

and 23 others were wounded". Survivors described a large explosion at the densely packed encampment zone that set multiple tents ablaze. Bassal said that Israeli strikes on two other encampments of displaced Gazans killed a further nine people — seven in the northern town of Beit Lahia, and a father and son near Al-Mawasi. Separately, the civil defence reported two more attacks on displaced people in Jabalia — one that killed at least seven members of the Asaliya family, and another that killed six people at a school being used as a shelter. **(AFP)**





## Iraqi PM meets culture minister



Prime Minister of Iraq Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani met with HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, who is visiting Iraq. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance the exchange of expertise and experiences in the cultural fields between the two fraternal countries. They also emphasised the importance of continuing co-ordination and joint work to support the culture, tourism, and antiquities sectors and highlight their vital role in societies.

## Iraqi president meets culture minister



President of Iraq Dr Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid met in Baghdad with HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani. At the beginning of the meeting, HE the Minister of Culture conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the president and continued progress and prosperity to the brotherly people of Iraq. Meanwhile, President Rashid entrusted HE the Minister of Culture with his greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the Amir and further progress and prosperity to the Qatari people. During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to boost them. **(QNA)**

## Justice Minister chairs attorneys' admission committee meeting



The Attorneys' Admission Committee, chaired by HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi, convened yesterday to discuss several items on its agenda. During the meeting, three new lawyers took the legal oath before the committee. The meeting also considered applications to register professionals with equivalent qualifications under the practicing lawyers' roll, approved registration of a trainee lawyer, and reviewed a request to transfer a lawyer to the practicing roll before the Court of Appeal. The committee further discussed a number of regulatory matters and professional standards related to legal practice, including reports from its subcommittees, and made the appropriate decisions. HE al-Mohannadi congratulated the new lawyers, reaffirming the committee's commitment to creating an enabling environment for lawyers to fulfil their noble role in serving society and strengthening Qatar's legal and judicial system. **(QNA)**

## Health minister meets Italian counterpart



HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud met with Minister of Health of the Italian Republic Professor Orazio Schillaci, who is currently visiting the country. During the meeting, the two sides discussed relations between the two countries in the health sector and ways to enhance and develop them. **(QNA)**

## Grenada PM meets minister of state for international co-operation

Prime Minister of the State of Grenada Dickon Mitchell met yesterday in Doha with HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad. The agenda items included ways to boost bilateral relations and topics of common interest. **(QNA)**



## Minister, Türkiye's Deputy FM discuss ties



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi yesterday held a virtual meeting with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye Burhanettin Duran. During the meeting, they discussed relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, based on the existing strategic partnership between the two fraternal countries. They also exchanged views on key regional and international issues of common interest, particularly the latest developments in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. In this regard, the two sides emphasised the importance of continued co-ordination and consultation between the two countries to contribute to supporting security and stability efforts in Africa. **(QNA)**

## Regional honour for top executives

Qatar Tourism (QT) chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji has been recognised among Economy Middle East's '30 Hospitality and Tourism Leaders Driving Growth in the Middle East' for 2025.

The accolade highlights his outstanding contributions to raising the bar in the tourism and aviation sectors, a QT statement said yesterday.

HE al-Kharji was selected for his leadership in positioning Qatar as a world-class tourism destination through the development of tourism infrastructure, the enhancement of cultural experiences, and the expansion of a year-round events calendar. He has also spearheaded Qatar's representation at



HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji

key international events and conferences, strengthening the country's visibility in global markets.

Qatar Airways Group CEO engineer Badr Mohammed al-Meer has also been recognised for his instrumental role in driving Qa-



Eng Badr Mohammed al-Meer

tar Airways' transformation into a global benchmark for operational excellence, financial performance and sustainability. Under his leadership, the airline was named the World's Best Airline for the eighth time by Skytrax in 2024.

## Ministry honours winners, sponsors of Ramadan, Eid competitions



The Ministry of Municipality, represented by the Public Relations Department, has honoured the winners and sponsors of Ramadan and Eid competitions. There were a total of 44 winners from the contests held for 34 days. Dr Faiqa Abdullah Ashkanani, director of the Public Relations Department at the Ministry of Municipality, noted that the two competitions witnessed significant public interaction with the ministry's Instagram account garnering more than 104,000 followers.

## Qatar finds success in helping reunite Russian, Ukraine kids with families

**QNA**  
Doha

Over the past 38 months of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, Qatari mediation has successfully reunited Russian and Ukrainian children affected by conflict with their families on nine occasions, after hosting them, providing them with medical, psychological and social care and support, and ensuring their security and safety.

Peaceful conflict resolution, dialogue, preventive diplomacy, and mediation are at the core of Qatar's foreign policy priorities. Qatar enjoys a distinct global reputation as a neutral and credible mediator

among the conflicting parties

Based on its firm commitment to humanitarian principles and international solidarity, and its ongoing efforts to find peaceful solutions to the various conflicts and disputes taking place around the world, Qatar has engaged in mediation in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis that erupted in 2022, focusing its efforts primarily on reuniting Russian and Ukrainian children separated from their families due to the conflict.

Since the first day of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, Qatar has mobilised its diplomatic capabilities, relations, and expertise to resolve the crisis and assist those affected by it on both sides. It has intensified its humanitarian efforts to reunite children with their fami-

lies, as part of its continued commitment to humanitarian efforts. It has also supported the international community's efforts to stop the fighting and protect civilians by all available means.

On October 16, 2023, Qatar announced the first reunion between Russian and Ukrainian children and their families. The state hosted the children and their families at the Qatari Embassy in Moscow, prior to their transfer to their destination. This was to ensure their safety and comfort. Qatar considered this mission an important beginning toward reuniting the remaining children affected by the Russian-Ukrainian crisis with their families, a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Afterward, reunification between children and their families from both sides went on. On March 27, Qatar announced that two additional groups of children in Russia and Ukraine were reunited with their families. Additionally, Qatar announced on Wednesday the arrival of 19 families from Russia and Ukraine – including 32 children – in Doha, to take part in programmes dedicated to providing healthcare services and comprehensive support for both Russia and Ukraine.

The mediation to reunite families separated by this crisis reflects the important role played by Qatar, its international credibility with various parties, its enduring commitment to promoting peace,

security, and stability in the region and the world, and its full readiness to play a constructive and effective role in the various crises and conflicts facing the region and the world.

Qatar seeks to continue its role in facilitating more family reunification, given its significant success in this regard. This step represents a distinctive model of effective diplomacy that places human interests above all other considerations. This approach makes Qatar a key player in efforts to achieve peace around the world.

At various regional and international events and conferences, Qatar reiterates its full support for all international efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the

Russian-Ukrainian crisis through dialogue and peaceful means. This stance stems from Qatar's strong relations with both Russia and Ukraine, which are built on solid foundations of mutual respect, friendship, and shared interests.

Qatar's efforts towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis are internationally respected and appreciated, particularly by the parties to the conflict. This recognition is rooted in the practical support provided by Qatar in reuniting children affected by the conflict as part of its commitment to supporting efforts aimed at de-escalating the crisis, which align with the broader goals of the international community to reach a permanent ceasefire between the two sides.



# Amir’s Moscow visit strengthens strategic co-operation: Slutsky

QNA  
Moscow

Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs in the State Duma Leonid Slutsky affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani would lead to strengthening strategic co-operation between the two countries in various fields.

In statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Slutsky said that they welcome His Highness the Amir’s visit to Russia, and they are confident that this visit will achieve the outcomes desired by both countries, particularly in developing strategic co-operation across diverse sectors and discussing regional and international issues of mutual interest.

He added that Qatar and Russia have been friends and strategic partners for a long time. Co-operation between the two countries has witnessed remarkable development in recent years, he added, noting that there is continuous communication between the leaderships of both countries, reflecting the depth of friendship that binds them and their shared commitment to ad-

vancing relations in various fields. Expressing his confidence in the summit between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and the Russian President Vladimir Putin, Slutsky noted that it would result in numerous joint projects and elevate bilateral relations to a high level that serves the interests of both countries and their friendly peoples.

He affirmed that Qatari-Russian relations are founded on mutual understanding, respect, and a commitment to developing joint co-operation. He pointed out ongoing communication between the ministries of foreign affairs, defence, energy, and other relevant ministries on social and cultural matters to enhance collaboration and coordination on issues important to both countries.

He further stated that the two countries have many promising joint projects in sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and investment, emphasising the role of Qatar Investment Authority in Russia, adding that they look forward, during His Highness the Amir’s visit, to developing co-operation and enhancing partnerships in these fields, moving forward to strengthen collaboration in transportation, aviation, tourism,



social, and humanitarian domains, among others that serve the interests of both nations.

Highlighting the growing progress in investment and tourism sectors, Slutsky explained that this progress is evident through continuous communication between businesspeople and the increasing tourism exchange between the two countries, stressing that they have seen a rise in the number of Qatari tourists visiting Russia, as well as an increase in Russian tourists travelling to Qatar, especially during Qatar’s hosting of the FIFA World Cup

2022. He clarified that after the 2022 World Cup, Russian tourists developed a deeper appreciation for Qatar as a unique tourism destination, amazed by its advanced infrastructure, cultural richness, and outstanding social and humanitarian aspects. Slutsky emphasised the collaborative nature of Qatari-Russian relations in addressing sensitive political issues in the Middle East, such as the Palestinian cause, noting that Russia always approaches regional issues with seriousness and rationality.

He underscored that the two countries share common views on the international relations system. Both aspire to a multipolar system that guarantees security and peace for all nations, regardless of their size. They work to ensure stability for all people while taking into account the interests of states concerning complex security matters.

The Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs in the State Duma praised Qatar’s developmental achievements and its efforts to enhance and sustain social welfare. He mentioned that under Qatar’s wise leadership, the State has successfully developed and implemented policies that have elevated the standard of living for its people, achieving unparalleled

welfare for every individual at the highest standards. Qatar stands as a pioneering and inspiring model for the region regarding local development strategies and policies.

Slutsky commended Qatar’s advanced role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East through mediation efforts to resolve crises and ease tensions in the region and the world. He confirmed Russia’s support for these efforts and its eagerness to cooperate to reach peaceful resolutions for all pending issues and crises.

He underlined that Qatar is a significant regional player whose efforts in promoting stability and peace cannot be overlooked, adding that His Highness the Amir is among global leaders steering these efforts, which they see positively impacting numerous files. In this context, he appreciated Qatar’s humanitarian efforts in reuniting many Russian and Ukrainian children with their families as part of its ongoing humanitarian initiatives. He also lauded the global humanitarian endeavours of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser particularly in education and health sectors, stating that they recognise the significance of Her Highness’s humanitarian initiatives, which have a profound global impact.

# ‘Russia visit further enhances Qatar’s strategic partnerships’

QNA  
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani’s visit to the Russian Federation demonstrates the prudent leadership’s keenness to foster strategic partnerships and expand co-operation with friendly nations, said Chairman of the Internal and External Affairs Committee of the Shura Council Yousef bin Ali al-Khater.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Khater said the two nations have deep-rooted relations that significantly developed in recent years across all levels, primarily energy, investment, food security and political co-

operation. He hailed the visit as a pivotal milestone in the path of bilateral relations that will open new horizons for co-operation in promising sectors and enhance the level of bilateral political coordination amid the rapidly growing global changes.

This will reinforce Qatar’s regional and international endeavours. He stressed that the Shura Council, through its constitutional powers and its continuous communication with counterpart parliaments, supports everything that strengthens relations between Qatar and friendly countries, primarily the Russian Federation, and recognises the wise leadership’s great efforts in consolidating the State’s position and enhancing its regional



and global diplomatic presence. Al-Khater said that the strong and growing relations between the Shura Council and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (The State Duma) are manifested in the enhanced co-ordination of

parliamentary positions in various regional and international forums. He added that a Duma delegation is expected to visit Doha this year, streamlining further bilateral relations and advancing multi-level co-operation to achieve the two peoples’ aspirations and interests.

Concluding his statement to QNA, Al-Khater reiterated that His Highness the Amir’s visit to Russia represents a clear expression of the strength of bilateral relationship and confirms the mutual keenness to build on the achievements made and embark on a new phase of fruitful and constructive co-operation, serving the interests of the two friendly peoples and contributing to supporting stability and peace in the region and the world.

# RIAC expert: Visit reflects development of relations between Moscow and Doha

QNA  
Moscow

Expert at the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) and a political researcher specialising in Middle Eastern affairs and Islamic groups, Kirill Semenov described the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Russian Federation as a reflection to the development of the two countries’ relations.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Semenov said that the visit comes at a highly complicated time, given the intricate situation in the Middle East and the ongoing talks between the United States and Iran in Oman. He pointed out the potential for this visit to foster co-operation between Qatar and Russia in mediating between the administration of US President Donald Trump and the Iranian leadership to resolve their crisis, especially since Qatari and Russian positions on this issue are nearly identical.

He highlighted the importance of this visit in addressing devel-



opments in the Gaza Strip, noting the alignment of Russian and Qatari stances in this regard, and emphasising the need for an immediate cessation of violence and the establishment of a Palestinian state in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions. Additionally, the visit provides an opportunity to discuss the situation in Europe in light of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

The (RIAC) expert praised Qatar’s efforts and mediations in resolving numerous conflicts and disputes in the region and the world, as well as its humanitarian role in reuniting children affected by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict with their families. He

called for leveraging the Qatari-Russian rapprochement to further develop relations between the two countries, emphasising the many shared interests and untapped potential that exist.

Semenov remarked that the visit of His Highness the Amir to Russia and his discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin could serve as a catalyst for advancing joint efforts between the two countries on various regional and international issues. He added that considering previous co-operation on issues such as the trilateral format between Qatar, Russia, and Turkiye on Syria, and the Astana Process on Syria, it is now possible to reactivate the Astana Process for joint work on the Syrian issue and to provide the necessary support for Syria and its people. He stressed the importance of institutionalising Qatari-Russian joint efforts in political matters.

On a regional level, Semenov described Qatar as a major regional power due to its highly influential roles in regional affairs and its contributions to achieving stability, security, and peace. He noted

that Qatar has proven its capabilities through action, positioning itself as a regional heavyweight.

He further emphasised that Qatar’s status as a regional power stems not only from its vision for self-development but also from its broader vision for the Middle East, the Arab world, and the Islamic world, adding that Qatar strives to present key ideas and visions for the development and growth of these regions. What distinguishes Qatar, he explained, is its unique perspective on these issues, which is not found in many other countries.

Semenov concluded his remarks to QNA stressing that Qatar views its relationship with the Russian Federation as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. Similarly, Russia needs Qatar as an important regional player, particularly because Qatar is capable of pursuing an independent foreign policy that does not succumb to the desires or expectations of others, adding that Qatar maintains its own positions without compromising its relations with all countries. Moreover, Qatar is essential for Russia as it can assist in shaping its policies in the Middle East.

## Amir’s visit seeks to address pressing global issues: Kremlin spokesman

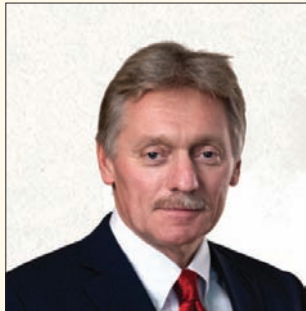
QNA  
Moscow

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Russian Federation seeks to address pressing regional and international issues, focusing on the importance of enhancing joint political co-ordination to find comprehensive solutions for these concerns.

Speaking to QNA, Peskov said the visit provides further impetus to advancing partnership relations between the two nations, streamlining further joint co-operation across various fields. He added that the Amir’s visit to Moscow manifests the comprehensive development of the solid friendship between the two countries.

He added that the Qatari-Russian talks addresses a number of promising areas of bilateral co-operation, noting that Qatar is an important partner for Russia in the Middle East. He also pointed to the continuous development of bilateral relations between the two countries, based on a solid foundation of mutual respect and partnership. Peskov affirmed his country’s continued frank political dialogue with its Qatari friends, based on its commitment to preserving peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa region. He noted the importance of addressing crises through political and diplomatic means, while strictly adhering to international law. He also stressed the importance of continuing to strengthen trade and economic co-operation between the two countries, highlighting the key role played by the Qatari-Russian Joint Committee on Trade, Economic, and Technical Co-operation as the main co-ordinator of these efforts.

He added in this regard that the committee held its fifth meeting in Doha in March 2025, where



the two sides agreed to intensify efforts to increase the volume and diversification of mutual trade and implement promising joint projects in the fields of energy, industry, agriculture, investment, and cultural and humanitarian co-operation.

Regarding promising trends for strengthening and expanding co-operation between the two countries, Peskov told QNA that there are good prospects for expanding mutually beneficial trade co-operation in the fields of energy, agriculture, and industry. He expressed his hope for launching major joint logistics projects in the near future and expanding co-operation in the field of transportation in general, as there is a good foundation for investment between the two countries. In this context, the Kremlin spokesman spoke about the success of the partnership between the Qatar Investment Authority and the Russian Direct Investment Fund, stressing that Russia is ready to sign more important bilateral documents. He noted the increase in mutual tourism flows between the two countries, as Russian tourist flows to Qatar have increased by more than 40% for the third consecutive year, while Russia has strengthened its position as a preferred tourist destination for Qataris. He also praised Qatar’s significant mediation efforts to settle critical issues and crises and its hosting of key international sporting tournaments and international forums.

## Interest in Qatar visible among various Russian circles: envoy

QNA  
Moscow

Ambassador of Qatar to Russia Sheikh Ahmed bin Nasser al-Thani stressed that Russia attaches great importance to the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Moscow, pointing to the high regard in which His Highness is held by both senior officials and citizens of Russia.

In statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Sheikh Ahmed said that they have sensed the respect and appreciation for His Highness the Amir in Russia and the growing interest in Qatar, through meetings and engagements with various officials at different levels, as well as with representatives from academic, intellectual, cultural circles, and citizens who participate in a range of events organised by the Qatari Embassy.

He noted that the increasing interest in Qatar among various Russian circles is clearly reflected in numerous media reports highlighting the country’s achievements such as the successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and its significant humanitarian role at both the regional and international levels, which includes Qatar’s efforts to reunite children affected by the conflict in Ukraine with their families.



The envoy stressed that the Russian side values Qatar’s commitment to restoring stability, security, and peace to the Middle East, as well as its mediation efforts to end the war in Gaza not to mention its positive role in relation to the situation in Afghanistan. Regarding the key issues discussed at the Qatari-Russian summit, Sheikh Ahmed said that the talks focused on bilateral relations and co-operation between the two countries in various fields.

International and regional issues were also discussed, including the Middle East peace process, he said, noting that Doha and Moscow share common positions on the necessity of a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the importance of resolving the crisis through political means, as well as creating the conditions necessary to resume Palestinian-Israeli negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian cause.

## Qatar, Russia lay solid foundation for further co-operation: Manturov

Qatar and Russia have robust relations and co-operation, especially in the economic sphere, said First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Denis Manturov. Interviewed by Qatar News Agency (QNA), Manturov said the Doha-Moscow economic co-operation could be further expanded through many joint investment opportunities.

The two sides, he said, laid a solid foundation for fostering co-operation in promising areas such as trade, investment, industry, agriculture, transport and logistics,



infrastructure, digital technologies, culture, sports, and tourism.

He highlighted the 5th meeting of the Russian-Qatari Joint Committee for Trade, Economic, and Technical Co-operation which convened during his recent visit to Doha in March 2025, saying that the relevant bodies in both countries have already begun implementing the agreements reached, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry.

Manturov revealed that a joint business forum was held during His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani’s visit to Moscow for a more detailed discussion of the joint plans and the establishment of direct contacts between the economic circles of the two countries. He explained that the forum’s programme covers the most pressing topics, such as investment and financial co-operation, transportation and logistics, pharmaceutical industries, healthcare, urban development, and tourism. Manturov hopes that the upcoming discussions between the leaders of the two countries will confirm the main priori-



ties of co-operation and agree on practical steps to implement the proposed plans for the benefit of both countries and their friendly peoples. (QNA)

different international changes and continued to move forward in a sound and steady manner,” he said. He emphasised that Moscow and Doha proceed from the shared principles of mutual respect and account for national interests of one another, adding that both sides collaborated to uphold the global system with the United Nations and its institutions at its core. (QNA)

## Amir’s visit reflects strength of bilateral relations: envoy

Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Qatar Dmitry Dogadkin said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Moscow reflects the strength of the relations between Russia and Qatar, adding that Moscow and Doha proceed from the shared principles of mutual respect and account for national interests of one another.

In a special statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he noted that the Russian Federation has historically enjoyed very close ties with Middle Eastern countries, noting that both countries will mark the 37th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the states in 2025. “Over the past years we weathered





## Amir’s visit to Russia strengthens bilateral ties: minister

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad said the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Russian Federation will further strengthen the close relationship between the two nations across various sectors. The visit of His Highness the Amir comes at a time when Qatar plays an important role in promoting international peace and security through its successful mediation in numerous regional and international matters, Her Excellency said pointing to the convention of the Qatari-Russian Joint Committee on Trade, Economic, and Technical Co-operation, which held its fifth session in Doha last month, chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and

Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov. Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), she highlighted Qatar's unwavering support for all international efforts aimed to find a peaceful solution to the Russia-Ukraine crisis through dialogue and diplomacy, rooted in the country's firm belief that dialogue remains the most effective way to resolve regional and international conflicts. She also noted Qatar's success in reuniting multiple groups of children from Ukraine and Russia with their families, as part of its ongoing humanitarian efforts to reunite families separated by the war. She stressed that the talks between the two countries explored ways to elevate bilateral co-operation to new heights and deepen partnerships across various fields. These discussions will build upon the



HE Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad  
outcomes of the fifth session of Qatari-Russian Joint Committee on Trade, which reviewed economic, trade, and technical co-operation and explored opportunities

to expand and enhance shared interests between the two friendly nations. On the regional and international fronts, she said that the high-level talks covered key developments in the Gaza Strip and occupied Palestinian territories, the situations in Syria and Lebanon, the Iranian nuclear file, as well as the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and prospects for a peaceful resolution. Speaking about Qatar's role in resolving regional and international disputes, she said Qatar enjoys a global reputation as a neutral and trusted mediator, known for resolving conflicts through peaceful means and dialogue. This reputation stems from the consistent success of Qatari diplomacy over the years in navigating complex issues. In the case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Qatar's primary contribution

lies in reuniting children from both countries with their families – a reflection of its mediation approach rooted in international law, humanitarian values, and global solidarity. She pointed out that Qatar's mediation efforts recently led to the successful reunification of two additional groups of children from Ukraine and Russia with their families in March. His Highness the Amir's visit will further strengthen bilateral ties across various sectors, benefiting both nations, she said adding Qatar's ongoing commitment to its mediation efforts to reunite children in Russia and Ukraine with their families. She reiterated the country's readiness to support all international efforts aimed at peacefully resolving Russia-Ukraine crisis. **(QNA)**

## Visit a milestone in development of bilateral relations: al-Ansari

QNA

Doha

HE the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari highlighted the importance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Russia, describing it as a significant milestone in the development of bilateral relations between the two countries.

He noted that this marks His Highness's first visit to Russia since 2018 and comes at a time of rapid regional and international developments, which necessitate close co-ordination between politically and economically influential nations.

Al-Ansari said His Highness the Amir's visit underscores the depth of the Qatari-Russian partnership and reaffirms the commitment of both leaderships to strengthening co-operation across various sectors, particularly the energy sector. He highlighted that both Qatar and Russia are among the world's leading natural gas exporters, making co-ordination between them vital to supporting the stability of global energy markets.

Al-Ansari noted that the agenda



HE Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari

of the talks between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Russian President Vladimir Putin covered political issues of mutual interest – foremost among them, the developments in Ukraine, where Qatar is playing an active role in humanitarian mediation efforts, particularly in reuniting children affected by the war. He also pointed to Qatar's ongoing engagement with various parties aimed at alleviating the suffering of civilians.

He added that the visit also falls within the framework of co-ordinating efforts on pivotal regional issues, including the war in the Gaza Strip and efforts to halt the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

The talks also addressed prospects for rebuilding Syria and enhancing stability in Lebanon, along with other key issues such as the situations in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Libya – all of which remain priorities in Qatar's foreign policy.

Al-Ansari noted that the meeting also explored ways to enhance economic and trade co-operation, particularly in light of the meetings of the Qatari-Russian Joint Committee on Trade, Economic, and Technical Co-operation held in Doha last March, which serves as a key platform for deepening economic relations between the two countries.

Al-Ansari emphasised that His Highness the Amir's visit to Russia marks a strategic turning point in bilateral relations and aims to consolidate the foundations of co-operation between two countries that share common visions on numerous international challenges.

He noted that Russia is a pivotal global actor and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and that consultations with it enhance the prospects of achieving peaceful solutions to global crises, thereby promoting international security and stability and serving the interests of both the Qatari and Russian peoples.

### ‘Amir’s visit marks an important stage, new phase of relations’

Russian political and economic expert and analyst Murad Sadygzade said His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Russia represents an important stage and a new phase in relations between the two countries.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), President and Founder of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and Head of the Centre for Education and Co-operation of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences Murad Sadygzade said the visit represents a step toward elevating relations between the two countries to a strategic partnership, especially following the start of the military operation in Ukraine and the global crises.

Today, Doha is one of the world's most important centres and plays a pivotal role in resolving conflicts at the regional and international levels, Sadygzade said. He pointed out that Russia views Qatar's role in mediation, conflict resolution, and the humanitarian field with respect and appreciation, particularly with regard to the success of Qatar's mediation between Russia and Ukraine to reunite children with their families.

He stressed the particular importance attached to the continuation of dialogue between Doha and Moscow, both in economic and political affairs, pointing to the recent meetings between His Highness the Amir



Murad Sadygzade

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Russia President Vladimir Putin in Kazakhstan. The current visit was unique in its nature and comes at this stage to elevate relations to a new level because it came amid a different international situation, particularly regarding the Ukrainian crisis and the ongoing talk of settling it through political negotiations, Sadygzade added.

He noted that Russia always views friendly countries with utmost appreciation and respect, and appreciates the role played by Qatar at the international level in efforts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis. This visit reaffirms the importance and value of relations between Moscow and Doha, he added. The political expert said the leaders of the two countries discussed the situation in Syria, and the crisis in the Gaza Strip, as well as the developments in the talks between Tehran and Washington.

He indicated that Russia, despite its conservative foreign policy, always views with pain what is happening in the Middle East, what is happening in the Palestinian territories and the Gaza Strip, and how innocent people and victims are falling there.

The expert hailed Qatar's important role and its efforts to stop the bloodshed in the Middle East and bring peace to the Gaza Strip, adding that Russia is endeavouring to exert its efforts, whether through the United Nations platform or through relations with various countries to play a role in ending this tragedy. Sadygzade stressed the importance of establishing a political basis for interaction between the two countries. He added that before beginning to expand economic co-operation, the level of political relations must be elevated to that of a strategic partnership, as a strategic partnership represents a transitional moment from normal relations between countries to alliance relations.

He emphasised the importance of co-operation and co-ordination between Qatar and Russia, particularly in the energy sector, pointing to the Qatar Investment Authority's investments in the Russian company Rosneft. He noted that if sanctions on Russia were lifted, investment co-operation between the two countries would grow significantly in the coming years. **(QNA)**

## Amir’s visit ‘carries strategic dimensions in terms of timing, content’



Several political experts and analysts have underscored the significance of the visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Russian capital, Moscow, arguing that the visit comes at a critical juncture marked by accelerating geopolitical shifts and intensifying regional tensions, particularly amid the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip and the continued conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the experts emphasised that the visit holds strategic weight in both its timing and substance reflecting not only the strength of Qatari-Russian bilateral relations but also Qatar's growing role in mediation efforts aimed at resolving international crises and bolstering global security and stability.

In this context, international relations expert and consultant Dr Ahmed Ghaith al-Kuwari underscored the exceptional significance of the visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Moscow, noting that it surpasses previous visits in importance due to the rapid developments unfolding on both the regional and international fronts.

Dr al-Kuwari said the discussions focussed on ways to enhance bilateral co-operation in the energy and investment sectors, in addition to discussing key developments on the international scene.

However, the visit's true significance stems from the delicate circumstances facing the Middle East, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Gaza Strip, the crisis in Syria, and the repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

He highlighted the alignment between Qatari and Russian positions on several key matters, most notably their mutual rejection of attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land, an issue that Moscow has described as a “time bomb” threatening regional stability.

He stressed that Qatari-Russian relations are built on the foundations of trust and mutual respect. These distinguished relations have enabled the two sides to co-operate on sensitive diplo-

matic issues, particularly those requiring political and humanitarian mediation, such as the exchange of prisoners and hostages, and ceasefires in conflict zones.

This reflects the constants of Qatari foreign policy, which are based on respect for the sovereignty of states, adherence to the UN Charter, commitment to international law, and the pursuit of peaceful solutions to settle disputes.

In turn, Dr Hawas Taqiyah, Supervisor of the Gulf Studies Unit at the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, highlighted the particular sensitivity of the visit's timing, given the recent Israeli escalations in both Syria and Gaza. He warned that further escalation could destabilise the entire region.

**The discussions focussed on ways to enhance bilateral co-operation in the energy and investment sectors, in addition to discussing key developments on the international scene**

Dr Taqiyah suggested that the visit could pave the way for strategic alignment between Qatar and Russia, particularly in supporting the stability of the modern Syrian state by countering attempts at destabilisation from actors affiliated with the former regime.

Such co-operation, he noted, would allow Russia to preserve its strategic interests in Syria while complementing Qatar's efforts to promote regional security in co-ordination with the current Syrian government.

He also pointed to the potential for Doha and Moscow to co-ordinate efforts to halt Israeli aggression in Gaza and prevent any attempts at forced displacement.

Dr Taqiyah stressed the importance of the Russian role in this regard, in alignment with Qatar's humanitarian approach to protecting civilians and fostering opportunities for peace and stability across the region.

For his part, Dr Liqaa Makki, a researcher at the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, remarked that His Highness the Amir's visit gains additional importance against the

backdrop of current global political challenges.

He noted that Russia, along with Qatar and Iran, is one of the world's leading gas producers making trilateral co-ordination among these nations both a strategic and economic imperative.

Dr Makki added that energy cooperation remains a cornerstone of Qatari-Russian relations. He further highlighted Qatar's stature as a reliable international mediator, citing its successful diplomatic engagements in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, among others.

He emphasised that Qatar is well-positioned to contribute to de-escalation efforts between Russia and Ukraine, while continuing its mediation to end the war in Gaza. Given Moscow's influence over several key regional actors, including Iran, the visit also presents an opportunity for meaningful dialogue on the Israeli escalation in Gaza.

Meanwhile, Dr Fouad al-Qaisi, a lecturer at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, described the visit as strategically significant in light of the prevailing regional and international political and economic landscape. He noted that the visit comes amid major developments, including shifts in the US stance on the Ukraine war, the consequences of Israeli aggression on Gaza, and mounting indicators of a global economic downturn that could affect the energy sector.

Dr al-Qaisi added that the visit reflects the mutual desire of both countries to deepen their bilateral ties, which have gained momentum this year. He pointed to high-level exchanges, including the visit of the Russian foreign minister to Doha in February and the subsequent visit by the Russian first deputy prime minister in March, as clear signs of the two sides' shared ambition to enhance co-operation, particularly in the domains of energy and diplomacy.

He concluded by emphasising that His Highness the Amir's visit to Moscow aligns with Qatar's pivotal role in international mediation and its steadfast commitment to advancing peace efforts worldwide. **(QNA)**

## Amir’s visit draws Russian media attention

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's official visit to Russia yesterday drew the attention of Russian media, which highlighted the meeting between His Highness the Amir and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

According to the Kremlin, President Putin held talks in Moscow with His Highness the Amir.

Current issues of Russia-Qatar co-operation in various areas were discussed, with a focus on trade, economic and humanitarian affairs, as well as several key topics on the international agenda.

Meanwhile, Russian news

agency (RIA Novosti) quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying that the meetings agenda included the Ukraine crisis. He pointed out that Qatar plays a significant role in efforts to resolve many pressing situations.

In an interview with Russia Today (RT), chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs Slutsky Leonid, described Qatar as a reliable strategic partner in energy, transport, and investment projects.

He praised Qatar's efforts in reuniting families with children in Ukraine and affirmed that the visit will drive the launch of new

joint projects between Moscow and Doha.

In an interview with Russian news agency (TASS), HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi said that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Putin have maintained regular meetings and continuous communication over the years to discuss prominent international issues.

HE al-Khulaifi said Qatar and Russia have closely co-operated to find joint solutions to regional and international issues, noting Russia's openness to diplomatic approaches, whether concerning the

crisis between Russia and Ukraine or broader regional matters.

Since the first day of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Qatar has expressed its readiness to play a constructive role in reaching a political solution, which resulted in the success of mediation efforts to reunite children affected by the war, he said.

Qatar and Russia are constantly working to expand co-operation across various fields, HE al-Khulaifi said, stressing there are numerous opportunities to enhance Qatari-Russian relations in ways that fulfil their shared aspirations and interests and bring benefits to both nations.

He said the talks between the two leaders covered issues of Ukraine, Syria, and the Gaza Strip, in addition to energy-related topics such as liquefied natural gas (LNG).

He underlined that Qatar and Russia share deep-rooted historical relations based on mutual respect and common interests, adding that the world is currently grappling with complex geopolitical challenges, with crises affecting both Europe and the Middle East.

Qatar believes in the importance of dialogue as a primary means of reaching peaceful solutions and is committed to keeping channels of

communication open with Russia and other nations in an effort to reduce tensions and achieve diplomatic outcomes rather than resort to conflict, he said, noting that these efforts align with Qatar's support for the UN's objectives to promote global peace and security.

Russian Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova praised Qatar's initiative to host 10 Russian families affected by the conflict as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation programme in Doha from April 14 to 23. She noted that the programme includes health, psychological, and cultural aspects. **(QNA)**



# UDST signs MoU with Russian IT university

As part of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Russia yesterday, University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Innopolis University marking a major step in academic co-operation and professional development.

UDST's partnerships and engagement director Najla al-Naemi and the Russian IT university's deputy director Aleksei Pavlov were the signatories, a statement said. The MoU serves as a framework for advancing shared objectives and engaging in joint activities that will benefit students, faculty, and researchers from both universities.

The entities will collaborate on scientific and research projects in the fields of machine learning, computer vision, natural language

processing, and robotics. Special attention will be given to the application of artificial intelligence in healthcare, smart cities, and energy, key sectors for both Qatar and Russia.

The partnership includes the establishment of a platform to support technology startups in the field of AI, providing access to laboratories, mentoring programs, and investment opportunities offered by both universities.

Additionally, the institutions plan to develop joint educational programmes and organise international events aimed at knowledge exchange and the pursuit of breakthrough solutions in artificial intelligence.

UDST president Dr Salem Al-Naemi, said: "This collaboration will offer our students and faculty valuable international exposure

and open doors to cutting-edge research, academic exchange, and transformative learning experiences. Innopolis University's excellence in technology and innovation makes it an ideal partner as we work together to shape the future of higher education."

Innopolis University director Iskander Bariev, said the MoU will expand the horizons of Russian-Qatari co-operation in the field of high technology. "University of Doha for Science and Technology has a strong research base, and our IT university has competencies in the field of applied AI: medical diagnostics, logistics, creation of new drugs and materials, and more. Together, we will be able to accelerate the development of new innovative projects. In addition, the co-operation between the two universities will strengthen scientific and technological ties be-

tween our countries and will also help in the development of an international ecosystem of AI developments."

The MoU will facilitate the exchange of academic staff and students for teaching, visits, joint research experiments, and internships, as well as the implementation of collaborative projects. UDST and Innopolis University have also committed to sharing best practices and innovative experiences, with the potential to expand their co-operation into other mutually agreed areas in the future.

This collaboration is part of UDST's broader internationalisation strategy and emphasises its position as a leader in applied education, committed to empowering the next generation of thinkers, innovators, and industry professionals, the statement added.



## 'Significant achievements made in linking traffic violations between GCC countries'

Significant achievements have been made in developing an integrated system to link traffic violations between the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, the Director-General of Traffic Col Jabr Ali al-Kubaisi has said.

On the sidelines of 37th Unified GCC Traffic Week awareness exhibition, the official told local Arabic daily *Al-Rayah* that this is a strategic achievement that enhances Gulf integration that supports the traffic safety system and facilitates procedures for citizens and residents of the GCC countries.

He urged all drivers and road users to adhere to traffic rules and guidelines and to avoid using mobile phones while driving, as even a moment of distraction can cost lives.

This year's event under the theme 'No Phone While Driving' will conclude today. The exhibition was inaugurated by Staff Major General Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Sowaidi, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for Technical and Specialised Affairs.

Present were several department directors and officers from MoI and the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) along with representatives from the entities concerned.

The exhibition features a va-



riety of interactive activities and demonstrations, as well as dedicated pavilions showcasing the latest technologies used to enhance road safety, in addition to brochures and educational materials.

Al-Kubaisi said the slogan was chosen for the second year in a row in response to reducing accidents resulting from the use of mobile phones while driving.

The celebration embodies the firm commitment to achieving MoI's fourth strategic goal, which is to raise the level of traffic safety on the roads, in addition to the seventh strategic goal, which aims to improve the

quality of services provided.

The official noted there have been successes achieved over the past years, especially with regard to reducing the rates of deaths and serious injuries resulting from traffic accidents.

"The General Traffic Department is committed to continuing its tireless efforts to raise the level of traffic culture among all road users and to educate community members about the importance of instilling the principles of safe driving, as reducing traffic accidents is a shared responsibility that requires the combined efforts of all members of society and its institutions," he added.

# National Archives of Qatar marks World Heritage Day

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The National Archives of Qatar marks World Heritage Day, which falls on April 18 of each year and is celebrated by the Unesco. Dr Ahmed Abdullah al-Buainain, Secretary-General of the National Archives of Qatar and Chairman of the Memory of the World Committee for the Arab Region, emphasised that the National Archives of Qatar is keen to strengthen partnerships with local, regional, and international entities.

Dr al-Buainain pointed out that such partnerships enhance the use of the latest technologies in the fields of documentation and digital archiving, ensuring the preservation of historical documents using



innovative methods that facilitate access and utilisation. He emphasised that this co-operation is not limited to preserving the past. Rather, it contributes to building community awareness of the importance of documentation as a fundamental pillar for strengthening national identity, connecting future generations to their rich history, protecting the documentary heritage, and ensuring the consolidation of knowledge.

Dr al-Buainain highlighted

some of the partnerships between the National Archives of Qatar and international organisations, such as the joint co-operation to organise the regional conference 'Memory in Heritage: Enhancing Co-operation on Documentary Heritage in the Arab Region', which the archives organised last January in co-operation with Unesco.

He said that through the Qatar's presidency of this committee, it is working with all Arab countries to preserve documentary heritage and convert it into digital materials to preserve and protect it from extinction and loss, thus ensuring its preservation, along with all its treasures and valuables.

In this context, Dr al-Buainain emphasised that strategically preserving documentary and cultural heritage contributes to supporting sustainable development.

# Qatar Airways to showcase 'Qsuite Next Gen' at ATM Dubai

Qatar Airways is bringing the latest in cutting-edge 'airline luxury' to this year's Arabian Travel Market (ATM) Dubai from April 28 to May 1 with its 'Qsuite Next Gen' - the newest iteration of its patented Qsuite Business Class.

The airline is again setting the industry's benchmark for travel innovation and business class experiences through the design of Qsuite Next Gen that features fully customisable Quad Suites

creating the largest social space in the sky for groups of four and window aisle Companion Suites.

All suites have 4K OLED manoeuvrable in-flight entertainment screens that can be moved to connect the spacious and private suites.

From ambient lighting to privacy controls to the 'Make My Bed' button for the Qatar Airways turn-down service; ATM visitors are invited to interact with Qsuite Next

Gen's vast range of customisation options.

Both the 'Quad' and 'Companion' suites further boast increased dining space and taller digitally controlled privacy dividers. With this year's ATM theme, "Global travel: Developing tomorrow's tourism through enhanced connectivity", Qatar Airways will spotlight its continued investment in technology, and customer experience, reinforcing its position as a global aviation leader, a statement added.

# Doha Declaration ensures seamless air transport

From Page 1

The declaration urges states, ICAO, international and regional organisations, and industry and other stakeholders to work collaboratively with the public health sector and relevant stakeholders to develop a national aviation plan in preparation for the outbreak of a communicable disease posing a public health risk, ensuring that air transport can continue safely and efficiently in all circumstances.

"The Doha Declaration is a guiding roadmap for future policies in air transport facilitation. It emphasises the joint commitment by the ICAO, member states, regional and international organisations, and other stakeholders to developing and enhancing facilitation on all counts," said the Minister of Transport.

He emphasised that Qatar's efforts to develop transportation and civil aviation infrastructures and achieving smart and sustainable mobility associated with Qatar National Vision 2030 are aligned with the Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport, which creates a strategic vision to ensure the efficient and seamless movement of passengers, crew, cargo, and aircraft across borders.

The minister also lauded the efforts of the ICAO and the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) for the successful staging of FALC 2025.

Mohamed Faleh al-Hajri, in charge of managing QCAA, highlighted the significance of the conference as a unique opportunity to reaffirm the collective commitment of ICAO member states to enhancing the air transport facilitation system, as outlined in the resolutions of the ICAO General Assembly. These resolutions collectively lay the foundation for a safer and more

sustainable international civil aviation environment, he noted.

"The Doha Declaration clearly reflects our belief in the importance of creating a seamless travel experience for passengers and the necessity of providing this sector with international attention and support.

This is achieved through strengthening mechanisms that foster solid partnerships, ensuring a unified and comprehensive approach to facilitating air traffic.

"Therefore, I call on everyone to adopt this declaration as a genuine catalyst for positive change and as a means to build a more resilient and prosperous future for the civil aviation sector," said al-Hajri, citing the Doha Declaration.

He added: "It also plays a pivotal role in outlining a roadmap for the development of facilitation, through a unified and comprehensive strategic vision that addresses emerging trends, technological advancements, and the future needs of travellers, all while upholding the principles of seamless mobility, inclusivity, and sustainability, in line with the requirements of the upcoming phase." Sciacchitano said enhancing air transport facilitation means ensuring the smooth movement of passengers, crew, cargo, and aircraft while maintaining the highest standards of safety, security and efficiency.

"This is how our work at this Conference is helping to deliver a more accessible and efficient international air transport system. We are also committed to sustainable funding mechanisms that ensure the longevity and effectiveness of facilitation programmes. These tools also give us the means to deliver an international air transport network that is accessible to all travellers, including persons with disabilities, refugees, and stateless persons,"

Sciacchitano pointed out.

Salazar said, "The Doha Declaration on Facilitation of International Air Transport is a roadmap for delivering a more efficient, resilient, and sustainable global flight network. We are asking ministers to do three things: champion stronger border coordination, drive digital transformation, and build global consensus on aviation facilitation."

He also underscored ICAO's commitment to providing the assistance necessary to facilitate the sharing of best practices that can help accelerate progress towards a globally optimised and harmonised air transport ecosystem.

Noteworthy, FALC 2025 in Doha stands as the second largest ICAO gathering, behind the ICAO General Assembly, in terms of the level of attendance, namely the ministerial representation and number of industry experts and leaders. FALC 2025 also saw a large participation with nearly 120 ministers and civil aviation authority chiefs, some 3,000 local and international aviation and air transportation experts and leaders, and 17 international organisations, in addition to 80 speakers in 13 sessions.

The accompanying exhibition also featured 35 entities, as well as some of the latest technologies and innovative procedures relative to air transport facilitation.

FALC 2025 featured numerous sessions that discussed multiple topics, including cooperation, collaboration and inter-agency co-ordination, cargo release clearance and automation processes, travel document integrity and border control, inadmissible persons, deportees, refugees and stateless persons, human trafficking and irregular migration, assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families, capacity building and implementation support for states.

# QF scientist harnessing AI in supporting people with autism

With the help of artificial intelligence (AI), a Qatar Foundation (QF) scientist is working to better understand the nuances of autism in educational settings, with the aim of transforming how support is delivered across Qatar.

The initiative is relevant considering that autism is a complex and often misunderstood condition - no two individuals are the same. It can take time to identify, and effective support requires tailored, personalised approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

Dr Dena al-Thani, associate professor at the Information and Computing Technology Department at the College of Science and Engineering at QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University, is leading a research to harness AI in understanding and supporting young people with autism.

Since 2016, she has headed a dedicated research group at HBKU's College of Science and Engineering focused on using AI to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities, particularly those on the autism spectrum. Her efforts have recently culminated in the official launch of the Autism Sensing Centre of Excellence, a research hub under HBKU's umbrella dedicated to advancing autism support through AI-powered tools.

"Our focus in this centre is to utilise AI tools to track where



Dr Dena al-Thani

a child's attention goes during lessons, what content engages them, how long they stay focused, and which subjects they are disinterested in," she said.

This provides teachers and therapists with detailed, real-time attention assessment reports on how students with autism interact with educational content - enabling them to tailor the learning experience, evaluate educational performance, and account for attention shifts. "In this regard, we work in collaboration with many hospitals, centres, and dedicated institutes."

According to Dr al-Thani, understanding the behaviour of individuals with autism is crucial for clinicians, teachers, and parents to provide the right support and assessment. Traditionally, it required weeks or even months of observation by psychologists,

therapists, and educators, often resulting in findings that were subjective, time-consuming, and sometimes inconclusive. Now AI tools are being tested in collaboration with local hospitals, schools, and centres. But as Dr al-Thani pointed out technological applications do not replace humans - nor will they. "Rather, they empower and support them in managing and understanding this spectrum."

For the QF researcher, as AI outcomes become increasingly more explainable and transparent, it is important to address ethical concerns, including privacy, gender bias, and data protection. As such, the Autism Sensing Centre of Excellence's work is closely overseen by the Ministry of Public Health and HBKU's Institutional Review Board. One of the most pressing challenges, according to Dr al-Thani, is the development of robust, representative datasets. "AI can help us personalise learning and therapeutic tools, but only if we build them on rich, diverse, and ethically collected data."

Looking ahead, Dr al-Thani believes it won't be long before AI tools are being widely used to support autism care across clinics, schools, and even homes. "After all," she said, "the most powerful AI innovations are the ones that can track, hear, and assess."



# World Health Day at MES



Students of MES Indian School marked the World Health Day on April 10 with a special assembly jointly organised by the Cubs, Bulbuls, and the physical education department under the guidance of Reshma and Fency.

The event embraced the global theme ‘Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures!’ aimed at instilling healthy habits among young learners.

Tara Kamala welcomed the gathering. Ayra Safer spoke on the significance of World Health Day, emphasising the lifelong benefits of embracing a healthy lifestyle from an early age.

The highlight was a skit performed by students portraying relatable, everyday situations to teach essential lessons about hygiene and nutrition.

Students presented a colourful and lively dance performance on healthy habits, choreographed by Rajani.

The yoga team presented a series of yoga asanas, emphasising the importance of physical and mental well-being in everyday life.

Khadeeja Layal led the students in a Health Promise, where children pledged to eat healthy food and care for their well-being.

The event concluded with an address by principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, who urged the students to carry forward the healthy practices they learned.

The school also showcased a harvest from its garden, an initiative aligned with Qatar Vision 2030, by members of the Campus Care Force (CCF), merging health, sustainability, and hands-on learning.

The ‘Harvesting Health’ event was guided by the key functionaries of the school and coordinated by Jency George, Pushyami Racherla, Pradnya Pande, and Ramla K K of the CCF.



## Kerala expat forum holds Inland Sea trip



Photography Malayalam Qatar (PMQ) hosted an overnight trip to the Inland Sea for members and their families. Various cultural activities were among the highlights of the event. PMQ is a forum for expatriates from the southern Indian state of Kerala, who are interested in photography.

## Native Assembly organised

The ‘Native Assembly’ organised by the Qatar KMCC Mogral Puthur Panchayat Committee proved to be a platform for raising awareness against drug and alcohol abuse.

The event blended nostalgia, culture, and social responsibility in a community gathering.

The programme revived memories of home through traditional sports, local cuisine, and artistic performances.

Beyond celebration, the gathering took on a serious tone with the launch of ‘Navabodhwa’ (New Awareness), a long-term

anti-drug campaign aimed at educating and empowering the community against the growing menace of substance abuse.

A solemn anti-drug pledge, taken collectively by attendees, officially marked the beginning of the campaign.

The programme’s central theme – ‘We of yesterday must shape today’s youth for tomorrow’ – was echoed throughout the event, inspiring collective reflection and dialogue within the diaspora.


Qatar KMCC state vice-president Adam Kunji Talankara inaugurated the programme. Anwar Kadavat, president

of the Mogral Puthur Panchayat Committee, presided over the event, while general secretary Abdul Rahiman Eriyal welcomed the gathering.

The event saw the participation of several prominent community members, including Ali Cheroor, Shanif Paika, Harris Eriyal, Shafiq Chengala, Jafar Kallangadi, Nawaz Azad Nagar, Rahim Chowki, KB Ra-feeq, Hameed, Harris Choori, Riyaz Many, Sharif, Noushad Paika, Rahim Greenland, Akbar Kadavat, Siddique Padinjar, Rahim Balur, Mahin Blarkode, Shanawas Talankara, and Muhammad Kunji.



### Podar Pearl School partners with IIT Madras



Podar Pearl School is collaborating with IIT Madras Connect, to launch an initiative that will allow students of grades XI and XII to enrol in an exclusive eight-week programme designed to equip them with future-ready skills in high-demand fields.

IIT Madras, one of India’s premier institutions, is renowned for its excellence in engineering, technology, and research. The IIT Madras Connect programme bridges the gap between high school education and advanced technological learning, offering students a unique opportunity to learn from leading experts and explore cutting-edge innovations.

The first cohort of 44 students will join the April 2025 batch, embarking on a transformative educational journey through three specialised courses: Introduction to Data Science & AI, Introduction to Electronic Systems, and Introduction to Architecture and Design.

This partnership reflects Podar Pearl School’s commitment to providing its students with access to premier academic experiences and cutting-edge knowledge from one of India’s most prestigious institutions.

By acquiring foundational knowledge in emerging domains, students will gain a competitive edge in higher education and future career opportunities.

Exposure to industry-relevant concepts and practical applications will make them better prepared for internships, university admissions, and job prospects in technology-driven fields.

“We are thrilled to collaborate with IIT Madras Connect to offer this outstanding learning experience. This programme aligns with our vision of preparing students for the dynamic and technology-driven world of tomorrow,” said Dr Maneeish Mangal, principal of Podar Pearl School.

## Dare to Dream Toastmasters Annual Conference 2025 held

Division D of District 116, Qatar, conducted its Toastmasters Annual Conference 2025 (TAC-D 2025) themed Dare to Dream, recently. The agenda included speech contests in four categories, banner parade, and keynote speech by Joseph Stantley on ‘Service and Leadership’.

The speech contest first-place winners Najla Azad (evaluation), international, table topics) and Vinod Kumar (humorous) will represent Division D in the District Toastmasters Annual Conference 2025 on May 23 and 24.

TAC-D 2025 had a core team led by division director Smitha Bindu and TAC-D chair Azeez Muhammed and including Pradiip Sadiye, Babu M K, Bindu Pillai, Sagarika Pati, Anusree K, Sakshi



Sukhnani, Nivedita Ketkar and Sampath Samarasekara. District director Sabeena M K, Podar Pearl

School principal Dr Manish Mangal and development and training head Dr Pooja Singh graced the event.

The chief judges were Rajesh V C and Christopher Almeida. The contest chairs were Browlin Raj, Remi

Raji, Sakshi Sukhnani and Sanjaya Munindradasa. Fathima Muhasina and Parimala Karthikeyan were the

master of ceremonies and Hamna Azad and Anju Sujith banner parade master of ceremonies.



# India sets sight on defence exports with loan offers to clients

Reuters  
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bid to transform India into a global factory floor has produced billions of dollars of low-cost iPhones and pharmaceuticals. Now he hopes to add missiles, helicopters and battleships to the shopping carts of foreign governments.

The world's largest importer of weapons after Ukraine is expanding the ability of the state-owned Export-Import Bank (EXIM) to offer long-term, low-cost loans to clients, including those whose political or credit risk profiles may limit their access to conventional financing, according to two Indian officials and three industry sources.

New Delhi will also sharply increase the number of defence attachés in its foreign missions as part of a new programme that will see the government directly negotiate some arms deals, four Indian officials said. India is particularly targeting governments which have long relied on Russia for arms, two of the people said. India's plans, which were detailed by 15 people and have not been previously reported, mark an unprecedented effort by the government to inject itself into the recruitment and financing of foreign buyers as the world is rearming and longstanding geopolitical relationships are being recast.

Indian bureaucrats have long focused more on buying fighter aircraft from Russia's Sukhoi and Howitzers from the US to ward off China and Pakistan, Delhi's two nuclear-armed neighbours.

While India has long had a small-arms production sector, its private firms have only recently started to make higher-end munitions and equipment.

The Indian defence and external affairs ministries, as well as Modi's office, did not respond to requests for comment. EXIM declined to comment. "India is marching towards achieving the target of increasing defence exports," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh wrote on X this month.

One turning point was Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, according to an Indian official tasked with growing arms exports.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive government matters.

Spare Western arsenals were shipped to Kyiv while Russia's factories churned out munitions almost exclusively for its war effort. That left other nations that had historically relied on Washington and Moscow – the world's two largest arms exporters – scrambling for alternatives.

With its history of buying and absorbing arms technology from both the West and Russia, Delhi started to get more inquiries, the official said.

In response to queries, Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport referred to previously issued statements that said it was in talks with India about jointly producing and promoting equipment to third-party states that are "friendly to Russia."

The Pentagon had no comment. India produced \$14.8bn of arms in 2023-2024 fiscal year, up 62% since 2020, government data show. Some Indian-made artillery shells were found on the frontline in Ukraine in support of Kyiv's defence.

Delhi has started brokering meetings between visiting delegations and domestic arms contractors, as well as demonstrating more sophisticated equipment like combat helicopters during military exercises, four officials said.

Viraj Solanki, a research fellow at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies think-tank, said India faced challenges selling its newer and more high-end wares.

"Unless it starts using its indigenous equipment more frequently and demonstrating its effectiveness, it is likely to struggle to convince potential buyers," he said.

Modi's government has set a target of doubling arms-and-equipment exports to \$6bn by 2029. It hopes sales will go beyond the ammunition, small arms and defence-equipment components that currently compose much of its military exports. Delhi missed its target of \$3.5bn in arms sales for the latest fiscal year by about a third, but that still marks a significant increase from the \$230mn in weapons and defence components it exported a decade ago.

At a time of stretched global budgets and burgeoning defence

demand, India is pitching itself partially as a relatively low-cost producer.

India can produce 155mm artillery ammunition for about \$300 to \$400 a piece, two Indian sources said, while European equivalents sell for upwards of \$3,000.

Indian firms have also sold Howitzers for about \$3mn each, one of them said, or roughly half what a European-made version costs.

While Western nations that reduced artillery and other defence production after the Cold War are rushing to restart factories, state-owned Munitions India was among the Indian firms that kept such capacity. Delhi – which has in recent years faced off with Pakistan and China in combat – had a different strategic scenario, said retired naval Cdr Gautam Nanda, who leads KP-MG's Indian aerospace and defence consulting practice. "There were no cuts on our production capacity."

Private manufacturers like Adani Defence and Aerospace and armour-and-ammunition maker SMPP are beginning to produce 155mm artillery shells, which they said had already been ordered by foreign governments.

"With this changing scenario, definitely we see a huge, massive demand for artillery ammunition," said SMPP chief executive Ashish Kansal, whose company is setting up a plant to manufacture large calibre 155mm artillery ammunition.

India plans to use increased financing of arms exports via EXIM, which had a loan portfolio of \$18.32bn in the 2023-24 fiscal year, to move its products up the value chain. Such financing will largely be conducted by EXIM's commercial business, which has the state as a backstop but doesn't draw solely from the national budget. Indian arms makers lobbied heavily for the move, an industry source said.

Most banks in India have been unwilling to offer commercial loans for arms exports because they don't want to deal with countries that may have higher credit and political risks, one Indian diplomat said.

That has long hampered India from competing on big deals with countries like France, Türkiye and China, whose packages come with financing or credit guarantees, the diplomat said.

## Philippine film legend Nora Aunor dies aged 71

Nora Aunor, considered by many Filipinos as their country's greatest actor and singer, has died aged 71, the government and her family said yesterday. Proclaimed a "National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts" by the Philippines in 2022, the once child snack vendor will be honoured with a state funeral. "It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Nora Aunor, our beloved mother, celebrated television and movie actress," her adopted daughter Lotlot de Leon announced yesterday on her Instagram page. The cause of death, which took place Wednesday, was not disclosed. Aunor starred in 170 films and got her first break when cast in 1967's *All Over the World*, a typical teen comedy of the era. With a darker skin tone compared to the half-Caucasian actors that dominated local cinema at the time Aunor brought a relatability to audiences, earning her the nickname Ate guy, or big sister guy. She would become a sensation as part of a studio-manufactured "love team" with actor Tirso Cruz III. Together they were known as "Guy and Pip". Aunor also recorded hundreds of songs. President Ferdinand Marcos yesterday described her as "a gift to the Filipino nation", and



the government's National Commission for Culture and the Arts said she would receive a state funeral. Aunor's daughter Leon later posted on Instagram that the funeral will take place on April 22 at the National Heroes Cemetery.

"Throughout her splendid career that spanned more than 50 years, she was our consummate actress, singer, and film producer," Marcos said. "Her golden voice was a balm for all. Her genius was a gift to the Filipino nation."

The fourth of five children from a family in the poverty-stricken Bicol region southeast of Manila, Aunor, born Nora Villamayor, helped the family make ends meet by selling cold water and snacks at a train station.

Her grandmother taught her to sing, and at 14, she won a nationwide singing contest. She married Filipino actor Christopher de Leon in 1975, and the couple had one biological child and four adopted children before separating two decades later.

Aunor later immigrated to the US, and in 2005 was arrested at Los Angeles International Airport for drug possession. She underwent a court-directed drug diversion programme that kept her out of prison. She returned to Manila in 2011 to resume her acting and singing career.

# Congress condemns graft charges against Gandhis

AFP  
New Delhi

India's main opposition Congress party accused the government of a "vendetta" after a federal agency filed charges against its top leaders in a years-long corruption case.

Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia Gandhi were charged as part of a probe initiated by a member of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

They have denied the allegations and have accused the BJP of using the state apparatus to target its rivals.

Congress lawmaker Abhishek Singhvi said the case was "nothing but vendetta in legal disguise".

He also accused the government of using the enforcement directorate – a national agency that probes money laundering and financial crimes – of selectively targeting the opposition while sparing its allies.

"Selective justice is nothing but political thuggery," Singhvi added.

The initial 2001 complaint



Police detain Shama Mohamed, a member of India's main opposition Congress party as she and others protest outside the party headquarters after the party's senior leader, Rahul Gandhi, and his mother Sonia Gandhi were accused in a money laundering case by the country's financial crime agency, in New Delhi, India.

against the Gandhis brought by BJP member Subramanian Swamy accused the Gandhis and others of "usurping" properties belonging to a now-defunct newspaper.

He alleged that the Gandhis aimed to grab property worth \$332mn owned by the publishing firm using fraudulent papers.

Jairam Ramesh, a veteran lawmaker from the Congress party, described the case as "harassment and targeting of rivals".

"We can't be forced to shut up," Ramesh said.

Critics in recent years have accused the BJP of using the justice system to target political rivals, with several opposition figures the subject of active criminal investigations.

But BJP lawmaker Ravi Shankar Prasad said India's judiciary was independent and investigative "agencies are free to work under PM Modi's government".

"They (the opposition) have the right to protest – but what are the protesting about?", Prasad said.

## Netflix's Con Mum tells court she had nobody to bail her out

A British woman from the Netflix documentary *Con Mum*, about her allegedly scamming her renowned pastry chef son, told a Singapore court yesterday that she had nobody to bail her out. Dionne Marie Hanna, 84, was charged this month with five counts of fraud involving three people, according to documents filed with a district court in the city-state. Prosecutors said her alleged offences involved losses of Sg\$500,000 (\$381,000) at a hearing yesterday. Her bail was set at Sg\$50,000 (\$38,100). "I don't have anybody to bail me out," she said in a weak voice over video link from a police station. Hanna, sitting in a wheelchair, was not represented by a lawyer. In the documentary released on March 25, Hanna upends pastry chef Graham Hornigold's life when she e-mails him and claims to be his biological mother. She allegedly scams Hornigold as they reconnect, conning him out of hundreds of thousands of dollars, according to the film.

# 'Resist protectionism,' China's Xi tells Cambodia

Reuters  
Phnom Penh

China's leader Xi Jinping urged Cambodia to "resist protectionism," as he arrived in Phnom Penh yesterday at the end of a three-nation tour of Southeast Asia, as US tariffs threatened the economies of both countries.

Cambodia is a major exporter of clothing and footwear to the US, and was slapped with a rate of 49%, one of the highest globally, before "reciprocal" duties were paused until July for most countries, except those on China which faces combined tariffs of 145%.

Trade was undermine the multi-lateral trading system and impact the world economic order, Xi told Hun Sen, chairman of Cambodia's senate and political heavyweight, according to Chinese state media Xinhua. Earlier yesterday, in an article published on Cambodian media, Xi had urged Phnom Penh to oppose "hegemonism" and "protectionism", repeating messages he sent earlier this week to Vietnam and Malaysia during the first two legs of his trip.

Phnom Penh is a close partner of China, which has invested billions of dollars in projects including roads and airports, and is the country's largest creditor.

"We expect more co-operation including on infrastructure development," Meas Soksensan, spokesman for the Cambodian finance ministry, said on the eve of Xi's arrival in the capital Phnom Penh.

He was answering a question about whether Cambodia expected Beijing to announce financial support for a 180km canal, which is the country's most ambitious infrastructure project.

Xi, who has a road named after him on the outskirts of the capital, extolled the positive economic impact of past Chinese infrastructure projects, pledged to continue to "unswervingly support" Cambodia's development, but mentioned no new specific project in his statements yesterday.

The Cambodian government has said China would pay for the Funan Techo Canal, which would run from the Mekong River, from a site near Phnom Penh, to the coast on the Gulf of Thailand, diverting water from the fragile rice-growing Mekong Delta and reducing Cambodian shipping through Vietnamese ports.

China has so far made no public financial commitment to the project, while Phnom Penh has changed its statements on Chinese engagement from covering 100% to 49% of total costs, estimated at \$1.7bn, nearly 4% of Cambodia's annual gross domestic product.

# Japan minister 'deeply concerned' over Trump tariff impact

Reuters  
Tokyo

Japan is "deeply concerned" about the global economic fallout from US President Donald Trump's trade tariffs, Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato said yesterday in the government's strongest warning yet as the two nations began trade talks.

In an interview with Reuters in Tokyo hours after the talks began in Washington, Kato also voiced concern over recent volatile market moves triggered by Trump's tariff announcements, saying they

could hurt Japan's economic recovery.

"The recent US tariff measures affect various industries and heighten uncertainty. We're deeply concerned they could affect Japan's economy, as well as the global economy, through various routes such as trade and financial markets," said Kato, who plans to go to Washington next week for meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the Group of 20.

Kato is also expected to meet separately with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to continue the talks begun by Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's top tariff negotiator Ryo-

sei Akazawa. Trump unexpectedly joined those talks, which included Bessent.

"There's a risk of exerting downward pressure on Japan's economy," Kato said of the US tariffs and the ensuing market volatility, in his first media interview since Trump announced "reciprocal" tariffs on many nations on April 2.

Kato said he will "closely communicate" with the US on currency issues, adding Tokyo and Washington have long agreed that excessive volatility and disorderly moves in currency rates are undesirable.

"It's important for currency

rates to move stably, reflecting fundamentals. There's no change to the government's concern over currency market developments, including speculative moves," he said. "We need to scrutinise how the US tariff measures affect financial market moves, including currency rates."

Kato declined to comment on how any discussions on currencies could unfold once he meets Bessent, saying that doing so now would be premature and cause undue speculation in the market.

"The only thing I can say is that we will actively exchange views based on Japan's basic stance" on

currencies, Kato said, when asked about market speculation that Washington could ask Japan to join a co-ordinated effort to weaken the dollar.

Trump has indicated he wants the trade talks to include his accusations that Japan intentionally weakens the yen to help its exporters and his complaints that Japan does not pay enough to support US troops based in the country. Japan, which denies manipulating its currency, wants to avoid such topics.

Trade negotiator Akazawa, Japan's economic revitalisation minister, said exchange rates did not come up in Wednesday's talks,

adding that both sides deferred to an earlier agreement between their leaders that currency matters would be set aside for talks between their finance chiefs.

Akazawa also brushed aside the idea that Washington might seek a co-ordinated effort to weaken the dollar.

"As it has done in the past, Japan's government could take action in the market if there are speculative moves but it won't do anything beyond that," Akazawa told reporters in Washington after the talks. "Japan isn't manipulating the market to weaken the yen in the first place."





# Macron hails US-Europe-Ukraine talks as ‘important occasion for convergence’

AFP  
Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday hailed rare talks involving top US, European and Ukrainian officials as a “very important occasion for convergence” as Kyiv’s allies seek to rekindle stalled ceasefire efforts amid transatlantic tensions.

The talks involving US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and US envoy Steve Witkoff come as Donald Trump’s push to end three years of fighting has not borne fruit so far and after Russian leader Vladimir Putin refused to agree to a complete truce despite multiple efforts to engage him.

“This is a very important occasion for convergence,” Macron said in English after hosting Rubio and Witkoff for lunch earlier in the day.

“I think everybody wants to get peace for sure, and a robust and sustainable peace,” Macron said.

The meetings in Paris took place just days after Witkoff met Putin.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s chief of staff Andriy Yermak, Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga and Defence Minister Rustem Umerov were also in Paris to talk with European and US delegations.

Britain and Germany’s national security advisors were also in Paris,

is, the French presidency said.

Macron has taken the lead in seeking to forge a co-ordinated European response to defending Ukraine, both during the current conflict and in its eventual aftermath, after Trump shocked the world by opening direct talks with Russia.

Russia’s strikes, which have recently killed dozens of people including children in Ukraine’s cities of Sumy and Kryvyi Rig, show how the war is taking a hefty toll despite a series of diplomatic efforts.

“Arrived in Paris with one goal in mind: secure real, practical solutions to end the Russia-Ukraine war,” Rubio said on X.

Earlier yesterday, Zelensky urged the allies meeting in Paris to lean on Russia to agree to a ceasefire. “Russia uses every day and every night to kill. We must put pressure on the killers,” he said on Telegram.

Zelensky also said Ukraine had “finally” received information that China was supplying weapons to Russia.

And he accused Witkoff of “spreading Russian narratives” after the US envoy suggested a peace deal with Russia hinged on the status of Ukraine’s occupied territories.

“I believe that Mr Witkoff has taken on the strategy of the Russian side,” Zelensky told reporters.



UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell (left), Britain’s Foreign Secretary David Lammy (second left), US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff (fourth left), US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (fifth left), France’s Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot (centre left), France’s President Emmanuel Macron (centre) French President diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Bonne (centre right), Ukrainian Head of Presidential Office Andriy Yermak (fourth right), Ukraine’s Defence Minister Rustem Umerov (third right), Ukraine’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Andriy Sybigha (second right) and Germany’s national security adviser Jens Ploetner (right) take part in a diplomatic meeting at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

“I think it is very dangerous, because he is consciously or unconsciously, I don’t know, spreading Russian narratives.”

Witkoff said this week that Putin was open to “permanent peace” after talks with the Kremlin chief in Saint Petersburg, their third meeting since Trump returned to the White House in

January. Witkoff said during a Fox News interview broadcast Monday that he saw a peace deal “emerging”.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed the Paris meeting. “Unfortunately we see from Europeans a focus on continuing the war,” he said. Russia’s top economic negotiator Kirill Dmitriev

said certain countries were trying to “derail” Moscow’s talks with the United States.

Despite a series of diplomatic efforts, Russia has continued to strike Ukraine.

Russian drone strikes and shell-ing in Ukraine killed at least 12 people yesterday, Ukrainian authorities said, just days after a

Russian attack killed at least 35 people in the northeastern city of Sumy.

Macron’s office said the purpose of the Paris talks was to “review progress on peace negotiations aimed at ending the Russian aggression in Ukraine”.

The negotiations were to focus on a potential full ceasefire, the involvement of international peacekeepers and the development of Ukraine’s security framework, Ukraine’s foreign ministry said.

Britain and France are spearheading discussions among a “coalition of the willing” of around 30 countries looking to shore up any deal Trump might strike with a “reassurance force”.

The German foreign ministry said government security advisor Jens Ploetner would participate in the Paris talks.

Zelensky has said that negotiators were making “good progress” with the United States in fraught talks over a minerals deal intended to secure desperately needed US support.

Putin last month rejected a US proposal for a full and unconditional ceasefire, after Kyiv gave its backing to the idea.

He also suggested Zelensky be removed from office, sparking an angry response from Trump who said he was “very angry” with the Russian leader.

## Zelensky accuses China of supplying Russia with arms

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday China was supplying weapons and gunpowder to Russia, the first time he has openly accused Beijing of direct military assistance for Moscow. The Ukrainian leader said at a press conference that his government also had intelligence that China was producing weapons on Russian territory and that he would be able to provide more details next week. China, which has the world’s second largest economy, has had close economic relations with Russia over the course of Moscow’s three-year-old war in Ukraine. But it has sought to project an image of neutrality on the conflict. For Kyiv, direct Chinese supplies of weaponry would mark a major departure from that position.

“We finally have information that China is supplying weapons to the Russian Federation,” Zelensky said in Kyiv, referring specifically to “artillery”, without saying if he meant shells, artillery systems or both. “We believe that Chinese representatives are engaged in the production of some weapons on the territory of Russia,” Zelensky said, without elaborating. There was no immediate public comment from China and Reuters was not immediately able to seek comment from officials in China, given Zelensky’s remarks were made during the late evening in Beijing.

## Meloni, Trump raise EU trade deal hopes

AFP  
Washington.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and US President Donald Trump talked up the chances of cutting a tariff deal for the European Union, as Rome’s far-right leader led a charm offensive at the White House yesterday.

“I’m sure we can make a deal, and I’m here to help with that,” Meloni told reporters as she began lunch with Trump in the Cabinet Room.

Trump said he “100 percent” believed Washington and Brussels could reach a deal but added it had to be a “fair deal”.

Meloni has criticised Trump’s “wrong” 20% duties on EU exports – which he later suspended for 90 days – but has looked to maintain ties with the mercurial Trump despite the chaos caused by his tariffs.

Described by Trump as a “fantastic leader” who shares many of his conservative views, Meloni is the first European leader to meet with Trump since his trade war with the bloc began. The Italian premier said she believed in “unity” despite the trade tensions, and added of the United States: “If I didn’t think it’s a reliable partner I wouldn’t be here.”

Senior US officials earlier said Meloni and Trump had a “very special relationship”, adding she could be a bridge for a deal on tariffs between Europe and Washing-



US President Donald Trump with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC. (AFP)

ton. “Hopefully the Prime Minister and the President will be able to advance the ball down the field,” one Trump administration official told reporters.

“We’re open, we’re available, we’re ready to make deals for countries that take this seriously. So hopefully Italy and the EU are part of that.” Trump is, however, also expected to raise his demand for Nato allies to spend more on defence – a huge demand for debt-laden Italy.

Amid the uncertainty Meloni has called for cool heads, urging Brussels not to retaliate while casting herself as the only EU figure able to potentially de-escalate the conflict. Meloni was the only European leader to be invited to Trump’s January 20 inauguration

and US officials said she was “eye-to-eye with President on a lot of issues like immigration on Ukraine”.

Russia’s war in Ukraine could be a touchy subject, however.

Italian newspapers on Wednesday floated the possibility that Meloni could end up in a trap similar to the White House meeting in February with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky, in which Trump and his Vice-President JD Vance berated their guest in front of reporters.

Meloni has been a staunch ally of Ukraine and Zelensky since Russia’s invasion of the country in 2022, most recently calling Moscow’s Palm Sunday attack on the city of Sumy “horrible and vile.” Meloni has acknowledged the uncertainty weighing on her trip.

“We know we’re going through a difficult period, let’s see how it goes in the coming hours. I don’t feel any pressure, as you can imagine, for my next two days, let’s say,” she joked at an awards ceremony for Italian goods Tuesday.

“Surely, I am aware of what I represent and I am aware of what I am defending,” she added.

Italian newspapers reported that one of the goals of Meloni’s visit was to pave the way for a meeting between Trump and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen.

Meloni has said the goal should be to eliminate so-called reciprocal duties on existing industrial products as part of a “zero for zero” formula, as floated by the European Commission earlier this month.

Meloni’s decision to personally intercede with Trump has caused some disquiet among EU allies, concerned her visit could undermine the unity of the bloc.

“If we start having bilateral discussions, obviously it will break the current dynamic,” France’s Industry Minister Marc Ferracci warned last week.

A European Commission spokeswoman said that while the EU alone could negotiate trade agreements, Meloni’s “outreach is very welcome” and was co-ordinated with Brussels.

Following yesterday’s meeting with Trump, Meloni will fly back to Rome today in time to host JD Vance, with whom she has a meeting planned.

## One dead in US university shooting

At least one person was killed and six others were wounded yesterday after a shooting at Florida State University, and a suspect was taken into custody, according to media reports.

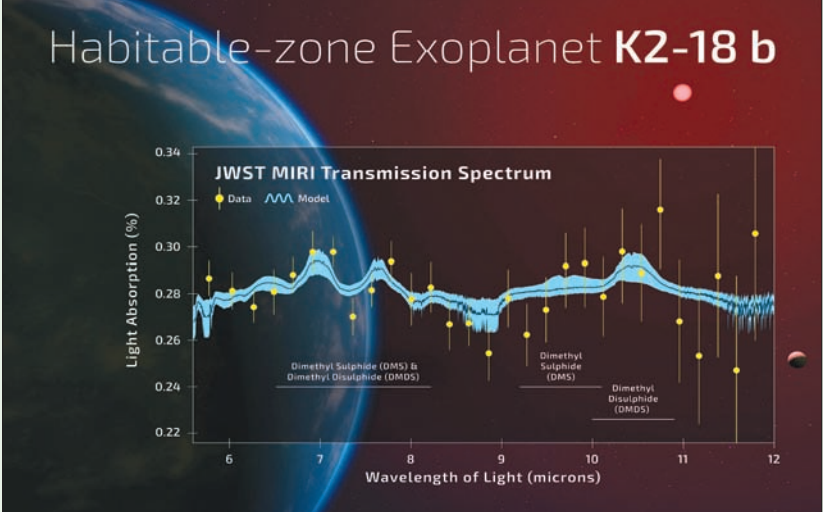
ABC News, citing multiple unnamed law enforcement officials, reported that at least one person had died. Gunshots were reported at midday at the Student Union building on the FSU campus in the state capital of Tallahassee. Students and faculty were advised to shelter in place as police responded. More than 42,000 students attend classes at the main campus. A nearby hospital, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare, said in a statement it had received six patients – one in critical condition and the rest in serious condition.

Officers took one suspect into custody shortly after the shooting, two law enforcement sources with knowledge of the situation told CNN. The station also reported that three firearms were found; one on the suspect, one in a car nearby and a shotgun in the student union. Law enforcement agencies could not be immediately reached to confirm the reports or to comment. FBI Director Kash Patel said in a post on X he had been briefed on the shooting at Florida State, and that a team from the Jacksonville FBI office was assisting.

“We will provide full support to local law enforcement as needed,” he added. The shooting was the latest burst of deadly gun violence to rock a US school campus in recent years.

## Strongest ‘hints’ yet of life detected on distant planet

Astronomers announced yesterday that they had detected the most promising “hints” of potential life on a planet beyond our solar system, though other scientists expressed scepticism. There has been vigorous debate in scientific circles about whether the planet K2-18b, which is 124 light years away in the Leo constellation, could be an ocean world capable of hosting microbial life, at least. Using the James Webb Space Telescope, a British-US team of researchers detected signs of two chemicals in the planet’s atmosphere long considered to be “biosignatures” indicating extraterrestrial life. On Earth, the chemicals dimethyl sulphide (DMS) and dimethyl disulphide are produced only by life, mostly microscopic marine algae called phytoplankton. The researchers emphasised caution, saying that more observations were needed to confirm these findings, and that they were not announcing a definitive discovery. But the implications could be huge, according to Nikku Madhusudhan, a Cambridge University astrophysicist and lead author of the study, published in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*. “What we are finding at this point are hints of possible biological activity outside the solar system,” he told journalists. “Frankly, I think this is the closest we



A graph shows the observed transmission spectrum of the habitable zone exoplanet K2-18b using the James Webb Space Telescope MIRI spectrograph instrument. (Reuters)

have come to seeing a feature that we can attribute to life.” But outside experts pointed to disputes over previous discoveries about the exoplanet, adding that these chemicals could have been created by unknown means having nothing to do with life. More than eight times the mass of Earth and 2.5 times as big, K2-18b is rare among the roughly 6,000 exoplanets discovered so far in that it orbits its star in a habitable or “goldilocks” zone.

This means it is neither too hot nor too cold to have liquid water, considered the most important ingredient for life. Telescopes observe such far-off exoplanets when they cross in front of their star, allowing astronomers to analyse how molecules block the light streaming through their atmosphere. In 2023, the Webb telescope detected methane and carbon dioxide in K2-18b’s atmosphere, the first time such carbon-based molecules were detected on an

exoplanet in a habitable zone. It also detected weak signals of the chemical DMS, leading astronomers to turn Webb towards the planet again a year ago, this time using its mid-infrared instrument to detect different wavelengths of light. They found much stronger signs of the chemicals, though still well below the “five sigma” threshold of statistical significance scientists seek for such discoveries. Even if the results are confirmed, it would not necessarily mean that the planet is home to life. Last year, scientists found traces of DMS on a comet, which suggested it can be produced in non-organic ways and is perhaps not a “biosignature”. However the concentration of the chemical observed on K2-18b appears to be thousands of times stronger than levels on Earth, likely suggesting a biological origin, Madhusudhan said. K2-18b has long been considered the premier candidate for a “hycean planet” – an ocean world bigger than Earth with a hydrogen-rich atmosphere. These planets would not be expected to be home to intelligent alien life, but rather tiny microbes similar to those in Earth’s oceans billions of years ago. Some research has questioned whether the currently proposed hycean planets are too close to their stars to support liquid water – including K2-18b, which orbits its star every 33 days.

Raymond Pierrehumbert, a planetary physics professor at Oxford University, has conducted separate research indicating K2-18b is too hot for life. If the planet did have water, it would be “hellishly hot” and uninhabitable, he told AFP, adding that oceans of lava were more plausible. Sara Seager, a professor of planetary science at MIT, called for patience, pointing to previous claims of water vapour in K2-18b’s atmosphere that turned out to be a different gas. Madhusudhan estimated that it would take just 16 to 24 more hours of Webb’s time to reach the five-sigma threshold, which could happen in the next few years. The current three-sigma is comparable to the odds of flipping a coin 10 times and getting the same result each time, Cambridge University statistician Stephen Burgess explained. Five sigma would be getting that result after 20 flips, and would mean “we can be very confident that this observation isn’t just a chance finding,” he said. Even beyond K2-18b, Madhusudhan said Webb and future telescopes could allow humanity to discover life outside our home planet sooner than one might think. “This could be the tipping point, where suddenly the fundamental question of whether we’re alone in the universe is one we’re capable of answering,” he said.



# Prerequisites and essentials of the prayer

In Islam, performing the prayer is the most important, mandatory act after the testimony of faith. The Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said: “The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is the prayer...”[At-Tirmithi]

It is the last thing, the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, recommended to his nation before he died, saying: “The prayer, the prayer and what your right hands possessed.” [Abu Daawood] An act of this weight and status is really worthy of getting all attention and care of Muslims. Because the prayer which Allah accepts and rewards plentifully is the prayer whose conditions, and basic elements are perfected.

But how could one carry out the prayer in the correct manner? One could attain that goal by learning the way the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, practised it. By knowing its prerequisites, essentials and *Sumnah* acts. Because botching the prayer is a harmful act that results in the forfeiture of the reward, either completely or partially, the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, warned us: “Truly, a man leaves, and none of his prayer has been recorded for him except a tenth of it, a ninth of it, eighth of it, seventh of it, sixth of it, fifth of it, fourth of it, third of it, a half of it.”[Abu Daawood]

Here is a detailed description of the prerequisites (*Shuroot*) and essentials (*Arkaan*) of the prayer:

There is a difference between the terms “prerequisite” and “essential”. The former is an object, quality, or condition that is required in order for something else to happen – and if it is missing, the thing is invalid and unfulfilled. For instance, *Wudhoo’* (ablution) is a prerequisite for the prayer, as per the Prophetic narration: “The prayer of one without purification is void...” [Abu Daawood and At-Tirmithi] While “essential” is the property or characteristic of something that makes it what it is – and if it is missing the thing

is null and void. For instance, the chapter of *Al-Faatihah* (the Opening of the Qur’an) is an essential for the prayer because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Anyone who does not recite the Opening of the Book in one’s prayer is not credited with observing it.” [Al-Bukhari]

The scholars concur that a willful violation of any essential or prerequisite in prayer invalidates it. However, when an essential act is unintentionally omitted, two things are required: 1. performing the missing act and; 2. making *Sujood as-Sahw* (prostration of mistake) before *Tasleem* (concluding the prayer with salaam) if it is on account of an omission or due to both an omission and an addition; or after *Tasleem* if the cause is only an addition. However, if the mistake is one of involuntary addition – such as an extra bowing – it is atonable by *Sujood as-Sahw*.

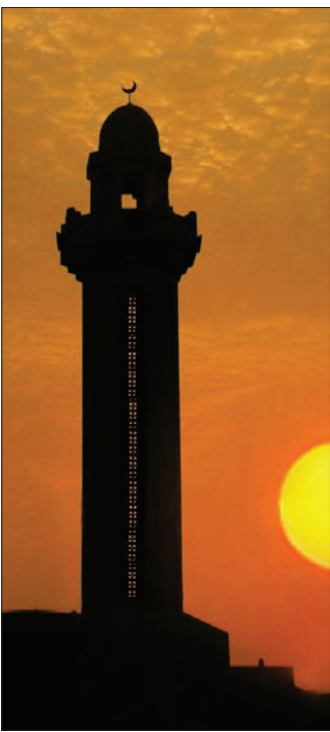
It is obligatory on the one who wishes to perform the prayer to make sure that he/she satisfies the following conditions before he enters into it:

(1) Islam: One must be a Muslim in order for him/her to obtain the rewards of Islamic acts of worship.

(2) Intention (*Niyyah*): The Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Verily all actions are only by intentions.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Scholars of all of the four schools of jurisprudence are unanimous that intention takes place in the heart and that it should not be uttered by the tongue. The Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, never instructed us to audibly or inaudibly state intentions for any act of worship, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did not do this either. According to a few of the late scholars, one is only permitted to utter one’s intention in prayer if one is in a severe case of forgetfulness or always doubting what he wants to do – the term they coined to describe the state of such a person is Al-Mustankah.

(3) Sanity and maturity: One



must be able to know and appreciate what he/she is doing. Sanity is mentioned in the narration in which the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The pen (which records one’s deeds) is raised from the account of a person in the following three situations: a sleeper until he awakes, a child until he matures (reaches age of puberty) and the insane until he regains sanity.” [Abu Daawood]

One must also have a clear mind at the time of making the prayer. Allah Says (what means): “O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying...”[Qur’an 4: 43] In addition, the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, also said: “If one feels drowsy while performing the prayer, one should go to sleep until his slumber is over, because if one perform the prayer while drowsy one would not know whether he is asking for forgiveness or for a bad

thing for himself.”[Al-Bukhari]

(4) Knowing the prayer’s proper time: Allah Says (what means): “...Indeed, the prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times” } [Qur’an 4: 103] The Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Jibreel led me in prayer at the Ka’aba. He led me in the early afternoon prayer (*Dhuhr*) when the sun had passed the meridian to the extent of the throng of a sandal; he led me in the mid-afternoon prayer (*‘Asr*) when the shadow of a thing was as long as itself; he led me in the sundown prayer (*Maghrib*) when the one who fasts breaks the fast; he led me in the night prayer (*‘Ishaa’*) when the twilight (redness from the horizon at sunset) disappears; he led me in the dawn prayer (*Fajr*) when food and drink becomes forbidden for the faster. On the following day, he led me in the early afternoon prayer (*Dhuhr*) when the shadow of a thing was as long as itself; he led me in the mid-afternoon prayer (*‘Asr*) when the shadow of a thing was twice as long as itself; he led me in the sundown prayer (*Maghrib*) when the one who fasts breaks the fast; he led me in the night prayer (*‘Ishaa’*) when the first half of the night had passed; he led me in the dawn prayer (*Fajr*) when there was a fair amount of daylight. Then turning to me Jibreel said, ‘Muhammad, this is the time observed by the prophets before you and the difference in time for each prayer we made on both days is anywhere between the two times.’”[Abu Daawood]

(5) Purification: One must make sure that the following three things are clear from all kinds of impurity before he starts the prayer:

A. Purity of the body from major and minor impurities:

A minor impurity is one that may be removed by the performance of ablution (*Wudhoo’*). A state of minor impurity results after defecation or urination. A major impurity requires the performance of Ghusl or ritual bathing. A state of major impurity results after sexual

intercourse or sexual discharge for both men and women.

If one is not in the necessary state of purification then one must attain it for Allah Says (what means): “O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] the prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles And if you are in a state of *janaabah* (major impurity), then purify yourselves...” [Qur’an 5: 6]

And the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “When you stand for prayer, perfect your ablution,” [Al-Bukhari and Abu Daawood] and “the prayer is not accepted from anyone who nullifies one’s ablution until she/he regains another one nor is charity from stolen property.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

The Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, also said: “Allah does not accept any prayer that was not performed while in a state of purity, nor does he accept charity from what has been stolen from booty.” [Al-Bukhari & Muslim]

Post-natal bleeding and menstrual bleeding are also considered forms of major impurity. Both postnatal bleeding and menstrual bleeding waives the prayer from a woman. In those cases, after such conditions come to an end, women are required to make Ghusl before praying.

B. Clothes: If the clothes are contaminated with impurities one should wash them for Allah Says (what means): “And your clothing purify.” [Qur’an 74: 4] and the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “If menstrual blood is on one’s clothes she must wash it out and then perform prayer.” [Al-Bukhari]

C. Place: If the ground is filthy, one can pour water over the impurity: A Bedouin entered the Masjid (mosque) and urinated. The people grabbed him and the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, ordered his release, told them to pour a tumbler of water over the soiled

area, and said: “You have been sent to make things easy and not make them difficult” [Al-Bukhari]

It is prohibited to offer prayer in graveyards [Muslim], camel pens [Abu Daawood], churches and synagogues with images [Al-Bukhari], public baths/bathrooms and dunghills [Abu Daawood], the roof of the Ka’aba, slaughterhouses, and the middle of the road.

(6) Covering the private parts: Allah Says (what means): “O children of Aadam, take your adornment at every Masjid (mosque)...” [Qur’an 7: 31] The meaning of “adornment” here is the covering of the ‘*Aurah*. The meaning of “mosque” is “prayer.” Therefore, it means “Cover your ‘*Aurah* for every prayer.”

The ‘*Aurah* for a man, in general, is from his navel to his knees; however, inside prayer one should be dressed in a proper manner and the shoulders should not be left uncovered since it is greatly disliked. The ‘*Aurah* of a woman (for prayer purposes) is her entire body except her face and hands.

(7) Facing the *Qiblah*: Allah Says (what means): “Turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haram (Sacred Mosque), and wherever you are turn your faces (in prayer) in that direction.” [Qur’an 2: 144] The Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “When you stand for prayer face the *Qiblah*, make *takbeer*, utter glorification and praise for Allah, recite the Mother of the Book (Al-Faatihah)...”[Al-Bukhari and Abu Daawood]

There are many ways to decide the *Qiblah*. And when one is ignorant of the right direction, one should inquire and strive to determine its exact or approximate direction, and in case neither of the two is possible one should follow his best judgment.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



## Why do we pray?

By Sameh Strauch

After a long and hectic day at work, how difficult it is for a tired person to go out to the mosque and concentrate on his prayers to Allah, the Almighty. Snuggled up in a warm and cozy bed, how difficult it is to get up at the call of the Muezzin: “Come to prayer! Come to success!”

The famous doctor and philosopher, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), recalls such a moment in his life. One cold and icy night, he and his slave were resting at an inn in a remote part of Khuraasaan. During the night, he felt thirsty, so he called to his slave to bring him some water. The slave had no desire to leave his warm bed, so he pretended not to hear Ibn Sina’s call. But finally, after repeated calls, he reluctantly got up and went to fetch the water. A little while later, the melodious sound of the *azaan* (call to prayer) filled the air.

Ibn Sina began to think about the person calling the people to prayer. “My slave, ‘Abdullaah, he mused, has always respected me and admired me. He seizes any opportunity to lavish praise and affection on me, but tonight he preferred his own comfort to my needs. On the other hand, look at this Persian slave of Allah: He left his warm bed to go out into the chilly night, he made ablution in the icy water of the stream, and then he ascended the high minaret of the mosque to glorify Him Whom he truly serves: ‘I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’”

Ibn Sina records: “I learned the essence of true love, that love which results in complete obedience.” The love of Allah demands total and unconditional obedience. Allah, the Almighty says: { Say [oh, Muhammad!]: “If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will forgive you your sins, for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful } (*Surah* 3:31)

### Prayer: A Cry of the Inner Soul

His arrogance and pride have often led man to behave as an oppressor and a tyrant. Some men have been carried away by their own self-importance that they have even claimed divinity. Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, was among those who announced: “I am your supreme Lord!” With his sense of greatness and pride, Pharaoh subjugated the Israelites and made their lives wretched and miserable.

But is man really as strong and great as his ego tells him? The Qur’an tells us the reality of man’s nature: { It is Allah Who created you in a state of weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength, gave you weakness and a hoary head: He creates what He wills, and He is the All-knowing, the All-powerful } (*Surah* 30:54)

Weakness in the beginning and weak-

ness in the end: This is the essence of man. He is so weak and helpless at birth that his entire existence depends on his parents and his family. If he were to be abandoned in these first crucial years, he could not survive on his own. He needs a gentle and loving hand, not only in his infancy, but in his childhood and even in his teenage years.

As this child enters the years of youth and independence, he begins to take control of his own life. He looks with pride at his strong physique, his handsome features and his many talents. He begins to despise those of lesser abilities, even scorning his parents, who exhausted their own health to nurture him. He becomes unjust and cruel, using his strength and vigour to dominate others. He thinks he is master, free to act as he wills. But does this youth, these good looks last forever? In only a few decades, he begins to lose his strength... his youth is replaced by old age. Weakness in the beginning, weakness in the end.”

The message is clear: The real Master is Allah. He Alone is Mighty, He Alone, is Great. He Alone is never tired, never needs rest, is never dependent upon anyone. Allahu Akbar! – Allah is the Greatest! In our everyday lives, we say a warm thank you for the small acts of kindness which others do for us. So what about thanking Allah, Who, in His infinite Mercy, has provided for every single one of our needs. Just observe the beauty and perfection of the earth around you and fall down in gratitude to your Lord.

### Prayer: The Ascension for a Believer

After the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, was commissioned for Prophethood, the first thing he was commanded to do by Allah was to pray. The angel Jibreel came to him and a spring of water gushed out of the rocks in front of them. Jibreel then showed Allah’s Messenger how to make ablution. He then showed him how to offer prayers to Allah. He began to pray two *rak’ah* twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. He then went home and showed his wife Khadeejah what he had learnt from the angel Jibreel.

From that time, the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, never went through a day without praying. Just before his migration to Madinah, he was taken on a night journey to Jerusalem and then to the heavens (*Mi’raaj*). During this journey, Allah, Almighty, ordered him to pray five times a day. This prayer was a gift given to every Believer to enable him to experience a spiritual ascension five times a day. The Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The prayer is the *Mi’raaj* of the Believer.” It gives every Muslim the chance to communicate with his Lord. During each prayer, the Muslim recites *Surah Al-Faatihah*: This recitation is

not a dull monologue by the Believer, but Allah promises that it is a conversation between Him and the worshipper.

The Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, reported that Allah, the Almighty says: “When my slave says in his prayer: “All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the worlds,” I say: “My slave has praised Me” When he says: “The Merciful, the Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment,” I say: “My slave has glorified Me.” When he says: “You Alone we worship and your Aid we seek,” I say: “This is between Me and My slave.” When he says: “Show us the Straight Path,” I say: “This is for My slave, and I give My slave what he wants.”

The Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, once said: “Prayer is the pillar of religion.” (Narrated by Al-Baihaqi) He also informed us that Islam is built upon five pillars, the second being to establish prayer five times a day. (Narrated by Al-Bukhari) This makes the image very clear: Islam is like a building supported by five columns; remove just one column and the entire building weakens. In the same way, when a person stops praying, his faith becomes weak, and the mildest blows can cause it to crumble. The prayer is so very important that the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Verily, between man and polytheism and disbelief is abandoning prayer.” (Narrated by Muslim)

Allah says, concerning the plight of the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment, that they will be asked by the Believers: {“What led you into the Hell-fire?” They will say: “We were not of those who prayed.”} (*Surah* 74:42-43). Allah also says: {Successful indeed are the Believers, those who humble themselves in their prayers } (*Surah* 23:1-2), and: {And those who guard [strictly] their worship, such will be the honoured ones in the Gardens [of Bliss] } (*Surah* 70: 34-35).

Allah has emphasised the need for humility and concentration in prayers. There is no doubt that Satan is the most bitter enemy of man; he always tries to disturb the Believer’s prayers. He (the worshipper) finds his mind suddenly engulfed with memories, problems, worries, work and his family... and he will often find himself wondering whether he has prayed three *rak’ah* or four. This is how Satan steals the prayer. Man was created only to worship Allah. He says: {I created not the jinns and mankind except to worship me} (*Surah* 51:56). Man is to live in this world as a worshipper of Allah and prayer is the best form of worship. On the Day of Judgment, man will have to answer for his deeds. Allah says: {Then shall you be questioned about the joy [you indulged in]} (*Surah* 102:8)

(Abridged from: *Why Do We Pray?* by Dr Suhaib Hasan)

## How to safeguard and improve your prayers

The following is some advice to help you preserve and safeguard your prayer, and perform it in a proper manner, which makes it more likely to be accepted,

- Perform *Wudhoo’* (ablution) properly because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said: “Allah made compulsory upon Himself to admit into Paradise any Muslim who properly performed *Wudhoo’*; then prays two *Rak’ah* with attentiveness and submissiveness.” [Muslim]

- Leave your house in the state of *Wudhoo’* because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The one who leaves his house in a state of *Wudhoo’* to perform an obligatory prayer will get the reward of pilgrimage.” [Ahmad].

- Be keen to perform it as soon as its time is due because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The best of deeds is performing prayer on its due time” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

- Be keen to perform it with the congregation because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Prayer with the congregation is 27 multiples better than praying alone.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

- Be keen to reach before the Imam utters the initial *Allahu Akbar* because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Whosoever prays 40 days with the congregation, attending the initial (*Allahu Akbar*) of the prayer, will be free of two things: Hell Fire and hypocrisy.” [Ahmad]

- Be keen to walk to the mosque because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Give glad tidings to those who walk to the mosque during dark with complete light on the Day of Resurrection.” [Abu Dawood and At-Tirmithi]

- Be attentive with your heart while performing prayer.

- Wait in the mosque for the next prayer as often as you can because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said when he mentioned the seven whom Allah The Almighty will protect under the shade of His throne: “A man whose heart is attached to mosques.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

- Learn the rulings of prayer and the *Sumnah* (tradition) of the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*.
- Perform the regular optional prayers at home because the Prophet, *sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The best prayer is the one performed at home except the obligatory prayer.” [At-Tabarani]

- Beware of staying up late at night because you are likely to miss the *Fajr* prayer.
- Beware of eating, drinking and laughing too much, because this makes perform-

ing prayer heavier on the heart.

- Set your alarm for *Fajr* or get someone to call you to wake up for prayer.
- Ponder upon the verses recited during the prayer.
- Read about the *Salaf* (righteous predecessors) and their ambition and keenness to guard prayer.
- Think about the glory of Allah The Almighty before you start praying.
- Always say the recommended supplications and remembrance after prayers, and do not leave the mosque before finishing them.

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said:

“There are five ranks of people in relation to prayer,

First, is he who transgresses against himself by neglecting parts of *Wudhoo’*; its timings and some of its conditions; and he will be punished.

Second, is he who maintains its timings and conditions, but his mind is occupied during prayer; and he will be questioned.

Third, is he who maintains its timings and conditions and all its rights and struggles against himself not to become busy thinking of something else; so he is in a state of Jihad while praying; and he will forgive.

Fourth, is he whose heart is fully consumed by praying during his prayer, and his main concern is establishing it properly and perfectly, and he is in a state of servitude to his Lord; and he will be rewarded.

Fifth, is he who does as the fourth, but in addition he sets his heart in the Hands of his Lord, watchful of his Lord, glorifying and honoring Him as if he can see his Lord; his mind is concentrated on praying; and this type is far higher than any other rank; and he is close to his Lord and will have the pleasure of being close to his Lord in the Hereafter.”

Which one of these five ranks do you fit in? Hold yourself accountable and weigh it according to your performance of prayer.

Ways to glorify the status of prayer:

1. Perform it on time.
2. Perfect its conditions and compulsory acts.
3. Rush to perform it.
4. Feel sorrow if any portion was performed improperly, like the one who becomes saddened for not performing it with the congregation because he missed out on the 27 multiples of reward; or if he was inattentive during prayer, for a prayer without complete submission is like a body without a soul.

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GULF TIMES

EPA’s rejection of climate science threatens everyone

In mid- March, Lee Zeldin, President Donald Trump’s newly confirmed administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency, announced that the EPA was undertaking a formal reconsideration of its “endangerment finding.” The Trump administration has made no secret of its desire to rescind the 2009 declaration that greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions endanger “both the public health and the public welfare of current and future generations.” In other words, Trump wants to walk back the US government’s assertion that climate change is real and caused by humans.

This scientific finding stemmed from a 2007 US Supreme Court ruling that various GHGs are pollutants covered by the Clean Air Act. The Court held that the EPA must determine whether GHG emissions from new motor vehicles “cause[s], or contribute[s] to, air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare” (emphasis added). To be clear, the ruling did not command the EPA to regulate GHG emissions. But if the agency found that emissions caused or contributed to air pollution, the Clean Air Act would require it to establish air-quality standards that accurately reflect “the latest scientific knowledge.” To make this determination, the EPA had to survey the scientific literature, assess existing and emerging risks based on that science, and evaluate the costs and benefits associated with alternative options for prospective regulation. The agency then posted a preliminary draft of its findings and policy options for a 60-day public-comment period, and was required to respond publicly to each comment while revising the document.

After publishing a final version of its endangerment and “cause or contribute” findings – the latter recognises that GHG emissions from new motor vehicles contribute to harmful air pollution – in December 2009, the EPA began to design its response and implement appropriate measures. But the pushback was almost immediate. By July 2010, the

The Trump administration’s disdain may end up discouraging an entire generation of young people from studying climate change

course. The stated rationale for reconsidering the endangerment finding is tenuous, based in part on false claims about the climate agenda – most notably that it has imposed trillions of dollars in costs on Americans.

Still, the EPA faces a difficult road ahead. Before the agency can reach the opposite conclusion – that GHG emissions do not endanger public health and welfare – it must undertake the same rigorous, multi-step process that produced the 2009 finding. And now it must contend with a much larger body of scientific evidence for the observed and projected damages from these emissions: the past 16 years have produced reams of research pointing to GHG emissions’ harmful effects.

The severity of the climate crisis became clearer in 2019, when 15 scientists published a review of the then-current literature in Science. They concluded that, since 2009, “the amount, diversity, and sophistication of the evidence” had “increased markedly, clearly strengthening the case for endangerment.” In 2023, the sixth assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change brought home the message, finding that “adverse impacts from human-caused climate change will continue to intensify.” The report emphasised that the effects were worsening at a faster pace than ever before.

Simply embarking on an official reassessment of the endangerment finding may produce the Trump administration’s desired effect: a massive retreat from climate action at the federal level. That is already happening to a certain degree. The EPA has announced plans to eliminate its scientific-research arm, even though almost every US agency depends on the climate science that it produces.

Moreover, the new leaders of the many government departments that support research on global warming – from Health and Human Services (which houses the National Institutes of Health) to Commerce (which houses the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) – largely share Trump’s climate scepticism. The EPA’s reconsideration of the endangerment finding will give them cover to defund existing scientific programmes, discontinue the collection of valuable data series, reject creative research proposals, freeze government hiring, and undertake large-scale personnel reductions.

The Trump administration’s disdain for established science, coupled with dramatic cuts to research funding for universities, NGOs, and the private sector, may end up discouraging an entire generation of young people from studying climate change. – Project Syndicate

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How should Africa respond to foreign aid cuts?

By Ifeanyi M Nsofor  
Silver Spring

A global storm is gathering – and Africa is directly in its path. Under President Donald Trump, the US has frozen \$40bn in USAID funding, slashing 83% of grants. European donor countries are also drastically cutting their foreign-aid commitments, signaling a broader shift in priorities. The devastating effects are already being felt across Africa, particularly in sectors like healthcare, education, and social services, which have long relied on external support.

For decades, African governments have depended heavily on foreign aid, often at the expense of building sustainable domestic financing systems. But the current wave of aid cuts underscores an uncomfortable truth: foreign aid is inherently unreliable. It can be paused, reduced, or redirected at any time, without warning, and is often subject to political shifts in donor countries.

The current financial crisis, then, should serve as a wake-up call. African countries must reclaim control of their futures by adopting bold, innovative strategies to close funding gaps and build resilient, self-sufficient health systems.

To this end, African governments must invest in homegrown financing solutions for essential public services. In the health sector, the main focus should be achieving universal health coverage through a robust, well-funded primary healthcare (PHC) system. Most donor-funded health initiatives – vaccinations, childcare, nutrition, sanitation, and disease control – fall squarely within the

PHC framework. According to the World Health Organisation, up to 90% of an individual’s health-care needs can be addressed at the PHC level.

Focusing on prevention and health promotion thus remains the fastest and most cost-effective way to improve health outcomes across Africa. Preventive PHC measures such as childhood vaccinations, hypertension screenings, prenatal care, and nutrition services could significantly reduce mortality rates among mothers and children under five. Malnutrition alone contributes to nearly half of all deaths among children in this age group, underscoring the urgent need for early, community-based care.

Unfortunately, more than four decades after the 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration defined PHC as the foundation of equitable health care, many of its goals remain unfulfilled. Consequently, African governments must develop independent health financing mechanisms to ensure long-term accessibility and accountability.

Health insurance represents an opportunity for African countries to draw on their cultural traditions of collective responsibility and community-based support. South Africa’s Zulu people live by the principle of Ubuntu – “I am because you are” – while the Igbo people of Nigeria uphold “Igwebuike” (“strength in unity”). These deeply rooted values mirror the essence of health insurance: protect individuals by pooling resources.

Rwanda and Morocco offer compelling models for strengthening PHC systems and expanding access. Rwanda’s community-based health insurance, rolled out nationwide

in 2004, now covers more than 90% of the population, making it one of Africa’s most effective health financing models. The scheme is funded through a combination of member premiums, government contributions, international donors, and other mechanisms. It is also supported by roughly 59,000 community health workers, who serve as vital links between households and formal services. Over the past two decades, the programme has reduced mortality rates and decentralised service delivery, bringing health care to the communities that need it most.

In Morocco, the government introduced a dual national health insurance system in 2005: Assurance Maladie Obligatoire (AMO) for workers in the formal sector and Regime d’Assistance Médicale) for informal workers. In 2022, these programmes were consolidated into the AMO-Tadamon programme, enabling beneficiaries to access both public and private facilities.

This reform not only eased pressure on public-health facilities but also promoted equitable access through strategic financing, with insurance coverage surging from just 15% in 2005 to nearly 80% today. In 2023, the World Bank approved a \$450mn programme-for-results loan to advance universal health coverage in Morocco and increase access to quality care.

The need for universal coverage in Africa is particularly urgent as the continent faces a surge in noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Collectively, NCDs – driven by unhealthy diets, sedentary lifestyles, and excessive alcohol and sugar consumption – claim

41mn lives annually, with 32mn deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

As foreign aid shrinks, African leaders must adopt bold policies that encourage healthier lifestyles and boost domestic revenue. One such solution is taxation. As the WHO’s Sugar Tax Report shows, taxing sugary beverages reduces consumption and lowers the risk of obesity and diabetes. Experts at the recent Global NCD Alliance Forum underscored the need for stronger excise taxes across Africa to curb the growing NCD epidemic and generate sustainable revenue streams for public-health investments.

South Africa and Mexico demonstrate the promise of such measures. Mexico implemented a one-peso-per-liter excise tax on sugar-sweetened beverages on January 1, 2014, and consumption of sugary drinks fell by 7.6% over the two-year period from 2014 to 2015. In South Africa, a 2018 sugar tax led to a 51% reduction in purchases of sugary drinks, 52% reduction in calories, and 29% reduction in the volume of beverages purchased per person per day.

Diaspora remittances represent a promising and sustainable source of funding. While talent continues to leave Africa, remittances also create a powerful “brain gain,” delivering a stable flow of funds to the continent. In 2024, remittances to Africa exceeded \$100bn, outpacing foreign aid. Diaspora Nigerians alone accounted for 20% of this figure. Globally, remittances reached \$590bn in 2020, far surpassing official development assistance, which stood at \$180bn, and philanthropic outflows, which totaled \$70bn. If African countries had allocated just 1% of every remittance dollar to health insurance – as I proposed in 2019 – the \$100bn in remittances sent by the African diaspora in 2024 could have generated \$1bn for healthcare, bringing the continent closer to achieving universal health coverage.

But to unlock remittances’ full potential, African governments must improve governance, strengthen accountability, and foster trust with diaspora communities. Of course, Africa is not a monolith. Solutions must be tailored to each country’s unique context, complementing broader efforts to boost domestic resource mobilisation.

What is clear, however, is that lasting independence depends on financial self-reliance. For African countries to control their financial futures, they must ensure that they can fund essential services like healthcare without relying on external support. – Project Syndicate

• Ifeanyi M. Nsofor, a public-health physician and behavioral-science researcher, serves on the Global Fellows Advisory Board at the Atlantic Institute.





# How China took to ‘never yield’ defiance after Trump tariffs

Reuters  
Beijing/Washington

China has put civilian government officials in Beijing on “wartime footing” and ordered a diplomatic charm offensive aimed at encouraging other countries to push back against US President Donald Trump’s tariffs, according to four people familiar with the matter.

Communist Party officials have played a leading role in framing China’s response, one of the people said, with government spokespeople posting defiant clips on social media featuring former leader Mao Zedong saying “we will never yield.”

As part of the “wartime” posture, the details of which are being reported by Reuters for the first time, bureaucrats in the foreign affairs and commerce ministries have been ordered to cancel vacation plans and keep mobile phones switched on around the clock, two of the people said. Departments covering the US have also been beefed up, including with officials who worked on China’s response to Trump’s first term, they said. The combative all-of-government approach after Trump’s “Liberation Day” salvo marked a hard turn for Beijing, which had tried to avoid a spiralling trade war. For months, Chinese diplomats had tried to establish a high-level channel of communication with Trump’s administration to defend what China’s cabinet has described in state media campaigns as a “win-win” trading relationship.

Optimistic Chinese observers even held out hope for a grand bargain with Trump over trade, TikTok – and perhaps even Taiwan.

This account of how China shifted from seeking a deal to punching back with retaliatory tariffs and threatening all-out defiance is based on interviews with more than a dozen people, including US and Chinese government officials, as well as other diplomats and scholars briefed on bilateral exchanges.

Four of them also described how Beijing’s diplomats have been engaging other governments targeted by Trump tariffs, including sending letters seeking co-operation to several countries. Longstanding US allies in Europe, Japan and South Korea have also been contacted, two people said.

Most of the people spoke on condition of anonymity to describe confidential government deliberations.

“China is a responsible major country. We stand up against



hegemony, not only to safeguard our own rightful interests, but also to uphold the common interests of the international community,” the Chinese foreign ministry said in a faxed statement.

It added that, “This trade war was started by the US and imposed on China... If the US really wants to resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiations, it should stop applying extreme pressure. Any dialogue should be established on the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit.”

The South Korean and Japanese embassies in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment on talks between their countries and China.

After the initial Chinese retaliation, Trump said: “China played it wrong, they panicked – the one thing they cannot afford to do!” He has also suggested that Beijing wanted to make a deal but “they just don’t know how quite to go about it.”

US officials have also blamed China for the impasse because its trillion-dollar trade surplus with the world is the result of what they see as abuses of the global commerce system that haven’t been successfully addressed through years of negotiations.

Trump on April 2 stunned the world with massive tariffs that he said would prevent countries like China from “ripping off” the US. Chinese leader Xi Jinping ditched official caution and issued a patriotic message casting doubt on whether American voters could bear as much hardship as the Chinese. The “Liberation Day” levies have since been suspended for all countries except China for

90 days. With some exceptions, trade of goods between China and the US is now largely frozen, and Beijing is starting to crack down on trade of services, while warning its citizens against travel to the US and putting curbs on import of American films.

Even after Trump was elected on the promise of high tariffs, relations with Beijing got off to a polite start. Trump invited Xi to his inauguration, which was eventually attended by Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng.

Things started deteriorating soon after.

During the first Trump administration, Beijing had several high-level channels of communication, most notably between then-ambassador Cui Tiankai and Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner. There isn’t an equivalent channel this time around, according to a Beijing official familiar with Sino-American ties, adding that China wasn’t sure who spoke for Trump on their relationship.

A Trump administration official said in response to Reuters’ questions that the US had “made clear to China that we want working-level contact to continue... but will not engage for the sake of engagement and in dialogues that do not advance American interests.”

Chinese ambassador to the US Xie Feng made unsuccessful attempts before the election to reach Trump’s billionaire ally Elon Musk, said a US scholar who recently visited China for unofficial exchanges that Beijing has historically used to communicate with Washington policymakers.

Musk didn’t immediately return a request for comment. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi tried to meet Secretary of State Marco Rubio, a China hawk who is sanctioned by Beijing, during a February visit to New York to chair a United Nations session but did not secure a meeting. There has been no publicly disclosed exchange between the two sides’ top diplomats beyond a frosty phone call in late January.

Wang was also unsuccessful in his efforts to meet on that trip with National Security Adviser Mike Waltz, said a person familiar with the matter. Wang had held numerous talks with Waltz’s predecessor, Jake Sullivan, including an exchange that led to a rare prisoner swap.

In an interview with ABC News on Sunday, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said there have been initial discussions through intermediaries between the US and China.

“We all expect that the President of United States and President Xi of China will work this out,” Lutnick said.

China’s commerce ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Lutnick’s remarks.

Trump told reporters this week that he would be willing to meet Xi, whom he also described as a friend. He has not detailed any specifics of a possible deal.

The Trump administration official said the US had repeatedly asked Chinese diplomats if Xi would request a phone call with Trump and “the answer has consistently been ‘no.’”

International relations expert Zhao Minghao at Shanghai’s

Fudan University said such outreach “totally doesn’t work in terms of the Chinese policy-making system.”

“For the Chinese side, usually there is agreement and work on the working level and then we can arrange the summit,” he said. The way “countries which have tried to negotiate have been treated so far this year also certainly has not done much to encourage China to sit down at the table,” said Lynn Song, Chief Economist for Greater China at ING Bank.

There are some ongoing conversations between lower-level officials on both sides, according to one Chinese and three US officials, though some working groups put in place by the Joe Biden administration to deal with commercial disputes, as well as treasury and military issues have been frozen.

While many countries were hit by US tariffs this month for the first time, China honed its response during previous bouts of the Sino-American trade war.

Drawing on lessons from Trump’s first term, China created a retaliatory playbook that includes tariffs as well as restrictions on about 60 US companies and curbs on exports of rare earths.

The effort was a result of weeks of preparations by Chinese government officials who had been tasked with studying Trump’s policies and suggesting countermeasures that could be gradually scaled up, according to two people familiar with the situation.

Xi opted for a strong response, hitting back with across-the-board levies even before Trump’s announced tariffs went into effect. The duties were announced shortly before Wall Street opened on April 4 – a public holiday in China. US equities dropped sharply lower.

One Chinese official briefed on the deliberations described the unusually swift response as akin to Covid pandemic-era decision making that was carried out without the customary sign offs by all relevant departments.

Some Chinese opinion leaders appeared to suggest off-ramps in the trade war.

Ren Yi, a political blogger with nearly 2mn followers on the Weibo microblogging platform said in an April 8 post that countermeasures “do not require a broad increase in tariffs on American goods.”

Ren, whose grandfather was a prominent reformist leader in the 1980s, suggested targeted moves like suspension ofentanyl co-operation and further restrictions on agricultural imports and

movies. China’s finance ministry said last Friday that with tariffs on US goods now at 125%, it will stop matching any future hikes in duties by Washington, whose tariff strategy it branded a “joke”.

China’s foreign ministry has summoned many of the heads of its overseas missions back to Beijing for a special meeting held last week to co-ordinate the response, according to two Beijing-based diplomats.

China has also sent formal letters to government officials of other countries pressured by Trump to engage in trade negotiations.

The letters, which were described to Reuters by four people familiar with their contents, outlined the Chinese position as well as the need for multipolarity and for countries to stand together. The messaging also included criticism of US policy that echoed China’s public statements.

China has approached some G20 governments with wording for a joint declaration voicing support for the multilateral trading system, an EU diplomat told Reuters.

But the diplomat said that the messaging did not address concerns also held by non-US governments about Chinese overcapacity, its subsidy regime and alleged unfair competition. Beijing has said those concerns are overblown and that the rise of its high-tech industries is due to its comparative advantages and benefits the world.

China is also heavily focused on the domestic reaction to the tariffs, with social media users this week widely reposting an April 7 editorial in the official *People’s Daily* warning against panic. China has also recently started encouraging households to spend more and has dramatically changed its language about domestic consumption. Beijing is aiming to shift the engine of growth from exports to consumers at a time when the economy remains hobbled by a crisis of failed real estate development.

“The real battlefield is on the domestic front, rather than bilateral negotiations,” said Zhao of Fudan University.

Chinese officials also published on Musk’s X platform a clip of Chairman Mao giving a speech in 1953 – the last time the US and China were in direct military conflict during the Korean War.

In the clip, Mao, whose oldest son died in the war, says peace is up to the Americans.

“No matter how long this war is going to last, we’ll never yield,” he said. “We’ll fight until we completely triumph.”

## Back to Russian gas? Trump-wary EU has energy security dilemma

- French, German firms open to modest return of Gazprom’s gas
- Trump has made US LNG a politically loaded commodity
- EU aims to quit Russian gas by 2027, has no detailed plan on how
- Arbitrations against Gazprom complicate supply resumption

More than three years after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Europe’s energy security is fragile. US liquefied natural gas helped to plug the Russian supply gap in Europe during the 2022-2023 energy crisis. But now that President Donald Trump has rocked relationships with Europe established after World War Two, and turned to energy as a bargaining chip in trade negotiations, businesses are wary that reliance on the United States has become another vulnerability. Against this backdrop, executives at major EU firms have begun to say what would have been unthinkable a year ago: that importing some Russian gas, including from Russian state giant Gazprom, could be a good idea. That would require another major policy shift given that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 made the European Union pledge to end Russian energy imports by 2027. Europe has limited options. While the deployment of renewables has accelerated, the rate is not fast enough to allow the EU to feel secure. “If there is a reasonable peace in Ukraine, we could go back to flows of 60bn cubic metres, maybe 70, annually, including LNG,” Didier Holleaux, executive vice-president at France’s Engie, told Reuters in an interview. The French state partly owns Engie, which used to be among the biggest buyers of Gazprom’s gas. Holleaux said Russia could supply around 20-25% of EU needs, down from 40% before the war. The head of French oil major TotalEnergies, Patrick Pouyanne, has

warned Europe against over-relying on US gas. “We need to diversify, many routes, not over-rely on one or two,” Pouyanne told Reuters. Total is a large exporter of US LNG and also sells Russian LNG from private firm Novatek. “Europe will never go back to importing 150bn cubic metres from Russia like before the war ... but I would bet maybe 70 bcm,” Pouyanne added. France, which produces large amounts of nuclear power, already has one of the most diversified energy supplies in Europe. Germany relied heavily on cheap Russian gas to help drive its manufacturing sector until the Ukraine war and has fewer options. In Leuna Chemical Park, one of Germany’s biggest chemical clusters hosting plants of Dow Chemical and Shell among others, some makers say Russian gas should return quickly. Russia used to cover 60% of local needs, mainly through the Nord Stream pipeline, which was blown up in 2022. “We are in a severe crisis and can’t wait,” said Christof Guenther, managing director of InfraLeuna, the operator of the park. He said the German chemical industry has cut jobs for five quarters in a row, something not seen for decades. “Reopening pipelines would reduce prices more than any current subsidy programmes,” he said. “It’s a taboo topic,” Guenther added, saying many colleagues agreed on the need to go back to Russian gas. Almost a third of Germans voted for



Russia-friendly parties in the February federal election. In the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the east German region where the Nord Stream pipeline comes ashore after running from Russia under the Baltic Sea, 49% of Germans want a return to Russian gas supplies, a poll carried out by the Forsa institute found. “We need Russian gas, we need cheap energy – no matter where it comes from,” said Klaus Paur, managing director of Leuna-Harze, a mid-sized petrochemical maker at the Leuna Park. “We need Nord Stream 2 because we have to keep energy costs in check.” The industry wants the federal government to find cheap energy, said Daniel Keller, economy minister for the state of Brandenburg – home to the Schwedt refinery, co-owned by Russian oil firm Rosneft but held in German government trusteeship. “We can imagine resuming the intake

or transport of Russian oil after peace is established in Ukraine,” Keller said. US gas covered 16.7% of EU imports last year – behind Norway with 33.6% and Russia with 18.8%. Russia’s share will drop below 10% this year after Ukraine shut pipelines. The remaining flows are mainly LNG from Novatek. The EU is preparing to buy more US LNG as Trump wants Europe to lower its trade surplus with the United States. “For sure, we will need more LNG,” EU trade commissioner Maros Sefcovic said last week. The tariff war has strengthened Europe’s concern about reliance on US gas, said Tatiana Mitrova, a research fellow at Columbia University’s Centre on Global Energy Policy. “It’s becoming increasingly difficult to regard US LNG as a neutral commodity: at a certain point it might become a geopolitical tool,” Mitrova added.

If the trade war escalates, there is a small risk the United States could hold back on LNG exports, said Arne Lohmann Rasmussen, chief analyst at Global Risk Management. A senior EU diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, agreed, saying no one could rule out “that this leverage is used”. In the event US domestic gas prices surge because of rising industrial and AI demand, the US could curtail exports to all markets, Warren Patterson, head of commodities strategy at ING, said. In 2022, the EU set itself a non-binding goal to end Russian gas imports by 2027, but has twice delayed publishing plans on how. An EU Commission spokesperson declined to comment on the companies’ comments. Several EU firms have opened arbitration cases against Gazprom for non-delivery of gas following the Ukraine war. Courts awarded Germany’s Uniper and Austria’s OMV €14bn and €230mn respectively. Germany’s RWE has claimed €2bn, while Engie and other firms have not disclosed their claim. Engie’s Holleaux said Kyiv could allow Russia to send gas via Ukraine to meet arbitration repayments as a starting point of resuming contractual relationships with Gazprom. “You (Gazprom) want to come back to the market? Very good, but we won’t sign a new contract if you don’t pay the award,” Holleaux said. The return of Russian gas worries Maxim Timchenko, the chief of DTEK, Ukraine’s private gas company, which hopes to import US LNG into Ukraine’s storage and export it to Europe. “It’s hard to comment, being Ukrainian, but my hope is that European politicians learned their lessons dealing with Russia,” Timchenko said. – Reuters





# Amir, Putin discuss ways to bolster ties, Gaza and Syria

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He said that the two countries' views are convergent regarding issues in the Arab region, particularly Syria, the Palestinian issue, and the need to adhere to UN resolutions to enable the Palestinian people to establish their independent state.

For his part, His Highness the Amir expressed his thanks and appreciation to President Putin for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, voicing his hope that today's talks would contribute to advancing co-operation between the two countries to broader horizons.

His Highness also stressed the two countries' agreement on many visions calling for resolving regional and global crises through dialogue and peaceful means.

His Highness the Amir reiterated the importance of realising the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, foremost among which is the establishment of an independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, halting the ongoing killing, and protecting innocent civilians in Gaza.

The meeting was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani, and a lineup of members of the official delegation accompanying the Amir.

On the Russian side, the meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov, First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, Aide to the President for Foreign Policy Yuri Ushakov, Minister of Sport Mikhail Degt-

### Amir, Putin witness exchange of agreement, MoUs

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, and President of the friendly Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin witnessed the exchange of an agreement and memoranda of understanding between the two countries at the Kremlin yesterday. His Highness the Amir and Putin witnessed the exchange of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on developing public financial management; a co-operation agreement in the fields of healthcare, medical education, and medical sciences; an MoU between the Qatar Investment Authority and the Russian Direct Investment Fund to explore joint co-operation opportunities, and an MoU on co-operation in the fields of culture and sports.

The exchange ceremony was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir, while on the Russian side, it was attended by a number of ministers and senior officials.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani leaving Moscow at the end of an official visit to the friendly Russian Federation.