deficit. Trump and his team have said their policies may cause short-term pain but will eventually revive manufacturing and spur growth. On Friday he told investors pouring money into the United States that his policies would never change.

White House spokesman Kush Desai said in



Previous assumptions that US President Donald Trump’s pro-business agenda would buoy risk assets had already been fading as his trade policies rattled investors over the past few weeks.

a statement to Reuters: “Just as it did during President Trump’s first term, the administration’s America First economic agenda of tariffs, deregulation, tax cuts, and the unleashing of American energy will restore American Greatness from Main Street to Wall Street.”

Some investors fear that weakening consumer confidence, an escalating trade war, and rising price pressures could deal a harsh and lasting blow to the economy, regardless of any potential economic upside down the line.

For Brian Bethune, an economist at Boston College, the disruption caused by the tariffs was too abrupt to allow US businesses to soften the blow, despite their resilience.

“You’re putting so many sandbags on the balloon, it’s going to come back down to earth with a thud,” Bethune said. In the two sessions after the tariff decision was unveiled on Wednesday, the S&P 500 has tumbled 10.5%, erasing nearly \$5tn in market value, marking its most significant two-day loss since March 2020. On Monday, the S&P was down 0.12%.

Hopes that the market could be propped up by actions by the US Federal Reserve have also taken a knock. Trump on Friday called on Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell to cut interest rates, saying it was the “perfect time” to do so. But stock losses deepened past 5% after Powell on Friday warned that the new tariffs would likely push inflation higher while slowing economic growth, suggesting the Fed was unlikely to rush in to cut rates.

“The market is still digesting the great deal of uncertainty and I think it’s also digesting the fact that both Trump and Powell have made it clear that the cavalry is not coming to immediately cause things to bounce back up,” said David Seif, chief economist for developed markets at Nomura in New York.

Rising prices could reduce the Fed’s ability to take supportive actions as it has in previous market downturns or if economic conditions deteriorated significantly, analysts said. This could take off the table a so-called “Fed put,” or a perceived tendency of the central bank to run to the aid of financial markets. “Who blinks first? The Fed or President Trump? The Fed has made it clear that with inflation where it is and unemployment where it is, (they’re) comfortable without doing anything right now,” said Ryan Detrick, chief market strategist at Carson Group in Omaha. “We think Washington likely has to blink first to present some type of positive news.” – Reuters

What to know about the rising US measles cases

By Nancy Lapid
Washington

A second child in Texas has died from measles, one of the world’s most contagious illnesses that was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000, several decades after the introduction of a highly effective vaccine.

A decline in vaccination among US children in recent years, fuelled by unscientific claims that the shots are unsafe, has triggered larger outbreaks. Here is what you need to know about measles:

Why worry about measles now?

There have been more US measles cases in the first months of 2025 than in all of 2024. In addition to the outbreak in West Texas and New Mexico, the US has reported 607 cases as of April 3, including 124 in the previous week. In Europe, 127,350 cases were reported in 2024, double the number in 2023 and the highest in 25 years, according to the World Health Organisation and Unicef, the United Nations children’s organisation.

In the decade before a vaccine became available in 1963, there were 3 to 4mn US measles cases each year – mostly in children – with 48,000 hospitalisations and 400 to 500 deaths. Complications from measles include ear infections, hearing loss, pneumonia, croup, diarrhoea, blindness and swelling of the brain. Even in healthy children, measles can cause serious illness and death. In unvaccinated pregnant women, measles may cause premature birth or a low-birthweight baby.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 1 in 5 unvaccinated people in the US who get measles will need hospitalisation.

How are measles infections prevented?

The best protection is the vaccine, either given alone or as part of a Measles-Mumps-Rubella shot commonly known as the MMR vaccine or a Measles-Mumps-Rubella-Varicella (MMRV) vaccine. No vitamins or drugs have been shown to prevent measles.

Two doses of the MMR vaccine provide 97% protection against the virus. Children typically first receive the vaccine when they are 12 to 15 months old and again at age 4 to 6 years.

Adults born before 1957 are presumed to have acquired immunity as they most likely had measles during childhood.

Adults who do not remember having measles and don’t know whether they were vaccinated should get a dose of the vaccine, the CDC says. The agency also advises a booster dose for adults who received boosters many years ago who might be exposed to an outbreak.

How are measles outbreaks prevented?

At least 95% of kindergarten-age children need to have received the measles vaccine to achieve so-called herd immunity that can prevent outbreaks.

That goal has become elusive in recent years as public figures have promoted theories – contrary to scientific evidence – that childhood

vaccines are a cause of autism and other health risks. Robert F Kennedy, Jr, who heads the US Department of Health and Human Services, has helped sow such doubts for decades.

The idea stems from a long since-debunked study of 12 children led by British researcher Andrew Wakefield in the late 1990s that connected autism to the measles vaccine. No rigorous studies have found links between autism and vaccines or medications, or their components such as thimerosal or formaldehyde.

Vaccination coverage among US kindergartners decreased from 95.2% during the 2019-2020 school year to 92.7% in 2023-2024, according to the CDC.

The Texas county at the centre of the current outbreak had an 80% vaccination rate among kindergarten children in 2023-24. Vaccination rates below what is needed to reach herd immunity leave those who cannot receive the vaccine unprotected and vulnerable to the virus, including young infants and individuals with immune disorders.

How does measles spread?

Measles spreads via respiratory droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. Virus particles can remain suspended in the air for up to two hours. If one person has measles, up to 90% of unvaccinated people nearby will become infected, the CDC says.

Symptoms including cough, runny nose, inflamed eyes, sore throat, fever, and the telltale red, blotchy skin rash don’t appear until 10 to 21 days after exposure. Because infected people can unknowingly spread the disease to others during that time, health experts advise a 21-day quarantine for unvaccinated individuals who have been exposed to measles.

How is measles treated?

There are no specific drugs for measles. Treatments can only help to ease symptoms and limit complications. The WHO recommends rest, keeping hydrated with fluids, and using fever reducers such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Antibiotics can be used to treat pneumonia and ear and eye infections due to measles. Steroids have been used to treat a rare complication of measles that causes brain swelling, but steroids also weaken the immune system’s defence against the virus.

Can Vitamin A prevent or treat measles?

Vitamin A supplements, which have been raised by Kennedy as a vaccine alternative, cannot prevent measles. Studies show high doses of vitamin A can dramatically reduce severe complications in children with measles, based on research in low-income countries where malnutrition is common.

Any evidence in favour of giving vitamin A to measles patients in the developed world “is weak at best,” said Dr Sean O’Leary, chair of the Infectious Diseases Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

WHO and AAP warn that vitamin A in doses recommended for measles must be given under a doctor’s supervision because of the risk of toxicity. – Reuters



Minister inaugurates Surgi Art Hospital

HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud inaugurated the Surgi Art Hospital, which has a capacity of 49 suites, of which 22 are for inpatients, a statement from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) said yesterday.

The minister toured the hospital and received an overview of the range of medical services available across various specialities, including internal medicine, general medicine, paediatrics, obstetrics

and gynaecology, dentistry, dermatology, otolaryngology, and surgery.

The opening ceremony was attended by Surgi Art Hospital chief executive and co-founder Dr Saed Mohammed Kaldari and several members of the hospital's medical and administrative staff.

The MoPH is committed to supporting the private health sector and enhancing its role in providing high-quality healthcare services in the country, the statement added.

Qatar 'playing its role in solving global crises', says al-Misnad

From Page 1

She said that Qatar has actively participated in international efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement, in partnership with Egypt and the US, underscoring the importance of implementing all stages of the agreement, including the release of prisoners and detainees, halting aggression, and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2735.

HE al-Misnad added that, despite challenges, Qatar has continued to deliver urgent humanitarian aid to Gaza in co-ordination with the UN and will not stop as long as there is a child sleeping under the rubble or a patient awaiting inaccessible medicine.

She said that the ongoing war in Sudan has resulted in a rapidly escalating humanitarian disaster, with rising internal and external displacement and worsening basic needs, reaffirming Qatar's commitment to providing urgent assistance, supporting humanitarian programmes, and calling on all parties to engage in dialogue, emphasising Qatar's belief that lasting solutions to conflicts can only be achieved through dialogue and political understanding, no matter how long such conflicts persist.

HE al-Misnad underscored the imperative of reassessing joint action mechanisms, galvanising political will and international support, optimising co-ordination, and reinforcing transparency and accountability, grounded in accurate data to delineate priorities and needs that ensure effective humanitarian response.

She stressed the need to evolve response mechanisms toward greater adaptability and resilience, extending beyond aid to encompass prevention, capacity-building, and diplomatic leverage to safeguard civilians and hold violators of international law accountable.

The international community must fully shoulder its responsibilities, rather than falter before tragedies or grow desensitised to anguish, HE al-Misnad underlined, stressing that acquiescence to the status quo is rejected and instead unity should be made to reshape it upon principles of justice, dignity, and compassion.

In her concluding remarks, she highlighted that she is confident in this conference, by virtue of its diverse intellect and expertise, to serve as a platform for crafting novel visions and bold initiatives capable of impacting concrete change on the ground.

Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies director Dr Ghasan Elkahlout affirmed that convening this conference amid mounting and complex global crises manifests a profound recognition that conventional humanitarian action now faces formidable tests, conceptually and operationally, in terms of its moral and political legitimacy.

He emphasised that Qatar's role in supporting humanitarian action, both regionally and globally, cannot be ignored, highlighting that over the past decades, Qatar has served as a vital contributor to relief and development efforts, while fostering spaces for humanitarian dialogue and academic discourse on the ethical and political challenges confronting the sector, thereby reflecting an increasing commitment to advancing a more just and sustainable humanitarian approach. - QNA

'Eid Gift' drive for children in Gaza, Syria concludes

The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, in partnership with the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) and Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), has concluded its annual "Eid Gift" campaign, an initiative by EAA Chairperson Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, which was aimed at collecting new clothing and school bags to support children and families in Gaza and Syria.

Held from March 5-20, the campaign collected over 60,000 new items from 18 locations across Qatar, including Hyatt Plaza, Al Khor Mall, Place Vendôme, Mayoral Stores, Minaretein and Al Mujadilah Centre and Mosque, and LuLu Hypermarket stores.

"The 'Eid Gift' campaign reflects our strong commitment to supporting vulnerable communities, not only through education but also by responding to their essential humanitarian needs - especially during occasions that embody solidarity and dignity," Said Talal al-Hothal, director of the EAA's Al Fakhoora Programme.

"We are proud of this partnership with the QRCS and QFFD, as well as the Qatari community's overwhelming engagement, which



played a pivotal role in the campaign's success."

"This year, there were more collection points to receive in-kind donations from the generous peo-

ple of Qatar, and the scope of target beneficiaries expanded to include Gaza and Syria," said QRCS assistant secretary-general Dr Mohamed Salah Ibrahim. "Throughout the

campaign, QRCS volunteers have been unsung heroes, carrying out all the necessary organising and logistic tasks."

"We are proud to support the 'Eid Gift' campaign, a meaningful initiative that embodies Qatar's longstanding commitment to humanitarian assistance and international solidarity," said QFFD deputy director-general (Development Projects Sector) Nouf al-Kaabi. "Through our collaboration with the Education Above All Foundation and the Qatar Red Crescent Society, we are able to support and bring hope to children and families in Gaza and Syria, ensuring they experience the joy of the Eid season."

"This campaign reflects the strength of our community and our shared responsibility to uplift those in need," she added.

A major collection site was Place Vendôme, where the Matalan store collected 1,750 clothing items, valued at QR73,000.

Additionally, over 5,000 awareness flyers were distributed at key touchpoints within the mall, to inform shoppers about how they could contribute.

The campaign also received generous contributions from the private sector.

Apparel Group, through its various retail outlets including XimiVogue, BHPC, Dollar Plus, Babies and More, La Vie En Rose, Steve Madden, The Children's Place, Hema, and LC Waikiki, donated an additional 20,000 clothing items, valued at QR1mn.

Ilham Textiles, a medium-sized business, donated 1,400 additional clothing items, further showcasing the virtue of community compassion.

Snoono participated through its application in a campaign to buy new clothes for the campaign.

The campaign was further amplified through a visual advertising partnership with Elan Media, which contributed QR175,000 worth of advertising.

Place Vendôme also launched a separate initiative titled "Spend and Win", running until April 5, with the winners encouraged to donate a portion of their prize value to support EAA Foundation's educational and humanitarian programmes.

Lina Ghotmeh to design Qatar pavilion at Giardini of La Biennale di Venezia

Renowned architect Lina Ghotmeh (**pictured**) has been chosen through an international competition to design the Qatar Pavilion in the Giardini of La Biennale di Venezia, Qatar Museums (QM) Chairperson HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani has announced.

Ghotmeh, founder and principal of the Paris-based studio Lina Ghotmeh - Architecture, was selected on the basis of a concept distinguished by its architectural clarity and thoughtful response to the pavilion's historic context, creating a cultural bridge between Qatar and the global community.

"Her work is inspiring new and traditional audiences with its sensitivity to the human condition and its confident, innova-

tive flair," HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa said in a statement. "She has a worldview and sensibility that has grown from her native Lebanon to reach across cultures."

"Lina has wholeheartedly embraced our vision for the Qatar Pavilion as a platform for the artistic, architectural, and cultural creativity of our nation and the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia," she added.

"I thank His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani for his vision and support in realising Qatar's Pavilion," HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa continued.

"For their vision of bringing our two nations together through arts and culture, I also thank the Republic of Italy; Maria Tripodi, Italy's Undersecretary of State to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

and International Co-operation; the Municipality of Venice and Mayor Luigi Brugnaro; Pieterangelo Buttafuoco, President of La Biennale di Venezia; HE Khalid bin Youssef Khalifa Abdullah al-Sada, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Qatar; and HE Paolo Toschi, ambassador of the Republic of Italy to the State of Qatar," she said.

The Qatar Pavilion will be located in the heart of the Giardini al-Thani for his vision and support in realising Qatar's Pavilion, HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa on behalf of Qatar.

When completed, it will be only the third Pavilion added in more than 50 years to the historic and prestigious Giardini.

"My team and I are deeply honoured to have been chosen



for this uniquely exciting and significant project," Ghotmeh said. "Qatar is a cultural beacon for the entire Menasa (Middle East, North Africa and South Asia) region."

"It is thrilling to be given this opportunity to design Qatar's Pavilion on the historic grounds of the Giardini of La Biennale di Venezia," she said.

Exemplifying architecture's ability to engage with the public realm, the design blends seam-

lessly with the Pavilion's immediate landscape and the larger environment.

Taking into account the contemporary art and architecture that it will house, the interior will be flexible and adaptable, enabling exhibitors to transform the space into their own visions.

A conversation between Sheikhha Al Mayassa and Ghotmeh, moderated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, will take place at ACP-Palazzo Franchetti on May 8.