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SPORT | Page 4

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Qatar elected IPU committee member

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has elected Qatar, represented by HE Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, as a member of the Union's Executive Committee and Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Arab Group. The election of representatives of the political groups within the IPU took place during the 215th session of the Governing Council, held as part of the 150th IPU General Assembly, which concluded yesterday in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent. HE Dr al-Sulaiti expressed her pride in being selected as a member of the IPU Executive Committee. **Page 4**

HIA wins big at 2025 Skytrax Awards

Hamad International Airport (HIA) has retained its title as the Best Airport in the Middle East for the eleventh consecutive year and won Best Airport Shopping globally for the third year in a row at the 2025 Skytrax World Airport Awards in Madrid, Spain. HIA was also awarded the prestigious 5-star Airport Rating, a statement said yesterday. The airport connects passengers to more than 197 destinations. Hamad Ali al-Khater, chief operating officer at HIA, said: "With the launch of Concourses D and E a few weeks ago, we're expanding our capacity to over 65mn passengers, enhancing the overall experience, integrating smart infrastructure, sustainable design, and next-generation retail and dining experiences." **Page 7**

Education City to host 'Marathon'

The Qatar Sports For All Federation (QSFA) has announced the organisation of a Sustainability Marathon in collaboration with Education City and students from sustainable development programmes. The event will take place at the Sustainability Park at Qatar Foundation. The marathon, which will kick off on Saturday evening, will feature 50 students from the youth and junior categories, participating in a race that carries health, environmental, and educational significance. **Page 4**

France to recognise Palestinian state

France plans to recognise a Palestinian state within months and could make the move at a UN conference in New York in June on settling the Israel-Palestinian conflict, President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday. "We must move towards recognition, and we will do so in the coming months," Macron, who this week visited Egypt, told France 5 television. "Our aim is to chair this conference with Saudi Arabia in June, where we could finalise this movement of mutual recognition (of a Palestinian state) by several parties," he added.

Nightclub collapse toll rises to 124

A devastating roof collapse on Tuesday at a popular nightclub in the capital of the Dominican Republic has now claimed at least 124 lives, authorities said yesterday, as the search for survivors turns increasingly grim. More than 150 people have been rescued from the rubble of Jet Set nightclub in Santo Domingo on Tuesday. An official said rescue workers expected to need another 24-36 hours to complete their search. **Page 11**

Oman Sultan Haitham receives al-Kaabi



Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman, received HE Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, Minister of State for Energy Affairs, at Al Barakah Palace in the capital, Muscat, yesterday. During the meeting, they reviewed areas of co-operation and partnership in the energy sector between Oman and Qatar to serve common interests and benefit the peoples of both countries.

29 killed in Israeli strike on Gaza residential block

Reuters/AFP
Cairo

An Israeli air strike killed at least 29 Palestinians, including women and children, in a house in Shujaiya in Gaza City, local health authorities said yesterday.

Medics said dozens of others were wounded in the attack that hit a multi-floor residential building in the eastern suburb of Gaza City. Many were still believed to be missing and trapped under the ruins of the building. The strike damaged several other houses nearby, medics said.

The Israeli military said in a statement it struck a senior Hamas fighter, whom it did not identify.

Local health authorities said nine other Palestinians were killed in separate Israeli military strikes in other parts of the enclave, raising Wednesday's death toll to 38.

Last week, the military ordered Shujaiya residents to evacuate, saying forces intended to operate against militants in the area.

Israel resumed its bombardment of Gaza on March 18 after a two-month truce and sent troops back into the enclave. In the three weeks since, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says Israeli military strikes have killed nearly 1,500 Palestinians.



Palestinian casualties are rushed into Al-Ahli Arab Baptist Hospital, following an Israeli strike, in Gaza City yesterday.

Since late March Israel has ordered Gazans out of territory around the edges of the enclave to create what it describes as a security zone; residents fear the aim is to permanently depopulate swathes of territory.

Since October 7, 2023, more than 50,800 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military campaign, Palestinian authorities have said.

Meanwhile, Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said that the army was seizing large areas in Gaza and incorporating them into buffer zones cleared of their inhabitants.

"Large areas are being seized and added to Israel's security zones, leaving Gaza smaller and more isolated," Katz said during a visit to the newly announced Morrag Corridor between the southern Gaza cities of Rafah and Khan Younis.

Katz also said that Israel was working to implement US President Donald Trump's plan for the "voluntary emigration" of Gaza residents.

"The four-storey block was home to many people who believed they were safe. It was blown up over their heads," a witness said.

He added that the strike hit while many children were playing inside.

Cabinet approves draft decision on localisation award for private sector



QNA
Doha

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

Following the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi stated the following: The Cabinet considered the topics on its agenda and took note of the Shura Council's approval of a draft law on ministers.

The Cabinet approved a draft Amiri Decision establishing the Qatar Award for Localisation in the Private Sector. The award aims to encourage positive competition between private sector

establishments in the field of job localisation by honouring establishments that have achieved localisation targets and contributed to achieving Qatar National Vision 2030 and the objectives of the Third National Development Strategy, which aims to create a future-ready workforce.

It also honours distinguished talents among citizens working in the private sector, those with distinguished visions, and innovative pioneers in the sector.

The Cabinet decided to take the necessary measures to ratify the general agreement for the establishment of the Arab Common Electricity Market, a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of social insurance between the governments of Qatar and Kuwait, and the memorandum of understanding between the governments of Qatar and Kuwait

for co-operation in the field of developing industrial exports.

The Cabinet also decided to approve Qatar's joining of the Near East Plant Protection Organisation, and a draft air services agreement between the governments of Qatar and the Republic of Kiribati.

The Cabinet concluded its meeting by reviewing two reports and taking appropriate decisions regarding them. First, a report on the results of the participation of Qatar's delegation, headed by HE the Minister of Labour, in the 352nd session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation, and second, a report on the results of the participation of Qatar's delegation, headed by HE the Minister of Public Health, in the ninth meeting of the Ministerial Committee for Food Safety of GCC countries. **(QNA)**

Fishing exhibition opens at Old Doha Port

CEO of Old Doha Port Mohammed Abdullah al-Mulla announced the inauguration of the first edition of the Fishing Exhibition at the Old Doha Port yesterday. The event features over 30 exhibitors and more than 150 brands, running for four days, including weekends.

Al-Mulla emphasised that the event welcomes visitors, fishing enthusiasts, and sea lovers daily from 4pm-9pm at Mina Park. He described the exhibition as a comprehensive platform showcasing the rich maritime heritage while blending traditional sea crafts with the

technological advancements of the maritime sector. He said that the exhibition coincides with the start of the fishing season in the region, wishing it to become an annual destination for sea enthusiasts, providing all essential supplies and equipment for the fishing season. **Page 5**

Trump lowers tariffs for most countries; hits China harder

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he would temporarily lower new tariffs on many countries, even as he raised them further on imports from China, in a sudden reversal that sent US stocks sharply higher.

Trump's announcement came less than 24 hours after steep new tariffs kicked in on imports from dozens of trading partners. The new trade barriers have hammered markets, raised the odds of recession and prompted retaliatory responses from China and the European Union.

Trump said he would raise the tariff on Chinese imports to 125% from the 104% level that took effect at midnight, further escalating a high-stakes confrontation between the world's two largest economies.

Trump said he would at the same time suspend targeted tariffs on other countries for 90



Trump speaks with autoracing officials on the South Portico of the White House yesterday.

days to allow time for US officials to negotiate with countries that have sought to reduce them.

"At some point, hopefully in the near future, China will realise that the days of ripping off the USA, and other countries, is no longer sustainable or acceptable," Trump said.

A 10% blanket duty on almost all US imports will remain in place, the White House said. The announcement also does not appear to affect duties on autos, steel

and aluminium that are already in place. US stock indexes shot higher on the news, with the benchmark S&P 500 up more than 6%. Bond yields came off earlier highs and the dollar rebounded against safe-haven currencies.

Goldman Sachs cut its probability for a recession back to 45% after Trump's move, down from 65%, saying the tariffs left in place were still likely to result in a 15% increase in the overall tariff rate.

Since returning to the White House in January, Trump has repeatedly threatened an array of punitive measures on trading partners, only to revoke some of them at the last minute. The on-again, off-again approach has baffled world leaders and spooked business executives, who say the uncertainty has made it difficult to forecast market conditions.

"Trump is gaining a reputation now for flip-flopping on tariffs and not having a consistent economic policy," said Marcus Brookes of Quilter Investors.

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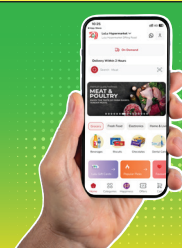
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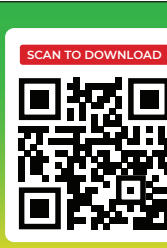


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Qatar elected member of IPU Executive Committee

QNA
Tashkent

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has elected the State of Qatar, represented by HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, as a member of the Union's Executive Committee and Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Arab Group.

The election of representatives of the political groups within the IPU took place during the 215th session of the Governing Council, held as part of the 150th IPU General Assembly, which concluded yesterday in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent.

In a statement on this occasion, HE Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti expressed her pride in being selected as a member of the IPU Executive Committee, emphasising that this confidence reflects the advanced position that Qatar has come to occupy in the interna-

tional parliamentary arena, thanks to the directives of the wise leadership and the active role played by the Shura Council in promoting parliamentary dialogue and co-operation regionally and internationally.

She said that the approval of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Governing Council of her membership in the Executive Committee is a recognition of the active role played by the Shura Council in parliamentary diplomacy. She added that it gives the Shura Council a greater opportunity to contribute to formulating the policies and general directions of this venerable international union, serving the interests of peoples, especially those of the Arab peoples, and promoting the concepts of peace, development, and understanding among nations.

She also said that the position constitutes an important platform for the Shura Council and Arab legislative councils to expand their participation in decision-making



within the union, implement their vision of supporting parliamentary dialogue as a tool for achieving stability and resolving conflicts, and affirm the principles embraced by Qatar and Arab countries in respecting international law, human rights, and sustainable development.

She affirmed that, through this qualitative representation, the Shura Council will continue its constructive contributions to im-

portant issues on the international parliamentary agenda and enhance its presence as an effective legislative institution in supporting efforts to bring peoples closer together and co-operate.

It is worth noting that the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the supreme body responsible for managing the affairs of the Union between sessions of the General Assembly. It plays a pivotal role in

formulating general policies and directing its strategic activities, enhancing the effectiveness of global parliamentary work.

Membership on the Bureau of this Committee represents a valuable opportunity to contribute to international parliamentary decision-making and gives member states a direct influence in shaping the Union's approaches to current international issues.

In a related context, the closing session of the General Assembly witnessed the appointment of Yousef bin Ali al-Khater, a member of the Shura Council, as a member of the Bureau of the IPU's Standing Committee on Sustainable Development. Al-Khater expressed his pride in being selected as a member of the IPU's Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, saying that the selection represents an appreciation of the active role played by the Shura Council and the State of Qatar in supporting sustainability issues at the regional and international levels. He

said that the committee is one of the four standing committees of the Union and is concerned with enhancing the quality of human life and well-being by highlighting environmental issues, climate change, financing for development, and other vital issues.

He appreciated the support of the Shura Council and the Arab Group for his candidacy, affirming his determination to work with his colleagues on the committee to advance efforts aimed at serving peoples, especially in the Arab world, through concrete initiatives and effective programs.

The closing session of the IPU General Assembly also witnessed the adoption of reports by the Union's standing committees, including a draft resolution on the Role of Parliaments in Advancing the Two-State Solution regarding the Palestinian issue, and a draft resolution on parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-term impact of conflicts, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development.

Official

Amir condolences with Saudi King Salman

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the death of Prince Abdullah bin Mubarak al-Abdulrahman al-Saud. **(QNA)**

Qatar's permanent representative to UN meets UNEP executive director



HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN Sheikh Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met with Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Inger Andersen, at the Permanent Mission's headquarters in New York. The meeting focused on enhancing existing collaboration between Qatar and UNEP, and the available opportunities within the framework of the Second Global Summit for Social Development, scheduled to take place in Doha this year, aiming to advance the implementation of shared priority goals. **(QNA)**

Avoid engaging with suspicious links: MoI

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has urged the public to avoid engaging with suspicious links that claim to be from state institutions or ministries. MoI, in an advisory on X, said this is in order to protect from cybercrime. "Your awareness is your security," MoI said.

MoI earlier asked the public to be cautious of being victimised by phishing attacks that use e-mails or messaging services to trick or fool them into clicking on a link or opening an attachment that contains malicious files.

Phishing is a form of fraud to obtain sensitive information by disguising itself as a reputable entity or person through e-mail or other communication channels. It often directs users to enter personal information on a fake website, the look and feel of which are identical to a legitimate site. Phishing mostly steals banking information and data related to e-shopping accounts and social media accounts. By falling victim to such an attack, the users risk having their highly sensitive information stolen and/or their computers infected. Attackers make their e-mail look like



it come from a friend or a trusted company. MoI said that the public can alert the authorities by a direct visit or through Metrash 2 if such suspected fraudulent activities are noted. They can contact on 2347444 or hotline 66815757, as well as by e-mailing cccc@moi.gov.qa

Algeria, Qatar widen areas of co-operation in transport sector

QNA
Doha

Algerian Minister of Transport Said Sayoud has praised Qatar's pioneering expertise in the transportation sector, highlighting the significant progress made by the State in developing this vital areas in all its aspects.

He also emphasised that the advanced infrastructure and modern transportation networks established on the ground are a clear reflection of a strategic vision aimed at achieving positive outcomes both nationally and internationally.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA) at the conclusion of his visit to Qatar, the Algerian minister explained that the air transport services agreement signed between the two countries is part of efforts to strengthen their fraternal bilateral relations.

He noted that Qatar's extensive experience in the transportation sector serves as a model to be emulated, and emphasised that Algeria aspires to benefit from this expertise within the framework of a genuine partnership that is based on the 'win-win' principle, serving the interests of both countries and supporting sustainable development.

Sayoud emphasised that Qatar has become a prominent and strategic partner for Algeria, as evidenced by the volume of Qatari investments across diverse sectors such as telecommunications, iron and steel, and agriculture. He added that this co-operation is now entering a new phase of expansion, particularly in the transportation sector, with a focus on port development and maritime transport, especially freight transportation.

The Algerian minister mentioned that discussions are ongoing with Qatar to establish a high-quality partnership in the transportation sector. He noted that, over the past two months, a high-level



Algerian Minister of Transport Said Sayoud

Qatari delegation visited several Algerian ports in both the east and west of the country, assessing their capabilities and strategic locations.

Efforts are now focused on fostering dialogue and consultation to strengthen this co-operation and achieve a transformative shift that reflects the depth of the historical ties between the two nations.

Sayoud noted that the air transport services agreement between Qatar and Algeria, signed during his visit to Doha, marks the first step toward developing co-operation in both air and maritime transport. The agreement allows Qatari aircraft to land at Algerian airports and operate flights from there to other destinations, while Algerian aircraft can fly via Doha to other countries without requiring third-party transit. He also noted that the agreement facilitates connections between the two countries' airlines to better serve passengers travelling to Africa and Europe.

In the same context, he revealed a strategic project currently under study, which involves opening a maritime route connecting Algeria to Doha, passing through several Arab ports, including

Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and, in the future, Oman. He emphasised that this project has direct support from Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, due to significance in boosting trade and logistics exchange between the Mediterranean and the Arabian Gulf.

Furthermore, the minister indicated that Algeria has become an attractive investment destination, thanks to the profound economic reforms introduced by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. These reforms, particularly the new investment law, have addressed many previous shortcomings and created a more transparent and conducive environment for both domestic and foreign capitals.

In this regard, he welcomed Qatari investors, whether through partnerships with the Algerian side or through independent investments, emphasising that all doors are open, the possibilities are plentiful, and there is a strong political at the highest levels of government to support high-quality investments that contribute to wealth creation and job opportunities.

Addressing Qatari investors, the Algerian transport minister expressed his aspiration for Qatar to play a pivotal role in Algeria's new development trajectory. He emphasised the importance of forging qualitative partnerships to enhance Algeria's logistics system and position the country as a key economic and logistics hub connecting Africa and Europe. The minister invited Qatari investors to visit Algeria to explore the vast opportunities offered by the country's promising investment climate.

He highlighted that the strong commitment shown by the Qatari side reflects a shared desire to build effective co-operation based on trust and mutual interests, adding that Algeria is fully dedicated to ensuring that the partnership with Qatar becomes a successful model of integrated Arab co-operation.

Sustainability Run on April 12


The Qatar Sports For All Federation (QSFA) has announced the organisation of a Sustainability Marathon in collaboration with Education City and students from sustainable development programmes. The event will take place at the Sustainability Park at Qatar Foundation. The marathon, which will kick off on Saturday evening, will feature 50 students from the youth and junior categories, participating in a race that carries health, environmental, and educational significance. The event is part of a series of initiatives aimed at promoting physical activity as a lifestyle, raising environmental awareness, and aligning with sustainability principles through sports. Abdullah al-Dosari, Executive Director of QSFA, highlighted the importance of adopting sports activities as an effective means to enhance physical fitness across all age groups within society, as well as its role in environmental awareness. In his statement, al-Dosari said that QSFA is committed to making sports an effective and inclusive tool for improving physical health, as well as preserving the environment. He underlined the importance of the partnership between QSFA and Education City, which resulted in the organisation of numerous sports events and competitions.

Legal action for violating environment regulations



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Department of Wildlife Protection took the necessary legal action against a person in Rawdat Al Sabsab, south of Al Karaana Area, for committing several environmental violations, including intruding into the protected meadow with his vehicle, damaging its fence, and using a bird-calling device.





The General, Limited Tenders Committees and Supply Chain Department announces the following Tenders:

Important Notice:
Suppliers and Contractors who are already registered with QatarEnergy via Mushtaryat Portal can "Buy Tender Online and download Tender Document" from QatarEnergy website (Mushtaryat Portal).

Effective from 1st July 2023, bids submitted by a Local company (companies incorporated in Qatar) acting as Tenderer in accordance with this Invitation to Tender, will not be accepted by QatarEnergy without any further notification, if such companies are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal (<https://icv.qa/en-US>) by the specified Original Tender Closing Date or Original due date for submission of COMMERCIAL Package in case of two stage Tendering as per ITT. However, any Local company that has been established within last two (2) years is exempt from this mandatory ICV certification requirement.

Sl. No.	Tender Number	Tender Sale Period Start Date	Tender Sale Period End Date	Tender Closing Date	Tender Bond	Bond Curr.	Tender Fee	Fee Curr.
1.	GT25102900	27.03.2025	15.04.2025	18.05.2025	550,000.00	QAR	N/A	

Title of Tender: **PROVISION OF NDR AND THREAT HUNTING SERVICES**

Mid-Tender Meeting Location : To be advised if required

Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time : To be advised if required

* Tender documents can be purchased and downloaded from QatarEnergy Website-> Supply Management-> Tenders page during the Tender Sale Period mentioned above against each Tender. Request for issuance of Tender after the specified Tender Sale Period will not be entertained.

* Always refer to QatarEnergy Website (www.qatarenergy.qa) -> Supply Management -> Tenders page for up to date information on QatarEnergy Tenders. Subscribe to Tender Alert to receive notification in your email on new Tenders.

* Changes to Tender Sale Period and Bid Closing Date will be updated in QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal only.

* Brief Scopes of Work for the above tenders are posted on the QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal.

* Suppliers and Contractors who are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QatarEnergy are instructed to maintain their Company Registration and Communication details upto date and valid via QatarEnergy Mushtaryat Portal on urgent basis.

* No queries will be entertained, or bids received, from entities who have not purchased tender documents in compliance with the above provisions.

* QatarEnergy invites all prospective Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in QatarEnergy Tenders to register online and obtain a QatarEnergy SAP Vendor code, a mandatory requirement for the issue of Tender Documents by QatarEnergy.

* Prospective Qatar based Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in future QatarEnergy Tenders shall obtain an ICV score. Relevant information pertaining to ICV, ICV Scorecard, ICV Certification, and ICV Guidelines are available on the ICV Digital Portal - <https://icv.qa/en-US>



The event runs until April 12 at Mina Park, south of Mina District. (Supplied picture)



Live demonstrations of traditional techniques at the exhibition.

Fishing exhibition at Old Doha Port offers glimpse into seafaring history

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Old Doha Port launched Qatar's first-ever Fishing Exhibition yesterday, showcasing more than 30 exhibitors and 150 brands, and offering a glimpse into the country's maritime heritage. Running until April 12, the four-day event at Mina Park (south of Mina District) provides fishing enthusiasts, families, and those eager to learn about Qatar's seafaring history a unique and engaging experience.

"The exhibition serves as a comprehensive platform showcasing the richness of Qatar's maritime heritage, bringing together traditional maritime crafts and modern technological advancements in the marine sector," Old Doha Port CEO Mohammed Abdullah al-Mulla told a press briefing.

He pointed to the significance of holding the exhibition in conjunction with the start of the regional

marine fishing season. From age-old techniques to cutting-edge marine innovations, organisers noted that the exhibition provides a complete picture of the fishing sector. Visitors can browse a diverse selection of local and regional fishing gear, equipment, and industry retail offerings, witnessing firsthand the evolution of the industry while appreciating its historical foundations.

"We hope it will become the go-to annual destination for sea lovers to prepare for the season, by offering all the necessary supplies and equipment for this field. We also aspire for the exhibition to become an occasion through which the port celebrates the community, its maritime culture, and its rich crafts—highlighting our deep-rooted connection to the sea as a cornerstone of our heritage and identity," al-Mulla said.

Apart from the commercial aspect, organisers said the exhibition is designed to be an immersive cultural experience. Visitors can



The event features more than 30 exhibitors and 150 brands.

participate in interactive activities, enjoy live artistic performances, and witness exciting competitions, including a marine fishing contest with prizes awarded on the final day. A culinary journey awaits as well, with opportunities to sample a variety of popular dishes inspired by traditional Qatari flavours.

Al-Mulla highlighted the exhibition's role in supporting marine sports and activities, enriching Qatar's event landscape, and maximising the use of the transformed Old Doha Port as a hub for community engagement. The event is open daily from 4pm-9pm.

"We wish the best of success in

organising this inaugural edition of the exhibition, which we hope becomes a permanent addition to the national calendar of events," al-Mulla said, envisioning it as a key driver for marine tourism, similar to the Qatar International Boat Show.

Skilled craftsmen's live demonstrations of traditional techniques such as net making and rope weaving present a tangible connection to the maritime traditions of past generations.

A lively soundtrack from a traditional folk maritime band, combined with hands-on activities and storytelling, immerses visitors, especially children, in Qatar's maritime history.

Citing the importance of supporting local businesses, al-Mulla stressed that the exhibition has been designed to provide a platform for businesses in the maritime and fishing sectors.

"We have not overlooked this aspect. In addition to the commercial/retail aspect related to sea ac-



Mohammed Abdullah al-Mulla announces details of Old Doha Port's first Fishing Exhibition yesterday. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

activities, we put some plans in place to support local entrepreneurs," he said. Al-Mulla added that the event includes dedicated spaces for food and beverage, providing them with valuable exposure and opportunities to connect with potential customers.

More online services for fishermen, boat owners

The Ministry of Municipality's Department of Information Systems in co-operation with the Fisheries Department has launched a number of new online services to ease the related procedures and processes for the fishermen and the owners of marine vessels, as part of its comprehensive project for digital transformation.

According to the ministry's X account, the new services that could be accessed through the ministry's website include renting marine vessel parking lots, fishing licence for boats and ships, renting a storehouse at the harbour, obtain a licence for transporting fish, fishermen licences, and fishing tools and gear permits, among others. First, the applicant has to register at the website, and then log on through the national authentication account.

The applicant will be able after logging in to use the desired service and after that enter the necessary details of the application and agree on the terms and conditions of the services. Accordingly, the application would be submitted for approval.



Tareq Hussain al-Khalaf, partner of My Q Trading and Advertising with Sultan bin Rashid al-Khater and Sheikh Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani at the Mega Deals Launch event.

E-commerce platform Mega Deals forays into Qatar

My Q Trading and Advertising has launched Mega Deals, an innovative e-commerce platform, set to transform online shopping in Qatar. Mega Deals offers a shopping experience where every purchase comes with an opportunity to win prizes, including cash, cars, and gold.

The Mega Deals reveal, held at the St Regis Marsa Arabia, was attended by Tariq Hussein al-Khalaf, partner of My Q Trading and Advertising, as well as members of the My Q team.

The e-commerce platform seeks to enhance Qatar's digital commerce by offering seamless shopping experiences. It makes online purchases more rewarding, bringing more value and convenience to consumers.

"As a Qatari company specialising in advertising, production and public relations, we recognised the opportunity to create solutions tailored to our customers' needs, while contributing to the nation's growing digital economy," said al-Khalaf. The platform operates with transparency and integrity, using



Fayez Chaoul, country director of Mega Deals, speaking at the Mega Deals launch.

clear processes, fully aligned with Qatar's regulations and supervised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It also ensures seamless accessibility through both its website (www.megadeals.qa) and a user-friendly mobile app that makes shopping convenient for all customers.

At its core, Mega Deals embraces a customer-centric approach, offering secure transactions, and responsive support to maximise customer satisfaction and build lasting relationships. "It is not merely a transactional platform –

it is an experience that brings joy and excitement to online shopping. When customers buy products from Mega Deals, they receive great opportunities to win big prizes," said Fayez Chaoul, country director of Mega Deals.

With Qatar's digital commerce market expected to more than double by 2029, Mega Deals enters the scene at a pivotal moment of rapid growth and transformation. By blending convenience, value, and excitement, the platform aims to redefine how consumers engage with online retail.

Gord organises 5th meeting of Gulf Technical Committee on sustainable building standards

The Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (Gord) hosted the 5th meeting of the Gulf Technical Committee for Sustainable Building Standards (GSO TC17). The two-day hybrid meeting, held both in-person and virtually, took place at Gord's headquarters at Qatar Science & Technology Park.

The meeting witnessed the participation of representatives from the GCC Standardisation Organisation (GSO), the General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), and national standardisation bodies from across the Gulf region. All member states were represented in the committee, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Yemen.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Yousef bin Mohammed Alhorr,



founding chairman of Gord and head of GSO TC17. Discussions focused on key priorities for 2025, including the review of newly proposed Gulf standards related to

the sustainability of building design, construction, and operations across various building types.

Commenting on the meeting, Dr Alhorr said: "We have reaffirmed

our shared commitment within the GCC framework by adopting several technical standards and guidelines aimed at promoting sustainable built environments that are resilient to climate change."

At the conclusion of the meeting, several recommendations were issued, including the adoption of a new package of technical standards and guidelines. These will be circulated among member states for review, feedback, and technical input, paving the way for the completion of the necessary procedures to approve priority standardisation projects. The outcomes underscored the collective commitment of Gulf nations to advance sustainable development initiatives through collaboration and innovation in line with the aspirations of the region's people.

Non-compliant fishing nets seized



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Marine Protection Department has seized a motorised fishing vessel during a surprise inspection campaign. The vessel was found carrying a large number of fishing nets that violated the terms of its fishing licence. Accordingly, the necessary legal procedures were taken against the violating vessel, and the seized items were confiscated.



PHCC serves 37,241 patients during Eid al-Fitr holidays

A total of 37,241 patients, including citizens and residents, visited its 20 health centres that were operational during the Eid al-Fitr holidays from March 30 to April 7, the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) said.

The family medicine clinics served 28,247 patients, general dental clinics received 1,848 patients and the “Urgent Units” across 12 health centres catered to 3,993 cases.

PHCC stated that a variety of specialised services were made available, including ophthalmology, ENT, dermatology and pre-marital screening clinics.

Pharmacy, radiology and laboratory services were also provided during the Eid al-Fitr



holidays. The community call centre (16000) facilitated 1,134 virtual medical consultations, both telephone and video, to patients who contacted the service line without prior appointments.

Such consultation ensures that patients classified as urgent cases receive timely healthcare, while also enabling prescriptions of required medications by specialist physicians as swiftly as possible.

DFI stresses support for emerging talent to pursue professional careers



Over 15 years, Doha Film Institute (DFI) has provided a gateway for emerging talents to “have the courage to pursue full-time careers” in cinema, observed the management team during a media briefing at Qumra 2025.

“With exciting new projects emerging on a regular basis, we have climbed over the hill,” said Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, chief executive officer. “Films are not an easy career but we are here to prove that it can be fulfilling work for young people and for the community. The interaction between the participants and the mentors at Qumra is truly inspiring, and we are happy to see more productions happening, be it features, documentaries or series.”

Alremaihi shared the Institute’s legacy of strong support of women filmmakers. “We never set quotas, and while currently we have more women statistics-wise, this has always been the case. We always focus on the quality of stories and the dedication of the filmmakers. We are

equally proud of all our filmmakers, who are doing great things.”

She shared that Doha Film Institute has big plans for the future.

“We are still a young industry, and we are trying to move as fast as we can. We want our filmmakers to gain more experience and build careers around cinema, which is already happening. From day one, our goal has been to support the Arab film industry because we have always suffered from being misrepresented. It’s time for us to tell our stories

“We don’t set unreasonable standards for films, and there are no limits to storytelling,” said Alremaihi.

“We don’t interfere in the content of the films submitted, nor do we own them. We simply support them unconditionally. We are an organisation whose sole goal is to support Arab cinema and bring films from the region to light.”

“Our vision for Qumra was clear from the beginning. We designed Qumra to focus on the work rather than the spotlight.

It is unique as an incubator for films and filmmakers in connecting them with industry specialists and we continue to maintain the close connection between filmmakers and masters,” she said.

Elia Suleiman, artistic advisor at Doha Film Institute, said Qumra shows that the region’s film industry has moved from just hope for the future to receiving strong solidarity from international filmmakers. He said, personally, he immerses into the event, listening from the Qumra Masters, who have a wealth of knowledge to share with emerging filmmakers.

Hanaa Issa, director of Strategy and Development at Doha Film Institute, and Qumra deputy director, said Qumra’s success is the “intimacy of the event; filmmakers are not distracted with different things. It is very focused and curated. Over the course of the past days, more than 700 meetings with industry experts have already been organised for the 49 Qumra projects from across the world. There is a very targeted programme not only for the projects but also the industry. Qumra delegates not only masterclasses but also discuss opportunities to showcase their films at international festivals and engage with sales and distribution decision-makers.”

The 11th edition of Qumra featured masterclasses, mentorship sessions, and industry matchmaking. Participants will continue to engage with mentors online from April 12 to 14. (QNA)

DFI’s Qumra concludes with participation of over 250 experts

The 11th Qumra, Doha Film Institute’s (DFI) renowned talent incubator for Arab and international cinema, concluded yesterday with the participation of over 250 film experts from 50 countries.

The last Masterclass at Qumra hosted Johnnie To, one of Hong Kong’s most influential and celebrated filmmakers, who underlined the need for constant evolution and cross-border collaboration in filmmaking.

He said: “I see great opportunities in Doha. I wouldn’t have come here for no good reason. Different eras offer different opportunities and if you do not

change, if you stay the same, it will be difficult to see something new happen.”

Johnnie To, who is mentoring talents at Qumra, said he was impressed by a project by a Qatari director. “It sets an example of how the history of movies will evolve, and how filmmakers anywhere in the world can evolve into world-class directors as long as there are opportunities to keep going.”

The Qumra Master also said filmmakers should not be worried about artificial intelligence. “Today there are many different channels to watch films. With the pace of technological ad-

vancement, different types of software will continue to evolve but the importance of content creators, even with AI, will not die. We will survive if young directors broaden their horizons, and look at Asia, look at the whole world, look at the Middle East, where people are doing outstanding work.”

Through approximately 700 meetings, the experts supervised 49 projects by filmmakers from more than 20 countries, including 18 projects by Qatari directors and those residing in Qatar, reflecting the growing strength of the film ecosystem in Qatar. (QNA)

Terrazas underlines key role of costume design at Qumra

Award-winning costume designer Anna Terrazas, a Qumra Master, highlighted the key role of costume design in bringing authentic characters to life on screen, calling costumes a “second skin for actors”.

Terrazas, who has designed costumes for Alfonso Cuarón, Alejandro G Inarritu, and Sam Mendes, among others, said costume designers have a huge responsibility. “From a script we create characters and help actors become who they need to be.”

Sharing her journey from a small town near Mexico City to being part

of some of Mexico’s seminal cinematic works, she urged emerging filmmakers to “always try to look for things that will give way to creating what they are looking for in their films”.

After studying art and design in London, she moved to New York to study fashion. When she returned to Mexico she found a mentor in a theatre costume designer. “That is when I discovered costume design; it taught me how to create a project from start to finish and to work in a team.”

Terrazas says collaborating with

the director, cinematographer, production design and practically every member of the crew is important in order to “speak the same cinematic language and to deliver what we are trusted to deliver.”

A defining moment was working on *The Duce* (2017), the American drama TV series created by David Simon and George Pelecanos. Set in New York City in the 1970s, the series, featured James Franco and Maggie Gyllenhaal.

Terrazas representation of the various social classes through textures, colours and materials went on



McDonald’s Qatar wraps up Season of Giving

McDonald’s Qatar wrapped up a Season of Giving with ‘Your Donations Matched by McDonald’s’ campaign’ that brought communities together through education, appreciation, and tradition.

The season of impactful community initiatives strengthened connections, celebrated local traditions, and reaffirmed the brand’s deep-rooted commitment to the people of Qatar, a statement said.

“Proudly 100% locally owned, managed, and operated by Al Mana Restaurants and Food Company, McDonald’s Qatar remains deeply committed to feeding and fostering the community, strengthening the bonds that connect it to the people it serves,” it was explained.

At the heart of this year’s Ramadan efforts was the ‘Your Donations Matched by McDonald’s Qatar’ campaign, launched in partnership with Education Above All Foundation (EAA). Customers were invited to donate through the Drive-Thru, front counters, self-ordering kiosks, or the McDonald’s app, where every 20 rewards points equalled QR1.

McDonald’s Qatar matched every donation, raising over QR92,000 to support EAA’s Educate A Child and Al Fakhoura programmes, which provide access to quality education for children and fund higher education scholarships in Qatar. To date, the brand has contributed more than QR700,000 towards empowering youth through primary and higher education, helping students unlock their potential regardless of circumstances.

Throughout the holy month, McDonald’s Qatar embraced the spirit of Ramadan with initiatives designed to nurture connections and celebrate local traditions. A dedicated Iftar Night brought together over 120 delivery riders from Rafeeq, Snoonu, Deliveroo, and McDelivery in recognition of their hard work and devotion.

Continuing its tradition, McDonald’s Qatar offered complimentary soup, dates, and water to dine-in guests during Iftar. The celebrations also extended to Garangao Fun Day where children and families enjoyed games, face painting, and festive activities across participating restaurants.



“Supporting the local community is a core part of who we are at McDonald’s Qatar,” said Sara Abuobeid, senior marketing manager. “Our ongoing partnership with Education Above All Foundation reflects a shared commitment to expanding access to education and creating opportunities for young people across the country. Our long-standing focus on corporate social responsibility continues to guide us as we work to strengthen community ties and contribute to lasting, positive impact across Qatar.” Guided by Rahlatuna – Our Journey, McDonald’s Qatar’s corporate social responsibility platform, the brand continues to celebrate local traditions, uplift communities, and contribute to Qatar National Vision 2030 – all while delivering feel-good moments to every guest it serves, the statement added.

Awqaf opens new mosque at Al Mearad

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened a new mosque at Al Mearad.

Spread over an area of 5,024sq m, the mosque can accommodate 1,260 male and female worshippers. A library and an imam’s house are attached to the mosque.

According to an official statement from Awqaf, the mosque is endowed by Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Ali al-Thani. Its opening comes within Awqaf’s plan to expand the number of mosques in all regions of the country, keeping pace with urban and population growth, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

With number MS 1421, the mosque has a main prayer hall with space for 800 worshippers in addition to a daily prayer hall for 200 worshippers. The women’s prayer hall can accommodate 60 worshippers.

The mosque also includes a spacious ablution place in addition to a large number of public parking lots, several of which are allocated to persons with disabilities.

The entrances and exits of the mosque are disability-friendly. The mosque also has a tall minaret.

The Department of Engineering Affairs at the ministry is con-



cerned with fulfilling the needs of the regions in the country for mosques and prayer grounds while providing temporary mosques and supervising their preservation as well as preparing the annual plan for the maintenance of mosques and imams’ residences.

These are in co-ordination with the competent authorities.

For mosque designs, the department takes into account the requirements of different areas along with the guidelines for green and sustainable buildings.

Also, the department focuses on the conditions for sustainability in the use of electricity and water, and preserving the aesthetics of heritage in designs

that reflect the authenticity of Qatari and Islamic heritage by the highest standards.

The ministry’s plans to build mosques also take into account the population density map along with engineering, architectural specifications and the heritage aspect within the framework of caring for the mosques to perform worship and to serve the worshippers.

Awqaf’s website provides the facility to search for mosque locations geographically, according to the global navigation system, through accurate and specific maps that facilitate access to mosque locations in all cities across the country.



Anna Terrazas attends Qumra Masterclass on day five of Qumra 2025.

Qatar Charity stresses co-ordination in humanitarian response



Qatar Charity (QC) hosted a panel session as part of the Humanitarian Leadership Conference held under the theme: “Transformative Leadership in Times of Polycrisis”.

The two-day Humanitarian Leadership Conference was jointly organised by the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies (CHS) and the Center for Humanitarian Leadership (CHL) at Australia's Deakin University.

The panel session explored the gap between humanitarian theory and field practice, emphasising the importance of co-ordination with local governments and communities for effective action.

During the session, speakers stressed the need to balance operational and implementing partners in both competitive and complementary roles. Data shar-

ing was deemed essential, particularly in fragmented contexts like Gaza. Moreover, localisation was strongly advocated, with a call to empower Global South organisations. Proposals included multi-year, regionally driven solutions to overcome legal and procedural hurdles in humanitarian response.

During his welcome note, Director of External Affairs at QC, Mana Mohammed al-Ansari said: “The world is facing an increasing number of crises whether driven by conflict, natural disasters, or other emergencies. In these moments, effective co-ordination among humanitarian actors is not just beneficial it is essential. Well-co-ordinated action ensures that aid reaches the most vulnerable in a timely, efficient, and impactful manner.”

In turn, Director of Humanitarian Operations at QC, Aisha Abdulrazzaq al-Kuwari noted the importance of humanitarian co-ordination, highlighting the lessons learned from Gaza.

Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Qatar, Ahmed Mohsen emphasised that humanitarian co-ordination requires more than just theoretical frameworks. It demands proactive and flexible responses on the ground.

Partnerships and Philanthropy Officer at UNHCR Qatar, Maria Hatem emphasised the importance of collaboration grounded in equality, transparency, and results, adding: “At UNHCR, we work with various actors in refugee and IDP situations, ensuring a unified approach.” (QNA)

QF’s BilAraby summit to explore Arabic language’s creative role

BilAraby, a Qatar Foundation (QF) initiative dedicated to amplifying ideas, stories, and voices in the Arabic language will showcase a rich and varied lineup of cultural and intellectual activities at its summit on April 19-20 at Mullaq.

During the summit creative minds will explore new frontiers in innovation and advancing Arabic content, a statement said. A variety of exploratory sessions and panel discussions will focus on the role of the Arabic language in creative fields such as arts, technology, science, and innovation.

Artist Lutfi Bouchnak will perform a musical segment featuring humanitarian messages, Yemeni blogger Fidaa al-Din al-Khashi will lead a narrative session exploring historical and social themes, Egyptian maestro Mustafa Saeed will present a musical performance blending the beauty of Arabic melodies with grammatical craftsmanship, and a special session will explore the current and future landscape of Arabic podcasting with the participation of Mohammed al-Rummash (Atheer Podcast) and Bashar al-Najjar (Manbat Podcast – Sawt).

Over 500 thought-leaders, innovators, and influential figures from around the world will attend the summit, said Hisham Nourin, executive director of Strategic Initiatives and Programmes at QF.

The summit will feature 20 keynote lectures and 15 interactive workshops covering a wide range of contemporary topics, including sustainability, Artificial Intelligence, medicine, programming, arts, and space exploration.

It will include strategic partnerships with prominent cultural institutions such as QatarDebate, founded by QF which will present a performance ti-



Lutfi Bouchnak

tled ‘The Abandoned Arabic Language’, while Qatar National Library’s Qatar Reads initiative will offer an artistic performance inspired by al-Hariri’s classical literary work, Maqamat.

Attendees will have the opportunity to engage directly with speakers and innovators across more than 10 pavilions dedicated to showcasing groundbreaking innovations and developments, providing a unique platform for networking and idea exchange.



HIA wins top spots in 2025 Skytrax World Airport Awards

Hamad International Airport (HIA) has retained its title as the Best Airport in the Middle East for the eleventh consecutive year and won Best Airport Shopping globally for the third year in a row at the 2025 Skytrax World Airport Awards in Madrid, Spain.

HIA was also awarded the prestigious 5-star Airport Rating, a statement said yesterday. The airport connects pas-

sengers to more than 197 destinations via contemporary shopping and dining options, entertainment and relaxation facilities, including a spacious indoor tropical garden, and a world-class art collection from internationally acclaimed artists.

Hamad Ali al-Khater, chief operating officer at HIA, said: “Being named Best Airport in the Middle East for the eleventh

year and Best Airport Shopping for the third time reflects our commitment to delivering an exceptional passenger experience. With the launch of Concourses D and E a few weeks ago, we’re expanding our capacity to over 65mn passengers, enhancing the overall experience, integrating smart infrastructure, sustainable design, and next-generation retail and dining experiences”.

QRCS hands over social housing units in Niger



As part of a residential construction project for poor families in Niger, the representation office of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) recently handed over 25 social housing units to the recipient families in Kore Sania, a village located about 10km from Fillingue Department, Tillaberi Tillaberi Region.

The handover ceremony was attended by the Fillingue governor, head of department, head of municipality, Kore Sania mayor, and other local government officials. They thanked QRCS and the Qatari government for their efforts to support poor people in Niger, calling upon all donors to continue to provide humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable com-

munities. The project which also comprise a mosque and a well was totally funded and constructed by QRCS.

A total of 53 beneficiaries were selected, including widows, female breadwinners, older breadwinners, families that lost their homes during last year’s flash floods, and persons with disabilities.

HBKU CPP’s master’s programme in Global Health Policy launched

Hamad Bin Khalifa University’s (HBKU) College of Public Policy (CPP) has launched Master of Global Health Policy (MGHP) programme, a full-time, two-year professional degree to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to tackle pressing health policy challenges at both national and global levels.

MGHP will provide a comprehensive understanding of global health governance, policymaking, and leadership.

It will cover fundamental topics including global health economics and financing; data, artificial intelligence (AI), and methods in contemporary health policy; and global health advocacy, diplomacy and leadership. Students will also explore health systems in the global south as well as health policy in crises and emergency settings.

The college will offer a range of elective courses developed in collaboration with HBKU’s College of Law,

College of Science and Engineering, and Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, enabling students to personalise their learning experiences with modules that cover global health and ecological resilience, healthcare law, and health policy design.

Dr Leslie A Pal, dean, CPP, said: “CPP seeks to complement Qatar’s standing as a leader in healthcare innovation and policy by equipping future leaders with the skills necessary to anticipate and serve its future needs. The MGHP’s design exemplifies how CPP’s programmes contribute to effective policy development, evaluation, and dialogue in critical areas as outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030.”

MGHP will integrate health policy and politics, public policy, public health, development studies, and ethics. Its coursework draws from multiple fields – including economics, policy analysis, public health, research methodology, psychology, sociology, and artificial intelligence.

Alfardan Sports Motors welcomes Maserati MCXtrema

Alfardan Sports Motors – Maserati Qatar announced the arrival of the Maserati MCXtrema, track-only homologated racing car, delivered to a Maserati enthusiast and prominent figure in Qatar.

This exceptional model, designed for the most passionate racing aficionados, joins the distinguished collection of one of Qatar’s most dedicated automotive connoisseurs, a statement said.

With only 62 units produced worldwide, the MCXtrema stands as the pinnacle of Maserati’s engineering excellence. Powered by a 3.0-litre V6 twin-turbo Nettuno engine, this track-exclusive marvel unleashes 730hp, pushing the limits of performance with its ultralight carbon fibre monocoque chassis and state-of-the-art aerodynamics. Built purely for the track, the MCXtrema is not road-homologated – delivering an uncompromising racing experience.

The car’s great aerodynamics design, including an adjustable rear wing, advanced front splitter, and sculpted rear diffuser, ensure unparalleled downforce and track stability. Inside, the driver-focused cockpit draws inspiration from Formula 1 technology, featuring FIA-homologated safety elements for maximum protection.



Philippe Claverol, head of Maserati Overseas Markets, stated: “The MCXtrema embodies Maserati’s relentless pursuit of performance, exclusivity, and racing excellence. Its arrival in Qatar marks a significant milestone, further showcasing the brand’s commitment to pushing the boundaries of engineering and design. As a limited-production track car, it delivers an uncompromising experience tailored for gentleman drivers and racing car enthusiasts.”

This milestone further reinforces Maserati’s deep-rooted connection with Qatar’s discerning clientele, who admire the Brand’s heritage, craftsmanship, and track-focused innovation.

As Maserati’s exclusive partner in Qatar, Alfardan Sports Motors is honoured to facilitate this remarkable delivery, marking another chapter in Maserati’s motorsport legacy.

Charly Dagher, general manager of Alfardan Sports Motors – Maserati Qatar, reflected on

this milestone: “We are immensely proud to see the Maserati MCXtrema become part of an esteemed collector’s garage. This delivery signifies Maserati’s commitment to performance and exclusivity, as well as Qatar’s passion for automotive excellence. The MCXtrema is a true masterpiece, created for the world’s most discerning enthusiasts, and we are honoured to introduce it to our market as one of three allocations to the Middle East region.”





TRAGEDY

China nursing home blaze kills 20; one arrested

Twenty people were killed in a fire that broke out in an apartment for the elderly at a nursing home in China, state media said yesterday, while authorities arrested its owner as they investigate the cause. It was the latest in a series of similar incidents in recent years, including a fire at a hospital in the capital in 2023 that killed 26 patients and wounded dozens. Tuesday's fire in the city of Chengde in the northern province of Hebei blazed for two hours before it was doused, the official Xinhua news agency and the state-backed *Global Times* newspaper said, citing local authorities.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Philippines sent supplies to warship at atoll: China

China's coast guard yesterday said it had allowed a Philippine civilian vessel to deliver provisions to a warship "illegally grounded" at the Second Thomas Shoal, a disputed atoll in the South China Sea. The coast guard questioned and monitored the Philippine vessel throughout its supply mission, it said in a statement, urging the Philippines to work with China to manage the maritime situation. China and the Philippines have traded barbs for months over manoeuvres at Second Thomas Shoal, an atoll within Manila's 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone in the South China Sea.

DECISION

Japan to sell more rice reserves as prices soar

Japan will sell more rice from its emergency stockpile through July in an attempt to stabilise soaring prices, the agricultural minister said yesterday. After rice prices nearly doubled year-on-year, the government began auctioning its stockpile last month – the first time since it was started in 1995. "In order to stabilise rice prices that have soared, the government will sell off its reserve rice every month until this summer" when newly harvested rice enters the market, Agricultural Minister Taku Eto said. The shortages have been driven by factors including poor harvests due to hot weather in 2023 and panic-buying prompted by a "megaquake" warning last year.

STUDY

One-third of sport supplements 'contain banned substances'

More than one-third of sport supplements available online in Australia contained substances banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), according to a survey commissioned by the national doping watchdog. The survey tested 200 products including amino acids, protein powders and others marketed as "muscle builders" and "fat burners", Sport Integrity Australia (SIA) said. The tests, run by Human and Supplements Testing Australia, found 35% of the products contained substances listed on WADA's banned list. "Athletes need to understand that using supplements always carries risk," SIA chief science officer Dr Naomi Speers said.

S Korea holds 'shipbuilding card' in US tariff talks, says minister

Reuters
Seoul

South Korea's Trade and Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun yesterday said that potential co-operation with Washington in the shipbuilding sector is a "very important card" in negotiating with the US over its tariffs.

US President Donald Trump spoke to South Korean interim leader Han Duck-soo late on Tuesday to discuss shipbuilding and potential energy deals in what Trump labelled a "great call", a day before a 25% tariff on its Asian ally was due to kick in.

"Since President Trump and the Trump administration are showing great interest in shipbuilding co-operation, we believe that the shipbuilding sector will be a very important negotiating card for us," Minister of Trade, Industry, and Energy Ahn told parliament, citing Trump's call with Han.

South Korea is a major global player in the shipbuilding industry, and Trump has previously cited concern over how his country has fallen behind in a sector that is also dominated by China.

Ahn warned, however, that US tariffs were expected to have a "very negative" impact on South Korean exports such as automobiles, reiterating that the government would focus on negotiating with Washington.

The Yonhap News Agency cited a senior official at acting president Han's office as saying the top priority in negotiating with the US was to lower tariff rates.

Trump said he talked to Han about South Korea's payment for "big time" US military protection, signalling that defence cost could be part of a broader deal not only about tariffs and trade.

Trump has pressured allies including South Korea to pay more for American troops stationed in the countries.

The official from Han's office, however, said the issue of defence cost was not connected to the tariff negotiations, according to Yonhap.

"I think it is a wiser solution to elevate the South Korea-US alliance to a stronger security alliance and an economic alliance," Han said in a Facebook post late yesterday, citing game theory in which individual players repeating selfish choices cause long-term losses for everyone.

"Long and difficult negotiations remain."

The South Korean government yesterday announced emergency support measures for its auto sector, which include tax cuts and subsidies to boost domestic demand.

With South Korea seeking to negotiate with the US over tariffs, not retaliate, Seoul's top trade envoy Cheong In-kyo is currently in Washington to meet top US officials including Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

Cheong said that he would put on the table a potential energy deal in Alaska and co-operation in shipbuilding in negotiating with Washington officials.

Lego opens \$1bn factory in Vietnam



Employees prepare Lego packages on a production-line during the inauguration of the Lego factory in Binh Duong province, Vietnam, yesterday. Lego has opened the \$1bn factory, its second facility in Asia as the Danish toymaker pushes to expand its reach across the region. Vietnam has become an increasingly attractive investment destination in recent years, although its appeal has been somewhat dented for international firms exporting to the US due to an enormous 46% tariff imposed by Washington on Vietnamese goods. Lego's CEO Niels Christiansen said it was important for the company "to have proximity to some of the countries where we have a lot of revenue and a lot of Lego fans".

Beijing rejects Ukraine claim 'many' Chinese fighting for Russia

AFP

Kyiv, Ukraine

China yesterday rejected Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's claim that many Chinese citizens were fighting for Russia, calling it "absolutely groundless".

Zelensky said on Tuesday that Kyiv had captured two Chinese citizens fighting alongside Russian forces, and that there was evidence "many more Chinese citizens" were fighting with Moscow.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a press conference it was "absolutely groundless" to suggest many Chinese citizens were fighting in Ukraine.

"The Chinese government has always asked its citizens to stay away from areas of armed conflict (and) avoid involvement in armed conflicts in any form," he said.

He added that Beijing was verifying relevant information with Kyiv.

The Kremlin declined to comment on the matter. China presents itself as a neutral party in the conflict and says it is not sending lethal assistance to either side, unlike the US and other Western nations. But it is a close political and economic partner of Russia, and Nato members have branded Beijing a "decisive enabler" of Moscow's offensive, which it has never condemned. "The Chinese side's position on the issue of the Ukraine crisis is clear and unequivocal, and has won widespread approval

from the international community," Lin said.

"The Ukrainian side should correctly view China's efforts and constructive role in pushing for a political resolution to the Ukraine crisis."

At least two people were killed and two wounded in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region on Wednesday and one man died in the southern region of Kherson during Russian shelling, officials said, as the war grinds through its fourth year. Ukrainian troops had captured the two Chinese citizens fighting with Russian forces in the Donetsk region, Zelensky told reporters.

The media outlet Ukrainska Pravda, citing the Ukrainian army, reported that one of the captives had paid \$3,480 to an intermediary in China to join the Russian army because he wanted to receive Russian citizenship.

US academic's visa revoked by Thailand

A US academic charged with breaking Thailand's strict royal defamation laws was granted bail yesterday, his lawyers said, but remains in custody pending an appeal to immigration authorities who earlier revoked his visa. Paul Chambers, who has spent over a decade teaching Southeast Asian politics at a Thai university, was arrested on Tuesday after reporting to police to answer a charge of lese-majeste. His case is a rare instance of a foreigner falling foul of strict laws which shield King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his close family from any criticism and can lead to decades-long prison sentences. "The Appeal Court... issued an order granting bail for Paul," said a post on X from the Thai Lawyers for Human Rights group (TLHR) representing Chambers. "Paul will remain in custody at Phitsanulok Provincial Prison until the result of the bail request from immigration police is known."



Filipino activists face police near the US embassy during a protest against the annual US-Philippines joint military exercises called "Balikatan" in Manila, Philippines, yesterday.

Philippines, US launch joint drills aimed at 'deterrence'

AFP

Manila

The Philippine and US air forces have kicked off joint exercises aimed at boosting operational co-ordination and enhancing "strategic deterrence", Manila's military said.

The drills follow months of confrontations between Beijing and Manila over disputed areas of the South China Sea, with significantly larger US-Philippine air, land and sea exercises set for late April. "Enhancing combat readiness and elevating joint mission effectiveness" is central to the Cope Thunder exercise, Philippine Air Force commander Arthur Cordura said at a ceremony to launch the drills.

Military ties between the Philippines and US have deepened since the 2022 election of President Ferdinand Marcos, with Manila pushing back on sweeping Chinese claims in the South China Sea that an international tribunal has ruled are without merit.

The US state department last week approved a long-mooted sale of F-16 fighter jets to the Philippines, though Manila said the deal was "still in the negotiation phase".

Speaking at the ceremony, US major general Christopher Shepard said that "the pace of our alliance is accelerating".

Cope Thunder, which will continue through April 18, aims to enhance "asymmetric warfare capabilities", operational co-ordination and strategic deterrence, according to the Philippine Air Force. Further down the road, we look forward to the seamless transition to exercise Balikatan, which will continue to push the boundaries of our interoperability," Cordura added.

Myanmar still in desperate need after quake: Thailand

Reuters

Naypyidaw

Quake-stricken Myanmar is still in desperate need of medical assistance, field hospitals and shelters, Thailand's foreign minister said, stressing the importance of a co-ordinated regional relief effort and long-term support.

The 7.7 magnitude quake on March 28 was one of the strongest to hit Myanmar in a century, jolting a region that is home to 28mn people, toppling buildings, flattening communities and leaving many without food, water and shelter.

The military government said 3,645 people were killed in the quake, with 5,017 injured and another 148 missing. Nearly 49,000 houses and more than 2,100 government buildings were destroyed.

Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa and Malaysian counterpart Mohamad Hasan met with Myanmar officials on Saturday in the quake-hit capital Naypyitaw and saw the scale of the devastation.

"What Myanmar needs is field hospitals," Maris said in an interview. "Their existing hospitals can't operate to their full capacity due to damage from the quake," he said.

There was also a need for temporary shelters, mosquito nets, food, water filters and clean water supplies, Maris said, with fears rising about communicable diseases among those made homeless, compounded by the intense summer heat.

The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs yesterday thanked the more than 30 search-and-rescue teams from 13 countries that had been deployed to find survivors, some of which were now departing Myanmar.

"Their expertise was crucial in the immediate aftermath – helping locate survivors and support communities in their darkest hours," OCHA said in a Facebook post.

The Chinese search-and-rescue team left Myanmar yesterday having completed its mission, state news agency Xinhua reported.

A fifth batch of emergency aid supplies from China arrived yesterday weighing 91 tonnes, it said, including 266 tents and thousands of mosquito nets and tarpaulin sheets.

The disaster was a major blow to a country that has been grappling with a wilting economy and a widening civil war triggered by a 2021 military coup, with an estimated 3.5mn people displaced in Myanmar long before the quake struck,

according to the United Nations.

The junta and rebel groups have announced unilateral ceasefires to support the quake relief effort, but have accused each other of violating the agreements.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing said the government must ensure in the reconstruction effort that buildings can withstand natural disasters.

"It is necessary to take lessons of dreadful losses in past events," he was quoted as saying in yesterday's state media. "Officials need to supervise the construction of buildings rigorously."

Maris, Thailand's top diplomat, said plans were also being

drawn for medium- and long-term assistance for Myanmar, including reconstruction of damaged areas.

Malaysia wanted to co-ordinate the regional relief effort in Sagaing, he said, with Thailand handling humanitarian efforts in Mandalay. Both areas were near the quake epicentre.

The aim was to improve capacity on the ground to ensure foreign aid into Myanmar from Southeast Asian countries was optimised, he added.

"We told Myanmar that apart from helping the people, the two teams will help manage co-ordination efforts coming in," Maris said.

India readies for US extradition of Mumbai attacks suspect

India accuses Rana of being a member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba group, designated by the United Nations as a terrorist organisation, and of aiding planning the Mumbai attacks

AFP
New Delhi

Indian authorities are readying for the extradition from the US of a man that New Delhi accuses of helping plan the 2008 Mumbai siege that killed 166 people.

Tahawwur Hussain Rana, 64, a Canadian citizen born in Pakistan, is due to be extradited “shortly” to face trial, Indian media said, reporting that New Delhi had sent a multi-agency team of security officials to collect him.

India accuses him of being a member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group, designated by the United Nations as a terrorist organisation, and of aiding planning the attacks.

US President Donald Trump announced in February that Washington would extradite Rana, whom he called “one of the very evil people in the world”.

The US Supreme Court this month rejected his bid to remain in the US, where he is serving a sentence for a planning role in another LeT-linked attack.

New Delhi blames the LeT group for the Mumbai attacks in November 2008, when 10 gunmen carried out a multi-day slaughter in the country’s financial capital.

India accuses Rana of helping his long-term friend, David Coleman Headley, who was sentenced by a US court in 2013 to 35 years in prison after pleading guilty to aiding LeT militants, including by scouting target locations in Mumbai.

Rana, a former military medic who served in Pakistan’s army, emigrated to Canada in 1997, before moving to the US and setting up businesses in Chicago, including a law firm and a slaughter-

house. He was arrested by US police in 2009.

A US court in 2013 acquitted Rana of conspiracy to provide material support to the Mumbai attacks.

India maintains Rana is one of the key plotters of the Mumbai attacks along with the convicted Headley - and the authorities have welcomed his expected extradition.

In February, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that “finally, the long wait is over and justice will be done”.

Devika Rotawan, a survivor of the Mumbai attacks, said she believed the extradition of Rana would be a “big win for India”.

“I will never be able to forget the attack,” she told broadcaster NDTV yesterday.

Counter-terrorism experts however suggest Rana’s involvement was peripheral compared to Headley, a US citizen, who India also wants extradited.

“They gave us a small fish but kept David Headley, so the essential outcome is going to be symbolic,” said Ajay Sahni, head of the Institute for Conflict Management, a New Delhi-based think-tank.

Rana knew Headley, 64, from their days together at boarding school in Pakistan.

Headley, who testified as a government witness at Rana’s trial, said he had used his friend’s Chicago-based immigration services firm as a cover to scout targets in India, by opening a branch in Mumbai.

Rana has said he visited Mumbai ahead of the attacks - and stayed at the luxury Taj Mahal Palace Hotel that would become the epicentre of the bloody siege - but denied involvement in the conspiracy.

Sahni said that more than 16 years after the attacks, Rana’s extradition is of “historical importance” rather than a source of any “live intelligence”.

But he added that handing him over has “a chilling effect” on others abroad who India seeks to put on trial.

India withdraws transshipment facility for Bangladesh exports via land borders

India has withdrawn a transshipment facility for Bangladesh’s export cargoes to other countries via its land borders, in a fresh blow to Dhaka which is already reeling from steep US tariffs on its goods.

The move is expected to disrupt Bangladesh’s readymade garment exports and raise costs for trade with countries including Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar, exporters said.

A circular from India’s customs department said it has decided to rescind a 2020 order allowing transshipment of Bangladeshi exports to third countries through India’s land customs stations to ports and airports in containers or closed-body trucks.

The facility has been withdrawn due to “delays and higher costs” hindering India’s own exports

and creating backlogs, India’s external affairs ministry spokesperson said.

“This will stop Bangladesh’s exports to Nepal and Bhutan,” Yunus Hossain, a Dhaka-based trader, said.

In relation to readymade garments, Bangladesh’s biggest export, Bangladesh has always prioritised direct shipping, “so the impact will hopefully not be severe. But it does hamper an intra-regional potential,” said Rubana Huq, former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. The change comes as the US implements 37% reciprocal tariffs on Bangladeshi exports and is likely to increase logistical burdens, further straining Dhaka’s export competitiveness, said Selim Raihan, an economics professor at the

University of Dhaka.

India is one of Bangladesh’s top trading partners, and the move is “inconsistent with the future prospects of an enhanced bilateral relationship,” Raihan said.

Trade ties between the neighbours, which share a 4,000km border, have cooled since Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country amid mass protests last August and sought shelter in India.

Bangladesh’s commerce ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative, said the decision may violate World Trade Organisation rules, which guarantee landlocked countries freedom of transit.



Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves shakes hands with her Indian counterpart, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, at the London Stock Exchange Group in central London, Britain, yesterday, following an India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue.

India needs support from RBI, government: minister

Reuters
London

India’s Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said her country’s economy - hit by US trade tariffs - will need help from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the government as she welcomed yesterday’s interest rate cut by the central bank.

The RBI’s Monetary Policy Committee cut its repo rate for a second consecutive time by 25 basis points to 6% as it seeks to boost a sluggish economy in the face of US President Donald Trump’s change in trade policy.

The central bank started lowering rates with a quarter-point reduction in February, its first cut since May 2020. “I welcome it with a sense of joy,” Sitharaman told reporters when asked about the interest rate cut during a trip to London for the 13th UK-India economic and financial dialogue, adding that “growth is of great im-

portance.” “We are at a situation where, because of the global uncertainties, we will need every support both from the central bank and from the (finance) ministry.”

India is exploring options such as prolonging interest subsidies on bank loans and giving incentives to help exporters to diversify due to the increasing global uncertainty, two sources said earlier yesterday. The imposition of a 26% tariff on Indian exports, coupled with even higher duties on some other countries such as China, has raised alarm among Indian exporters in sectors such as gems and jewellery, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and engineering goods.

Asked if she expected any impact on India’s economic growth from the global trade turmoil, Sitharaman said sustained growth with a focus on domestic demand was possible.

Sitharaman, speaking alongside British Finance Minister Rachel Reeves after a bilateral meeting, also said that she was positive about the possibility of a free trade deal between the

UK and India. “I think both sides realise that we’ve had quite a lot of discussions, which was well worth it, but now it’s the time to conclude (the trade deal),” she said.

Reeves urged an acceleration of trade agreements worldwide amid US tariffs.

“In a changing world, this government is accelerating trade deals with the rest of the world to back British business and provide the security working people deserve,” Reeves said in a statement ahead of the meeting with her Indian counterpart Nirmala Sitharaman.

The UK and India are the sixth and fifth largest global economies, respectively, with a trade relationship worth £41bn (\$53bn) and investment supporting more than 600,000 jobs across both countries.

“We will be covering the topics of growth and global issues, as well as how we can unleash potential across various sectors and defence to create jobs, investment and trade opportunities,” Reeves said.

Modi invited for Russia’s Victory Day parade

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited to attend Russia’s annual Victory Day parade in Moscow, India’s foreign ministry said yesterday. Russia has promised to hold its biggest World War II commemorations “in history” to mark 80 years since the Soviet Union and allied powers defeated Nazi Germany. The annual Victory Day celebration on May 9 has emerged as Russia’s most important public holiday, one marked with a massive parade of military equipment and soldiers through the Red Square, and culminating in an address from President Vladimir Putin. Historically close to Russia, India has resisted Western pressure to distance itself from Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine. Russia sells India critical military hardware, and has also increasingly emerged as a key energy supplier as New Delhi seeks a pipeline of cheap imports to fuel its economic expansion.

Delhi zoo helps animals keep cool



An elephant bathes to beat the heat on a hot summer day, at the National Zoological Park in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

Indian navy ‘to get 26 French Rafale jets’

Reuters
New Delhi

India has approved the purchase of 26 Rafale fighter jets from France for its navy, two people aware of the decision said yesterday, a move aimed at deterring threats as rival China grows its naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

A deal is expected to be signed over the next few weeks, the people said, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media, after the purchase was approved by India’s cabinet committee on security affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India plans to buy 22 single-seater and four twin-seater fighters, made by France’s Dassault Aviation, in a deal which would boost the country’s defence ties

with its second-largest arms supplier. France’s defence minister plans to visit India ahead of the signing, the people said.

One person said the deal was valued at around Rs630bn (\$7bn). An Indian defence ministry spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

The acquisition is also part of India’s goals to modernise its military, wean itself off its Soviet-origin equipment and boost domestic weapons production after being the world’s largest arms importer for years.

It would also help deter potential threats at a time when the Indian Navy says China’s naval presence in the Indian Ocean has increased over the last decade, and it has deployed dual-purpose Chinese vessels in the region. Beijing says it has deployed vessels in the region for scientific research and peaceful purposes.

Prince Harry’s ‘life at stake’, lawyer tells court

AFP
London

Prince Harry’s “life is at stake” his lawyer warned as the royal’s bid to restore his UK police protection came to a close yesterday in a high-profile London court case.

The 40-year-old prince has been fighting to get his security in Britain brought back to the same high level it was before he and his wife Meghan split from the royal family in 2020 and dramatically moved to live in self-imposed exile in the US.

Harry is no longer considered a working royal and the government

decided several years ago he would not receive the “same degree” of publicly funded protection as before.

But with Harry sitting behind her on the second and final day of the challenge in the Court of Appeal, the prince’s lawyer Shaheed Fatima said the judges “must not forget the human dimension to this case”.

“There is a person sitting behind me whose safety, whose security and whose life is at stake,” she said in her concluding statement.

“There is a person sitting behind me who has been told that he is getting a special, bespoke process when he knows, and has experienced, the process has been mani-

festly inferior in every respect.”

Harry made a rare visit to the UK for the case and his lawyer said the prince’s presence “is a potent illustration... of how much this appeal means to him and his family”.

Earlier, lawyers for the UK government defended the interior ministry’s decision to cut back Harry’s police protection in the UK after he stepped back from royal life.

Lawyer James Eadie, representing the interior ministry, defended the “bespoke” approach adopted in Harry’s case by a committee that deals with the protection of royals and public figures.

He said the committee’s chair felt this was a “flexible and tailored ap-

proach better matched to (Harry’s) revised circumstances”.

In a dark suit and red striped tie, Harry listened intently to proceedings, occasionally conferring with his lawyer.

Much of yesterday’s hearing was held behind closed doors due to the sensitive nature of discussing the security and threats around King Charles III’s youngest son.

The prince took legal action against the interior ministry in 2021, and after his initial case was rejected last year, he brought a challenge before the Court of Appeal.

Harry’s lawyer told the court on Tuesday that the prince had been

“singled out for different, unjustified and inferior treatment”.

In a written submission, his lawyers highlighted threats made against the prince.

“Al-Qaeda recently called for (Harry) to be murdered,” and he and Meghan were “involved in a dangerous car pursuit with paparazzi in New York City” in May 2023, the submission said, without providing full details.

Harry has long been haunted by the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a high-speed car crash in Paris in 1997 as she tried to escape paparazzi photographers.

At one point in court yester-

day, a woman in the public gallery shouted her support for the prince, adding: “If you’re members of the press, you’re the reason he’s no longer in England.”

Harry and Meghan have started a new life in California with their two young children and are now largely estranged from the royal family.

But the prince has said security concerns have hampered his ability to visit Britain, and his trips have usually been fleeting.

At the end of the hearing, judge Geoffrey Vos said the Court of Appeal’s decision would be given in writing at a later date, which was “most unlikely” to be before April 20.

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GULF TIMES

Commotion over Trump tariffs

There is unfortunately absolutely nothing good to say about the announcements US President Donald Trump made during his recent ‘Liberation Day’ event in the White House Rose Garden. Try as one might to “sane-wash” Trump’s economic policies, there is simply no coherent rationale for his supposedly “reciprocal” trade tariffs. Kim Clausing of UCLA sums it up perfectly: “The largest tax increase in more than fifty years will burden US consumers, generating thousands of dollars in tax increases for the median household.” Michael Strain of the American Enterprise Institute is similarly spot on, noting that “[these new tariffs] will decrease, not increase, manufacturing employment. They will reduce the competitiveness of manufacturing companies.” And, as for the underlying methodology for calculating the new tariff rates, Doug Holtz-Eakin does not mince words, “They’ve got an indefensible foundation to an indefensible policy.”

Clausing worked on taxes for the Treasury Department under President Joe Biden, while Strain and Holtz-Eakin are highly regarded Republican economists. When these three agree so completely, it is a powerful indication that Trump’s latest tariffs represent an impending national disaster.

Interestingly, the day before Trump’s announcement, 50 senators, led by the Republican Lindsey Graham and Democrat Richard Blumenthal, advanced a better bipartisan tariff proposal, aimed at pressuring Russia to seek genuine peace with Ukraine. The overall structure of the proposal is sensible, and its most obvious flaw – it would impose tariffs on countries that import oil from Russia, rather than on Russia itself – is entirely fixable.

Importantly, the Senate bill can have a real impact without necessarily passing the House. Just the threat of congressional action on this front will be enough to get the Kremlin’s attention. After all the disruptions to trade, foreign aid, and relations with Nato and other US allies, Trump needs a win on the international stage. This bill can help him get that, and perhaps Graham, Blumenthal, Trump can share a Nobel Peace Prize if Russia really does sue for genuine peace.

‘Liberation Day’ tariffs were the culmination of a terrible first two months for Trump admin on the world stage

purchase armaments and other essential war-related supplies from abroad, and fossil-fuel exports (worth about \$600 million per day) are the Kremlin’s only significant source of dollar revenue. The strategy they propose is simple and brilliant:

“The administration should impose sanctions on any company or individual – in any country – involved in a Russian oil and gas sale. Russia could avoid these so-called secondary sanctions by paying a per shipment fee to the United States Treasury. The payment would be called a Russian universal tariff, and it would start low but increase every week that passes without a peace deal.”

Most Russian oil moves via ship, and all these shipments (and the underlying financial transactions) are meticulously tracked by commercial experts. It would therefore be straightforward to ensure that if Russia failed to pay the required tariff on any shipment, all parties to the transaction, including any tanker owner or operator, the insurer of the cargo, and the purchaser, would become liable. If these private parties in turn declined to pay within, say, 30 days, they would themselves be subject to sanctions. Recent evidence confirms that no one – including Indian and Chinese entities – wants to be caught up in American sanctions.

A \$20-per-barrel tariff on Russian oil would generate between \$40 and \$50bn per year, payable to the US. Ideally, the threat of a Russian universal tariff (RUT) would pressure Russia into serious negotiations, where its removal could be part of a deal that ends Russia’s devastating and entirely illegitimate invasion and brings lasting peace to Ukraine. It would be easy to set this up so that any new military aggression would immediately trigger renewed or increased tariffs under the RUT. To get out from its RUT, Russia just has to stop attacking people.

If Russia continues to negotiate in bad faith, the US would still collect billions annually under the RUT. In that scenario, Russia would at least be defraying the costs imposed on others from its full-scale assault on Ukraine.

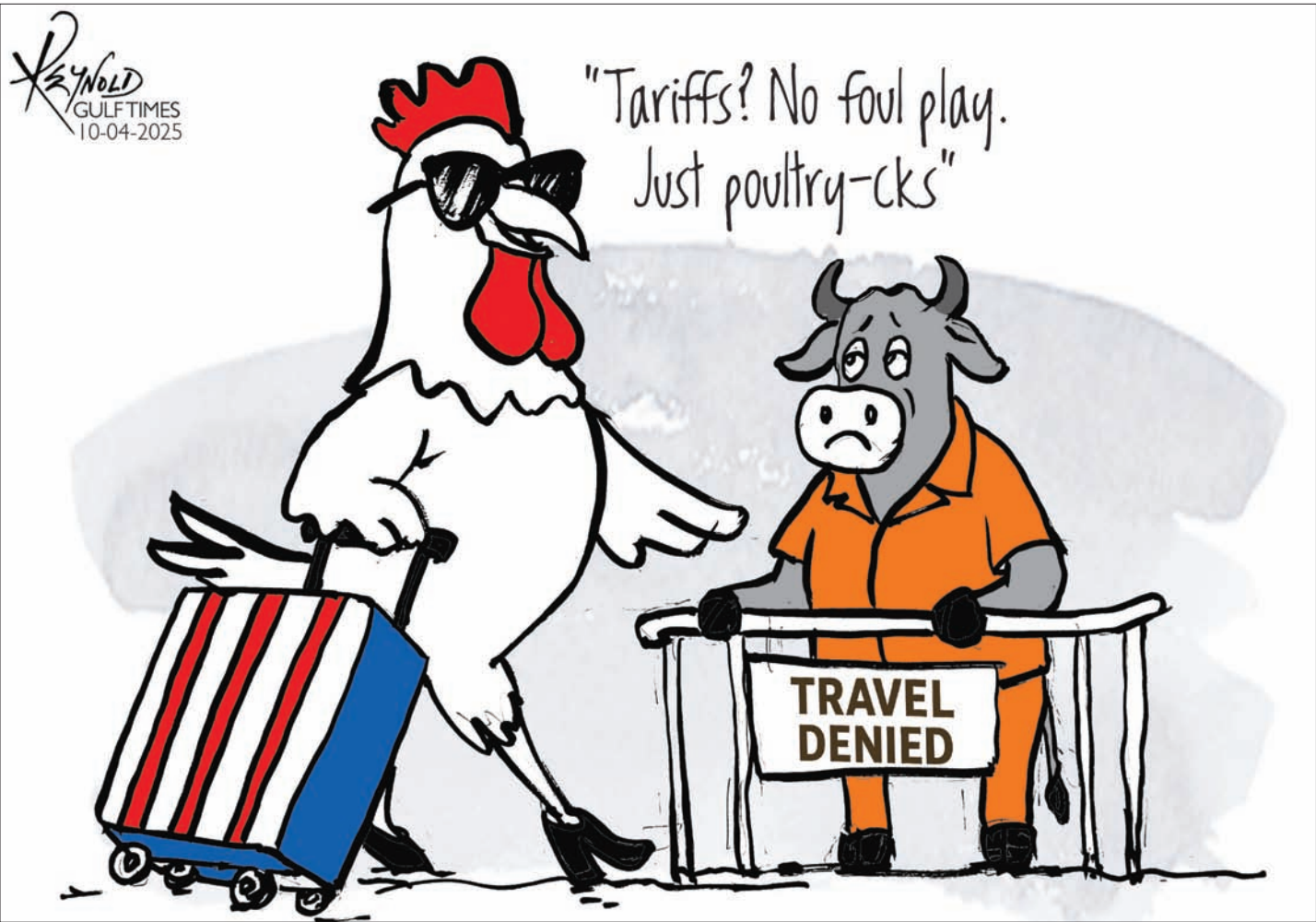
Trump’s ‘Liberation Day’ tariffs were the culmination of a terrible first two months for his administration on the world stage. He badly needs a win to boost American prestige around the world and convince investors that the US has not become an entirely nihilistic and self-destructive place. — Project Syndicate

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Navigating the Trump storm

By Michael Spence
Milan

US President Donald Trump’s second administration coincides with a period of rapid structural and technological change, driven by three trends. First, shocks from the pandemic, new wars, climate change, and geopolitical tensions continue to reverberate through the global economy. Second, broader secular trends continue to inhibit growth and create new inflationary pressures. And third, scientific and technological breakthroughs are transforming a wide range of sectors, from digital services and biotech to energy.

The responses to these trends are dramatically changing the global business and policy environment. Resilience and national security have become top priorities. Supply networks are evolving rapidly. Inflation has become a major issue for the first time in three decades. And all of this was happening before Trump’s return to the White House.

Although Trump’s blizzard of executive orders looks chaotic, the administration may well be pursuing a larger strategy, designed to dilute and weaken potential opposition. Trump and others in his administration have repeatedly argued that bilateral trade deficits are signals that something is wrong – that the United States is being taken advantage of, to the detriment of some industries and national security.

Among the top US trading partners with the largest bilateral surpluses (based on 2023 data) are China (\$279bn), the European Union (\$209bn), Mexico (\$152bn), Vietnam (\$104bn), Japan (\$71bn), and Canada (\$64bn, owing entirely to US energy imports). The four of these targeted by Trump’s initial tariffs – Canada, Mexico, the EU, and China – account for 66% of the overall

2023 US trade deficit (\$1.06tn). If you add in Japan and Vietnam, that figure grows to 83%.

The “Liberation Day” tariffs are broadly consistent with the targeting of large deficit trading partners. Since then the new tariff rates (raised further) for China, the EU, Vietnam, and Japan are 125%, 25%, 46%, and 24%, respectively, and Canada and Mexico will remain on a separate track for now, with high tariffs on autos, steel, and aluminium.

But the April 2 and after tariffs go far beyond targeting trading partners with which the US runs large deficits. Instead, the administration is applying a 10% rate across the board, including to countries with which the US has a trade surplus. Moreover, the Trump administration imposed additional tariffs above 10% on a wide range of small economies that have minimal effects on the US trade balance, though the main Latin American economies (apart from Mexico) were exempted.

The financial market reaction was immediate. In the two trading days after Liberation Day, the S&P 500 declined by \$5tn, or roughly 10%. Business and consumer confidence continued their downward trends, and markets outside the US also declined, reflecting the dominance of the US financial system. China responded with its own 84% tariff on US imports, and others are considering retaliatory measures. With market and economic uncertainty deepening, expectations of a recession have grown.

That said, the impacts are likely to be largest in the US and in those trading partners with the greatest exposure to US demand. Since the US economy accounts for about 26% of nominal global GDP, or 15-16% with purchasing-power-parity adjustments, ringfencing it will give a large shock to the entire system. While every country except the US will face tariffs on exports going to the US, there will be varying degrees of exposure:

China’s is medium, Vietnam’s is fairly high, and Mexico and Canada’s is very high. Fortunately, other countries still have the rest of the world to sell to, and the rest of the world is not small.

By contrast, US consumers and companies will face inbound tariffs on everything from every other country in the world. Companies will likely also face higher “reciprocal” tariffs when they try to access external markets, and major countries may restrict outbound foreign direct investment (FDI) to the US, partially defeating one of the US administration’s stated purposes for US tariffs.

In other words, while the damage will be widespread and variable across countries and regions, the largest impact is likely to be on the US economy, owing to its growing isolation from the rest of the global economy.

It is not clear whether the administration believes that tariffs will lead to a rebalancing of trade, or whether they are designed to impel trading partners and businesses to shift production and jobs to the US. Trump himself supports FDI as a way to support his agenda on deficits and employment, and tariffs presumably add another incentive.

Whatever one thinks of the administration’s diagnosis and prescribed treatment, its goal is clear: to shift the structure of global trade and FDI in favour of domestic US investment and employment. But this agenda faces a powerful headwind, owing to the global attractiveness of US debt and equities, and the status of the dollar as an international reserve currency. Unless the US intentionally diminishes the attractiveness of dollar-denominated assets, which would require a partial closure of the capital account, the dollar’s reserve-currency status is unlikely to change.

After all, there is no plausible

alternative to the current system. A growing global economy needs an expanding monetary base to function. Rather than reducing its \$1tn trade deficit, the US is more likely to redistribute it across countries, which probably would not lead to the kind of domestic restructuring that Trump envisions.

China, with its large domestic economy, can withstand tariff shocks. It already needs to boost its domestic aggregate demand, and it will surely see the Trump administration’s defunding of basic science and technology research at US universities as a windfall, given the damage that it will do to US long-term competitiveness.

Technology is a major variable here. Scholars have long shown that previous rounds of digital technology adoption put downward pressure on middle-class “routine” jobs and incomes. Whether this will be a feature of the adoption of AI in the economy is at this point an open question. While no one yet has a detailed roadmap for how this will play out, it is reasonable to expect that the effects could be as large or larger than those associated with the new global patterns of trade and investment.

If the Trump administration has a strategy for managing this challenge, it has not revealed what it is. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that restructuring international trade and investment will be sufficient to benefit US workers. There are other forces in play, and policymakers ignore them at their peril. — Project Syndicate

• Michael Spence, a Nobel laureate in economics, is Emeritus Professor of Economics and a former dean of the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University and a co-author (with Mohamed A El-Erian, Gordon Brown, and Reid Liddow) of Permacrisis: A Plan to Fix a Fractured World.



US President Donald Trump signs energy-related executive orders at the White House in Washington, DC, on Tuesday. (Reuters)

124 dead in Dominican Republic nightclub disaster

AFP
Santo Domingo

Rescue workers raced yesterday to find any remaining survivors under the rubble of a Dominican Republic nightclub, a day after the roof collapsed, killing at least 124 people in the country's worst disaster in two decades.

The death toll continued to climb yesterday as emergency crews pulled more bodies from the ruins of the Jet Set club in the capital Santo Domingo.

Juan Manuel Mendez, director of Emergency Operations, said rescue crews had "24 to 36 hours" of work left to find survivors of the disaster, which left at least 155 people injured.

Renowned Dominican merengue singer Rubby Perez was performing on stage when the roof collapsed with a thunderous noise on hundreds of revellers.

Perez was among a handful of celebrities killed in the tragedy, along with two former Major League Baseball players, Octavio Dotel and Tony Blanco.

Dozens of relatives gathered outside the club as well as at hospitals and the city morgue for news of their loved ones as forensic teams continued to identify the dead.

Mercedes Lopez was looking for her son in a tent next to the nightclub where bodies retrieved from the rubble were being brought.

"We haven't heard anything, they haven't given us any information, we haven't found him on the lists or in the hospitals," she said, adding she was in "a lot of pain."

Antonio Hernandez was also awaiting news of his son, who worked in the club.

"Yesterday, I was certain (of finding him), I had hope, but in the early hours of the morning... they pulled four dead people out of there in a flash, and mine wasn't there," he told AFP, his voice breaking.

Over 300 rescue workers combed mounds of fallen bricks, steel bars and tin sheets, supported by personnel from Puerto Rico and Israel.

Octavio Dotel, a 51-year-old baseball pitcher who won the World Series with the St Louis Cardinals in 2011, was rescued alive on Tuesday but later died of his injuries. Local media said there were between 500 and 1,000 people in the club when disaster struck at around 12:44am Tuesday. The club has capacity for about 1,700 people.

A video posted on social media showed the club suddenly being plunged into darkness while Perez was performing.



An aerial view shows rescue teams working at the Jet Set nightclub a day after the collapse of its roof in Santo Domingo yesterday. (AFP)

Perez's daughter Zulinka managed to escape but her father did not.

Mendez, the emergency services director, said Perez's body was recovered at dawn on Wednesday.

Tributes to the singer, known for hits such as *Volvere* and *Enamorado de Ella*, poured in from musicians across Latin America. "Maestro, what a great pain you

leave us," Puerto Rican Grammy-winning singer Olga Tanon wrote on social media. His former band leader Wilfrido Vargas said he was "devastated."

"The friend and idol of our genre has just left us," he wrote.

The governor of Monte Cristi municipality, Nelsy Cruz, was also killed.

President Luis Abinader, who visited

the scene, has declared three days of national mourning. 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," she said.

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

Helicopter images revealed a large hole where the club's roof once was.

Authorities issued a call for Dominicans to donate blood.

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.

Its last post before Monday's event invited fans to come and "enjoy his (Perez's) greatest hits and dance in the country's best nightclub."

The club issued a statement on Tuesday saying it was working "fully and transparently" with authorities.

The roof's collapse was one of the biggest tragedies the Caribbean nation and top tourist destination has faced in recent years.

In 2005, more than 130 prisoners in the east of the country died in a fire caused by a fight between inmates.

Panama: US recognises our sovereignty over canal

Panama said yesterday the United States recognised its sovereignty over the Panama Canal, despite tough rhetoric from Washington, as the two nations announced agreements to deepen US military training in the Central American nation.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, in the first visit by a Pentagon chief to Panama in decades, said he sees the canal as key terrain that Panama would secure together with the US – and not with China.

"We are helping to take back the Panama Canal from communist Chinese influence," Hegseth told a press briefing in Panama City. The Panamanian government has strongly rejected US allegations the key waterway is controlled by China.

But current and former US officials and experts say the United States has legitimate security concerns about China's presence in Panama, including that ports and other infrastructure held by Chinese firms could be used for espionage.

During Hegseth's visit, the US and Panama issued joint statements about deepening security co-operation. But the English-language version published by the Pentagon did not include a sentence that was in the Spanish-language version published by Panama that spoke about Panama's sovereignty over the canal.

The sentence read: "In addition, Secretary Hegseth recognised the leadership and inalienable sovereignty of Panama over the Panama Canal and its adjacent areas."

Asked whether he recognised Panama's sovereignty, Hegseth said: "We certainly understand that the Panama Canal is in Panama, and protecting Panamanian sovereignty from malign influence is important."

"Which is why when President Trump says we're taking back the Panama Canal from Chinese influence that involves partnership with the United States and Panama," Hegseth said.

Merz unveils new coalition, says we are 'back on track'

AFP
Berlin

Germany's next leader, the conservative Friedrich Merz, vowed yesterday to "move the country forward again" by boosting the economy and defence as he presented a deal to launch his coalition government by early next month.

Merz is set to take over as leader of Europe's top economy just as US President Donald Trump has sparked global trade turmoil and raised deep fears about future transatlantic security ties.

Asked at a press conference if he had a message for Trump, Merz said in English that the country would meet its defence obligations and rebuild its economic competitiveness.

"Germany is back on track," he added.

Following the February election victory of his CDU/CSU alliance, Merz quickly struck a deal to forge a new government with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) of the now caretaker Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

"The coalition agreement is a signal of a new beginning... for our country," said Merz, whose party won the elections with 28.5% of the vote.

In their 144-page coalition contract, the two big centrist parties pledged to "significantly" boost defence spending amid growing concerns about US commitment to European security under Trump.

The parties also said Germany would continue to support Ukraine as the United States looks to encourage a deal to end the war started by Russia's invasion over three years ago.

"We will provide comprehensive support to Ukraine so that it can effectively defend itself



Germany's chancellor-in-waiting and leader of the Christian Democratic Union party Friedrich Merz, Christian Social Union leader and Bavarian Premier Markus Soeder, co-leaders of the Social Democratic party Saskia Esken and Lars Klingbeil stand ahead of a press conference after reaching an agreement on their coalition government in Berlin yesterday. (Reuters)

against the Russian aggressor and assert itself in negotiations," the agreement said.

Presenting the deal, Merz pledged that Germany would "reform and invest to keep Germany stable, make it safer and make it economically stronger again", adding that "Europe can rely on Germany".

He also pledged that his government would "largely end irregular migration" and promised a "repatriation offensive" after an election campaign marked by a bitter debate on migration and a surge in support for the far-right AfD.

The swift conclusion of the talks – a process that has in past years dragged on for months in Germany – is the result of "extraordinary external pressure", said political scientist Wolfgang Schroeder of Kassel University.

"The pressure is coming from Trump, the pressure is coming from the AfD, the pressure is coming from (Merz's) own ranks," he told news channel NTV.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) came second in February's election with a record 20% of the vote.

Support for the party has since continued to rise, with one survey by the Ipsos polling firm released Wednesday rating it as Germany's most popular party on 25% – ahead of the CDU/CSU on 24%.

Renate Koecher, head of the Allensbach Institute, said the rise of the AfD had been fuelled by Germany's political paralysis at a time of acute global and domestic crises.

"Problems are growing but at the same time we have no government capable of acting," Koecher told the *Rheinische Post* newspaper.

"The economy is facing increasing difficulties and decisions are being made in the US that Europe, with Germany in a leading role, should be able to respond to quickly," she said.

"And in this situation, we have a power vacuum. This fuels the unease among the population."

PIA posts first annual profit in two decades



Reuters
Islamabad

Pakistan's national carrier has posted an annual profit for the first time in more than two decades ahead of a second attempt by the government to sell the airline, the country's defence minister said.

The disclosure was made at a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) board meeting, the minister said late on Tuesday.

"PIACL Board today has approved its accounts FY 2024, and after 21 years, it has achieved an operating profit of PKR9.3bn (\$33.14mn) & Net Profit of PKR26.2bn (after deferred tax adjustment)," Defence and Aviation Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said in a post on X, which was confirmed by the airline in a statement.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif yesterday termed it a "major turnaround after decades of losses" and said in a post on X: "The skies ahead looks brighter, God willing."

Islamabad's attempt to privatise PIA last year fell flat when it received only a single offer, well below the asking price of more than \$300mn.

Pakistan had offloaded nearly 80% of the airline's legacy debt and shifted it to government books ahead of the privatisation attempt.

The rest of the debt was also cleaned out of the airline's accounts after the failed sale attempt to make it more attractive to potential buyers, according to the country's privatisation ministry.

The airline has for years survived on government bailouts as its operational earnings were eaten up by debt servicing costs.

Officials say offloading the debt burden and recent reforms like shedding staff, exiting unprofitable routes and other cost-cutting measures led to the profitable year.

Ahead of the attempt to sell the airline last year, PIA had faced threats of being shut down, with planes impounded at international airports over its failure to pay bills and flights cancelled due to a shortage of funds to pay for fuel or spare parts.

Italy hails Trump tariff pause

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said yesterday he welcomed US President Donald Trump's 90-day suspension of trade tariffs, which would hopefully favour negotiations. "The decision by President Trump is a signal that we want to interpret positively," Tajani said in a statement. "It is to be hoped that the 90-day delay will help negotiations."

France looks for new home for two orcas after park closes

France is struggling to find a new home for an orca mother and her son after a marine park on the French Riviera closed down over a law banning shows featuring marine mammals.

Founded in the city of Antibes in 1970, Marineland closed to the public in January following a drop in attendance and a 2021 law banning orca and dolphin performances from December 2026.

The government, under pressure from animal rights activists, has struggled to find a new home for the park's two orcas, 24-year-old Wikie and her 11-year-old son, Keijo.

In February, the park's management submitted a request to urgently transfer the two orcas – also known as killer whales – and 12 dolphins to two parks in Spain by mid-April, when the contracts of its employees run out.

The management says it is now a matter of "extreme urgency" to find a solution. But animal welfare groups, who have for years insisted that orcas have suffered at the French marine zoo, say conditions for such animals in Spain would be even worse.

Activists argue that such a transfer

would violate the spirit of the 2021 law and have called for the creation of sanctuaries where the captive-born animals could live more freely.

French Ecology Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher says she has been working with her Spanish, Italian and Greek counterparts to address the problem, but has not been able to find an immediate solution.

In mid-March, the minister suggested that Wikie and Keijo be temporarily moved to Spain until a better alternative is found.

Following a lengthy legal battle from the animal rights group One Voice, two experts appointed by a French court released a report this week on the living conditions of orcas at Marineland.

One Voice had requested such an assessment in 2019 before the performance ban, and a court requested the report in 2023.

In the report released on Tuesday, the experts concluded that the park's water and infrastructure complied with the standards and that the shows provided useful distractions and stimuli for the mental health of the captive animals.



An orca swims with its baby at the Marineland animal park in the French Riviera city of Antibes in 2013. (AFP)

But it also pointed to health problems among the captive animals.

In 2023, an orca called Moana died aged 12 of an infection, while another orca, 23-year-old Inouk, died last year after ingesting a small metal spring.

According to the report, in the eight

months preceding his death, Moana had been on antibiotics for 107 days, corticosteroids for 31 days, painkillers for 36 days and antifungals for 21 days.

Despite this, the autopsies of the two orcas revealed severe untreated infections.

When the animal welfare law was adopted, Berangere Abba, then secretary of state in charge of biodiversity, said the government would be on hand to provide help to find a new home for retired dolphins and orcas.

But few people initially responded to a government call for ideas, Pannier-Runacher's office told AFP.

By 2024, her office had finally received five sanctuary proposals, but none of the solutions were immediately operational.

Sea Shepherd France has objected to the proposal to move the orcas to Spain, even temporarily.

"As soon as the animals are moved to Spain, France will no longer have any control over their destiny", the conservation group said in an open letter to the minister that gathered more than 90,000 signatures.

The group offered to pay five million euros (\$5.5mn) to keep the orcas in Antibes until the sanctuaries are ready.

Marineland declined to comment on the proposal.

"We will do everything in our power to prevent these shameful transfers," Sea Shepherd France said.



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