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BUSINESS | Page 1

'Global air passenger numbers expected to hit 12.4bn by 2050'



2500 pallet: chiller / freezer / ambient)

Contact: 55601482



Sheikha Jawaher meets consort of Syria's president

Her Highness Consort of His Highness the Amir Sheikha Jawaher bint Hamad bin Suhaim al-Thani met yesterday at Lusail Palace with Consort of the President of the sisterly Arab Syrian Republic Latifa al-Droubi. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged cordial talks and topics of mutual interest. Her Highness also hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of the consort of the Syrian president. (QNA)

Lebanese president arrives in Doha

Lebanese President General Joseph Aoun arrived yesterday in Doha on an official visit. Gen Aoun and the delegation accompanying him were welcomed upon arrival at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani. (QNA) Page 2

Take preventive steps against dust storm: HMC

Assistant Executive Director of Hamad Medical Corporation's Ambulance Service, Ali Darwish, urged all community members to adhere to preventive measures amid the ongoing dust storm affecting the country, stressing that individuals are advised to avoid open areas and to the extent possible, remain indoors or in enclosed spaces. Darwish highlighted that the current storm has health consequences for humans, especially the respiratory system, and those most likely to be affected include individuals with asthma, respiratory conditions, chronic chest illnesses, the elderly, and children. Page 3

Qatar to host IDF World Diabetes Congress 2027

Qatar has officially been announced as the host destination for the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) World Diabetes Congress 2027, during a formal handover ceremony held at the 2025 edition of the congress in Bangkok. The winning bid was led by the Qatar Diabetes Association, with the support of the Ministry of Public Health, Hamad Medical Corporation, and Visit Qatar. Page 4

Qatar, Syria to broaden co-operation

Amir, Syrian president hold official talksAmir leads well-wishers to welcome al-Sharaa

QNA

Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held a session of official talks at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with President of the Syrian Arab Republic Ahmed al-

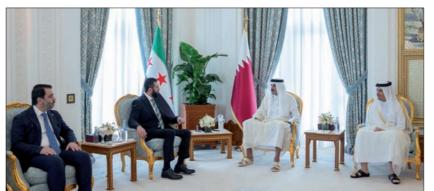
At the outset of the session, His Highness the Amir welcomed Syrian president and the accompanying delegation, voicing his happiness at al-Sharaa's first visit to Qatar and his hope that this visit would contribute to advancing co-operation between the two fraternal countries to broader horizons.

For his part, President al-Sharaa expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, voicing his happiness with this visit. He emphasised Syria's keenness to develop bilateral relations and enhance joint co-ordination to serve the interests of the two countries and fraternal peoples.

During the session, they discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them, especially in the political and diplomatic fields.

They also discussed key re al and international developments and exchanged views on ways to enhance security and stability in the region.

The session was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Moham-



Talks covered wide range of topics: Amir

them

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani stressed that the talks with President of the Syrian Arab Republic Ahmed al-Sharaa covered a wide range of aspects of bilateral co-operation across various fields, emphasising the shared commitment to strengthening and developing

In a post on his official X account, His Highness the Amir voiced his happiness with the visit of President al-Sharaa and their talks that covered a wide range of aspects of bilateral co-operation across various

med bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim

al-Thani, HE Chief of the Amiri

Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed

al-Khulaifi, HE the Minister of

State at the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Ab-

aspirations of the fraternal Syrian people for stability, prosperity, and development. (QNA)

fields. His Highness the Amir

between the two brotherly

said that the fraternal relations

nations are witnessing significant

development and growth, thanks

to the shared commitment to

strengthening and developing

His Highness the Amir added

to elevate the relations to the

countries, hoping that this will

desired level that serves the

common interests of both

contribute to achieving the

that they are working together

dulaziz al-Khulaifi, and a number of senior officials.

On Syria's side, the session was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Asaad al-Shaibani and a number of mem-

bers of the official delegation accompanying the president.

His Highness the Amir hosted luncheon banquet in honour of the Syrian president and his accompanying delegation.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir led well-wishers in welcoming the Syrian president upon his arrival, along with the accompanying delegation, at the Amiri Terminal of Hamad International Airport on an official visit to the country vesterday.

Sharaa and the accompanying delegation were HE Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi and HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi. Page 3

Media City Qatar, dpa to launch regional editorial hub in Doha

edia City Qatar and the German Press Agency (dpa) have signed a collaboration agreement to establish a regional editorial hub aimed at strengthening Qatar's role as a leading media platform and enhancing news coverage across the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC)

Operations are set to begin in June 2025 and will continue for an initial period of five years. By partnering with dpa, one of the world's leading independent news agencies, Media City Qatar continues its commitment to supporting high-quality news coverage and fostering the presence of global media organisa-

The new hub will expand dpa's services, deepen regional reporting, and contribute to its global coverage in Arabic, German, English, and Spanish. In addition to editorial operations, dpa will offer professional training for media entities and individuals, with a focus on developing Qatari

With a network spanning all over the world with 137 locations, dpa provides fact-based, nonpartisan journalism to media organisations, government institutions, and corporate clients. To Page 4

UNRWA warns of Gaza famine; Hamas studying new ceasefire proposal

ommissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works ■ Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini stated that the stocks that entered the Gaza Strip during the ceasefire have been depleted, indicating that the Strip is once again facing the possibility of famine.

Lazzarini explained in a statement that no aid has entered Gaza for six weeks due to the ongoing Israeli blockade of the Strip. He noted that over 2.1mn Palestinians are trapped in the Strip, subjected to bombardment, and suffering from starvation.

Nearly a month after Israel resumed its aerial and ground assaults across Gaza, Hamas, the Palestinian resistance group, said it had received a new ceasefire proposal from Israel.

A senior Hamas official said that the group would "most likely" respond within 48 hours.

The proposal was delivered to the group's delegation in Cairo over the weekend by Egyptian officials, who are mediating in the ceasefire talks.

Another senior Hamas official said that Israel had proposed a 45day ceasefire in exchange for the release of 10 living hostages.

In return, Israel would free 1,231 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails and allow humanitarian aid into the Palestinian territory.

The latest proposal also stipu-



People walk past a puddle of water by a tent shelter erected near the rubble of a collapsed building in Gaza City yesterday.

previous releases involving public ceremonies in Gaza that drew widespread criticism in Israel.

The Hamas official said that the Israeli proposal calls for the release of Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander on the first day of the ceasefire as a "gesture of good-

Israel's public broadcaster, Kan 11, said that the proposal also stipulates that Hamas release the bodies of 16 hostages on the 20th day of the ceasefire.

An official said consultations were ongoing, and that Hamas was "keen to end the aggression and the war" but would require guarantees from Egypt, Qatar and US mediators that Israel would uphold its side of the deal. (Agencies) Page 8

Interior minister crowns winners of Camel Racing Festival



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, crowned the winners at the grand finale of the annual Purebred Arabian Camel Racing Festival for the sword of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at the Al Shahaniya Camel Racetrack yesterday. Al Hayba and Mubashara won the gold and silver sword titles respectively at the prestigious event, which was organised by the Camel Racing Committee over 15 consecutive days, with wide participation from various racecourses across the Gulf Co-operation Council countries. Sport Page 1

lates that any hostage release occur privately, in contrast to the

Lebanese president arrives in Doha



Lebanese President General Joseph Aoun arrived vesterday in Doha on an official visit to the country. He and his accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani, Qatar's ambassador Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, and Acting Charge d'Affaires at the Lebanese embassy in Doha Farah Berri. (QNA)

PM meets French president's envoy to Lebanon



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with the visiting French President's Envoy to Lebanon Jean-Yves Le Drian. During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral co-operation, the latest developments in Lebanon, and a number of issues of mutual interest. HE Sheikh Mohammed stressed the need for the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from all Lebanese territories, and for all parties to adhere to the ceasefire agreement and avoid escalation, in order to ensure security and stability in the region. **(QNA)**

Qatar stood by Lebanon in all circumstances: President Aoun

Joseph Aoun praised Qatar's support for Lebanon during the various circumstances it has faced, which comes in the context of the keenness of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to do everything possible to strengthen relations between the two countries.

In special remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA) following his arrival in Doha, the president voiced his happiness at accepting the Amir's invitation to visit Doha, noting that relations between Lebanon and Qatar have always been based on mutual respect and a commitment to doing everything possible to strengthen them, a reflection of the Amir's keenness to advance them to broader horizons.

President Aoun stressed that Lebanon views Qatar with great appreciation and respect and its positive role in supporting and standing by Lebanon under various circumstances. He expressed his confidence that this visit will contribute to developing bilateral relations, achieving common interests, and promoting stability in the region.

He added that it is also natural that during the visit he will discuss the role that Qatar can play, with the Arab brothers and friends, to help Lebanon rise, contribute to strengthening the authority of the state and its army throughout

Lebanese territory, and restore confidence in the relationship that unites it with the countries of the

A diligent effort that he seeks to undertake, in co-operation with the government and parliament, noting that they have already begun taking tangible steps in this area.

The Lebanese president indicated that it is not unusual for Qatar to stand by Lebanon in the various circumstances it has faced, as it has not hesitated to co-ordinate with other fraternal and friendly countries to expand efforts to rescue it, especially as the crises have worsened and increased.

He pointed out that Qatar's role

in assisting Lebanon will undoubtedly continue, especially if the Lebanese people succeed in accomplishing what they must do and what is required of them in terms of development and reform, and in developing financial, economic, and reconstruction plans and implementing them in a way that inspires confidence in donors and investors, while working on security and military stability to impose Lebanese sovereignty over all territories, restricting weapons to the army and official security forces, and moving from a fragile phase to another that gives hope to the Lebanese and the world that Lebanon has returned to its former

The president also noted that the relations between Lebanon and Qatar make it impossible to limit co-operation to specific areas.

However, it is important to point out that Qatar excels in some areas from which Lebanon benefits, including, for example, the energy and gas sector, where Qatar has extensive experience that can be leveraged to develop the Lebanese energy sector, recover the financial sector by encouraging Qatari investments in Lebanon and banking co-operation, and develop the tourism sector by enhancing tourism exchange and encouraging Qataris to visit Lebanon. He highlighted the importance of co-operation in enhancing the



technology and innovation sector, to benefit from the two countries' expertise in developing technical fields, infrastructure, and reconstruction, especially in light of the need to rehabilitate the Lebanese infrastructure and develop these and other partnerships, which will advance the path of cooperation between the two countries to achieve common aspirations for growth and prosperity, while taking into account balance in relations and mutual benefit for the two peoples. (QNA)

Al-Khulaifi meets Russian deputy FM



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with the visiting Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them, as well as the latest developments in the Middle East and the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. HE al-Khulaifi praised the level of bilateral relations and the constructive co-operation between the two countries within international organisations. He also reaffirmed Qatar's position in support of dialogue and peaceful solutions. (QNA)

and peaceful solutions. (QNA)

Al-Muraikhi receives copies

of credentials of new envoys



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday copies of the credentials of three new ambassadors: Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ahmet Halilovic, Liberia's Mohammed B.O.S. Kenneth and Singapore's Pong Kok Tian. HE al-Muraikhi wished the new ambassadors success in performing their duties, assuring them of providing all support to advance bilateral relations between Qatar and their countries to closer co-operation across various fields. (QNA)





Transport minister meets dignitaries at FALC 2025

HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani met with a number of counterparts and top officials from different countries on the sidelines of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Facilitation Conference (FALC 2025) yesterday. The minister met with Malaysia's Deputy Minister of Transport Haji Hasbi bin Haji Habibollah. They discussed aspects of co-operation in the fields of transportation and ways to de them, particularly by utilising modern and smart technologies in the transportation and civil aviation sectors. The co-operation relations between Qatar and Ghana in the areas of transportation and ways to enhance them, particularly in areas of training on civil aviation, were discussed during the meeting with Ghanaian Minister of Foreign Affairs Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa. The minister also met with Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation Viliame Gavoka. The meeting discussed co-operation relations in the areas of transportation and ways to enhance them particularly in air transportation. Co-operation relations between Qatar and Cuba in the areas of transportation and ways to enhance them particularly with respect to air transportation activities were discussed by the minister during the meeting with Cuban Minister of Transport Eduardo Rodríguez Davila. The minister also met with Yemeni Minister of Transport Dr Abdulsalam Saleh Humaid to discuss co-operation relations in the areas of transportation and ways to enhance them.



HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani meeting with Malaysia's Deputy Minister of Transport Haji Hasbi bin Haji Habibollah.



Mohammed al-Thani meeting with Cuban Minister of Transport Eduardo Rodríguez Dávila.

Qatar, Dominica sign air services agreement

A bilateral talks session between the civil aviation authorities of Qatar and Dominica was held, under which an air services agreement was signed in initials and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that allows designated carriers from both sides to operate an unlimited number of passenger and cargo flights, with full transportation rights. This signing represents a positive and significant step toward strengthening bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the civil aviation sector, contributing to the realisation of each country's vision in this field and their ongoing efforts to develop and improve air transport services. The memorandum was signed by In Charge of Managing Qatar Civil Aviation Authority Mohammed Faleh al-Hajri and Minister of Tourism and International Transport of Dominica Denise Charles.



Qatar, Grenada ink air services deal

Qatar and Grenada signed an air services agreement, allowing for the designated airlines of the two countries to operate unlimited and unrestricted traffic rights for both passenger and cargo flights, thereby enhancing cooperation ties particularly in air transportation. The agreement was signed by HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani and Prime Minister of Grenada Dickon Mitchell, on the sidelines of the ongoing International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Facilitation Conference (FALC 2025) in Doha. The pact was signed in the context of enhancing Qatar's connection with world countries through new air services agreements that allow for the national carrier to expand its network and fly to more destinations around the world. In addition, this agreement comes as part of Qatar's ongoing efforts to strengthen its connectivity with other nations through new air services agreements, enabling the national carrier to expand its route network and access a broader range of global destinations. (QNA)



Syrian president's visit signals new step towards openness: Qatari diplomat

QNADamascus

harge d'Affaires at the Qatari embassy in Damascus Khalifa Abdullah al-Mahmoud (pictured) affirmed that the official visit of Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa to Qatar represents a new step towards greater openness and co-ordination on various political, economic, and humanitarian issues.

He explained in an exclusive interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the visit of President al-Sharaa comes within the framework of strengthening bilateral relations and discussing ways of co-operation to serve the interests of the two brotherly peoples, indicating that it carries very important connotations, especially at this time that is witnessing rapid transformations on the regional arena.

He said that the current phase of Qatari-Syrian relations is characterised by a clear political will on both sides and a spirit of openness and mutual respect, which paves the way for rebuilding trust and activating co-operation mechanisms in priority areas, explaining that what distinguishes this phase is a realistic approach to challenges and a desire to formulate a new approach based on shared interests away from tensions.

om tensions. Regarding the Qatari role in



supporting Syria, the Charge d'Affaires stressed that Doha has been and continues to be present in the Syrian humanitarian files. especially in the education, health, and relief sectors, with a growing interest in exploring opportunities to support early economic recovery, which would contribute to alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people and enhancing stability, pointing out that there is serious consideration of future investment projects that could be the beginning of a joint economic launch.

Regarding the return of Qatari diplomatic representation to Damascus, he explained that this step came after a careful assessment of the circumstances and developments of the current situation, pointing out that Qatar's position remained steadfast in supporting the aspirations of the Syrian people and considered the

resumption of diplomatic activity not only symbolic but a practical approach to bringing viewpoints closer together and contributing to creating an atmosphere of constructive dialogue.

He also pointed to the mutual readiness to develop relations on the ground through reciprocal visits, meetings between institutions, and discussions on ways to implement joint projects with a tangible impact, indicating that joint work and exchange of experiences constitute a fundamental pillar for achieving real progress at the development and economic levels.

In this context, al-Mahmoud affirmed that Qatar and Syria have effectively entered a new phase of co-operation based on clarity, trust, and integration, with a focus on supporting stability, contributing to reconstruction, and activating partnerships in the economic and cultural fields, indicating that relations between the two countries are based on solid historical and fraternal ties and that the next phase will include joint construction and stability in the field of co-operation.

Charge d'Affaires al-Mahmoud emphasised Qatar's belief in the importance of Arab and humanitarian co-operation, and that strengthening relations between brotherly countries in the region will have a positive impact on regional security and stability.



Qatar extends full support to unity of Sudan in London meet

QNA London

atar participated in the London Sudan Conference on the humanitarian situation in the country, held yesterday in London. Qatar was represented at the conference by HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad.

Addressing the conference, HE al-Misnad affirmed Qatar's firm position in support of the unity and sovereignty of Sudan, stressing the importance of redoubling ceasefire efforts, meeting urgent humanitarian needs, supporting women and children, and protecting civilians.

She explained that Qatar's humanitarian and political role in supporting international initiatives and efforts to achieve devel-

opment, alleviate the suffering of victims of crises and disasters, and confront global challenges stems from its belief in the importance of international partnership and co-operation in achieving this goal.

She noted that Qatar has been keen to provide full and continuous support to alleviate the severity of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan by co-sponsoring the High-Level Pledging Conference to Support the Humanitarian Response to Sudan and the Region in 2023, and by launching an air bridge to deliver humanitarian aid and evacuate a number of Sudanese holding Qatari residency.

Qatari humanitarian organisations are also working to provide support and implement projects in various humanitarian fields to overcome the negative effects of the conflict. She added that Qatar has announced its pledge to pro-

vide \$75mn to support the efforts of the Sudan Humanitarian Needs Response Plan and the Regional Refugee Response Plan.

In this regard, she announced that Qatar will allocate \$10mn to support programmes targeting women in conflict areas in Sudan.

HE al-Misnad called for supporting political settlement efforts within the agreed frameworks, foremost among which are the Jeddah Declaration and the Geneva and Paris conferences, while ensuring the inclusion of all parties in the political solution and finding a way out that ensures stability for Sudan and meets the aspirations of the brotherly Sudanese people.

She reiterated Qatar's unwavering position in working to mitigate the impact of crises, achieve sustainable development goals, and ensure international peace and security. Page 8

Syrian president ends Doha visit



Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa left Doha last evening after concluding an official visit. He and his accompanying delegation were seen off at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi. **(QNA)**

Strong winds, dust until weekend



Qatar is expected to be affected by northwesterly winds ranging from fresh to strong, lasting through the weekend, the Met office said. The winds kicked up massive clouds of dust which enveloped the country from the early hours of yesterday (Tuesday), reducing horizontal visibility in some areas. A marine warning is also in effect during this period, as wave heights are expected to range between 3-8ft, reaching to 12ft, at times. Yesterday's minimum and maximum temperatures were in the 24-25C and 28-35C ranges, respectively. Today's (Wednesday) forecast for minimum and maximum temperatures are in the 22-24C and 29-34C ranges, respectively. The pictures depict yesterday's dusty environments. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen and Shaji Kayamkulam



Dust storm: Emergency teams remain on high alert

Assistant Executive Director of Hamad Medical Corporation's Ambulance Service, Ali Darwish, urged all community members to adhere to preventive measures amid the ongoing dust storm affecting the country, stressing that individuals are advised to avoid open areas and, to the extent possible, remain indoors or in enclosed spaces.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Darwish highlighted that the current storm has health consequences for humans, especially the respiratory system, and those most likely to be affected include individuals with asthma, respiratory conditions, chronic chest illnesses, the elderly, and children.

Accordingly, he said heightened caution is advised, and proactive steps should be taken to mitigate the potential health impact of dust exposure, calling on patients who exhibit symptoms of severe shortness of breath in such an atmosphere to directly call the ambulance service, whose personnel are on full alert to respond to

life-threatening cases. Meanwhile, individuals who suffer from mild symptoms associated with exposure to dust may either head to the nearest health centre, hospital, or emergency department, Darwish highlighted. He noted that since this morning, the ambulance service reported a slight increase in service requests recorded until approximately 1pm, with 900 calls received during this period compared to 800 calls typically recorded during the same timeframe on regular days.

The increase, he said, was primarily attributed to minor-to-moderate traffic accidents and a majority of moderate medical cases, including respiratory distress incidents among children and the elderly, particularly those with underlying chronic chest conditions.

Darwish pointed out that the key challenge faced by the ambulance service Tuesday was the low visibility in open areas and outdoor spaces, posing a slight hurdle to the swiftness of response to requests. He indicated that the ambulance service operates in persistent and full co-ordination under the umbrella of the National Command Center (NCC), through which all climate updates in Qatar are reviewed.

He stressed the importance of dealing cautiously with dust by wearing masks while outdoors, promptly washing hands upon returning home, and avoiding beaches, desert areas, and open outdoor environments as far as

In addition, Darwish called on vehicle drivers to exercise extreme caution while driving, particularly on highways and in outer areas, due to significantly reduced visibility, especially since the dust storm resembles dense fog conditions and may at times result in near-zero visibility or severely limited sight distance.

Drivers are therefore advised to reduce speed as much as possible and remain prepared to respond to sudden errors by other road users at any moment. (QNA)

Thailand, Qatar to explore sustainability synergies at Earthna Summit

By Joey Aguilar Staff Reporter

he Thai embassy in Doha is set to host a seminar on April 23 aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of Thailand's sustainable practices and exploring avenues for collaboration with Qatar in the area of environmental conservation, ecotourism, and climate resilience.

Titled 'From Local to Global: Thailand's Sustainability and Eco-Tourism Journeys', the event will take place at the Park Hyatt Doha, coinciding with the Earthna Summit 2025, the Thai embassy said.

The seminar, organised in partnership with the Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future, the Department of Wildlife Development under Qatar's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and the Environmental Science Centre at Qatar University, will showcase Thailand's holistic approach to sustainability, stressing the integration of traditional wisdom with modern innovation, environmental education, and community-led initiatives.

The agenda is structured around

three key sessions designed to provide a comprehensive overview of Thailand's sustainability efforts.

The first session, 'Empowering Local Communities – An Enterprise for a Better World', will explore the groundbreaking Doi Tung Development Project. Visit-orn Rajatanarvin, director of Knowledge and Learning Centre at the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, will share her expertise and insights on this project.

The second session, 'Promoting Responsible Eco-Tourism and Environmental Education', will highlight the crucial role of education

in advancing a profound connection between people and nature, laying the foundation for truly responsible eco-tourism.

The Environmental Education Centre Thailand, under the leadership of chief executive director and co-founder, Alex Rendell, empowers youth and the broader public to become active participants in conservation and sustainable development through immersive learning and meaningful collaborations with local communities.

The final session will tackle 'Advancing Environmental Conservation', with a particular focus

on the critical role of mangrove conservation in protecting coastal and marine biodiversity. Experts from Thailand and Qatar will share insights on conservation efforts, local stewardship, educational awareness-raising initiatives, and eco-tourism development.

The panel will also explore ongoing collaborations between the two countries on mangrove conservation and coastal ecosystem resilience. Prominent speakers include Associate Asst Prof Dr Pasinee Worachananant, Dr Aspa D Chatziefthimiou, Jassim Lari, and Prof Dr Jassim al-Khayat.



The seminar's agenda is structured around three key sessions designed to provide a comprehensive overview of Thailand's sustainability efforts.

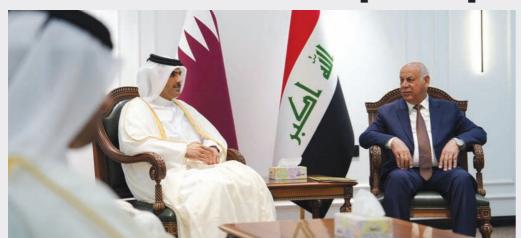


Official

Amir sends cables of condolences to King and PM of Malaysia

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar and Prime Minister Dr Anwar Ibrahim on the death of former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a cable of condolences to Prime Minister Dr Anwar Ibrahim. (QNA)

Culture minister meets with Iraqi counterpart



HE the Minister of Culture, Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, met in Baghdad yesterday with Iraqi Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities Dr Ahmed Fakak al-Badrani. The meeting discussed aspects of cultural co-operation between the two countries. (QNA)

Qatar partakes in Arab Forum for Sustainable Development in Beirut

epresented by the Ministry of Social Development and Family, Qatar is participating in the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, held in Beirut, Lebanon, from April 14-16.

The forum is organised by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with the participation of ministers and high-level officials from various Arab countries, as well as representatives of UN organisations, civil society, and the private sector.

HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Iabr al-Nuaimi led Oatar's delegation at the forum, which is being held in preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development, scheduled to be held

in Doha in November. This reflects Oatar's unwavering commitment to the principles of fair and comprehensive development and to strengthening joint Arab action to address the social and economic challenges in the region.

On the sidelines of the forum, HE the Minister of Social Development and Family met with Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs Haneen al-Sayed.

The two sides discussed opportunities for bilateral co-operation and the exchange of experiences in the areas of protecting vulnerable groups, responding to crises, empowering women, and supporting development efforts in the social and economic contexts.

HE the Minister also met with

Syrian Minister of Social Affairs Hind Kabawat. The two sides discussed the importance of exchanging expertise in developing social policies, enhancing community protection, and economic empowerment for the most vulnerable groups, thus enhancing Arab countries' response to common social challenges.

This participation is part of Qatar's active efforts to prepare for hosting the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha. The summit aims to reshape a new international vision that reaffirms the social dimension of development and promotes more inclusive, equitable, and flexible models in light of current global changes. (QNA)

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Public Announcement

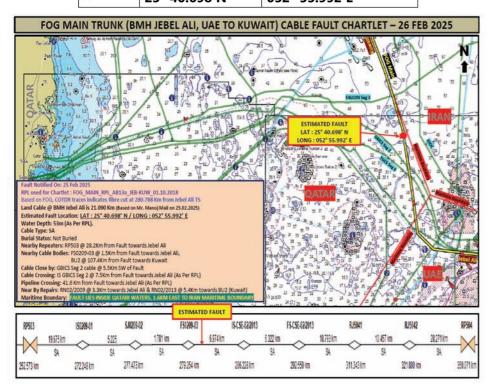
To all Ships, Fisherman, and Mariners Repair of Fiber Optic Gulf (FOG) Submarine Cable - North Sumaysimah-Offshore Qatar By the Vessel "ATHBA"

Repair of Submarine Cable (FOG)- Offshore Qatar from 15th April 2025 to 18th May 2025

In pursuant and under directives from the Registration and Seafarers Affairs Department, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners, and Fisherman that Ooredoo Co. intends to undertake Repair of Gulf Bridge International (FOG) Submarine Cable System - by the vessel "ATHBA" Offshore Qatar, bounded by the coordinates and location map shown below.

Coordinates: -

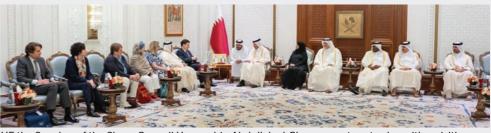
| Coordinates Covering the Work Area Boundary – GBI Cable System | | |
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| WGS84 Ellipsoid | | |
| ID | Latitude | Longitude |
| Α | 25° 40 698′N | 052° 55 992′F |



All Vessels, Mariners, and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the Repair of Submarine Cable area during the operations. Ooredoo takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation following the publication of this notice.

For more details contact 33342255

Speaker of Shura Council meets French parliamentary delegation



HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met yesterday with a visiting delegation from the French Senate, headed by President of the France-Gulf States Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group of the French Senate Olivier Cadic. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the parliamentary relations between Qatar and France, as well as ways to strengthen and develop them. HE the Speaker expressed his hopes that this visit would contribute to enhancing co-operation and co-ordination between the Shura Council and the French Senate on issues of mutual interest, commending the efforts of the two sides' friendship groups in supporting parliamentary relations and enhancing communication to serve the interests of both countries. (QNA)



'Social development forms solid ground for political stability'

QNA Beirut

E the Minister of Social Development and Family ■Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi emphasised that social development is no longer an optional complement but rather an essential pillar of public policies, serving as a fundamental basis for political stability, economic growth, and social cohesion, particularly amid the accelerating crises affecting the region and the

Speaking at the ministerial opening session of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, held in Beirut, HE the Minister stressed the importance of adopting a comprehensive social approach that places human dignity at the core of developmen efforts, reaffirming Qatar's commitment to an integrated participatory approach across different sectors to achieve social justice, empowerment, and equal oppor-

During the ministerial session, titled 'Upholding Inclusive So-

cial Development in the Face of New Inequalities, Conflict and Shrinking Fiscal Space', she called for incorporating the cultural and social specificities of Arab nations into the final document of the Second World Summit for Social Development, scheduled to be held in Doha.

HE the Minister also emphasised the need to focus on womand wouth empowerment strengthening family roles, expanding social protection, and developing more responsive and flexible policies to adapt to societal transformations.

She outlined key Qatari initiatives in social protection and care, digital transformation in service

provision, as well as empowerment programmes and community innovation support, confirming that these efforts align with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

On the sidelines of the forum, HE the Minister of Social Development and Family held a bilateral meeting with Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of Economic and Social Commi sion for Western Asia (ESCWA) Rola Dashti, where they discussed ways to enhance co-operation, particularly in preparation for the upcoming Doha Summit and the exchange of expertise in social protection and empowerment

Media City Qatar, dpa to launch regional editorial hub in Doha

Engineer Jassim Mohamed al-Khori, CEO of Media City Qatar, said: "By welcoming dpa to our ecosystem of over 200 licensed partners, we reinforce our commitment to supporting Arabic content and advancing regional storytelling. This partnership is a significant step in shaping the future of media, driving innovation, and ensuring diverse stories from our region reach global audiences, further establishing Media City Qatar as a catalyst for the next generation of international media."

Peter Kropsch, CEO, dpa, added: "We are delighted that, together with Media City Qatar, we have succeeded in expanding dpa's editorial presence in the Gulf region, doa has been reporting successfully in Arabic for decades and has strong roots and correspondent offices in many Arab countries. "The strength of our commitment to the region is demonstrated by the Arabic Service launched last year together with AP. With the new editorial hub in Doha, we are extending our independent and nonpartisan reporting from a region that is more and



more getting into the focus of the global public. Jassim Mohamed al-Khori, CEO of Media City Qatar, and Peter Kropsch, CEO, dpa, exchange documents during the signing ceremony.

The partnership highlights Media City Qatar's role in shaping a dynamic media ecosystem in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 by supporting the growth of news agencies. Through recent agreements with global media and technology leaders, Media City Qatar continues to drive innovation and foster the region's media sector.

Qatar officially selected to host IDF World Diabetes Congress '27

Qatar has officially been announced as the host destination for the International Diabetes Federation World Diabetes Congress 2027, during a formal handover ceremony held at the 2025 edition of the congress in Bangkok. The winning bid was led by the Qatar Diabetes Association, with the support of the Ministry of Public Health, Hamad Medical Corp (HMC), and Visit Qatar. In preparation for the 2027 congress, a delegation from Oatar attended the 2025 Bangkok edition to promote Qatar as a business events destination and begin discussions with the Diabetes



Federation organisers. Visit Qatar's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) team, which has supported the bid from inception, led a series of

engagements with international stakeholders including an exhibition stand to showcase Qatar's outstanding tourism and logistical capabilities. (QNA)

Jumbo Electronics partners with Nothing to bring tech innovations to Qatar

umbo Electronics, one of Qatar's leading consumer electronics retailers and distributors, has announced its exclusive partnership with Nothing, the London-based technology company known for its innovative and designforward tech products.

With this agreement, Jumbo Electronics becomes the official distributor of Nothing products in Qatar, a statement said yes-

This strategic partnership marks a significant milestone for both companies as they aim to redefine the consumer tech landscape in Qatar. Jumbo Electronics will offer the full range of Nothing products - including smartphones, earbuds, and upcoming innovations – through its wide retail network, e-commerce platform, and partner channels across the country. "We are thrilled to partner

with Nothing and introduce their cutting-edge technology to the Oatari market," said Sajed Sulaiman, vice-chairman and managing director, Jumbo



Jumbo Electronics vice-chairman and managing director Sajed Sulaiman and Nothing - Middle East & Africa regional director Rishi Gupta with the Jumbo Electronics team.

Electronics. "Nothing's commitment to sleek design and seamless user experience aligns perfectly with our mission to bring the world's most exciting tech brands to our customers." Nothing has rapidly gained global recognition for its distinct design philosophy and transparent product

aesthetics, beginning with the acclaimed Ear (1) earbuds and the Phone (1) and Phone (2) smartphones.

The collaboration comes at a time when Nothing has just announced the launch of its latest smartphones – the Phone (3a) and Phone (3a) Pro. These new devices continue

the brand's legacy of pushing boundaries in both design and functionality and will be made available in Qatar exclusively through Jumbo Electronics.

With this new partnership, Jumbo Electronics reinforces its position as a pioneer in introducing global tech innovations to Qatar, the statement added.

QIB launches Visa+ to simplify int'l money transfers

atar Islamic Bank (QIB) has partnered with Visa, a global leader in digitar payments, to become the first lender in Qatar to launch the Visa+ (Visa Direct Alias Directory) for its cus-

This innovative service offers QIB's customers a more convenient, secure and faster way to send money to Visa cardholders within GCC or Gulf Co-operation Council.

With Visa+, the bank's customers can transfer funds to Visa cardholders in other countries using the recipient's alias - a mobile number.

This eliminates the need for the recipient to share sensitive information like a 16-digit debit card number (primary account number or PAN), making the process more secure and convenient.

"This partnership high-lights our commitment to providing fast, secure and more convenient way to send money through our award



Shashank Singh, Visa's vice-president and general manager for Qatar and Kuwait.

winning QIB mobile app,"

D. Anand, QIB's general manager - Personal Banking Group.

"This innovative service not only enhances convenience for senders but also benefits families, communities, and economies globally," said Shashank Singh, Visa's vice-president and general manager for Qatar and Kuwait.

Qatari researcher publishes book on 'tear film structure'

osa Publishing House has announced the release of Aspects of Tear Film Structure, a groundbreaking work by the distinguished Qatari researcher and scholar in optometry, Dr Nabila Yousef al-Tamimi.

This comprehensive book represents a significant advancement in optometry, delving deep into the molecular composition of tear fluid. This has a primary focus on fibronectin (FN) a crucial protein for tear film stability.

Dr al-Tamimi's research uncovers new insights into ocular surface health and therapeutic applications, offering an indepth examination of fibronectin concentration across diverse tear conditions, such as closedeye, open-eye, and stimulated tears. Utilising methods such as ELISA, gel electrophoresis, and Western blotting, this book quantifies FN levels and uncovers that closed-eve tears have the highest concentration of FN, while stimulated tears contain the lowest

Additionally, Dr al-Tamimi's work identifies six key tear proteins, including lactoferrin



and secre-IgA, highlighting their roles in maintaining tear stability and ocular surface protection. This second edition also

pioneers efforts to localise fibronectin within the tear film, using rabbit models to visualise FN's structural interactions with the corneal epithelium.

The stability and health of the tear film are essential for protecting the ocular surface, and disturbances in tear composition can lead to various eye conditions. This book serves as an invaluable resource for clinicians, researchers, and students, providing detailed analyses of tear fluid components, particularly fibronectin.

Dr al-Tamimi is a leading researcher and scholar in optometry. She has served as th of Optometry at Hamad Medical Corp, an expert at the Ministry of Public Health optometry division, and as Professor in Ophthalmology - Optometry at Qatar University. (QNA)

Dreama marks Arab Orphan Day



rphan Care Centre (Dreama) held its Arab Orphan Day 2025 campaign and celebration under the theme 'A Radiant Light' on Thursday and Friday at Wisdom Square in Katara Cultural Village, with broad community attendance and the participation of various partners, institutions, and prominent pub-

The campaign aimed to promote community engagement in the integration and empowerment of orphans, allowing them to shine as beacons of hope and contribution in society, and to highlight the role of orphans in the advancement of communities, while emphasising the importance of society's role in nurturing their skills and supporting their development into active and capable individuals.

Sheikha Sheikha bint Jassim al-Thani, assistant undersecretary for family affairs, affirmed during her visit the vital role played Dreama in providing holistic care, empowerment, and social integration for orphans. Also in attendance were official partners, executive directors of sister organisations, and well-known community figures who expressed their support for Dreama's children through direct interaction and messages.

One of the highlights of the event was the 'Community Wishes for Orphans' initiative, which allowed visitors to listen to prerecorded voice messages from Dreama's children sharing their wishes, and respond with either written or recorded audio messag. es of encouragement. The event also featured interactive art corners for children, including sand art, painting, and the distribution of symbolic giveaways inspired by the campaign.

In a press statement, Sheikha Najla bint Ahmed al-Thani, executive director of Dreama, said: "At Dreama, we believe that empowering orphans begins with creating a nurturing environment that strengthens their self-confidence and offers equal opportunities in both education and life. Our vision extends beyand daily care to include a comprehensive system of psychological, social and behavioural support that enables children to grow in safe and stimulating environments - whether within the centre or in foster families."

Islamweb's portal for deaf adds new visual materials

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance, announced the addition of 130 new visual materials in sign language to the Islamweb website as part of its portal for the deaf.

This is part of its ongoing efforts to enhance religious and guidance services for the deaf and hard of

hearing. The portal is one of the pioneering initiatives within the Islamic network Islamweb. It is a unique knowledge platform serving the deaf community by providing comprehensive religious content in the unified, international Arabic sign language.

This enhances the Islamic identity of this community and consolidates the concepts of social and academic integration between them and other segments of society. The number of visual materials available on the portal by the end of 2024 reached about 823 video clips, while the number of visitors to the site during the same vear exceeded 52,000, bringing the total number of visitors since the portal's launch to more than 260,000. (QNA)

DAAM, Katara in pact to support Senyar Festival

¬he Social and Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM) has signed an agreement with Katara to fund the 11th Senvar Festival 2025 slated to be held from April 16 to 25.

Under this agreement, DAAM will renew the provision of essential financial support to the festival, which is one of the most crucial cultural events in Qatar that contributes to preserving the Qatari maritime heritage and inculcating its legacy in the future generations.

This agreement stems from the leading roles performed by DAAM and public shareholding companies listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) in alignment with the Qatar National Vision 2030, in pursuit of fostering the Qatari maritime legacy and reviving maritime mores.

This year's event features the participation of 60 teams comprising 680 competitors

This year's event features the participation of 60 teams comprising 680 competitors from among amateur fishing and diving enthusiasts. The teams have been divided into three groups of 20 teams each.

The teams will compete within their respective groups, from which the top five teams in each group will advance to the final stage, held under the framework of the challenge competition, with the organising committee stressing the importance of commitment to the security and safety measures while aboard the traditional dhows, with full adherence to the contest's regulations to avoid potential penalties or disqualification.

The committee clarified that the catch is limited to 17 designated species of fish, affirming that participating dhows will be fitted with tracking cameras to ensure the highest standards of safety and to uphold the principles of transparency and integrity throughout the competitions.

Since its inception in 2010, DAAM has launched a wide array of vital projects and initiatives across the cultural, social, sports, and charitable domains, with the contributions from public shareholding companies listed on QSE constituting one of the DAAM's primary financial resources, making them a key partner in advancing community development. (QNA)

Ansar Gallery announces lucky winners of Ramadan car promotion



s part of its Holy Ramadan Celebrations, Ansar Gallery hosted a special Car Promotion during the holy month, with participation from its furniture, building materials, carpet, and light sections. The campaign was a gesture of gratitude, aiming to spread joy and appreciation among its valued customers.

The much-anticipated car raffle draw took place on April 10, 2025, at Ansar Gallery's Barwa branch. The event was held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Joining him were members of the Ansar Gallery management team, including Deputy General Manager Mohamed Khaldoun, Marketing and Graphics Manager Shamsheer Parivat, Showroom Managers Ahmed Elseoudy, Abbas, and Abdulaziz, as well as PRO Officer

The highlight of the evening was the announcement of the three lucky winners of the brand-new Jetour T-2 LUX V4 2025 model cars. These customers not only took home an incredible prize but also unforgettable memories from this Ramadan season

The Lucky Winners Are:

1.Maha Ibrahim - Coupon No. 01353 2.Shaiful Islam - Coupon No. 03239 3. Aysha Khalid - Coupon No. 39631



S Korea acting president attends Qatar Philharmonic concert



QNA

South Korea's Acting President Han Duck-soo attended a concert by the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra in the capital, Seoul, marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic

relations between Qatar and the Republic of Korea The event was organised by the Qatar embassy in South Korea, in co-operation with the Goyang Culture Foundation. Under the baton of maestro Wilson Ng and featuring worldrenowned pianist Jae Hong Park, the orchestra performed



a selection of international classical works, concluding with musical pieces drawn from Qatari heritage

The concert was attended by several South Korean ministers and officials, heads of Arab and foreign diplomatic missions, business leaders and representatives from Korean

companies, as well as journalists. The exhibition highlighted the media professionals, and prominent public figures from various sectors. The Qatari embassy also hosted a photo exhibition in the reception hall of the National Theater of

Korea, showcasing Qatar's rich

cultural heritage, traditions, and

country's renaissance across various sectors, with a particular focus on culture and art. The concert drew a remarkable audience and was met with high praise. Attendees expressed their admiration for the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra's powerful and exceptional performance.

Aimed at strengthening cultural ties and fostering mutual understanding between the two nations through music, the concert is part of a series of cultural events organised by the Qatari embassy to commemorate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Qatar and the Republic of Korea.

Al Meera embarks on digitising platforms, expanding self-checkout

By Santhosh V Perumal

Business Reporter

l Meera Consumer Goods Company is strengthening efforts to digitise platforms and expand self-checkout as part of its continued strategies to improve services to customers.

"Looking towards the future, Al Meera's strategy remains centred on enhancing the customer experience by improving service, digitising platforms, expanding self-checkout, and upgrading store aesthetics," said its board report tabled before shareholders at the annual general assembly meeting, which approved the financial results and cash dividends

of QR0.85 per share for 2024. Operationally, the focus would be on increasing efficiency and cost-effectiveness through technological advancements and streamlined processes to ensure operational excellence and deliver superior customer value, it said

"In line with our continuous ambition to expand the horizons of innovation as a key driver of sustainable growth, we have made significant progress in this direction through a long-term strategy and our ambitious journey toward comprehensive digital transformation," said Al Meera chairman Abdulla Abdulaziz Abdullah Turki al-Subaie in the 2024 report.

During the review period, Al Meera strengthened its market presence both online and offline with its online and home delivery service contributing 5-6% of total sales.

Over the past year, Al Meera strengthened its position as a leader in advanced retail, continuing to adopt a sustainable innovation strategy with a focus on digital transformation, a focus that led to significant advancements in

As part of its digital transformation, Al Meera had in 2024 introduced smart shopping carts, the first of their kind in Qatar.

"Following the opening Al Meera Smart, a fully automated, check-out free branch in 2023, the first of its kind in Qatar and the we continued to advance our digital retail offering with the launch of smart shopping carts in January 2024, the first in Qatar, further enhancing the in-store experience and reinforcing our commitment to delivering innovative and seamless shopping solutions for our customers," according to

On the digital end, the company further integrated the SAP system into its operations, building upon the strategic partnership established with the global technology leader in 2023.

This collaboration targets modernising Al Meera's branches and services with advanced cloud solutions, directly contributing to its operational excellence and expansion plans and enhancing the experience for both customers and employees, the board report said.

Alongside its focus on innovation and sustainability, Al Meera remains firmly committed to supporting local industries, bringing together suppliers, businesses, and customers in a celebration of Qatari-made products, driving strong engagement across its store

"Through targeted in-store Al Meera reaffirmed its dedication to offering locally sourced goods while contributing to the development of Qatar's retail sector," the

QPO to present 'Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1'

Bruch's iconic Violin Concerto No. 1 will take centre stage when the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) performs at the Katara Cultural Village Opera House on April 19 at 7.30pm. According to QPO, the concert promises to be a remarkable showcase of talent, led by the esteemed Greek conductor, composer, and educator, Michalis

Economou. Economou, currently the music director of the Greek Radio Symphony Orchestra, was previously QPO's music director. He also holds the position of chief conductor of the City of Athens Symphony Orchestra and has collaborated with numerous symphony orchestras across Europe, the US, and Asia. Adding to the allure of the evening is the performance of acclaimed violist Anastasiva Petryshak, recognised as the "European Personality in Classical Music". Petryshak is celebrated for her impeccable intonation, exceptional technique, and profound musicality. The programme for the evening includes: Giuseppe Verdi's Overture to "La Forza del Destino": This dramatic overture perfectly encapsulates the essence of skill in weaving together different themes and motifs to build tension and excitement.

Max Bruch's Violin Concerto

No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26: A

true masterpiece in the violin showcases his romantic and lyrical style, featuring beautiful melodies and Jush orchestration. Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10 in E Minor, Op. 93: This

Michalis Economou

Anastasiya Petryshak

haunting and complex symphony. death, reflects the composer's personal struggle and the collective trauma of Soviet society, offering a powerful and emotional musical landscape.

GU-Q professor recognised as 'global thought leader'

r Gabor Scheiring, assistant professor of comparative politics at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) has been selected as a Global Fellow by the Charles F Kettering Foundation.

This one-year, by-invitationonly fellowship recognises Dr Scheiring as a 'global thought leader' committed to defending democracy and combating authoritarianism.

As a fellow, Dr Scheiring will have the opportunity to contribute to global conversations about the future of democracy through publications, webinars, and conferences, a GU-Q statement said yesterday.

"Economic anxiety, political polarisation, and strategic institutional manipulation are converging in ways that threaten democratic governance," said Dr Scheiring, adding: "Understanding why democratic institutions weaken and what can be done to counteract these trends is not just an academic concern – it's an



Dr Gabor Scheiring

urgent political and social challenge?

A former member of parliament in the Hungarian National Assembly before pursuing his PhD in sociology from the University of Cambridge, Dr Scheiring's research explores the intersection of economic shocks, inequality, and democratic resilience focusing on actionable insights for policymakers.

"As a scholar and a former policymaker, I've seen firsthand how economic crises and social dislocation create fertile ground for illiberalism. My work seeks to unravel these dynamics — not just as an academic exercise, but as a way to inform better policy responses,"

The recipient of many prestigious fellowships and awards, including the European Commission's Marie Curie Fellowship, Dr Scheiring highlighted the unique platform that the Kettering Foundation provides: "This fellowship offers an opportunity to contribute my expertise while also learning from practitioners actively engaged in defending democracy on the ground."

Dr Scheiring is the author of The Retreat of Liberal Democracy: Authoritarian Capitalism and the Accumulative State in Hungary, among other publications, and during the fellowship will be working on two book projects, one exploring the politics of deaths of despair and democracy, and another on the structural forces behind the rise of authoritarian populism and its consequences for strategic policy areas.

to over 10,000 people in Pakistan

Qatar Charity brings clean water



atar Charity (QC) has installed 80 hand pumps in remote areas of Pakistan s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, providing drinking water to over 10,000 beneficiaries.

The initiative, implemented through Qatar Charity's Pakistan Branch, comes with the generous support of donors in Qatar and reflects Qatar Charity's ongoing commitment to ensuring access to safe water for the most vulnerable communities.

The project involved installing 40 hand pumps in the Charsadda district and another 40 in the Mardan district. It aimed to address the urgent water needs of vulnerable communities, reduce the spread of waterborne diseases, and improve access to local water sources.

Lubna Gul, a widow residing with her children in a remote village in the Charsadda district, shared her experience: "We used to depend on brackish water, which repeatedly made my children sick. I couldn't afford medical treatment, but everything changed after the hand pump was installed. Thankfully, my children are now healthy and

doing well." Haseena Khan from the Mardan district noted that her children used to miss school to fetch water from a distant location. "Now that water is available near our home, my children can attend school regularly, and I have started learning sewing to help improve our family's income."

In 2024, QC installed more than 1,100 hand pumps across Pakistan, ensuring access to clean and safe drinking water for nearly 55,000 individuals. This included the installation of 250 hand pumps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa benefiting more than 27,000 people in that prov-

Indian expat dies in car crash

Indian expatriate Joy Mathew (47), died vesterday in a road accident on Dukhan Highway after his car collided with a truck. He had been working in the event management sector in Qatar for the past 13 years. A native of Vaikom. Kerala, Joy is survived by his wife Sreedevi, a former resident of Qatar.



CMC reviews Ashghal's infrastructure projects



he Central Municipal Council reviewed its infrastructure projects at the 34th meeting of its seventh session vesterday.

Headed by HE the Chairman of CMC, Mohammed bin Ali al-Athba, the council went over its

agenda items, topped by a co-ordination meeting with President of the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), Eng Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Meer, along with a number of Ashghal senior officials, with the aim of gaining insights into current and future infrastructure projects across various regions and for council members to receive answers to their inquiries.

Al-Meer expressed his appreciation for the council's role in addressing the needs and requests of citizens regarding the completion of projects in their areas. He affirmed Ashghal's readiness to receive feedback and engage with members requests in a way that ensures the improvement of services and the devel-

opment of infrastructure.
Ashghal officials also pre-

sented a detailed briefing on key projects currently underway, as well as those planned for future implementation. The meeting witnessed wide engagement from council members, who raised their questions and comments, which were directly ad-

dressed by the Authority's of-

For his part, HE al-Athba praised Ashghal's pivotal role in implementing national projects, which enhance the quality of life and meet citizens' aspirations.

Karwa hosts 18th Chief Audit Executive Forum



owasalat (Karwa) has hosted the 18th gathering of the Chief Audit Executive Forum while bringing together over 20 internal audit leaders from prominent organisations in Qatar.

The forum focused on the theme of Internal Audit Structure and Independence – a critical topic shaping the future of corporate governance, internal audit and risk management practices, a statement said.

The event was headed by Moses Chavi, internal audit director, Karwa, and facilitated by Hatem El-Safty, EY partner – risk con-

sulting with contributions from participating internal audit lead-

Key discussions revolved around the independence requirements of the new Global Internal Audit Standards and their impact on internal audit functions, the evolving role of management and the board of directors and the global risk landscape for 2025.

The sessions explored realworld corporate and industry scenarios, equipping attendees with practical strategies to enhance internal audit independence, build strong relationships with management and boards and drive governance excellence within their organisations.

Nader Sultan D R al-Shammari, head of Internal Audit -Shared Services, said Karwa is committed to upholding best practices in governance and internal audit. "By hosting the CAE Forum, we reaffirm our dedication to fostering collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange among audit leaders while ensuring that organisa tions across Qatar continue to strengthen their internal control practices and corporate governance frameworks.

VCUarts Qatar announces AEB award recipients

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) has honoured the recipients of Arab Engineering Bureau (AEB) Awards for Design Excellence for 2025

The awards were presented by Ibrahim Jaidah, group chief executive officer and chief architect, AEB, in the presence of VCUarts Qatar dean Amir Berbi.

Two graduating students from Graphic Design and Interior Design programmes were the recipients of the AEB Awards for Design Excellence for 2025, while two outstanding junior students were honoured with AEB's award for Creative Achievement and Potential

Jaidah presented the AEB award for Creative Achievement and Potential in Graphic Design to Sruthi Subashi, and the AEB award for Creative Achievement and Potential in Interior Design to Joanna Jaber. Among the graduating students, Haneen Darwich was presented the AEB Award for Design

Aiman Mohammed was the recipient of the AEB Award for Design Excellence in Graphic Design.

The AEB Design Excellence awards were instituted in 2007 by Jaidah, to encourage and assist outstanding graduating students from VCUarts Qatar's graphic design and interior design department, as they begin their lives as designers, and contribute to the community's art and design land-scape.

In 2014, AEB extended the scope by introducing two additional awards for Junior students — one for Interior Design and one for Graphic Design. These awards were created to inspire students in their junior year, encouraging them to push their creative boundaries and strive for excellence as they progressed in their studies.

"Since its establishment in 1998, VCUarts Qatar has stood as a beacon of creativity and innovation in design within the region. The vision initially set forth by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser has flourished, and today, we proudly witness the impact of that vision through the many accomplished graduates of VCUarts Qatar who are now shaping the design industry and holding influential positions across prominent institutions," said Ibrahim Jaidah, "At Arab Engineering Bureau, we are honoured to have contributed to this journey by supporting the AEB Awards for the past 19 years. It brings us great pride to see the award recipients thrive in their professional paths.

"Support from an Industry leader such as Jaidah is crucial for talented students early on in their careers. Ibrahim Jaidah is recognised as a pioneer of a new architectural movement that combines the far-reaching influences of Islamic art with modern styles to create memorable structures that are shaping Qatar. Today, it gives the VCUarts Qatar community great satisfaction to see the next generation of creatives from our university being recognised by such a renowned designer and pioneer as Jaidah," dean Berbi

QCS conducts workshop for staff

s part of its continuous efforts to develop its human capital and enhance the efficiency of its internal work environment, Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) organised a staff training workshop titled "Towards an Effective and Sustainable Work Environment".

The workshop aimed to reinforce modern administrative principles, develop functional and interpersonal skills, foster a culture of teamwork across departments, and highlight the importance of internal communication and positive interaction in the workplace. This initiative supports professional development and aligns with the strategic vision of QCS for institutional excellence.

The workshop was conducted by Raafat Darwish, human resources officer at QCS, and comes as part of a comprehensive annual training programme designed to upgrade employee competencies. It focused on es-



sential themes that promote an inclusive, supportive, and sustainable work culture.

Key topics discussed during the session included: Core principles of institutional work and the integration of roles across departments, the importance of building effective teams and promoting collaboration among staff, mechanisms to enhance performance and increase productivity at both individual and team levels, strategies to foster organisational loyalty and employee well-being, and effective time management and optimal

use of available resources to achieve strategic goals.

In his address, Raafat Darwish stressed the importance of investing in human capital as the driving force behind the success of any institution. He pointed out that continuous training represents a key pillar in QCS' overall strategy, emphasising that empowering employees through skill development has a direct impact on work quality.

"We aim, through these workshops," Darwish stated, "to instil a culture of continuous learning and self-development in the workplace, foster team spirit, and build a positive environment that encourages effective communication and a strong sense of belonging to the organisation." he added.

This workshop is one of many training initiatives implemented by the Qatar Cancer Society throughout the year as part of its broader vision to achieve the highest standards of excellence and quality in performance.



PICTURE: Thajudheen

Ashghal project set to upgrade three labs in Qatar

A comprehensive project by the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) will impart a facelift to three veterinary and agricultural laboratories across Qatar.

The project includes designing, constructing, and refurbishing veterinary and agricultural laboratories at Old Airport Area, Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) and Al Sheehanivva.

Ashghal, on its website, has said the project will be completed during the first quarter of 2026. The project scope includes comprehensive design, full refurbishment, and structural repairs of the veterinary laboratory at Old Airport Area while it features design, construction, and complete fit-out of modern agricultural laboratory facilities at QSTP.

The project includes designing, constructing and completing fit-out of the agricultural laboratory at Al Sheehaniyya where the facility will be tailored to regional agricultural research and development needs.



QU to launch Cultural Village on April 21

QNA Doha

atar University (QU) will launch its 12th Cultural Village on April 21, which will rurruntil April 24.

Representing 27 countries, the Cultural Village will offer theatrical and folkloric performances, as well as food and fashion booths, showcasing the countries' unique cultures and arts.

QU held a press conference Monday attended by Director of Student Activities at QU Dr Abdullah Hamed al-Mulla and Head of Campus events and programmes at QU and Deputy Chair of the Organising Committee Mira Abdulrahman al-Kuwari, along with several committee members.

The Director of Student Activities at QU told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the event will not be limited to the QU community alone, rather it will be open to

the general public, in keeping with the Cultural Village's goal of raising cultural awareness and understanding.

Al-Mulla added that the event is a true embodiment of values such as diversity, coexistence, and mutual respect among different cultures, being a vibrant space where students from various nationalities and backgrounds can express their identities, present their heritage, and share their cultures with their peers and the

broader university community.

He added that QU believes that the university experience extends beyond the lecture room to encompass extracurricular activities that shape students' personalities, refine their skills, and open before them new horizons of understanding and openness to the world and to being global citizens.

For her part, the Head of Campus events and programmes at QU, Mira Abdulrahman al-Kuwari, told QNA that in light of the

success of past editions and the traction they gained, QU is eager to hold the Cultural Village annually.

Al-Kuwari highlighted that this is not merely a highly anticipated cultural event, but also a rich human experience that reflects the university and the diversity of its student body, which plays a vital role in student development, fosters global understanding, and reinforces values of coexistence, tolerance, and belonging.

Representing 27 countries, the Cultural Village will offer theatrical and folkloric performances

She noted that the event will dedicate April 21 and 22 for female students and April 23 and 24 for male students.

REGION/ARAB WORLD/AFRICA

Macron tells Netanyahu ordeal of Gaza civilians 'must end'

AFP

¶rance's President Emmanuel Macron told Israel's leader during a phone call yesterday that the suffering of Gazan civilians "must end" and that only a ceasefire in Gaza could free remaining Israeli hostages.

"The ordeal the civilian populations of Gaza are going through must end," Macron posted on X after the call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

He also called for "opening all humanitarian aid crossings?

into the besieged Palestinian territory. The United Nation has warned that Gaza's humanitarian crisis is spiralling out of control, with no aid having entered the territory for weeks.

Palestinian Hamas group said Monday that Israel had offered a 45-day ceasefire if it releases half of the remaining hostages held in Gaza.

A Hamas official told AFP that Israel had also demanded that the Palestinian fighters disarm to secure an end to the Gaza war, but that this crossed a "red line".

Macron said he told Netanyahu "the release of all hostages" and the "demilitarisation of Hamas" were still an absolute priority for France.

He said he hoped for "a ceasefire, the release of all hostages, humanitarian aid, and then finally reopening the prospect of a political two-state solution".

Macron irked Israel last week when he suggested Paris could recognise a Palestinian state during a United Nations conference in New York in June.

Israel insists such moves by foreign states are premature.

But Macron has said he hopes French recognition of a Palestinian state will encourage not just other nations to follow suit, but also countries who do not recognise Israel to do so.



Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy (right) and Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, attend the London Sudan Conference 2025 at Lancaster House, yesterday.

Nations urge quick end to Sudan war, pledge 800mn euros in new aid

AFP London

Britain and European Union countries led international calls yesterday for "an immediate and permanent ceasefire" to end the devastating war in Sudan, as nations pledged more than 800 million euros in fresh humanitarian aid.

The international community also "stressed the necessity of preventing any partition of Sudan", a statement at the end of a London conference said, as the conflict entered its third year.

The war erupted on April 15, 2023 in a bitter power struggle between rival generals leading Sudan's regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Neither of the strongmen, whose forces have been both accused of atrocities, were present for the London talks which gathered ministers from some 15 countries, and high-level representatives from international bodies such as the United Nations.

More than 13mn people have been uprooted and tens of thousands killed in what the United Nations describes as the world's worst hunger and displacement

"We simply cannot look away," the UK's foreign minister David

"We have got to persuade the warring parties to protect civilians, to let aid in and across the country, and to put peace first," he

Various peace efforts have so far

failed to lead to a ceasefire.

But Lammy said it was "morally wrong" to give up on Sudan "when we see so many civilians beheaded, infants as young as one subjected to sexual violence, more people facing famine than anywhere else in the world".

The continued fighting has fuelled fears the tensions will spill over Sudan's borders and stir further instability in the impoverished Horn of Africa region.

And the final statement "underscored that the non-interference by outside actors remains paramount".

It also "rejected any plans, including any announcement of parallel governments, that risk the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sudan".

"There can be no military solution in Sudan, only an immediate, unconditional secession of hostilities," warned the African Union's commissioner for political affairs, Bankole Adeoye earlier in the day, urging inclusive peace talks.

A UN-backed assessment has concluded that famine is now blighting parts of the country.

Britain's foreign ministry said more than 30mn people were in desperate need, and 12mn women and girls were in danger of genderbased violence. Lammy unveiled £120mn in new aid for Sudan, with the EU pledging more than 522mn euros to address the crisis. and Germany putting up 125mn euros.

France also announced an extra 50mon euros in humanitarian aid this year. "How can we forget the world's largest humanitarian crisis?" asked German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

During a visit to a refugee camp, she said she heard "horrific reports of women and children being abused" and of people dying of

Germany and France as well as the European Union and the 55-member African Union cohosted the conference with the British government in London. The United States and Saudi Arabia were also said to be attending.

Sudan's government has protested that it was not invited, soliciting a rebuke from Khartoum.

But the German foreign ministry said both the Sudanese army and the RSF militia were unwilling to come to the table. Sudan has accused a Middle

East state of supporting the paramilitary forces with arms shipments. Those fighters and the state deny the charges. French Foreign Minister Jean-

Noel Barrot stressed "the unity of Sudan must be preserved" and there could be no unilateral government imposed on civilians.

The conflict pits the regular army of Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against the RSF led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo after relations between the two men soured following a 2021 coup.

That coup ousted a fragile transitional government put in place following the 2019 overthrow of long-time leader Omar al-Bashir.

he RSF are rooted in Darfur and control much of its territory, as well as parts of Sudan's south.

The army reclaimed the capital Khartoum last month, and holds sway in the east and north, leaving Africa's third-largest country divided in two.

Iraq sandstorm closes airports, puts 3,700 people in hospital

Palestinians inspect the damage at the site of an Israeli strike on a tent sheltering displaced people, in

AFP Baghdad

sandstorm swept through Iraq, filling the air with choking dust that closed airports and put more than 3,700 people in hospital with breathing difficulties, the health ministry said yesterday.

Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday

Visibility fell to less than one kilometre in central and southern cities as the storm cloaked

the region in an eerie orange haze, AFP photographers reported. Basra and Najaf airports both closed for the duration of the storm, which began to dissipate yesterday morning.

Health ministry spokesperson Saif al-Badr said Basra was the worst-hit province, accounting for more than 1,000 of the 3,747 hospital admissions attributed to the sandstorm. Many of those who dared to venture out in Basra wore face masks to protect themselves from the choking dust, an AFP photographer reported. Sandstorms are a peren-

nial feature of life in central and southern Iraq but the environment ministry has warned the country can expect to suffer a rising number of "dust days" in coming decades due to the impact of global warming.

A heavy sandstorm in 2022 saw one person die and more than 5,000 treated in hospital for breathing difficulties.

Somalia launches its first voter registration in capital in five decades

Mogadishu

omalia yesterday launched voter registration in the capital Mogadishu for the first time in over 50 years, a step towards universal suffrage ahead of presidential elections scheduled for 2026 in the volatile nation.

The east African country is struggling to emerge from decades of conflict and chaos, battling a bloody insurgency and frequent natural disasters.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud pledged last year to end the complex clan-based indirect voting system that had been in place since 1969, when the dictator Siad Barre seized power. An AFP correspondent observed dozens of people queuing to register in the Mogadishu district of Shangani, most of whom had never been in an electoral registration office before. "I'm still not sure about this and how it will work, but I'm very happy to be here today to register," said 25-year-old Ali Mohammed. While he welcomed the opportunity to vote, he voiced the scepticism of many, wondering "if this works".

Abdirahman Dhegey, 35, also waiting in line to register said: "We have never elected anybody before so if this registration works and we cast our



A Somali man provides his fingerprints during a biometric voter registration exercise in Mogadishu, yesterday,

vote to elect, it will be very good for the people." Somalia is due to hold local elections in June, using the one-person one-vote model, ahead of presidential polls that have been scheduled for 2026.

The election plan was first unveiled in 2023 but initially ran into problems, with leading Somali politicians saying it lacked the full support of all federal states, particularly the semi-autonomous state of Puntland. The cabinet eventually approved

Kenyan agents bust plot to smuggle giant ants for sale to foreign insect lovers

Reuters Nairobi

our smugglers caught trying to transport thousands of live ants out of Kenya for sale on exotic pet markets in Europe and Asia will be sentenced for trafficking wildlife in a case being hailed as a milestone by the Kenya Wildlife Service.

The KWS said authorities had intercepted live queen ants, including from the sought-after Messor Cephalotes species also known as the Giant African Harvester Ant, concealed in modified test tubes and syringes.

"Investigations revealed that the test tubes had been designed to sustain the ants for up to two months and evade airport security detection," the KWS said in a statement, describing this as "premeditated and well-executed". While some people may see ants as a picnic-ruining nuisance, aficionados enjoy keeping them in formicariums, transparent cases where they can watch them building complex colonies.

A court document seen by Reuters stated that the authorities had intercepted about 5,000 queens packed in 2,244 containers, with a street value of about 1mn Kenyan shillings (\$7,800).

Two Belgians, one Vietnamese and one Kenyan pleaded guilty on Monday to charges of illegal possession and trafficking of live wildlife and appeared again yesterday at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport Court. "We did not come here to break any laws. By accident and stupidity we did," said David Lornoy, one of the Belgian smugglers, as he asked the court to show leniency.

The court adjourned the case until April 23, when it will consider pre-sentencing reports from the KWS, National Museums of Kenya and the probation officer. The smugglers are in custody.

Khamenei downplays prospects of talks with US

AFP

ran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday he was satisfied with talks with the United States but warned they could ultimately prove fruitless.

Tehran and Washington are due to meet again in Muscat on Saturday, a week after top officials held the highest-level talks since the landmark 2015 nuclear accord col-

US President Donald Trump, who pulled out of the deal during his first term, revived his "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign after returning to office in January.

In March, he sent a letter to Khamenei urging talks and warning of possible military action if Iran refused. Saturday's talks were "well carried out in the first steps" Khamenei said, quoted by state television. "Of course, we are very pessimistic about the other side, but we are optimistic about our own capabilities." But he added that "the negotiations may or may not yield

results". Despite having no diplomatic ties since Iran's 1979 Revolution, both sides described the talks as "constructive". Iran insists discussions

remain "indirect" and mediated by Oman. On Monday, Trump again threatened to strike Iran's nuclear facilities if no deal was reached, saying Iranian authorities should not possess nuclear weapons.

Tehran denies seeking an atomic bomb, saying its nuclear programme is for peaceful purpose. Khamenei said Iran's "red lines

are clear", without elaborating. Earlier vesterday, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said the country's military capabilities were

off limits in the discussions. "National security and defence and military power are among the red lines of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which cannot be discussed or negotiated under any circumstances," Guards spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini said. On Monday, US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, who led the talks in Oman with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, said Iran should return to the 3.67% enrichment level stipulated in the 2015 accord.

He said the process with Iran "is going to be much about verification on the enrichment programme and then ultimately verification on weaponisation that includes missiles, the type of missiles that they have stockpiled there and it includes the trigger for a bomb".



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with government officials in Tehran, yesterday.

WORL



Philippines, China trade charges in new shoal row

China and the Philippines accused each other of dangerous manoeuvres in a hotly disputed shoal in the South China Sea. A Chinese coast guard vessel sped up and manoeuvred to block the navigation route of a Philippine vessel around 36 nautical miles off the Scarborough shoal, the Philippine Coast Guard said. "This incident highlights the CCG's non-compliance with the international regulations ... and reflects a blatant disregard for safety at sea," it said. China's coast guard said the Philippine vessel "dangerously approached" its ship and crossed its route, alleging it attempted to stage a false collision, Xinhua reported.

UK job market weakened ahead of business tax hike

The number of UK payrolled workers and job vacancies slid ahead of businesses being hit by tax hikes and US tariffs, official data showed. Preliminary figures for March showed the number of payrolled employees dropped by 78,000 from February, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. That compared with a decrease of 8,000 in February from January, the ONS added. Job vacancies in the three months to March dipped below pre-pandemic levels for the first time since 2021. Wage growth, however, remained elevated, with the annual growth in employees' average regular earning edging up to 5.9% in the three months to the end of February.

Crypto scammers hack UK minister's X account

The X account of a British minister was hacked vesterday to promote a fraudulent "House of Commons" cryptocurrency, her spokesperson said. "Lucv Powell's personal X account was hacked this morning," said a spokesman for the MP, who has been leader of the House of Commons since July. "Steps were taken quickly to secure the account and remove misleading posts," he added. The verified account, followed by nearly 70,000 people, was used early yesterday to spread a series of messages promoting the "House of Commons Coin (\$HCC)" cryptocurrency, allegedly linked to the lower house of the British parliament

Andrew Tate accusers suing for 'six-figure' sum, court hears

Four women suing the social media influencer Andrew Tate over abuse and coercive behaviour claims are seeking damages of more than £100,000 (\$132,000). London's High Court heard yesterday. Papers filed last week accuse Tate, a self-described misogynist, of rape and sexual assault, and of pointing a gun at a woman's face. Judge Richard Armstrong told a preliminary hearing of the civil case yesterday that the claimants were "seeking damages likely to reach six figures", and that there could be a three-week trial in early 2027. Tate's lawyer called the claims a "fabrication" and a

China orders airlines to suspend Boeing jet deliveries

Reuters Beijing

hina has ordered its airlines not to take further deliveries of Boeing jets in response to the US decision to impose 145% tariffs on Chinese goods, Bloomberg News reported yesterday, citing people familiar with the matter.

Shares of Boeing - which considers China one of its biggest growth markets and where rival Airbus holds a dominant position - were down 0.5% in midday

The global aerospace industry is being dragged into a USled trade war, with planemakers, airlines and suppliers reviewing contracts worth billions of dollars, after US supplier Howmet Aerospace ignited debate over who should bear the cost of the

Confusion over changing tariffs could leave aircraft deliveries in limbo, with some airline CEOs saying they would defer delivery of planes rather than pay duties.

China's top three airlines - Air China, China Eastern Airlines and China Southern Airlines had planned to take delivery of 45, 53 and 81 Boeing planes respectively between 2025 and

Chinese carriers halt purchases of aircraft-related equipment and parts from US companies, the Bloomberg report said.

Reuters has not been able to in-

Two aerospace industry sources said they had not been alerted independently to a blanket ban by China on US aircraft parts.

in deliveries to China would not have a major impact on Boeing, since the planemaker could redirect those jets to other airlines and because Airbus does not have capacity to supply the country

ficulty banning imports of new US parts to support its existing fleet of aircraft, including China's C919. "If China stops buying aircraft components from the US, the C919 programme is halted or dead," wrote Bank of America analyst Ron Epstein in a note to

The Chinese government is considering ways to provide assistance to airlines that lease Boeing jets and are facing higher costs, Bloomberg News reported. It was China that first ground-

Beijing has also asked that

dependently confirm the report.

Analysts said a short-term halt

China would have more dif-

ed Boeing's 737 MAX jets after two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019 killed nearly 350 people. China also suspended most orders and deliveries of the jet in 2019.

Boeing declined to comment. The halt in deliveries to China marks vet another setback for the planemaker, which is navigating a slow recovery following a challenging year marked by a labour strike, enhanced regulatory scrutiny and persistent supply chain

disruptions. Beijing's action follows its decision last week to hike levies on US imports to 125% in retaliation against US tariffs, which would significantly raise the cost of Boeing jets bound for Chinese carriers and potentially lead airlines to consider alternatives such as Airbus and domestic player COMAC.

Boeing's shares have shed more than a third of their value since a mid-air door panel blowout on a brand-new MAX 9 jet last year, which triggered a fresh wave of challenges for the company.

escalating tit-for-tat tariffs between the world's two biggest economies risk bringing goods trade between the two countries to a standstill. That trade was valued at over \$650bn in 2024.

UK secures fuel shipment to keep its last steel blast furnaces alight



Britain's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Secretary Jonathan Reynolds tours the facility as coking coal is unloaded at Immingham Port, northern England, yesterday to be transported to British Steel's steelworks site after payment was settled. Britain yesterday said it could keep the country's last steel blast furnaces burning for at least the next few weeks after securing a delivery of fuel - the latest step in a last-gasp government scramble to save domestic virgin steel production.

Rahul, Sonia Gandhi accused in India money laundering case

Reuters

pposition leader Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia, the most senior members of India's Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty, have been accused in a money laundering case by the country's financial crimes agency, news agency ANI

reported yesterday. The financial crimes agency, the enforcement directorate (ED), presented the findings of its investigation in the case, known as a charge sheet, to a New Delhi court.

The ED accused the Gandhis, who have previously denied any wrongdoing in the case, of forming a shell company to illegally take control of property worth \$300mn that belonged to a firm that published the National Herald newspaper.

The charge sheet also names

other members of the main opposition Congress party, ANI said. The ED did not immediately re-

spond to a request for comment. "Filing chargesheets against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and some others is nothing but the politics of vendetta and intimidation by the PM," Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X, referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Congress party and its leadership will not be silenced, Ramesh added.

Rahul Gandhi and Sonia were questioned by the ED in 2022 as November 2023, the agency said it had seized assets worth Rs7.52bn (\$87.72mn) linked to the case, including properties in New Delhi and Mumbai and equity investments.

part of a probe into the case. In

The National Herald newspaper was founded in 1937 by Jawaharlal Nehru, who went on to become India's first prime minister. Congress has been led for decades by his descendants: Rahul Gandhi is Nehru's great-grandson.

The ED yesterday also questioned Robert Vadra, Rahul Gandhi's brother-in-law, in an unrelated case involving alleged irregularities in land deals dating back to 2008 when a Congressled coalition governed India, local media reported.

India airlifted \$2bn worth of iPhones to US in March: data

Apple's main India suppliers Foxconn and Tata shipped nearly \$2bn worth of iPhones to the US in March, an all-time high, as the US company airlifted devices to bypass President Donald Trump's impending tariffs, customs data shows The smartphone maker stepped up production in India and chartered cargo flights to ferry 600 tonnes of iPhones to the US to ensure sufficient inventory in one of its biggest markets on concern Trump's tariffs would push up costs. In April, the US administration imposed 26% duties on imports from India, much lower than the more than 100% China was facing at the time. Trump has since paused most duties, except for China for three months Foxconn, Apple's main India supplier, exported smartphones worth \$1.31bn in March, its highest ever for a single month and equal to shipments for January and February combined, according to commercially available customs data.

Training session for mountaineers



Mountaineers practice walking on a ladder during a training session at Everest base camp, Nepal,

India 'to pursue trade liberalisation with US'

Reuters New Delhi

rndia has decided to pursue a path of trade liberalisation with the US, India's trade secretary said yesterday, with the two countries signing the terms of reference for the first part of a bilateral trade deal.

India and the US agreed in February to work on the first phase of a trade deal to be concluded late this year, with a view to reaching bilateral trade worth \$500bn by 2030.

"India has decided to go for a path of trade liberalisation with the US," trade secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters.

The two countries will start virtual discussions on the deal this month, with the next round of in-person talks scheduled for mid-May, added Rajesh Agrawal, an additional secretary in the

It was reported last month that India is open to cutting tariffs on more than half of US imports worth \$23bn in the first phase of a trade deal the two nations are negotiating, the biggest cut in years.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced a 90-day pause on most tariff hikes for major trading partners including India, while raising levies on China, providing temporary relief for Indian export-

Although Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first leaders to visit Washington and hold talks with Trump after he returned to the White House, the US president has continued to call India a

"tariff abuser" and "tariff king". During Modi's US visit in February, the two countries agreed to start talks towards clinching an early trade deal and resolving

India forecasts above-normal monsoon rains

Reuters New Delhi

'ndia is likely to see above-average monsoon rains for the second straight year in 2025, the government said yesterday, raising expectations of higher farm and economic growth in Asia's thirdbiggest economy.

The monsoon delivers nearly 70% of the rain needed to water crops and recharge reservoirs and aquifers. With nearly half of the country's farmland without any irrigation, it depends on the JuneSeptember rains to grow a number

Good rains will help to bring down food prices, to keep inflation at the central bank's comfort level, and to allow the world's biggest rice exporter to ship more of the staple.

The monsoon, which usually arrives over the southern tip of Kerala state around June 1 and retreats in mid-September, is expected to reach 105% of the long-term average this year, M Ravichandran, secretary in the ministry of earth sciences, told a news conference

The India Meteorological Department defines average or normal rainfall as ranging between 96% and 104% of a 50-year average of 87cm for the four-month

Above-average rainfall is very likely over most parts of the country, except for some areas over northwest India, northeast India, and southern peninsular India, where below-average rainfall is likely, Ravichandran said.

The El Nino weather phenomenon, which usually leads to below normal monsoon rains, is unlikely to occur during the four-monthlong monsoon season, said Ravichandran. In 2024, India received 107.6% of its long period average rainfall, against a forecast of

Steady agricultural growth will boost rural consumption and keep inflation near the Reserve Bank of India's estimate, enabling flexibility in rate cuts amid global volatility, said Aditi Gupta, economist at Bank of Baroda.

The RBI lowered its key repo rate last week for a second consecutive time and changed its monetary policy stance, signalling room for more cuts ahead as it seeks to boost the sluggish economy in the face of fresh US tariffs.

"While a further 50 basis points cut is almost a certainty even more rate cuts are not ruled out if retail inflation remains below 3.5% levels," said Madhavankutty G, chief economist at Canara Bank.

India's retail inflation eased to 3.34% in March, the slowest pace in over five years, as food prices continued to soften, government

data released vesterday showed. India is the world's biggest exporter of rice and onions, and the second-biggest producer of sugar. Following surplus rainfall in 2024, India lifted curbs on rice and onion exports but allowed limited sugar exports of 1mn tonnes.

"Above-average rains for the second year will help New Delhi increase sugar, rice and onion exports. It will also help reduce edible oil imports," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trade house.

The world's largest importer of edible oils, India currently fulfils nearly two-thirds of its demand through overseas purchases of palm oil, sovoil and sunflower oil, primarily from Indonesia, Malaysia, Argentina, Brazil, Russia,

COMMENT

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- editor@gulf-times.com
- 44350478 (News),
- **9** 44466404 (Sport)
- **9** 44466636 (Home delivery)
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- facebook.com/gulftimes
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Trade war, bearish demand outlook weigh on oil prices

Oil prices have has dropped about \$10 this month as the trade war started by US President Donald Trump stoked fears of a global recession that would hurt energy demand, especially in the US and China, the biggest crude consumers.

Concerns about the impact of a tit-for-tat trade war on global growth and demand for oil sent Brent crude prices plummeting by more than 20% within a week to a four-year low after Trump announced his sweeping tariffs on April 2.

Concerns around the growth outlook have led agencies to cut demand views and analysts to slash price forecasts, with the possibility of a glut amplified by Opec+'s surprise decision to bring back output more quickly than expected.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) yesterday slashed forecasts for global oil demand this year, while Opec on Monday lowered its outlook, expecting demand to grow by 1.3mn bpd in 2025, down from a previous forecast of 1.4mn bpd.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec)

now sees global demand reaching at total 105.05mn bpd this year. It also slightly lowered its global economic growth forecast to 3%. Meanwhile, the IEA chopped projections for 2025 demand growth by a hefty 300,000 bpd — or almost a third — to 730,000 bpd. Half of the reduction was concentrated in the US and China,

which are engaged in a full-blown trade war. The plunge in oil prices following the twin shocks of Trump's tariffs and the surprise boost in production from Opec+ has altered the global energy landscape with stunning speed.

The plunge in oil prices following the twin shocks of tariffs and the surprise boost in Opec+ production has altered the global energy landscape with stunning speed

Already the oil market is tossing aside expectations

Goldman Sachs Group, one of Wall Street's longstanding crude bulls, cut its year-end price forecast last Thursday for Brent crude by \$5, to \$66 a barrel.

Enverus has slashed more than a third from its demand-growth model. UBS Group, which at the start of the year forecast global demand would grow by 1.1mn bpd, is now cutting that up to nearly

In Europe, the plunge in prices is welcome news. The tariffs sent gas there plunging to a six-month low on expectations that trade wars could cripple

global energy demand and ease the market's recent tightness. Those lower prices bring a relief to a region struggling to stockpile enough gas for next winter. If China's economy slows, Europe is less likely to face competition to buy liquefied natural

gas cargoes from the US and elsewhere But many of Opec+ members require high oil prices to cover government spending.

Saudi Arabia, for instance, needs oil above \$90 a barrel, according to the International Monetary Fund. Iraq also needs prices above \$90 a barrel, while Kazakhstan needs more than \$115, the IMF estimates.

Back in the US, lower oil prices have led shale investors to settle in to a harsh, new reality.

Crude hit a four-year low this month as the trade war especially the confrontation between the US and China - stoked fears of a global recession that would hurt energy demand. A surprise Opec+ decision to bring back shuttered output more quickly than expected has added to bearishness.

In a wider sense, oil's see-saw trajectory is a double-edged

Major oil producing countries will lose money regardless of the market share they enjoy. The Gulf countries produce oil at the lowest cost; but due to high government spending, they need higher prices to balance their budgets.

But big importing nations such as China, India and Germany could get some relief from falling energy bills.

But cheap oil can cut investments to develop new oil and gas

The world is in need of a stable oil market with price

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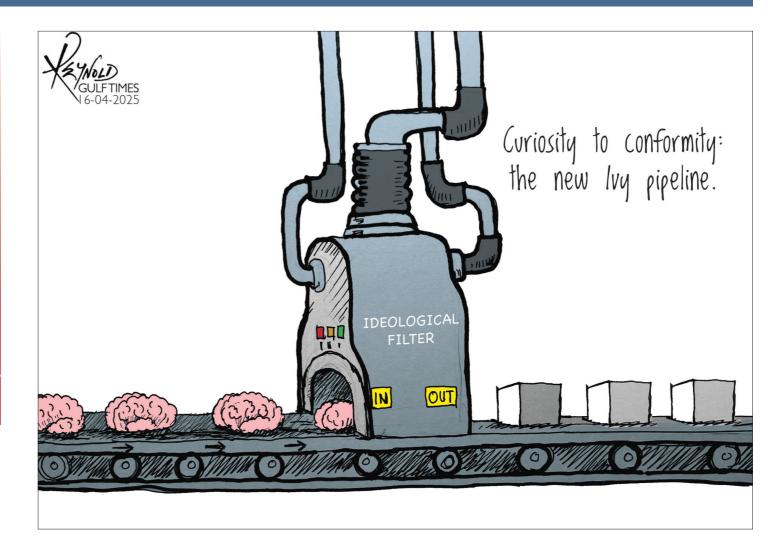
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Governments aren't startups

By Mariana Mazzucato and **Rainer Kattel**

round the world, governments are trying to reinvent themselves ■in the image of business. Elon Musk's DOGE crusade in the United States is quite explicit on this point, as is Argentina's president, Javier Milei. But one also hears similar rhetoric in the United Kingdom, where Cabinet Office Minister Pat McFadden wants the government to foster a "test-and-learn" culture and move toward performance-based management.

The problem is that governments and businesses serve vastly different purposes. If public policymakers start mimicking business founders, they will undermine their own ability to address complex societal challenges.

For startups, the highest priority is rapid iteration, technology-driven disruption, and financial returns for investors. on solving a narrowly defined problem with a single product, or within a single organisation. Governments, by contrast, must tackle complex, interconnected issues like poverty, public health, and national security. Each challenge calls for collaboration across multiple sectors, and careful long-term planning. The idea of securing short-term gains in any of these areas doesn't even make sense.

Unlike startups, governments are supposed to uphold legal mandates, ensure the provision of essential services, and enforce equal treatment under the law - more important today than ever. Metrics like market share are irrelevant, because the government has no competitors. Rather than trying to "win", it should focus on expanding opportunities and promoting the diffusion of best practices. It must be long-term minded, while achieving nimble and flexible structures that can adapt.

Introducing a new digital health app within a weak healthcare system may offer incremental

improvements, but it will not address underlying systemic issues, like a shortage of medical workers or geographic challenges. Worse, if startup logic is applied to public services, it could lead to piecemeal solutions that exacerbate existing inefficiencies. For example, a city might create an app to report potholes, gaining quick wins in citizen engagement. However, this doesn't help the city to consider more sustainable transportation systems and lower carbon emissions that impact citizens' health.

The process by which governments learn to deliver better outcomes is profoundly different from that of a startup. Rather than blindly embracing startup culture, governments should examine past efforts to modernise and reform public services. There are several lessons to be learned.

First, the public sector needs a new foundation in economics. The prevailing model's emphasis on "efficiency" too often confuses outputs (how many school meals were subsidised?) with outcomes (how nutrition and sustainably or locally sourced were the meals?), and it rests on an overly simplified public-private dichotomy. The result is an overreliance on superficial heuristics like cost-benefit analysis, which does not necessarily measure progress toward desired systemic outcomes.

Governments also need to improve how they account for the long-term value of public investment. For example, UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves is right to shift the focus from the public sector's net debt to its net financial liabilities, which better recognises the return on public investments by including illiquid assets (government loans) and other financial liabilities (monetary gold). But Reeves' scheme still does not reflect the value of nonfinancial assets (like government ownership of infrastructure and housing), and its short-term horizon prevents it from creating an incentive structure for longerterm investments.

A second lesson is that diversity

is an asset, not an exercise in political correctness. Over the past century, the public sector strived for universality and uniformity: services should be as good and as accessible in small towns as they are in wealthier cities. But how those services are delivered also matters. Creating an adaptive, outcomes-focused public sector requires a more diverse workforce, ongoing training, multiple analytical perspectives, and a portfolio of interventions (since there are no silver bullets).

Third, the public sector needs to strike a balance between its political, policymaking, and implementation capabilities. Governments are more than administrative machines; they require political leadership, a sense of purpose, and the ability to adjust policies. Too often, public-sector reform focuses on technocratic efficiency, while neglecting the need to articulate and execute on a vision that will win public support.

Some municipal leaders have been pioneering new models. politics of grievance, for example, mayors from Barcelona to Bogotá have been elected on platforms of urban transformation. Their success underscores the importance of balancing political vision with feasible implementation.

More broadly, to equip the public sector with the capacity it needs to address contemporary challenges, governments and what one of us has called "entrepreneurial states" - must cultivate six capabilities that will enable them to learn, adapt, and adjust. The first is strategic awareness: an ability to identify emerging challenges and opportunities proactively. The second is agenda adaptability, so that priorities can be balanced while responding to crises. The third is coalition-building and partnerships, so that the public sector can foster collaboration across sectors and with communities.

The fourth capability is selftransformation: the continual updating of public agencies' skill sets, organisational structures.

and operational models. This presupposes a fifth capability: experimentation and iterative problem-solving in publicservice delivery. And, lastly, the public sector needs outcomesoriented tools and institutions.

Building such capabilities across the public sector requires rethinking public-service training, competency frameworks, and organisational models. Above all, however, it means rethinking how we measure and assess the public sector's work. That is why we at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) are creating a Public Sector Capabilities Index, to evaluate government capabilities at the city level. Such tools can identify gaps in skills or resources, while linking capability development to better outcomes.

Governments should not be run like startups, because they serve vastly different purposes, answer to different constituencies, and operate on entirely different timelines. Rather than chasing a Silicon Valley mirage, policymakers should focus on building the structur and capabilities that enable governments to be responsive, resilient, and effective. (Alongside our work at the IIPP, others, like Jennifer Pahlka and Andrew Greenway at the Niskanen Center, have offered further visions of what this could look like.)

Reform must be rooted in a deep understanding of publicsector dynamics, rather than in the desire to mimic unicorns chasing the next big disruption - too little too late. And yes, we are learning in real time that disruption alone is a recipe for disaster. - Project Syndicate

 Mariana Mazzucato is Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London and the author, most recently, of The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens Our Businesses, Infantilizes Our Governments and Warps Our Economies.

• Rainer Kattel is Deputy Director and Professor of Innovation and Public Governance at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose.





French prisons hit by mystery arson and gunfire attacks

AFP Paris

wave of co-ordinated attacks have hit prisons across France, with unknown assailants torching cars outside several jails, leaving mysterious inscriptions and hitting one facility with automatic gunfire.

In recent months Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin and Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau have vowed to intensify the fight against narcotics and drug-related crime.

Overnight Sunday to Monday, a prison warden's car set on fire in Seine-et-Marne outside Paris and fire was set to seven vehicles in the car park of a prison staff training centre in Agen in southwest France, a prosecutor's office and police source said.

But most of the incidents several car torchings and an automatic gunfire attack on a prison near the southern city of Toulon

were recorded overnight Monday to yesterday. The inscription "DDPF" – standing for "French prisoners' rights" – was found at nearly all sites, except for the prison near Toulon where assailants left the mysterious acronym "DDFM".

The national anti-terrorist prosecutor's office said it was taking charge of the investigation.

Darmanin yesterday travelled to the prison near Toulon that was targeted by gunfire.

French authorities "will not give in," he told the press outside the jail, adding no one had yet claimed responsibility for the attacks.

"Attempts are being made to intimidate penal institutions, ranging from the burning of vehicles to automatic gunfire," he wrote on X

France is facing "drug trafficking, and is taking measures that will seriously disrupt criminal networks," he added, promising a "firm" government response.

Darmanin, who is a former in-

terior minister, is presiding over what he calls a "prison revolution" that envisages putting 200 of France's 700 most dangerous drug traffickers in two top-security prisons.

The plan follows the escape from custody last year of suspected drugs baron Mohamed Amra that killed two prison guards. He has since been re-arrested in Romania and extradited back to France. All lines of inquiry are being pursued over this week's attacks, but investigators are not ruling out that anarchists could be behind them, one source close to the case said.

But Darmanin said the methods seemed reminiscent of those used in the drugs world.

"It looks awfully like what I knew when I was interior minister: people paid a couple of hundred or thousand euros on small contracts to intimidate," he said.

A source close to the matter told AFP it looked like a co-ordinated attack "clearly linked to the anti-



French Minister of Justice Gerald Darmanin talks to the press following his visit of the Toulon-La Farlede prison in La Farlede, near Toulon, southern France, yesterday, after 15 bullet impacts were found on the front gate following an attack with a "Kalashnikov-type" assault weapon. (AFP)

drug gang strategy" pursued by Darmanin.

Retailleau called for a "prompt" reinforcement of "the protection of prison officers and establishments". Early Monday night, several individuals armed with automatic rifles targeted the gate of the prison near Toulon, according to the authorities.

The prison's grey gates were peppered with bullet holes and spray-painted with a mysterious inscription reading "DDFM", an AFP journalist reported.

In the southern port city of Marseille, ten prison vehicles were tagged with the inscription DDPF overnight Monday to yesterday, the head of the Bouches-du-Rhone department, Martine Vassal, said on X.

In the car park of the Villepinte prison north of Paris, three vehicles - including two belonging to prison staff - were set on fire, a police source said. A fuel canister was found on site, and CCTV footage showed two individuals torch-

Cars were also torched in Aix and Valence in the south of the country, a police source said.

"These criminal acts are a fullon attack on our institution, on the republic and the staff who serve the republic every day," the FO Justice union said, calling for a "strong, clear response" from the

Wilfried Fonck, national secretary for the UFAP UNSA Justice union, told AFP the prison system did not have enough staff to secure prison perimeters "24/7".

'Unprecedented' Europe raids net 200 arrests, drugs haul

AFP Istanbul/The Hague

olice in Europe staged "unprecedented" raids against four organised crime groups yesterday, arresting more than 200 people across five countries, primarily in Turkiye, in a "massive blow" against drugtrafficking networks.

Alongside the arrests, officers in Operation "Bulut" ("Cloud" in Turkish) seized more than 21 tonnes of drugs, including 3.3mn MDMA tablets, said EU police agency Europol, which co-ordinated the sting.

"This was one of the biggest strikes against organised crime groups in recent years," Andy Kraag, head of Europol's European Serious Organised Crime Centre, told AFP in an inter-

Images of the raids showed armed police storming into properties, apprehending suspects and pinning them to the floor before handcuffing them. Authorities also confiscated drugs, vehicles and cash used by the groups

"This is a massive blow because I think it's unprecedented," said Kraag, adding the operation sent "a big message to organised crime."

"And the message is basically that even though you might think that you're resilient, that you're a big player, at the end of the day, you will get dismantled," warned Kraag.

Police detained a total of 234 people in the co-ordinated raids, 225 of whom were picked up in Turkiye, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya told reporters earlier yesterday.

Yerlikaya said the groups were aiming to ship cocaine to Turkiye and Europe by sea and land from South American countries, as well as heroin from Iran and Afghanistan, skunk cannabis through the Balkans, and ecstasy through Europe.

The four dismantled groups were also involved in money laundering, violent crime, and other shady criminal activities.

As well as Turkiye, police made arrests in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany

Europol's Kraag said authorities had detained the whole network of these groups from the top boss to the low-end street criminal." The sting was made possible by reading messages from the cracking four years ago of encrypted communications platforms Sky ECC and ANOM used by criminals.

Kraag told AFP that the "gold min tercepted messages was "like the gift that keeps on giving."

"They constantly lead to actionable intelligence and to ongoing operations," he said.

"I would not exclude further arrests," added

Ukraine, following talks seeking to end the more than three-year war.

has said that Russian leader Vladimir Putin was open to a "permanent peace" deal with Trump has been pressing Moscow and Kyiv to agree to a ceasefire but has failed to extract

Trump envoy: Putin

open to 'permanent'

Ukraine peace deal

US President Donald Trump's special envoy

any major concessions from the Kremlin, despite repeated negotiations between Russian and US officials. On Friday, Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff met with Putin in Saint Petersburg – their third meeting since the Republican leader returned to the White House in January. Witkoff said during a Fox News interview televised Monday that he sees a peace deal "emerging," and that two key Putin advisers - Yuri Ushakov and Kirill Dmitriev were in the "compelling meeting."

"Putin's request is to get to have a permanent peace here. So beyond the ceasefire, we got an answer to that," Witkoff said, acknowledging that "it took a while for us to get to this place." "I think we might be on the verge of something that would be very, very important for the world at large." He added that business deals between Russia and the United States were also part of the negotiations

"I believe there's a possibility to reshape the Russian-United States relationship through some very compelling commercial opportunities, that I think give real stability to the region too," he said.

Nearly 60,000 Afghans return from Pakistan in two weeks

AFP

early 60,000 Afghans have been forced to leave Pakistan since the start of April, the International Organisation for Migration said yesterday, after Islamabad ramped up a campaign to deport migrants to Afghanistan.

Pakistan last month set an early April deadline for some 800,000 ghans carrying Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) issued by the Pakistani authorities to leave the country, in the second phase of efforts to remove Afghans.

"Between 1 and 13 April 2025, IOM recorded a sharp rise in forced returns, with nearly 60,000 individuals crossing back into Afghanistan through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border points," the UN agency said in a statement. Families with their belongings in tow have crowded the crossings at Torkham in the north and Spin Boldak in the south. recalling scenes in 2023 when tens of thousands of Afghans fled deportation threats in Pakistan.

"With a new wave of largescale returns now underway from Pakistan, needs on the ground are rising rapidly - both at the border and in areas of return that are

struggling to absorb large numbers of returnees," said Mihyung Park, head of the IOM's Afghanistan mission.

The UN says nearly three million Afghans live in Pakistan, many having been there for decades, after fleeing successive conflicts in their country and following the Taliban's return to power in Kabul in 2021.

More than 1.3mn Afghans who hold Proof of Registration cards from the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, have also been move outside the capital Islamabad and the neighbouring city of Rawalpindi. The Taliban authorities have repeatedly called for Afghans to be allowed a "dignified" return to Afghanistan.

As Afghans again began streaming over the border in large numbers, the Taliban Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said: "The mistreatment of them (Afghans) by neighbouring countries is unacceptable and intolerable."

Ties between the two countries have frayed since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.

Islamabad has accused Kabul's rulers of failing to root out militants sheltering on its soil, a charge the Taliban government denies, as Pakistan has seen a sharp rise in violence in border regions with Afghanistan.

Zuckerberg admits he bought Instagram because its camera was 'better'

Reuters Washington

eta CEO Mark Zuckerberg made a key concession at a US antitrust trial, saying he bought Instagram because it had a "better" camera than the one his company was trying to build under its flagship Facebook brand at the time.

The acknowledgement appeared to bolster allegations by US antitrust enforcers that Meta had used a "buy or bury" strategy to snap up potential rivals, keep smaller competitors at bay and maintain an illegal monopoly. It came during Zuckerberg's second day testi-

fying at the high-stakes trial in Washington, in which the US Federal Trade Commission is seeking to unwind Meta's acquisitions of prized assets Instagram and WhatsApp.

The case, filed during President Donald Trump's first term, is widely seen as a test of the new Trump administration's promises to take on Big Tech companies.

Asked by an attorney for the FTC whether he thought fast-growing Instagram could be destructive to Meta, then known as Facebook, Zuckerberg said he believed Instagram had a better camera than what his company was building.

"We were doing a build vs buy analysis" while in the process of building a camera app, Zuckerberg said. "I thought that Instagram was better at that, so I thought it was better to buy them."

The company argues that his past intentions are irrelevant because the FTC has defined the social media market inaccurately and failed to account for stiff competition Meta has faced from ByteDance's TikTok, Alphabet's YouTube and Apple's messaging app.

Zuckerberg also acknowledged that many of the company's attempts at building its own apps

"Building a new app is hard and many more times than not when we have tried to build a new app it hasn't gotten a lot of traction," Zuckerberg

told the court. "We probably tried building dozens of apps



Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies during a Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and Senate Judiciary Committee joint hearing about Facebook on Capitol

over the history of the company and the majority of them don't go anywhere," he said.

Zuckerberg's testimony comes as Meta is defending itself years after the release of damning statements plucked from Facebook's own documents, like a 2008 e-mail in which he said "it is better to buy than compete."

The FTC accuses Meta of holding a monopoly on platforms used to share content with friends and family, where its main competitors in the United States are Snap's Snapchat and MeWe, a tiny privacy-focused social media app launched

Platforms where users broadcast content to strangers based on shared interests, such as X, TikTok, YouTube and Reddit, are not interchangeable, the FTC argues.

Zuckerberg also disputed the FTC's claim that Meta is able to show users more ads because it

lacks competitors, another key pillar of the case.

While antitrust lawsuits typically look to a monopolist's ability at a monopolist's ability to raise prices on customers, the FTC has pointed to Meta's ability to lower the quality of apps that users access for free, such as by increasing the

Zuckerberg pushed back on the idea that more ads equals a worse user experience, saying ads on Meta's apps have improved and its system is designed to "show more ad content to people who like seeing ad content."

Meta has even contemplated introducing a feed that was all ads, Zuckerberg suggested under questioning by FTC attorney Daniel Math-

"I think we have discussed it at different points but I don't think we have done it," Zuck-

OpenAI working on X-like social media network

OpenAI is working on its own X-like social media network, the Verge reported yesterday, citing multiple sources familiar with the matter. There is an internal prototype focused on ChatGPT's image generation that has a social feed, the report said. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has been privately asking outsiders for feedback about the project, which is still in early stages, according to the Verge. It is unclear whether the company plans to release the social network as a separate application or integrate it into ChatGPT, the report said.

The company did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The potential move could escalate tensions between Altman and billionaire Elon Musk - the owner of X and an OpenAl co-founder who left the startup in 2018 before it emerged as a front-runner in the generative artificial intelligence race. The feud has intensified in recent months. In February, a consortium of investors led by Musk made an unsolicited \$97.4bn bid for the control of OpenAI, only to be rejected by Altman with a swift "no thank you".

Musk had sued the ChatGPT maker and Altman last year, alleging they had abandoned OpenAl's original goal of developing Al for the benefit of humanity - not corporate gain. OpenAl counter-sued Musk earlier this month, accusing him of

a pattern of harassment and attempting to derail its shift to a for-profit model. The two parties are set to begin a jury trial in spring next year.

An OpenAl social network could also put the company in direct competition with Facebook-owner Meta, which is reportedly working on a standalone Meta Al service. In February, Altman responded on X over media reports on Meta's plans, saying "ok fine maybe we'll do a social app".

Both Meta and X have access to a massive amount of data public content posted by users on their social media platforms that they train their AI models on.

Winners of 'Arab **Prize for Encouraging Research in Social** Sciences, Humanities'

■he Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies vesterday announced the winners of the 'Arab Prize for Encouraging Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities' at the closing ceremony of the 10th Social Sciences and Humanities Conference.

The award ceremony was attended by HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater and Dr Azmi Bishara, director general of the Arab Center and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, alongside other dignitaries, guests, members of the prize committee and a distinguished group of Arab researchers.

During the ceremony, Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi, chair of the Prize Committee, announced this year's winners. The award was granted to Mahjoba Gaogo for her research titled "Social Media and Electronic Surveillance: An Anthropological Study of Digital Life Stories", Nadim Mansouri for

"Tribalism and Social Practices in the Digital Society: A Socio-Digital Reading", and Youssef Zaddam for "Ethics, Politics, and Social Media: A Study on the Scope and Limits of Ethical Responsibility in Political Interaction."

Launched in 2011, the Arab Prize is a competitive initiative by the Arab Center aimed at encouraging creative scientific research among Arab scholars in the fields related to the evolution of Arab societies. Since 2017, the prize has been integrated with the

conference's peer-reviewed paper submissions. Over the years, the prize has honoured 54 researchers from across the Arab world for their exceptional contributions to the social sciences and humani-

Awarded biennially, the prize recognises up to three outstanding research papers submitted at the conference. Each winner receives a certificate of achievement, a \$10,000 encouragement award, and a \$40,000 research grant to further develop their winning study as a first option or pursue a new research project.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Dr Bishara announced the theme of the 11th edition of the

conference and the Arab Prize: "Social Sciences, Humanities, and Artificial Intelligence in the Arab World." He also encouraged researchers to contribute to this timely topic, with the official call for papers and reference guidelines to be released soon on the Arab Center's website and social

media channels.



The Qatar Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka opens

The Qatar Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, a stunning dhow-inspired structure designed by Kengo Kuma, opened yesterday (April 15), showcasing the vital relationship between Qatar's land and sea.

The pavilion was commissioned by Oatar's Ministry of Commerce and Industry with creative and content direction led by the Oatar Blueprint, a think tank within Chairperson's Office of Qatar Museums (QM).

In a press statement, QM Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani said: "We are proud to share these experiences with the international audience at Expo 2025 Osaka. Congratulations to the Qatar Pavilion commissioner-general HE Jaber Jarallah al-Marri, ambassador of Qatar to Japan, and HE Sheikh Ali Alwaleed al-Thani, commissioner-general and chairman of the preparation committee. Thank you to the brilliant design teams at Kengo Kuma & Associates and OMA*AMO."

Housed in an extraordinary structure, a multimedia exhibition conceived by OMA*AMO explores how the nation's 563-km coastline has shaped the culture, heritage, identity, and industry of Qatar.

The pavilion is the nation's official contribution to Expo 2025 aka, dedicated to helping the world achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. It will remain on view through Octo-

Kengo Kuma's design for the Qatar Pavilion recalls the form of a dhow. The lightweight timber structure wrapped in flowing white fabric employs both traditional Qatari and Japanese woodjoinery techniques, linking the nations' maritime heritage in tribute to the close relations between the two nations, both of which have established pearling histories. Approaching the pavilion's en-



The Qatar Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka. Photo courtesy Qatar Museums



trance, an outdoor vitrine welcomes visitors with poems by Qatar's Founder, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani, and Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hassan al-Muhannadi printed on representations of the coast.

Inside the Pavilion, visitors reach the 'land' with sands of various hues representing the desert landscapes of inland Qatar and backlit wall graphics that showcase rock carvings discovered on the coastal region of Al Jassasiya during archaeological surveys from the 1950s to the 1970s. Two maps illustrate Qatar's historical trajectory and modern development, visually illustrating 200 years of dramatic coastal transformation.

The exhibition's main space features a panorama of the Qatari coastline and a 'Sea Curtain' Central to the exhibition is a threescreen film by The Explorers that tells the story of Qatar's journey from the past into the present through archival footage and con-

temporary imagery. In line with Expo 2025's overarching theme, 'Designing Future Society for Our Lives,' the exhibition highlights the central role of the Qatari people in shaping the nation's development and vision for the future and illustrates how different sectors in Oatar have complemented each other to em power and enrich the lives of Qa-

The section titled Land & Sea - Navigating the Journey, curated by the National Museum of Qatar, focuses on the pearl divers (ghawaseen) who for centuries risked their lives along the coast, and the pearl merchants (altawash) who brought Qatari goods to international markets. It also looks at the role of women in these communities through objects found in coastal houses across the Arabian Peninsula.

The pavilion's second floor





features a library curated by Qatar-based Atlas Bookstore and a meeting room, or majlis, with seating by Qatari designer Maryam al-Homaid. A special display celebrates Qatar-Japan relations as well as artworks by Yousef Ahmed (Qatar) and Hayaki Nishigaki (Japan), created as part of Qatar-Japan 2012 Year of Culture. The second floor's flexible layout allows it to host events, lectures, workshops, and more.

Photographers featured throughout the pavilion are Fatema Ibrahim al-Sehlawi, Meera Badran, Samir Bantal, Suzuki Hisao / NUAA, Alexey Sergeev, Hasan Zaidi and The Explorers.

The pavilion's official employee uniforms are designed by Qatari fashion label Terzi. Identity for the Qatar Pavilion was developed by Government Communications Office - State of Qatar, QC+, Terzi, and Stúdio Noor Saad.

Qatar participates in opening



Qatar participated in the opening ceremony of Expo 2025 in the Japanese city of Osaka, held under the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives." More than 130 countries and 25 international organisations are participating in the event which is expected to attract approximately 28mn visitors from around the world, including 3.5mn from outside Japan.

The delegation participating in the opening ceremony included Qatar's ambassador and Commissioner-General of the Qatar Pavilion at the Expo, Jaber bin Jarallah al-Marri, Deputy Commissioner-General and Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for Qatar's Participation at the Expo, Sheikh Ali bin Alwaleed al-Thani, and Vice-Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for Qatar's Participation at the Expo, Tariq al-

Qatar's participation in this global event affirms its commitment to expanding co-operation with various countries across various sectors, including economy, culture, and innovation. Through its pavilion at the Expo. Oatar seeks to showcase its future vision and achieve sustainable development goals, in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030. The Qatar Pavilion at Expo Osaka 2025 will serve as a dynamic platform to showcase the country's achievements in innovation, technology, and sustainability. It also offers an opportunity to engage with a global audience, highlighting the beauty of Qatari culture, its history, and its diverse natural landscapes. (QNA)

Science Café discusses autism research



International experts gathered at Science Café in Doha.

Msheireb Museums and Sidra Medicine hosted the latest Science Café session on Monday at Bin Jelmood House, bringing international experts together to discuss advancements in autism research, diagnosis, and support during World Autism Month. Themed 'Autism and Neurodiversity: From Breakthroughs to Real-Life Journeys,' the event also coincided with the AutismTech Conference hosted by Hamad Bin Khalifa University. The Science Café session featured two panel discussions: 'The Power of Genomics in Diagnostics,' examining how genetic research is enhancing autism diagnosis and treatment; and 'Al, Technology, and the Future of Healthcare,' focusing on how artificial intelligence and emerging technologies are reshaping autism assessment and intervention strategies. Dr Sahar Da'as, research manager at Sidra Medicine and founder of the Science Café series, said: "As a mother of a teenager with autism, this session held profound significance for me. It is both humbling and empowering to witness global experts

gathering here in Qatar to exchange insights and inspire action. "Our focus on genomics, technology, and real-life journeys is not just about science - it's about reshaping futures. To see research transforming into hope and practical change for families like mine is the most meaningful progress of all." Msheireb Museums general manager Abdulla al-Naama emphasised the significance of hosting events aligned with Qatar Foundation initiatives: "By providing a platform for these critical discussions between global leaders and local communities, Msheireb Museums continues to fulfil its role in enhancing understanding and improving lives. This session demonstrates how cultural institutions can effectively complement scientific forums while promoting social inclusion.'

The two panels featured prominent speakers including Dr Stephen Kanne, director of the Centre for Autism and the Developing Brain and Professor at Weill Cornell Medicine; Dr Mohammed Aldosari, paediatric neurologist and director of the Centre for Paediatric Neurosciences at Cleveland Clinic; Dr Connie Kasari, distinguished professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles; Dr Stephen Scherer, chief of Research at SickKids; Dr Alia Satti, attending physician in Developmental Pediatrics at Sidra Medicine; Christopher Banks, president and CEO of the Autism Society of America; Dr Qazi Fazli Azeem, assistant professor at Al Akhawayn University; and Mursi Seraj, technology advocate at MADA Centre. Prof Khalid Fakhro, chief research officer at Sidra Medicine, who also spoke at the AusTech Conference said: "Sidra Medicine is building unique programmes around personalised medicine, leveraging its complementary strengths in advanced research capabilities and excellent clinical care. This is the approach with our Baraka-Qatar study, built as a collaborative initiative between multiple institutions to advance Autism Spectrum Disorder research across the Mena region".