

GULF

TIMES



0 668039 136499

TUESDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13346

April 15, 2025
Shawwal 17, 1446 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

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BUSINESS | Page 1

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meets Qatari
businessmen and
CEOs of major firms

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The Egyptian president expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, expressing his keenness to bolster bilateral co-operation and development relations, elevating them to broader horizons across all fields.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued yesterday Amiri Decision No. 14 of 2025, appointing HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Thawadi as Managing Director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC). The decision is effective starting from its date of issue and is to be published in the official gazette. **(QNA)**



Qatar-Egypt talks reflect depth of bilateral ties

As part of the solid fraternal relations and historic ties between Qatar and Egypt and their keenness to boost multi-level consultations and co-ordination, President of Egypt Abdel Fattah al-Sisi paid an official visit to Doha on April 13-14.

The talks between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and President al-Sisi were held in an atmosphere of brotherhood and understanding and reflected the depth of bilateral relations and their solidity and mutual trust. The agenda included ways to foster multi-sector co-operation to enhance shared interests and open new horizons for integration and partnership.

Stressing the importance of boosting economic co-operation, the two sides have agreed to continue joint work to promote investment and economic exchange, reflecting the political will of the two countries and contributing to supporting sustainable economic development that serves the aspirations of the two brotherly peoples.

In this context, the two sides reiterated their commitment to sup-

porting their economic partnership and working towards a package of direct Qatari investments totalling \$7.5bn to be implemented over the next phase, manifesting the strength of the relationship between the two countries and streamlining the achievement of sustainable economic development for the interests of the two brotherly peoples.

Meanwhile, the two sides have affirmed the centrality of the Palestinian cause for Arabs and their firm stance backing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, primarily their right to establish an independent state on the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with peace initiatives and relevant international resolutions.

Affirming their support for efforts to achieve Palestinian national reconciliation and the need to unify Palestinian ranks, ensuring the activation of Palestinian state institutions and the fulfilment of the aspirations of the brotherly Palestinian people, the two sides have reiterated their full support for the Gaza reconstruction



plan and expressed their aspiration for an international conference on this matter to be hosted by Egypt, in co-operation with regional and international partners, to co-ordinate humanitarian and development efforts to ensure improved living conditions for the Palestinian people in the Strip.

The two sides have expressed their grave concern over the continued escalation in the Gaza Strip and stressed the importance of continuing joint efforts to achieve an immediate and sustainable ceasefire, ensure the delivery of urgent humanitarian aid to civilians, and support reconstruction efforts to alleviate the suffering of the

brotherly Palestinian people.

They have expressed grave concerns over the ongoing armed conflict in the Sudan and emphasised the importance of an immediate cessation of military operations and a return to the comprehensive national dialogue process, which would preserve the country's unity and sovereignty and end the suffering of its brotherly people. The two sides affirmed their full support for all regional and international initiatives aimed at ending the conflict.

The two sides have embraced the continuation of indirect negotiations between the US and Iran, affirming their support for any peaceful efforts aimed at reducing



tensions in the region and enhancing security and stability. They also commended the diplomatic efforts exerted by the sisterly Sultanate of Oman in this regard.

Qatar and Egypt have stressed the importance of enabling regional and international efforts aimed at calming the situation and achieving peaceful solutions, particularly their mediation efforts in partnership with the US, to achieve a ceasefire and end the war in the Gaza Strip.

They condemned all attempts to undermine the negotiating process or target mediators, which aim only to sabotage mediation efforts.

Meanwhile, Qatar has expressed

its support for the nomination of Dr Khaled El Enany of Egypt for the position of Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), in recognition of his academic and cultural career and confidence in his ability to contribute positively to the work of the organisation.

They also expressed satisfaction with the progress made in bilateral relations over the past period, stressing the importance of building on these achievements and advancing relations to broader levels, within a framework of mutual respect and a shared vision for a future of security, stability, and prosperity. (QNA)

Egypt's president ends Doha visit



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi left Doha yesterday after an official visit. He and the accompanying delegation were seen off at Hamad International Airport by HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani and HE the Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed. Also present were Qatar's ambassador Tariq bin Ali al-Ansari and Egyptian ambassador Amr El Sherbiny. (QNA)

QU to celebrate 48th graduation ceremony next month

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Qatar University (QU) will celebrate the graduation of its 48th cohort (Class of 2025), male students, on May 7. The ceremony for distinguished female students will be held in the presence of Her Highness Consort of His Highness the Amir Sheikha Jawaher bint Hamad bin Suhaim al-Thani, on May 8.

QU announced that the total number of graduates this year is expected to be around 3,560 graduates, which includes 2,782 female graduates, and 778 male graduates. As QU graduates its 48th cohort, the university said it continues to chronicle a long history spanning decades in which it has heavily contributed to Qatar's development and prosperity, through supplying the labor market with qualified graduates. (QNA)

Minister meets top officials at FALC 2025

HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani yesterday met with a number of counterparts and officials from various countries. According to a statement from the Ministry of Transport, the meetings took place on the sidelines of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Facilitation Conference (FALC 2025) that began yesterday in Doha.

The minister held separate meetings with Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation president Abdulaziz al-Duailej and Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation head Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Humoud al-Sabah. They discussed bilateral relations in the areas of air transportation and ways to enhance them.

The minister met with Sierra Leone's Minister of Transport and Aviation Alhaji Fanday Turay. They discussed co-operation relations in the areas of transportation and ways to enhance them particularly on capacity building in air transportation.

The minister also met with Brunei Darussalam's Deputy Permanent Secretary (Transport), Ministry of Transport and Information Communications Haji Mohammad Salihin Haji Aspar. They discussed bilateral transportation co-operation ties and ways to enhance



HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani meeting with president of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) of Saudi Arabia Abdulaziz al-Duailej (above) and head of Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Humoud al-Sabah.



them. Co-operation relations between Qatar and Morocco in the areas of transportation and its associated logistics services as well as ways to take them to broader

horizons were discussed by the minister during the meeting with Moroccan Minister of Transport and Logistics Abdessamad Kayouh. (QNA)

PM meets French parliament team



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday at the Amiri Diwan with a French Parliament delegation, headed by President of the France-Gulf States Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group of the French Senate Olivier Cadic. The agenda included ways to boost bilateral relations and the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, Syria and Lebanon. Also on the table were several topics of common interest. HE Sheikh Mohammed affirmed Qatar's relentless efforts, along with regional and international partners, to foster stability and peace in the region. (QNA)

'Civil aviation key to Qatar's economic growth'

From Page 1

The minister lauded award-winning Hamad International Airport and Qatar Airways and said they are "symbolic of the country's commitment to providing a world-class infrastructure" for an "exceptional and integrated" passenger experience.

"Hamad International Airport and Qatar Airways embody such a commitment in the form of offering an integrated travel experience based on latest traveller data systems that helped cut wait time, and improve security check procedures, in addition to being a main partner to global facilitation initiatives in association with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), thereby putting best universal practices in place," the minister said.

HE Sheikh Mohammed urged conference participants from around the world to take full advantage of the opportunity to deepen international co-operation and engage in productive discussions that lead to meaningful collaboration and impactful solutions for improving air transport facilitation and the traveller experience. He also invited ministers and senior officials to the high-level Ministerial Segment, where a joint ministerial declaration will be announced.

"This declaration aims to promote a unified and comprehensive approach to air transport facilitation, support future initiatives, and ensure continued progress based on shared strategic principles," HE Sheikh Mohammed noted. ICAO FALC 2025 is attended by more than 120 ministers and aviation authority chiefs from around the world and numerous high-profile officials, experts and leaders representing civil aviation industry in some 190 countries. Held under the theme 'Facilitating the Future of Air Transport: Collaboration, Efficiency,

Inclusivity', the conference offers a unique platform for states and aviation industry stakeholders to explore advancements in air transport facilitation. It encourages dialogue on improving co-operation and operational efficiency in global air travel, while fostering collaboration among participants to develop a comprehensive global facilitation strategy that can adapt to the sector's rapid evolution. The ICAO Facilitation Conference is distinguished by its high-level Ministerial Segment, which sets the strategic tone for the event and reaffirms global commitment to strengthening air transport facilitation. This segment provides a key platform for ministers to discuss and endorse initiatives aimed at connecting communities and enhancing seamless international mobility. In his address, Mohamed bin Faleh al-Hajri, In Charge of Managing the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), noted, "Qatar's emergence as a global aviation leader, driven not only by its advanced infrastructure but also by its intellectual leadership, active engagement in ICAO initiatives, and ongoing efforts to raise international standards in the sector."

Al-Hajri said, "The conference underscores the need for collaborative efforts to achieve efficiency, inclusivity, and resilience in the transport of passengers and cargo, ensuring smooth and secure global movement." He added: "This is not just an operational necessity but a key factor in strengthening the aviation sector's role and its positive impact on the global economy. It drives connectivity between nations, particularly as the industry undergoes significant transformation and rapid technological advancement. This requires a proactive, co-operative approach to address emerging challenges and capitalise on new opportunities in air transport facilitation."

Al-Hajri reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to advancing international facilitation through active participation in ICAO activities and involvement in various technical committees and working groups. He drew attention to the value of the conference sessions, which will focus on addressing vital topics for the development of air transport facilitation. Al-Hajri emphasised that fostering international co-operation is key to strengthening the global aviation system's resilience and adaptability. This approach aligns with ICAO's vision to advance the sector, and he urged all member states and participants to engage in open dialogue that promotes the exchange of experiences, best practices, and practical solutions to support global facilitation frameworks. The 4-day ICAO Facilitation Conference will feature numerous sessions covering key issues related to co-operation and co-ordination among relevant authorities in the field of facilitation. Topics include cargo release clearance and automation processes, travel document integrity and border control, addressing inadmissible persons, deportees, refugees and stateless persons, combating human trafficking and irregular migration, assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families, capacity building and implementation support for states, and innovation in facilitation. The conference will conclude with the announcement of the adoption of the 'Doha Declaration' on facilitation of international air transport. An exhibition with the participation of various organisations and companies, offering a unique opportunity to showcase the latest procedures and technologies in air transport facilitation, is being held on the sidelines of FALC 2025.

Qatar Family Day today

The Ministry of Social Development and Family is organising a wide range of events to celebrate Qatar Family Day, a national occasion that highlights the importance of the family as the foundation of society.

Family Day in Qatar was officially adopted in 2011, following a proposal during the 2004 Global Family Conference, and is now celebrated annually on April 15.

The aim is to promote family cohesion, raise awareness of the family's social and economic role, and encourage positive values in Qatari society. The events will take place from today until Saturday (April 19)

The events will take place from today until Saturday at Katara Cultural Village

at Katara Cultural Village. In collaboration with Katara, the programme includes awareness lectures, workshops, cultural and entertainment activities, and interactive sessions. Various government bodies, community organisations, and local businesses will participate, offering educational activities, family-oriented booths, and exclusive

discounts. Religious awareness will also be part of the celebrations.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs will dedicate the Friday sermon to the significance of the family in Islam. The Family Consulting Center 'Wifaq' will hold a number of related discussion panels.

Dhabiya al-Muqbali, director of the Family Development Department, stressed that Qatar Family Day offers a valuable opportunity to empower families, address modern challenges, and strengthen social bonds. The celebration reflects the Ministry's vision for supporting family stability and well-being.

Dukhan Bank declares April winners of Thara'a

Dukhan Bank has announced the names of the most recent round of draw winners for Thara'a, its Shariah-compliant savings account, held at the bank's headquarters under the supervision of a representative of the Qualitative License and Market Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

For this month's draw, Muhsina Alnabit won the top prize of QR50,000, while the following winners each received QR5,000: Jassim al-Behaimi, Fatima Alyafel, Kasim Daloul, Kamel Hussein, Miran Allam, Abdulrahman Fakhroo, Fathiya Mohammed, Albandari Almana, Cheryl Basa, Mohammed al-Marri, Omar Awadulla, Rhoda Barasi, Noora

Alrumaihi, Maryam al-Mahannadi, Rashid al-Maslamani, Khalid Ahmed Faisal, Aisha al-Mulla, Maryam al-Mannai, Tariq Elhalees, Mohamed Abohajieh, Khalid Framerzi, Mustapha Achir, Nahla Merhi, Maged Adel Hassaballa, Saja Almeer, Fatima al-Mahansa, Mehaiya Nabet, Qaisar Hussain, Mohammed Keshaihs, Randa Abdelkhalig, Chakib Dejoui, Maamoun Saqer, Dalia Elmaghrabi, and Alaa Agha. Dukhan Bank continues its customer-centric approach with its enhanced Thara'a savings account campaign, reaffirming its commitment to rewarding clients. The upgraded campaign now features a total prize pool of QR5.025mn, with 327 winners

throughout the year. The initiative includes three grand prizes of QR1mn each, awarded every four months, along with monthly draws featuring a QR50,000 prize and 35 additional prizes of QR5,000. Thara'a, a Shariah-compliant savings account, offers customers exclusive benefits, including access to Dukhan Bank's innovative digital banking services. Customers interested in participating can open a Thara'a savings account via Dukhan Bank's website, mobile app, or by visiting any branch. For more information, customers can call 800 8555 or reach out to Rashid, the bank's virtual assistant, via WhatsApp at 44100888.

All set for Earthna Summit 2025

The Earthna Summit 2025 will bring together more than 1,000 participants from over 100 countries on April 22-23 at Msheireb to discuss sustainability solutions rooted in both traditional knowledge and cutting-edge innovation.

The second edition of Earthna is set to convene global policymakers, thought leaders, academics, and businesses at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Bin Jelmood Museum, and Barahat Msheireb for discussions on environmental challenges. It will also shine a spotlight on Qatar's commitment to sustainable solutions for hot and arid environments, blending cultural heritage with modern innovation.

Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future (Earthna), a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), noted that the event, themed "Building Our Legacy: Sustainability, Innovation, and Traditional Knowledge", will feature Earthna Village, in addition to a series of sessions and interactive workshops.

"Addressing the pressing sustainability challenges of our time requires fresh perspectives and bold

collaboration. The Earthna Summit provides a crucial platform to bring together diverse voices and expertise, bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and cutting-edge innovation," Earthna executive director Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata said.

Earthna will also host the Intbau Qatar Conference at the summit on 'Rethinking Urban Development through Traditional Architecture'. The sessions will explore whether place-specific knowledge, human-scale design, and resource efficiency in urban models can provide viable solutions to contemporary challenges. "We are actively bridging our rich heritage with cutting-edge climate solutions. This summit is crucial for developing concrete, global responses to the urgent environmental challenges we face," engineer Ahmad Mohammed al-Sada, Assistant Undersecretary for Climate Change Affairs for the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the strategic partner of the Earthna Summit, said.

A key highlight of the summit will be the announcement of the Earthna Prize winners. The inau-

gural prize honours projects integrating traditional knowledge to tackle environmental challenges in water management, food security, sustainable urbanism, and land stewardship.

Four winners, selected from more than 400 submissions across 100 plus countries, will share a \$1mn prize to advance their work.

Building on the success of 2023, the summit returns with Earthna Village at Barahat Msheireb. Thought leaders, Earthna Prize winners, and the community will engage in interactive experiences that highlight QF projects and groundbreaking sustainability efforts. The village features three zones focused on Sustainable Urbanism, Sustainable Living and Eco-Learning, plus exhibition spaces and lively Agora sessions for bilingual discussions sparking fresh ideas. A place for networking, family fun, and inspiration, Earthna Village invites all generations to explore and embrace nature-based solutions for a brighter, sustainable future.

Speakers at the Earthna Summit and Village include Nobel



Officials announce details of Earthna Summit 2025 yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser to the Government of Bangladesh; Ibrahim Thiaw (United Nations Convention to Com-

bat Desertification); artist Thijs Biersteker; Gauri Singh (International Renewable Energy Agency), and local experts such as Fahad bin

Mohammed al-Attiyah; Dr Tareq al-Ansari, and Dr Akel Ismail Kahera from Hamad Bin Khalifa University, a member of QF.

WCM-Q prepares 41 aspiring doctors for medical education

A total of 41 students from 19 high schools completed the 2024-2025 edition of the Qatar Aspiring Doctors Programme (QADP), organised by the Office of Student Outreach & Educational Development at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q).

The year-long QADP programme prepares high school students for the pre-medical curriculum through advanced tuition

in the physical sciences, biology, research skills, college writing, and reading. To enrol in the programme, students must be in grades 10, 11, or 12, demonstrate a strong interest in pursuing a career in medicine, and excel in both the sciences and mathematics. Additionally, students must be nominated by their high school counsellor, with priority given to Qatari students.

Dr James Roach, associate dean



QADP participants with WCM-Q officials.

for pre-medical education and professor of chemistry, who teaches the physical sciences modules of the QADP, said: "At WCM-Q, we are committed to nurturing talented high school students who are passionate about science. We equip them with the knowledge

and skills they need to confidently pursue their journey to medical school." The students who completed the programme were celebrated at a ceremony at WCM-Q, where they received certificates of completion and personal congratulations from WCM-Q faculty

members in attendance. Speaking during the ceremony, one of the students who completed the programme with honours, Aisha Hamad al-Mudahka from Sherborne Qatar School for Girls, said: "The programme has given me access to valuable resources and guid-

ance, helping me build essential skills like critical thinking, personal statement writing, and much more. Thanks to QADP, I now have a much clearer understanding of what universities are looking for and how to approach the application process with confidence."

Qatar's 2024-25 cruise season ends; 19% surge in vessel calls

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Curtains came down on Qatar's cruise season for 2024-25 with Doha Port welcoming more than 390,000 visitors aboard 87 cruise ships, marking a 5% increase in visitors and a 19% rise in vessel calls against the previous season.

"These figures underscore The Terminal's growing role in supporting the tourism sector and strengthening Qatar's position as a leading regional cruise destination, in line with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030," Mwani Qatar said in its social media handle X.

The season kicked off with the arrival of Resorts World One Cruise Ship and the last one was Norwegian Sky.

This season saw notable nameplates such as Mein Schiff 4, MSC Euribia, AIDAprima, Costa Smeralda, Norwegian Sky, and Celestyal Journey, call on Doha Port, solidifying Qatar's growing status as a premier global cruise destination.

"The growth of Qatar's cruise sector is pivotal to achieving our National Tourism Strategy 2030, which aims to welcome 6mn visi-

tors annually. With new partnerships and an increasing number of high-profile cruise lines visiting our shores, Qatar continues to position itself as a leading destination for cruise travellers worldwide," Saad bin Ali al-Kharji, chairman of Qatar Tourism, had said in November 2024 at the launch of 2024-25 season.

Doha Port's cruise terminal is strategically located just minutes away from key attractions such as the National Museum of Qatar and Souq Waqif, optimising the visitor experience by allowing cruise passengers to make the most of their time in the city.

Looking ahead, Qatar Tourism plans to strengthen its collaborations with more international cruise lines, which is vital for driving further growth in Qatar's the tourism sector and contributing to Qatar's economic diversification efforts.

A recent report from Price-waterhouseCoopers said sports tourism remains a vital growth driver with FIFA World Cup 2022 generating an estimated \$2.3bn to \$4.1bn in tourism spending and broadcasting revenue, contributing \$1.6bn to \$2.4bn to Qatar's gross domestic product.



The 2023/2024 cruise season had seen 73 cruise ships and more than 347,000 visitors, representing a significant milestone in Qatar's cruise market. International world-class ships including MSC

Virtuosa, Seabourn Encore, AIDAprima, Artania, Mein Schiff 2, Azamara Journey, MS Riviera, MS Hamburg, and Norwegian Dawn have all previously docked in Doha.

Event to bring together pets, animal lovers, rescuers on April 18

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Paws for Hope will bring together local rescuers, adoptable pets, and veterinarians on April 18 at L'Arche Dog Park. The free-entry event is dedicated to supporting abandoned pets and the rescuers who care for them.

It also aims to raise awareness about the challenges faced by abandoned animals in Qatar, connect them with loving homes, and provide much-needed resources to local rescue organisations.

The event will feature representatives from several local rescue organisations, including Pawmiser Rescue Qatar, Furry Good Deeds, Cats Rescue Qatar, Paws, Moon Paws Rescue, Qatar Tails, Furkids by Nagham, and Streets of Stray, offering attendees a chance to meet adoptable animals and learn about their stories.

Apart from adoptions, Paws for Hope offers a variety of ways to support the cause, organisers noted. Donations of pet food, cleaning materials, pet toys, and cat litter are welcome.

Apart from adoptions, Paws for Hope offers a variety of ways to support the cause

Attendees can also become pet sponsors, contributing directly to vet clinics for medical care or sponsoring a pet's flight to a new home.

The event will also feature local vendors selling food and handmade crafts, with proceeds benefiting the rescue organisations. For family fun, the event will include a photobooth for humans and pets, face painting, balloon animals, and a "pin-a-tail" game. OneStop workshop will also offer workshops for a fee.

"Whether you're a lifelong animal lover, considering adoption, or just curious to learn more — join us. Bring your family, your friends, your leashed dog (Important: please keep an eye on their social cues and keep them on leash) or cuddly cat. Come hungry, come curious, come with love," organisers added.



QPC calls for an end to killing of journalists in Gaza

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Center (QPC) has appealed to a number of UN, human rights, press, and media organisations to assume their responsibilities and take urgent action to pressure Israel to stop the bloodshed. As well as to provide legal and logistical protection for journalists and media professionals in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. To take legal action to hold accountable those responsi-

ble for these grave violations and compensate those affected.

The letter emphasised the Israeli occupation army's deliberate targeting of journalists and media professionals during the war on Gaza, with inflammatory rumours, intimidation, administrative detention, torture, and assassination through the systematic bombing of their homes and locations.

This resulted in the killing of 214 journalists, both male and female, who wore press badges on their jackets, in an attempt to silence the free media and prevent them from conveying the truth to the



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world, in flagrant violation of international and humanitarian law.

The letter read: In light of this unprecedented and ongoing attack against journalists and media

professionals, who have become a direct target of the Israeli killing machine, the QPC calls on international, human rights, press, and media organisations to assume their responsibilities and take urgent action to stop the bloodshed and provide legal and logistical protection for journalists and media professionals in the Palestinian territories.

It added: The Center calls on relevant organisations, bodies, and the international community to pressure Israel to allow international investigators and human rights organisations. Including the United Nations Special Rap-

porteurs, investigators at the International Criminal Court, and the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry, to conduct extensive independent investigations. To take legal action to prosecute and hold accountable those responsible before international courts for war crimes against journalists and media professionals, and compensating journalists and their families for the violations they suffered.

The Center called for the release of all Palestinian journalists held in administrative detention or without charge, who are subjected to serious

violations documented by civil society organisations and the UN.

The organisations that received a copy of the letter from the QPC included: the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Safety of Journalists, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Foreign Press Association (FPA), Amnesty International, the Global Investigative Journalism Network, the International Journalists' Network, the International Association for Broadcasting (AIB), the International Press Institute, and Human Rights Watch.

Shura clears draft law on meteorological activities

The Shura Council held its weekly meeting yesterday, under the chairmanship of its Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. At the outset of the session, HE the Secretary-General Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud read out the agenda, and the minutes of the previous session were approved.

During the session, the Council approved a draft law regulating amended meteorological activities and services and referred it to the esteemed government after debating the Health, General Services and the Environment Committee's report. The legislature also reviewed the esteemed government's statement on the Shura Council's proposals on the development of the automated system of the medical appointments in public health facilities and referred it to the Health, General Services and the Environment Committee for scrutiny.

The agenda also included discussions of two reports on the Council's participation in the Asian Parliamentary Assembly



(APA)'s Standing Committee on Political Affairs in Baghdad and in the 16th Assembly of the Arab Scout Parliamentarians Union in Kuwait, both in January 2025.

HE al-Ghanem also briefed the members on the outcomes of his official visit to Uzbekistan on April 4, heading a Shura Council delegation. The visit resulted in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Shura Council and the Uzbek Senate aimed at strengthening relations and exchanging expertise.

In a related context, the Speaker briefed the members on the Council's participation, under his chairmanship, in the 150th

Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU-150) and the 215th session of the Governing Council, hosted by Uzbekistan from April 5-9, under the theme parliamentary action for social development and justice.

He highlighted his meeting with Uzbekistan's President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, noting that the president praised the development of relations between the two countries during the meeting. In the same context, HE al-Ghanem noted the Governing Council's election of HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, as a member of the

IPU Executive Committee and Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Arab Group.

He also noted the General Assembly's approval of the Member of the Shura Council Yousef bin Ali al-Khater to the Bureau of the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development.

He emphasised that the Shura Council's membership in the IPU Executive Committee confirms Qatar's pioneering role on the international stage. It also represents an appreciation of the Council's active role in parliamentary diplomacy, giving it a greater opportunity to contribute to formulating the policies and general directions of this important parliamentary group, serving the interests of peoples, particularly those of the Arab peoples, and promoting the concepts of peace, development, and understanding among nations.

HE the Speaker also briefed the members on President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Lorenzo Fontana's visit to Doha on Sunday, along with an accompanying delegation. (QNA)

Qatar hosts tech conference



Qatar, represented by Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) launched yesterday in Doha the CONNECT 25 Technology Conference.

The five-day event is being held in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

It brings together leaders and representatives of 32 National Societies around the world, to exchange insights and experiences, and to share the latest digital transformation achievements of the international humanitarian community.

In his keynote speech, QRCS President Yousef bin Ali al-Khater

said: "The event serves as a participatory platform to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technological advancement and innovation to improve relief and development operations, making them better able to achieve the noble humanitarian goals of enhancing the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of challenges and helping them live better."

The launch was attended by QRCS Secretary-General Faisal Mohamed al-Emadi, Head of Delegation at ICRC - GCC Mamadou Sow and Director of Digital Transformation at IFRC Juriaan Lahr.

There was an opening panel discussion that featured leaders from IFRC, ICRC, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the Egyptian Red Crescent, the Finnish Red Cross, the Kenyan Red Cross, and Boston Consulting Group.

The event's agenda items include Artificial Intelligence in Humanitarian Work, ICRC Technology Strategy and Dilemma in Tech Choice, Intro to Digital Transformation Impact Platform, Minimum Technology Blueprints, Digital Products for Integrated Assistance, the Business Case for Human-Centred Design in Digital Solutions, Data Governance and Compliance in Humanitarian Work, Telecommunications for Humanitarian Operations, and Cyber Hygiene. (QNA)



Burundi president meets labour minister

Burundi President Evariste Ndayishimiye met yesterday with HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri. The meeting was part of HE al-Marri's official visit to

Bujumbura on the occasion of the convening of the Joint Qatari-Burundian Committee on Labour Affairs.

The meeting agenda included the current framework for bi-

lateral co-operation in the labour sector and measures to strengthen and further develop this collaboration in a manner that serves the mutual interests of both countries. (QNA)

Qatar-Burundi joint panel reviews labour relations

The Qatar-Burundi Joint Committee on Labour held its inaugural meeting for 2025 yesterday in Bujumbura, under the chairmanship of HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri and Burundi's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Co-operation, Albert Shingiro. The committee reviewed re-

cent developments in bilateral labour relations, including measures to enhance co-operation in regulating labour recruitment processes and initiatives to increase the reliance on a pool of qualified and trained workers that meets the needs of Qatar's labour market in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. In addition, the committee

discussed the implementation of the labour agreement signed between Qatar and Burundi.

During the meeting, the ministers emphasised the importance of holding regular meetings of the Joint Committee to reinforce strategic partnerships, overcome any obstacles, and further enhance joint efforts in the future. (QNA)

Qatar delivers 6,000 tonnes of fuel to Lebanese Army

Qatar, through Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), has delivered the second fuel shipment of 2025 to Lebanon, as part of its commitment to support the country.

In a statement yesterday, QFFD said that the shipment, comprising 6,000 tonnes of fuel, had arrived at the port of Tripoli. The shipment aims to enhance the operational capabilities of the Lebanese Army and contribute to supporting the country's security and stability. This effort embodies Qatar's solidarity with the fraternal Lebanese people, affirming its commitment to supporting their prosperity and stability amidst these difficult circumstances. (QNA)

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Public Announcement
To all Ships, Fishermen and Mariners
Seismic Survey Acquisition by Vessels AOS Glory, Stanford Hawk, GMS Apollo, Voyager Explorer, BGP Innovator and Safa Searcher
Seismic Survey Works Offshore Qatar from 27th November 2024 – 27th November 2025

Pursuant to and under directives from the Department of Seafarers Affairs & Registration, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen that QatarEnergy LNG intends to perform Ocean Bottom Node Seismic Survey Works with Vessels AOS Glory, Stanford Hawk, GMS Apollo, Voyager Explorer, BGP Innovator and Safa Searcher in the locations bound by the coordinates shown in the diagram below.

All Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations.

QatarEnergy LNG takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation, following publication of this notice.

Point	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
1	26° 22' 30.4"N	51° 24' 39.2"E
2	25° 40' 26.4"N	52° 13' 40.2"E
3	25° 19' 05.3"N	51° 42' 50.5"E
4	25° 56' 16.4"N	51° 35' 40.4"E
5	25° 59' 04.7"N	51° 28' 34.6"E
6	26° 11' 46.7"N	51° 16' 10.5"E

Any further inquiries should be addressed to: Tel. +974 44531797



Appointed as Exclusive Distributor for **KYB** Shock Absorbers in Qatar!!!

UNIPART is pleased to announce its appointment as the exclusive distributor for KYB Shock Absorbers, a globally renowned leader in automotive suspension solutions. This partnership will provide customers across Qatar with access to KYB's premium range of shock absorbers and suspension components, ensuring superior ride comfort, safety, and vehicle performance.



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VCUarts Qatar Presents Global Experts for “Design for Humanitarian Crisis Response” Lecture and Panel



VCUarts Qatar, in collaboration with Anthro-Tech Ateliers and the Embassy of Sweden to the State of Qatar, hosted a lecture and panel discussion titled “Design for Humanitarian Crisis Response” on April 14 at the university’s Atrium. The event brought together leading voices in design and humanitarian work to explore how creative and human-centered design can play a vital role in addressing crises caused by conflict, displacement, and environmental impacts.

The event opened with remarks from the Dean of VCUarts Qatar, Amir Berbić, who emphasized the responsibility of designers to go beyond aesthetics and contribute meaningfully to global challenges. “As designers, we have the unique responsibility not only to create beautiful and functional spaces but also to address the critical needs of those affected by disasters and conflict,” he said. “This discussion highlighted the power of design in humanitarian efforts,



offering innovative solutions that can provide shelter, dignity, and hope to communities in crisis.”

The keynote address was delivered by Johan Karlsson, Managing Director of

Better Shelter, a humanitarian nonprofit that develops innovative temporary housing for displaced people. Drawing on over a decade of field experience, Karlsson shared compelling insights into how design, engineering, and humanitarian partnerships can lead to scalable, life-saving solutions. “At Better Shelter, we believe that thoughtful, human-centered design, developed in collaboration with humanitarian organisations, donors, and academia, can help restore a sense of agency and hope for people who have lost everything,” Karlsson said.

Following the keynote, a panel discussion featured Karlsson alongside Dr. Alkindi Aljawabra, Director at Qatar Museums, and was moderated by Dr. Johan Granberg, Professor of Interior Design at VCUarts Qatar. The dialogue focused on how designers, architects, and students can contribute to global humanitarian efforts through creative, scalable, and culturally responsive thinking and practice.

H.E. Gautam Bhattacharyya, Ambassador of Sweden to the State of Qatar, highlighted Sweden’s commitment to humanitarian innovation and stated: “Sweden has long championed innovation with purpose – where design, sustainability, and human rights go hand in hand,” he said. “This event reflects our strong belief in the power of creativity to solve real-world challenges.”

The event attracted a diverse audience of students, academics, designers, diplomats, and humanitarian practitioners, fostering an open exchange of ideas and strategies for co-creating solutions that are both innovative and socially responsive.



Thrive and strive at Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-som: *The ultimate wellness escape for children*

Balance mind, body and spirit with stays curated for children’s wellbeing and family bonding



Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som is excited to introduce three new retreats at Discovery designed specifically for families to help them achieve their wellness goals. The new retreats named, Fit for Life (Fit4Life), Thrive with Confidence, and Digital Detox, each focus on a unique aspect of wellness, with a tailored approach to tackle and overcome everyday habits that impact achieving our utmost potential. The retreats include an abundance of activities including fitness workouts, storytelling, meditation and engaging workshops, all combined with wholesome cuisine options, and downtime to enjoy the plethora of wellness facilities available at Zual Discovery.

Mr. Ammar Samad, General Manager at Zual Wellness Resort, comments on the introduction of the new retreats: “As the world becomes increasingly fast-paced and digital, we’ve noticed the growing need for children to reconnect with the basics of discovery, play, and wellbeing. These retreats are designed to provide families with a unique opportunity to nurture their children’s physical, emotional, and mental health, all within a holistic, supportive environment. At Zual, we believe in a balanced approach to wellness, and our new retreats aim to give children the tools to develop healthy habits for life, alongside their families.

The three family retreats can be added to any stay for QAR980 per kid per stay:

Fit for Life (Fit4Life)

The *Fit for Life programme* is designed to help children develop lasting fitness and healthy eating habits. It combines expert nutrition guidance with tailored workout plans, setting the stage for an active lifestyle. Families can also enjoy a variety of fitness activities together, including nature walks, fun obstacle courses, and energetic Zumba sessions.

Retreat Inclusions:

- Curated fitness workouts meeting every child’s goals and fitness level
- Personalised consultations with an expert nutritionist for balanced meal plans
- Wellness meals, nutrient-rich, flavourful dishes to support weight management
- Access to metabolism-boosting activities and family fitness challenges at Discovery Oasis

Thrive with Confidence

Through interactive games and skill-building activities, the Thrive with Confidence retreat invites young guests to

foster healthy communication, creativity, and positive self-esteem. Curated activities and workshops, including:

- Social skills games, role-playing, and storytelling
- Guided meditation, breathing exercises, and nature journaling
- Confidence-boosting workshops
- Art projects and communication workshops with parents

Digital Detox

Children are encouraged to spend time offline, reconnecting with themselves, their families and nature through mindfulness exercises and creative expression.

Retreat Inclusions:

- Expert tips on creating a balanced home environment with minimal digital distractions
- Guided meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises
- Outdoor activities, such as hiking and nature walks
- Creative activities, such as art therapy, journaling, and music activities
- Dedicated digital-free zones where technology is not allowed

As one of the first resorts in the world offering dedicated family wellness immersions, Zual Wellness Resort enhances intergenerational connections and individual wellbeing through its exclusive ‘Kids on Us’ offer.* Embark on a multi-generational journey with additional complimentary room and free dining for up to two children (under 16), when two adults book one room and a full retreat package each.

A one-night Zual Discovery Explore retreat* starts from QAR3,213 based on two sharing a Discovery Deluxe Room.

*Terms and conditions apply, valid for stays until 31 December 2025. Price includes three wellness cuisine meals per day; individual health and wellness consultation; personalised Retreat programme of wellness treatments and therapies; access to wellness centre facilities, gym, and daily activity programme; in-room wellness minibar; and daily laundry of three pieces of sports attire per guest.

For more information or reservations, please email Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som at reservations@zual.com, call/WhatsApp +974 4477 6555 or visit www.zual.com.





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Qatar Charity expresses thanks to Ramadan campaign supporters

Qatar Charity (QC) has thanked the supporters of its “Giving Lives On” campaign for the 1446 AH/ 2025 Ramadan, which reached over 4.5mn people in 40 countries, including Qatar.

The campaign focused on those in need, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and individuals affected by crises, with a special emphasis on Palestine, particularly the Gaza Strip.

During Ramadan, QC’s seasonal aid, worth QR166mn, benefited over 2mn people through the provision of food baskets, Iftar meals, Zakat al-Fitr, Eid clothing, and Eidi gifts. Its development projects, with a budget of QR282mn, positively impacted the lives of 2.4mn people in the areas

of shelter, water, mosques, and orphan care.

Within Qatar, the Ramadan campaign benefitted thousands of low-income individuals, workers, and families through diverse projects.

These included mobile Iftar for workers in seven areas, 46 Ramadan tents, and projects like “Family Iftar,” “Ramadan Supplies,” and “Ramadan Gifts” for over 1,000 families. QC also provided Eidi gifts to orphans, medical aid to 33 patients, educational support to 53 students, and monthly financial assistance to 112 families. Furthermore, the ‘Alaqraboon’ platform alleviated debtors’ burdens with QR12.2mn.

Outside Qatar, QC reached 673,222 people through Ram-

adan projects such as “Feed the Fasting” and Zakat al-Fitr, and provided Eid clothing to 10,800 orphans. Notably, it organised a large-scale Iftar for over 7,000 IDPs in Gaza. Reflecting the deeply-rooted spirit of generosity in Qatari society, donations during the “27th Night Challenge” totalled QR220mn in support of Gaza and the reconstruction of Syria. Qatar Charity expressed its sincere gratitude to the supporters of the ‘Giving Lives On’ campaign, including institutions, companies, media outlets, and individuals, in appreciation for their efforts in sponsoring, supporting, or facilitating the implementation of its Ramadan projects.



QU to organise PharmESP conference from April 17

The College of Pharmacy at Qatar University (QU) will organise the Pharmacy Education, Science, and Practice Conference 2025 (PharmESP 2025) from April 17 to 19 at JW Marriott Marquis City Center Doha.

The event under the theme ‘Patients First – Advancing Pharmacy Through Education, Science, and Practice,’ is in collaboration with a number of regional and international partners, including Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC). This leading academic conference serves as a strategic platform that brings together distinguished academics,

researchers, practitioners, and students from inside and outside Qatar to discuss the latest innovations, challenges, and future directions in pharmacy practice, education, and pharmaceutical sciences. The event, expected to attract over 300 participants, including academics, students, and healthcare practitioners, will feature a diverse scientific programme that includes keynote sessions, research presentations, workshops, interactive discussion panels, and awards for best oral and poster presentations.

Dr Muhammad Abdul Hadi, associate professor in the De-

partment of Clinical Pharmacy and Practice and Co-Chair of the Executive Committee, said: “The PharmESP 2025 reflects our continued commitment to the advancement of pharmaceutical education, scientific research, and clinical practice. The conference aims to promote academic and professional exchange, highlight innovative practices, and strengthen institutional collaboration. With its focus on patient care, the conference provides an ideal platform to discuss how collective efforts can drive transformation in pharmacy practice regionally and beyond.”

Sidra Medicine to host AI and Medicine conference

Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, will host the second edition of its international conference, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Medicine 2025, from April 23 to 26.

The agenda is designed to showcase the latest advancements in AI and its transformative role in healthcare. Supported by a Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council award, this year’s programme will bring together AI and healthcare experts

from academia, clinical practice, and the tech industry to foster cross-sector collaboration and dialogue.

AI and Medicine 2025 will begin with a full-day pre-conference workshop on April 23 focused on machine learning model development and implementation in healthcare.

Attendees will engage in presentations and expert-led discussions with a focus on revolutionising diagnostics and personalising

treatment and discover groundbreaking AI applications in healthcare. They will also have the opportunity to kickstart their own research with new computational tools and help shape the future of medicine.

The conference welcomes a broad range of attendees, including physicians, nurses, medical students, computer scientists, engineers, academics, researchers, and members of the public with an interest in digital health.



Qatar teams shine in Arab Robotics and AI Championship in Tunisia

The Qatari delegation participating in the 16th edition of the Arab Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Championship – held in Tunisia from April 10-14, achieved outstanding results that reflected the level of progress witnessed by the Qatari teams participating in the championship’s competitions.

The Qatar Technical School for Girls team won first place in the robot arm competition, and the Al Wakra Secondary School for Boys team won first place in the ball collecting competition (beginner category), while the Ibin Seena Secondary School for Boys team won second place in

the ball collecting competition (advanced category).

Omar Bin Al Khattab Secondary School for Boys team won first place in the line tracing competition (advanced category), while Muath Bin Jabal Primary School team also won first place in the line tracing competition (beginner category).

The Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys team won the Best Programming Award in the sumo competition (advanced category).

In her remarks on Qatar’s participation in the championship, Fatima al-Mohannadi, member of the administrative board, rep-

resentative of Qatar in the robotics competitions of the Arab Robotics and AI Association, and member of the supreme organising committee of the championship, said the current edition of the championship featured the inclusion of the robot arm competition for the first time.

Al-Mohannadi indicated that the inclusion of this competition came based on a proposal submitted by the Qatar Scientific Club, and was officially approved by the Arab Robotics and AI Association, noting that it was announced during the closing ceremony of the Schools Robotics Championship held in Doha in February. (QNA)

Al Faisal Foundation unveils website to expand global cultural access

Al Faisal Global Foundation for Culture and Knowledge has launched its official portal to enlarge the scope of accessibility by the public and those interested from around the globe to its diverse cultural contents.

The website is a digital platform that primarily aims to contribute to the efforts and initiatives Qatar has witnessed, in addition to enabling individuals to access its knowledge-based, reliable sources.

HE the Chairman of the Board of Al Faisal Global Foundation for Culture and Knowledge, Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, said that the move is part of the foundation’s vision to share knowledge and preserve the vibrant heritage of Qatar, its people and

leaders, as well as the Arab nations and the world for generations to come, thereby upholding the principles of connectivity, intellectual illumination, and innovation. He highlighted that the website offers an integrated interactive platform, showcasing a digital library and news about the foundation, alongside a prolific archive that features releases and initiatives, as well as the events that the foundation holds at home and abroad.

In addition, the website offers the opportunity for visitors to surf the content in both Arabic and English, thereby demonstrating the foundation’s global nature and strengthening the presence of Qatari and Arab culture in the global digital space.

Soon, a selection of publica-

tions will be made available for free download in support of researchers and scholars, featuring interactive tools that enable direct engagement with the foundation, including participation in cultural forums and discussions it plans to convene in the future. The platform showcases a photo gallery documenting Qatar’s progress across multiple sectors most notably education, culture, health, sports, and other domains that constitute core pillars in shaping individuals and advancing the community.

The Doha-based Al Faisal Global Foundation for Culture and Knowledge was established in 2016. It is a non-profit organisation that strives to preserve and promote Qatari, Arab, and global heritages. (QNA)

QNL hosts symposium on Moroccan book-making



Qatar National Library (QNL) hosted yesterday a symposium on the history and continuing traditions of book and manuscript production in Morocco.

Titled “Moroccan Book-making and Manuscript Production: Approaches to Materials, Traditions, and Functions”, the two-day event is part of the Qatar-Morocco Year of Culture and in celebration of Arabic Manuscript Day 2025.

It brings together experts and researchers with a particular focus on how these traditions

influenced the circulation of knowledge across the Islamic world. Symposium organiser Dr Mahmoud Zaki, manuscript librarian and curator at QNL, said: “Bringing together leading voices from Morocco and beyond, this symposium reflects a shared cultural commitment to preserving and reinterpreting the manuscript heritage of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

“Marking Arabic Manuscript Day a cherished initiative launched over a decade ago and the Qatar-Morocco Year of Culture, the event highlights both

the historical depth of Moroccan book-making and the dynamic potential of emerging tools such as artificial intelligence and digital scholarship. From the craftsmanship of scribes to the capabilities of algorithms, it bridges past and present in a dialogue that shapes the future of manuscript studies.”

Attendees explored the role of Moroccan bookmakers in preserving and disseminating scholarly works and how these traditions shaped the wider Islamic world during in-depth discussions and interactive workshops. (QNA)

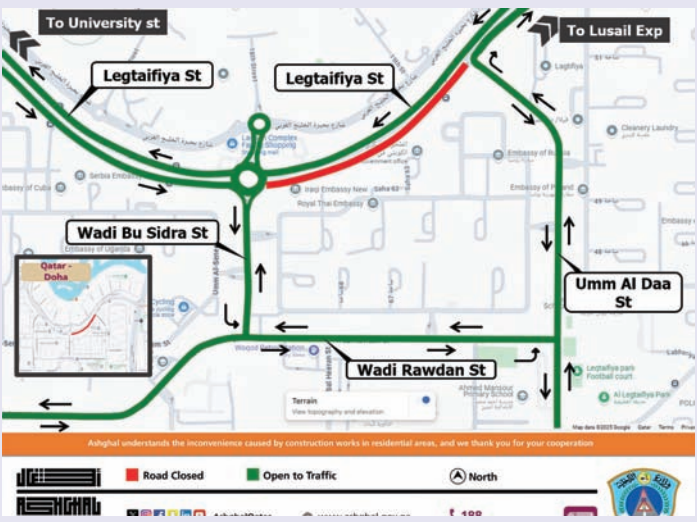
Closure at Al Daayen Interchange

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary partial traffic closure on the tunnel at Al Daayen Interchange (Exit 40) leading to Umm Garn from 12 midnight until 5am on Tuesday and Wednesday. The closure is in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic to carry out routine road maintenance works. Ashghal has urged road users to reroute to nearby streets to reach their destinations. Ashghal will install road signs advising motorists of the temporary closure and has requested all to follow and abide by the speed limit to ensure safety.



Temporary closure on Legtaifiya Street

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary traffic closure on a section of Legtaifiya Street in the direction towards Lusail from April 15 to 29 from 12 midnight to 5am (Sunday to Thursday), 2am to 10am (Fridays) and from 2am to 7am (Saturdays). The closure is in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic to carry out maintenance works. Traffic will be diverted to alternative routes as shown on the map. Ashghal will install road signs advising motorists of the temporary closure and has requested all to follow and abide by the speed limit to ensure safety.



LEGAL

Bangladesh court approves UK ex-minister's arrest warrant

A court in Bangladesh has approved an arrest warrant for a British lawmaker over graft allegations tied to the country's ousted leader Sheikh Hasina, to whom she is related, the public prosecutor said yesterday. Tulip Siddiq resigned as the UK government's anti-corruption minister in January, denying any wrongdoing after being named in multiple probes in Bangladesh. She and several family members, including her aunt Hasina, are facing accusations over an alleged land grab of lucrative plots in a suburb of the capital Dhaka. "The accused were absent, and that's why the court approved the arrest warrant," Mir Ahmed Ali Salam, the public prosecutor, said.

DECISION

Birmingham rubbish collectors reject deal to end strike

Refuse workers in the British city of Birmingham yesterday refused a deal to end a weeks-long strike that has left tonnes of uncollected rubbish piled high in the streets, union officials said. The vote came as army logistics staff were called in to try to ease a crisis now in its sixth week. The Unite union said its members in Birmingham voted overwhelmingly against what it called a "totally inadequate" offer. "The rejection of the offer is no surprise as these workers simply cannot afford to take pay cuts of this magnitude to pay the price for bad decision after bad decision," Unite said.

LAW AND ORDER

Three dead as protests against new law turns violent in India

Protesters angered by a new law on land use they say discriminates against Muslims set fire to police vehicles in Kolkata, capital of India's West Bengal state, yesterday after a weekend of violence claimed three lives, authorities said. The unrest began in the Murshidabad district, where Muslim protesters set fire to shopping malls, attacked a Hindu home and stabbed two people on Saturday, police said, forcing authorities to suspend Internet services in the area. Protesters in the Bhangar area of Kolkata yesterday clashed with police after officers stopped a protest rally. A major highway was blocked by protesters during the disturbances.

OBITUARY

Former Malaysia premier Abdullah dies aged 85

Former Malaysian prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi died yesterday, aged 85. Abdullah became Malaysia's fifth prime minister in 2003, following the resignation of veteran leader Mahathir Mohamad after 22 years at the helm. The former premier died at 710pm (1110GMT) at the National Heart Institute in the capital Kuala Lumpur, his son-in-law and former health minister Khairy Jamaluddin said in an Instagram post, without specifying a cause of death. Abdullah was admitted to the National Heart Institute on Sunday after experiencing breathing difficulties and was immediately placed under intensive care, the institute said in a statement.

China, Vietnam sign deals as Xi visits Hanoi amid US tariff tensions

Reuters
Hanoi

China's President Xi Jinping yesterday called for stronger ties with Vietnam on trade and supply chains amid disruptions caused by US tariffs, as he attended the signing in Hanoi of dozens of co-operation agreements between the two Communist-run nations. The visit, planned for weeks and part of a wider trip in Southeast Asia, comes as Beijing faces 145% US duties, while Vietnam is negotiating a reduction of threatened US tariffs of 46% that would otherwise apply in July after a global moratorium expires.

"The two sides should strengthen co-operation in production and supply chains," Xi said in an article in *Nhandan*, the newspaper of Vietnam's Communist Party, posted ahead of his arrival yesterday. He also urged more trade and stronger ties with Hanoi on artificial intelligence and the green economy.

After he met Vietnam's top leader To Lam, the two countries signed dozens of co-operation agreements, including deals on enhancing supply chains and on co-operation over railways, footage of the documents showed. Chinese and Vietnamese state media later yesterday reported that 45 agreements were signed.

The content of the agreements was not disclosed and it was unclear whether they involved any financial or binding commitments.

Under pressure from Washington, Vietnam is tightening controls on some trade with China to make

sure goods exported to the US with a "Made in Vietnam" label have sufficient added value in the country to justify that.

"There are no winners in trade wars and tariff wars," Xi said in his article, without mentioning the US. Later, in a meeting with Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Xi said the two countries should oppose unilateral bullying, according to Chinese state media Xinhua.

One memorandum of understanding signed yesterday is to boost co-operation between the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which issues certificates on the origins of goods.

Vietnam is a major industrial and assembly hub in Southeast Asia. Most of its imports are from China while the US is its main export market. The country is a crucial source of electronics, shoes and apparel for the US.

In the first three months of this year, Hanoi imported goods worth about \$30bn from Beijing while its exports to Washington amounted to \$31.4bn, Vietnam's customs data show, confirming a long-term trend in which imports from China closely match the value and swings of exports to the US.

After a two-day stop in Hanoi, Xi will continue his Southeast Asian trip today by visiting Malaysia and Cambodia from April 15 to 18. He last visited Cambodia and Malaysia nine and 12 years ago, respectively.

Xi's trip to Hanoi, his second in less than 18 months, aims to consolidate relations with a neighbour

that has received billions of dollars of Chinese investments in recent years as China-based manufacturers moved south to avoid tariffs imposed by the first Trump administration.

Vietnam's Lam in an article published yesterday in Chinese state media said Hanoi wanted to boost co-operation in defence, security and infrastructure, especially on rail links.

Vietnam has agreed to use Chinese loans to build new railways between the two countries, in a major confidence-building step that would boost bilateral trade and connections.

However, no credit agreement has yet been announced. Later yesterday Lam encouraged China to offer concessional loans, according to Vietnamese state media.

After prolonged pressure, Beijing obtained Vietnam's approval for planes authorised by the Chinese aviation regulator, which paves the way for the use of China-made COMAC passenger jets in the country.

COMAC planes are operated by several Chinese companies but have so far struggled to find foreign buyers or be approved abroad.

On Sunday, Vietnam's budget airline VietJet and COMAC signed a memorandum of understanding in Hanoi.

The content of the agreement has not been announced yet, but it was reported in past weeks that under a draft deal, Vietjet would lease two COMAC C909 planes, operated by crew from Chengdu Airlines, on two domestic routes.

Ambedkar statue unveiled



People unveil a statue of India's social reformer and architect of its constitution B R Ambedkar, on the occasion of his birth anniversary, in Ahmedabad yesterday.

Fugitive Indian jeweller arrested in Belgium

Reuters
New Delhi

Fugitive jeweller Mehul Choksi has been arrested in Belgium and will file an appeal for release, his lawyer said yesterday, seven years after details of his involvement in one of India's biggest bank frauds became public.

The Indian government had sent a request for Choksi's extradition prior to his arrest, a source with India's enforcement directorate said.

Punjab National Bank (PNB), India's second largest state-run lender by assets, had announced in 2018 that it had discovered alleged fraud worth \$1.8bn at a single branch in Mumbai.

The bank had filed a criminal complaint with India's federal investigative agency against several entities including billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi and Choksi, his uncle and the managing director of Gitanjali Gems, saying they had defrauded PNB.

Indian federal police filed fraud charges against Choksi, Nirav Modi and others in connection

with suspected involvement in fraudulent transactions that led to huge losses for PNB.

The two diamond tycoons have denied any wrongdoing.

Choksi said in a letter in 2018 that the "investigating agencies were acting with pre-determined minds and interfering with the course of justice."

Choksi's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal said yesterday: "An appeal will be filed for his release, on grounds that he is undergoing cancer treatment and is not a flight risk." He said that Choksi had not committed any offence in Belgium.

India and China discuss resuming flights, no date set

India and China have held one round of talks on resuming direct passenger air services, but no dates have been fixed yet. New Delhi said yesterday, as relations continued to thaw five years after a deadly border clash. The neighbours agreed in January to work on resolving trade and economic differences, in a move expected to boost their aviation sectors, particularly China's which has lagged other countries' in rebounding from the Covid pandemic. "The civil aviation ministry and our counterpart in China have had one round of meetings," civil aviation secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam said at a conference organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in New Delhi. There were still some issues to resolve, he added. Relations soured between India and China in the wake of the 2020 clash between troops along their border which killed at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese.

Film promo



Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar (centre) addresses fans as actors R Madhavan (left) and Ananya Panday look on upon their visit to the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar yesterday during the promotion of their Indian Hindi-language historical drama film *Kesari Chapter 2*.

'West Philippine Sea' now visible on Google Maps

AFP
Manila

Google Maps scan yesterday of the body of water directly west of the Philippines now shows a name once invisible to most users - the West Philippine Sea.

The Philippine government's preferred name for the disputed waterway better known as the South China Sea was previously viewable only if specifically sought by name, according to journalists who kept screenshots of earlier searches.

The name South China Sea remains visible to the north and west of the area newly identified as the West Philippine Sea.

Beijing claims the South China Sea almost in its entirety despite an international ruling that its assertion has no merit.

China has deployed navy and coast guard vessels in a bid to bar the Philippines from strategical-

ly important reefs and islands in the strategic waterway, leading to a string of confrontations in recent months.

Philippine armed forces spokeswoman Francel Margareth Padilla welcomed yesterday "the inclusion of 'West Philippine Sea' on Google Maps".

"As defenders of national sovereignty, the (military) sees this as a valuable contribution to truthful representation and public awareness," she said.

Then-Philippine president Benigno Aquino issued a directive in April 2012 calling for the sea's renaming as a standoff over the Scarborough Shoal was heating up between Beijing and Manila.

The administrative order said the renamed areas specifically included "the Luzon Sea as well as the waters around, within and adjacent to the Kalayaan Island Group and Bajo De Masinloc, also known as Scarborough Shoal".

UK confident of keeping British Steel going, China urges fairness

Reuters
Scunthorpe, England

Britain yesterday expressed confidence that it could secure enough raw materials to keep the blast furnaces burning at its last maker of virgin steel, after the government seized operational control from its Chinese owners.

Ministers said British Steel's owners, China's Jingye Group, had wanted to shut the furnaces at the loss-making Scunthorpe plant after they rejected a government funding proposal, a move which would force Britain to import steel instead.

The government recalled parlia-

ment at the weekend - the first Saturday recall since the 1982 Falklands War - to pass emergency legislation and give it powers to direct the company's board and workforce, and to order raw materials.

By yesterday morning it had approved the appointment of an interim chief executive and chief commercial officer - both long-term employees of the plant - and said it had established that enough raw materials were in the country.

A spokesperson for Prime Minister Keir Starmer said two shipments containing iron ore, pellets and coking coal had docked at a local port, with a third on its way.

"We are now confident in secur-

ing the supply of materials needed," the spokesperson told reporters. "Obviously we'll be working with management to identify further raw materials needed to keep a steady pipeline and to keep the furnaces burning."

Treasury Department Minister James Murray said earlier yesterday that the focus was on getting the materials into the blast furnaces, and said if the government had not acted on Saturday the blast furnaces would be closing.

A number of businesses, including India's Tata and local distributor Rainham Steel, have also offered managerial support and raw materials, the government said.

The dispute risks straining ties between London and Beijing, which Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government had sought to improve, at a time when nations around the world are trying to deepen trading co-operation after the US tariff shock. Jingye has not commented, but China called for fair treatment of its companies and resolution through consultation.

The furnaces in the northeastern city of Scunthorpe need to be constantly fuelled and are losing £700,000 (\$922,000) a day.

Their output is used in the rail network, construction and automotive industry. Without the plant, Britain would be reliant on imports

at a time of trade wars and geopolitical instability.

The intervention at a site which employs 3,500 people and more in the supply chain prompted Britain's Business Minister, Jonathan Reynolds, to say on Sunday that China was no longer welcome in Britain's steel sector.

The Chinese embassy in London said it was following the situation closely, hoped Britain could find a solution acceptable to all, and noted that British steel companies had generally encountered difficulties in recent years. "We have urged the British side to act in accordance with the principles of fairness, impartiality and non-discrimination and to

make sure the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese company be protected," an embassy spokesperson said.

Beijing's foreign ministry urged Britain not to politicise trade, so as to protect the confidence of Chinese investors. British Steel has not commented on the dispute but did announce yesterday the appointment of Allan Bell as interim chief executive and Lisa Coulson as chief commercial officer to ensure "consistent and professional leadership" at the plant.

The company was already struggling in an over-supplied global market before the rise in energy costs of recent years.

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GULF TIMES

Sterling’s past and the dollar’s future

In April 1925, a hundred years ago this month, Winston Churchill, in his capacity as chancellor of the exchequer, took the fateful decision to return pound sterling to the gold standard at the pre-war rate of exchange.

Churchill then, not unlike US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent now, was torn between two objectives. On one hand, he wanted to maintain sterling’s position as the key currency around which the international monetary system revolved, and preserve London’s status as the leading international financial centre. On the other hand, he, or at least influential voices around him, saw merit in a more competitive – read “devalued” – exchange rate that might boost British manufacturing and exports.

Why Churchill chose the first course is uncertain. The weight of history – British economic pre-eminence under the gold standard prior to World War I – pointed to restoring the monetary status quo ante. The City of London, meaning the financial sector, lobbied for a return to the pre-war exchange rate against gold and the dollar. The most articulate opponent, John Maynard Keynes, had an off night when given an opportunity to make his case to the chancellor.

The effects were much as predicted. Sterling regained its position as a key international currency, and the City its position as a financial centre. Now, however, they had to contend with New York and the dollar, which had gained importance, owing to disruptions to Europe from the war and the establishment of the Federal Reserve System to backstop US financial markets.

Also as predicted, British exports stagnated. At current prices, they were lower in 1928-29 than in 1924-25, when the decision to stabilise the exchange rate was taken.

Here, clearly, a strong pound and the high interest rates required to defend its exchange rate were unhelpful. But to attribute the British economy’s poor performance entirely to the exchange rate is to jump to conclusions.

What was achieved over a long period could be demolished in the blink of an eye

For one thing, the export industries on which Britain traditionally relied – textiles, steel, and shipbuilding – were now subject to intense competition from later industrialisers with more modern facilities, including the United States and Japan. The situation was not unlike the competition currently felt by US manufacturing from China and other emerging markets. Then as now, it is not clear that a weaker exchange rate would have made much difference, given the emergence of these rising powers. Nor did the tariffs the United Kingdom imposed in the 1930s revive its old industries.

Moreover, Britain had difficulty developing the new industries that constituted the technological frontier – electrical engineering, motor vehicles, and household consumer durables – even after devaluing the pound in 1931. The US and other countries were quicker to adopt new technologies and production methods, such as the assembly line. Union militancy discouraged investment. Workers with the relevant skills and work ethic were in short supply. Again, these are not unlike complaints heard today from the operators of TSMC’s new semiconductor fab in Arizona or Samsung’s chipmaking plants in Texas.

And, of course, it did not help that the 1930s were marked by trade wars and a decade-long depression.

Notwithstanding these problems, sterling’s position as an international currency survived the 1930s. In fact, the pound regained some of the ground as a reserve and payments currency that it lost to the dollar in the preceding decades. Whereas Britain was broadly successful in maintaining banking and financial stability, the US suffered three debilitating banking and financial crises. The UK maintained stable trade relations with its Commonwealth and Empire under a system of imperial preference that negated the effects of otherwise restrictive tariffs. And it remained on good terms with trade partners and political allies beyond the Commonwealth and Empire, including in Scandinavia, the Middle East, and the Baltics, where monetary authorities continued to peg their countries’ currencies to sterling.

The lessons for those seeking to preserve the dollar’s status as a global currency are clear. Avoid financial instability, which in the current context means not allowing problems in the crypto sphere to spill over to the rest of the banking and financial system. Limit recourse to tariffs, since the dollar’s wide international use derives in substantial part from America’s trade relations with the rest of the world. And preserve the country’s geopolitical alliances, since it is America’s alliance partners who are most likely to see the US as a reliable steward of their foreign assets and hold its currency as a show of good faith.

The US, to all appearances, is going down the opposite path, risking financial stability, imposing tariffs willy-nilly, and antagonising its alliance partners. What was achieved over a long period could be demolished in the blink of an eye – or with the stroke of a president’s pen. – Project Syndicate

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Excluding Sudan’s govt a critical flaw in half-hearted diplomacy



By Mohamed Sulieman al-Shazly

The exclusion of the Sudanese government from peace talks severely undermines the core objective of the international conference on Sudan. The reasoning behind this decision warrants closer examination. On April 15, 2025 – two years since war broke out in Sudan – the conference convenes in London to tackle the ongoing conflict and the escalating humanitarian crisis. Co-hosted by the United Kingdom, the European Union, France, and Germany, the event will gather diplomats, humanitarian organisations, and regional stakeholders. Yet conspicuously absent from the proceedings will be the Sudanese government, a central player in the conflict. This exclusion represents a critical flaw: a political resolution cannot be forged without the involvement of all parties. While the conference may try to coordinate humanitarian aid or galvanise international support, its ability to achieve lasting peace is profoundly compromised. Without the participation of those in power on the ground, any agreements reached are likely to be politically ineffective and difficult to implement.

This is not the first international attempt to address Sudan’s crisis. Previous initiatives, including the Paris Conference and numerous regional and UN-led meetings, have sought to rally support, end the war, and deliver humanitarian relief. Yet these efforts have largely faltered. Donor pledges have often gone unfulfilled, and despite repeated calls for peace and the protection of civilians, violence has persisted unabated, with little progress in halting the conflict or alleviating its devastating consequences. Since the conflict began in April 2023, Sudan has witnessed widespread atrocities, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, looting, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. The toll has been especially

severe in West Darfur, where violence has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions. The United Nations estimates that some 12.9mn people have been forced to flee their homes, with half the population facing acute hunger. As famine spreads, health services have collapsed, exacerbated by the deliberate targeting of medical facilities.

The international response has been strikingly inadequate. While some humanitarian aid has reached parts of Sudan, it has been insufficient to stem the overwhelming suffering. In El Fasher, North Darfur, where thousands of displaced people have sought refuge, the situation has worsened. Recently, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) launched attacks on displacement camps, killing over 415 people and injuring many more. These assaults also led to the deaths of all remaining medical personnel at the Zamzam camp, a tragic reminder of the deliberate strategy of targeting essential services in conflict zones. Such actions are flagrant breaches of international humanitarian law, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned them, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a renewed commitment to peace talks.

Guterres has reiterated that indiscriminate violence and attacks on civilians are prohibited under international law and stressed the need for an inclusive political process to restore peace and stability in Sudan, a sentiment echoed by many global leaders. Despite mounting pressure, however, the RSF persists in its violent campaign across key areas, including the Zamzam and Abu Shok camps. These attacks have left entire communities without shelter, food, or medical care, and the Sudanese Doctors’ Network reports the execution of ten medical personnel, including the director of Um Kadada Hospital, during recent attacks. The growing danger to both civilians and aid workers only exacerbates the already dire humanitarian crisis.

The Arab world, including countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Egypt, has also condemned these attacks as clear violations of international law. They, too, have called for an immediate cessation of violence and stressed the importance of upholding international humanitarian standards to protect civilians.

As the conflict enters its third year, Sudan stands at a critical juncture. With the RSF’s territorial control receding and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) regaining ground, there is

a glimmer of hope that military advances could pave the way for a resolution. However, the humanitarian needs remain vast, and the risk of further escalation continues to threaten Sudan’s already fragile state.

In light of the ongoing atrocities in Sudan, it is paramount that the leaders convening in London on 15 April take swift and resolute action to ensure that any future discussions are not only inclusive but that they also integrate the Sudanese government into the process. The absence of the Sudanese government at the table has proven unproductive in the past, and it is clear that without their direct involvement, any recommendations or resolutions arising from such meetings stand little chance of effective implementation. The failure to engage the government will risk further alienating those with the power to bring about change, rendering past interventions an object lesson in the futility of half-hearted diplomacy.

At the forefront of these discussions must be the protection of civilians. The international community must ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those in desperate need, free from obstruction and that all necessary measures are taken to shield innocent lives from the ongoing violence. Equally important is the urgent need to pursue a sustainable political resolution – one that addresses the root causes of the conflict, fosters genuine national comprehensive reconciliation, and sets the foundations for a stable, inclusive future.

The failure of previous summits and interventions should act as a stark warning. Empty rhetoric, however eloquent, will no longer suffice. The Sudanese people, scarred by years of brutal conflict, are not in need of platitudes but of a clear and unified commitment to action. Words must be matched by deeds, and the international community must be prepared to support tangible, meaningful steps to end the violence and set Sudan on a path to recovery. Only through collective, determined efforts can a credible and lasting peace be achieved. The inclusion of all relevant parties, particularly the Sudanese government, is not just desirable – it is essential. The road ahead will be fraught with challenges, but a genuine, co-ordinated effort offers the best hope for rebuilding a nation shattered by war. The opportunity for meaningful change is within reach, but only if the global community acts with urgency and purpose.

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People who fled the Zamzam camp for the internally displaced after it fell under RSF control, queue for food rations in a makeshift encampment in an open field near the town of Tawila in war-torn Sudan’s western Darfur region on April 13. Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) announced on April 13 that it had taken control of the famine-hit Zamzam camp, home to over 500,000 refugees according to the United Nations, after two days of heavy shelling and gunfire, amid its ongoing war with the country’s army and affiliated forces.

Katy Perry roars into space on all-woman Blue Origin flight

Pop star Katy Perry completed a brief foray into space yesterday, roaring to the edge of the cosmos with an all-women crew on one of billionaire Jeff Bezos's rockets. The *Firework* and *California Gurls* singer was lofted more than 60 miles (100km) above the Earth's surface in a vessel from Blue Origin, the space company owned by the Amazon founder. Five other women including Bezos's fiancée Lauren Sanchez were on the flight, which took off from western Texas shortly after 8:30am before safely landing again some 10 minutes later. The flight brought the passengers beyond the Karman line — the internationally recognised boundary of space. Their fully automated craft rose vertically before the crew capsule detached mid-flight, later falling back to the ground slowed by parachutes and a retro rocket. The jubilant women then emerged, with Perry kissing the ground after exiting the capsule. Yesterday's mission is the first all-woman space crew since Valentina Tereshkova's historic solo flight in 1963.

It is also the 11th sub-orbital crewed operation by Blue Origin, which has offered space tourism experiences for several years. The company does not publicly communicate the price of trips made possible by its New Shepard rocket. They were expected to have a brief period when the women could unbuckle from their seats and float in zero gravity. Perry recently told *Elle* magazine that she was taking part "for my daughter Daisy," whom she shares with actor Orlando Bloom, "to inspire her to never have limits on her dreams." "I'm just so excited to see the inspiration through her eyes and the light in her eyes when she sees that rocket go, and she goes back to school the next day and says, 'Mom went to space'," Perry added. She said in a separate video posted to Instagram that she was shocked to discover during space training that the capsule she would travel in was named the "Tortoise" and decorated with a "feather" design — the two nicknames her parents have for her.



US singer Katy Perry upon return to Earth after a flight on Blue Origin New Shepard NS-31, which brought the passengers beyond the Karman line — the internationally recognised boundary of space, in Van Horn, West Texas, yesterday. (AFP)

"There are no coincidences and I'm just so grateful for these confirmations and so grateful that I feel like something bigger than me is steering the ship," Perry said

in the video. Perry, launched onto the international stage with her 2008 hit *I Kissed a Girl*, was also travelling alongside TV presenter Gayle King, film producer Kerianne Flynn, former Nasascientist Aisha Bowe and Amanda Nguyen, founder of a campaign group against sexual violence. They follow 52 previous Blue Origin passengers, including long-time *Star Trek* leading man William Shatner. King's close friend — talk show legend Oprah Winfrey — was among those watching the launch in Texas. Such high-profile guests are intended to keep public interest in Blue Origin's work, as it battles multiple rival firms in the space tourism field. Bezos' top challenger in passenger flights is Virgin Galactic, which offers a similar sub-orbital experience. But Blue Origin aims in the future to bring space tourists into orbit, competing directly with Elon Musk's SpaceX. In January, Blue Origin's much more powerful New Glenn rocket successfully completed its first unmanned orbital mission.



US President Donald Trump (right) meets with El Salvador President Nayib Bukele in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday. (Reuters)

Bukele rules out returning migrant in Trump love-fest

AFP
Washington

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele assured Donald Trump yesterday that he would not return a man mistakenly deported from the United States, as the pair bonded over Trump's scheme to send migrants to a notorious prison in the Central American country.

Trump gave a warm welcome in the Oval Office to 43-year-old Bukele, the self-proclaimed "world's coolest dictator" who is now the US president's key ally in his controversial push to deport illegal migrants.

But the pair faced questions over the case of a father who was mistakenly deported to the Salvadoran mega-prison — and whose return a US court has ordered the Trump administration to facilitate.

"Of course, I'm not going to do it," Bukele told reporters when asked if he would send the man, Kilmar Abrego Garcia, back to the United States.

"The question is preposterous.... I don't have the power to return him to the United States."

Trump and Bukele, who wore a dark T-shirt under a suit, spent much of the meeting complimenting each other on their migration and crime policies.

Known for his stylish dress sense and social media savvy, Bukele is broadly popular at home for clamping down on once rampant drug gangs that terrorised El Salvador.

But the Salvadoran leader is accused of overseeing mass human rights violations, epitomised by a huge, brutal prison known as CECOT.

Trump's immigration policies focused on what he says is the threat of a gang-led crime wave in the United States, are meanwhile among his most popular, receiving much higher ratings than on the economy.

"You are helping us out, and we appreciate it," 78-year-old Trump told Bukele.

Trump also reiterated that he was even considering deporting some US citizens who commit violent crimes to El Salvador, saying "I'm all for it" and asking Attorney-General Pam Bondi to look into the idea.

Trump and Bukele also share a taste for conservative, strongman-style politics. They spent several minutes criticising the media.

Shortly after Trump's inauguration for a second term, Bukele

Trump wants to deport some US citizens to El Salvador

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he wants to deport some violent criminals who are US citizens to El Salvador, where they would be incarcerated under an agreement with that country's government. Trump's spoke to journalists at the White House during the state visit of Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele.

The remarks were one of the clearest signals yet that the US president is serious about deporting naturalised and US-born citizens, a proposal that has alarmed civil rights advocates and is viewed by many legal scholars as unconstitutional.

Trump said he would only go through with the idea if his administration determined it was legal. It was not clear what level of due process an American would receive before being deported. "We always have to obey the laws, but we also have homegrown criminals that push people into subways, that hit elderly ladies on the back of the head with a baseball bat when they're not looking, that are absolute monsters," Trump said. "I'd like to include them in the group of people to get them out of the country, but you'll have to be looking at the laws on that."

Trump told reporters last week that he "loved" the idea of deporting citizens to El Salvador, after Bukele said the country was open to housing US prisoners. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later confirmed that the proposal was on the table, saying Trump had "simply floated" the idea. The Trump administration has sent hundreds of migrants accused of criminal affiliations to El Salvador's harsh mega-prison known as the Terrorism Confinement Center, under often-contested legal authorities. The US is paying El Salvador \$6mn. The highest-profile deportee, Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran national, was deported despite a judicial order protecting him from removal. The US government has described his deportation as an administrative error. The US Supreme Court last week upheld a lower court ruling directing the administration to "facilitate and effectuate" his return. But it said the term "effectuate" was unclear and might exceed the authority of the district court judge.

made the extraordinary offer to take in prisoners from the United States, in exchange for a fee of \$6mn.

Trump took the Salvadoran leader up on his proposal, sending more than 250 migrants there — a majority of them under a rarely used wartime law dating to 1798, which stripped the deportees of due process.

Slickly produced footage of their arrival — including chained and tattooed men having their heads shaved and being frog-marched by masked guards — was widely promoted by both the Salvadoran and US governments.

The Trump administration contends that the migrants are members of criminal gangs designated by the United States as terrorist organisations, including El Salvador's MS-13 and Venezuela's Tren de Aragua.

However, relatives of several of the men contend they have no connection to organised crime and in some cases had been swept up simply because they had tattoos unrelated to any gang activity.

The expulsion to El Salvador of Abrego Garcia has set off a major legal crisis, after the Trump administration admitted he had been deported in an "administrative error."

A federal judge ordered the government to "facilitate" Abrego Garcia's return to the United States, but Trump officials contend he is now solely in Salvadoran custody, leaving the man in legal limbo.

Despite the partnership, El Salvador was among the dozens of US trade partners that the Trump administration slapped with 10 percent tariffs earlier this month.

The United States is the main destination for Salvadoran exports. Of the nearly \$6.5bn in goods exported from El Salvador in 2024, \$2.1bn went to the United States, including clothing, sugar and coffee, according to the central bank.

But Trump and Bukele also share a fondness for cryptocurrency, with El Salvador becoming the world's first country to establish bitcoin as legal tender in 2021.

Russia: Deadly Sumy strike hit army meeting

AFP
Sumy

Russia said yesterday that its missiles hit a meeting of Ukrainian army commanders in Sumy, accusing Ukraine of using civilians as a "human shield" while Kyiv said the attack Sunday killed at least 35 people in one of the deadliest strikes of the entire war.

Russia's attack drew condemnation and accusations of "war crimes" from leaders around the world, though US President Donald Trump — who is pushing for a ceasefire — called it a "horrible thing" and suggested Russia had "made a mistake".

Commenting on the strike for the first time after more than 24 hours, Russia's defence ministry said its army launched two ballistic Iskander-M missiles at "the place of a meeting of command staff", claiming that it had killed 60 Ukrainian soldiers.

The Kremlin denied that its army had targeted civilians or that there had been any kind of "mistake".

"Our army hits only military and military-related targets," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about the strike and Trump's comments.

A day after the strike, workers were digging in the late afternoon sun through the rubble of a destroyed university building, next to which people had come to lay flowers.

"We used to walk here all the time," said 32-year-old Igor Koloshchuk, who came to the makeshift memorial with his wife Tetyana.

"We came to pay our respects," she said, adding she felt "shock, incomprehension, and probably hatred."

Sumy residents have already got used to explosions from the near-daily Russian attacks, said the 31-year-old kindergarten teacher.

"But when such tragedies happen, it's impossible to get used to it."

Russia's defence ministry appeared to concede there were civilian casualties, but placed the blame on Ukraine.

"The Kyiv regime continues to use the Ukrainian population as

a human shield, placing military facilities and holding events with the participation of soldiers in the centre of a densely populated city," the ministry said.

Russia has made similar accusations since it invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

There is widespread evidence that Russia's missiles and drones have slammed into apartment blocks, hospitals, schools, train stations and other civilian areas in the three-year war.

Even conservative independent estimates say thousands of civilians, including hundreds of children, have been killed in the conflict.

"Only completely deranged scum can do something like this," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday after the strikes on Sumy.

Ukrainian prosecutors said the attack killed 35 people, including two boys aged 11 and 17, and injured 117 people.

One witness told AFP she heard the two explosions.

"A lot of people were very badly injured. A lot of corpses," she said, struggling to speak.



People react as a missile strikes and interrupts a church service in Sumy, Ukraine, in this screengrab taken from a video on Sunday. (Reuters)

Meta says to train AI models on public data of European users

Meta will train its generative artificial intelligence (AI) models with its European users' public content and conversations with the Meta AI chatbot, the firm said yesterday. The decision represents a major volte-face from the Facebook and Instagram owner, which has previously appeared wary of the European Union's stringent regulations on the use of personal data. People based in the EU who use Meta platforms can opt out of having their data used for training purposes, the social networking giant said. The changes would not apply to the accounts of users under 18, nor to private messages of users to family and friends, the tech giant said on social media. WhatsApp messenger will for the time being not be affected by the changes. When Meta AI first launched in the EU, the tech giant was at pains to point out that the chatbot was not trained on data from European users. Its rollout on the continent was delayed by more than year as a result of overlapping European regulations on emerging technologies, including the General Data Protection Regulation, AI and digital markets.

Trump attacks Zelensky in 'millions of deaths' blame

US President Donald Trump resumed his attempts yesterday to blame Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky for Russia's invasion, falsely accusing him of responsibility for "millions" of deaths.

Trump — who had a blazing public row in the Oval Office with Zelensky six weeks ago — said the Ukrainian shared the blame with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who ordered the February 2022 invasion, and then-US president Joe Biden. The Republican told reporters that there were "millions of people dead because of three people." "Let's say Putin number one, but let's say Biden, who had no idea what the hell he was doing, number two, and Zelensky," Trump said during a meeting with the visiting president of El Salvador.

Trump then doubled down on his attack on Zelensky.

"He's always looking to purchase missiles," he said dismissively of the Ukrainian leader's attempts to maintain his country's defence against the Russian invasion. "When you start a war, you got to know that you can win the war," Trump said. "You don't start a war against somebody that's 20 times your size, and then hope that people give you some missiles." Relations between Trump and Zelensky have been tense ever since the US president stunned the world by opening talks with Russia in February. In the run-up to their televised row on February 28 Trump repeatedly echoed Moscow's talking points — blaming Ukraine for the war and calling Zelensky a "dictator without elections." Zelensky has since tried to patch things up, including sending a delegation to Washington last week to discuss a mineral deal Trump has called for, that would give the US preferential access to Ukrainian natural resources.

But the US leader has stepped up his rhetoric in the last few days. Trump however insisted a deal to end the Ukraine war was possible, despite Ukrainian accusations that Moscow is stalling.

"I want to stop the killing, and I think we're doing well in that regard. I think you'll have some very good proposals very soon," Trump said.

Trump's comments came despite a deadly Russian strike on the Ukrainian city of Sumy on Sunday that killed at least 35 people, one of the deadliest attacks of the war. The US president said on Sunday that the attack was a "mistake" but did not elaborate. Russia insisted yesterday that its missiles hit a meeting of Ukrainian army commanders.

Zelensky urged US counterpart Donald Trump in a CBS interview broadcast Sunday to visit his country to better understand the devastation wrought by Russia's invasion.

Sheikha Moza attends launch of HBKU’s AutismTech Conference

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

AutismTech Conference, an initiative by Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) to positively support the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) started yesterday in the presence of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF). QF Vice-Chairperson and CEO HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim bin Saad al-Mahmoud, HBKU president Dr Ahmad M Hasnah and a number of other dignitaries attended the opening session of the three-day conference.

The event has been co-designed with partners from Qatar, including the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Sidra Medicine, Qatar University (QU), Mada Assistive Technology Centre, as well as American institutions: Autism Speaks, and the Autism Science Foundation.

“We have embarked on an inclusive approach to development, one that values every individual, regardless of their mental, physical, or financial circumstances. At the heart of this principle is that we value every human as a human. From the outset, Qatar Foundation has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting individuals with challenges,” said, Dr Hasnah at the opening session.



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser attends launch of HBKU’s AutismTech Conference yesterday. **PICTURES:** Aisha al-Musallam

“AutismTech reinforces the pivotal role Qatar plays in advancing autism awareness globally, leaning on the strong advocacy of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. This is also reflected in the diversity of international partners that have contributed to the planning and delivery of this important conference. AutismTech particularly recognises the importance of engaging communities with individuals with ASD and their families, both in Qatar and internationally,” he explained.

Dr Hasnah said: “Qatar continues its work in the field of autism care and innovation, with technology playing an important role in both diagnosis and support. At Hamad Bin Khalifa University, researchers are developing cutting-edge digital phenotype tools for early screening and detection of autism, in addition to conducting a high, thorough drug screening to identify targeted treatments.”

As part of QF’s growing commitment to support autism research, Her Highness Sheikha

Moza and HE Sheikha Hind held a high-level meeting with a group of autism experts from the US. They discussed strategic co-operation to enhance global awareness of the urgent need to increase investment in the field of autism, address the unmet needs of adults with autism, and develop comprehensive services at the national level.

In addition, they discussed enacting comprehensive legislation to promote inclusivity in the education, healthcare, and communi-



ty sectors. Delivering the keynote speech, ‘The Promise of AI-Based Computational Phenotyping’, Dr Robert Schultz, professor, University of Pennsylvania highlighted that most of the methods used even today are the same methods that were developed in the 1950s.

“AI promises to change all of that and having worked now in the field of using AI to understand autism for 10 years, I am an enormous enthusiast for it. It is going to take a concerted effort, not only from scientists and clinicians, but for those who can provide resources to advance this project.”

The session featured a high-level panel discussion moderated by Dr Dena al-Thani, associate professor, HBKU and Dr Marwa Qarage, associate professor, HBKU. The panellists in the discussion were Dr Noof al-Siddiqi, lead, National Autism Plan, Ministry of Public Health; Christopher Banks, president and CEO,

Autism Society of America; Keith Wargo, president, Autism Speaks; and Mary Partin, chief executive officer, Dan Marino Foundation. The speakers discussed global and local perspectives about the prevailing scenarios in ASD and the latest advancements in helping the individuals to face the challenges.

AutismTech convenes global leaders in autism research and related fields, including AI, computing technologies, and other emerging disciplines, for discussions on accelerating the development, integration, and implementation of innovative solutions that support individuals with ASD, their carers, and families. The conference also showcases how pioneering research, and emerging technologies can revolutionise learning outcomes, therapy approaches, and social integration for individuals with autism locally and globally.



Dr Noof al-Siddiqi (second right) and other panellists during the discussion. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

Qatar plans ‘person-centred pathway for autism care’

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar aims to create an integrated and person-centred pathway for autism care, noted an official from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) yesterday.

“Our vision is to leverage technology as a powerful tool with the support of universities, researchers, policy makers and educators among others. We really have a promising AI screening tool in Qatar and we are trying to really adapt those kinds of tools to detect early the signs of autism,” noted Dr Noof al-Siddiqi, lead, National Autism Plan, MoPH, during a panel discussion at the AutismTech Conference, an initiative of Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

Dr al-Siddiqi said that there should be quick efforts for better outcomes. “We are trying to envision a national digital platform that can support the families



Dr Robert Schultz speaking at the event.

and connect them to clinicians, educators, and even research. And we are trying to tailor it in a way that it really has and includes the English and Arabic languages. And I think that can help not to delay the early detection and early intervention,” she explained.

The official said that the efforts are on to bring the services

to the end users or to the families at the earliest possible. “Using assistive communication devices or non-verbals and VR-based social skills training is one of the things that we are exploring. Putting technology and embedding it as part of our national strategy and in the autism plan is definitely an evidence that we are taking things seriously,” she said.

Dr al-Siddiqi stressed: “We have to really focus on establishing a public-private partnership. We are focusing on how we can bring the collaboration and the attention of the private sector. It is very promising as we are connecting with universities, startups and also with technology leaders.”

“I think training the parents, is important because we don’t want to leave them alone. They have to feel that we are supporting them to the end. And I hope that we can finish and establish and launch the National Autism Plan, hopefully within a couple of months,” the official added.

QF observes World Autism Awareness Day

Renad Academy, part of Qatar Foundation (QF)’s Pre-University Education (PUE), in collaboration with Al Shaqab, organised its annual Family Fun Day under the theme ‘Acceptance is an action’.

The event at Al Shaqab’s indoor arena in Education City saw wide participation from community members and families of children with autism. The event was held as part of the global observance of World Autism Awareness Day, being observed since April 2, 2008, adopted following a proposal submitted by QF Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, to the United Nations in 2007 and unanimously approved by the UN General Assembly.

The event brought together more than 25 local entities, including various Qatar Foundation entities such as Renad Academy, Awsaj Academy, The Learning Center, and the Ability Friendly Programme. Each participating organisation offered a variety of recreational, educational, and interactive activities tailored to different age groups and abilities, all aimed at promoting inclusion and fostering community support for individuals with autism.

As part of the community partnership, Al Jazeera Perfumes dedicated 50% of its sales during the event to support Special Schools & SEN Services at QF. The event also featured multiple zones, including booths for information and hands-on experiences, sports and movement areas, a horse stable, a student performance stage, and collaborative art spaces.



Haya al-Mannai, a mother of a child with autism and a student at Renad Academy, said: “I’m grateful for an educational environment like Qatar Foundation that embraces my child’s uniqueness and supports him to be himself. World Autism Awareness Day reminds us that inclusive education is not a privilege, it’s a fundamental right that every child should receive in order to be an active member of society.

“This day is an important occasion for us to recognise that we are part of a community that genuinely strives to understand and

support individuals with autism. The event embodies this hope through its wide range of activities and interactive experiences, offering parents like us opportunities to connect with others, while giving our children a sense of belonging and appreciation.”

“I’ve seen how my son has become more engaged with those around him. Events help him feel accepted and confident. Even his siblings now make sure to attend with him every year, and that has significantly changed the way they interact with him at home,” she added.

Nahham Al Khaleej festival draws large crowds

Katara Festival and Prize for the Art of Nahma, Nahham Al Khaleej 2025, continued for the second day at Katara Beach, attracting large crowds with its vibrant celebration of Gulf maritime heritage.

The festival revives the ancient art of Nahma, traditional sea chants once performed during pearl diving voyages. On Sunday, the first stage of the competition saw Sultan Omar al-Kuwari (Qatar), Youssef Anwar Mousa (Bahrain), and Saleh Abdulaziz Dashti (Kuwait) qualify for the next round.

The contest featured two main segments, “Work Arts on the Ship’s Deck”, showcasing chants performed during laborious tasks like raising sails and rowing, and “Entertainment Arts on the Shores



of Katara”, which included melodic performances of Fijiri and Haddadi, sung at night to entertain sailors. Yesterday’s events featured new participants from across the GCC countries, including representatives from Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman. Competitions continued with engaging performances highlighting each country’s maritime traditions. The festival is also hosting cultural seminars.



Kuwaiti researcher Abdulhamid al-Saqr discussed rhythmic Gulf arts, particularly Haddadi, while Bahraini lecturer Youssef Adam explored Nahma’s role in representing seafaring life.

The competitions are accompanied by traditional heritage ac-

tivities, including live drawing and photography contests, an art exhibition, and a maritime history display. Visitors can watch live demonstrations of related crafts such as shipbuilding, net making, and palm weaving, alongside cultural games and local food stalls.

Shafallah Center to hold autism awareness event

The Shafallah Center for Persons with Disabilities is holding an awareness event on ways to distinguish autism at Al Hazm Mall from April 17-23. Held under the theme of ‘A spectrum: a journey of understanding and embrace,’ the event will be held from 17:00-21:00 as part of the autism awareness month. It aims to raise societal awareness about autism through offering visitors an interactive experience and shedding light on the reality and experiences of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This event simulates the sensory and emotional experiences of these individuals, by using auditory, visual, and tactile stimuli, carefully designed to reflect the challenges and obstacles they face in their daily environments. This in turn enables visitors to go through the experiences and feelings of Individuals with ASD, understanding the way they feel, think, and respond to their surroundings. This awareness event is a valuable opportunity for all members of society, including school and university students to interact with this sensory experience, which fosters a deeper understanding of individuals with ASD and supports efforts for their inclusion, led by the Shafallah Center as part of its community mission. **(QNA)**