



Get home contents insurance
Visit us at Build Your House exhibition



Regulated by QCB

GULF



TIMES



0 668039 136499

SATURDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13364

May 3, 2025
Dhul-Qi'dah 5, 1446 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

published in
QATAR
since 1978

Introducing our new loyalty program, iPoints!
Join and earn points with every spend



vodafone



iPoints

ROBSON

The first Paint product that obtained
Qatar Quality Mark

Robshield Topcoat Matt
by
ROBSON PAINTS

Used as Exterior Coat - Matt



www.npfqatar.com Tel: 44601602

NOW OPEN

AL RAWABI FOOD STUFF



WHOLESALE
Plus

"Your trusted partner
for bulk essentials"

AL NAYEF SQUARE
AL - RAYYAN
BUILDING NO. 458

40459900, Call center: 40459999

ALL ITEMS UNDER WHOLESALE PRICE

Family

فاميلي

SUMMER
DEALS

PROMOTION PERIOD: 23/04/2025 - 24/05/2025

550+ Products
On Offer

SPORT | Page 1

Al-Attiyah leads
after punishing
opening day of
Rally Saudi Arabia

Spend 100+ QAR
at Al Meera
and join the

Land Cruiser
raffle



talabat
pro

Balmsan Championship concludes



The top five-winning teams of the Balmsan Championship and the top three winners in the 'Biggest Fish' competition were crowned yesterday during Al-Qaffal celebration at Katara Cultural Village by general manager Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti. Balmsan is considered the final stage of the Senyar Festival competitions. The championship derives its name from the main fishing site 'Herr Balmsan', one of Qatar's largest and richest marine habitats for oysters and fish. A winning team is seen celebrating during the award ceremony at Katara's southern beach (Freej Katara). **Page 12**

'Devastated' Harry says 'no UK return'

Prince Harry said yesterday he wanted to reconcile with Britain's royal family, but was "devastated" at losing a court battle over his security that meant he felt unable to return to the country with his family. Visibly upset, Harry revealed to the BBC that his father King Charles III no longer speaks to him over the security issue and after he published a memoir critical of the royals, and urged Prime Minister Keir Starmer to intervene. "Of course some members of my family will never forgive me for writing a book. Of course they will never forgive me for lots of things." **(AFP) Page 9**

Germany's AfD party designated 'extremist'

Germany's domestic intelligence service yesterday designated the far-right AfD party as an extremist group, handing authorities greater powers to monitor it and fuelling calls for it to be banned. The anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) slammed the move as a "heavy blow" to democracy, just months after they won second place in national polls, and vowed to mount a legal challenge. The BfV domestic intelligence agency, said it decided to give the entire party the label due to its attempts to "undermine the free, democratic" order in Germany. **(AFP) Page 11**

Carney vows big shift in Canada's economy

Prime Minister Mark Carney promised yesterday to oversee the biggest transformation of Canada's economy since the end of the Second World War to enable it to "stand up" to Donald Trump. Carney led the Liberal Party to a dramatic fourth mandate in elections on Monday after a campaign focused on the US president's threats to Canada's economy and sovereignty. Liberals fell just short of the 172 seats needed for majority control of parliament, but with 168 confirmed wins they will be in a strong position to pass legislation. **(AFP)**

COMMUNITY

See Pages
4,5 & 6

Unicef warns Gaza children face risk of hunger, disease

QNA
New York/Geneva

The UN Children's Fund (Unicef) warned yesterday that children in Gaza face an increasing risk of hunger, disease, and death due to the ongoing stifling Israeli blockade of the Strip, stressing that there is no justification for these practices. In a report highlighting the situation of children in the Strip two months after the Israeli blockade and the denial of humanitarian aid, Unicef Executive Director Catherine Russell reiterated her call for the blockade on Gaza to be lifted, commercial goods to be allowed in, and children to be protected.

"For two months, children in the Gaza Strip have faced relentless bombardment, deprived of essential goods, services, and life-saving healthcare," she said, stressing that with every day that passes under the Israeli blockade, children face an increasing risk of hunger, disease, and death, "and nothing justifies this." The Israeli occupation resumed its aggression on Gaza on March 18. Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes



Palestinian children queue for a hot meal at a charity kitchen in Gaza City.

killed at least 42 people yesterday in the Palestinian territory. Meanwhile, Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said that the situation in Gaza is catastrophic, with 2mn people facing hunger. Speaking at a press conference in Geneva yesterday, Ghebreyesus noted that WHO is facing unprecedented funding challenges as donor countries reduce their contributions, calling it the most severe disruption in the history of WHO financing. Executive Director of WHO's Health Emergencies Programme, Dr Michael Ryan, warned that the minds and bodies of Gaza's children are being broken. **Page 7**

Syria slams Israel's Damascus strike as a 'dangerous escalation'

AFP
Damascus

Syria's new rulers yesterday denounced an Israeli air strike near the presidential palace as a "dangerous escalation". The dawn strike came hours after senior Druze clerics and armed factions reaffirmed their loyalty to Damascus and rejected any call for secession.

They also urged the authorities to appoint local officials to government posts in the Druze heartland in Sweida province.

The statement followed sectarian clashes between Druze fighters and Syrian forces, including government-affiliated groups.

More than 100 people were killed in Jaramana and Sahnaya near Damascus and in Sweida, war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Yesterday's explosion from the Presidential Palace area was heard across Damascus.

Syria's presidency called the strike "a dangerous escalation against state institutions", and accused Israel of destabilising the country.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the Israeli strike as a violation of Syria's sovereignty, which he said Israel must respect along with "its unity, its territorial integrity and its independence", his spokesman said.

After this week's sectarian clashes a de-escalation deal was agreed between Druze representatives and the government, prompting troop deployments in Sahnaya and tighter security around Jaramana.

Syrian officials said the agreement also included the immediate surrender of heavy weapons.

An AFP photographer saw troops taking over checkpoints from Druze gunmen in Jaramana, although no handover of weapons was witnessed.

A German foreign ministry statement said: "Syria must not become the venue for regional tensions to be played out".

Israel has attacked hundreds of military sites since long-time president Bashar al-Assad was deposed in December. It has also sent troops into the demilitarised buffer zone that used to separate Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights.

On Wednesday, Israel launched strikes near Damascus and threatened more if violence against the Druze continued.



This aerial photo shows the Presidential Palace in Damascus' Mount Qasyoun. Israel bombed an area near the palace early yesterday.

Qatar condemns Israeli attack, renews support for Syria's sovereignty, stability

Qatar has condemned, in the strongest terms, the Israeli air strike near the Presidential Palace in Damascus, describing it as a flagrant aggression against the sovereignty of Syria and a serious violation of international law. In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs renewed Qatar's warning that Israel's repeated attacks on Syria and Lebanon, along with its ongoing brutal war on Gaza, risk fuelling further violence and chaos in the region, calling on the international community to pressure Israel to comply with international legitimacy and resolutions. The ministry also renewed Qatar's support for Syria's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and the aspirations of its people for peace and stability. The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has strongly condemned the Israeli air strike, reaffirming its absolute rejection of Israeli attacks that violate Syria's sovereignty, security, and stability. In a statement issued yesterday, the Saudi Foreign Ministry emphasised the urgent need to put an end to Israel's blatant violations of international law in Syria and the region. It further warned that the continuation of these violations and Israel's extremist policies will exacerbate the risks of violence, extremism,

and regional instability. The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) has condemned the Israeli strike, describing it as a serious violation that destabilises regional security and stability. In a statement yesterday, GCC Secretary-General Jassim Mohammed AlBudaïwi emphasised that the Israeli attack reflects the occupation's ongoing approach of fuelling conflicts and heightening tensions in the Middle East. AlBudaïwi expressed the GCC's firm rejection and condemnation of such Israeli violations, which undermine Syria's sovereignty, stability, and the security of its people. He stressed the importance of respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, rejecting any foreign interventions in its internal affairs, and affirming that Syria's security and stability remain a fundamental pillar of regional and international security. Meanwhile, the Muslim World League's General Secretariat denounced what it said was Israel's brutal approach in violating all international laws and norms and undermining security and stability in Syria and the region. It also reaffirmed the League's solidarity with Syria and its people in the face of any threats to their security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. **(QNA)**

Activists say drones hit aid boat bound for Gaza

AFP
Nicosia

A group of activists organising an aid boat for Gaza said it was attacked yesterday by drones in international waters off Malta as it headed towards the Palestinian territory.

The Maltese government and Cypriot rescuers said they had responded to a distress call from the vessel, while Malta said all crew members were safe and made no mention of an alleged attack.

The activists said they suspected Israel could be behind the attack, and Cyprus's rescue agency said it had been informed by the island's foreign ministry of an Israeli drone strike.

The Israeli military did not provide an immediate response when contacted by AFP.

"At 00:23 Maltese time (2223 GMT Thursday), the Conscience, a Freedom Flotilla Coalition ship came under direct attack in international waters," the group said in a statement.

"Armed drones attacked the front of an unarmed civilian vessel twice, causing a fire and a substantial breach in the hull."

"Israeli ambassadors must be summoned and answer to violations of international law, including the ongoing blockade and the bombing of our civilian vessel in international waters." Asked whether the group believed Israel was behind the attack, a spokesperson told AFP they

"suspected" that was the case.

"While we cannot confirm 100%, we suspect it's Israel," Hay Sha Wiya said, calling the country "the primary entity interested in keeping us and any aid out of Gaza".

Israel is known for conducting covert operations beyond its borders, including several during the Gaza war that it only acknowledged later.

The activists said the strike appeared to target the boat's generator.

Following the distress call, the Malta Vessel Traffic Services body dispatched a tugboat and offered support.

"The tug arrived on scene and began firefighting operations. By 0128 hrs, the fire was reported under control," the Maltese statement said.



Damage is seen on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla vessel Conscience outside Maltese territorial waters in this handout picture provided by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition.



Shura Council participates in Conference of AIPU in Algeria

QNA
Algiers

The Shura Council is participating in the 38th Conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU), held in Algiers, with a delegation led by HE Speaker of the Council, Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. The two-day conference is set to commence today and will bring together representatives from Arab parliaments to discuss key regional and international developments. Discussing the role of the

AIPU amid regional and international changes, the conference will focus on exploring ways to enhance Arab parliamentary co-operation in addressing current challenges and discuss political, economic, and social issues of common interest. Participants will also review the Union's periodic reports and evaluate mechanisms to enhance joint Arab parliamentary efforts and reinforce the AIPU's contribution to advancing Arab causes on regional and international platforms. On the sidelines of the main conference, the member of the

Shura Council and the AIPU Executive Committee, Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabet al-Dosari took part in the 38th meeting of the Executive Committee, held earlier yesterday in Algiers. The Executive Committee meeting addressed several agenda items, including the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the General Secretariat, proposed amendments to the regulations governing the Arab Parliamentary Excellence Award, and a proposal concerning the hosting of the AIPU General Secretariat's permanent headquarters.

Shura Council attends meeting of Gulf Legislative Councils in Algeria



The Shura Council participated in the Co-ordination Meeting of the Gulf Legislative Councils, which was held in Algiers, in preparation for the 38th Congress of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, which will be held today and tomorrow, discussing the role of the Union in light of regional and international changes. The Shura Council was represented at the meeting by the member of the Shura Council and member of the Executive Committee of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabet al-Dosari. The meeting discussed the co-ordination of Gulf positions on the topics on the agenda of the conference. **(QNA)**

Qatar special envoy meets UN officials



HE the Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs ambassador Faisal bin Abdullah al-Hanzab met with the visiting Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Afghanistan Georgette Gagnon, and Director of Political Affairs at the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Scott Smith. The meeting discussed Qatar-UN relations, the latest developments in Afghanistan, and preparations for the 4th International Meeting on Afghanistan, which will be held in Qatar under the auspices of the UN. **(QNA)**

Juvenile Police Department participates in exhibition accompanying Akhlaquna Awards

The Juvenile Police Department at the Ministry of Interior participated in the exhibition held alongside the Akhlaquna Awards 2025, which took place as part of Multaqa (Education City Student Center), organised by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, earlier this week. The Juvenile Police Department's booth attracted considerable attention from students, with various educational and awareness materials distributed to help raise awareness among youth. The department also took the opportunity to share messages encouraging students to benefit from such events,



which promote values and support both their academic and personal development. In recognition of its efforts, the Juvenile Police Department was honoured for its contributions to awareness and educational outreach. **(QNA)**

Qatar Foundation alumni: Driving the future of Qatar in multiple roles

As Qatar Foundation (QF) marks 30 years since its founding, its alumni are testament to its vision: creating lifelong learners equipped to lead Qatar into its next chapter of innovation.

Balkees Ahmed AlJaafari, an Iraqi graduate of QF partner university Northwestern University in Qatar, has spent the last three years transforming English education at Al Bayan Primary First School for Girls through Teach For Qatar.

"I heard from friends who graduated before me about how they enjoyed being in a school, not just teaching English, but giving back what they learned at QF to the students," says AlJaafari.

What sets AlJaafari apart is how she has incorporated her communications background into teaching. Inspired by her university courses, she launched a screenwriting competition at her school. "I wanted to experience teaching differently. Whenever we had free time, I would teach them about screenwriting, how to imagine and think outside the box," AlJaafari explained.

In the area of precision medicine and health, Dr Abdulrahman Ahmed al-Subaiey explains the impact that QF has had on him. After graduating from Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q), another QF partner university, with a degree in Biological Sciences and later earning his PhD from QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), he now leads groundbreaking research at QF's Sidra Medicine.

"My education at CMU-Q played a pivotal role in preparing me for both scientific research and entrepreneurship," says Dr al-Subaiey. His research on autoimmune epilepsy exemplifies how QF's approach to education and healthcare addresses specific health challenges facing Qatar's population.

"What stands out most is the culture of interdisciplinary collaboration and real-world impact that QF fosters across its education and research entities," he explains.

Haitham al-Haidari, a 2015 graduate of QF partner university Texas A&M University at Qatar (Tamuq) with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, embodies QF's impact in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) sector. Following graduation, al-Haidari transformed himself from an engineer into a serial entrepreneur, launching numerous tech companies.

His venture Modaris, started with just US\$200, grew into an international company operating in seven countries. "I've helped over 200 QF graduates generate income for themselves and over 8,000 students in Qatar. The impact is huge, so I focus on things with big impact," says al-Haidari says, who credits QF for giving him confidence to pursue high-impact initiatives.

"It comes from seeing QF as an institution trying to do good things – seeing the work that QF does, makes you wonder 'why not me as well?'"

Engineer Abeer Buhelaiqa, a petroleum engineering graduate

from Tamuq who later earned her master's in Women's Society and Development from HBKU, founded the Qatar Women Engineers Association (QWEA). The association emerged directly from her master's thesis research, which identified the critical need for platforms that highlight women's achievements in STEM fields. With direct encouragement from QF leadership, she transformed academic research into real-world impact.

QWEA now has approximately 300 members and has become a model across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. "Working in the industry gave me insight about women engineers in Qatar. We have many women joining the industry, yet there were none in leadership positions. This motivated me to investigate why," she says.

In the field of sustainability, Nada Raafat Elkharashi exemplifies how QF nurtures creative approaches to environmental challenges. The graduate from QF partner university Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, earned degrees in Interior Design and Interdisciplinary Design Studies.

She created innovative solutions like 'Electric Skin', which reimagines our relationship with energy, '66km', a sculptural piece addressing water scarcity, merging Qatar's climate with material research and cultural narratives, and, most recently, the Earthna Prize design titled 'Earthna Echo', which transforms sound wave patterns into a sculptural representation of environmental impact.



Dr Abdulrahman Ahmed al-Subaiey



Nada Raafat Elkharashi



Engineer Abeer Buhelaiqa



Balkees Ahmed AlJaafari



Haitham al-Haidari

giving me the tools and encouragement to pursue a path that is uniquely my own."

Broad inspection campaign on winter camping sites across the country

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Department of Land Protection in co-operation with the Environmental Unit of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) has carried out an extensive inspection campaign covering all winter camping areas across the country. The campaign coincided with the conclusion of the 2024-2025 winter camping season. The campaign aimed to notify winter camp owners of the end of the season and urge them to begin dismantling their camps in order to protect the environment and ensure the cleanliness and safety of the camping sites. The ministry has called on all campers to remove their camps as soon as possible, noting that a specialised team has been assigned to inspect and follow up on the removal process. The ministry further stressed the importance of leaving camping sites clean, collecting waste, and disposing of it in designated areas only.



Intajat by Sheikh Khalifa al-Thani launching today

Today M7 in Msheireb Downtown Doha will host the launch of Intajat, a new cultural platform founded by Sheikh Khalifa bin Abdulla al-Thani. A filmmaker, curator, and multidisciplinary artist, Sheikh Khalifa understands the challenges artists face today. Intajat is his response: a platform that connects Qatari artists with global audiences, supports creative sustainability, and celebrates artistic expression across all mediums.

Gulf Times sat down with him to learn more about the vision behind Intajat, his personal artistic journey, and what this means for the future of Qatar's creative economy.

When did your artistic journey begin, and what drew you to the world of art?
My journey began with a deep passion for storytelling — whether through film or installations. Both art and cinema have always felt like home to me; they've been spaces to question, reflect, and connect. I studied Film and Media at the School of Visual Arts in New York, earning a BFA, and returned to Doha to work with the Doha Film Institute. From there, I began working independently across film, exhibitions, and visual art.

What milestones are you most proud of, and what are you working on now?
I'm proud of directing films that received international recognition, and of curating exhibitions in partnership with leading Qatari institutions. One highlight was launching the Intaj series with the Doha Film Institute and Qatar Museums, combining cinema and cultural discourse in an immersive way. My film *Border* also holds a deep personal and public resonance. Most recently, I launched Intajat — a platform dedicated to supporting creative production in art, film, and culture.

What inspired you to create Intajat, and what is your long-term vision for it?
The motivation came from the need to help artists reach broader audiences while preserving their creative integrity. Intajat is meant to be a sustainable cultural platform — one that connects art, market, and society through collaboration and cultural exchange. We help artists sell their work, share their practice, and reach visibility both locally and internationally.

How have artists responded so far? Can you share what to expect at the launch?
The response has been overwhelmingly positive. We already have 25 artists onboard, and the platform continues to grow. I'm excited for the official launch this Saturday, May 3rd, at M7, where artists and guests will explore the platform and express interest in joining. What matters most to me is the spirit of unity — the sense that we're all building something together as a creative community.

How do you think artists can balance expression with the commercial side of their work?
It starts with understanding that commercial success doesn't diminish artistic value — it can support it. The key is maintaining creative integrity while thoughtfully presenting your work. If the work is



meaningful and honest, it will connect with people. True artistic sustainability lies in navigating both the personal and the public, without sacrificing your core.

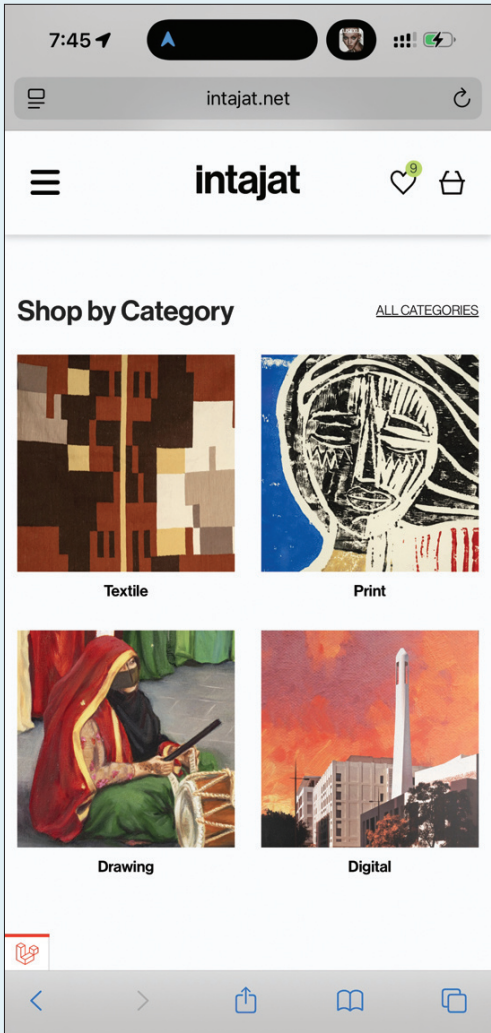
What support systems exist for artists in Qatar today?
Qatar's creative sector has seen remarkable growth, thanks largely to the vision and leadership of HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums. Her continued commitment has shaped the cultural landscape and empowered artists in transformative ways. Initiatives from Qatar Museums — like the Artist in Residence Program at the Fire Station, DFI's Qatari Film Fund, and countless institutional collaborations — have provided crucial support for both emerging and established creatives. There's now greater access to art materials, more platforms to exhibit, and expanded opportunities for cultural exchange. Beyond the public sector, the private sector has also played an important role. Independent galleries and spaces like AlHosh have opened new doors for artists to be seen, supported, and collected. And while often less visible, the Ministry of Culture's contribution continues to offer support across



various cultural initiatives, reinforcing the creative infrastructure behind the scenes. Public venues such as Katara and Souq Waqif provide consistent exposure, while events like Qatar Creates, Design Doha, DFI's Qumra, and the Ajyal Film Festival help artists engage in regional and international dialogue, while also encouraging cross-disciplinary collaborations and long-term growth. Though challenges remain — particularly in securing funding for large-scale projects or increasing global reach — there's no doubt Qatar offers one of the most supportive environments for artists in the region.

How do you see the creative economy in Qatar evolving?
The creative economy is growing rapidly. We're seeing more artists make a sustainable living, more galleries and exhibitions, and more commissioned public art across the country. Creative practice is becoming part of how we shape both our cultural identity and our economy. It's a movement driven by belief in the power of art.

How does Intajat contribute to this evolution?



Intajat contributes by offering artists a platform to share their work, reach new audiences, and engage with the broader community. We focus on curating meaningful collaborations and supporting artists through visibility, storytelling, and access to tools that help sustain their practice. The hope is to continue building a space that uplifts creatives and participates — alongside others — in shaping a more connected and resilient creative economy in Qatar.

About Sheikh Khalifa al-Thani

A Qatari filmmaker, curator, and multidisciplinary artist whose work explores the layered complexities of Arab and Qatari identity. His films have received international recognition, including awards at the New York Festivals and the Tangier Film Festival. In 2022, he started the Intaj series with the Doha Film Institute, merging cinema with cultural dialogue through immersive formats. In 2025, he launched Intajat, a private cultural platform and online store dedicated to supporting creatives through curated collaborations, increased visibility, and global cultural exchange.

Connected by one dream: The graduates whose families have grown together at QF

From siblings sharing classrooms to mothers returning as mentors — members of Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Class of 2025 share their stories of how a unique ecosystem and mission spans generations.

In Education City, the academic experience is not determined by the number of courses or exams, but rather by lasting impact it has on its students. For many QF graduates, the journey is not a solitary one, but rather a shared family experience. Siblings attend the same classrooms, mothers-turned-alumni now work alongside their children, and family gatherings are filled with conversations about QF — a shared experience that unites multiple generations within the same family and reflects the longevity of QF, which this year is marking 30 years since its establishment.

AlJohara Abdulla K al-Thani is among the members of QF's Class of 2025 who, in graduation season, reflects on how QF has brought her family together. She began her educational journey at Qatar Academy Doha — part of QF's Pre-University Education — and is now preparing to graduate from QF partner university Northwestern University in Qatar. Her sister graduated from Qatar Academy Doha in 2023, and her two younger brothers are currently enrolled there. Their mother, too, is a graduate of a QF partner university.

"Although my mother graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) in 2006, she often shared stories with us as we got older," she says. "When she used to pick us up from school, we'd drive past her university and she would say 'This is where I started university, and that's where I had my textile class or art history class'. That's how the stories would start.

"Back then, those small details didn't mean much to me as a child, but now, I walk through the same hallways, every



Alya Majid Sultan al-Issa

corner has a story and a special impact. My mother often says that VCUarts Qatar opened real doors in fashion, and that stayed with me. Now, as a student myself, I see how much Education City offers. What makes it special is that we're two generations learning in the same place."

"Having grown up within QF, I've experienced the full journey from childhood to university within the same ecosystem. The access to world-class universities right here in Doha gave my entire family — my mother, my sister, and now my siblings — the opportunity to grow, explore, and build our futures without needing to leave home.

"As a graduate, I can confidently say QF shaped me. I hope the next generation of my family will experience the same journey in a place that is like a second home."

Al-Thani's story is just one of many, and is mirrored by that of Alya Majid Sultan al-Issa, who this year graduates



Kareem Khazaal

from Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q), a QF partner university. Her QF journey began when she was just four years old, at Qatar Academy Doha. Her sister graduated from Northwestern Qatar; her two cousins and her sister-in-law from fellow QF partner university HEC Paris in Qatar; and her older brother was among Qatar Academy's first graduating class. Several of her cousins have studied at VCUarts Qatar since the early 2000s, and today some of her family members work there.

"QF is a common topic at our family gatherings," she says. "Even our daily routines often revolve around QF, whether it's having coffee in Education City or attending QF events together.

"These precious moments truly reflect how deeply embedded QF is in our lives. It's more than just a campus; it's part of our family's identity."

During her years at CMU-Q, al-Issa



Asmaa Salah

explored both athletics and entrepreneurship; co-founded, with her sister, her own jewellery store; and participated in several marathons. "QF gave me the skills and support to turn passion into reality," she says.

Kareem Khazaal, a law student who is graduating in 2025 from QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), believes that QF has never been just an educational institution, but rather "an integrated community."

"My family and I feel a sense of belonging to this community deepen as we reflect on how each of us has had a unique educational experience within the QF ecosystem, and how this diversity has shaped our paths and made us who we are today," he says.

Khazaal's mother worked for years at Texas A&M University at Qatar, a QF partner university, before moving to HBKU; and three of his brothers also

graduated from QF partner universities. Khazaal earned his degree from Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), a QF partner university, and is currently pursuing graduate studies in law.

"We often talk at home about our experiences at QF, the challenges, the lectures, and the efforts of my mother working behind the scenes," he says. "Our conversations, memories, and future aspirations remain linked to QF's vision."

Khazaal credits QF's support and his professors' belief in him, expressing his desire to give back by mentoring HBKU law students in international competitions. "What sets QF apart is the sense of community — it creates a lasting cycle of support and belonging," he says.

Asmaa Salah, a fellow member of HBKU's Class of 2025, describes her family's experience at QF as enriching, with her husband working and studying within Education City at the same time as she pursued her degree.

"We have formed a deep bond with this place that goes beyond the classroom," she says. "Living in Education City has given us a sense of belonging. Even the small daily details, like riding the tram in the morning and passing my husband on the way, are simple moments that demonstrate the harmony of our lives within a supportive and cohesive environment.

"QF has been more than a place of learning — it inspired us to align our goals and stay true to our values. It deepened our bond as a couple and gave us a shared sense of purpose within a community we truly belong to."

Now Salah looks forward to continuing her academic and personal growth within the QF environment. "As a student, I strive to make the most of my time at HBKU, using my knowledge and experiences to contribute meaningfully to my field and to society," she explains.

"QF has already given us so much. We hope to give back even more, and to continue learning and growing together."

WCM-Q alumni share career advice with future doctors

Foundation and pre-medical students at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) gained valuable insights from experienced medical professionals about the diverse training and career opportunities available to them during this semester's Medical Career Seminar series.

The spring edition of the series, which ran from January to March, featured presentations from five distinguished alumni of WCM-Q and Weill Cornell Medical College (WCM). The speakers discussed how their passion for medicine evolved over time, the challenges they faced in their careers, and the motivations behind their choice of speciality. They also provided essential guidance to students just beginning their journeys in medicine. Each presentation was followed by a Q&A session, allowing students to explore the career paths of each speaker while considering their own future plans.

The speakers included Dr Ibrahim al-Emadi (Class of 2016), a urologist at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), who has a special interest in urological on-



Left to right - Dr Sulaiman Alshakhs, Dr Mohammed al-Abdulla, Dr Dalia Steitieh, and Dr Ibrahim al-Emadi.

cology, renal transplantation, management of male lower urinary tract symptoms, and urinary stone management.

He was joined by Dr Sulaiman Alshakhs (Class of 2021), a senior resident in psychiatry at HMC and a clinical associate in psychiatry at WCM.

Dr Alshakhs' clinical and research interests include personality disorders and advocacy for vulnerable populations with mental health conditions.

Other speakers included Dr Mohammed al-Abdulla (Class of 2020), a senior clinical associate at WCM with a special interest

in inflammatory skin disorders and advancements in medical dermatology. He completed a residency in dermatology and venereology at HMC and is European board-certified.

Dr Dalia Steitieh (Class of 2017), an assistant professor of medicine at WCM and New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York, presented.

Dr Steitieh is also the director of the Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Program at WCM's Division of Cardiology and a member of several prestigious medical societies.

The alumni were joined by Dr Steven H Sewall, an orthopaedist with over 50 years of experience.

Dr Sewall graduated from WCM in New York in 1965 and completed a surgical internship and residency at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, followed by an orthopaedic residency at the University of Cincinnati. He then spent two years practising orthopaedics at the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in California. Since 1972, Dr Sewall has been a member of a private orthopaedic group associated with a community hospital near Boston, Massachusetts.

Dr Marco Ameduri, associate professor of physics/senior associate dean for Pre-Medical Education and Education City Collaborative

Curricular Affairs, said: "The experiences shared by the medical experts were not just about career achievements, but also about the commitment needed to establish a successful medical career. The speakers also played an important role in helping our students understand that a future in medicine could take many different and exciting directions."

Dr Rachid Bendriss, associate dean for foundation, student outreach and educational development programmes, added: "The seminars offer a valuable platform for students to connect with practising medical professionals and gain practical insights into the realities of a medical career. The series is an invaluable opportunity to inspire students and equip them with vital information early in their academic journeys."

The Medical Career Seminar series is a weekly activity for students. Each session features guest speakers, including WCM-Q faculty, alumni, and community partners, who provide valuable insights into the journey to a medical career and the practice of medicine.

MES trio for International Toyota Art contest



Sohan Sandeep



Nada Ashraf



Rinsha Fathima

MES Indian School students Sohan Sandeep (VI), Nada Ashraf (V) in category II and Rinsha Fathima (X) in category III have qualified for the International Toyota Art Competition. The winners' paintings will be selected for the forthcoming worldwide competition this year.

Talent Hunt 2025 at LIS

Loyola International School (LIS) was abuzz with excitement as over 650 students from across Oasis and Al Nasr campuses participated in Talent Hunt 2025. Students competed in dance, singing, speech, and elocution to magic tricks, sketching, painting, Holy Qur'an Surah recitation, and much more. Principal Bhavna V S encouraged the students to follow their dreams and appreciated the Activity Department for their meticulous planning in making the programme a grand success. She emphasised that the event marked another step towards a competence-based, learner-centric approach focused on the holistic development of students.



English Day celebrated at BPS

Birla Public School (BPS), Doha, observed English Day on April 23 with a morning assembly that paid tribute to the timeless legacy of English literature, coinciding with the birth anniversary of William Shakespeare.

Students presented word of the day coined by Shakespeare himself, showcasing his unparalleled influence on modern vocabulary.

A poignant thought from Hamlet was translated into Arabic, emphasising the universal appeal and timelessness of the Bard's ideas.

A theatrical segment titled 'The Bard on Stage' was staged bringing to life Shakespeare's iconic characters — Julius Caesar and Hamlet — through declamations.

One of the assembly's most imaginative moments came with a cross-cultural exploration of literary characters.

In a segment connecting global literary traditions, Tom Sawyer from American literature and Swami - Malgudi Days from Indian fiction were introduced on stage alongside their creators, Mark Twain and R K Narayan, highlighting storytelling as a bridge across cultures and generations.

Further enriching the day's celebration was a unique Indo-Qatar Literature segment, which explored the fusion of Indian and Qatari literary traditions.

This thoughtful inclusion promoted appreciation for local heritage and the shared values that unite diverse narratives.

In his address, principal Dr Anand R Nair underscored the power of language in shaping thought and character. He encouraged students to embrace eloquence by using refined idioms and expressive phrases in everyday speech and writing.



He also encouraged students to befriend books.

Vice principal Radhika Rele and headmasters and heads of various departments were present. The day's programmes were organised

under the guidance of the English Department head Rajasri Viswanathan and deputy head Ranchorini Binu with co-ordination of English facilitators Remya Vinod, Shabeela, and Vidhya Cherukad.

Queen's Qatar expands Secondary School

Queen's Qatar is expanding its Secondary School, with admissions now open for Year 10 students in the 2025-26 academic year, a statement said.

Queen's Qatar follows the English National Curriculum, augmented by the school's distinctive Fusion Curriculum in Key Stage 3 — a thematic and internationally-minded approach that builds

critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration alongside core academic skills.

Providing a broad and engaging curriculum that includes English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, Languages, and the Arts, the introduction of Year 10, for ages 14-16 years, will see students begin their IGCSE pathways, with A-Level programmes planned as the

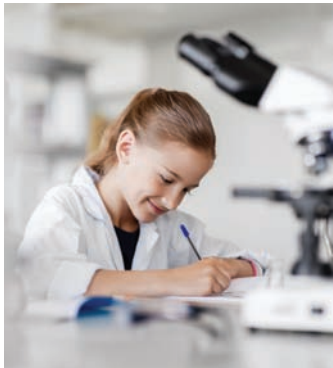
school extends to a full Secondary offering through to Year 13.

Principal Ann Djedid commented: "Queen's Qatar is committed to inspiring students to pursue excellence, cultivate their strengths, and thrive as purposeful global citizens. We look forward to welcoming Year 10 students in August as we continue to deliver on this commitment."

David Thiesen, incoming Head of Secondary, stated: "At Queen's Qatar, the Secondary School is designed to nurture curiosity, ambition, and resilience. Students benefit from a balance of academic challenges, co-curricular enrichment, and dedicated pastoral care, enabling them to shape their own story with confidence and purpose." Queen's Qatar serves students

aged 3-18 (Foundation Stage 1 to Year 13) within modern dedicated facilities, including science labs, art studios, libraries, a fully equipped 600 seat auditorium and technology hubs. A state-of-the-art Sports Centre opened in April.

Queen's Qatar is a purpose-built, COBIS-accredited British international school in Doha, and part of the Artemis Education family.



Girl studying chemistry at school laboratory.

Eloquence 2025 held

Division B, District 116, Qatar hosted its Toastmasters Annual Conference, 'Eloquence 2025' themed - 'Beyond Brilliance'. Seema Bhardwaj, Sridevi Lakshmanan, Shweta Koshti, Sabeena M K, Alar Mel Mangai, Sherwin Olimpo, DTM, Ravishankar J, Thayalan K, Manzoor Moideen, Rishida Mohamed, Bhaskar Rao, Riana Pinto, and Atul Hardas led the event. The speech contests winners,



in the order of first, second and third place, respectively, were: International - Sebastian

Mascarenhas, Addalin Rajan, Pratiksha; Evaluation - Muna Moiz, Nufaisa M R, Carl Jambo;

Table topics - Pratiksha Diwaker, Sebastian Mascarenhas, Addalin Rajan; Humorous - Sheik Malik

Kader, Rashmi Raghavendra, Carl Jambo. The winners will proceed to com-

pete at the District Toastmasters Annual Conference on May 23 and 24.

Philippine embassy celebrates ‘Filipino Food Month’

The Philippines embassy in Qatar celebrated its month-long festival commemorating Filipino gastronomy in April. Filipino food is a celebration of colours and flavours traced from the rich tapestry of heritage, history, and identity woven through generations across the Philippines’ 7,641 islands.

Recognising the crucial role of food culture in fostering new relationships and strengthening bonds between individuals and communities, the embassy enjoined every Filipino in Qatar and around the globe to unite in preserving and championing the country’s culinary treasures “because every bite of Filipino food is a taste of our national identity.”

This year, the embassy tapped selected restaurants to showcase the vibrant Filipino cuisine and transport diners on an



epicurean journey to the Pearl of the Orient Seas: the Philippine archipelago.

The embassy’s team, headed by ambassador Mardomel Celo D Melicor, visited



Lifestyle Avenue Restaurant together with media representatives, influencers, and non-Filipino guests. Highlighted during the visit were bulalo (a light coloured soup made by cooking beef shanks and bone marrow); pancit bihon (a traditional stir-fried noodle dish in the Philippines); classic street food chicken barbecue; cajun seafood; and turon (a fried snack made of thinly sliced bananas wrapped in a spring roll paper).



“Let’s encourage Filipino and non-Filipino friends to try out more Filipino restaurants in Qatar. Halika, kain tayo (Come, let’s eat together!)” the embassy stated. Follow facebook.com/PHinQatar, instagram.com/phinqatar, and dohape.dfa.gov.ph for updates on upcoming activities and programmes.

ICC Wednesday Fiesta



Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, continues to host the ‘ICC Wednesday Fiesta’, a weekly cultural event celebrating Indian arts and culture, featuring performances by various associated organisations and arts centres in Qatar. The evening also marked the soft launch of ICC’s new logo. Tulu Koota Qatar and Telangana Jagruthi presidents, Sandesh Anand and Sudha Sriramoju, respectively, were honoured on the occasion for their contributions to the community.

Networking seminar



Speakers Bureau District 116 Toastmasters organised a networking seminar in collaboration with Ceylon Business Builders (CBBQ). Nirlep Bhatt was the keynote speaker. Sri Lankan ambassador to Qatar Roshan Sithara Khan Azard gave a video message. Speakers Bureau chairman Jawed Ahmed, Salman Hilmi, Mohammed Nifras M Saheen, Rilwan Issadeen, Venkata Dileep Nalli, Dr Ashna Nusrat, and Sabeena M K were among those graced the occasion. Ceylon Business Builders president Mohammed Aashik Khan welcomed the gathering and Mohamed Nifras M Saheen proposed a vote of thanks.

Nutri-Cooking Challenge organised



As a part of the Poshan Pakhwada 2025 celebrations, MES Indian School organised a Nutri-Cooking Challenge for grade XII students, under the theme ‘Old Recipes, New Memories’.

The event aimed to promote healthy eating habits and highlight the importance of nutrition and well-being.

Titled ‘Cooking Beyond the Classroom: A Hands-On Approach to Learning’, saw participation from around 80 teams from both the Boys’ and Girls’ sections.

Students prepared a variety of traditional, nutritious, and delicious dishes, proving that healthy food can indeed be flavourful and enjoyable.

Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar de-

scribed the event as an opportunity for students to learn essential life skills as it fosters greater awareness of nutrition and promotes cultural appreciation through traditional recipes. Mary Cynthia Cyril and Ajith Kumar were teachers in charge of the event coordinated by lab assistant Raseena Najil in collaboration with the teachers of various sections.



Red Day at MES KG

The KG section of MES Indian School celebrated the ‘Red Day’ with a mix of fun activities, learning experiences, and interaction between students, parents, and staff. The tiny tots sung, danced, walked the ramp as different characters, and recited poetry. ‘Red on My Plate’ activity saw students dressed up as various red fruits and vegetables. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar thanked the parents for their active participation and support.



Merit Day at RPS



Rajagiri Public School (RPS) hosted its annual Merit Day ceremony to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding academic achievements of students across all grades. The highlight was the felicitation of the top five performing students from each grade level. Shine Together Foundation co-founder and noted Toastmaster Shaliny Kabeer was the chief guest. The students were honoured by the school’s leadership team.



Cleaning drive at Al Wakra Beach

KEF Toastmasters Club organised a cleaning drive at Al Wakra Beach to promote environmental responsibility and community engagement. Led by president Remi Raji and supported by the executive committee members Ajinas Arangatt, Hamna Azad, Yahkoob K, Pradip Sadiye, Shabir Hameed, Najla Azad, Bindu Pillai, Asya Naseem, the initiative saw enthusiastic participation from members, families, and well-wishers. Armed with gloves and trash bags, the volunteers combed the shoreline, collecting plastic waste, debris, and other litter.

TRIUMPHS ON THE TURF

CBSE Qatar Cluster Athletic Meet opens

The CBSE Qatar Cluster Athletic Meet 2025, jointly hosted by MES Indian School and Mesis Abu Hamour Branch, is witnessing participation from about 18 CBSE-affiliated schools for competitions in three categories - U-14, U-17 and U-19.

Mes governing board's director of sports and games Badarudheen Gulam Mohiyuddin was the chief guest and treasurer A T Usman distinguished guest. MES principal Dr Hameeda Kadar and Mesis principal Pramila Kannan spoke.

The event was organised by the physical education department of MES Indian School. The ceremony began with a prayer led by Mohammed Umair.

Girls' Section sports captain Nivedhya Sudhir welcomed the gathering. Athletic captain Mohammad Anas led the oath taking. Head



girl Hadiya Hashim introduced and compered the event along with Nimisha Liz Abraham. Mesis sports captain Mohammed Jasim proposed a vote of thanks.



PISQ student to represent Qatar

Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) student Amna Kashif (Grade 11) has been officially selected to represent Qatar in the ICC T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier 2025. "This milestone would not have been possible without the continuous support and expert coaching provided by Hira Aziz, who has played a vital role in guiding Amna throughout her journey. Her efforts in nurturing sportsmanship and talent among students are commendable," a school statement said. Principal Ch Muhammad Afzal congratulated both Amna and Hira Aziz. He expressed immense pride in Amna's achievement and assured her of the school's full support as she prepares to represent Qatar on the international stage.

DPS-MIS U-14 girls are badminton champions



DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) Under-14 Girls won the championship in the CBSE Qatar Cluster Badminton Competition held at DPS Monarch International School. The Girls' Under-19 team won the silver while the Boys' Under-14 and Under-19 teams bagged bronze medals. Principal Asna Nafees lauded all the participants.

BPS badminton champions



Birla Public School (BPS) has been crowned overall champions with 22 points at the CBSE Qatar Cluster Badminton Tournament, held at DPS Monarch International School, with participation from 16 CBSE-affiliated schools across the country.

Representing BPS, 24 students - both boys and girls across various age groups - competed in the tournament. BPS bagged gold medals in the Under-14 boys, Under-17 girls, and Under-19 boys' and girls' categories and bronze medals in the Under-14 girls and Under-17 boys' categories. The school management and senior leadership team congratulated the students and their coaches Hari Om Kashyap and Soumya Vijesh.

Birla Public School girls overall champions in handball



Birla Public School (BPS) won the overall championship in Girls' Category at CBSE Qatar Cluster Handball Championship 2025 held at Galileo International School from April 26-28. BPS teams earned gold medals in both the Under-14 and Under-19 girls' categories. A total of 28 students represented the school.

MES handball champions



The boys' handball team of MES Indian School has won the overall championship at the CBSE Qatar Cluster Handball Tournament 2025 held at Galileo International School from April 26-28. With 10 teams in Under-19, 11 teams in Under-17, and seven teams in Under-14, the MES Indian School's outstanding performance across all age groups set them apart. The boys' teams of MES emerged champions in the Under-19 and Under-17 categories and thus have advanced to the nationals to be held later this year in India. The boys' Under-14 and the girls' Under-14 and 17 teams secured bronze medals in the tournament.

School principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the players and coaches. Kabia, Mariam and Mohamed Navas were the teachers in charge.

Iran says US sanctions ‘will not change’ policy after Trump warnings

AFP
Tehran

Iran said yesterday that continued US sanctions on its trade partners will not alter its policy, after President Donald Trump threatened to penalise countries or individuals dealing in Iranian oil. “The continuation of these illegal behaviours will not change Iran’s logical, legitimate and international law-based positions,” a foreign ministry statement said, condemning what it called “pressure on Iran’s trade and economic partners”.

It added that such sanctions have created “deep suspicion and mistrust about the seriousness of America on the path of diplomacy”. On Thursday, Trump vowed to enforce sanctions and called for a global boycott of “any amount” of Iranian oil or petrochemicals. “All purchases of Iranian Oil, or Petrochemical products, must stop, NOW!” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. “Any Country or person who buys ANY AMOUNT of OIL or PETROCHEMICALS from Iran will be subject to, immediately, Secondary Sanctions,” he added. His remarks came after Iran

confirmed the postponement of the next round of nuclear talks with the United States, which had been expected to be held on Saturday, with mediator Oman citing “logistical reasons”. Oman said the date for a new round “will be announced when mutually agreed”. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who headed the Iranian delegation in the three rounds of talks held so far, said Iran was ready for a “just and balanced deal”. “There is no change in our determination to secure a negotiated solution,” Araghchi said on X, adding that any deal should guarantee “an end to sanctions”.

The talks mark the highest-level contact on Iran’s nuclear programme since Trump abandoned a landmark accord between Tehran and major powers in 2018. The US president had written to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in March urging negotiations but warning of potential military action if they failed. Since returning to office in January, Trump has revived his “maximum pressure” policy of sanctions against Iran, with the latest announced on Wednesday and targeting seven companies accused of transporting Iranian-origin petroleum products.

Tensions over Iran’s nuclear programme soared after Washington withdrew from the 2015 deal with major powers which offered Tehran sanctions relief in return for restrictions on its nuclear activities. Iran adhered to the agreement for another year before beginning to roll back its compliance. Western governments have since accused Tehran of seeking a nuclear weapons capability, an ambition it has consistently denied, insisting that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only. On Monday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said

Iran was “on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons”. He also warned that UN sanctions against Tehran – lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal – could be reimposed if Iran’s nuclear activities were seen to threaten European security. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said the French foreign minister’s remarks were “simply absurd”. “This false statement, coupled with the minister’s open threats to reimpose sanctions, reinforces the suspicion that France’s nagging posture risks evolving into a spoiling role.”

Gaza aid efforts on ‘verge of total collapse’, says Red Cross

AFP
Geneva

The Red Cross warned yesterday that the humanitarian response in Gaza was on the “verge of total collapse” after two months of Israel blocking aid to the war-torn Palestinian territory. “Without an immediate resumption of aid deliveries, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will not have access to the food, medicines, and life-saving supplies needed to sustain many of its programmes in Gaza,” it said in a statement. Israel strictly controls all inflows of international aid vital for the 2.4mn Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. It halted aid deliveries to Gaza on March 2, days before the collapse of a ceasefire that had significantly reduced hostilities after 15 months of war. Since the start of the blockade, the United Nations has repeatedly warned of the humanitarian catastrophe on the ground, with famine again looming. “Civilians

in Gaza are facing an overwhelming daily struggle to survive the dangers of hostilities, cope with relentless displacement, and endure the consequences of being deprived of urgent humanitarian assistance,” Pascal Hundt, ICRC Deputy Director of Operations said in Friday’s statement. “This situation must not - and cannot - be allowed to escalate further.” ICRC stressed that under international humanitarian law, “Israel has an obligation to use all means available to ensure that the basic needs of the civilian population under its control are met”. “If the blockage continues, programmes such as the ICRC common kitchens - which often provide the only meal people receive each day - will only be able to operate for a few more weeks,” it warned. The UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) said a week ago that it had sent out its “last remaining food stocks” to kitchens. ICRC cautioned that the field hospital it runs in Gaza was also “running dangerously low on food and medical supplies, with some

essential medicines and consumables already exhausted”. “Disruption to water systems, including the closure of water pipelines and destruction of critical sewage trucks, has created an unacceptably high risk of water-borne diseases,” it said. This dire situation was compounded by repeated attacks impacting the work of healthcare facilities and personnel, ICRC said. It highlighted the killing last month of 15 humanitarian workers and medical workers, including eight from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, and vast damage to hospitals in recent weeks, warning this “has further crippled Gaza’s collapsing health system”. “International humanitarian law is clear: medical personnel and facilities must be respected and protected in all circumstances,” ICRC said. “Aid must be allowed to enter Gaza. Hostages must be released. Civilians must be protected,” it said. “Without immediate action, Gaza will descend further into chaos that humanitarian efforts will not be able to mitigate.”

UAE had hottest April on record: met

AFP
Dubai

The United Arab Emirates endured its hottest April on record with an average daily high of 42.6C, the National Center of Meteorology (NCM) said. That topped the average daily high of 42.2C recorded in April 2017, said the centre, which has been keeping comprehensive figures since 2003.

The oil-rich Gulf state has been gripped by a heatwave for several days that has prompted authorities to warn residents to drink plenty of fluids and avoid work outdoors during the hottest part of the day. NCM meteorologist Ahmed Habib said the culprit was a mass of very hot air that had blown in from the desert. On April 27, temperatures in the emirate of Fujairah peaked at 46.6C, the second highest ever recorded in April in

the UAE. This year’s heatwave stands in stark contrast to April 2024, when the UAE was swept by its heaviest rains in 75 years. Four people died and the commercial hub of Dubai was paralysed for several days. Scientists of the World Weather Attribution network said last year’s rains were “very likely” exacerbated by global warming. The UAE is one of the world’s top oil exporters, but has also invested heavily in renewable energy.

South African mother found guilty of selling young daughter

AFP
Saldanha

A South African court found a woman guilty yesterday of trafficking her six-year-old daughter who has been missing for more than a year, in a case that has outraged the nation. The two-month trial heard statements from various witnesses that Racquel “Kelly” Smith had revealed to them that she had sold her daughter Joshlin in February 2024, including claims she was paid 20,000 rand (\$1,085). Judge Nathan Erasmus said the evidence of 35 state witnesses led him to find that Smith, 35, and her two co-accused – a boyfriend and a mutual friend – were guilty on the charges of human trafficking and kidnapping. “I have already found that on the evidence before me, Joshlin was exchanged,” he said.

“The evidence is from all scores there were payments, or at least the promise of payments,” he said, accusing Smith of regarding her daughter, who was aged six when she disappeared, as a “commodity”. The trial was held in a community hall in the small fishing town of Saldanha Bay, about 135km north of Cape Town, where the case sparked outrage. Crowds had gathered outside the hearings, chanting: “We want Joshlin back” and Friday’s verdict was met with a burst of applause. Many locals had joined the police in days of searches for the girl around their impoverished area. “You are guilty of... trafficking in persons in relation to Joshlin Smith. On count two, you are also convicted of kidnapping,” Erasmus told the three accused, none of whom took the stand. He adjourned the court for sentencing, which may run up to life sentences.

Sierra Leone faces rise in mpox cases

Sierra Leone has seen a new surge in mpox infections, recording 1,140 cases and nine deaths since the start of the year, the health ministry said. The west African country, which in January declared a public health emergency to combat mpox, last week said the death toll stood at six, with 763 cases. The capital Freetown has the highest number of detected cases, according to the latest figures sent to AFP late Thursday. The country began vaccinating children from the age of 12, high-risk people and exposed healthcare workers in early April after receiving 61,300 doses from the World Health Organization. “We are ramping up the vaccination drive in Freetown, border towns and rural areas mainly for frontline health workers and high-risk hotspots to ensure the protection of our people from the virus,” Desmond Maada Kangbai, who leads the health ministry’s vaccination programme, told AFP. So far, 2,500 people have been vaccinated, he added. The government has opened four treatment centres in the capital since February. —AFP

Back in time



People visit Oman Through Time Museum, in Nizwa, Oman.



Senegal revokes immunity for two MPs over alleged Covid funds graft

AFP
Dakar

Senegal’s National Assembly yesterday lifted parliamentary immunity for two opposition MPs over alleged embezzlement linked to Covid funds while they were ministers under the former government. Moustapha Diop was the minister of industrial development while Salimata Diop was the women’s affairs minister under former president Macky Sall when the fund to fight the spread of Covid-19 was established in 2020 and 2021. They have both rejected the accusations against them. The pair are among at least six ministers from the former government whose cases have been referred to the National Assembly by the courts, for alleged misappropriation of funds linked to Covid. Several investigations are currently under way in Senegal against former government officials. The fund, amounting to one trillion CFA francs (\$1.7bn) issued by the Senegalese state and donors, was supposed to reinforce the healthcare system, support households and the private sector and protect jobs in the west African nation. But a December 2022 report by

The revoking of the two MPs’ immunity was adopted yesterday in a vote backed by a majority of the 165 members of the National Assembly, which is controlled by the ruling party

The Court of Auditors revealed a multitude of irregularities, such as 2.7 billion CFA francs in over-invoicing of rice purchased for disadvantaged households and some 42 million CFA francs for gel sanitiser. The revoking of the two MPs’ immunity was adopted Friday in a vote backed by a majority of the 165 members of the National Assembly, which is controlled by the ruling party. Moustapha Diop was accused of spending 2.5 billion CFA francs in cash to buy face masks, “a violation” of accounting rules, according to authorities. “My department managed the 2.5 billion CFA francs within the rules. The suppliers said they had been paid in full and delivered all the masks. They said they had given us

nothing to bribe us,” he told his fellow MPs, defending himself. His parliamentary immunity had been lifted at the end of March in a separate case for “laundering and misappropriation” of public funds. An accountant from a public institution, currently in prison for “alleged embezzlement”, claimed to have given him 300 million CFA francs to finance his campaign in the November 2024 legislative elections. Salimata Diop also defended herself against what she called as “misleading accusations”, in having to justify expenses of more than 57 million CFA francs. “I have never taken a single franc from the State of Senegal,” she told journalists yesterday. Once their immunity has been lifted, the Assembly must vote to bring them before the High Court of Justice (HCJ), a special court empowered to try presidents and members of the government for offences and crimes committed in the exercise of their functions. They must first go before a High Court investigating committee, which will decide whether to refer them to the special court for trial. President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, elected in March 2024, and Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko have vowed to break with the old system of governance and fight corruption.



S Korea’s former PM launches presidential bid

AFP
Seoul

South Korea’s former prime minister Han Duck-soo announced his bid for the presidency yesterday, joining the race in a snap election triggered by the impeachment of the ex-president.

The June 3 vote will decide who replaces impeached former president Yoon Suk-yeol, who was removed from office over his ill-fated declaration of martial law in December that sank South Korea into prolonged political turmoil.

Political instability in the country intensified on Thursday after a retrial was ordered for a presidential

frontrunner over alleged election law violations, and as two key government figures - including Han - resigned. Han had hinted at a possible presidential bid when he resigned as acting president and prime minister on Thursday, suggesting that he was willing to “take on a greater responsibility”.

“For the future of the Republic of

Korea, a country I deeply love, and for all of us, I have decided to do what I can,” Han said yesterday.

“I will do my utmost to be chosen by our people in this presidential election.” The former prime minister took over as the country’s acting president after Yoon was impeached by parliament in December.

The 75-year-old career bureau-

crat is expected to team up with Yoon’s People Power Party to launch a unified conservative campaign against liberal frontrunner Lee Jae-myung. Across both liberal and conservative governments, Han has held a range of senior roles, including finance minister, trade minister and the country’s ambassador to the US.

Notably, Han has twice served

as prime minister, first under late former president Roh Moo-hyun and more recently under Yoon.

“I have dedicated my life to serving on the front lines of economic development as a proud public servant of the Republic of Korea,” Han said, pledging that he will tackle the ongoing crisis in trade involving Washington’s tariffs.

Australia PM says battle ahead to win election

AFP
Sydney

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese says he has a “mountain to climb” in elections today, despite leading the opinion polls, in a contest swayed by living costs and Trump tariffs.

Surveys give Albanese’s left-leaning Labor Party a narrow lead over the conservative opposition on a two-party preferred basis.

If they are right, Albanese, 62, could lead his party to a majority in the 150-seat parliament.

“On polls there’s a lot of undecided voters. We have a mountain to climb,” Albanese said yesterday.

“My job is to maximise Labor’s vote in the next 48 hours. That’s what I’m intending to do.”

Albanese has promised to embrace renewable energy, tackle a worsening housing crisis and pour money into a creaking healthcare system.

He warned of “cuts and chaos” under a right-leaning coalition led by former police officer Peter Dutton, 54, who wants to slash immigration, crack down on crime and ditch a longstanding ban on nuclear power.

Dutton, leader of the Liberal Party, has predicted “a lot of surprises, seat by seat” tonight.

“I haven’t met an Australian on this campaign who said that they’re better off today than they

were three years ago,” he said.

A result could come as soon as tonight, unless the vote is very tight.

A total 18.1mn voters have enrolled for the election. More than a third of them have cast an early ballot, the election authority says.

Voting is compulsory, enforced with fines of A\$20 (US\$13), leading to turnouts that top 90%.

Sizzling snags (sausages) cooked by local fundraisers also entice voters at more than 1,000 polling sites, searchable at democracy-sausage.org.

High prices are the top voter concern, polls show.

Albanese is promising modest tax cuts, cheaper healthcare and new homes for first-time buyers.

Dutton says he would slash fuel tax, curb gas prices and invest in infrastructure for half a million homes.

Both sides have had to grapple with US politics too.

The six-week election campaign had barely started when US President Donald Trump unveiled his trade tariffs, with a 10% levy on Australia.

Some polls showed Dutton leaking support because of Trump, who he praised earlier this year as a “big thinker” with “gravitas” on the global stage.

As Australians soured on the US president, both Dutton and Albanese took on a tougher tone, promising to stand up for Australia’s interests.

Japan dating app uses govt data to verify unmarried status

A popular Japanese dating app has introduced a feature allowing it to verify users’ marital status through government records, in a bid to prevent married cheaters pretending to be single.

Tapple, which counts more than 20mn users in the country facing a demographic crisis, introduced the feature on Wednesday.

It said over half of users - 69% of women and 54% of men - had expressed concern over the honesty of other members about their marital status.

Its survey also showed that 97% of women and 83% of men would like to be able to know for sure whether their potential partner is already married.

So the tool is designed “to promote even safer and more secure dating and marriage hunting”, the company said in a statement.

Users must give permission to the dating app to access an online government portal.

Driver’s body recovered from sinkhole



Japanese rescuers yesterday recovered the body of a truck driver who was swallowed by a huge sinkhole near Tokyo three months ago, an official said. A road in the city of Yashio caved in during morning rush hour in late January while the 74-year-old man was driving his lorry on it. The sinkhole, which was caused by corroded sewerage pipes, was reportedly 52 feet deep in February. The search operation was hindered by unstable ground, which raised the risk of the chasm collapsing further and prevented rescuers from approaching the area where the driver was believed to be buried. “We discovered a man inside the truck cabin and confirmed his death, then passed the incident to police,” a spokesman for the local fire department said.

AFP
Geneva

The United Nations yesterday decried continuing deadly attacks by Myanmar’s military despite a ceasefire declared following a devastating earthquake that killed nearly 3,800 people.

“The unrelenting violence inflicted on civilians, despite a ceasefire nominally declared in the wake of the devastating earthquake on March 28, underscores the need for the parties to commit to, and implement, a genuine and permanent nationwide halt to hostilities and return to civilian rule,” UN rights chief Volker

Turk said in a statement. A multi-sided conflict has engulfed Myanmar since 2021, when Min Aung Hlaing’s military wrested power from the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Following the 7.7-magnitude quake, the junta joined opponents in calling a temporary halt to hostilities on April 2 for relief to be delivered.

But Turk said that since the quake and up to April 29, “the military has reportedly launched at least 243 attacks, including 171 air strikes, with over 200 civilians reportedly killed”.

“The vast majority of attacks,” he added, had happened after the ceasefire took effect.

While the military renewed once its “largely

unobserved ceasefire”, the truce had been allowed to expire on April 30, Turk said.

“It is imperative that the military immediately stop all attacks on civilians and civilian objects,” he insisted.

The UN rights chief decried how “the relentless attacks affect a population already heavily beleaguered and exhausted by years of conflict”, compounded by the impact of the quake.

Nearly 20mn people in the country already rely on humanitarian assistance, he said, stressing that people in Myanmar “need food, water and shelter”.

“They need, and must have, peace and protection,” he said.

Thailand records first anthrax death in decades

AFP
Bangkok

Thailand’s health ministry yesterday urged calm after the kingdom reported its first anthrax death in more than three decades, with a second infection already confirmed.

Anthrax - which spreads through bacteria in soil - commonly infects grazing livestock and wild animals but can kill humans with symptoms including skin lesions, blisters and swollen lymph nodes.

Health officials warned Thais against eating raw meat, a staple in the country’s northeast, following the death of a 53-year-old man who reportedly handled a dead cow in Mukdahan province near the border with Laos.

A second 53-year-old man, also with a history of contact

with cattle, has tested positive and been hospitalised in the same region.

Meanwhile 638 people in “risk groups”, including a butcher and those who consumed raw beef, are being monitored and given antibiotics.

Weerawat Manosuthi, a spokesman for the health ministry’s disease control department, said the victim who died on Wednesday had underlying health issues.

“The man touched the cow without proper protection,” he told reporters in Bangkok. “Two days later, he developed symptoms and sought medical care.”

It was Thailand’s first anthrax fatality since 1994, when three people died, and comes as infections rise in the region.

In neighbouring Laos 129 people were infected last year, with a single fatality.

China ‘evaluating’ US offer for talks on tariffs

Reuters
Beijing

Beijing is “evaluating” an offer from Washington to hold talks over US President Donald Trump’s 145% tariffs, China’s commerce ministry said yesterday, although it warned the US not to engage in “extortion and coercion.”

Washington and Beijing have been locked in a cat-and-mouse game over tariffs, with both sides unwilling to be seen to back down in a trade war that has roiled global markets and upended supply chains.

The commerce ministry said

the US has approached China to seek talks over Trump’s tariffs and Beijing’s door was open for discussions, signalling a potential de-escalation in the trade war.

The statement comes a day after a social media account linked to Chinese state media said Washington had been seeking to start talks, and a week after Trump claimed discussions were already underway, which Beijing denied.

“The US has recently taken the initiative on many occasions to convey information to China through relevant parties, saying it hopes to talk with China,” the statement said, adding that Beijing was “evaluating this”. “Attempting

to use talks as a pretext to engage in coercion and extortion would not work,” it said.

The US should be prepared to take action in “correcting erroneous practices” and cancel unilateral tariffs, the commerce ministry said, adding that Washington needed to show “sincerity” in negotiations.

The punishing US tariffs on many Chinese products saw Beijing respond in April with levies on imports of US goods of 125%, as Beijing labelled Trump’s tariff strategy “a joke”.

The tit-for-tat increases stand to make goods trade between the world’s two largest economies impossible, analysts say, with import

duties beyond about 35% potentially wiping out Chinese exporters’ profit margins and making American products in China similarly exorbitant. China has repeatedly denied it is seeking to negotiate a way out of the tariffs with the US, appearing instead to be betting that Washington makes the first move.

Trump’s decision to single out Beijing for hefty import duties comes at a particularly difficult time for China, which is struggling with deflation due to sluggish economic growth and a prolonged property crisis.

Beijing has expressed its anger at the tariffs, which it says are tantamount to bullying and cannot stop

the rise of the world’s second-largest economy. Alongside leveraging its propaganda machine to hit back at the duties, China has quietly created a list of US-made products it will exempt from its retaliatory 125% tariffs - including select pharmaceuticals, microchips and jet engines - Reuters has reported. As tensions between both sides fester, the Trump administration yesterday ended US duty-free access for low-value shipments from China and Hong Kong, known as “de minimis” exemptions.

On the US side, officials, including Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett, have

expressed hope for progress in easing trade tensions.

“I am confident that the Chinese will want to reach a deal. And as I said, this is going to be a multi-step process. First, we need to de-escalate, and then... we will start focusing on a larger trade deal,” Bessent said in an interview with Fox Business Network this week.

Trump said on Wednesday he believed there was a “very good chance” his administration could do a deal with China, hours after Chinese President Xi Jinping called on officials to take action to adjust to changes in the international environment, without explicitly mentioning the US.

India response to Kashmir attack should avoid regional war: Vance

Reuters
Washington

US Vice-President J D Vance said Washington hoped Pakistan would co-operate with India to hunt down Pakistan-based militants, and that India's response to the recent militant attack in India-

administered Kashmir does not lead to a broader regional conflict.

"Our hope here is that India responds to this terrorist attack in a way that doesn't lead to a broader regional conflict," Vance said in an interview on Fox News' *Special Report with Bret Baier* show.

"And we hope, frankly, that Pakistan, to the extent that they're re-

sponsible, co-operates with India to make sure that the terrorists sometimes operating in their territory are hunted down and dealt with," Vance added.

Top US leaders, including President Donald Trump, have condemned the attack in Kashmir.

India is an important US partner as Washington aims to counter China's rising influence. Pakistan

remains Washington's ally even as its importance diminished after the 2021 US withdrawal from neighbouring Afghanistan.

In recent days, Washington urged India and Pakistan to work with each other to de-escalate tensions and arrive at a "responsible solution."

India has blamed Pakistan for the attack. Islamabad denies re-

sponsibility and is calling for a neutral probe.

The US State Department has said it was in touch with the two countries at multiple levels and Secretary of State Marco Rubio held calls on Wednesday with Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Indian Prime Minister

Narendra Modi vowed to punish those responsible and Jaishankar has told Rubio that the perpetrators should be brought to justice. Pakistan says military action by India was imminent.

After the attack, India suspended a treaty regulating water-sharing, and both countries closed airspace to each other's airlines.

Hard-right wins local UK polls in blow to Labour

AFP
Runcorn, United Kingdom

Hard-right upstarts Reform UK snatched a parliamentary seat from Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour party yesterday in local elections that dealt a blow to Britain's two establishment parties.

Reform, led by anti-immigrant firebrand Nigel Farage, won the by-election in Runcorn and Helsby in northwest England by just six votes, as it picked up gains in other localities, including its first mayoralty.

"This is heartland Labour Party. Their vote has collapsed, and much of it's come to us," said Farage of Starmer's first electoral loss since he took office last July.

"And that does away with the sort of media narrative that somehow it's just us versus the Conservatives. It's not. This is a whole different politics," added the Brexit champion.

The group's strong showing - overturning a huge Labour majority in one of the party's safest parliamentary seats - continues momentum seen at last year's general election and appears to confirm a trend that the UK is entering an era of multi-party politics.

Retiree Christopher Davies, who voted Reform because he felt "disgruntled" with Labour, said the result was a "wake up call for both" the country's main parties.

"I don't agree with all the things that Reform are on about, but... it was just out of total disillusionment with the system," the 67-year-old said.

The polls were the first since

Starmer became prime minister and Kemi Badenoch took over the reins of the struggling opposition Conservatives last year.

The premier called the result "disappointing", pledging to go "further and faster" in delivering change.

Reform also picked up dozens of council seats from both Labour and the Conservatives as Britain's long-established political landscape showed signs of fragmenting.

In the fight for six mayoralties, Reform won Greater Lincolnshire with Labour holding three. Labour, however, only narrowly held the North Tyneside mayoralty after a 26% swing to Reform.

New Greater Lincolnshire mayor Andrea Jenkyns said the "fightback to save the heart and soul of our great country has now begun".

"Now that Reform is in a place of power, we can help start rebuilding Britain. Inch by inch," she said.

Reform's by-election victory takes its number of parliamentary seats to five, an unprecedented number for a British hard-right party in the 650-seat chamber.

Just 1,641 seats across 23 local authorities were up for grabs - only a fraction of England's 17,000 councillors - but early results suggested Reform was transferring leads in national polls into tangible results at the ballot box.

"The first results show the Labour government is quite unpopular," analyst Anand Menon said. "The second point is the Conservatives clearly are not being seen as a credible government in waiting by the electorate. So it's bad news for both the big parties."

Starmer visits defence equipment supplier



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer speaks to members of staff during a visit to Leonardo, one of the biggest suppliers of defence and security equipment to the UK ministry of defence, in Luton, north of London, yesterday.

UK-India investment treaty 'lets companies sue govt'

Reuters
London

An investment treaty between Britain and India will contain a provision that allows companies to sue either government if they believe policy changes unfairly harm their investment or profits, two sources familiar with discussions said.

The Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism is aimed at protecting companies against possible unfair treatment under local laws, and will be included in an investment treaty that is expected to be struck alongside a free trade agreement shortly.

The mechanism has been criticised in recent years, including by Britain's previous Conservative government, for blocking efforts to fight climate change because fossil fuel producers can use it to protect their assets.

Britain has not included ISDS in any of the bilateral free trade deals it has struck since it left the European Union, though it is a feature of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) it has signed up to. India has also moved to limit ISDS in its treaties.

One of the sources said London had pushed for its inclusion in a deal with India as British businesses wanted reassurance that they would be treated fairly under the Indian legal system.

The Indian government declined to give an immediate response to a question about the current talks.

A spokesperson for Britain's trade ministry declined to comment on the matter but said any deal needed guarantees for businesses that they would be treated fairly.

The two sources said government officials on Tuesday told a meeting of businesses in-

terested in the deal that ISDS was included.

Britain has never lost an ISDS claim by a company but according to UN data, of 30 ISDS cases brought against India since 2003, eight were brought by UK-based companies under a previous agreement.

"We are determined to improve access for UK businesses, ensure their fair treatment, cut tariffs, and make trade cheaper and easier," the UK trade ministry spokesperson said.

Britain's left-of-centre Labour Party won power last year, and has been keen to stress that it is now the party of business as it restarts various trade negotiations.

Britain and India have been locked in trade talks, on and off, since January 2022, and are expected to strike a full trade deal soon.

India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal was in London earlier this week for late-stage talks, and returned yesterday for further discussions.

Four dead as heavy rains batter Delhi

Four members of a family were killed during a thunderstorm in New Delhi yesterday after a tree collapsed on top of the room in which they were sleeping, and one person was injured, the capital territory's chief minister said.

The city experienced wind speeds ranging between 70-100kph, along with lightning and its heaviest May downpour since 2021, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

"Instructions have been given to the district administration to provide all necessary assistance (to the affected family) immediately," Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said in a post on X.

Flight operations at the city's airport were also disrupted due to low visibility and waterlogging, while metro services were delayed and traffic snarls reported in several places.

A study commissioned by charity WaterAid last month pointed to a trend of weather in some of the world's most densely populated cities swinging from droughts to floods and back again, as rising temperatures wreak havoc on the global water cycle.

Unseasonable heavy rain also swept across eastern and central India and parts of Nepal last month, killing more than 100 people.



A man wades through a waterlogged street in a wholesale market after rain, in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

UK comedian appears in court on assault charges

AFP
London

British comedian and actor Russell Brand appeared in a London court yesterday to face five charges of rape and other sexual offences.

Brand, 49, who became known internationally as the husband of pop star Katy Perry after forging a career in Britain with his risque comedy routines, was charged last month.

Arriving for the first court hearing in the case, Brand made his way slowly through a crush of media and onlookers gathered outside the court.

The celebrity, dressed casually in a dark coloured open-necked shirt and jeans, spoke only to confirm his details before being granted bail and ordered to appear in court again on May 30.

In a video response on X after he was charged, Brand denied all the alleged offences and said he was "grateful" for the "opportunity" to defend himself.

The charges relate to offences alleged to have taken place between 1999 and 2005 involving four women.

Prosecutors charged him after a police investigation into allegations following a broadcast of a Channel 4 documentary in September 2023.

London's Metropolitan Police have said the investigation remains open and urged "anyone who has been affected by this case, or anyone who has any information" to contact officers.

The court confirmed that he lives part of the time in the US, but Brand also gave an address in the southern English county of Buckinghamshire.

UK court rejects Prince Harry's security appeal

AFP
London

Prince Harry yesterday lost his appeal to restore his full UK police protection when visiting Britain - a blow to the estranged royal, who had said that the safety of his family was at risk.

King Charles III's youngest son, also known as the duke of Sussex, has been embroiled in the years-long legal saga since the UK government downgraded his security when he stepped down from royal life and left to live abroad with his wife, Meghan.

Harry was not present for the

judgement at London's Court of Appeal in which judge Geoffrey Vos dismissed the appeal, saying the duke's "sense of grievance" had failed to translate into a legal argument.

"From the duke of Sussex's point of view, something may indeed have gone wrong, in that an unintended consequence of his decision to step back from royal duties and spend the majority of his time abroad had been that he has been provided with a more bespoke, and generally lesser, level of protection than when he was in the UK," Vos said.

This, however, did not "of itself give rise to a legal complaint", he added.

Since moving to California in 2020, Harry and Meghan have had a second child, Lilibet, a sister to Archie born in 2019, and rarely engage with the British royals.

But the prince says security concerns have hampered his ability to visit the UK and bring his family with him.

The government committee which handles protection for royals and public figures in 2020 decided he would not receive the "same degree" as before of publicly funded protection when in Britain.

After initially losing a case in the High Court challenging the decision last year, he was allowed to launch an appeal against the inte-

rior ministry.

His lawyers argued Harry was "singled out" for "unjustified and inferior treatment" and that the committee did not fully assess the security threats when downgrading his protection.

Harry, whose older brother is heir-to-the-throne Prince William, has long been haunted by the 1997 death of his mother Princess Diana in a high-speed car crash as she tried to escape paparazzi photographers.

The prince has blamed the press for the tragedy and cited intense media scrutiny as one of the reasons he and Meghan took a step back five years ago.

In the two-day appeal hearing last month, Harry's lawyers said the Sussexes had been threatened by Al Qaeda and was involved in a "dangerous car pursuit with paparazzi" in New York City, as an example of the security dangers he faces.

"There is a person sitting behind me whose safety, whose security and whose life is at stake," the prince's lawyer, Shaheed Fatima, said in her concluding statements.

In a 2023 high court hearing, Harry, a former British army captain who served in Afghanistan, said it was too dangerous to bring his family to the UK without bolstered security.

"The UK is my home," he said.

"The UK is central to the heritage of my children. That cannot happen if it's not possible to keep them safe."

However, the high court concluded that the government had acted lawfully in its decision.

In the appeal hearing, government lawyers said Harry's security was meant to be "bespoke" to his "revised circumstances", adding it was a result of his decision to spend less time in the UK.

Harry's fraught ties with his family have worsened after various public allegations that he and Meghan have made against the royals.

Harry and William are barely on speaking terms, according to UK media.

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

Production Editor

Amjad Khan

📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
✉ editor@gulf-times.com
☎ 44350478 (News),
☎ 44466404 (Sport),
☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
☎ 44350474
📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
🐦 twitter.com/gulftimes_Qatar
📷 instagram.com/gulftimes
📺 youtube.com/GulftimesVideos

GULF TIMES

How the trade war between China, US is playing out

China has said it has received overtures from the US for talks on tariffs — but warned it will need concessions as proof of “sincerity” before any negotiations can take place.

The world’s two largest economies are locked in a tit-for-tat tariff war that threatens hundreds of billions in trade and has roiled global markets and supply chains.

The US has raised tariffs on Chinese imports to 145%, with cumulative duties on some goods reaching a staggering 245%.

As well as the blanket levies, China is also under sector-specific tariffs on steel, aluminium and car imports.

Sales of Chinese goods to the US last year totalled more than \$500bn — 16.4% of the country’s exports, according to Beijing’s customs data.

China has vowed to fight the measures “to the end” and has unveiled reciprocal tariffs of up to 125% on imports of American goods, which totalled \$143.5bn last year, according to Washington.

Beijing has filed complaints with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), citing “bullying” tactics by the Trump administration.

And it has gone after American companies, scrapping orders for Boeing planes, probing Google for “anti-monopoly” violations and adding US fashion group PVH Corp — which owns Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein — and biotech giant Illumina to a list of “unreliable entities”.

Beijing has also restricted exports of rare earth elements — critical in the manufacturing of everything from semiconductors to medical technology and consumer electronics.

Beijing has long drawn Trump’s ire with a trade surplus with the US that reached \$295.4bn last year, according to the US Commerce Department’s Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Chinese leaders have been reluctant to disrupt the status quo.

But an intensified trade war will likely mean China cannot peg its hopes for strong economic growth this year on its exports, which reached record highs in 2024.

US duties further threaten to harm China’s fragile post-Covid economic recovery as it struggles with a debt crisis in the property sector and persistently low consumption.

The tariff war is already having an impact in the US, with uncertainty triggering a manufacturing slump last month and officials blaming it for an unexpected slump in GDP in the first three months of the year.

“The cost on the US economy and livelihood is beginning to surface,” Mei Xinyu, an economist at the state-affiliated Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Co-operation, told AFP.

“They are starting to truly feel the cost and impact of pursuing trade hegemony with China,” he said.

The head of the WTO said in April that the US-China tariff war could cut trade in goods between the two countries by 80%.

Analysts expect the levies to take a significant chunk out of China’s GDP, which Beijing’s leadership hope will grow 5% this year.

Likely to be hit hardest are China’s top exports to the US — everything from electronics and machinery to textiles and clothing, according to the Peterson Institute of International Economics.

And because of the crucial role Chinese goods play in supplying US firms, the tariffs may also hurt American manufacturers and consumers, analysts have warned.

Trump has repeatedly claimed that China has reached out for talks on the tariffs. But yesterday’s statement by Beijing suggested it was Washington that’s been reaching out.

While China’s commerce ministry said it was “evaluating” the offer, it warned it would need concessions from Washington — namely the lifting of tariffs — before talks could go ahead.

“Tariffs cannot be used as a bargaining chip to pressure China. China cannot make any concessions on the tariff issue,” Wang Wen, Dean of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, told AFP.

Analysts in China broadly agreed that pressure on the US economy was driving Washington’s call for talks. — AFP

“Tariffs cannot be used as a bargaining chip to pressure China”

Qatar leads the way with smart transport and sustainable urban innovation



By Ali Hamad al-Marri

In a world increasingly driven by technology and the urgent need for sustainable solutions, Qatar stands out as a shining example of visionary leadership and transformative action.

In 2025, the country once again reaffirmed its pioneering spirit by launching the Middle East’s first fully electric public bus network and achieving significant milestones in smart city development, particularly through the remarkable growth of Lusail City. These groundbreaking achievements are not isolated initiatives — they represent a comprehensive national movement towards integrating technology, sustainability, and innovation into every facet of urban life.

Revolutionising Urban Mobility: A Cleaner Future on the Move

The deployment of Qatar’s fully electric bus fleet marks a historic step forward. Across Doha and key urban centres, hundreds of zero-emission buses now glide through the streets, replacing traditional diesel-powered vehicles and drastically slashing carbon emissions. The buses, equipped with state-of-the-art battery technology and powered by clean energy sources, offer a glimpse into the future of public transportation — a future where efficiency and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

This monumental transition supports the ambitious goals outlined in the Qatar National Vision 2030, which emphasises sustainable development, economic diversification, and environmental preservation. It is not merely about replacing one mode of transport with another; it is about reshaping how people experience mobility in their daily lives. Residents and visitors now enjoy quieter streets, cleaner air, and a more pleasant commuting experience, proving that technological progress and quality of life improvements can be achieved simultaneously.

Lusail City: Building Tomorrow’s Cities Today

Yet Qatar’s ambitions extend far beyond transportation. Lusail City, often described as the “City of the Future,” serves as a living laboratory for smart urban planning and environmental stewardship. Covering an area of 38sq km, Lusail embodies the integration of intelligent systems



designed to enhance every aspect of urban life.

The city boasts real-time traffic management systems that optimise vehicle flow and reduce congestion, dynamic lighting and energy-efficient buildings that minimise energy consumption, and advanced environmental monitoring tools that track air quality and water usage. Public services are seamlessly integrated, providing residents with a level of convenience and connectivity previously unseen in the region.

Lusail is not simply a place where people live — it is an ecosystem where technology, nature, and human well-being coexist in perfect balance. It stands as a powerful testament to what can be achieved when vision is matched by execution and when sustainability is placed at the heart of development.

Human-Centric Innovation: The True Core of Progress

What truly sets Qatar’s initiatives apart is the underlying philosophy that places human well-being at the centre of all innovation. Technological advancements are not pursued for their own sake but as tools to create healthier, safer, and more vibrant communities. Every electric bus that runs silently through the

streets, every sensor embedded in Lusail’s infrastructure, and every sustainable building constructed is a deliberate act of caring for the people who call these spaces home.

This human-centred approach is particularly critical as cities worldwide grapple with the twin challenges of rapid urbanisation and climate change. Qatar’s model demonstrates that embracing technology and sustainability does not have to come at the expense of liveability — rather, it can enhance it in ways that profoundly enrich everyday experiences.

A Global Inspiration for Bold Action

As the world races to address the climate crisis, Qatar’s leadership offers a compelling blueprint for other nations to follow. Rather than waiting for international trends to dictate action, Qatar has taken bold, proactive steps to shape its own destiny, setting standards that others now aspire to meet. Its success sends a clear message: real change requires vision, courage, and a willingness to invest in the future today.

The creation of a fully electric bus network and the rise of smart cities like Lusail are not just local success stories; they are global calls to action. They prove that

with the right commitment, cities can become engines of innovation, hubs of sustainability, and sanctuaries of human well-being.

Looking Ahead: The Journey Continues

Qatar’s journey towards a smarter, greener future is far from over. With ongoing projects aimed at expanding electric mobility, incorporating artificial intelligence into urban management, and strengthening its renewable energy portfolio, the country remains firmly on the path of progress. Upcoming developments in autonomous transportation, clean energy integration, and eco-friendly urban expansion promise to push the boundaries of what sustainable living can look like.

Moreover, Qatar’s hosting of major international events, such as the 2022 FIFA World Cup and future global forums, provides an unparalleled opportunity to showcase its innovations to the world and inspire broader adoption of sustainable practices.

In Conclusion Qatar’s trailblazing efforts in smart transportation and sustainable urban innovation reveal a nation unafraid to dream big — and, more importantly, unafraid to act on those dreams. By seamlessly blending technology with environmental responsibility and human-centred design, Qatar is not merely adapting to the future; it is shaping it.

As cities around the globe search for models to guide them through the complex challenges of the 21st century, they need only look to Qatar, where the streets hum with the energy of electric buses and the skyline gleams with the promise of smarter, greener living.

The future is already unfolding — and Qatar is leading the way with vision, resolve, and an unshakable belief in the power of innovation to transform the world for the better.



A view of Lusail City. (QNA)

To Advertise
✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

Display
☎ 44466621 ☎ 44418811

Classified
☎ 44466609 ☎ 44418811
✉ gtcad@gulf-times.com

Subscription
✉ circulation@gulf-times.com

© 2025 Gulf Times. All rights reserved

German spy agency brands AfD party as ‘extremist’

Reuters/AFP
Berlin/Frankfurt

Germany’s spy agency has classified the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) as “extremist”, enabling it to step up monitoring of the country’s biggest opposition party, which decried the move as a “blow against democracy”.

A 1,100-page experts’ report found the AfD to be a racist and anti-Muslim organisation, a designation that allows the security services to recruit informants and intercept party communications, and which has revived calls for the party’s ban.

“Central to our assessment is the ethnically and ancestrally defined concept of the people that shapes the AfD, which devalues entire segments of the population in Germany and violates their human dignity,” the BfV domestic intelligence agency said in a statement.

“This concept is reflected in the party’s overall anti-migrant and anti-Muslim stance,” it said, accusing the AfD of stirring up “irrational fears and hostility” towards individuals and groups.

The BfV agency needs such a classification to be able to monitor a political party because it is more legally constrained than other European intelligence services, a reflection of Germany’s experience under both Nazi and Communist rule.

Other organisations classified as extremist in Germany are neo-Nazi groups such as the National Democratic Party (NDP), Islamist groups including Islamic State, and far-left ones such as the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany.

The agency was able to act after the AfD last year lost a court case in which it had challenged its previous classification by the BfV as an entity suspected of extremism.

The move follows other setbacks the far-right across Europe has suffered in recent months as it seeks to translate surging support into power.

They include a ban on France’s Marine Le Pen contesting the 2027 presidential election after her embezzlement conviction, and the postponement of Romania’s presidential vote after a far-right candidate won the first round.

“VERY SERIOUS. After France and Romania, another theft of Democracy?” wrote Matteo Salvini, deputy Italian prime minister and leader of far-right party, the League, on X.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Germany should reverse course on branding the AfD as “extremist”, while US billionaire Elon Musk, who threw his support behind the party ahead of February elections, warned against banning it.

The AfD denounced its designation as a politically motivated attempt to discredit and criminalise it.

“The AfD will continue to take legal action against these defamatory attacks that endanger democracy,” co-leaders Alice Weidel and Tino

Chrupalla said in a statement.

German parliament could now attempt to limit or halt public funding for the AfD – but for that authorities would need evidence that the party is explicitly out to undermine or even overthrow German democracy.

Meanwhile, civil servants who belong to an organisation classified as “extremist” face possible dismissal, depending on their role within the entity, according to Germany’s interior ministry.

The stigma could also make it harder for the AfD, which currently tops several polls and is Germany’s most successful far-right party since World War II, to attract members.

“Starting today, no one can make excuses anymore: This is not a democratic party,” said Manuela Schwesig, premier of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and senior member of the Social Democrats (SPD), who are about to form a government with the conservatives.

Under the new government, the authorities should review whether to ban the AfD, SPD leader Lars Klingbeil told *Bild* newspaper.

“They want a different country, they want to destroy our democracy. And we must take that very seriously,” he said, although he added that the coalition would not make any hasty decisions.

Created in 2013 to protest the eurozone bailouts, the eurosceptic AfD morphed into an anti-migration party after Germany’s decision to take in a large wave of refugees in 2015.

Trump cuts funding for NPR, PBS broadcasters

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump has signed an executive order to cut federal funding for NPR and PBS, two US broadcasters that rely partially on government financial support, his administration’s latest effort to sanction institutions it views as opposed to his political agenda.

The order, announced late on Thursday, instructs the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which distributes funding to the PBS television and NPR radio networks, to “cease direct funding” them.

NPR said it would challenge the executive order and PBS said it was exploring its options.

Congress allocated \$535mn for the CPB for fiscal year 2025.

Most of the funding for the PBS and NPR comes from other sources.

The White House said in a statement yesterday that PBS and NPR receive tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer funding each year to spread “radical, woke propaganda disguised as ‘news’”.

The statement cited examples of what it called “trash that has passed for ‘news’ at NPR and PBS”, including NPR saying the Declaration of Independence was a document with “flaws and deeply ingrained hypocrisies” and apologising for describing undocumented migrants as “illegal”.

Patricia Harrison, CPB’s president and chief executive, said in a statement yesterday that the president lacked the authority to withdraw the funding.

“Congress directly authorised and funded CPB to be a private nonprofit corporation wholly independent of the federal government,” the statement said.

PBS and its stations receive about 15% of their revenues from the CPB, a spokesperson said, adding most of that goes to local stations.

NPR typically receives only about 1% of its funding directly from the federal government and slightly more indirectly.

Its 246 members, which operate more than 1,000 stations, receive an average of 8-10% of their funds from CPB, according to the PBS representative.

NPR did not immediately respond to a request for confirmation.

The order says CPB’s governing statute reflects principles of impartiality and that neither NPR nor PBS “presents a fair, accurate or unbiased portrayal of current events to taxpaying citizens”.

The Trump administration has labelled multiple institutions in academia, the legal profession and the media as being leftist, Marxist, biased or “woke”, and threatened funding cuts or other sanctions.

Human rights advocates have raised concerns over free speech and academic freedom.

The administration also sought to shut down Voice of America, Radio Free Asia and Middle East Broadcasting Networks, whose news broadcasts are funded by the government.

A federal judge ordered the administration in late April to halt those efforts.

Both NPR and PBS have previously said that cuts in federal funding would have a “devastating impact” on Americans who rely on them for credible local and national news, including during emergency situations.

NPR said Trump’s action jeopardises the national airing of programmes such as *NewsCast*, *Morning Edition* and *Tiny Desk Radio*.

PBS is known for educational children’s programming such as *Sesame Street* and is also home to such long-running programmes as *PBS News Hour*, *Firing Line*, *Nova*, and *Antiques Roadshow*.

The CPB, created by Congress in 1967, sued the White House on Monday after Trump sought to fire three of its five board members.

Harvard University’s tax-exempt status will be revoked: Trump

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that his administration will revoke Harvard University’s tax-exempt status, returning to a threat he issued against the Massachusetts school last month as part of his wider attack on elite universities.

“We are going to be taking away Harvard’s Tax Exempt Status. It’s what they deserve!” Trump wrote in a post on his social media platform, without elaborating.

The university responded, saying that would be an unlawful misuse of the US tax code, which makes it a crime for the president, vice-president or any White House employee to request the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) investigate or audit a particular individual or entity.

Harvard is already suing the Trump administration over the announcement last month that the government was freezing federal grants to the Ivy League university amounting to \$2.2bn, mostly to fund medical and other scientific research.

Trump previously said on April 15 that he thought Harvard should perhaps “lose its Tax Exempt Status and be Taxed as a Political Entity if it keeps pushing political, ideological, and terrorist inspired/suppressing ‘Sickness?’”

Soon after, White House spokesperson Harrison Fields said any forthcoming IRS actions were independent of the president and that any audit or investigations were initiated before Trump’s post.

Representatives for the IRS did not respond to questions. The tax code requires that any IRS employee who receives an improper request from the White House report that to the US Treasury Inspector-General for Tax Administration, whose office also did not respond to questions.

Harvard, the nation’s oldest and wealthiest university, said a revocation of its tax-exempt status would be unlawful and unprecedented, a comment echoed by free-speech advocacy groups and other non-profit organisations yesterday.

“There is no legal basis to rescind Harvard’s tax-exempt status,” the Boston-area school said in a statement. “The unlawful use of this instrument more broadly would have grave consequences for the future of higher education in America.”

It would also cut money available for student scholarships, medical research and technological advancements that drive economic growth, Harvard said. – *Reuters*

Russia will ‘help’ Taliban fight IS in Afghanistan

Reuters
Moscow

Russia will help the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan fight against the Afghan branch of Islamic State (IS), Moscow’s special representative for the country was quoted as saying yesterday.

Zamir Kabulov, a former Russian ambassador to Afghanistan, referred to Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) as the “common enemy” of Moscow and Kabul.

“We see and appreciate the efforts that the Taliban are making in the fight against the Afghan wing of IS,” Kabulov told the RIA state news agency in an interview. “We will provide our best assistance to the authorities of (Afghanistan) through specialised structures.”

No country currently recognises the Taliban government that seized power in August 2021 as US-led forces staged a chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of war.

However, in a step towards recognition, Russia last month formally removed the Taliban from its list of terrorist organisations, to which it had been added in 2003.

Kabulov’s comments underscore the dramatic rapprochement in recent years between Moscow and Kabul, which President Vladimir Putin said last year was now Russia’s “ally” in combating terrorism.

Russia has been left reeling from multiple Islamic State (IS)-linked attacks, including the shooting of 145 people at a concert hall outside Moscow in March 2024 which was claimed by ISIS.

US officials said they had intelligence indicating IS-K was responsible.

The Taliban says it is working to wipe out the group’s presence in Afghanistan.

Pakistani Kashmir orders stockpiling of food as tensions with India flare

AFP
Muzaffarabad

Pakistan-administered Kashmir has called on residents near the de facto border with India to stockpile food as tensions flare between the arch-rivals following a deadly attack last month.

India blames Pakistan for backing a shooting on civilians at the tourist site of Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir on April 22 that killed 26 people.

Islamabad has denied the charge and the uneasy neighbours have issued a raft of tit-for-tat punitive diplomatic measures.

The two nuclear-armed countries have exchanged gunfire for eight consecutive nights along the militarised Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border that separates the contested Kashmir region.

“Instructions have been issued to stock food sup-

plies for two months in the 13 constituencies along the LoC,” the prime minister of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Chaudhry Anwar ul-Haq, told the local assembly yesterday.

The regional government has also created an emergency fund of 1bn rupees (\$3.5mn) to ensure the supply of “food, medicines and all other basic necessities” to the 13 constituencies, he said.

Government and privately owned machinery was also being deployed to maintain roads in the areas along the LoC, he said.

On Tuesday Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the military “complete operational freedom” to respond to the attack.

Pakistan said this week it had “credible evidence” that India is planning a military strike, vowing that any attack would be met with a response.

Fearing a military escalation, authorities in Pakistani Kashmir shut more than 1,000 religious schools for 10 days on Thursday.



Police and other members of the emergency services work at the scene where a car crashed into people in Stuttgart. – *AFP*

8 hurt after car drives into crowd in Stuttgart

Reuters/AFP
Berlin

At least eight people were injured, three of them seriously, after a car drove into a crowd in the centre of the southwestern German city of Stuttgart yesterday in what police said was a “tragic” traffic accident.

The driver of the car has been detained, police said.

“There are currently no indications of an attack or an intentional act,” Stuttgart police said on X.

The incident, which occurred

shortly before 6pm (1600 GMT), took place near the Olgaek tram station.

The city fire service said on its X account that the three seriously injured people had been taken to hospital while others were being treated at the scene where debris lay scattered on the road.

Police warned people to avoid Stuttgart city centre and said that there was severe disruption to traffic.

The *Bild* newspaper cited eyewitnesses as saying that a woman

with a pram had been hit by the black Mercedes G-Class SUV.

A mangled pushchair was visible in images from the scene.

The area of the incident was blocked off by police, who advised pedestrians and drivers to avoid the area if possible.

German security services have been on high alert following several deadly car-ramming attacks in recent months, including in the eastern city of Magdeburg and in the southern city of Munich.

US designates two Haitian gangs as terrorist groups

The United States said yesterday that it has designated two of the gangs that wreak havoc while controlling most of Haiti’s capital as foreign terrorist groups.

These gangs are Viv Ansanm and Gran Grif, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement. “The age of impunity for those supporting violence in Haiti is over.”

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, has for years been in the grips of well-armed street gangs that carry out murders, kidnappings, rapes and other crimes as Haiti suffers from chronic political instability.

More than 1,600 people died in Haiti gang violence in the first

three months of 2025, the United Nations said on Wednesday.

“Haitian gangs, including the Viv Ansanm coalition and Gran Grif, are the primary source of instability and violence in Haiti,” Rubio said. “They are a direct threat to US national security interests in our region.”

The United States had already designated other gangs as terrorist groups, such as the Sinaloa drug cartel in Mexico, the Venezuela-based group Tren de Aragua and MS-13, with roots in El Salvador.

Gangs control 85% of the capital Port-au-Prince, according to the UN, and have stepped up attacks on areas not yet under their control. – *AFP*

US jails man for hate crime that killed Palestinian child

A man from Illinois was sentenced yesterday to 53 years in prison after a jury convicted him of the murder of a six-year-old Palestinian American boy and the severe wounding of his mother in an October 2023 hate crime stabbing, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported.

Joseph Czuba, 73, stabbed and killed Wadee Alfayoumi and knifed Hanan Shaheen days after US ally Israel began its war on Gaza following the events of October 7, 2023.

Prosecutors said that the stabbing – one of the earliest and worst hate crime incidents in

the US since the start of the war – was sparked by anti-Muslim hatred.

US rights advocates have noted rising Islamophobia, anti-Arab hate and antisemitism.

Czuba, who was the landlord for Shaheen and her son, stabbed the boy 26 times with a military-style knife with a 7” (18-cm) serrated blade, authorities said.

Shaheen suffered multiple stab wounds in the attack that occurred in Plainfield Township, about 40 miles (64km) southwest of Chicago.

Czuba was found guilty in late February. Other recent incidents raising alarm in the

US about anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian prejudice include the attempted drowning of a three-year-old Palestinian American girl and the stabbing of a Palestinian American man, both in Texas.

Incidents raising alarm over antisemitism and anti-Israel attitudes include an unsuccessful plot to attack a New York Jewish centre and an arson attack on Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro’s residence.

Hate incidents have also been reported during protests and counter-protests related to the war. – *Reuters*

Polish flag flies high in Doha to celebrate national pride and bilateral relations

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The skies above Al Bidda Park in Doha were painted with the vibrant white and red of the Polish flag yesterday as the embassy of Poland marked its National Flag Day.

The highlight of the celebration was a 21m Polish flag, the longest so far in Qatar, hoisted into the air by a large balloon, creating a memorable display for onlookers.

The festivities continue today from 10am to 12 noon, coinciding with Poland's Constitution Day.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Polish head of Mission Tomasz Sadzinski underlined the significance of the event, saying the dual celebration also honours the Polish

diaspora, connecting compatriots both at home and abroad.

"Today, we are celebrating both Poland National Flag Day and the Day of the Polish Diaspora," he said. "We wanted to create something truly memorable and exceptional."

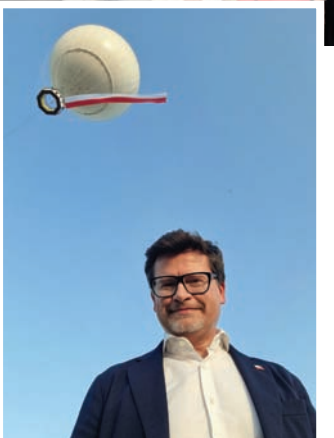
Given the expertise of Polish professionals here, particularly in the aviation sector with drones and balloons, Sadzinski said they decided to hang Poland's flag from a balloon at Al Bidda Park, making it visible to everyone.

He described the flag as a powerful symbol of Polish national pride, acting as a beacon for the Polish community in Qatar and capturing the attention of those passing by.

The celebrations, he added, extend today to mark the anniversary



Polish head of Mission Tomasz Sadzinski and members of the Polish diaspora at the National Flag Day of Poland event at Al Bidda Park yesterday.
PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam



Sadzinski led the event at Al Bidda Park yesterday.
PICTURE: Joey Aguilar

of the adoption of the Polish Constitution in 1791.

Sadzinski said that this historic document, adopted 234 years ago, holds immense significance as the first constitution in Europe and the second in the world, after the American Constitution.

He highlighted the importance of such special celebrations in fostering stronger ties between Poland and Qatar, stressing the collaborative spirit and the support received from Qatari authorities.

"We are very grateful for the support from Qatar's institutions and authorities," Sadzinski said, adding: "As an embassy, we strive to promote our heritage and culture, sharing it with our Qatari host."

The embassy official also noted the reciprocal efforts of Qatar's ambassador in Warsaw, Saoud bin Abdulla Zaid al-Mahmoud, who is actively promoting Qatari culture in Poland, inviting Polish institutions to participate in events like

Qatar's National Sport Day.

According to Sadzinski, the Polish embassy in Doha has actively promoted yesterday's event on social media, sharing wishes with the Polish community and encouraging them to join the celebration at Al Bidda Park.

He said that such celebrations underscore the strong bond between Qatar and Poland, founded on mutual respect and a shared appreciation for each other's cultures.



Snapshots from the event yesterday.



MoECC activities raise students' awareness on local wild plants

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Wildlife Development Department and the Environmental Awareness Section of the Public Relations and Communications Department have taken part in the interactive "Akhlaquna" (Our Morals) exhibition, accompanying the 2025 "Akhlaquna" Award organised by Qatar Foundation.

The ministry's participation included organising an agricultural workshop and a display of the seeds and wild plants to raise awareness among students about the importance of plants and their impact on climate change.

It also aimed to promote individual responsibility in preserving wild plants through demonstrating correct and incorrect behaviours in handling them.

Students were also introduced to the names of wild plants in Qatar to familiarise them with the country's environmental heritage.

Further, the MoECC presented a cultural competition titled "Our Morals and the Environment", during which students were asked various environmental questions to raise their environmental awareness and encourage positive environmental behaviours.



Balmsan Championship concludes at Katara

The top-five winning teams of the Balmsan Championship and the top three winners in the "Biggest Fish" competition were crowned yesterday during Al-Qaffal celebration at Katara Cultural Village by general manager Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti.

Balmsan is considered the final stage of the Senyar Festival competitions.

The championship derives its name from the main fishing site "Herr Balmsan", one of Qatar's largest and richest marine habitats for oysters and fish.

The event at Katara's southern beach (Freej Katara) was attended by dignitaries, local seafarers, and enthusiasts of Qatar's rich maritime heritage.

The returning traditional dhows were welcomed with sea chants performed by Al-Rifaa folk band.

Families received the returning captains and sailors with flowers and musk, while

young girls participated in a ceremony that revived the charm of the past and evoked deep cultural pride.

The first place was claimed by Al-Wakra team, led by Captain Yousef Ibrahim al-Obaidly, who was awarded a cash prize of QR1mn.

Second place went to Al-Maydan team, under the leadership of Captain Issa Abdullah Saleh, who received QR600,000.

The third-place winner was Balmsan team, led by Captain Jassim Ahmed al-Mohannadi, securing QR500,000.

In fourth place came the Battaah team, captained by Abdullah Saleh al-Sulaiti, winning a prize of QR200,000, while the fifth place went to Al-Zubarah team, led by Captain Nasser Khalifa Melhem, who received QR100,000.

In the "Biggest Fish" competition, the Silver Fish team, led by Captain Jumaa Ibrahim al-Sheraim, took first place with

a kingfish weighing 16.10kg and awarded QR30,000.

The second prize went to Shulaa team, captained by Khalifa Bouhassoum al-Badr, for a kingfish weighing 16kg, earning them QR20,000.

The third place was secured by Balmsan team, led again by Captain al-Mohannadi, with a fish weighing 13.10kg and a prize of QR10,000.

In his address during the awards ceremony, Prof Dr al-Sulaiti expressed his satisfaction with the achievements of the participating teams.

"We are pleased to celebrate the conclusion of the Balmsan Championship, which has provided a wonderful example of fair competition and reflected the authenticity of our rich maritime heritage," he said. "The Senyar Festival has become an annual tradition that reinforces the values of our forefathers and revives the spirit of challenge and maritime legacy within the hearts of younger generations."

He reiterated Katara's ongoing commitment to supporting initiatives that promote national identity and preserve cultural heritage, extending his gratitude to all sponsors and partners who contributed to the success of this unique event.

Jihad al-Jaidah, head of the Judging Committee for the Senyar Festival, noted the high level of skill and dedication demonstrated by the teams despite challenging marine and weather conditions.

He stressed that the judging process was based on strict criteria that considered the weight and type of fish in accordance with the rules of the Hadaq and Lif-fah competitions.

The competitions took place over Wednesday and Thursday, in open waters near Halul Island, one of Qatar's richest fishing grounds.

The closing ceremony included the recognition of sponsoring entities, including the Ministry of Interior (Coast and Border Guard Department), Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (Natural Reserves Department), Social and Sports Activities Support Fund (Daam), Al Kass Sports Channels, QatarEnergy (Mesaieed Port), Hamad Port, Qatar Fish Store, Safar Fish Store, and Senyar Ice Factory.