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SATURDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13343

April 12, 2025
Shawwal 14, 1446 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

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ALL ITEMS UNDER WHOLESALE PRICE

BUSINESS | Page 1

Qatar banks' net
profit to remain
'broadly stable'
in 2025: Moody's

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PM participates in Antalya Diplomacy Forum

●Qatar reaffirms its unwavering position on supporting Palestinian cause

QNA
Antalya, Turkiye

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated yesterday in the opening of the fourth edition of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkiye. The forum is being held from April 11-13 under the theme “Reclaiming Diplomacy in a Fragmented World”. More than 20 heads of state and government, over 50 foreign ministers, and around 60 high-level representatives of international organisations are participating in the forum.

The forum discusses, in more than 50 sessions, issues such as climate change, counterterrorism, humanitarian aid, digital trans-



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

formation, food security, and artificial intelligence.

The Doha Forum and the Antalya Diplomacy Forum share a

content partnership programme, and both countries are looking to expand co-operation between the two platforms. **To Page 2**



Iran seeks ‘real and fair’ deal in nuclear talks with US

Iran seeks a “real and fair” agreement with Washington on its nuclear programme, a senior aide to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday, setting the stage for a diplomatic showdown this weekend in Oman. The two countries are set to hold talks today aimed at reaching a deal on Tehran’s nuclear programme. US President Donald Trump last month wrote to Khamenei urging negotiations, but warning of possible military action if Iran refuses. “Far from putting up a show and merely talking in front of the cameras, Tehran is seeking a real and fair agreement, important and implementable proposals are ready,” Khamenei adviser Ali Shamkhani posted on X. **(AFP) Page 6**

China hits US with 125% tariffs

President Donald Trump insisted yesterday that his tariff policy was “doing really well” despite China hiking levies on US goods to 125% in the spiralling trade war between the world’s two biggest economies. Investors dumped US government bonds, the dollar tumbled and stocks seasawed after Beijing’s retaliation against Trump deepened concerns on already traumatised global markets. Chinese President Xi Jinping gave his first major comments on the tensions yesterday, with state media quoting him as saying his country was “not afraid”. Xi also said the European Union and China should “jointly resist unilateral bullying practices”. **(AFP) Business Page 4**

Turkish, Syrian presidents discuss Gaza, Syria situations with PM

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan received HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani yesterday, on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum. At the beginning of the meeting, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Turkish president, along with His Highness’s wishes for his continued good health and happiness, and for the Turkish people’s ongoing progress and prosperity. In turn, President Erdogan entrusted HE Sheikh Moham-

med with his greetings to the Amir, along with his wishes for His Highness’s continued good health and well-being, and for the Qatari people’s further development and prosperity. The meeting discussed the close co-operation between the two sisterly countries

Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa met yesterday with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum. Discussions during the meeting dealt with co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them, the latest developments in Syria, and Qatar’s support for Syria in the

energy sector, in addition to a number of topics of common interest. During the meeting, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterated Qatar’s full support for Syria’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, as well as the aspirations of its brotherly people for security and stability. The meeting was attended by Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Asaad al-Shaibani. **(QNA)**

Traditional maritime music performance



A traditional maritime music performance yesterday at the inaugural Fishing Exhibition at Old Doha Port, which concludes today. **PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam Page 12**

Family of 10 killed in Israel strike in Gaza

Agencies
Gaza City

Dozens of Israeli air strikes on Gaza have killed “only women and children” after a ceasefire collapsed last month, the UN said, as an Israeli attack in the territory’s south killed a family of 10 yesterday. A UN rights office report also warned that expanding Israeli evacuation orders were resulting in the “forcible transfer” of people into ever-shrinking areas, raising “real concern as to the future viability of Palestinians as a group in Gaza”. Israel resumed its Gaza strikes

on March 18, ending a two-month ceasefire with Hamas. Since then, more than 1,500 people have been killed, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory to which Israel cut off aid more than a month ago. “Ten people, including seven children, were brought to the hospital as martyrs following an Israeli air strike that targeted the Farra family home in central Khan Yunis,” civil defence spokesperson Mahmud Bassal said. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan denounced Israel at a forum in Antalya, saying: “If this is not barbarism, I ask you, what is it?” Israel’s military issued new evacuation warnings to residents

in areas of northern and southern Gaza ahead of new offensives. “Several medical facilities and storage sites containing critical supplies are located within the newly designated displacement zones,” the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said. OCHA warned that this could have “life-threatening consequences for people in urgent need of care”. Many displaced Gazans are living in tents in cemeteries. “We couldn’t find any place to live... That’s why we were forced to sit on top of graves,” Ibtisam Abu Ghanima told AFP at a cemetery in Gaza City. **To Page 6**



PM attends Antalya Forum

From Page 1

The Diplomacy Forum's opening session featured two panel discussions titled: "Nuclear Escalation: The Re-emerging Threat" and "Seeking Partnership in the Era of Multipolarity". The forum is scheduled to hold more than 50 sessions in various formats, addressing issues of concern to various geographic regions, from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific, from Africa to Latin America.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs also participated in the expanded Joint Arab-Islamic Summit-Commissioned Ministerial Committee Meeting regarding developments in the Gaza Strip, which was held yesterday with representatives from the European Union, Russia, China, Norway, Slovenia and Spain.

During the meeting, discussions focused on the two-state solution and achieving lasting peace in the Middle East.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Qatar's unwavering position on supporting the Palestinian cause and the steadfastness of the Palestinian people, which is firmly rooted in international legitimacy and the two-state solution, guaranteeing the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

HE Sheikh Mohammed participated in the meeting of the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit-Commissioned Ministerial Committee Meeting regarding developments in the Gaza Strip.

The meeting dealt with the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as ways to reach a permanent ceasefire and ensure the unhindered flow of humanitarian aid to those affected in the Strip.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Qatar's firm and longstanding position on support of the Palestinian cause and the steadfastness of the brotherly Palestinian people.

He also stressed that the continued politicisation of humanitarian aid and its use as a tool of collective punishment against the population of the Gaza Strip is unacceptable.

Qatar University launches new awards for graduate students

Qatar University (QU) has announced the launch of a new set of awards for graduate students, aimed at promoting academic and research excellence. These awards are part of the university's strategy to provide a stimulating learning environment that fosters innovation and creativity among graduate students across various disciplines. In a press conference, it was stated that the graduate student awards include college-level awards such as the Best Master's Thesis Award, Best PhD Dissertation Award, Best Research Paper Award, and Best Capstone Project Award. At the

university level, the awards include the Best Master's Thesis Award, the Best PhD Dissertation Award, and the Best Capstone Project Award. University officials emphasised the importance of these awards is to highlight outstanding research contributions and encourage students to make valuable contributions that support the country's aspirations in the fields of knowledge and innovation. Vice-President for Academic Affairs at QU, Prof Ibrahim al-Kaabi, said: "We are pleased to announce the launch of the graduate student awards, which represent a key

pillar in supporting academic excellence and enhancing the quality of graduate programs at QU. These awards reflect our ongoing commitment to advancing the standards of education and research and to encouraging graduate students to achieve outstanding academic accomplishments that contribute to knowledge development and community service". "They also aim to recognise pioneering scientific efforts and inspire students to embrace excellence in their research, reflecting the high quality of higher

education and research at the University," he added. Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies at QU, Prof Aiman Erbad, noted that in line with QU's mission to foster impactful research addressing societal challenges and aligned with the Qatar National Vision 2030, the awards were developed to honour exceptional theses, dissertations, and research projects by graduate students in various disciplines. He explained that these awards are designed to motivate students to adopt standards of excellence and strengthen their research

capabilities in addressing issues that benefit the community. The award process consists of two stages: the college level followed by the university level. Prof Erbad added: "The University offers an integrated academic environment that supports creativity and innovation and contributes to the preparation of qualified research professionals. These awards also provide students with broader opportunities for scientific publication, career engagement, and building strong academic networks. We are proud of our students and remain

committed to supporting and encouraging them toward further academic excellence". In turn, Dean of Graduate Studies Dr Ahmad al-Own affirmed that as the nation's premier university, QU is continuously working to enhance its academic framework to provide an environment that enables students to benefit from available resources and achieve academic excellence. "We are proud to recognise these outstanding academic achievements and reaffirm our continued support for our students on their academic journey," Dr al-Own added. (QNA)

Smart Tech Meets High-Speed Racing: Snoonu and Lusail International Circuit Unite to Elevate 2025 MOTOGP™ QATAR AIRWAYS GRAND PRIX OF QATAR



Snoonu, Qatar's leading technology platform, and Lusail International Circuit (LIC) are proud to announce their partnership for 2025 MOTOGP™ QATAR AIRWAYS GRAND PRIX OF QATAR, set to take place from April 11-13, 2025. Through this collaboration, Snoonu's innovative platform, S City, will provide fans with a seamless and enhanced event experience, redefining how audiences in Qatar access major sporting events.

As the official Fan Experience Partner, S City will serve as a comprehensive platform, allowing fans to effortlessly access event-related services, from ticketing and hospitality to exclusive on-ground experiences.

What also sets this partnership apart is that all food delivery services during the event will be handled exclusively through the Snoonu app, reflecting the seamless integration of digital and logistical experiences aimed at ensuring visitor comfort and delivering an exceptional experience on all levels.

This initiative builds on Snoonu's successful partnership with Lusail International Circuit during Formula 1 in 2024, reinforcing its role in transforming digital engagement for sports and entertainment events in Qatar.

Hamad Mubarak Al-Hajri, Founder & CEO of Snoonu, emphasized the broader impact of this collaboration:

"At Snoonu, we are always looking for ways to push the boundaries of digital innovation and enhance how people experience major events. This partnership with Lusail International Circuit is a testament to our commitment to redefining engagement in the sports and entertainment industry. We are proud to contribute to Qatar's growing status as a global hub for world-class events, ensuring that fans enjoy not just the

thrill of the race but a seamless and immersive digital journey around it."

Highlighting S City's role in transforming the fan experience, Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani, General Manager of S City, added:

"S City is designed to revolutionize event access and fan engagement, and MotoGPTM Qatar 2025 is the perfect stage to showcase its potential. This partnership is about making major sporting events in Qatar more connected, efficient, and memorable than ever before."

On the occasion the CEO of Lusail International Circuit, Abdulaziz Ali Al Mohannadi, said "our partnership with Snoonu's S City Platform reflects our commitment to enhancing our racing portfolio while empowering local businesses. This collaboration underscores the importance of bringing international motorsport events to Qatar, showcasing their significant role in boosting the local economy and aligning with the Qatar National Vision 2030."

Through this strategic collaboration, Snoonu and Lusail International Circuit are setting new benchmarks for motorsport events in Qatar, blending technology, entertainment, and fan-centric innovation to create a truly world-class experience.

2025 MOTOGP™ QATAR AIRWAYS GRAND PRIX OF QATAR is one of the most anticipated motorsport events on the global calendar, drawing top riders, elite teams, and passionate fans from around the world. Beyond delivering high-speed action, the event plays a key role in bolstering Qatar's sports tourism industry, fostering community engagement, and positioning the country as a global hub for world-class sporting events.

QatarDebate signs MoU with Hamilton-Lugar

QNA
Doha

QatarDebate Center has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Hamilton-Lugar School of Global and International Studies at Indiana University, USA, aimed at strengthening academic and cultural co-operation between the two institutions.

The agreement was signed on the Indiana University campus by Director of Programs at QatarDebate Center, Abdulrahman al-Subaie, and Dean of the Hamilton-Lugar School and Professor of International Studies, Professor John Ciorciari, in the presence of several officials and academics from both sides.

The MoU outlines a broad framework for academic collaboration and cultural exchange, designed to deepen mutual understanding between Qatar and the US and promote dialogue between diverse cultures.

Commenting on the agreement, Abdulrahman al-Subaie emphasised the strategic importance of this partnership in advancing educational and cultural relations between the two nations. This collaboration marks a



significant step toward strengthening academic and cultural ties between institutions in Qatar and the US. "At QatarDebate, we are committed to developing programs that nurture critical thinking and encourage the exchange of ideas among young people in both countries, fostering mutual understanding and co-operation," he said.

The agreement will facilitate the exchange of educational resources and materials, including teaching tools that promote academic engagement across cultures. It also envisions the joint organisation of conferences and debate championships aimed at enhancing participants skills in critical thinking, logical reasoning, and intercultural communication.

The Hamilton-Lugar School of Global and International Studies is recognised as one of the leading academic institutions in the US in the field of international studies. It offers advanced programs in global affairs, international relations, and geopolitical studies, and is renowned for its research and analysis of complex global issues.

WISE Prize finalist provides platform to support children's Arabic literacy

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

One of the finalists of the WISE Prize for Education 2024-25 provides a comprehensive parental platform supporting them with their children's foundational Arabic literacy journey.

Iqrili jo is among the six projects shortlisted for the prestigious WISE Prize for Education, an initiative of World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), a global education initiative of Qatar Foundation.

Based in Jordan, Iqrili jo is designed to be a critical resource in a concerted effort to systematically change the reality of early childhood literacy in Jordan and the Arab world.

What sets Iqrili jo apart is its holistic approach to supporting parents in their children's literacy journey. The platform isn't a solution in isolation but underpins a broader consortium of national and global actors working towards systemic change in Jordan.

Some of the key features of the programme are: evidence-based resources and tools curated from across the Mena region; free access for parents at all socio-economic levels; tailored content to meet different parents' needs; integration with a wider national level parental behaviour change programme and potential for interactive communi-



ty aspects and chatbot technology.

Iqrili jo has been initiated by the Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development (QRF) that has identified a critical gap in early childhood education in Jordan and the broader Arab world.

Through extensive research, QRF has uncovered alarming statistics that highlight the urgent need for intervention in early literacy development.

In Jordan, while 9 in 10 children under 6 spend most of their day with their mothers, less than 1% of parents read to their children on a typical day.

The scarcity of age-appropriate books in households and the lack of reading habits among parents have contributed to a situation where 6 in 10 children are not developmentally on track in literacy skills. These findings have driven QRF to develop innovative solutions to address the literacy crisis. The foundation has a strong track record of successful educational initiatives

such as the Edraak.org, launched in 2014, with over 9,000,000 users across the Arab World.

QRF's Karim and Jana educational mobile app series have over 2,500,000 downloads across the first five apps.

The Parental Education Programme has reached 17,000 parents since 2017 and built a regional community of over 500,000 parents active on social media. QRF's school library programme has developed 63 libraries since 2022 and have set up over 370 classroom libraries with children checking out around 100,000 books so far.

QRF has set some ambitious plans for Iqrili jo such as to develop a highly tailored experience for parents, ensuring the right tools and evidence-based resources are offered to support children's foundational literacy.

It aims to create an interactive community aspect and effectively use technologies such as chatbots to increase usability and impact. It is planning to integrate the platform into a wider programme of work focused on supporting parents.

QRF also feels the application's potential for replication and tailoring for other countries across the Arabic-speaking world. Iqrili jo addresses the WISE Prize for Education challenges by leveraging technology to support Arabic language literacy, focusing on foundational skills, and incorporating AI-driven personalisation for parents.

Owners of usufruct rights to desert houses need to register

The Ministry of Municipality's State Property Department has called on citizens benefiting from desert holiday houses (Buyout Al-Bar), who have not yet been granted usufruct rights, to complete the necessary procedures to establish their right of use. Beneficiaries are required to visit the municipality which has jurisdiction on the areas where the desert house is located within one calendar year from the date of this announcement.

This initiative is in accordance with the provisions of Law No 10 of 1987 regarding public and private state property and its amendments, and the Cabinet Decision No 6 of 2025, which outlines the conditions and regulations for benefiting from

desert houses. The goal is to regulate the usage of these houses and ensure the protection of the rights of both the state and the beneficiaries.

The ministry explained that applications must be submitted through the customer service centres at the relevant municipalities. In the event of a rejection, an appeal process is available in accordance with Cabinet Decision No 5 of 2025. The decision allows the concerned parties to submit an appeal to the minister within thirty days of being notified of the rejection. HE the minister will review and decide on the appeal within thirty days of submission. If no response is issued within that time, the appeal is considered implicitly rejected. The

Minister's decision is final.

The ministry urged all beneficiaries of desert houses who have not yet received usufruct rights, including those who submitted previous requests that were not granted, to visit their municipality and re-submit the application. The previous and new applications will be combined and reviewed by the committee.

Further, the ministry stressed that failure to submit an application within the specified time frame will result in the termination of the usufruct right. The desert house will then be removed through the regular administrative procedures as an encroachment on state property, and all related licences and permits will be revoked.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ((يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطَهَّرَةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتٍ)) صدق الله العظيم

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Mr. Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan

Vice-Chairman

And

Mr. Omar Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan

Managing Director

Mr. Ali Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan

Mr. Fahad Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan

Mr. Mohammed Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan

on the sad demise of

Hassan Ibrahim Alfardan

May his soul rest in peace

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Minister visits orphanage, centre for female survivors of violence in Port Sudan



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad visited Dar Nawwal Orphanage and Dar Aman for female survivors of violence in Port Sudan, on the sidelines of her visit to the Republic of the Sudan. During her visits, HE al-Misnad was briefed on the conditions of the orphans and the stories of the women's resilience and suffering from the scourges of war and violence. HE the minister affirmed that the State of Qatar's initiative backing women and girls in conflict zones, including the Republic of Sudan, will work to strengthen the efforts of Dar Aman, which provides protection and support in various forms to women survivors of violence. (QNA)

Qatar reaffirms commitment to implementing ICPD initiative

QNA
New York

Qatar reaffirmed its unwavering dedication to implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and advancing the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on Goal 3 concerning good health and well-being. This priority aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030, which integrates long-term healthcare strategies emphasising sustainability and the delivery of comprehensive medical services.

This came in a statement delivered by Vice-Chairman of the Permanent Population Committee (PPC) Sultan bin Ali al-Kuwari, during the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, held under the theme "Ensuring Healthy Lives and Promoting Well-being for All at All Ages" at the UN headquarters in New York.

Al-Kuwari highlighted that Qatar's healthcare development strategies prioritise prevention and equitable access to medical care across all demographics. He emphasised that these goals have been translated into strategic initiatives under the framework of "Health in All Policies", fostering co-operation among various state sectors.

Al-Kuwari further noted Qatar's accomplishments at national, regional, and international levels in performance, quality, patient safety, development programmes, health insurance, and partnerships between the public and private sectors. He added that Qatar proudly holds the distinction of being the first country in



the world where all municipalities have been designated as "Healthy Cities" by the World Health Organisation (WHO), stressing that five hospitals in Qatar were ranked among the top 250 academic medical centres globally, adding that in May 2023, Qatar was elected to chair the WHO Executive Board during its 153rd session.

He indicated that Qatar recently launched its National Health Strategy (2024-2030), part of the Third National Development Strategy under Qatar National Vision 2030. Developed collaboratively with health institutions, experts, stakeholders, and patient representatives, al-Kuwari clarified, the strategy aspires to create a health-centric society supported by an integrated healthcare system founded on sustainability and innovation.

Its focus rests on three key priorities: improving population health and well-being, ensuring excellence in healthcare services

to boost public trust, and achieving efficiency and resilience in the health system.

The UN session coincides with the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where civilians face acute shortages in healthcare services due to continuous Israeli aggression, a violation of international humanitarian law. In this context, Qatar called upon the international community to fulfil its responsibilities by holding Israel, as the occupying power, accountable for attacks on civilians, medical personnel, and humanitarian workers.

Qatar stressed the urgency of allowing unhindered humanitarian aid entry and achieving an immediate, definitive, and sustainable ceasefire in Gaza. In conclusion, the PPC vice-chairman reiterated Qatar's commitment to international co-operation and its ongoing support for countries facing health emergencies, particularly developing and least-developed nations.

Qatar set to take part in Expo Osaka-Kansai '25

QNA
Doha

Qatar is preparing to inaugurate its pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka-Kansai, which will be held in Japan from Apr 13-Oct 13, 2025. The inauguration ceremony is scheduled for next Tuesday in the Empowering Lives zone of the exhibition.

The pavilion offers a unique and multi-dimensional experience that embodies Qatar's journey from its maritime roots toward horizons of innovation, progress, and sustainability. It features innovative interactive experiences that highlight Qatar's success stories in key areas such as human development, the environment, and the knowledge-based economy.

It reflects Qatar's commitment to supporting global dialogue and strengthening international co-operation to shape a more inclusive and sustainable future. It also embodies the values of creativity, innovation, and humanity



in a harmonious way, through an artistic and immersive design that takes visitors on a unique journey that mirrors Qatar's ambitions for the future.

The pavilion spans an area of 1,846sq m and showcases Qatar's journey in building a diverse and sustainable knowledge-based economy. It blends cultural identity and authentic traditions through a design inspired by the intersection of Qatari and Japanese cultures, placing people at the

heart of development, grounded in cultural exchange and global cooperation.

The design of Qatar's pavilion draws inspiration from the traditional sambuk boat floating on water, as an architectural representation of Qatar's historical and future journey.

It highlights the harmonious relationship between land and sea and presents the coastal region as a source of potential and inspiration.

Katara opens 'Yet Unfinished' art exhibition by Wissam Radwan

QNA
Doha

The Cultural Village Foundation, Katara, inaugurated the art exhibition 'Yet Unfinished' by visual artist Wissam Radwan, in the presence of a distinguished audience of artists and art enthusiasts.

Running until April 20, the exhibition features 52 paintings and nine art pieces, inviting visitors on a visual journey oscillating between light and shadow, past and present, and what is visible and what remains within imagination.

The exhibition offers an artistic experience where collage techniques intersect with printmaking. Through her works, Radwan evokes elements of her memory and nostalgia for places and people she has lost but keeps alive in the texture of her artworks and discarded papers.

In this context, Wissam Radwan explained her search for a long-lost rhythm, condensing lost time into her creations away from polished surfaces and conventional details. She noted that her exhibition reflects humanity's yearning for perfection, an unattainable ideal, leaving people in a constant pursuit of better and more complete outcomes. The exhibition's pieces range from paintings to pottery plates, cubes, and the artist's



book, employing a visual composition that integrates contemporary techniques addressing both emotion and memory.

This exhibition marks a shift in Radwan's artistic trajectory, as she transitions from using paper as a structural element in printmaking to creating artistic realms based on recycling images, memories, and materials. The exhibition is open daily for art lovers and those seeking artistic expressions that merge form with personal depth,

shedding light on the incomplete beauty rooted in memory.

Wissam Radwan holds a master's degree in printmaking from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Alexandria University. She is currently teaching at the Visual Arts Center under the Ministry of Culture and has dedicated more than 20 years to developing printmaking and paper techniques. She remains committed to environmental practices by reusing paper and natural materials.

Katara's Naham Al Khaleej fest to showcase seafaring heritage

The Cultural Village Foundation, Katara, has announced the launch of the Katara's Naham Al Khaleej 2025 Art Award and Festival, set to commence tomorrow for three days on Katara's southern beach.

The festival aims to revive Al Nahma, a traditional Gulf maritime chanting art closely linked to the region's seafaring heritage, ensuring its continuity among new generations. The event features a diverse lineup of activities, including seminars and lectures led by experts from Qatar and the wider Gulf region.

The festival will showcase heritage performances that highlight the authenticity of Al Nahma,

alongside a photography competition tailored for enthusiasts in Qatar to document the festivals events. Additionally, there will be an art competition, fostering connections between different art forms, whether musical or visual.

The festival will conclude with the crowning of the winner of the 'Naham Al Khaleej' title, following a multi-stage competition. The contest focuses on traditional maritime songs, categorised into two artistic styles: Work Arts, including Duwari, Al Yamal, Al Khatfa, Al Jib, and Al Makhmous, Lafri Arts, including Adasani, Haddadi, Hassawi, Al Mukhlafi, and Al Bahri. Al Nahma is a historic traditional art that emerged in the

Gulf's maritime culture, deeply intertwined with pearl diving and fishing voyages. It served as both entertainment and morale-boosting for sailors, led by the Naham, the designated chant leader who performed rhythmic melodies and prayers onboard ships to uplift workers in their challenging sea journeys. This art form significantly shaped the region's musical and folk traditions, with Gulf sailors renowned for their distinct rhythms, such as Lafri, Sanjani, Mukhlafi, Duwari, and Haddadi.

Al Nahma, however, stands out for its spiritual and emotional depth, offering a melodic expression of hope and resilience amid the hardships of life at sea. (QNA)



Qatar partakes in meeting of GCC security media departments

Qatar participated in the 19th meeting of the GCC security media departments, held in Kuwait. The Ministry of Interior's Public Relations Director, Major General Abdullah Khalifa al-Muftah, chaired Qatar's delegation to the meeting. The meeting addressed topics related to security media in the GCC countries and made appropriate recommendations. (QNA)



MES begins new academic year

MES Indian School kicked-off its new academic year (2025-2026) on April 8. The commencement was preceded by a series of in-house sessions aiming at orienting teachers, parents and transport staff. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar briefed teachers about their increased responsibilities in ensuring their contribution for the holistic development of the students in the new academic year.

She urged them to adhere to the latest reforms and modifications as outlined in the curriculum document introduced by the Central Board of Secondary Education through National Education Policy (NEP) and brief students on the major changes in the syllabus for the new academic session.

The focus should be on dynamic, student-centred learning by adopting pedagogical strategies designed to enhance student engagement, including innovative teaching methods, collaborative lesson planning, project-based, and inquiry-driven learning, thus making the learning process more practical and engaging.

Parents were clarified about their wards' academic and emotional needs, besides stressing on promoting a well-rounded educational experience in line with the NEP. In the session conducted for the transport section, the staff were reminded of giving utmost priority to students' safety.



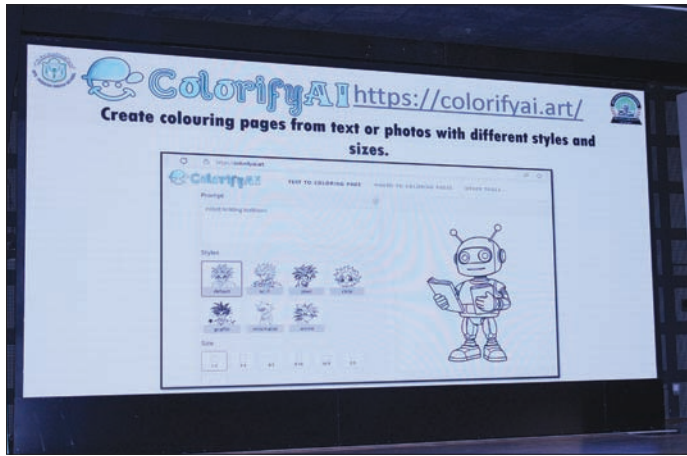
DPS-MIS hosts AI workshop for teachers



As part of its Continuous Professional Development programme, DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) organised a two-day workshop to equip teachers with the expertise of seamlessly integrating artificial intelligence (AI) tools into their

pedagogical practices to create a more student-centred, technologically enriched learning environment. The sessions delved into the practical applications of AI in education, encompassing areas such as lesson planning, content

creation, student assessments, and fostering classroom engagement. Over the course of the programme, educators were introduced to a diverse array of AI-powered tools, enabling them to optimise their workflows and el-



evate their teaching methodologies. Through hands-on activities, participants gained insights into leveraging these tools to enhance their instructional strategies and foster a more engaging and personalised learning experience for their students. Principal Asna Nafees congratulated the teachers for yet another successful academic year and encouraged them to continue impacting lives positively. She

also shared the school's vision for the silver jubilee year, urging the teachers to complement the legacy of excellence with innovation, collaboration and passion. The workshop was part of the school's ongoing efforts to equip its faculty with advanced skills and resources, enabling them to inspire a future-ready generation of learners and meet the evolving demands of modern education, a statement added.

MES cricketer selected for Qatar squad

Maria Theresa Jacob, the captain of girls' cricket team of MES Indian School, has been selected to represent Qatar in the Women's T20 World Cup Asia Region Qualifiers in Bangkok, Thailand, from May 7-20. Her selection to the Qatar women's national cricket squad is due to her impressive track record, especially in the Qatar Cricket Association Women U19 T20 League. The school management, principal and staff has congratulated Maria. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar said: "We are immensely proud of Maria's achievement which motivates students who are passionate for sports and games. Her selection to the national squad for such a major international tournament is a reflection of her hard work, dedication, and the support of her coaches and mentors."



'ICC Wednesday Fiesta' resumes



Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, resumed 'ICC Wednesday Fiesta' for a new season. Embassy counsellor (Head of Chancery and Consular) inaugurated the event that showcased performances by various affiliated organisations under ICC, and arts centres in Qatar. Birla Public School principal Dr Anand R Nair and presidents of affiliated organisations Bharathi and Charishma Arts, Ketan R Kanakhara and Mohammed Basheer, respectively, were honoured on the occasion.



MES duo to represent Aspire Academy



MES Indian School Grade 7 students and outstanding football talents, Aman Ziyen and Raymond James Bobby, have been selected to represent Aspire Academy of Qatar in the upcoming JWCA World Cup 2025, in Antalya, Turkey, from April 13-20.

The tournament brings together young players from across the world to showcase their skills, passion, and sportsmanship. The selection of Aman and Raymond is a significant moment for MES, underlining the school's unwavering commitment to excellence in sports and holistic development.

The selection of Aman and Raymond is a significant moment for MES

"The school takes pride in the achievement of these young talents. Their participation is a proud milestone. We wish these young champions great success as they represent the Aspire Academy of Qatar with great determination and enthusiasm striding into the international arena," principal Dr Hameeda Kadar said.



Iran says seeks ‘real and fair’ deal in nuclear talks with US

AFP
Tehran

Iran seeks a “real and fair” agreement with Washington on its nuclear programme, a senior aide to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday, setting the stage for a diplomatic showdown this weekend in Oman.

Long-time adversaries Iran and the United States are set to hold talks today aimed at reaching a deal on Tehran’s nuclear programme.

US President Donald Trump last month wrote to Khamenei urging negotiations, but warning of possible military action if Iran refuses.

“Far from putting up a show and merely talking in front of the cameras, Tehran is seeking a real and fair agreement, important and im-



A cruise ship floats, in Muscat, ahead of the awaited negotiations between US and Iran, in Oman, yesterday.

plementable proposals are ready,” Khamenei adviser Ali Shamkhani posted on X.

He confirmed that Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was heading to Oman “with full authority for indirect negotiations with America”, adding that if Washington

showed goodwill, the path forward would be “smooth”.

Ahead of the talks, Trump reiterated that military action was “absolutely” possible if they failed.

Iran responded by saying Tehran could expel UN nuclear in-

spectors, prompting another US warning that this would be an “escalation”.

Iran has consistently denied seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Yesterday, foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said Iran was “giving diplomacy a genuine chance in good faith and full vigilance”.

“America should appreciate this decision, which was made despite their hostile rhetoric,” he said.

The talks were first announced by Trump during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Washington.

He said they would be high-level and “direct”, but Iran insisted they would be “indirect”.

“The talks will be conducted indirectly through the exchange of texts,” claimed Iran’s Fars news agency, without naming a source.

White House spokeswoman

Karoline Leavitt insisted yesterday that the talks would be direct, “and I want to make that very clear”.

“The president believes in diplomacy, direct talks, talking directly in the same room,” she told reporters in Washington.

Araghchi and US special envoy Steve Witkoff are due to lead the talks in Oman, which has played a mediating role on the Iran nuclear issue.

Witkoff visited Iran’s ally Russia yesterday for talks on Ukraine with President Vladimir Putin.

Expert-level consultations between Russia, China and Iran on nuclear issues were held in Moscow on Tuesday, Russia’s foreign ministry said.

Iran has in recent months also been talking with the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal, Britain, France and Germany.

The 2015 accord saw sanctions

relief for Iran in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme.

Yesterday, the European Union cautioned that there was “no alternative to diplomacy” on the Iranian nuclear issue.

On Thursday, Washington imposed additional sanctions on Iran, targeting its oil network and nuclear programme.

Iran’s nuclear agency chief Mohammad Eslami downplayed their impact.

“They applied maximum pressure with various sanctions, but they were unable to prevent the country from progressing,” he said.

“They still think that they can stop this nation and country with threats and intimidation, psychological operations, or stupid actions.”

Iran has been in the spotlight since Trump returned to office, and its regional allies have suffered major setbacks.

Family of 10 killed in Israel strike in Gaza

From Page 1

“The dead have become better off than the living. On top of that, there’s the awful smell, rats come at us, reptiles too, and we are dying,” she said.

The UN decried the impact of Israel’s ongoing strikes, finding that “a large percentage of fatalities are children and women”.

“Between March 18 and April 9, 2025, there were some 224 incidents of Israeli strikes on residential buildings and tents for internally displaced people,” the UN human rights office said in Geneva.

“In some 36 strikes about which the UN Human Rights Office corroborated information, the fatalities recorded so far were only women and chil-

dren.” Israel’s military has repeatedly said Palestinian fighters often hide among civilians, a charge Hamas denies.

UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani also raised concerns over “the denial of access to basic necessities within Gaza and the repeated suggestion that Gazans should leave the territory entirely”.

Gaza’s health ministry said yesterday at least 1,542 Palestinians have been killed since March 18, taking the overall death toll since the war began to 50,912.

The president of the Red Cross described the humanitarian situation in Gaza yesterday as “hell on earth” and warned that its field hospital will run out of supplies within two weeks.

“We are now finding ourselves in a situation that I have to describe as hell on earth... People don’t have access to water, electricity, food, in many parts,” Mirjana Spoljaric told Reuters at the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

Director-General of World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said yesterday that the Israeli occupation is blocking 75% of UN missions from entering the Gaza Strip due to the ongoing blockade.

Speaking at a press conference in Geneva, Dr Tedros said that the total blockade imposed by Israeli authorities on Gaza since March 2 effectively halted the entry of all food and medical supplies.



Palestinian children gather near containers used for water, in Gaza City.

Israel-Hezbollah war ‘cost Lebanon agriculture \$700mn’

AFP
Beirut

The conflict in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah group caused more than \$700mn in agricultural damage and losses, a report from the United Nations and Lebanese authorities said yesterday.

“The agriculture sector in Lebanon has incurred an estimated \$118mn in damages and \$586mn in losses,” said the assessment by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation with Lebanon’s agriculture ministry and the National Council for Scientific Research.

The most affected areas are south Lebanon and the eastern Bekaa Valley, said the report, which covers the period from October 2023 to November 2024,

adding that “the most affected sub-sector is crops, followed by livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture”.

In October 2023, Hezbollah initiated cross-border fire with Israel in support of ally Hamas the day after the Palestinian group’s attack on Israel which sparked the Gaza war.

In September last year, Israel massively scaled up its campaign against the Iran-backed Hezbollah, targeting the group’s strongholds in the south and east - areas also known for their agricultural production - in Beirut’s southern suburbs, and launching a ground offensive.

More than a million people were displaced, with many farmers unable to tend to their lands or harvest crops in the affected areas. A November 27 ceasefire largely halted the hostilities, al-

though Israel has continued to strike Lebanon.

The report said the agricultural sector needed an estimated \$263mn “for reconstruction and recovery”, with \$95mn “prioritised” for this year and next.

“Immediate support is needed to restart farming, livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture activities,” a statement said, alongside efforts to restore crops, livestock and agricultural infrastructure.

According to the report, olives were the most affected crop, with 814 hectares of olive groves burnt, \$12mn in damage and \$237mn in losses.

Other crops impacted include citrus, bananas, potatoes and other vegetables, and wheat and barley, noting \$19mn in damage, and \$28mn in losses to livestock, with poultry and beehives also affected.

Gaza’s water crisis deepens

Reuters
Gaza/Cairo

Hundreds of thousands of Gaza City residents have lost their only source of clean water in the past week after supplies from Israel’s water utility were cut by the Israeli army’s renewed offensive, municipal authorities in the territory said.

Many now have to walk, sometimes for miles, to get a small water fill after the Israeli military’s bombardment and ground offensive in the Gaza City’s eastern Shejaia neighbourhood damaged the pipeline operated by state-owned Mekorot.

“Since morning, I have been waiting for water,” said 42-year-old Gaza woman Faten Nassar. “There are no stations and no trucks coming. There is no water. The crossings are closed. God willing, the war will end safely and peacefully.” Israel’s military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israel ordered Shejaia residents to evacuate last week as it launched an offensive that has seen several districts bombed. The military has said previously it was operating against “fighters’ infrastructure” and had killed a senior leader. Mekorot’s pipeline had been supplying 70% of Gaza City’s water since the destruction of most of its wells during the

war, municipal authorities say. “The situation is very difficult and things are getting more complicated, especially when it comes to people’s daily lives and their daily water needs, whether for cleaning, disinfecting, and even cooking and drinking,” said Husni Mhana, the municipality’s spokesperson.

“We are now living in a real thirst crisis in Gaza City, and we could face a difficult reality in the coming days if the situation remains the same.”

Most of Gaza’s 2.3mn people have become internally displaced by the war, with many making daily trips on foot to fill plastic containers with water from the few wells still functioning in remote areas - and even these do not guarantee clean supplies.

Water for drinking, cooking and washing has increasingly become a luxury for Gaza residents following the start of the war between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas group, whose fighters carried out the storming of Israel in October 2023. Since then, more than 50,800 Palestinians have been killed in Israel’s military campaign, Palestinian authorities have said.

Many residents across the enclave queue for hours to get one water fill, which usually is not enough for their daily needs.

“I walk long distances. I get tired. I am old, I’m not young to walk around every day to get wa-

ter,” said 64-year-old Adel al-Hourani. The Gaza Strip’s only natural source of water is the Coastal Aquifer Basin, which runs along the eastern Mediterranean coast from the northern Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, through Gaza and into Israel.

But its salty tap water is severely depleted, with up to 97% deemed unfit for human consumption due to salinity, over-extraction and pollution.

The Palestinian Water Authority stated that most of its wells had been rendered inoperable during the war.

On March 22, a joint statement by the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics and the Water Authority said more than 85% of water and sanitation facilities and assets in Gaza were completely or partially out of service. Palestinian and UN officials said most of Gaza’s desalination plants were either damaged or had stopped operations because of Israel’s power and fuel cuts.

“Due to the extensive damage incurred by the water and sanitation sector, water supply rates have declined to an average of 3-5 litres per person per day,” the statement said.

That was far below the minimum 15 litres per person per day requirement for survival in emergencies, according to the World Health Organisation indicators, it added.

Sudan paramilitaries kill 57 in Darfur

AFP
Port Sudan

Paramilitaries killed 57 civilians yesterday in an attack on North Darfur’s besieged capital El-Fasher and a nearby famine-hit camp, activists said, as the battle to control Sudan’s west intensifies.

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), at war with the army since April 2023, launched a major assault on El-Fasher using

heavy artillery, sniper fire and suicide drones from the east and northeast, said the local resistance committee, a volunteer aid group. “By 5:00pm (local time), 32 people had been killed in the city, including four women and 10 children aged between one and five,” the group said, adding that at least 17 others were wounded and taken to hospital.

Earlier, RSF fighters attacked Zamzam displacement camp around El-Fasher, killing 25 civilians, including women, chil-

dren and elderly residents, the local committee said. Zamzam, along with other densely populated camps for the displaced around El-Fasher, has suffered heavily during nearly two years of fighting. El-Fasher is the only state capital still under army control in Darfur, making it a strategic prize in the RSF’s push for full control of the west.

Witnesses described seeing RSF combat vehicles entering the Zamzam camp under cover of heavy gunfire.

Call to declare SA gender violence a national disaster

AFP
Pretoria

Several hundred people marched yesterday against femicide and gender violence in South Africa, calling for the “scourge” to be declared a national disaster.

Gender-based violence is endemic in the economic powerhouse where one in three women experiences physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime, according to UN figures.

The rally - one of many organised across the country yesterday - marched to the Union Buildings, the majestic seat of government that adjoins the presidential palace in the capital



Miss South Africa Mia le Roux (centre) stands with others during a demonstration calling for gender-based violence and femicide to be declared a national disaster in Pretoria, yesterday.

Pretoria. They handed a petition to the government which was received by a deputy minister.

Counting the black-clad Miss South Africa Mia le Roux within their ranks, they booed, chanted

and waved placards reading slogans such as “My body is not a crime scene!”.

“It is time for change. We cannot continue to do the same thing over and over and nothing happens,” said Siphiwe George, founder of a group called Women Waging War, who drove nine hours to join the protest.

Declaring the violence a national disaster “will open up a whole new level of how we can fight this scourge”, she said, saying it would release funds for shelters for victims.

South Africa, a nation of 62mn people, has some of the highest rates of violence against women and children in the world, according to the UN agency, UN Women.

LEGAL Opposition leader denied bail in Uganda

A Ugandan court yesterday denied bail to leading opposition figure Kizza Besigye and another defendant, with the judge citing the heavy charges they face and the ongoing investigation, AFP reported from Kampala. Besigye, 68, is a leading opponent of President Yoweri Museveni - in power for nearly 40 years - and was abducted from Kenya in November to face treason charges at home. The UN and rights organisations have expressed growing concern about the suppression of Uganda’s opposition in the run-up to presidential elections in 2026. “Although all grounds for bail are met. The applications for bail are denied,” High Court Judge Rosette Comfort Kania ruled yesterday.

Hegseth announces \$5.1bn spending cuts

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has ordered the termination of several information technology services contracts valued at \$5.1bn, including companies such as Accenture, Booz Allen Hamilton and Deloitte, according to a Pentagon memo.

The contracts “represent non-essential spending on third party consultants” for services Pentagon employees can perform, Hegseth said in the memo released late on Thursday.

“These terminations represent \$5.1bn in wasteful spending,” Hegseth said, adding that their termination would result in “nearly \$4bn in estimated savings”.

President Donald Trump has vowed to slash government spending, tasking Elon Musk – the world’s richest man – with leading the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Hegseth has said that the DOGE would have “broad access” to root out programmes from the previous administration.

Last month, he ordered the termination of \$580mn in spending, which included grants related to climate change and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) areas, among others.

In a video published on Thursday, Hegseth said the DoD was ending “eleven contracts for DEI, climate, Covid-19 response, and related non-essential activities”.

“We’re signing a memo right now directing the termination of \$5.1bn in DoD contracts, not million,” he said.

The cuts include contracts for consulting services from private firms for the Defence Health Agency, as well as a cloud IT services contract.

The DoD is also pausing over \$500mn in funding to Northwestern University and Cornell University, which Hegseth described as “academic institutions that tolerate anti-Semitism and support divisive DEI programmes”.

The Pentagon’s budget for 2025 is some \$850bn.

In February, a memo from Hegseth ordered the development of plans for 8% to be cut from the budget in each of the next year, according to the *Washington Post*.

If implemented in full, the cuts would reduce the budget by tens of billions each year to some \$560bn by the end of the five years.

“We will move away from woke, Biden-era, non-lethal programmes, and instead spend that money on President Trump’s America First, peace through strength, priorities,” Hegseth said earlier this year.

Representatives for Accenture, Deloitte and Booz Allen Hamilton did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The contracts appeared to be wide-ranging cuts to consulting services for the Navy, the Air Force, the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Defence Health Agency.

In a video posted on X, Hegseth said the contracts were for “ancillary things like consulting and other non-essential services”.

He said the services would be brought in-house. – **AFP/Reuters**

Greenland base commander sacked after Vance visit

The US military has fired the commander of a US Space Force base in Greenland following a visit there by Vice-President J D Vance and said it would not tolerate actions that “subvert” President Donald Trump’s agenda.

The Pentagon did not specify what exactly Colonel Susan Myers did but her dismissal, disclosed late on Thursday, followed publication of an e-mail she wrote that questioned Vance’s assertions during his visit to the base last month.

Vance had accused Denmark of failing to protect Greenland from “very aggressive incursions from Russia, and from China and other nations”, without detailing the alleged aggression.

“I do not presume to understand current politics, but what I do know is the concerns of the US administration discussed by Vice-President Vance on Friday are not reflective of Pituffik Space Base,” Myers wrote, according to the news website military.com

Reuters could not reach Myers for comment.

Trump has frequently said that the United States has a security imperative to acquire the

island, which has been controlled by Denmark since 1721.

The president has refused to rule out the use of force to secure it.

The Pentagon said she was fired due to a loss of trust and confidence.

Sean Parnell, a Pentagon spokesperson, wrote on X: “Actions to undermine the chain of command or to subvert President Trump’s agenda will not be tolerated at the Department of Defence.”

The Pentagon has been firing officers since Trump took office in January, in what appears to be a widening national security purge that has included the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the top Navy admiral and the military’s top lawyers.

Just earlier this week, the Pentagon also confirmed the firing of US Navy Vice-Admiral Shoshana Chatfield, who holds a senior position in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato).

Chatfield’s dismissal was first reported by Reuters.

Uniformed military officials are supposed to be loyal to the US Constitution and apolitical. – **Reuters/AFP**

Four publicly executed in one day

Four men were publicly executed in Afghanistan yesterday, the Supreme Court said, the highest number of executions to be carried out in one day since the Taliban’s return to power.

The executions were at stadiums in three separate provinces.

Two men were shot around six or seven times by a male relative of the victims in front of spectators in Qala-e-Naw, the centre of Badghis province, witnesses told an AFP journalist in the city.

A third man was executed in Zaranj in Nimroz province and the fourth was in Farah city in the western province of the same name, the Supreme Court said. – **AFP**

Webb telescope documents alien planet’s death plunge into a star

By Will Dunham
Reuters

In May 2020, astronomers for the first time observed a planet getting swallowed by its host star.

Based on the data at the time, they believed the planet met its doom as the star puffed up late in its lifespan, becoming what is called a red giant.

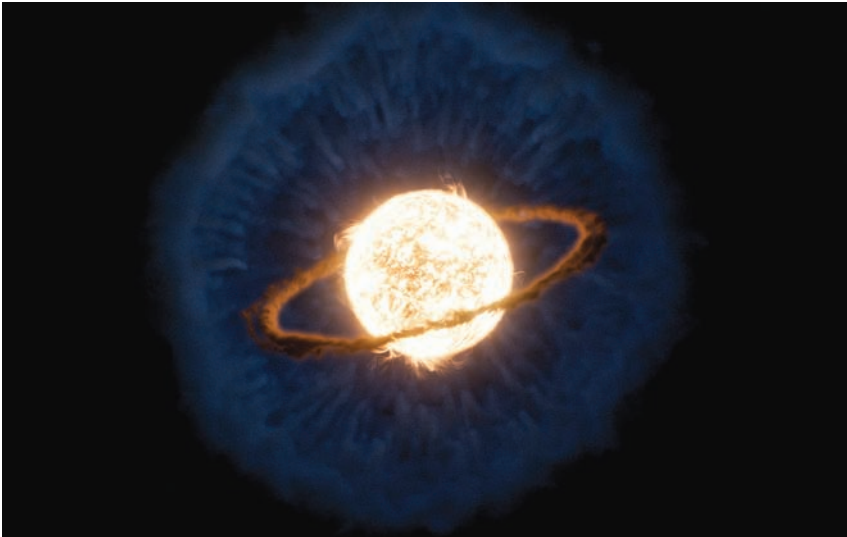
New observations by the James Webb Space Telescope – sort of a postmortem examination – indicate that the planet’s demise happened differently than initially thought.

Instead of the star coming to the planet, it appears the planet came to the star, with disastrous consequences – a death plunge after an erosion of this alien world’s orbit over time, researchers said.

The end was quite dramatic, as evidenced by the aftermath documented by Webb.

The orbiting telescope, which was launched in 2021 and became operational in 2022, observed hot gas likely forming a ring around the star following the event and an expanding cloud of cooler dust enveloping the scene.

“We do know that there is a good amount of material from the star that gets expelled as the planet goes through its death



An artist’s concept shows a ring of hot gas left after a star consumed a planet, in this undated illustration. Nasa’s James Webb Space Telescope observed such a ring and also found an expanding cloud of cooler dust enveloping the scene. – **Reuters**

plunge,” said astronomer Ryan Lau of the US National Science Foundation’s NOIR-Lab, lead author of the study published in the *Astrophysical Journal*. “The after-the-fact evidence is this dusty leftover material that was ejected from the host star”

The star is located in our Milky Way gal-

axy about 12,000 light-years from Earth in the direction of the constellation Aquila.

A light year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9tn miles (9.5tn km).

The star is slightly redder and less luminous than our sun and about 70% of its mass.

Supreme Court orders return of wrongly deported man

AFP/Reuters
Washington

The Trump administration suffered a setback in a closely watched immigration case on Thursday, as the US Supreme Court ordered it to “facilitate” the return of a wrongly deported Salvadoran migrant.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia, 29, was living in the eastern state of Maryland until he became one of more than 200 people sent to a prison in El Salvador last month as part of Republican President Donald Trump’s crackdown on undocumented migrants.

Most of the deportees were suspected members of Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, which the Trump administration has declared a foreign terrorist organisation.

Justice Department (DOJ) lawyers later admitted that Abrego Garcia – who is married to a US citizen – was deported due to an “administrative error”.

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the government to “facilitate” Abrego Garcia’s release from custody in El Salvador and to ensure that his case is handled as it would have been had he not been improperly sent to El Salvador”, the conservative-majority court said in its unsigned ruling.

Abrego Garcia had been living in the United States under protected legal status since 2019, when a judge ruled he should not be deported because he could be harmed in his home country.

Following his deportation and internment in the notorious CECOT counter-terrorist prison, lower courts had ordered that the US government return him to the United States by midnight on Monday.

The Supreme Court put that order on hold hours before the deadline, after the administration requested an emergency ruling.

In its challenge, the government argued that Abrego Garcia is a member of Salvadoran gang MS-13 – a claim the lower courts found lacked evidence.

UN to cut humanitarian operations staff by 20%

The United Nations’ humanitarian body yesterday announced plans to reduce its staff of more than 2,000 people by 20%, citing “a wave of brutal cuts”.

In a letter to staff, UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs head Tom Fletcher wrote “we will reduce bureaucracy and reporting layers. We will become less top-heavy, substantially reducing senior positions... but have dynamic and full responses where we are present”.

In the letter sent on Thursday, excerpts of which were posted on the office’s website yesterday, Fletcher said the agency is facing a funding gap of almost \$60mn.

Since February, the OCHA has implemented austerity measures to save \$3.7mn internally, but that won’t be enough.

The latest cuts will also “reduce its presence and operations” in Cameroon, Colombia, Eritrea, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkiye and Zimbabwe.

The broader aid situation has grown dire since the Trump administration scrapped 83% of humanitarian programmes funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

USAID had an annual budget of \$42.8bn, representing 42% of total global humanitarian aid.

“The context we face is the toughest it has ever been for our mission as OCHA, and the system we co-ordinate,” Fletcher wrote. “The humanitarian community was already underfunded, overstretched and literally, under attack. Now, we face a wave of brutal cuts”.

“As we all know, these exercises are driven by funding cuts announced by Member States and not by a reduction of needs,” he said. “Humanitarian needs are on the rise and have perhaps never been higher, driven by conflicts, climate crises, disease, and the lack of respect of international humanitarian law.”

The Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is an advocacy arm of the United Nations that delivers reports from the front-line of conflicts “to amplify the voices of crisis-affected people”, according to its website.

It has long been active in response to ongoing violence in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and other conflict zones to provide humanitarian aid.

Since returning to office in January for a second term, US President Donald Trump’s administration has slashed billions of dollars in foreign assistance in a review that aimed to ensure programmes align with his “America First” foreign policy. – **AFP/Reuters**

Judge declines to curb immigration enforcement in places of worship

A federal judge has refused to limit the Trump administration’s immigration enforcement activities in places of worship, ruling against a group of 27 religious organisations that had sued the administration over its decision to drop a previous policy against enforcement in sensitive locations.

US District Judge Dabney Friedrich in Washington, who was appointed by President Donald Trump during his first term in office, found that the organisations likely did not have standing to bring the case because their claims that they faced harm were speculative.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs, which include the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA, Central Conference of American Rabbis and Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas,

did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The White House and Department of Homeland Security also did not respond to requests for comment.

The groups sued the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other immigration enforcement agencies in February, arguing that the administration’s policy change violated their right to religious freedom under federal law and the US Constitution’s First Amendment.

Trump, a Republican, has pledged to deport millions of people who are in the United States illegally, and DHS said the policy change would mean that people would no longer be able to stay in churches to avoid arrest. – **Reuters**

The US government also argued that it no longer had jurisdiction to have Abrego Garcia released now that he is on Salvadoran soil, calling the lower courts’ orders “unprecedented and indefensible” and a “demand that the United States let a member of a foreign terrorist organisation into America tonight”.

“We’re confident that people that are (in CECOT) should be there, and they should stay there for the rest of their lives,” Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said on Wednesday, according to news site Axios.

Noem had visited the prison in person on March 26.

The White House has trumpeted a \$6mn deal with Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele in return for his holding alleged gang members in the ultra-high-security jail.

“The (Monday) deadline in the challenged order is no longer effective,” the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday.

However, “the rest of the District Court’s order remains in effect” requiring Abrego Garcia’s return, the judges added – although the lower court must clarify its order “with due regard for

the deference owed to the Executive Branch in the conduct of foreign affairs”.

A statement signed by liberal Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson argued there was “no basis in law” for Abrego Garcia’s removal to El Salvador.

“The government’s argument... implies that it could deport and incarcerate any person, including US citizens, without legal consequence, so long as it does so before a court could intervene,” they added.

Following the Supreme Court ruling, US District Judge Paula Xinis said the United States must “take all available steps to facilitate the return of Abrego Garcia to the United States as soon as possible”.

Yesterday Human Rights Watch (HRW) called on the US government to disclose information about all the people it has moved to CECOT and allow them contact with the outside world.

“The cruelty of the US and Salvadoran governments has put these people outside the protection of the law and caused immense pain to their families,” the rights group said in a statement.

Tourist helicopter crashes into New York’s Hudson River, killing all onboard

Reuters/AFP
New York

A tourist helicopter plummeted upside down into New York City’s Hudson River on Thursday, killing all six people on board, including a Spanish family with three children and the pilot, Mayor Eric Adams said.

Agustin Escobar, chief executive of Rail Infrastructure at Siemens Mobility, the train transportation arm of Germany-based technology company Siemens, was among those killed, a company spokesperson told Reuters.

“We are deeply saddened by the tragic helicopter crash in which Agustin Escobar and his family lost their lives,” the spokesperson said in an e-mailed statement.

The family killed when in the crash was celebrating a birthday, a local official said yesterday.

“They were celebrating the mum’s 40th birthday with the tourist helicopter flight yesterday. The kids were all 11 years old and younger,” said Jersey City mayor Steven Fulop.

A family member was flying in to recover their remains and officials were seeking to expedite the release of the bodies to be repatriated to Spain, he added on X.

Video of the crash showed what appeared to be a large object plunging into the river, followed seconds later by what appeared to be a helicopter blade.

Emergency and police boats were seen circling a patch of river where the helicopter was submerged, with only what appeared to be the aircraft’s landing gear poking above the water’s surface.

The Bell 206 chopper, operated by New York Helicopter Tours, departed about 3pm ET (1900 GMT) from a downtown helicopter pad and flew north over the Hudson River, New York Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said.

It turned south when it reached the George Washington Bridge and crashed minutes later, hitting the water upside down and sinking near Lower Manhattan about 3.15pm, just off Hoboken, New Jersey, Tisch added.

Divers helped remove the victims from the water.

Four were pronounced dead at the scene, while two were taken to area hospitals, where they died.

At a briefing on Thursday, Mayor Eric Adams called it a “heart-breaking and tragic crash”.

The airspace around Manhattan is crowded with helicopters offering tourists a bird’s-eye view of the sights, with at least two dozen operators listed on tour website Viator.

the planet affected the star, but we don’t truly know for certain what happened to the planet,” MacLeod said. “In astronomy there are lots of things way too big and way too ‘out there’ to do experiments on. We can’t go to the lab and smash a star and planet together - that would be diabolical. But we can try to reconstruct what happened in computer models”.

None of our solar system’s planets are close enough to the sun for their orbits to decay, as happened here. That does not mean that the sun will not eventually swallow any of them.

About 5bn years from now, the sun is expected to expand outward in its red giant phase and could well engulf the innermost planets Mercury and Venus, and maybe even Earth.

During this phase, a star blows off its outer layers, leaving just a core behind – a stellar remnant called a white dwarf.

Webb’s new observations are giving clues about the planetary endgame.

“Our observations hint that maybe planets are more likely to meet their final fates by slowly spiralling in towards their host star instead of the star turning into a red giant to swallow them up,” Lau said. “Our solar system seems to be relatively stable though, so we only have to worry about the sun becoming a red giant and swallowing us up.”

OFFICIAL

Chinese president to visit Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia

Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia next week, Beijing's foreign ministry said yesterday, on his first official foreign trip this year. Xi's tour of Southeast Asia will last from Monday until Friday, a foreign ministry spokesperson said. His visit to the region comes as Beijing squares off with the US in an escalating trade war triggered by President Donald Trump. Many Chinese exports are now facing 145% tariffs on arrival in the world's largest economy. Xi's visit to Vietnam comes on the invitation of President Luong Cuong, Beijing said. He last visited the country in December 2023.

DATA

Japan jets 'scrambled 30 times last year due to China drones'

Japan scrambled jets in response to Chinese drones 30 times during the past year, the military said, up over threefold year-on-year as Beijing bolsters its air force. "Overall, we are seeing the trend staying at a high level," Japan's military chief of staff Yoshihide Yoshida said at a press conference. In the financial year to March 31, Japan scrambled fighter jets 704 times to intercept foreign aircraft. Of those, 464 - or 66% - were for aircraft or drones that are known or believed to be from China, Japan's Joint Staff said, down slightly from 479 times in 2023-24. Of the incoming Chinese aircraft, 30 were drones - up from nine seen in the previous year.

BLUNDER

Woman gives birth to wrong baby after embryo mix-up

An Australian woman has given birth to a stranger's baby after a fertility doctor accidentally implanted the wrong embryo, the clinic owner said in its apology letter while blaming the mix-up on "human error". Monash IVF, which is responsible for nearly one-quarter of Australian IVF treatments, said it learned in February that a woman at its Brisbane clinic had the wrong embryo transferred, "resulting in the birth of a child". The mistake was identified when the new parents asked for their remaining embryos to be sent to another clinic. At that time, the company said it discovered an additional embryo in storage.

DECISION

S Korea deploys helicopters to contain fire in DMZ

South Korean military deployed helicopters to contain a wildfire within the DMZ, the buffer zone separating the two Koreas, it said yesterday. The announcement comes after the country suffered its deadliest wildfires in history last month, which claimed more than 30 lives in its southeastern regions. The cause of the fire which broke out Thursday afternoon, in the Goseong area of Gangwon Province within the Demilitarised Zone, is currently unknown, the country's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. "Two forest fire extinguishing helicopters from the Korea Forest Service have been deployed to extinguish the fire since yesterday," it said.

Australia wants AUKUS nuke subs for deterrence, stealth: Albanese

Reuters
Sydney

Australia is buying nuclear-powered submarines as a deterrent, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday, adding that the AUKUS treaty that has come under scrutiny amid President Donald Trump's trade policy was also in the US' interests. The US sale of three nuclear-powered submarines to Australia under AUKUS is facing new doubts as Trump's tariffs take hold, and amid concern in Washington that providing the subs to Canberra may reduce deterrence to China. The US Navy in September set a deadline of 2027 for its forces to be prepared for a conflict with China. Reuters reported, citing US defence experts and documents, consternation that Australia's reluctance to even discuss using the attack submarines against China means transferring them out of the US fleet in 2032 could hurt deterrence efforts.

Campaigning for a May 3 election in the northern garrison town of Darwin, Albanese told reporters he was "confident about AUKUS". "We're investing in our assets so that we're more secure. Obviously you have assets there as deterrents," he said. "The great benefit of nuclear-powered submarines, as I've spoken about many times, the reason why the government supports them is because of their stealth capacity." Asked about comments by a US

defence strategist who said Australia was unwilling to talk about the offensive capability of the submarines, Albanese said it was not responsible "to talk up war". Australia faces a 2025 deadline to pay the US \$2bn under AUKUS to assist with improving US submarine shipyards. "We support the existing arrangements that we have with the US," Albanese said when asked whether he would agree to a request for more money from the Trump administration. Opposition Liberal Party leader Peter Dutton said Australia needed nuclear submarines because it is an island nation. "The nuclear submarine allows us to project strength. It makes us a more reliable partner for our Five Eyes partners, and in addition to that Japan and other countries including the Philippines, India," he said on yesterday, referring to the intelligence sharing agreement between Australia, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Britain. Albanese's government had cannibalised spending from other parts of the defence budget to pay for AUKUS, he said. "I do think it is at risk under Labor, because they are not putting money in. If the Americans think or the Brits think we are not serious about the programme, why would they proceed with it?" he told reporters in Western Australia. Labor has said it is spending A\$50bn more over a decade on defence.

Worker missing in S Korea rail construction site crash



One worker is missing following the collapse of a rail construction site in South Korea yesterday, the national fire agency said, while a second has been located, but remains trapped in the rubble. The incident happened in Gwangmyeong, southwest of the capital Seoul, where workers were constructing a new commuter rail line that will connect the centre of the capital with the suburbs. Cracks had been found in an underground pillar and reported to authorities overnight, according to media reports.

UN denounces Myanmar army attacks despite post-quake truce

AFP
Geneva

The United Nations rights office yesterday decried attacks by Myanmar's military despite a ceasefire declared following last month's devastating earthquake, which killed more than 3,600 people. "At a moment when the sole focus should be on ensuring humanitarian aid gets to disaster zones, the military is instead launching attacks," spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said. UN rights chief Volker Turk said: "Calls on the military to remove any and all obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to cease military operations". A multi-sided conflict has engulfed Myanmar since 2021, when Min Aung Hlaing's military wrested power from the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Following reports of sporadic clashes even after the March 28 quake that so far is known to have killed at least 3,645 people, the junta joined its opponents last week in calling a temporary halt to hostilities for relief to be delivered. But Shamdasani highlighted that since the earthquake, "military forces have reportedly carried out over 120 attacks". "More than half of them (were) after their declared ceasefire was due to have gone into effect on April 2," she said. The UN rights office had determined that most of these involved aerial and artillery strikes, she said, "including in areas impacted by the earthquake". "Numerous strikes have been reported in populated areas, many of them appearing to amount to indiscriminate attacks and to breach the principle of proportionality in international humanitarian law," Shamdasani pointed out that areas at the epicentre of the quake in Sagaing, particularly those controlled by opponents of the military, "have had to rely on local community responses for search and rescue, and to meet basic needs". "Clearly these valiant efforts need to be further supported," she said, calling for "common efforts to assist those in greatest need". "In this spirit we call on the military to announce a full amnesty for detainees it has incarcerated since February 2021, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint."

S Korea's ousted Yoon moves back to apartment with 11 pets, security

Former South Korean president Yoon Suk-yeol yesterday moved back with his wife and their 11 dogs and cats to their apartment in an upscale district of Seoul, close to the prosecutors' office where the impeached leader worked before entering politics. Yoon and his wife Kim Keon Hee, known for their love of pets, are beginning a new life after he was impeached for a failed attempt to impose martial law and removed from office. The number of pets they own grew from four dogs and three cats at the start of his presidency, and now include a retriever that is a retired service dog adopted by Yoon in 2022. The couple's 164 sq metre apartment is located in a complex in the glitzy "Gangnam" area south of the Han river, and some neighbours have raised concerns about the return of a man who so polarised the nation during his stint in office. As many as 50 presidential security service personnel will be deployed to guard the couple, who are entitled to protection for at least five years, according to South Korean media reports. The three 37-storey towers that make up the Acrovista complex are home to more than 750 households. Previously, South Korean presidents have moved into detached houses after leaving office, which have afforded much greater privacy.



Ousted South Korean president Yoon Suk-yeol waves before leaving the presidential residence in Seoul yesterday.

US tariffs threaten Lanka's recovery: IMF

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka's recovery from its worst economic meltdown, which forced a sovereign default and toppled a president, will be undermined if punishing US tariffs resume, the IMF warned yesterday. The US is Sri Lanka's largest single market, accounting for almost a quarter of its \$12bn in merchandise exports. The trade balance is heavily in favour of the country. Washington imposed a 44% "reciprocal tariff" on the island nation before putting it on hold for 90 days on Thursday. Sri Lanka has not retaliated but instead appealed for negotiations with Washington. "The recent external shock and evolving developments are creating uncertainty for the Sri Lankan economy, which is still recovering from its own economic crisis," the IMF said following talks with local officials. It noted that more time was needed to assess the full impact on the IMF-supported bailout programme Sri Lanka entered into in early 2023. Sri Lanka secured a \$2.9bn, four-year loan from the IMF after running out of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports, such as food, fuel and medicines. "Against ongoing global uncertainty, it remains important to continue rebuilding external buffers through reserves accumulation," the IMF said. Sri Lanka had reported its first full year of economic expansion since its unprecedented crisis in 2022 when the US tariff announcement was made. The final quarter of 2024 saw the economy expand by 5.4%, bringing the full calendar year's GDP growth to 5%, compared to a contraction of 2.3% in 2023. The island's worst economic performance came in 2022, when GDP shrank by 7.3%. Months of shortages in early 2022 led to street protests that eventually toppled then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Taiwan charges Chinese ship captain with damaging undersea cables

Reuters
Taipei

Taiwan prosecutors for the first time yesterday charged a Chinese ship captain with intentionally damaging undersea cables off the island in February, after a rise in sea cable malfunctions alarmed Taiwan officials amid tensions with China. Prosecutors say the man was captain of the Chinese-crewed Hong Tai 58, registered in Togo, which Taiwanese authorities detained after suspecting the ship had

dropped anchor near an undersea cable off southwestern Taiwan, damaging it. The prosecutors' office in the southern Taiwanese city of Tainan said they had charged the ship's Chinese captain, whom they identified only by his family name, Wang, with being responsible for damaging the cable. Wang has said he is innocent, but refused to provide details of the ship's owner and "had a bad attitude", the prosecutors said in a statement. Seven other Chinese nationals detained at the same time will not

be charged and will be transported to China, prosecutors said, adding that the case was the island's first prosecution over damaging sea cables. Reuters was not able to determine the ship's ownership or immediately locate a lawyer representing the captain. China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China has previously accused Taiwan of "manipulating" possible Chinese involvement in the case, saying it was casting aspersions before the facts were clear. The cable damage has come

on top of China's military activities around Taiwan, including war games, the latest of which Beijing held last week. Taiwan's defence ministry yesterday said it had detected 21 Chinese military aircraft operating near the island, taking part in a "joint combat readiness drill" with Chinese warships, something Taipei routinely reports. Taiwan has reported five cases of sea cable malfunctions this year, compared with three each in 2024 and 2023, according to its digital ministry. Taiwan's coast guard has in recent months stepped up efforts to protect its sea cables, including monitoring a "blacklist" of close to 100 China-linked ships registered to a country other than that of its owner near Taiwan, officials familiar with the matter told Reuters. Taiwan said in January it suspected a China-linked ship of damaging an undersea cable off its northern coast; the ship owner denied the accusations. Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, has repeatedly complained about "grey zone" Chinese activities around the island, designed to pressure it without direct confrontation, such as balloon overflights and sand dredging. Taipei was alarmed after another Chinese-linked ship was suspected of damaging a different cable this year, prompting the navy and other agencies to step up efforts to protect the undersea communication links, which are vital to the island's connections to the rest of the world. Taiwan, whose government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, has pointed to similarities between what it has experienced and damage to undersea cables in the Baltic Sea following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

From Daikin to Samsung, companies fight Modi over e-waste policy

Reuters
New Delhi

India wants to tackle its mounting e-waste problem. Global electronics companies say the cost is too high.

Daikin, Hitachi and Samsung are among manufacturers alarmed by new Indian government rules that require them to pay significantly more to recycle air conditioners, refrigerators, TVs and other appliances, court papers and lobbying letters show.

The electronics giants are urging environment officials to abandon the approach, with four companies suing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration in New Delhi over the measures they say will heighten compliance woes and unsettle businesses.

The previously unreported standoff marks the latest chapter in foreign companies' battles with India over what some perceive as protectionist policies and shifting regulatory goal posts.

India is the third-biggest e-waste generator behind China and the US. But government data shows only 43% of the country's e-waste last year was recycled and at least 80% of the sector comprises informal scrap dealers, whose methods can pose environmental and health risks. Concerned about poor waste-processing practices, New Delhi in September set a floor price that electronics makers must pay recyclers, with the aim of formalising the sector and encouraging investment in e-waste management.

A review of hundreds of pages of non-public court papers and letters to the government by an industry group representing Samsung and LG reveals the impasse over the new rates, which the industry says have roughly tripled manufacturers' recycling costs. Johnson Controls-Hitachi, Japan's Daikin, India's Havells and Tata Group's Voltas each sued Modi's government between November and March to quash the pricing rules.

The measures are unconstitutional, exceed the government's powers under environmental law, and raise compliance costs manifold, the companies said in submissions to New Delhi judges. The government has called for the cases to be dismissed. Daikin said no Indian

government had ever previously drafted policies with the "sole intention" of providing financial gain to some businesses, in this case recyclers, at others' expense. Voltas predicted a "cascading effect" on product prices. The companies are part of an Indian consumer electronics market Euromonitor estimates will be worth \$62bn this year. The sector has experienced average annual growth of 10% since 2021.

As sales of consumer electronics skyrocket due to rapid urbanisation, companies such as Daikin, Hitachi and Samsung have expanded production in India. In line with global trends, India's e-waste reached 1.7mn metric tonnes in 2023-24, more than doubling in six years.

Samsung declined to comment. The other companies and India's environment ministry didn't respond to queries about the pricing rules and the industry's response.

For years, India has resisted foreign companies' demands to revoke protectionist policies. Lobbying by Walmart and Amazon, for example, failed to ease regulations that protect small retailers.

On e-waste, too, Modi's administration is digging in. In a March 18 submission, the environment ministry urged the judges to dismiss the lawsuits, saying it was "reasonable" and within its powers to fix prices.

The alternative of letting companies and recyclers determine prices may not account for all costs of environmentally sound waste management, the ministry said, adding that it wanted to prevent a "race to the bottom" in pricing.

India's government says there are 322 authorised recyclers in the country. But informal waste handlers flourish nationwide, using methods such as open burning and acid leaching to extract metals and components, which can release hazardous materials.

In western Gujarat state, 60-year-old scrap dealer Mustakeem Malik uses a hammer to dismantle televisions, air conditioners and routers.

Inside his tin-roofed shed where electronic equipment was stacked in haphazard piles, Malik said he earns Rs50,000 - about \$580 - a month by selling the plastic, circuit boards and copper he extracts from the devices. He doesn't want to work in the formal e-waste sector.

"That business has a lot of expenses. It's for the big guys," he said.

India's new rules mandate a minimum payment of Rs22 (25 US cents) per kilogram to recycle consumer electronics and Rs34/kg for smartphones. Makers of heavier devices such as air conditioners are likely to be hit hardest because their per-unit recycling cost has risen by a greater amount compared with makers of lighter gadgets like smartphones.

Research firm Redseer in February said India's recycling rates were still low compared with the US, where they are up to five times higher, and China, where they at least 1.5 times higher.

"We are talking about peanuts here," said Nitin Gupta, CEO of one of India's biggest recyclers, Attero, who added that the government rates require manufacturers to pay about \$10 to recycle a washing machine. "If you have to create scientific capacity for recycling, you need extra profits. This is good for us," said Gupta, whose firm counts LG and Daikin as clients.

The electronics makers, though, feel threatened.

India's Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association, which represents LG and Samsung, among others, said in a letter to the government in November that e-waste compliance expenses had risen to 2% to 8% of production costs.

Samsung and LG haven't sued the government but have signalled concern. LG India's December IPO prospectus warned without specifics that higher recycling rates "had a significant financial impact on our company". A person with direct knowledge of the matter said Samsung had told senior Indian officials its recycling costs would be five to 15 times the previous rates, and urged New Delhi not to interfere in commercial dealings with recyclers.

In court, Johnson Controls-Hitachi was the only company to reveal what it previously paid for recycling: Rs6 per kg, or 7 US cents. That figure has now almost quadrupled.

The company disclosed that it recycled more than 10,000 tonnes of air conditioners last fiscal year, which would amount to roughly \$2.6mn under the new rates. Its India business reported a net loss of \$8.8mn the previous year.



Italy's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani (right) speaks with India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal during the Italy-India Business, Science and Technology Forum, in New Delhi yesterday.

India, US finalise terms of reference for first phase of trade deal: official

Reuters
New Delhi

India and the US have finalised terms of reference for talks over the first part of a bilateral trade deal, an Indian trade official said yesterday, adding it was possible that a "win-win" deal could take shape in the next 90 days.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced a 90-day pause on most tariff hikes for major trading partners including India, while raising levies on China, providing temporary relief for Indian exporters. India and the US agreed in February to work on the first phase of a trade deal to be concluded late this year, with a view to reaching bilateral trade worth \$500bn by 2030.

"We are far ahead in trade talks with the US compared to other countries ... there are lots of possibilities in 90 days," said the official, who did not want to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue. It was reported on Thursday that India wanted to move quickly to clinch a trade deal following

Trump's tariff pause. Trade discussions between the countries will continue virtually and regularly, the official said, adding there could be some delegation-level visits from both sides as part of the talks.

US Vice-President J D Vance is also expected to visit India soon, the official said.

Trump's administration had announced a 26% tariff on Indian goods earlier this month, and New Delhi had said it did not plan to retaliate.

Bilateral trade with the US, India's largest trading partner, rose to around \$129bn in 2024, with a \$45.7bn surplus in favour of India.

India has asked its customs authorities to step up scrutiny of exports and imports of goods to ensure the country is not used as a conduit to re-route goods to the US, the official said.

Trade analysts have said that, following Trump's huge increase in tariffs on China, some companies could use India to divert exports to the US market.

India 'to prioritise national interest over FTA deadlines'

India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal yesterday said the government is treading carefully in its pursuit of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), emphasising that the country will not be pressured into signing deals that compromise national interest. Goyal said: "India will not negotiate with a gun to its head," highlighting that while talks are underway with the US, UK, European

Union and several Latin American countries, New Delhi is not in a hurry to conclude agreements. Our national interest remains paramount," he added. To mitigate risks stemming from potential demand slowdowns in developed economies, particularly in OECD nations, India is exploring new export destinations across Latin America and Africa.

NTPC to build small nuke reactors to replace old coal plants

India's NTPC is exploring the possibility of building small modular reactors to replace its older thermal power plants, according to a tender document, the first such proposal since the country moved to open its much-guarded nuclear sector. The state-run company, India's top power producer, has called for consultants to run feasibility tests for small modular reactors (SMR), which have simpler designs than large nuclear plants and can be scaled up to meet demand. NTPC mainly runs coal-fired plants and wants to identify ones that can be retired in the next five years, preferably replaced by SMRs, according to the tender. It was reported in February that the company was in talks with foreign firms, including those from Russia and the US, to build SMRs. Its current capacity, including through its joint ventures, is about 63 gigawatts (GW) of coal power. In early February, India said it would amend its nuclear liability law to boost foreign and private investments, aiming for at least 100GW of nuclear capacity by 2047.

India grills Mumbai-attacks accused after extradition

AFP
New Delhi

Indian investigative agencies yesterday questioned a man they extradited from the US and charged with being a "mastermind" of the deadly 2008 Mumbai siege.

India accuses Tahawwur Hussain Rana, 66, of being a member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group, designated by the United Nations as a terrorist organisation.

Rana, a Pakistan-born Canadian, has denied all charges - including waging war against India, conspiring to commit murder and acts of terrorism. He could face the death penalty if convicted.

New Delhi blamed the LeT group for the 2008 Mumbai attacks when 10 gunmen carried out a multi-day siege of the country's financial capital.

Nine of the attackers died in the siege, while one captured alive was tried and hanged.

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA), which accuses Rana of being the attack's "mastermind", took him into custody under heavy guard after he arrived in



National Investigation Agency officials stand with Tahawwur Hussain Rana (second left), upon his arrival in New Delhi.

a special flight to the capital New Delhi on Thursday evening.

"Rana will remain in custody for 18 days, during which the agency will ques-

tion him in detail in order to unravel the complete conspiracy behind the deadly 2008 attacks," NIA said.

Rana, who served in the Pakistan army's medical corps, faces 10 criminal charges including conspiracy, murder, commission of a terrorist act, and forgery.

Rana, who has denied the charges, is accused by India 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 is accused of playing a smaller role than Headley, but India maintains he is one of the key plotters.

He was flown to India after the US Supreme Court this month rejected his bid to remain in the US, where he was serving a 14-year sentence related to another LeT-linked attack.

India released a photograph of Rana arriving in Delhi, taken from his back, dressed in a brown jumpsuit and guarded by NIA officers.

Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesman Shafqat Ali said that Rana "did not apply to renew Pakistani documents over the past two decades".

UK lays groundwork for nationalisation of British Steel

Reuters
London

Britain moved towards the nationalisation of British Steel after it recalled parliament to introduce legislation that would keep the company's blast furnaces open, a move aimed at preserving the country's steel-making capability and saving jobs.

British Steel, owned by China's Jingye Group, employs 3,500 people at its Scunthorpe plant and supports more in the supply chain. It has warned it could

shut its two blast furnaces, which are losing £700,000 (\$914,760) a day, as soon as June.

Its output is used in the national rail network as well as in the construction and automotive industries. Without the Scunthorpe plant, Britain would be solely reliant on imports at a time of global trade wars and geopolitical instability.

"The government has requested a recall of the House to take forward legislative proposals to ensure the continued operation of British Steel blast furnaces is safeguarded," a note to lawmakers said.

The lower chamber of parliament, the House of Commons, had been scheduled to be in recess for an Easter holiday until April 22.

Such recalls only tend to happen in extraordinary circumstances, as in August 2021 when lawmakers were brought back to discuss the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

British Steel has been hit by years of high energy prices and was further damaged by US tariffs of 25% on all imports of steel, which took effect in March.

Asked about the company's nationalisation, British Finance

Minister Rachel Reeves told reporters earlier yesterday that all options remained on the table to prevent the blast furnaces from closing.

"We recognise the importance both to Scunthorpe for the jobs and community there, but also for our national economy, to maintain the capacity to make steel in Britain," Reeves said.

A spokesperson for British Steel declined to comment.

The future of the Scunthorpe plant came to a head after the government and British Steel failed to agree a funding deal to switch to a greener type of steel

production. The government had already earmarked £2.5bn for the steel industry and has said it would publish a strategy on its plans for the sector in spring 2025.

In the 19th century, Britain was the world's biggest steel producer, but its industry has been in decline, hurt in recent decades by a glut of low-cost production globally and high energy costs for domestic production.

More recently, tariffs have sent shockwaves through the sector. Britain's steel exports to the US are worth more than £400mn a year, according to industry body

UK Steel, or about 5% of total steel exports.

The nationalisation of British Steel would be the biggest state rescue since a number of banks were taken into government hands in 2008.

Less carbon-intensive electric arc furnaces, which make new steel from scrap, are being built in Britain at Tata Steel's Port Talbot site, following a government support package worth £500mn.

The two blast furnaces at Port Talbot closed last year, and the new electric furnace will not start producing steel until late 2027 or early 2028.



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Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

Production Editor

Amjad Khan

📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
✉ editor@gulf-times.com
📞 44350478 (News),
📞 44466404 (Sport),
📞 44466636 (Home delivery)
📠 44350474
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GULF TIMES

US dollar feels heat as Trump's tariffs spark trade turmoil

In just a week, the dollar has gone from a safe haven to investors' whipping boy as US President Donald Trump's chaotic tariffs on friend and foe alike undermine decades of trust in the world's reserve currency.

The sudden loss of confidence was nowhere more stark than in the Treasury market, which saw the largest weekly increase in borrowing costs since 1982 as offshore funds fled.

"The US, almost overnight, it seems to have lost its safe-haven attributes," said Ray Attrill, head of FX strategy at National Australia Bank.

"There is... a loss of confidence to some extent... you're overlaying that with the loss of exceptionalism and the view that in the short-term, at least, it's the US economy that's going to be suffering more than any other from what's happening on the tariff front." The dollar, already on course for its worst year since 2017, yesterday plunged to a decade-low against the Swiss franc and dropped to its weakest level against the euro in more than three years.

"The whole premise of the dollar as a reserve currency is being challenged, effectively, by what we've seen since Trump's election," said Attrill.

It was the establishment of the Bretton Woods system in 1944 that cemented the greenback's global standing. Post-war planners devised a system built on exchange rate stability and deepening international trade and the dollar remained dominant even after Bretton Woods broke down in the early 1970s.

Stocks globally have shed trillions of dollars and world markets have gone into a tailspin

"Regardless of how the next 90 days evolve, the US's international reputation has been eroded," ANZ group chief economist Richard Yetsenga said in a note.

"The global economy is in a weaker position than it was before the tariffs" Martin Whetton, head of financial markets strategy at Westpac, said this week's massive shift in US dollar swap spreads, the "sharp flash-crash" move higher in US Treasury yields and the heavy selloff in the dollar showed "a stripping away of the shield of liquidity and safety".

"By losing or diminishing credibility as a financial safe haven, the willingness of creditors to lend money to the US is reduced," he said.

Things are so bad that the US now has to pay investors more to borrow their money than Italy, Spain or Greece.

To be sure, some believe the dollar selloff could be temporary.

"Once the uncertainty is more or less gone, the tariff rates are set, there's no back and forth, we'll see the dollar getting stronger again because the eventuality is that the tariffs are set in place and this is the new normal," said Francis Tan, chief strategist for Asia at Indosuez Wealth Management.

But even if it does prove short-lived, any erosion of the dollar's standing as a safe-haven is bad news for investors.

For those who have piled trillions of dollars into buoyant US markets in recent decades, a sharp dollar fall could result in higher interest rates for longer as price pressures at home persist, which is bad for bonds and equities.

Foreigners owned \$33tn of US debt and stocks at the end of 2024.

"The Trump administration's ambitious agenda to reform the international financial system seems almost oblivious to the reality of America's extreme dependence on foreign capital as reflected in its net international investment position," said Chris Wood, global head of equity strategy at Jefferies, in a note. — Reuters

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Who will drive the post-American global economy?

By Jim O'Neill
London

Since the US presidential election last year, I have been commenting regularly on various aspects of Donald Trump's agenda and what it might mean for America, financial markets, and the rest of the world. There has been no shortage of chaos, but that was largely expected, given the president's ham-handed, erratic "method" of policymaking.

As I noted in February, and again in March, other economies may respond to Trump's aggression by boosting their own domestic demand and reducing their dependency on US consumers and financial markets. If there is a positive spin to the current mess, it is that Europeans and the Chinese have already started to pursue such changes. Germany is loosening its "debt brake" and allowing for sorely needed investment, and China is said to be studying its options for stimulating domestic consumption.

For any country that depends on international trade and markets, it is abundantly obvious that, even if the United States can be persuaded to rein in its trade-war policies, new trading arrangements will be necessary. Many are already seeking ways to increase trade among themselves and to forge new agreements to lower non-tariff barriers in the rapidly growing services trade.

As a bloc, the rest of the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom) is nearly as large as the US. Add the other participants in UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's "coalition of the willing", and America's erstwhile allies could offset much of the damage that Trump has inflicted. By the same token, if China could refashion its Belt and Road Initiative in close co-ordination with India and other larger emerging economies, that might prove transformational. Such moves would mitigate the



This photo illustration shows Chinese 100 yuan notes (red) and US 100 dollar notes, in Beijing on April 8, 2025. China vowed on April 8 to "fight to the end" against fresh tariffs of 50 percent threatened by US President Donald Trump, further aggravating a trade war that has already wiped trillions off global markets. (AFP)

effects of US tariff policies and threats. But they will not be easy to pull off; if they were, they already would have happened. Today's trading and financial arrangements reflect a variety of political, cultural, and historical factors, and the Trump administration will try to derail any changes to the status quo that could benefit China.

What matters, then, is precisely how other large economies go about stimulating domestic demand, mobilising investment, and forging new trade ties. At a recent conference on "globalisation and geo-economic fragmentation," hosted by the think tank Bruegel and the Dutch central bank, I was reminded just how skewed global GDP growth has been since the turn of the century. A simple analysis of annual nominal GDP figures from 2000-2024 shows that the US, China, the eurozone, and India collectively contributed nearly 70% of all growth, with the US and China accounting for almost 50% between them.

This finding further underscores the fact that US tariff threats must be met with higher domestic demand elsewhere. But here is

a reality check: The only other country that could single-handedly boost its demand and imports by enough to compensate for America's declining share of the global economy is China.

But what if China isn't operating single-handedly? As we have seen, Europeans are already taking steps to increase investment and defence spending in ways that will benefit both the EU economy and others, like the UK. And, of course, India's economy has been growing faster than many others in recent years, suggesting that it could have some scope to pursue more domestic stimulus. What if all these other economies were co-ordinating their own policies?

Such co-ordination probably might not have the same global impact as the 2009 London G20 agreement, which introduced wide-ranging global reforms and new institutions to address the causes of the global financial crisis and its fallout. But if these countries signalled to the rest of the world that they were engaged in some kind of consultation to harmonise their economic policies and advance shared objectives, that could have quite a positive impact.

Finally, something else from the Bruegel conference has been nagging away at me. It was a chart, presented by Bruegel Senior Fellow Andre Sapir, highlighting the similarities between Japan's rise, when its GDP grew to around 70% that of the US in the 1990s, and China's today. Then as now, the great fear in America was that it would be "surpassed". But what does America really want? Does it want to be able to say that it is the largest economy in nominal terms, or does it want to provide wealth and prosperity for its citizens?

These are not necessarily the same thing. What the current US administration fails to understand is that other countries' growth and development can make Americans themselves even wealthier. Perhaps, someday, Americans will elect leaders who can comprehend this basic economic insight. For now, though, they seem destined for many years of turmoil and persistent uncertainty. — Project Syndicate

• Jim O'Neill is a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK Treasury minister.

Europe's tech sovereignty demands more than competitiveness

By Marietje Schaake and Max von Thun
Brussels

As part of his confrontational stance toward Europe, US President Donald Trump could end up weaponising critical technologies. The European Union must appreciate the true nature of this threat and move beyond its current approach of competing with the US as an economic ally. To achieve true tech sovereignty, the EU must move beyond its narrow focus on competitiveness and deregulation and adopt a far more ambitious strategy.

After passing several landmark tech bills in recent years, the EU is now seeking to boost innovation and enhance competitiveness. Building on former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi's influential 2024 report, the European Commission recently published the Competitiveness Compass – its road map for implementing Draghi's recommendations.

Europe's growing anxiety about competitiveness is fuelled by its inability to challenge US-based tech giants where it counts: in the market. As the Draghi report points out, the productivity gap between the United States and the EU largely reflects the relative weakness of Europe's tech sector. Recent remarks by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Tech Commissioner Henna Virkkunen suggest that policymakers have taken Draghi's message to heart, making competitiveness the central focus of EU tech policy.

But this singular focus is both insufficient and potentially counterproductive at a time of technological and geopolitical upheaval. While pursuing competitiveness could reduce Big Tech's influence over Europe's economy and democratic institutions, it could just as easily entrench it. European leaders' current fixation on deregulation – turbocharged by the Draghi report – leaves EU policymaking increasingly vulnerable to lobbying by powerful corporate interests and risks legitimising policies that are incompatible with fundamental European values.

As a result, the European Commission's deregulatory measures – including its recent decision to shelve draft AI and privacy rules, and its forthcoming "simplification" of tech legislation including the GDPR – are more likely



Commissioner for Tech-Sovereignty, Security and Democracy Henna Virkkunen talks to journalists prior to a Foreign Affairs Council at the European Council headquarters in Brussels. (AFP/File photo)

to benefit entrenched tech giants than they are to support startups and small and medium-size enterprises. Meanwhile, Europe's hasty and uncritical push for "AI competitiveness" risks reinforcing Big Tech's tightening grip on the AI technology stack.

It should come as no surprise that the Draghi report's deregulatory agenda was warmly received in Silicon Valley, even by Elon Musk himself. But the ambitions of some tech leaders go far beyond cutting red tape. Musk's use of X (formerly Twitter) and Starlink to interfere in national elections and the war in Ukraine, together with the Trump administration's brazen attacks on EU tech regulation, show that Big Tech's quest for power poses a serious threat to European sovereignty.

Europe's most urgent task, then, is to defend its citizens' rights, sovereignty, and core values from increasingly hostile American tech giants and their allies in Washington. The continent's deep dependence on US-controlled digital infrastructure – from semiconductors and cloud computing to undersea cables – not only undermines its competitiveness by shutting out homegrown alternatives but also enables the owners of that infrastructure to exploit it for profit.

Even more alarmingly, Europe's technological dependence gives a handful of corporations

and the US government outsize power over its technological development and democratic decision-making. This power could be used to stifle the growth of Europe's tech sector by restricting access to advanced chips, or by making access to cloud computing contingent on light-touch regulation of US tech firms.

Safeguarding Europe from such coercion will ultimately enhance its competitiveness. Strong enforcement of competition law and the Digital Markets Act, for example, could curb Big Tech's influence while creating space for European startups and challengers to thrive. Similarly, implementing the Digital Services Act and the AI Act will protect citizens from harmful content and dangerous AI systems, empowering Europe to offer a genuine alternative to Silicon Valley's surveillance-driven business models.

Against this backdrop, efforts to develop homegrown European alternatives to Big Tech's digital infrastructure have been gaining momentum. A notable example is the so-called "Eurostack" initiative, which should be viewed as a key step in defending Europe's ability to act independently. In an increasingly volatile geopolitical landscape, sovereignty is about more than competitiveness; it is about security, resilience, and self-determination. European policymakers must therefore weigh competitiveness against other, often more important, objectives. A "competitive" economy holds little value if it comes at the expense of security, a fair and safe digital environment, civil liberties, and democratic values.

Fortunately, Europe doesn't have to choose. By tackling its technological dependencies, protecting democratic governance, and upholding fundamental rights, it can foster the kind of competitiveness it truly needs. — Project Syndicate

• Marietje Schaake, a former member of the European Parliament, is International Policy Director of the Cyber Policy Center at Stanford University, International Policy Fellow at Stanford's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, and a member of the Executive Committee of the UN High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence. Max von Thun is Director of Europe and Transatlantic Partnerships at the Open Markets Institute.

Bogota authorities end one year of climate-induced water rationing

AFP
Bogota

Residents in Colombia's biggest city Bogota won a much-desired reprieve from year-long water rationing yesterday, with authorities announcing tough climate-induced cuts will end. For 12 months, the capital's 8mn resi-

dents have faced 24-hour water cuts every nine days, as the city tries to raise critically low reservoir levels. Andes-nestled Bogota receives more annual rainfall than London. However, increasingly extreme cycles of El Nino drought and Amazon deforestation have taken their toll on reserves. Mayor Carlos Fernando Galan announced restrictions will be lifted today.

"It has been the most complex crisis the city has faced in terms of water scarcity" he said, acknowledging the substantial impact on "the quality of life of Bogota's residents". It has become a regular feature of Bogota life to keep containers ready and scramble late in the evening to store water for cooking or bathing the next day. Briceida Torres had to fill buckets and

carry them for household chores. "Obviously, it is inconvenient," she told AFP. Car wash owner Benjamin Nunez Fletcher said he has learned to use "rain-water and filters ... to keep the business running". The restrictions are estimated to have lowered the city's average water consumption by more than 8% - from 17.7 cubic

metres per second to 16.2. While climate change has worsened the city's water woes, Andres Torres, director of the Water Institute at Javeriana University in Bogota, said that cuts were like an x-ray exposing poor resource management over years. "They penalised the population because they didn't do what they were meant to," he said.

Trump tells Russia to 'get moving' on Ukraine

AFP/Reuters
Moscow

US President Donald Trump told Moscow yesterday to "get moving" on ending its "senseless war" with Ukraine, moments before his envoy Steve Witkoff began talks with Vladimir Putin in Russia on the conflict. Trump has been pressing Moscow and Kyiv to agree to a ceasefire since returning to the White House but has failed to extract any major concessions from the Kremlin despite repeated negotiations between Russian and US officials. The US leader told NBC News last month that he was "a vulgar word meaning unhappy)" with his Russian counterpart, while top US diplomat Marco Rubio warned last week that Washington would not tolerate "endless negotiations" with Russia over the conflict. "Russia has to get moving," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, adding that the

conflict - which began more than three years ago when Moscow sent troops into Ukraine - was "senseless" and "should have never happened". Kyiv and several of its Western allies suspect Russia of stalling the talks on purpose. And after accusing Moscow of dragging Beijing into its invasion, Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that hundreds of Chinese nationals were fighting at the Ukraine frontline alongside Russia. Shortly after Trump's post, the Kremlin said talks between Putin and Witkoff had started. The meeting took in Putin's home city of St Petersburg and touched on "various aspects of the Ukrainian settlement", Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "There is no need to expect any breakthroughs here, the process of normalising relations is ongoing," Peskov was quoted as saying by Russian state media before the meeting. The talks concluded after more than four hours.

The Kremlin posted a photo on its website of the two men shaking hands, saying that the meeting had taken place. "The theme of the meeting - aspects of a Ukrainian settlement," it said. Russian news agencies said the meeting lasted more than four hours. Interfax news agency said that Witkoff, Trump's envoy for the Middle East who is increasingly involved in Russian affairs, had left the site of the talks - the presidential library in St Petersburg, Russia's second largest city. Witkoff has held two previous meetings with Putin in Russia since Trump's return in January. After their last meeting, Witkoff, a longtime Trump ally who worked with the US president in real estate, said that Putin was a "great leader" and "not a bad guy". The envoy's praise of a president long seen by the United States as an autocratic adversary highlights the dramatic turn in Washington's approach to dealings with the Kremlin since Trump took office for a second term.



In this pool photograph distributed by the Russian state agency Sputnik, Russia's President Vladimir Putin is seen shaking hands with Steve Witkoff during their meeting in St Petersburg. - **AFP**

Bolsonaro hospitalised

AFP
Brasilia



Brazil's far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro (*pictured*) was "stable" yesterday after being hospitalised with severe abdominal pain six years after he barely survived being stabbed in the stomach, doctors said. The 70-year-old, who is seeking to make a political comeback even as he faces a criminal trial, started feeling "unbearable abdominal pain" at a political event yesterday in the northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte, a senior member of his Liberal Party said. He was brought to a local hospital where he was "stabilised", according to right-wing senator Rogerio Marinho, then flown by helicopter to another, bigger facility in the state capital, Natal. An AFP photographer witnessed Bolsonaro arriving at the Rio Grande Hospital in Natal by ambulance with an intravenous drip, awake and calm. Television footage had shown him walking to the helicopter, with evident discomfort. A medical report released to the media said he was admitted with abdominal swelling and pain, but "stable vital signs". He was undergoing lab tests while receiving intravenous hydration and an antibacterial treatment, it added. "For now, there is no need for surgery," added Dr Luiz Roberto Leite Fonseca, the hospital's general director.

Massive black hole 'waking up' in Virgo constellation

A massive black hole at the heart of a galaxy in the Virgo constellation is waking up, shooting out intense X-ray flares at regular intervals that have puzzled scientists, a study said yesterday. Astronomers previously had little reason to pay any attention to galaxy SDSS1335+0728, which is 300mn light years from Earth. However, in 2019, the galaxy suddenly started shining with a brightness that turned some telescopes its way. Then in February last year, Chilean astronomers started noticing regular bursts of X-rays coming from the galaxy. This was a sign that the galaxy's sleeping black hole was waking from its slumber, according to the study published in the journal *Nature Astronomy*. Most galaxies, including our home Milky Way, have a supermassive black hole squatting at their heart, like a spider in a web. These invisible monsters gobble up everything that comes their way - not even light can escape their almighty suck. If an unlucky star swings too close, it gets torn apart. The star's shattered material becomes a stream that spins rapidly around the black hole, forming what is called an accretion disc that is gradually swallowed. However, black holes can also go through long periods of inactivity when they do not attract matter. And after a fairly uneventful period, the bright, compact region at the heart of galaxy SDSS1335+0728 has been classified as an "active galactic nucleus" - and given the nickname "Ansky". "This rare event provides an opportunity for astronomers to observe a black hole's behaviour in real time" using several X-ray telescopes, astronomer Lorena Hernandez-Garcia of Chile's Valparaíso University said in a statement.

Ansky's short-lived X-ray flares are called quasiperiodic eruptions, or QPEs. "This is the first time we have observed such an event in a black hole that seems to be waking up," Hernandez-Garcia said. "We don't yet understand what causes them." The current theory is that QPEs are linked to the accretion discs that form after black holes swallow stars. However, there is no sign that Ansky has recently feasted on a star. And its flares are quite unusual. "The bursts of X-rays from Ansky are 10 times longer and 10 times more luminous than what we see from a typical QPE," said Joheen Chakraborty, a PhD student at MIT and member of the research team. "Each of these eruptions is releasing a hundred times more energy than we have seen elsewhere." The intervals of 4.5 days between these blasts are also the longest ever observed, he added. "This pushes our models to their limits and challenges our existing ideas about how these X-ray flashes are being generated," he said in the statement. Astronomers have had to come up with some theories for what could be causing these strange bursts. One was that the accretion disc was formed by gas getting sucked into the black hole, which only shoots out X-ray flares when a small celestial object such as a star crosses its path. "Simply imagine a black hole and disc around it," Norbert Schartel, chief scientist of the European Space Agency's XMM-Newton telescope which has observed Ansky, told AFP. Now imagine the star crossing the disc twice every time it orbits - shooting out flares - but at a particular angle which means "there is no real strong force to drag it in", he said.

Greenland appoints first Arctic ambassador

Reuters
Copenhagen

Greenland appointed its first Arctic ambassador yesterday, pledging to promote sustainable economic development for indigenous people and advance green energy transitions for polar communities as it prepares to chair the Arctic Council. The two-year chairmanship comes at a time when US President Donald Trump is attempting to assert control over the semi-autonomous Danish island and when competition over the Arctic region is hotting up among world powers. The Arctic holds fossil fuels and minerals beneath the land and the seabed that could become more accessible with global warming. The United States also sees the Arctic as crucial for natural security, including for its early warning system against nuclear attacks. The Kremlin says the Arctic is a zone of Russian strategic interest. The Arctic Council does not address military

security but serves as a platform for collaboration on issues such as pollution, economic development, and search-and-rescue missions. The Council comprises the eight Arctic nations: the United States, Canada, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and Russia. At an event in Nuuk, Greenland's capital, Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Motzfeldt outlined the island's priorities for the role, including sustainable economic development, mental health, gender equality, and the empowerment of Arctic indigenous communities. Ulrik Pram Gad of the Danish Institute for International Studies, said Greenland's priorities for its Arctic Council chairmanship complicate Trump's bid to lure Greenlanders. "This is basically the opposite of Trump's agenda: building welfare states that respect the equality and diversity of indigenous peoples while securing the green transition to combat climate change," he said. Trump has encouraged Greenland's 57,000 residents to sever ties with Denmark and join the United States. New Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen

told Reuters this month that Greenland would strengthen its relationship with Denmark until it achieves sovereignty. Kenneth Hoegh, head of Greenland's diplomatic representation in Washington, was appointed as the new Arctic ambassador, representing the Kingdom of Denmark. The appointment follows a dispute between Denmark and Greenland, with Nuuk advocating for a greater role in foreign affairs. Last year Greenland objected to Copenhagen's appointment of a Dane, insisting the role should be held by a Greenlandic individual. The Trump administration has yet to appoint a new Arctic ambassador following Mike Sfraga's resignation in January. The relevance of the Arctic Council has been questioned since the seven Western nations, all North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) members, paused co-operation with Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine. Norway, which has chaired the forum for the past two years, has attempted to maintain limited co-operation with Russia, whose role was not mentioned at yesterday's presentation.

Sweden 'drowns' in discarded fast fashion items

By Nioucha Zakavati
AFP



A worker sorts incoming clothing items at Artikel2's sorting centre in Stockholm. - **AFP**

Sweden's recycling centres are overflowing with clothes after an EU-wide ban this year on throwing away textiles, leaving overwhelmed municipalities eager to have fast fashion giants take responsibility. "It's a huge amount coming in everyday. It's been crazy, it's a huge increase," said Brian Kelly, secretary-general of the Artikel2 charity shop in Stockholm, where rows of bins were overfilled with discarded apparel. Since the beginning of this year, EU countries must have separate textile recycling, alongside existing processes for glass, paper and food waste. The aim is to promote circular waste management, where textiles are sorted and reused, or recycled if they are not too damaged. "We have seen a 60% increase in textiles collected in January and February this year compared with the same period last year," said Karin Sundin, an expert on textile waste at Stockholm city's waste and recycling management company Stockholm Vatten och Avfall. Once the textiles are sorted, some 60-70% is designated for reuse, and 20-30% for recycling as padding, isolation or composite materials. Around 7-10% is burned for energy, according to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. That is a huge improvement from before the new law, according to experts, who note that discarded clothing used to be systematically incinerated. However, a lack of infrastruc-

ture in Sweden means used clothes are largely exported abroad, primarily to Lithuania, where they are sorted, reused, or burned for energy. "We don't have the big sorting plants that can put everything into value in the same way that they have in eastern Europe for example," explained Sundin. "The reason is that it's so labour intensive (and) costs a lot of money," she said as she gave AFP a tour of the Ostberga recycling centre in southern Stockholm. Swedes throw away 90,000 tonnes of textiles per year, or 10kg (22 pounds) per person, according to the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature. The EU average is 19kg, according to 2022 statistics, up from 17 in 2019, data from the European Environment Agency showed. The clothing industry also pollutes the environment. To make a t-shirt that weighs 135g (4.76 ounces), 2,500 litres (660 gallons) of water and 1kg (2.2 pounds) of chemicals are needed, noted Yvonne Augustsson, advisor at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. "That means greenhouse gas emissions of around two to five kilos," she said. "In Sweden, an article of clothing is used on average 30 times. If you double this to 60 times - which seems reasonable - you reduce the climate impact by half." Textile sorting in Sweden is handled by municipalities, many of which have been overburdened by the quantities received since the introduction of the new law. In the sparsely populated north, some towns, such as Kiru-

na, continue to incinerate textiles because they have no takers for the items. Fast fashion giants, such as H&M and Zara, are expected to eventually play a role in handling the waste they help generate, and negotiations are ongoing at the European level to determine their responsibility. According to a preliminary agreement EU member states reached in February, clothing giants will be responsible for the end of lifetime of the products they sell, required to pay for collection, sorting, reuse and recycling. The idea is to encourage fast fashion retailers to produce "clothing designed to last longer", said Augustsson. Swedish brand H&M told AFP it welcomed moves in that direction. Consumers also need to change their mindset. Each person should "buy no more than five new articles of clothing per year", said Beatrice Rindvall, head of the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature, which regularly organises clothing swaps. In the town of Linköping on a sunny spring day, a clothing exchange on a student campus had racks featuring everything from a hot pink jacket with feathered sleeves to faded jeans, bags and striped t-shirts. "People can give us clothes in good condition that they don't wear anymore (and) exchange them for something else," volunteer Eva Vollmer said. "We focus on creating the solution so that people actually have an alternative."

Chile monitors volcanic field after seismic swarm causes 160 quakes

A seismic swarm that caused 160 quakes in two hours at the Laguna del Maule volcanic field in central Chile earlier this week has put authorities and citizens on alert. The volcanic complex, located about 300km (190 miles) south of the capital near the Argentine border, is a vast 500sq km (193sq miles) area with volcanic domes, cones and lava flows with an estimate 130 volcanic vents. "These are signs that the volcano is active, it has magma, what's inside is moving and this can lead to a moderate-sized event in the future," said Ayaz Alam, a geologist and professor at the University of Santiago of Chile. "But when? We don't know?" Chile's National Geology and Mining Service, Sernageomin, said the quakes were low magnitude and kept the volcanic complex on green alert, meaning there was no immediate risk. Chilean disaster agency Senapred said it would continue working with regional authorities to alert and respond to any eventual emergencies. Alam said seismic swarms in volcanic areas are lower intensity and different from swarms along fault lines because the activity is caused by magma flows rather than tectonic plates crashing into each other. The largest tremor registered during the swarm was a 2.1 magnitude but the relatively young volcanic field has shown several signs of activity in recent years. Daniel Diaz of the University of Chile says the area is unique since it doesn't have a single volcanic structure, but dozens around the lake. "This (volcanic) system is quite recent and therefore we expect there to be activity," he said. "But it's not concentrated in one structure or cone, but all around the zone surround the Laguna del Maule." - **Reuters**



Fishing Exhibition blends ‘heritage, innovation and economic opportunity’

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The inaugural Fishing Exhibition at Old Doha Port, which concludes today, continues to draw crowds, enthralling visitors with its unique blend of traditional Qatari heritage and cutting-edge maritime innovation.

Launched on April 9 at Mina Park (south of Mina District), the event has received an enthusiastic response, attracting a diverse audience ranging from seasoned fishing professionals to curious hobbyists.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Old Doha Port chief executive engineer Mohamed Abdulla al-Mulla said the exhibition is designed to showcase the rich history of fishing in Qatar while simultaneously promoting advancements in sustainable marine technology.

“As we did in past events at Old Doha Port, we always make sure to showcase the heritage and the history of the place,” he pointed out. “Old Doha Port, as we know, was the first commercial port back in the last century, back in the 50s, so we in Qatar have a link to this economic growth which the port has contributed.”

“As a sign of appreciation, we always try to have these shown not only for the visitors who are coming from other regions but also to our next generation to appreciate what these have contributed to the economy,” al-Mulla said, stressing that they ensure cultural activities apart from the main event.

The event features more than 30 regional exhibitors, showcasing the evolution of the fishing industry from traditional methods to the latest in sustainable marine technology.

Visitors can explore displays ranging from hand-crafted fishing gear to advanced equipment, offering



Engineer Mohamed Abdulla al-Mulla

something for everyone interested in the world of fishing.

Beyond the displays, organisers noted that the exhibition offers immersive experiences that bring Qatar’s maritime heritage to life.

Visitors can witness live demonstrations of net-making and rope-weaving, enjoy traditional maritime music, and listen to storytelling that reflects the Port’s history.

“Interactive demos, live maritime performances, and the relaxing coastal setting created the perfect midweek atmosphere,” al-Mulla said. “The F&B outlets were busy too, with guests enjoying everything from Qatari street bites to modern café favourites by the sea.”

“The momentum continues with more to see, taste, and experience each evening,” he added. “There’s still time to enjoy it all.”

Al-Mulla highlighted the exhibition’s role in supporting local entrepreneurs and businesses.

“We have not overlooked this aspect,” he said. “In addition to the commercial and retail outlets which are related to the sea activities, we put plans to support the local entrepreneurs, especially startups and including those in the food and beverage sector.”

The Fishing Exhibition, al-Mulla said, is also seen as a key contributor to Qatar’s overall tourism strategy.

“Diversification is always something to the benefit of the consumer at the end of the day,” he noted. “Having different activities and events all falling into the interest of the local visitors, as well as international visitors, making more options for them to come and enjoy.”

The exhibition culminates in the highly anticipated Fishing Competition, offering prizes worth more than QR300,000.

The event features more than 30 regional exhibitors, showcasing the evolution of the fishing industry from traditional methods to the latest in sustainable marine technology.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam



Fishing competition draws unprecedented turnout

Old Doha Port’s annual fishing competition attracted 578 fishermen and marine enthusiasts, reflecting the passion and excitement of fishing sports fans.

Organised into 132 teams, this year’s event marks a record-breaking number of participants in the history of fishing competitions in Qatar.

Due to this overwhelming response, organisers expanded the leaderboard to recognise 25 winning teams, up from five.

This move aims to heighten the excitement and competition between the teams while honouring a larger group of participants and recognising their achievements at this annual marine event.

Prizes range from marine equipment such as manual and electric kayaks to vouchers for a complimentary stay at

Mina Hotel & Residences at Old Doha Port.

In this edition, the competition is fast becoming one of Qatar’s most dynamic community sporting events.

Taking place within a larger celebration of heritage and sea this year, the event will run until today at Mina Park, one of the leading marine destinations in the country.

Focused exclusively on kingfish (*kan’ad*), the competition kicked off yesterday, with teams setting sail to sea and submitting footage of their best catch – including boat registration and weight verification – for final review by the organising committee.

The top 25 catches will be crowned today, at an awards ceremony at 7.30pm at Mina Park, bringing the four-day exhibition to a festive close.



مسابقة ميناء الدوحة القديم للصيد
Old Doha Port Fishing Competition

تم إغلاق التسجيل رسمياً
إقبال إستثنائي وغير مسبوق!

عدد الفرق المشاركة 132 فريق بمشاركة 578 شخص

نظراً للإقبال الكبير تمت زيادة جوائز المسابقة لتشمل الفائزين حتى المركز الـ 25

Registration is officially closed.
We had an exceptional and unprecedented turnout!
132 teams are participating with a total of 578 individuals taking part.
Due to the high turnout, prizes were added for winners up to 25th place.

