

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

vodafone

iPoints



The first Paint product that obtained
Qatar Quality Mark

Robshield Topcoat Matt
by
ROBSON PAINTS
Used as Exterior Coat - Matt



www.npfqatar.com Tel: 44601902



30 + Varieties
Starting from 8th May onwards

SPORT | Page 1

World's top high jumpers return for 'What Gravity Challenge'



CUSTOM
CAKES
MADE TO
ORDER
70256690



Spend 100+ QAR
at Al Meera
and join the
Land Cruiser
raffle

Sheikha Jowaher patronises QU graduation



513 distinguished female students, out of a total of 2,857 female graduates, honoured

Under the patronage and presence of His Highness the Amir's Consort Her Highness Sheikha Jowaher bint Hamad bin Suhaim al-Thani, Qatar University (QU) organised the graduation ceremony of its 48th batch of distinguished female students from the Class of 2025, at the QU Sports and Events Complex yesterday (Thursday).

Her Highness Sheikha Jowaher honoured 513 distinguished female students, out of a total of 2,857 female graduates from various academic disciplines at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels, a statement said. A total of 823 male graduates, including 153 outstanding students, were honoured in a ceremony on Wednesday.

Yesterday's ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including members of the university's Board of Regents, QU President Dr Omar al-Ansari, vice-presidents, and families of the graduates.

In his speech on this occasion, Dr al-Ansari, said: "This occasion reaffirms the vital role the University plays in supporting national aspirations and implementing the country's developmental and strategic plans. Since its establishment, Qatar University has been committed to providing high-quality education and conducting outstanding scientific research that contributes to achieving sustainable development, within an institutional environment grounded in excellence, efficiency, and transparency. Over the years, the University has supplied the Qatari labour market with more than 68,000 young national talents who have demonstrated their excellence and creativity and have played an active role in shaping the future of the nation.

"The great attention given by our wise leadership and the continuous support of Qatar University's Board of Regents for higher education serve as a strong driving force for the University to continue its journey toward academic and research excellence, and to enhance its effective contribution to serving the Qatari community. The strong bond between the University and Qatari society has, over the years, enabled it to sense national development needs and to direct its efforts and resources toward achieving human, social, economic, and environmental development – aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030.

"Qatar University also takes pride in being one of the region's leading institutions in supporting and empowering women both academically and socially. The University is committed to providing an encouraging learning environment that allows female students to participate actively in various academic and research activities. It also works to overcome the challenges they may face, with the goal of developing their skills and enhancing their personal, professional, and leadership capacities – empowering them to contribute positively and effectively to society's development, while always preserving our values, identity, social fabric, and deep-rooted national and religious principles.

"Qatar University takes great pride in its fundamental role in supporting and advancing various sectors of the state through several key pillars, most notably the academic pillar. The University offers distinguished academic programmes at the undergraduate and graduate levels, with the aim of graduating national talents capable of competing globally. In this context, the Board of Regents has recently approved the University's new academic plan, which aims to enhance the quality of academic programmes to better align with labour market needs. Additionally, a new reference framework for graduate programmes has been adopted to serve the same purpose.

"In terms of scientific research, the University has redefined its research priorities to align with national development needs and the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. A harmonisation plan has also been developed to link research priorities with grant programmes and graduate studies, while strengthening partnerships with key national institutions, to deliver sustainable solutions and contribute to national development." **To Page 12**

Amir sends condolences to King Salman

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the death of Princess Jawaher bint Bandar bin Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani also sent a cable of condolences to King Salman. **(QNA)**

Gates to give away \$200bn by 2045

Bill Gates pledged yesterday to give away \$200bn via his charitable foundation by 2045 and lashed out at Elon Musk, accusing the world's richest man of "killing the world's poorest children" through huge cuts to the US foreign aid budget. Gates, 69, said he was speeding up his plans to divest almost all of his fortune and would close the foundation on December 31, 2045. **Page 9**

Trump asks apex court to revoke migrants' status

President Donald Trump's administration asked the US Supreme Court yesterday to intervene in its bid to revoke the temporary legal status granted by his predecessor Joe Biden to hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan, Cuban, Haitian and Nicaraguan migrants living in the United States.

COMMUNITY
See Page: 6

PM opens 34th Doha International Book Fair

QNA
Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani inaugurated yesterday the 34th edition of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) under the theme 'From Engraving to Writing'. The fair will run through May 17 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC).

A number of Their Excellencies Sheikhs and Ministers, as well as heads of diplomatic missions, ranking officials and the guests of the exhibition attended.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs visited the exhibition pavilions, which include 522 publishing houses from 43 countries. He was briefed on the works showcased by Qa-



tari, Arab, and international publishers, as well as the latest publications and manuscripts from the Ministry of Culture, government entities, and participating cultural institutions, especially the State of Palestine's pavilion – the guest honour of this edition.

Palestine is participating with a special pavilion and a diverse cultural programme that highlights authentic Palestinian heritage and intellectual and literary output, and features a variety of traditional and artistic performances.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs also launched *Doha Magazine*, which is returning to publication in a new look – as a cultural platform affiliated with the Ministry of Culture. **Page 2**

Gaza food aid solution steps away, says US



Palestinians receive food cooked by a charity kitchen in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Reuters
Washington/Gaza

THE US State Department said yesterday a solution to be able to deliver food aid to Gaza was "steps away" and an announcement was coming shortly, although it fell short of detailing what the plan would entail.

European leaders and aid groups have criticised Israeli plans to take over distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza and use private companies to get food to families after two months in which the military has prevented

supplies entering the Strip. Israel has given few details of its aid plans.

Fighters of resistance group Hamas were engaged in "fierce fighting" with Israeli soldiers yesterday in the south of the Gaza Strip near Rafah.

A Hamas statement said fighters ambushed an Israeli 12-man force inside a house in the Tanur neighbourhood in the eastern Rafah area with two anti-personnel and anti-armour rockets, killing and wounding several soldiers.

Israel said earlier this month it would further extend its offensive in Gaza.

Amir congratulates new Pope of Vatican

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has sent a cable of congratulations to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, on the occasion of his election as Pope of the Vatican. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent cables of congratulations to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. **(QNA)**

Cardinal Robert Prevost is elected Pope Leo XIV



Newly elected Pope Leo XIV

Cardinal Robert Prevost, 69 a little known missionary from Chicago, was elected in a surprise choice to be the new leader of the Catholic Church yesterday, becoming the first US pope and taking the name Leo XIV. Pope Leo appeared on the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica after white smoke had billowed from a chimney atop the Sistine Chapel signifying the 133 cardinal electors had chosen a new leader for the 1.4bn-member Catholic Church. "Peace be with you all," he told the cheering crowd, speaking in fluent Italian. **Page 9**



GU-Q celebrates Class of 2025

QNA
Doha

Georgetown University in Qatar, one of Qatar Foundation's partner universities, celebrated its Class of 2025, with 110 graduates from 37 nationalities earning a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service degrees. The ceremony also recognised 20 graduates of the growing Executive Master's in Diplomacy and International Affairs programme, which supports Qatar's leading role in global diplomacy.

In his keynote address, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani told the audience that rigorous education is the cornerstone of preparing people who can help in the world's stability and advancement. He added that today's event was not just an academic celebration, but also a reflection of the State of Qatar's national vision of investing in human capital, given

it is regarded as the most valuable source.

HE the Prime Minister said that marking the university's 20th anniversary coincides with the 30th anniversary of Qatar Foundation, affirming that this was a reflection of the deep belief in that developing people is the route to building productive, stable societies, and that building the future begins with campus and extends into professional life and policymaking.

He noted that the region and world face an unprecedented level of challenges, whether it is armed conflicts or food, climate, and geopolitical crises. He reaffirmed the State of Qatar's commitment to being a reliable partner for peace and stability while balancing mediation efforts with long-term development policies.

HE the Prime Minister said that the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani puts education and empowerment at the heart of Qatar's development agenda and are crucial for security, stability, and growth.



He praised the Executive Master's in Diplomacy and International Affairs programme, highlighting that it was designed to develop Qatari cadres in the field of diplomacy

that would be able to connect academic knowledge with the skills of working in the field of international politics, whether here or abroad. Speaking directly to the gradu-

ates, HE Sheikh Mohammed said that he was once in their place, with the same level of enthusiasm, existential questions, and boundless ambition. he added that back

then, he thought the path was clear, but that with time he realised that life was more complex, and that holding on to principles does not mean remaining in a deadlock, and that finding a balance between dreams and reality was the key to continuing to stay true.

Dean of Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar Dr Safwan Masri urged graduates to lead with awareness and responsibility. He reminded them that education's true worth lies in service to others: some of them will broker peace, others will rebuild schools, hospitals, and court houses, while others will make an impact in ways not yet imagined. The dean urged the graduates that, whatever they do, must be done with unwavering moral insight.

As Georgetown University in Qatar marks two decades of academic leadership and educational service, the Class of 2025 embodies the institution's mission of producing ethically grounded, globally minded leaders ready to serve the public good.

PM flags off 34th Edition of Doha International Book Fair



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani inaugurated yesterday the 34th edition of the Doha International Book Fair. The fair will run through May 17 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). HE the Prime Minister also launched *Doha Magazine*, which is returning to publication in a new look – as a cultural platform affiliated with the Ministry of Culture. **(QNA)**



Palestinian child author recounts growing up in war-ravaged Gaza

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The 34th edition of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) kicked off yesterday at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, with an outstanding local, Arab, and international participation and a large public turnout from the first hours of the opening.

This year's fair is the largest in its history in terms of the number of publishing houses and accompanying cultural events. The fair offers a diverse cultural programme covering literature, history, thought, and the arts, hosting a selection of authors, intellectuals, and researchers from both inside and outside Qatar.

HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library, described the DIBF as a meeting place for authors, publishers, and book lovers, stressing that the printed book will remain resilient despite the challenges imposed by the digital revolution.

He praised the idea of choosing the State of Palestine as the guest of honour for the current edition of the DIBF, in line with Qatar's continued

support for the Palestinian cause and the brotherly Palestinian people. Al-Kuwari said: "This choice is significant, and we are in dire need of it now, given the distortion of the Palestinian people's heritage and culture."

The State of Palestine is the guest of honour for this edition, with a unique cultural presence that reflects the deep cultural relationship between the two peoples. Visitors will be able to explore the rich Palestinian heritage through a special pavilion and distinguished participation from Palestinian publishing houses and cultural institutions.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, Ramadan Mahmoud Abu Jazar (11), who was accompanied by his father, spoke about his experience and suffering in Gaza during the six months of war before seeking refuge in Qatar. The child prodigy authored a book titled *A Biography of Childhood and Heroism: Memoirs of a Child from Gaza*, which is currently on sale at the exhibition.

Ramadan said: "In this book, I talked about the war, as I wrote it inside the tents during this war. We lived through this war for six months. I talked about the childhood in Gaza (He sighed deeply), about the

heroism of the children of Gaza, and how the children of Gaza face difficulties. Accounts in this book are true stories.

"In the second chapter, I talked about Letters to the Birds of my Homeland, children, and men in Gaza who also went through these difficult times. In this book, I talked about events that the media didn't highlight.

"In the third chapter, I talked about If the Tent Could Talk, where I touched on the tent, displacement, and its difficult experiences. Displacement was on one side, and war and destruction were on the other."

Ramadan summed up his innocent years tarnished by wars and destruction and said: "I was born in Gaza during the 2014 war, but we in Gaza create hope. Even though I was born during a war, my parents worked hard and persevered until I reached this level. I would like to send a message to the whole world, whether they are children or adults, adolescents or young adults, I advise them to pay attention to reading, the Holy Qur'an, and to focus on education."

He stressed: "Reading and the Holy Qur'an are the most important foundation for establishing a man of



science, an engineer, a human being, and for establishing the child prodigy. Of course, our people in Gaza are currently at war, and we must pray for them, stand with them, and encourage them. Allah willing, will give them patience, stop this war, and end this calamity for them!"

He added: "We are pleased to be here in the DIBF as we gathered in this place, Allah willing, we will gather in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Mosque soon."

The exhibition will extend over 10 days, providing a unique opportunity for cultural and reading enthusiasts to discover new publications and engage with ongoing cultural activities that enrich the knowledge landscape in Qatar and the region.



Ramadan Mahmoud Abu Jazar signing his book at the DIBF.



Ramadan Mahmoud Abu Jazar with his father Mahmoud Jazar. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen



The EU ambassador to Qatar Dr Cristian Tudor is joined by Qatar's Minister of Transport HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani in cutting a ceremonial cake at the event as other dignitaries look on.

Europe Day 2025 celebrated in Doha

The Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Qatar hosted a diplomatic reception on Wednesday to mark Europe Day 2025, commemorating the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, which laid the foundation for the EU.

Qatar's Minister of Transport HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Protocol director ambassador Ibrahim Fakhro, members of the diplomatic corps

and other guests were present. The EU ambassador to Qatar Dr Cristian Tudor, stated: "Europe Day is more than a celebration of history; it is a living reminder of our shared commitment to dialogue, peace, and co-operation.

As the world becomes more fragmented, the European Union remains a reliable and principled partner, investing in long-term solutions with our friends across the globe, including here in Qatar.

Europe Day 2025 also reflects

the EU's continued engagement in addressing global challenges, especially in a volatile environment as the one we are currently navigating, including on peace building, regional stability, economic resilience and of course climate change.

This year, we are working on the tangible outcomes of the deliverables agreed during the first EU-GCC Summit, in October 2024, in Brussels under the Qatari chairmanship of the Gulf Co-operation Council."



PHCC, AMAN collaborate to enhance specialised care for women, children

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) and the Protection and Social Rehabilitation Center (AMAN) signed a co-operation agreement aimed at strengthening community partnership and enhancing services provided to the most vulnerable groups – specifically women and children who are victims of violence and family breakdown.

The agreement was signed by Executive Director of Operations at PHCC, Dr Samya Ahmed al-Abdulla, and Acting Executive Director of AMAN, Fadl Mohammed al-Kaabi. Under the agreement, beneficiaries will be granted easier access to preventive and therapeutic healthcare services provided by PHCC, while AMAN will continue supporting protection, rehabilitation, and social integration programmes.

The partnership also involves exchanging expertise and information and organising joint awareness campaigns to promote violence prevention and reinforce family cohesion. This will be accomplished through the establishment of a sustainable framework that enhances the quality of support and services, and by building an integrated safety network for beneficiaries through joint workshops, seminars, and training programs.

Managing Director of PHCC, Dr Mariam Ali Abdulmalik, stated that the agreement marks a significant

step forward for both organisations and serves broader benefit of Qatari society, which remains the central focus of all state institutions and the true compass for collaboration and joint action plans.

In a press statement, she added that the collaboration would substantially boost community engagement. It aligns with PHCC's commitment to advancing efforts that foster a person- and community-centred healthcare culture and to opening direct lines of communication with members of the community.

PHCC emphasised that signing the agreement reflects its interest in reorienting services based on the perspectives of various stakeholders and societal sectors, offering more integrated and holistic care focused on individuals and families. Acting Executive Director of AMAN, Fadl bin Mohammed al-Kaabi, stressed the importance of activating the principle of community partnership with sectors that provide fundamental rights to AMAN's target groups – namely, women, children, and victims of family violence and breakdown.

He noted that the healthcare sector plays a vital role in supporting these groups, calling it a strategic partner.

Through the agreement, access to AMAN's protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration services will be facilitated, while PHCC will con-

tribute by offering preventive and therapeutic healthcare services to AMAN's target population, in addition to collaborating in information exchange and expertise sharing.

Executive Director of Operations at PHCC, Samya Ahmed al-Abdulla, emphasised that the agreement represents an important step in enhancing synergy between the healthcare and social sectors, providing mutual support for both preventive and therapeutic programs, and delivering professional, comprehensive services that meet the needs of all groups.

She added that ongoing communication with partners plays a key role in improving the quality of healthcare services and raising awareness of the importance of prevention and rehabilitation, ultimately reflecting positively on public health outcomes.

She also pointed out that the agreement will help solidify co-operation between the two parties and achieve their shared goals through a sustainable and practical framework – one that enhances public health and the quality of services provided to target groups, especially women, children, and victims of domestic violence. It will also aid in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, and promote awareness of child protection and rehabilitation for those affected by psychological and social challenges. (QNA)

PM sends message to chairperson of AUC



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, has sent a written message to Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to boost co-operation between Qatar and the African Union. HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulafi handed the message during his meeting with the chairperson of the AUC, in Addis Ababa yesterday. Discussion during the meeting revolved around co-operation between the two sides and the latest developments in Africa, in addition to a host of regional and international issues of common concern. During the meeting, the AUC chairperson praised the positive role played by Qatar in the area of mediation and conflict resolution, and its ongoing efforts to support stability and promote peace in the region and the world, particularly on the African continent. (QNA)

Minister meets diplomats of Morocco, Netherlands



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met with ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the State of Qatar Mohamed Setri and ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the State of Qatar Ferdinand Lahnstein. The meeting discussed the State of Qatar's participation in the upcoming meeting of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, scheduled to be held in Rabat. (QNA)

QF, Msheireb Properties sign accord for Rasekh initiative

Qatar Foundation (QF) has signed an agreement with Msheireb Properties to leverage its expertise and knowledge to enrich the educational content of the Rasekh initiative and develop specialised learning resources tailored to students' needs.

The collaboration focuses on utilising the rich content offered by the four Msheireb Museums, key cultural landmarks in Qatar, which showcase local heritage, bridging the past with the present and deepening understanding of Qatar's history and culture.

The Rasekh initiative will integrate this knowledge into its local knowledge bank, creating educational resources for students, researchers, and schools across Qatar.

Maryam al-Hajri, partnerships manager at the Rasekh initiative for QF's Pre-University Education (PUE), said: "Our collaboration with Msheireb Properties marks a significant step in enhancing educational content with resources inspired by Qatar's history and culture.

"We believe that education extends beyond books and curricula to include immersive experiences that deepen students' understanding. Through this collaboration, we provide them with the opportunity to engage with the unique knowledge offered by Msheireb Museums, allowing them to interact with their heritage in a modern and interactive way. This not only strengthens their understanding of their national identity but also deepens their connection to their roots.

"Our goal is to turn historical



and cultural knowledge into innovative educational resources. Connecting education with heritage enriches students' awareness of their history and national identity, while offering new perspectives on the cultural and social developments that have shaped our society today."

Al-Hajri emphasised that this collaboration aims to create sustainable educational content that enriches learning and enables students to benefit from Qatar's cultural and intellectual heritage, supporting their academic journey with innovative resources.

"These resources will be available to all schools and the wider community. They provide educators with a diverse range of teaching tools, from visual and audio materials to interactive resources, enhancing the learning experience and making educational content more engaging, interactive, and

connected to national identity and cultural heritage."

Fatima al-Mansouri, education manager at Msheireb Museums, said: "This partnership enables us to extend our educational reach from our museum spaces directly into classrooms across Qatar. Our four heritage houses offer insights into Qatar's history, from pearl diving and oil discovery to family life and architectural development. By transforming these narratives into educational resources, we can help students better understand their heritage and its relevance to Qatar's future."

The platform, launched by QF in 2022 in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, aims to share the depth and breadth of local knowledge, innovation, and research with learners of all ages and educators in Qatar and beyond, a statement added.

Lego Shows Qatar from June 7-22

The second edition of Lego Shows Qatar returns to the Qatar National Convention Centre from June 7 to 22, Visit Qatar announced yesterday. The event will feature creative zones, interactive challenges, themed installations, and world-class entertainment designed to inspire children and adults alike. The event is part of the official Qatar Calendar, produced by ATW Events, organised by Events & Entertainment Enterprises (E3) and Ooredoo as the telecom sponsor, a Visit Qatar statement said. Highlights of the event include creative Lego themes, interactive zones, live performances, master builder meet and greet, minifigure experience, and retail and food zones. More information is available at <https://visitqatar.com/intl-en/events-calendar/lego-show> or scan the QR code



Ladies Day returns at Desert Falls

Ladies Day is making a splash once again at the Desert Falls Sea Caves Waterpark at Hilton Salwa Beach Resort every Wednesday, exclusively for women and boys below seven, from 3pm to 7pm. Adding to the experience, a brand-new eforea Spa branch has opened inside the waterpark. With a 100% female team on-site, Desert Falls guarantees total comfort, privacy, and a fun-filled atmosphere. More information is available at www.desertfallsqatar.com or from +974 4423 6666, a statement added.





Poland eyes major trade expansion, diversification with Qatar

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Poland aims to significantly boost and diversify its QR4.2bn trade with Qatar, targeting growth beyond its nearly QR800mn in 2024 exports with high-end products and advanced technology, Polish head of mission Tomasz Sadzinski has said.

"I think we're doing a great job, but the potential is obviously significantly larger," he told the *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the recently held National Flag Day of Poland and the Day of the Polish Diaspora.

While Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) currently represents Qatar's primary export to Poland, Sadzinski expressed optimism

about future Qatari offerings. He sees that Qatar's aim to diversify its exports away from hydrocarbons will result in a meaningful range of Qatari products becoming available for export to Poland.

However, the envoy stressed that his priority remains promoting Polish products and solutions for development and use within Qatar, highlighting key areas such as highly developed machinery, fashion, high-end services for banking and other sectors, and tech services.

Sadzinski noted Poland's current export portfolio to Qatar is already varied: "It's quite diversified because a meaningful part, for instance, is foodstuffs, but we also have machinery, aviation, and high-end industries. So it's a fairly balanced foundation for co-oper-



Polish head of mission Tomasz Sadzinski in conversation with *Gulf Times*.

PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

ation, and I think it's a very good base to build upon."

Beyond the economic sphere, he said, Poland is actively work-

ing to enhance cultural and artistic exchanges with Qatar, initiating these efforts by planning a number of events in Qatar this year. While acknowledging that a full "Year of Culture" requires extensive planning and might be premature, he said it is an idea the embassy is keen to explore, particularly inspired by Qatar's current cultural year with Latin American countries, which he described as impressive.

The envoy cited a specific cultural ambition for the near future: an exhibition designed to resonate deeply with Qatari heritage. "My ambition is also to organise a number of exhibitions with our Qatari friends, [one] that would highlight the Polish heritage and success story in terms of breeding pure-blood Arabian horses," he said.

"I think it's a topic very close to the Qatari heart, and we want to support this as strongly as possible," he added.

Sadzinski stressed that for the embassy, occasions like the National Flag Day serve a dual role: while celebrating history, they are also crucial for highlighting Poland's modern identity, innovation, arts, and its ambitions on the global stage.

These events, he pointed out, underline the presence of Polish people and professionals in Qatar, showcasing their affection for the country and their significant contributions to its development. He added that their high qualifications in innovative sectors demonstrate that Poland is, in a sense, an integral part of the development currently taking place in Qatar.

The envoy noted that a cornerstone of this effort to showcase innovation is the planned continuation of the annual Poland-Qatar technology forum. He announced that this will happen at the end of the year, confirming that discussions are already underway with key partners in Doha. These include Invest Qatar, Qatar Financial Centre, Qatar Science and Technology Park, Qatar Development Bank, and Qatar Free Zones Authority.

According to Sadzinski, their intention is to ensure broad participation to effectively showcase Qatar's development, progress, and locally developed solutions, while also facilitating meaningful discussions with Polish counterparts that could potentially lead to business co-operation.



MoEHE, QC honour winning schools in 'Generational Impact Maker' initiative

QNA

Doha

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and Qatar Charity (QC) concluded the 'Generational Impact Maker Challenge' initiative and the accompanying charity exhibition, featuring 90 government schools to raise funds to build a school in Syria.

The event was held under the patronage and in the presence of HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir and CEO of Qatar Charity Yousuf bin Ahmed al-Kuwari.

HE AlKhatir praised the initiative as an inspiring initiative that aligns with the ministry's vision to instil humanitarian values and foster social responsibility among students. She added that the initiative effectively translated val-

ues into action, enhanced social awareness among students, and highlighted the importance of volunteerism in developing impactful individuals. HE the Minister sincerely thanked all supporters and expressed her gratitude to Qatar Charity for the fruitful co-operation in a valued partnership that aims to deepen community impact and foster a culture of giving and social responsibility.

Meanwhile, al-Kuwari expressed his satisfaction with the strong participation in the initiative, which involved 90 boys' and girls' schools, along with active engagement from families, teachers, and staff. He noted that the challenge fostered students' awareness of giving and social responsibility, resulting in the successful funding of a school for children affected by the crisis in Syria.

The event featured diverse segments, including a student-performed musical operetta and



a video showcasing the schools' achievements throughout the initiative. Highlights included 85 awareness workshops promoting charitable values and more than 60 cultural, artistic, and sports activities carried out by students in support of the initiative.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, HE AlKhatir presented awards to the winning schools. Al-Bayan Primary School for Girls received the award for the highest fundraising school through donation boxes and the online platform. Al-Shaymaa Secondary School for

Girls and Doha Preparatory School for Boys were honoured for the best awareness activities, while Al-Khor Preparatory School for Girls and Qatar Primary School for Boys were recognised for outstanding performance in reporting and monthly follow-up.

Following the ceremony, HE AlKhatir and al-Kuwari, along with officials, inaugurated the exhibition. During their tour of students' and partners' booths, she lauded the students' creativity and underscored the vital role of art, interactive activities, and awareness initiatives in promoting humanitarian values.

The exhibition featured 20 booths, where schools showcased handmade crafts, along with an art gallery displaying students' creative paintings available for sale. The proceeds from the sales will be donated to charitable causes.

Other bodies also participated in the exhibition with awareness

booths that focused on charitable work and community service. They included the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Justice, Dakkaken Group, Lusail Studios, Tarbeya Center, and FMM Company. The exhibition was open to attendees and the public from 5pm to 9pm.

In line with Qatar National Vision 2030's social development goals, the "Generational Impact Maker Challenge" initiative aims to promote global engagement and develop students' skills in humanitarian and community action. Launched in October 2024, the first edition of the "Generational Impact Maker Challenge" aimed to promote humanitarian values within the school community. The initiative successfully funded the construction of a school for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria through innovative fundraising efforts and awareness activities on key humanitarian issues.

The Amiri Guard School celebrated the graduation of the Amiri Guard's advanced course for officers No. 12 and the junior staff course for officers No. 14 at Barzan Camp, in the presence of HE the Commander of the Amiri Guard Staff Lieutenant-General Hazza bin Khalil al-Shahwani, Deputy Commander of the Amiri Guard, and a number of senior officers. In a speech delivered at the beginning of the ceremony, Commander of the Amiri Guard School Captain Hamad Abdullah al-Nabit emphasised the significant role played by the Amiri Guard School in qualifying and enhancing the efficiency and readiness of course participants. He indicated that the junior staff course qualifies officers to work as group leaders in the future, and provides them with further academic experience in analysis, deduction, resolving military dilemmas, assessing situations, and preparing studies. Following the review of the general reports on the two courses, the Commander of the Amiri Guard honoured the graduates. (QNA)

Amiri Guard celebrates graduation of advanced, junior staff courses for officers



Katara hosts 'Horses Through Time and Space' exhibition

The 'Horses Through Time and Space' exhibition by Iraqi artist Dr Raouf al-Attar opened at the Katara Cultural Village Building 47. The exhibition, running until May 13, features 30 paintings in black, white and grey palettes, featuring Arabian horses and aspects of Qatari culture and history. In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the General Manager of Katara Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti highlighted the exhibition's unique flair and the artist's approach by using unconventional colour choices and leather instead of traditional canvas. Prof Dr al-Sulaiti praised the artist's focus on Qatari heritage and history and relations to Arabian horses. For his part, Dr al-Attar explained to QNA that his artworks highlight the nobility of Arabian horses throughout Qatari history by inserting them in the country's notable landmarks, thus crossing different times and spaces. Dr al-Attar, who teaches at the Cihan University-Erbil in Iraq, has participated in more than 170 local and international exhibitions, held 29 solo exhibitions and won several awards in the art field. (QNA)



Israeli occupation undermines structure of Arab family: Qatar envoy

Qatar's ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative of Qatar to the Arab League Tariq Ali Faraj al-Ansari has affirmed that the Israeli occupation undermines the structure of the Arab family, and that Arab families living under occupation represent a stark example of the disintegration of social structures due to systematic oppression.

He that it is impossible to talk about the challenges facing the Arab family without considering the devastating impact of the Israeli occupation on the family structure and stability.

Al-Ansari said that families under occupation, especially Palestinian families and those in the occupied Syrian Golan and Lebanon, represent a stark example of the disintegration of social structures due to systematic oppression.

He added that the occupation not only stripped the land of its people, but also directly targeted families through policies of arrest, home demolitions, forced separation of family members, and the imposition of a siege, which has led to the disintegration of family ties and the distortion of roles within the family.

This came in a speech delivered by the envoy during the launch of the "First Arab Regional Policy Forum on the Doha Declaration: Family and Major Contemporary Transformations", organised by the Doha International Family Institute (Difi), a member of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Develop-

ment (QF), which kicked off in Cairo over the span of two days.

The forum is held in co-operation with Qatar's delegation to the Arab League and in partnership with the League's secretary-general.

Al-Ansari added that the structural targeting of the family, as the nucleus of Arab society, goes beyond human dimensions to touch upon the essence of identity and belonging, threatening to inherit suffering and instability across generations.

Therefore, he underlined, any strategic vision for empowering the Arab family is incomplete without including the occupation as a structural factor undermining the family.

Al-Ansari stressed that caring for the stability of the family and its members and strengthening family cohesion is one of the essential goals upon which Qatar National Vision 2030 is based, which stems from a firm belief that a cohesive family is the foundation for building a prosperous and stable society.

Based on this premise, the envoy continued, Qatar has given family issues a central focus in its development vision, recognising that family cohesion is the cornerstone of social stability and the foundation for human development.

The envoy underlined that this forum represents an extension of Qatar's efforts to support family issues regionally and internationally, the most recent of which was the 30th Anniversary of the Interna-



Qatar's ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative of Qatar to the Arab League Tariq Ali Faraj al-Ansari at the forum.

tional Year of the Family Conference, held in Doha in October 2024, marking three decades since the 1994 United Nations Declaration.

The conference discussed contemporary challenges such as demographic and technological changes, migration, and climate change.

This conference, al-Ansari said, issued the Doha Declaration, which included more than 30 recommendations to support families and strengthen social policies.

He added that this declaration complements the 2014 Doha Call to Action, which called for empowering families, achieving work-life balance, and comprehensive development.

Difi executive director Sharifa al-Emadi affirmed that the Forum aims to reconvene following the Doha Declaration to explore how to implement directives that support families and strengthen social policies in Arab countries, explaining that the Forum presents international experiences in this field, serving as an important platform for constructive dialogue.

Qatar University associate professor Sheikhha Hessa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani said that the Forum coincides with the urgent need to highlight key family issues and their profound impact on reality.

She added that these issues affect both individuals and communities, with implications that extend to the nation and the wider Islamic community, targeting its identity, language, spiritual values, and cultural and civilisational heritage.

She pointed to the accelerating pace of digitalisation and the entanglement of technology with the details of daily life, including the digitalisation of family communication.

While acknowledging that technology has opened new avenues for communication, Sheikhha Hessa noted that it has also weakened family bonds, evident in the silent browsing of phones, brief messages, and scattered notifications.

Egyptian Minister of Social Solidarity Dr Maya Morsi meanwhile affirmed her support for Qatar's efforts to strengthen protective legislation that safeguards women's rights, combats domestic vio-

lence, adopts economic empowerment policies, and integrates women across all sectors, especially emerging economies such as the green and digital economies.

She also praised efforts to expand the scope of protection programmes targeted at women.

Dr Morsi stressed the need for policies that take into account the specific circumstances and realities of Arab women, as well as the importance of sustainable funding to support protection and empowerment programmes.

Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Social Affairs Sector of the League of Arab States Dr Haifa Abu Ghazala said that the Doha Declaration, issued during the conference marking the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family, serves as a reference framework that reflects the collective Arab awareness of the need to respond to the transformations impacting and targeting the family, whether demographic, technological, environmental, religious, or social.

She added that the Forum serves as a tool to activate the Doha Declaration by promoting regional co-operation and reviewing leading practices in the field of family policies.

It also acts, Dr Ghazala said, as a platform for dialogue between researchers and policymakers, contributing to the development of effective, evidence-based responses grounded in scientific knowledge. - QNA

Palestine's cultural presence still 'strong locally, internationally'

Palestinian Minister of Culture Imad Abdullah Hamdan has said that despite the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people, Palestinian cultural identity will remain present and influential both locally and internationally.

In remarks to the Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the sidelines of his visit to Doha, where he is attending the opening of the 34th Doha International Book Fair, which launched yesterday, the minister said that Palestinian culture intersects with all other sectors, facing genocide alongside them and is not isolated from the broader impact of the ongoing war in Palestine.

Hamdan added that culture is arguably the most affected and most influential sec-

tor in these circumstances.

Regarding Palestine's participation as the guest of honour at the Doha International Book Fair, he told reporters that this selection reflects Qatar's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause across all levels.

He expressed his gratitude for this initiative, which demonstrates the deep cultural and fraternal ties between Qatar and Palestine.

Hamdan said that Palestine's presence in this international cultural event, despite its suffering and ongoing aggression, sends a clear message that Palestinian culture will remain strong and active even in the darkest times, and the Palestinian people will

continue to uphold their cultural identity as an integral part of their historical existence.

He further noted that the participation of 11 Palestinian publishers in this edition of the fair, along with a distinguished group of writers and intellectuals in its accompanying events, reflects the vitality of the Palestinian cultural scene.

The minister emphasised that culture symbolises resilience and serves as a form of soft power, reinforcing its ability to endure and regenerate.

Hamdan stated that Palestinian heritage, both tangible and intangible, is a cornerstone of national identity.

He said that his ministry is working to register key elements of Palestinian herit-

age, such as embroidery, Nablus soap, and the traditional Dabka dance, in the world heritage lists of Unesco, ICESCO, and other international organisations, to protect and document them against erasure, theft, and falsification.

Hamdan highlighted ongoing efforts to document cultural and heritage sites in Gaza, especially those destroyed in the war.

He pointed out that sites that were not previously documented have suffered the greatest damage, reinforcing the importance of prior registration to safeguard Palestine's cultural memory.

Palestine is the guest of honour at the 34th Doha International Book Fair, which continues until May 17. - QNA

First responders in Gaza 'running out of supplies'

AFP
Gaza City

First responders in Gaza said yesterday that their operations were at a near standstill, more than two months into a full Israeli blockade that has left food and fuel in severe shortage.

Israel denies a humanitarian crisis is unfolding in the Gaza Strip, where it plans to expand military operations to force Hamas to free hostages held there since the events of October 2023.

"Seventy-five per cent of our vehicles have stopped operating due to a lack of diesel fuel," the civil defence agency's spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP.

He added that its teams, who play a critical role as first responders in the Gaza Strip, were also facing a "severe shortage of electricity generators and oxygen devices".

For weeks, UN agencies and other humanitarian organisations have warned of dwindling supplies of everything from fuel and medicine to food and clean water in the coastal territory that is home to 2.4mn Palestinians.

"It is unacceptable that hu-

manitarian aid is not allowed into the Gaza Strip," Pierre Krahenbuhl, director-general of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), told reporters in Geneva yesterday.

The situation in Gaza is on a "razor's edge" and "the next few days are absolutely decisive", he added.

The UN's agency for children, Unicef, warned that Gaza's children face "a growing risk of starvation, illness and death" after UN-supported kitchens shut down due to lack of food supplies.

More than 20 independent experts mandated by the UN's Human Rights Council demanded action on Wednesday to avert the "annihilation" of Palestinians in Gaza.

Senior civil defence official Mohammad Mughayyir told AFP that Israeli bombardment across Gaza yesterday killed 21 people, including nine in a strike that targeted the Abu Rayyan family home in the northern city of Beit Lahia.

Yesterday Palestinians waited in line to donate blood at a field hospital in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis, an AFP journalist reported.

"In these difficult circumstanc-



A girl cries as she waits to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen in Beit Lahia, Gaza Strip. - Reuters

es, we have come to support the injured and sick, amid severe food shortages and a lack of proteins, by donating blood," Moamen al-Eid, a Palestinian waiting in the line, told AFP.

Hind Joba, the hospital's laboratory head, lamented that "there is no food or drink, the crossings are closed, and there is no ac-

cess to nutritious or protein-rich food".

"Still, people responded to the call, fulfilling their humanitarian duty by donating blood" despite the toll on their own bodies, she added.

"But this blood is vital, and they know that every drop helps save the life of an injured person"

Israel resumed military operations in Gaza on March 18 after talks to prolong a ceasefire stalled.

On Monday, the country's security cabinet approved a new roadmap for military operations in Gaza, aiming for the "conquest" of the territory while displacing its people en masse, drawing international condemnation.

Global community celebrates humanitarian work, courage of relief workers

Every year on May 8, the world marks World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day to honour the humanitarian efforts of millions of volunteers and workers in this field.

The occasion also serves as a call for the international community to reflect on the broader meaning of humanity and to recognise the courage and relief efforts undertaken to help others, regardless of nationality, religion, race, or political affiliation.

This year's celebration comes amid escalating global humanitarian challenges, including climate change, pandemics, and ongoing conflicts.

These circumstances underscore the vital role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, making this day an important opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of respecting international humanitarian law and protecting medical and relief personnel, particularly in conflict zones.

The day also highlights one of the world's largest humanitarian movements, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

It was founded on the principles of Swiss businessman Henry Dunant, who wit-

nessed the horrors of the Battle of Solferino in northern Italy in the 19th century between the French and Austrian armies.

After the battle, Dunant saw thousands of wounded soldiers from both sides left without adequate medical care.

He called on local residents to help care for the injured and, upon returning to Switzerland, launched a global appeal for the establishment of neutral volunteer organisations to provide medical care in times of war.

This vision has since evolved into a global movement comprising more than 190 national societies operating in over 150 countries, providing relief and humanitarian assistance.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA) about the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS)'s activities to mark the occasion, the assistant secretary-general for communication and resource development, Mohammed Ahmed al-Bishri, said that the organisation commemorates this day annually with a variety of events that embody the spirit of humanitarian work and highlight the role of humanitarian institutions in various sectors.

This year, the Volunteering and Local

Development Sector, through the Community Development Department, organised awareness campaigns in schools about Qatar's achievements through the QRCS and its role in promoting humanitarian principles.

These initiatives benefited around 400 students across seven different schools.

Al-Bishri noted that the QRCS celebrates humanitarian work that has both local impact and global influence.

Each year, a theme is chosen to reflect current global circumstances.

This year's theme is "Keeping Humanity Alive".

Al-Bishri emphasised that this occasion offers an opportunity to commend the efforts of national society members for their tireless work in alleviating the suffering of those in need, standing by them, supporting and aiding them, and upholding their dignity.

Al Bishri added that the QRCS enjoys widespread and active public engagement, reflected in the participation of the Qatari community in humanitarian campaigns, initiatives, projects, and volunteer efforts, both locally and internationally.

He further stressed the importance the

Red Crescent places on its diverse partnerships.

Given the nature of its humanitarian and developmental mission, the organisation requires effective co-operation with a wide range of stakeholders, both locally and internationally.

Al-Bishri highlighted the strategic partnership with Qatar Fund for Development and various humanitarian organisations in Qatar, as well as funding collaborations with several UN agencies, regional and international donor institutions, and local contributors.

These institutions in Qatar share the same core values rooted in the generosity of the Qatari people.

The official also noted the QRCS's strong partnerships with government institutions. Chief among these are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, and the Qatar Amiri Air Force, which transports relief supplies and teams.

Al-Bishri praised the role of the Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities in facilitating humanitarian missions and supporting relief campaigns from various institutions by providing in-kind support for humanitarian initiatives. - QNA

Sierra Leone's mpox cases fuel African outbreak

Sierra Leone accounted for half of Africa's confirmed mpox cases this week, the continent's main health body said yesterday, adding that the West African country was fuelling the outbreak.

Mpox is a viral infection that spreads through close contact and typically causes flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions. It is usually mild, but can be lethal.

It remains a public health emergency due to the continuing rise in the number of cases and the geographic spread of the outbreak, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), which first declared the emergency in August last year.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said that Sierra Leone reported 384 confirmed cases in a week, representing 50.7% of all the continent's cases.

Sierra Leone, which declared mpox a public health emergency in January, has seen a 63% jump in confirmed cases in just one week, Africa CDC official Ngashi Ngonzo said in an online briefing.

Ngongo said that funding was the main issue, but added that contact tracing and laboratory capacity also needed to be improved.

"They have a bed capacity in mpox treatment centres of only 60 beds, but we are talking about 800 active cases," Ngongo said, adding that most infected people had to stay at home.

Last August, officials said the budget to fight mpox was severely underfunded, and in February they warned funding cuts proposed by the United States earlier this year would threaten efforts to contain disease outbreaks.

Mpox cases in high-burden countries Uganda and Burundi are on a steady decline, while cases in Democratic Republic of the Congo are showing signs of flattening, said Ngongo. - Reuters

Vultures rescued from poisoning in South African game reserve

South African park rangers and a local wildlife organisation rescued more than 80 vultures from a mass poisoning in the country's Kruger National Park this week, though they were unable to save more than 120 vultures.

South African National Parks (SANParks) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust said it was one of the largest vulture poisoning events in Southern Africa.

Officials from the organisations suspect poachers are to blame as they are increasingly using agricultural toxins to target species whose body parts are in demand for traditional medicine.

The rescue was made possible by a wildlife-poisoning detection system in a remote section of the Kruger park.

After being alerted to suspicious activity, the rangers who arrived on site discovered 116 dead vultures near an elephant carcass laced with poison.

The death toll later rose to 123 vultures as more birds died on the way to a rehabilitation centre. - Reuters

MES marks International Labour Day

MES Indian School observed International Labour Day with special assemblies in honour of the working community and to express gratitude for their commitment.

Various activities, including speeches, skits, poem writing, collage making and slogan writing competitions, were organised to mark the occasion.

In the Boys' Section, students dressed in various costumes to represent the labour community of the world, portraying the greatness of occupations that contribute to the welfare of society.

Art teacher Suresh created portraits of the housekeeping staff of the school and presented these to them as a gesture of ap-



preciation for their hard work and dedication.

In the Girls' Section, during the special assembly, teachers highlighted the importance of the working community in society and the dignity of each profession, which enabled students to realise the need to respect, appreciate and honour them.

In the Junior Section, a special assembly saw students delivering speeches and a skit.

In the K G Section, a rhyme performance had tiny tots dressed up in fire-fighter costumes.

Children who dressed up as the workers of various occupations spoke a few lines confidently while introducing the role they were representing.

Employees, including the supporting staff, were honoured with special gifts and certificates of appreciation as a token of admiration and honour for their hard work rendered throughout the year.

The principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, in her felicitation remarks, stated that future leaders need to be made aware of the importance of the working class, which is the backbone of society.

The activities of the day were co-ordinated by the teachers in charge, Jenny George, Rajesh K S, Namita Pradeep, Shabrina, Nisha Menon and Suja Mathew.



MES student wins prize in Adhan contest



Mohammed Umair Mujeeb (VII) of MES Indian School won the second prize in the first edition of Mazameerul Furqan Adhan competition organised by Al Furqan Private School for the students of both government and private schools in Qatar. The event witnessed participation from 17 schools across Qatar. MES principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the student and the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers for their support.

Long-time Indian expatriates feted at special event



The Center for Indian Community Qatar - Rayyan Zone organised a special felicitation ceremony in observance of International Workers' Day, honouring members who have completed four decades of service in Qatar.

Among those honoured were K H Kunhimohammed from Padoor, Thrissur, who has been in Qatar for 48 years, and P K Mohammed from Perumbavoor, who has completed 47.5 years of expatriate life.

Other awardees included Haris Koorikkalakkatha (Kannur, Pappinisseri), N P Ashraf (Thrissur, Puthumanassery), Abdul Sathar (Thrissur, Karuvannur), A T Abdul Salam (Malappuram, Perumpadappu), Razak Karatt (Kozhikode, Koduvally), P V Abdul Salam (Kozhikode, Ramanattukara), Abdul Jaleel M M (Thrissur, Venkitangu), Ameer T K (Thrissur, Eriyad), and B M Laila, a member of Women India Qatar, all of whom have completed over 40 years of expatriate life.

The event was presided over by CIC Rayyan Zone vice-president Subul Abdul Aziz and commenced with a recitation by Fasalurrahman.

The ceremony was organised under the leadership of zonal committee members Abdul Basith, Raffiq Thangal, Siddique Vengara, and Women India Rayyan Zone secretary Zainaba Abdul Jaleel.

Poster released for swimming contest

The Qatar KMCC Mogral Puthur Panchayat Committee officially released the poster for its district-level swimming competition, set to take place on May 15 at Wakra Green Stadium.

The poster was released by Dr M P Shafi Haji, chairman of the Qatar KMCC Advisory Committee, in the presence of community leaders.

The inaugural function was presided over by Anwar Kadawat, president of the Mogral Puthur Panchayat KMCC, while general secretary Abdul Rahiman Eriyal welcomed the gathering.

The competition is being held under the banner of the 'Nattoruma' project - an initiative symbolising community unity.

Those present at the poster release included Basheer Vel-

likoth (Muslim League State Working Committee), Lukman Talankara (Kasaragod District KMCC president), Sadiq Paikara (State Muslim League Council), along with district leaders Sameer Udumpunthala, Nasir Kaithakkad, Ali Cheroor, Zakir Area, Shanif Paika, Ashraf Awil, Jafar Kallangadi, Nawaz Azad Nagar, Rahim Chowki, Abid Udinur, Jassim Chengala, and Rahim Balur.



Nurses Day celebration today

Uniq, the association of Indian nurses in Qatar, will celebrate International Nurses Day today at the DPS Monarch School Auditorium.

Indian ambassador Vipul will inaugurate the event at 3pm and launch the Uniq mobile app, designed to support Indian nurses in Qatar across various domains.

The event will also feature cultural performances by Indian nurses working in different hospitals across Qatar and their families, and a music programme by Uniq Beats, the music band of Indian nurses in Qatar.

The Uniq managing committee has welcomed all Indian nurses in Qatar and their families to join the celebration.

Uniq president Luthfi Kalambar, advisory chairman Vimal Padmalayam Vishwam, treasurer Dileesh Bhargavan, programme committee lead Dhanya, and media wing lead Ajmal Shams announced the details at a press conference.



An evening of reflection, recognition, rejoicing

The Marthoma College Alumni Qatar Chapter hosted its annual day celebration bringing together former students, families, and well-wishers for an evening of reflection, recognition, and rejoicing.

The event commenced with a business meeting. President Anish George Mathew welcomed attendees.

Secretary Nisha Jacob presented the annual report and treasurer Jacob M Mathew audited financial accounts.

The general meeting had vice-president Sheela Sunny welcoming the gathering. A musical solo by Girin Varghese George and a duet by Shejin Symon and Sheen Symon followed. QFM 98.6 Radio Network manager Noufal Abdul Rahman was the chief guest.

Former patron George Mathew offered felicitations. A video presentation titled 'Down the Memory Lane' evoked fond memories and shared experiences from alumni life.

The highlight of the evening, titled 'Honouring Milestones of Life & Cherishing Lifelong Bonds,' presented by Nisha Jacob, celebrated alumni family members who reached significant life milestones - those aged 60 and above and couples celebrating 25+ years of marriage.

The cultural segment featured performances by alumni and their families. Cultural secretary Sibin Abraham proposed a vote of thanks.



Senior school investiture ceremony at DPS Modern Indian School



DPS Modern Indian School hosted the Senior School Investiture Ceremony 2025-26.

The newly-appointed student council pledged to lead with conviction and embody the values that define true leadership.

Principal Asna Nafees welcomed the chief guest, Indian embassy first secretary (education and culture) Harish Pandey and encouraged student leaders to uphold integrity, lead with strength, and personify the values of commitment and purpose.

Pandey emphasised the importance of dedication and hard work during school years, which unlocks countless opportunities and lays a strong foundation for lifelong success and growth.

School vice-president George Thomas reinforced that success transcends talent, focusing on the crucial roles of persistence, hard work, and motivation.

A total of 120 young leaders took the oath of office, pledging to carry out their duties to the best of their abilities within their respective portfolios. Head boy Nikkil DCruz and head girl Shamitha Anand delivered their acceptance speeches.

POLITICS

S Korea presidential hopefuls square off over candidacy

South Korean presidential hopefuls Kim Moon-soo and former prime minister Han Duck-soo clashed yesterday during a meeting to discuss merging their campaigns in order to field a single conservative candidate to contest the upcoming election. Unifying conservatives behind a single candidate is seen as crucial if the right-wing People Power Party (PPP) is to stand any chance of success against Democratic Party frontrunner Lee Jae-myung in the snap election on June 3. So far neither Kim nor Han has shown much sign of being willing to stand aside. "Let's make a decision today or tomorrow" on unifying the conservative candidacy, Han said.

DISPUTE

Philippines, China trade charges on sea confrontation

The Philippines and China gave conflicting versions of a maritime confrontation around a contested shoal in the South China Sea, the latest incident in a longstanding dispute between the neighbours. A Philippine Navy patrol near the disputed Scarborough Shoal encountered "aggressive and unsafe" movements by two Chinese Navy vessels earlier this week, the Philippine military said. China's military, meanwhile, accused the Philippine frigate of "attempting to invade" the waters around the feature and said that it had organised naval and air forces to track and expel the vessel, in a statement released by its Southern Theatre Command.

CRIME

Three held over suitcases stuffed with hermit crabs

Three Chinese men were arrested in Japan after their rustling suitcases alerted hotel staff to the thousands of protected hermit crabs inside, police said yesterday. A hotel worker in Amami City, on one of the archipelago's southwestern subtropical islands, reported the suspected crime to environmental authorities. The guests "had asked the hotel to watch their suitcases, and the suitcases made a rustling noise", a police official said. When two of the three guests returned to the hotel, police asked them to reveal the contents of their luggage. Inside the three suitcases police found around 95kgs of spiral-shelled, protected hermit crabs.

OFFBEAT

Man admitted to Expo 2025 with 85-year-old ticket

A man was admitted to the World Expo in Japan with a ticket to a 1940 event that was called off as war escalated, organisers said. Tickets for the "Grand International Exposition of Japan" in Tokyo were released in 1938 but the event was postponed indefinitely as Japan became embroiled in World War II. Organisers of Expo 2025 in the western city of Osaka, which opened last month and runs until mid-October, said in a statement they had decided to admit holders of tickets to the 1940 event. They exchanged one of the old tickets for two one-day Expo 2025 passes, the statement said.

China premier 'to visit Malaysia for Asean-Gulf summit'

Reuters
Beijing

Chinese Premier Li Qiang will visit Malaysia in late May for a summit with a newly established group of South-east Asian and Arab nations that Beijing hopes to rally against US tariffs, two sources said. China is on an offensive to mend ties with the European Union, Japan and Korea after US President Donald Trump unleashed a global tariff salvo on April 2, which he then abruptly paused for dozens of countries except China. Li will be in Kuala Lumpur for the Asean-GCC-China summit on May 27, held shortly after the Asean Summit on May 26, two sources familiar with the matter said. China has not publicly confirmed who it will send. The visit of China's second-ranked official comes shortly after President Xi Jinping visited Malaysia, this year's Asean chair, last month. While there, he urged Asean nations to unite in resisting "excessive tariffs" and progress has been made on finalising an Asean-China free trade deal since then. The Malaysia meetings will follow the high stakes US-China trade talks in Switzerland this weekend that will likely lay the groundwork for deeper negotiations between the world's two largest economies after a period of escalation in the trade war. One of the sources said the planning of the summit, which began a few months ago, predates Trump's import tax blitz but trade is expected to be high on the agenda

with two major geopolitical power players invited to the region. When asked to confirm the visit, China's foreign ministry said yesterday it was willing to "deepen mutually beneficial co-operation" with Asean and GCC countries at the summit. "We will... jointly safeguard the international economic and trade order and the global free trade system," spokesperson Lin Jian told reporters. Malaysia's foreign ministry confirmed the Asean, Asean-GCC Summit and Asean-GCC-China Economic Summit will be held in Kuala Lumpur May 26-27. "These... are expected to draw high-level participation from Asean member states and dialogue partners," it said in a statement. As part of its outreach to South-east Asia, China has emphasised that it is willing to buy its exports, particularly agricultural items, according to a Beijing-based diplomat. China is concerned that other countries are wary of huge trade diversions from US tariffs on Chinese products, and that they could be convinced by Washington to put up economic barriers as a result, the source added. Asean is China's largest trading partner, with total trade value reaching \$234bn in the first quarter of 2025, according to Chinese customs data, while China is the Gulf Co-operation Council's top trading partner. The GCC's total commodity trade with China reached almost \$298bn in 2023 while the bloc accounted for 36% of China's total crude oil imports that year, according to UN figures.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un (centre) inspects a factory that makes shells and machinery in North Korea.

North Korea fires missiles off east coast, says South Korea

Reuters
Seoul

North Korea fired what appeared to be multiple short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast, South Korea's military said yesterday, possibly to test the performance and stability of various projectiles intended for export. The missiles were launched from Wonsan, North Korea's eastern coastal city and flew up to 800km before splashing down in the sea, the military said in a statement. South Korea is closely communicating with the US and Japan to share information about the launch, it added. The foreign ministry said the three countries' nuclear envoys consulted by telephone and condemned it

as a violation of UN sanctions. South Korea's joint chiefs of staff spokesperson Lee Sung-jun declined to comment on the exact number of missiles detected or their characteristics, but told reporters the launch may have been to test the performance of missiles intended for export. A North Korea analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification, Hong Min, said they were likely two types of short-range ballistic missiles that had been supplied to Russia which used them to strike Ukraine. "There is considerable amount of field data of these two missiles collected, and it's possible additional testing was needed to improve issues reported from the battlefield such as durability and precision," Hong said. The Japanese government also said it detected a launch of a ballistic missile by North

Korea, which may have flown on a irregular trajectory. The nuclear-armed North's ballistic missile programme is banned by United Nations Security Council resolutions, but in recent years Pyongyang has forged ahead in developing missiles of all ranges. In March, North Korea fired multiple ballistic missiles, while blaming the South Korean and US militaries for conducting drills it calls dangerous and provocative. North Korea has exported short-range ballistic missiles, among other weapons, to Russia for use in the war in Ukraine, according to US and allied intelligence agencies as well as independent researchers. Pyongyang and Moscow have denied the weapons trade, although North Korean troops have been deployed to fight on the frontlines in Russia's Kursk region.

Hundreds flee after attack on Myanmar military

More than 300 Myanmar people fled into Thailand to seek refuge following an assault on the military by ethnic armed groups, Thailand said yesterday, days after the junta extended a post-earthquake ceasefire. Myanmar has been mired in civil conflict since a military coup in 2021, with the junta battling a coalition of ethnic armed organisations and pro-democracy resistance forces. Wednesday's attack by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and its allied Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) targeted a military base in Kayin state, about 2.5kms from the Thai border, according to the Thai military. "The attack involved a close-range encirclement of the base and the use of armed drones to continuously drop explosives throughout the day," a statement said. By yesterday, 327 Myanmar nationals had crossed into Thailand and were sheltering in two temporary sites.

Tom Cruise in Seoul



US actor Tom Cruise poses for a photo during a red carpet event for the film Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning in Seoul yesterday.

Firm looks to patent AI system to decipher animal sounds

Reuters
Beijing

Ever wished you could understand what your cat is trying to tell you? A Chinese tech company is exploring whether it's possible to translate those mysterious meows into human language using artificial intelligence. Baidu, owner of China's largest search engine, has filed a patent with China National Intellectual Property Administration proposing a system to convert animal vocalisations into human language, according to a patent document published this week. Scientists have long attempted to decode animal communication, and Baidu's patent represents the latest effort to leverage AI to do so. The document says the system will collect animal data, including vocal sounds, behavioural patterns, and physiological signals, which will be preprocessed and merged before an AI-powered

analysis designed to recognise the animal's emotional state. The emotional states would then be mapped to semantic meanings and translated into human language. The system could allow "deeper emotional communication and understanding between animals and humans, improving the accuracy and efficiency of cross-species communication," Baidu said in the patent document. "There has been a lot of interest in the filing of our patent application," a Baidu spokesperson said when asked how soon the company could turn the patent into a product. "Currently, it is still in the research phase." Baidu was among the first major Chinese companies to invest heavily in AI following the 2022 debut of OpenAI's ChatGPT. It unveiled its latest AI model, Ernie 4.5 Turbo, last month, saying it matched the industry's best in several benchmark tests. However, the Ernie chatbot has struggled to gain traction amid fierce competition.

Digital voting breeds distrust among overseas Filipino workers

AFP
Manila

A new online voting system aimed at boosting turnout among the Philippines' millions of overseas workers ahead of Monday's mid-term elections has been marked by confusion and fears of disenfranchisement. Thousands of overseas Filipino workers, or OFWs, have already cast their ballots in the race dominated by a bitter feud between President Ferdinand Marcos and his impeached vice-president Sara Duterte. While official turnout figures are not yet publicly available, data

from the Commission on Elections (Comelec) show at least 134,000 of the 1.22mn registered overseas voters have signed up for the new online system, which opened April 13. But Jun Birlasa III, a Filipino working in Singapore, says he will not vote again if he has to do it online. "I'd rather do manual," the 50-year-old said this week, describing the new system as "confusing and suspicious". At issue is a digital QR code generated after voting that leads users to a page asking them to verify their ballot has been submitted correctly. Below that is a box containing a jumble of computer code and can-

didate names. Birlasa said many of the names visible were candidates for whom he had not voted. Similar stories about the anxiety-inducing webpage have proliferated across social media, including Facebook posts that have reached thousands. Eman Villanueva, a Hong Kong-based activist with migrant rights group BAYAN, said he was unsure his vote had been properly counted. "There is absolutely no way for the voters to know if the votes that went through really reflected our choices," he said. In previous overseas elections, voters could review the names they selected, but Comelec said the QR code was never sup-

posed to serve that purpose. The landing page was only intended to verify a ballot's receipt, the commission said, adding that the name of every candidate running in the election should appear. "We are definitely considering the feedback and studying how to incorporate them in future elections," Ian Geonanga, Comelec's director of overseas voting, said. Election watchdogs, however, say the commission failed to properly explain the new system and warn of the confusion risks disenfranchising voters. "It's a natural reaction of people that if you're not familiar with the system, then you won't trust it the

first instance," said Ona Caritos, executive director of the nonprofit Legal Network for Truthful Elections (Lente). Since April 14, 1.5mn people have watched a video in which a Philippines-based engineer named Jaydee San Juan quizzes ChatGPT about the names visible on the ballot verification page. "It's highly likely showing the candidates that were selected/voted for using that ballot ID," the AI chatbot replied. Comelec, however, got the opposite answer when conducting the ChatGPT experiment itself, Geonanga said. The election commission's efforts

to quell fears about the new system, meanwhile, have been misrepresented to sow more disinformation. AFP fact-checkers recently debunked a video edited to make it appear Geonanga was saying online ballots were "designed" to rig the election's results. The fiasco has also left election watchdogs and migrant groups sceptical that the switch to online voting will boost turnout as intended. Danilo Arao, convenor of voting watchdog Kontra Daya, said even a small change to the ballot's design might have helped assuage fears he believes could lead to "widespread disenfranchisement".



ECONOMY

UK-India trade pact to be signed after three months

A bilateral trade deal between India and the United Kingdom could be signed after three months and will take over a year to implement, an Indian government official said yesterday. New Delhi and London concluded talks for a free trade deal on Tuesday, closing a long-coveted deal between the world's fifth and sixth largest economies. India - the world's third largest car market - has offered separate import quotas to Britain for combustion engine vehicles and electric cars, the official said, and tariff cuts on the vehicles will be offered in a phased manner. The quotas have been offered based on engine capacity and car prices.

CONTROVERSY

Reliance scraps trademark plea for codename of military strikes

Mukesh Ambani's film studio has withdrawn an application to trademark the codename for India's military strikes against Pakistan after a public and political uproar on social media against the move. In a statement, Reliance said the trademark application was filed inadvertently by a junior person at Jio Studios without authorisation, adding that the phrase "Operation Sindoor" was "now a part of the national consciousness as an evocative symbol of Indian bravery." Reliance's statement came hours after some social media users posted screenshots showing some individuals and Reliance had filed applications for trademark registration.

APPROVAL

India agrees on conditional nod for Starlink operations

The Indian government has agreed to a conditional nod for SpaceX's Starlink to start offering satellite-based Internet services in the country, television news channel CNBC-TV18 reported yesterday. Starlink and the Indian Department of Telecommunications did not immediately respond to e-mails asking for comment. Starlink in March signed agreements with Indian telecom operators Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Industries Jio, in moves that would give the US firm greater access to the world's most populous nation. Starlink has been waiting since 2022 for licenses to operate commercially in India.

CORPORATE

LG Electronics India begins work on new \$600mn plant

LG Electronics India has begun construction on its third plant in the country, the company and the Andhra Pradesh government, where the facility is located, said. The IPO-bound electronics manufacturer will invest \$600mn in the plant which will generate direct employment opportunities for 1,495 individuals and indirectly employ 10,000. The company's other plants are located in Greater Noida, and in Pune, Maharashtra. The company's South Korean parent delayed the public float in India due to market volatility. LG Electronics is now targeting launching the IPO of its Indian unit in the second or third quarter of fiscal year 2026, instead of May.

India's appeal for investors dimmed but not derailed by conflict

Reuters
Mumbai

The latest conflict between India and Pakistan may impact New Delhi's efforts to pitch itself as a safe haven for foreign investors amid global economic turmoil - but not much, investors and analysts said as tensions ratcheted up between the nuclear-armed neighbours. India's \$4tn economy has limited direct trade with Pakistan, and even its overnight cross-border missile strikes had little immediate impact on local equity, currency and bond markets, on the view that full-fledged conflict is unlikely. "If there is a cessation of hostilities like there should be, pragmatically and practically, the investment climate may not actually be harmed," said Ajay Marwaha, head of fixed income at Mumbai-headquartered investment house Nu-vama Group.

Previous conflicts have not had a lasting impact on Indian assets, Citibank analysts wrote in a note. In the last such flare-up with Pakistan, in February 2019, the Indian rupee held steady and bond yields rose 15 basis points over that month but retreated later. In June 2020, when fighting broke out between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan valley, the rupee weakened 1% but regained ground as the two sides disengaged, Citi analysts said. Since US President Donald Trump unveiled a slate of huge

tariffs on his country's trading partners, Indian markets have in fact performed well. "The Indian market had begun to outperform on the back of the perception that there is some insulation from Trump tariffs given the strength of domestic consumption and a clear signal of monetary loosening from the central bank," said Sat Dhura, portfolio manager at Janus Henderson Investors. He acknowledged that: "Recent events are likely to keep foreign investors away," but added that local investment flows are likely to be sticky, helping serve as a support to the markets.

India is expected to remain the fastest-growing major economy with the central bank forecasting GDP growth of 6.5% this financial year. It is also among the best-performing of the world's big stock markets since early April, when Washington announced reciprocal tariffs on its trading partners, with the benchmark Nifty 50 rising 4.6% since then. Foreign investors, who had heavily sold Indian stocks from last October to March of this year, turned buyers in April and early May purchasing about \$1.5bn. They remained sellers of Indian bonds, offloading \$1.7bn since the start of April. UAE-based asset manager NAV Capital reckons that the geopolitical flare-up may temper immediate foreign portfolio flows into India but it expects global investors to remain invested in the country unless the latest conflict spirals.



Indian army military personnel stand guard at India Gate in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

Explosions rock Kashmir in suspected drone attacks

Reuters
New Delhi

Lasts rang out across the city of Jammu in Kashmir late yesterday during what Indian military sources said they suspected was a Pakistani drone attack across the region on the second day of clashes between the nuclear-armed neighbours. Sirens sounded and red flashes and projectiles could be seen in the night sky above the city, a Reuters journalist said. Several parts of Jammu and the surrounding towns of Akhnoor, Samba and Kathua came under attack, said an

Indian official who asked not to be named. "Our army installations are under attack, it is happening in five districts of Jammu (region)," a security official told Reuters. There was no immediate comment from Pakistan on what appeared to be an escalation in the countries' worst confrontation in more than two decades. Pakistan's Defence Minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, had earlier said further retaliation was "increasingly certain" after both countries accused each other of launching drone attacks. India said it hit nine sites in Pakistan on Wednesday in retaliation for what it says was a deadly Islamabad-backed attack in Indian Kashmir on April 22. Pakistan says it was not

involved and denied that any of the sites hit by India were militant bases. It said it shot down five Indian aircraft on Wednesday, a report the Indian embassy in Beijing dismissed as "mis-information". Pakistan said earlier yesterday it shot down 25 drones from India overnight, while India said it air defences had stopped Pakistani drone and missile attacks on military targets. World powers from the US to Russia and China have called for calm in one of the world's most dangerous, and most populated, nuclear flashpoint regions. The US Consulate General in Pakistan's Lahore ordered staff to shelter in place.

Elk could return to UK after 3,000 years as plan wins funding

Elk could roam the English countryside for the first time in 3,000 years after funding was approved to explore plans for their eventual reintroduction into the wild. European elk are woodland foragers and wetland grazers, helping to promote the natural regeneration of woodland and maintain open clearings. They went extinct in the UK due to overhunting and a loss of habitat. "This exciting project is working towards the possibility of reintroducing elk into two existing beaver enclosures in Derbyshire and Nottingham," in central England, said Rachel Bennett, deputy director of Wilder Landscapes and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, which applied for the funding alongside the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. The Rewilding Britain charity approved the grant in the latest round of the Rewilding Innovation Fund, a twice-yearly fund supporting innovative rewilding efforts.

Attenborough documentary premiere



John Kerry and Andrew Forrest attend the world premiere of the Ocean with David Attenborough documentary at the Royal Festival Hall in London, Britain.

Rural India consumer demand outpaces urban areas: study

Reuters
New Delhi

India's consumer goods sector reported an 11% growth in value in the March quarter, as rural growth outpaced that in urban areas for the fifth straight quarter, market research firm NielsenIQ said yesterday. Rural areas - which account for just over a third of overall consumer goods sales - have become a bright spot for an industry that is struggling with higher living costs and slow wage growth in large cities. "Rural markets continue to drive growth, whereas urban metros continue to see a shift toward E-commerce," Rousevelt Dsouza, head of customer success for consumer goods at NielsenIQ, said. Although rural consumption growth slowed in the March quarter, with volumes rising 8.4% compared to 9.2% in the previous three months, it still outpaced

urban demand, where growth decelerated to 2.6% from 4.2%. Price increases also contributed to the overall value growth, with the cost of staples such as edible oil rising 5.6% during the quarter, compared with just 0.3% in the same period a year ago. Low base, rural growth, and easing inflation are helping smaller players, which saw 17.8% growth in value, outpacing the broader FMCG market, the report said. Indian consumer goods maker Marico reported fourth-quarter profit above analysts' expectations, boosted by improving rural demand and price increases for its key packaged oil brands - underscoring the strength of non-urban markets. The company also said it plans to expand its presence in villages across India. Smaller manufacturers are driving consumption compared to larger players, whose volume growth has halved compared to the December quarter, NielsenIQ said.

King Charles leads service to mark end of WWII

AFP
London

King Charles III yesterday joined veterans and other members of the royal family at London's Westminster Abbey for a service to mark 80 years since the end of World War II. Arriving at the abbey, Charles and his eldest son Prince William laid wreaths at the church's tomb of the unknown warrior. The King's message on the wreath read simply: "We will never forget" and was signed Charles R. William's message, which was signed "William" and "Catherine",

added: "For those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Second World War. We will remember them." This year's commemorations have had an extra poignancy due to the great age of the dwindling numbers of surviving veterans. War-time prime minister Winston Churchill's 10-year-old great-great-grandson Alexander lit a candle of peace during the service, which was preceded by a nationwide two-minute silence. "It feels really amazing that I can represent my family and also the younger generation to know and remember everyone involved in World War II," the younger

Churchill said. Other younger members of the congregation handed out white roses to veterans. Charles, who is undergoing treatment for an unspecified cancer, was also accompanied by Queen Camilla, William's wife Princess Catherine, also known as Kate, and other senior members of the royal family. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and other politicians and dignitaries also attended. Eighty years ago on May 8, 1945, central London was thronged with huge crowds celebrating the end of the war. In a radio address to the nation Churchill announced that the day

would be "Victory in Europe Day". He added: "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing", despite the conflict with Japan not yet having ended. Later that day the crowds even included the late Queen Elizabeth II, then a 19-year-old princess, and her younger sister Margaret, who were allowed to leave Buckingham Palace and join the jubilant crowds incognito. The Westminster Abbey service featured a rendition of the favourite 1940s song *The White Cliffs of Dover*, readings of war-time letters to loved ones, and an excerpt of Churchill's 1945 victory speech.



The Prince of Wales and King Charles bow their heads at the grave of the Unknown Warrior after laying wreaths during a service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey in London on the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

Bill Gates speeds up giving away fortune, blasts Musk

Reuters/AFP
London/New York

Bill Gates (*pictured*) has pledged to give away \$200bn via his charitable foundation by 2045 and lashed out at Elon Musk, accusing the world's richest man of "killing the world's poorest children" through huge cuts to the US foreign aid budget.

The 69-year-old billionaire co-founder of Microsoft said he was speeding up his plans to divest almost all of his fortune and would close the foundation on December 31, 2045, years earlier than previously planned.

Gates published a chart showing his net worth plummeting 99% over the next 20 years in a blog post announcing the shift, describing a doubling of the pace of giving.

"People will say a lot of things about me when I die, but I am determined that 'he died rich' will not be one of them," Gates wrote.

Gates said that he believed the money would help achieve several of his goals, such as eradicating diseases like polio and malaria, ending preventable deaths among women and children, and reducing global poverty.

His announcement follows moves by governments, including the Trump ad-

ministration, to slash international aid budgets used to prevent deadly disease and famine.

The US cuts have been overseen by Musk, who has publicly bragged about feeding the US Agency for International Development (USAID) "into the wood chipper" and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Around 80% of USAID programmes are set to be cut; the agency spent \$44 billion worldwide in fiscal 2023.

"The picture of the world's richest man killing the world's poorest children is not a pretty one," Gates told the *Financial Times*.

Gates is listed as the 13th on the Forbes "real-time" billionaire list, with a net worth of \$112.6bn. Musk is first with \$383.2bn.

In an interview with Reuters, Gates warned of a stark reversal to decades of progress in reducing mortality over the next four to six years due to the funding cuts by governments worldwide.

"The number of deaths will start going up for the first time ... it's going to be millions more deaths because of the resources," Gates told Reuters.

The Gates Foundation's annual budget will reach \$9bn by 2026 and around \$10bn annually after that due to the accelerated spending.

Gates has warned the White House that

his foundation and other philanthropies cannot fill the gaps left by governments.

"I think governments will come back to caring about children surviving" over the next 20-year period though, Gates said yesterday.

Gates and Musk, the chief executive of Tesla and SpaceX, once agreed over the role of the wealthy in giving away money to help others, but have since clashed several times.

Asked if he had appealed to Musk recently to change course, Gates said it was now up to Congress to decide on the future for US aid spending.

"Gates is a huge liar," Musk said in reply to a tweet on his X social media platform that featured an interview with Gates warning about US aid cuts.

Musk's spokespeople were not immediately available for comment.

Gates said that despite his foundation's deep pockets, progress would not be possible without government support.

"There are too many urgent problems to solve for me to hold onto resources that could be used to help people," Gates wrote in a post on his website. "It's unclear whether the world's richest countries will continue to stand up for its poorest people."

He praised the response to aid cuts in Africa, where some governments have

reallocated budgets, but said that, as an example, polio would not be eradicated without US funding.

Gates made the announcement on the foundation's 25th anniversary.

He set up the organisation with his then-wife Melinda French Gates in 2000, and they were later joined by billionaire investor Warren Buffett.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which had more than \$71bn in assets at the end of 2023, has been credited with helping to reshape the world of global public health.

It lists five offices throughout Africa, in addition to locations in the United States, Europe, China, India and the Middle East.

Since inception, the foundation has given away \$100bn, helping to save millions of lives and backing initiatives like the vaccine group Gavi and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

It will close after it spends around 99% of Gates' personal fortune, he said.

The founders originally expected the foundation to wrap up in the decades after their deaths.

Gates, whose fortune is currently valued at around \$108bn, expects the foundation to spend around \$200bn by 2045, with the final figure dependent on markets and inflation.

The foundation has faced criticism for



its outsized power and influence in the field without the requisite accountability, including at the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Gates himself was also subject to conspiracy theories, particularly during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

He has spoken to Trump several times in recent months, and twice since the president took office on January 20, he told Reuters yesterday, on the importance of continued investment in global health.

"The world does have values. That's what my parents taught me," Gates told Reuters.

US cardinal elected Pope Leo

Reuters/AFP
Vatican City

Cardinal Robert Prevost, a little known missionary from Chicago, has been elected in a surprise choice to be the new leader of the Catholic Church, becoming the first US Pope and taking the name Leo XIV.

Pope Leo appeared on the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica after white smoke had billowed from a chimney atop the Sistine Chapel signifying the 133 cardinal electors had chosen a new leader for the 1.4bn-member Catholic Church.

"To all people, wherever they are, to all peoples, to the whole Earth, peace be with you," a smiling Leo told the crowd in fluent Italian. "Help us, and each other, to build bridges through dialogue, through encounter, to come together as one people, always in peace."

"We still keep in our ears that weak, but always courageous, voice of Pope Francis blessing Rome," he said, referring to the ailing Argentine's Easter Sunday address, a day before his death. "We must seek together how to be a missionary church, a church that builds bridges, which hold dialogues, which is always open."

He also spoke in Spanish during his brief address but did not say anything in English.

Prevost, 69 and originally from Chicago, has spent most of his career as a missionary in Peru and has dual Peruvian nationality.

He became a cardinal only in 2023. He has given few media interviews and rarely speaks in public.

President Donald Trump swiftly congratulated Prevost on becoming the first US Pope.

Prevost becomes the 267th Catholic Pope after the death last month of Pope Francis, who was the first Latin American Pope and had led the Catholic Church for 12 years.

Francis had widely sought to open the staid institution up to the modern world, enacting a range of reforms and allowing debate on



Newly elected Pope Leo XIV, Cardinal Robert Prevost of the United States, appears on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica. - Reuters

divisive issues such as women's ordination and better inclusion of gender minorities.

Leo thanked Francis in his speech and repeated his predecessor's call for a church that is engaged with the modern world and "is always looking for peace, charity and being close to people, especially those who are suffering".

He had not been seen as a front-runner and there was a brief moment of silence when his name was announced to the packed St Peter's Square, before people started to clap and cheer.

There were euphoric scenes as one priest sat on someone's shoulders waving a Brazilian flag and another lifted a heavy crucifix into the air in jubilation.

"Habemus papam, woooo!" howled Bruna Hodara, 41, from Brazil, echoing the words to be spoken on the balcony as the new pope is introduced.

She, like others, recorded the historic moment on her phone, as others waved flags and cried out "Viva Il Papa!" - "Long live the pope!" in Italian.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to be here to see the pope. It's really special ... I'm excited!" said Florian Fried, a 15-year-old from Munich, in Germany.

"I'm just thrilled. I hope this

can bring to America a more loving community. I think there's a lot of hate in America. I think there's a lot of racism. I have experienced it," said Lailah Brown, 28, from Seattle, Washington, a black American. "I hope America does not embarrass the Pope."

"It's an amazing feeling," said an elated Joseph Brian, a 39-year-old chef from Belfast in Northern Ireland, who came with his mother to Rome for the spectacle.

"I'm not an overly religious person but, being here with all these people just blew me away," he told AFP as people around him jumped up and down in excitement.

Ahead of the conclave, some cardinals called for continuity with Francis's vision of greater openness and reform, while others said they wanted to turn back the clock and embrace old traditions.

Unlike Francis, who spurned much of the trappings of the papacy from the day he was elected in 2013, Prevost wore a traditional red papal garment over his white cassock.

A crowd of clergy and staff members at Chicago's Catholic Theological Union erupted in a joyful cheer as Pope Leo walked out onto the Vatican balcony, some four decades after he graduated from the South Side school.

It was an "explosion of excitement and cheers that went up in the room ... many of us were just simply incredulous and just couldn't even find words to express our delight, our pride," said Sister Barbara Reid, president of the theology school.

Pope Leo graduated from the school in 1982 with a master's degree.

Reid called Leo intellectually brilliant, saying that he has an extraordinarily compassionate heart.

"It's an unusual blend that makes him a leader who can think critically, but listens to the cries of the poorest, and always has in mind those who are most needy," she said.

The last pope to take the name Leo led the church from 1878-1903.

Leo XIII was known for his devoted focus to social justice issues, and is often credited with laying the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was among world leaders congratulating the new Pope.

"May his pontificate contribute to strengthening dialogue and the defence of human rights in a world in need of hope and unity," Sanchez said.

Prevost has attracted interest from his peers because of his quiet style and support for Francis, especially his commitment to social justice issues.

Prevost served as a bishop in Chiclayo, in northwestern Peru, from 2015 to 2023.

Francis brought him to Rome that year to head the Vatican office in charge of choosing which priests should serve as Catholic bishops across the globe, meaning he has had a hand in selecting many of the world's bishops.

"Most of us thought a US cardinal would never become pope, but Prevost got strong support from cardinals from Latin America where he worked for 20 years," said Rev Thomas Reese, a Jesuit commentator who has covered the Vatican for decades. "He is multilingual and has a reputation as a listener."

Pakistan 'shot down 25 drones' from India

Reuters
Lahore

Pakistan said yesterday that it shot down 25 drones from India in its airspace while India said it "neutralised" Pakistan's attempts to strike military targets with drones and missiles, as fighting spread between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

The latest exchanges came a day after India said it hit "terrorist infrastructure" in Pakistan in the early hours of Wednesday - two weeks after it accused the Islamic nation of involvement in an attack in Indian Kashmir in which 26 people were killed.

Islamabad had denied the accusation and vowed to retaliate to the missile strikes, also saying it shot down five Indian aircraft.

The Indian embassy in Beijing termed reports of fighter jets being shot down as "misinformation".

Pakistan shot down 25 Israeli-made drones from India at multiple locations, including the two largest cities of Karachi and Lahore, and their debris is being collected, Pakistan military spokesperson Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said.

One drone was also shot down over the garrison city of Rawalpindi, home to the Pakistan army's heavily fortified headquarters, he said.

One drone hit a military target near Lahore and four personnel of the Pakistan army were injured in this attack, Chaudhry said.

"Indian drones continue to be sent into Pakistan airspace ... (India) will continue to pay dearly for this naked aggression," he said.

The Indian defence ministry said Pakistan attempted to engage a number of military targets in northern and western India on Wednesday night and early on Thursday and they were "neutralised" by Indian air defence systems.

In response, Indian forces targeted air defence radars and systems at a number of locations in Pakistan, it said in a statement, adding that the "Indian response has been in the same domain with the same intensity as Pakistan".

Pakistan says at least 31 of its civilians were killed and about 50 wounded in Wednesday's strikes and in cross-border shelling across the frontier in Kashmir that followed, while India says 13 of its civilians died and 59 were wounded.

Although Pakistan's federal government has pledged to respond to India's strikes, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told the *New York Times* on Wednesday that Pakistan was ready to de-escalate.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said New Delhi did not intend to escalate the situation.

Rubio urges India and Pakistan to de-escalate, backs direct dialogue

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio urged de-escalation and expressed support for direct dialogue in separate calls with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif yesterday, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said.

Fears have grown that the worst confrontation in two decades in the conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours could escalate after India on Wednesday struck what it said was "terrorist infrastructure" in Pakistan and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir in retaliation for a deadly attack in Indian Kashmir on April 22 that New Delhi has blamed on Islamabad.

Rubio, in both phone calls, "emphasised the need for immediate de-escalation", Bruce said in readouts of the calls. "He expressed US support for direct dialogue between India and Pakistan and encouraged continued efforts to improve communications." Showing the delicate balancing act of Rubio's diplomacy, the two State Department spokespersons' readouts, sent out within a minute of each other, also included tailored messages for each side.

To Jaishankar, Rubio reaffirmed his commitment to work with India in the fight against terrorism, the spokesperson said.

He expressed sorrow to Sharif for the reported loss of civilian lives in the current conflict between the two neighbouring countries. - Reuters

Ukraine lawmakers vote to ratify minerals deal with US

AFP
Kyiv

Ukraine's parliament voted yesterday to ratify a long-awaited minerals deal with the United States, an agreement that Kyiv hopes will pave the way for future military support from Washington.

The deal, signed last week, will see Washing-

ton and Kyiv jointly develop Ukraine's natural resources and minerals.

Kyiv and Washington planned to sign the agreement in February, but a White House clash between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky derailed the talks.

The deal does not include any security guarantees from Washington, but the United States argues boosting its business interests in Ukraine

will itself act as a bulwark against Russia, which invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

The ratification of the deal was approved by 338 out of 347 lawmakers, with none voting against.

Trump initially described the accord as "money back" for the wartime aid Ukraine received under his predecessor Joe Biden, but Kyiv says it has since been renegotiated to ensure "equal" benefits for both sides.

Acting FEMA chief ousted

Cameron Hamilton, the acting director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has been ousted from his position by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, a day after he told lawmakers in a hearing that he didn't support eliminating his agency.

Hamilton, a former Navy SEAL who was tapped to lead the FEMA in January at the start of President Donald Trump's second term, will be replaced by David Richardson, a senior official at the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the agency.

Trump and Noem have both have suggested eliminating the FEMA entirely.

Hamilton's ouster comes at a time when the FEMA is typically helping states and local communities prepare for the onset of hurricane season, which starts on June 1. - Reuters

German intelligence suspends AfD 'extremist' label amid appeal

AFP
Cologne

Germany's domestic intelligence service will temporarily suspend its classification of the far-right AfD party as a "right-wing extremist" group pending a legal appeal, a court said yesterday.

The BfV agency last week announced it was giving the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) the label after a lengthy investigation, accusing it of seeking to undermine the country's democracy.

However the AfD - which came second in February elections, behind only new Chancellor Friedrich Merz's conservatives - said that the move was politically motivated and lodged a legal challenge.

The Cologne court said the BfV spy agency will no longer refer to the AfD as a "confirmed right-wing extremist" organisation in public and remove a press release about the designation from its website.

The BfV was taking such steps without admitting any legal liability, a court statement added, pointing out that the agency was waiting for the outcome of the AfD's challenge.

AfD leaders Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla said in a statement posted on X that the party had scored "a partial success".

"This is an important first step to us being fully in the clear and countering accusations of right-wing extremism," they added.

Justifying its decision to label the party "extremist", the BfV had accused leading AfD members of making "xenophobic" and "anti-Muslim statements".

The move made it easier for spies to monitor the party and renewed calls for it to be banned, although parliament would need to vote on the matter and new

Chancellor Friedrich Merz has reacted coolly to such suggestions.

According to a report in news outlet *Der Spiegel*, the BfV report on the AfD found incriminating material on 353 members, including at the highest levels of the party, and said that the party distinguishes between so-called "real", ethnic Germans and those who merely have a German passport.

The Cologne court has jurisdiction over the matter since the BfV is based there.

In 2022, it backed the BfV's classification of the AfD as "suspected right-wing extremist".

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

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

GULF TIMES

Trump and the triumph of the technolords

Neoliberalism was neither new nor particularly liberal when it prevailed 50 years ago. Its great advantage was its sharp deviation from classical liberalism. Even though it paid tribute to liberal thinkers, neoliberalism shared neither their method nor their concept of the market. Today, we are on the cusp of another, equally profound, ideological innovation.

Unlike Adam Smith or John Stuart Mill, neoliberals felt no responsibility to demonstrate, theoretically or empirically, under what circumstances the unfettered market could be relied upon to transmute private profit-seeking into collective prosperity. The invisible hand was divine, infallible. Even when the market failed, they claimed, any attempt to correct it through some collective agency was doomed to fail more horribly. It was an attitude that suited Wall Street to a tee.

The 1970s craved such doctrinal indifference to actual evidence about the consequences of fully deregulating financial markets. Once America had become a deficit country and President Richard Nixon delivered his shock by decoupling the dollar from gold in 1971, successive administrations chose to enhance US global hegemony by boosting – not curtailing – the country’s fiscal and trade deficits.

Predictably, Wall Street banks were assigned the crucial role of recycling (into US Treasuries, equities, and real estate) the dollars foreign exporters were raking in as a result of America’s deficit-fuelled demand for their wares. But, to do this – to become the hub of this audacious global surplus recycling scheme – the bankers had to be liberated from regulatory restraint, which meant that legislators and a public taught, since 1929, to fear an out-of-control Wall Street, had to be re-educated. Neoliberalism’s fundamentalist orthodoxy exalting the sanctity of deregulated markets, reflected in the growing influence of the “law and economics” movement, fulfilled that requirement perfectly.

Today, the ascendancy of a new form of capital needs its own ideology to be fully liberated

Today, the ascendancy of a new form of capital – cloud capital, or networked algorithmic machines that furnish its owners’ remarkable powers to modify our behaviour – needs its own ideology to be fully liberated. Experts have called this new system technofeudalism – a mode of production and distribution which, powered by cloud capital, is replacing markets with cloud fiefs (like Amazon) and capitalist profits with cloud rents.

Just as Wall Street financiers needed neoliberalism after the Nixon shock, this new ideology must support cloud capital’s expanding domain in three ways.

First, it must legitimise the colonisation of human endeavour. Beginning with the relaxation of rules governing, say, self-driving vehicles and AI-driven medical and legal services, the ideology must justify the limitless replacement of fallible, recalcitrant humans by cloud capital-driven machines in every realm – including work that gives us pleasure (such as translating poetry) or that we should want to perform (such as raising children). The deeper cloud capital can penetrate tasks hitherto carried out by humans, the greater the cloud rents flowing to the technofeudal class.

Second, the new ideology must legitimise the colonisation of state institutions, especially the privatisation of public data through its transfer to Big Tech’s cloud capital. It must, for example, justify Musk’s use of his Department of Government Efficiency to hook his cloud-capital systems into various federal agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service, or the hard-wiring by Thiel’s defence firm Palantir and Google of their interfaces into the Pentagon, making their cloud capital indispensable to the military-industrial complex.

Third, it must legitimise the colonisation of Wall Street. Zuckerberg was the first technofeudalist to try to create his own digital currency, Libra. Wall Street foiled him. But then Musk’s purchase of Twitter, now X, evolved into a bolder attempt to create an “Everything App” that challenges Wall Street’s payments monopoly. Encouraged by President Donald Trump’s executive order directing the Federal Reserve to create a strategic crypto reserve, Big Tech, seeking to provide unfettered cloud finance outside traditional financial markets, needs more than ever to justify the merger of its cloud capital with financial services.

This new ideology is already here. An expert has called it technlordism, a mutation of transhumanism – a creed that advocates blurring the lines between organic and synthetic until augmented humans achieve genuine freedom, or even immortality. Just as neoliberalism borrowed from classical liberalism but usurped it by adding a divinity (the infallible market), technlordism makes itself useful to cloud capital’s three-pronged colonisation drive by replacing the neoliberal Homo Economicus with an amorphous “HumAIn” (a human-AI continuum).

The repercussions of the societal transformation accelerated by technlordism are breathtaking. They include unprecedented macroeconomic instability (as cloud rents decimate aggregate demand), the demise of democracy, even as an ideal (a position advocated by Thiel, an early prophet of technlordism), and the end of universities (replaced by personalised AI-driven augmentations). — Project Syndicate

To Advertise
gtadv@gulf-times.com

Display
44466621
44418811

Classified
44466609
gtcad@gulf-times.com

Subscription
circulation@gulf-times.com



Qatar’s green innovation: Umm Al Seneem Park and the future of public spaces

By Ali Hamad al-Marri

Qatar, a nation renowned for its ambitious growth and development, has always sought to innovate in every aspect of urban life. One area where this vision is particularly evident is in the creation of its public parks – vast green spaces designed to enhance the quality of life for both residents and visitors. These parks not only provide a peaceful escape from the demands of city living but also foster community interaction, environmental awareness, and overall well-being.

Among these green spaces, Umm Al Seneem Park is located in Doha and covers an expansive 130,000 square metres. What sets it apart is its advanced cooling technology, which makes it possible for visitors to enjoy a comfortable outdoor experience, even during Qatar’s most intense summer months. The park’s air-conditioned pathways and jogging tracks provide a respite from the searing heat, enabling families, fitness enthusiasts, and nature lovers to engage in outdoor activities year-round.

But Umm Al Seneem Park’s innovation doesn’t stop with its cooling system. The park is also a model of sustainability, integrating several eco-friendly elements into its design. Energy-efficient lighting, water-saving irrigation systems, and the use of native, drought-resistant plants help reduce the park’s environmental footprint. These initiatives not only preserve Qatar’s natural resources but also contribute to the promotion of environmental awareness among visitors.

In addition to its technological innovations, Umm Al Seneem Park is a versatile space designed to accommodate a variety of



Children playing football at the Umm Al Seneem Park.



activities. With ample green areas for picnics, playgrounds for children, and open spaces for sports and fitness, the park offers something for everyone. It is a place where families can gather, friends can socialise, and individuals can engage in recreational activities, all while enjoying the beauty of the outdoors. The park’s layout encourages movement and interaction.

Umm Al Seneem Park is part of Qatar’s broader commitment to creating public spaces that harmonise with the urban environment while preserving the country’s cultural and ecological heritage.

Other parks such as Aspire Park and Al Bidda Park are also integral

to Qatar’s strategy of urban greening, offering residents and visitors not only places of beauty but also a sense of well-being and connection to nature. Each of these parks incorporates features that promote outdoor living and community interaction.

Qatar’s investment in parks and green spaces is a reflection of the nation’s long-term vision for urban development. These spaces are not just recreational areas but are part of a larger effort to promote sustainability, improve public health, and enhance the quality of life for residents. The government’s investment in Umm Al Seneem Park and other green spaces is a demonstration of the country’s commitment to shaping a sustainable future.

Looking to the future, Qatar’s approach to public spaces will continue to evolve as the country strives to create more sustainable, innovative, and accessible urban environments. Umm Al Seneem Park is a testament to the country’s ability to integrate cutting-edge technology with green space design, making it a model for other cities worldwide.

The park demonstrates how urban spaces can be used to create a healthier, more sustainable future, blending the natural world with modern technology.

In conclusion, Umm Al Seneem Park is a prime example of Qatar’s commitment to innovative, sustainable urban development. By combining advanced cooling technologies with ecological responsibility, Qatar has set a global standard for public spaces.

This park, along with others in the country, is redefining the way we think about green spaces, creating environments that are not only beautiful and functional but also environmentally sustainable.





Preparing for Haj and Umrah

Every year, millions of Muslims make the journey of their lifetime. They come from all over the world for the sole purpose of fulfilling one of Allah's greatest commandments to mankind – the Haj.

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that “The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), was asked, ‘Which is the best deed?’ He said: ‘To believe in Allah and His Messenger.’ He was then asked, ‘Which is the next (good deed)?’ He said: ‘To participate in Jihad in Allah's cause.’ He was then asked, ‘Which is the next?’ He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: ‘To perform an accepted Haj.’ [Al-Bukhari]

For over 1,400 years, believers have been making Haj to the House of Allah in Makkah. It is an obligation for each and every Muslim to perform Haj at least once in his/her lifetime if he is physically and financially able.

Pre-Haj preparations

Due to the importance of Haj, preparations for it should not be taken lightly. Besides planning the actually logistics of the trip, the Muslim needs to prepare Islamically, physically, mentally, and financially for this great act of worship.

Islamically, one of the most important preparations for this journey is acquiring the necessary knowledge for performing the rituals of Haj and ‘Umrah



correctly and in accordance to the Sunnah of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*.

This means studying and learning about Islam, acquiring a high degree of Eemaan (faith) in order to deal with the emotional and physical demands of Haj, and learning correctly the actual religious rituals and requirements from the beginning to the end of Haj and ‘Umrah.

Studying and learning about the Haj can be accomplished in a variety

of fashions, from reading books on the subject or using computer programmes which utilise a multimedia format, to actually taking classes offered by Islamic centres on the rituals of Haj and ‘Umrah. Furthermore, many travel groups that specialise in Haj and ‘Umrah trips offer Haj preparation classes as well as scholars and students of knowledge that help those going for Haj perform the rituals of Haj and ‘Umrah correctly.

In addition, it is important to

mention that spiritually preparing for Haj and ‘Umrah is also a lesson on how to follow the footsteps of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, who taught the Companions may Allah be pleased with them – a lesson that can be transformed into other acts of worship. Preparing for Haj is a spiritual experience with a period of self-reflection and a lesson in piety and humility.

The pilgrim must focus on his sole intention of performing Haj.

That it is solely for the pleasure of Allah and in accordance to His Commandment regarding this act of worship. The believer also needs to resolve any conflicts or differences between him and others and seek forgiveness for any acts of transgression. This stage of preparation should take place long before the actual departure for Haj.

Other preparations that should be planned long before the actual trip are financial in nature. Simply, going to Haj costs money. Furthermore the pilgrim must pay off any old debts (this includes any type of loans), household bills, and leave enough money to pay any living expenses likely that other members of his family not making Haj might need. Finally it is important to complete one's will (*wasiiyyah*) before departing on Haj.

Another important step in preparing for Haj is the need to prepare physically for the event. Not only is Haj a spiritual event, it also requires a lot of physical stamina from the participant. Haj is not a picnic! Completing the rites of Haj includes a lot of walking, mixing with many people, living in high temperatures (during summer), and exerting a great deal of effort. Another important step in preparing physically for Haj is to make sure you are medically fit for the trip. Individuals with chronic health issues need to see their primary care physician in order to discuss any medical risks that need to be addressed prior to their Haj experience.

Another recommendation is that these individuals also travel with a healthy caretaker in case any problems might arise during the actual Haj. In addition, pilgrims must have the necessary vaccinations required by the Saudi Government. Because of these issues, it is also important to emphasise that one should complete Haj and ‘Umrah as soon as one is able to both physically and financially. Some people wait until they are old to go for Haj.

This is wrong and makes Haj more difficult than necessary for the participant and in many cases for his traveling companions. Performing Haj as soon as possible corresponds to the Hadeeth narrated by Abdullaah Ibn Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: “The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: ‘He who intended to perform Haj should hasten to do so.’” [Abu Daawood]

The last pre-logistic preparation centres on preparing mentally for Haj. This includes learning and accepting that the Haj experience includes frustration, intense desert heat (during summer), and various differences in culture and food. The pilgrim can expect to stand in long lines, be shoved and pushed by others while completing the necessary rituals, and be in an uncomfortable close proximity to members of the opposite sex.

One purpose of Haj is for the individual to be tested. The individual will be tested on physical, emotional, and spiritual levels.

At the gates of Paradise

Every now and then, the believer looks forward to something that raises his enthusiasm, motivates him to do righteous deeds, and strengthens the steadfastness in his heart. The Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said that Allah The Almighty Says: “I have prepared for My righteous slaves what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and the mind of no man has conceived.” (Then Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said) If you wish, recite: {And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes as reward for what they used to do.} [Qur'an 32:17] [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Allah The Almighty informed us of Paradise to make us long for it. He manifested some of its bliss and concealed some of it as a sort of encouragement and stimulation. Therefore, the bliss of Paradise, no matter how it is described, cannot be grasped by the human mind, because it contains goodness that never comes to man's mind or is known to anybody.

But before we begin, we must stop and ask ourselves some questions: Do we long to enter Paradise? Is the presence of *Houris*, food, and drink the only things we know about Paradise? Or do we know more details?

Dear reader, if you want to change and make Paradise your premier goal, join us on this blessed journey, but first make sure to fasten your concentration belt, dispose of your heedlessness, and take good companions along with you. These are the conditions of the takeoff on our journey. Let us go!

Dear reader, come and knock on the gates of Paradise, to fly with our mind in the Kingdom of Allah The Almighty and the secrets He deposited in it. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {When they reach it while its gates have been opened.} [Qur'an 39:73]

Dear reader, think why Allah The Almighty Says in this verse (what means): {and its gates have been opened.} [Qur'an 39:73] and when He talked about Hell He Says (what means): {its gates are opened.} [Qur'an 39:70]

Actually, it is a wonderful note taken by the great Imam Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him. Read, what this pious scholar said,

Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {But those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until, when they reach it and its gates have been opened...} [Qur'an 39:73] and while speaking of Hell, Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {When they reach it, its gates are opened.} [Qur'an 39:70] without using a conjunction. This is linguistically more eloquent in both cases.

That is because the angels are driving its denizens to Hell while its gates are closed. When they arrive at Hell, its gates will open up in their faces and punishment will suddenly surprise them. As they enter Hell, the gates will open without them noticing. This usually happens with the penalty which is made contingent on something that takes place immediately after that condition. Hell is the abode of humiliation and disgrace, so permission is not sought for its denizens, nor are its keepers asked to allow them to enter.

Paradise, however, is the abode prepared by Allah The Almighty; the abode of dignity where His favourites and allies dwell. As people reach Paradise,



they will find its gates closed, so they earnestly implore its Owner to open them. Also, they will intercede to Him by His most resolute messengers, but all of them will withdraw until they are guided to go to the final and master of them. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, will say: “I am entitled to that,” and thus, will prostrate under the Throne to his Lord, supplicating Him as much as He wills.

Then, permission will be given for him to raise his head and express his request. He will ask Allah The Almighty to open the gates of Paradise, and his request will be accepted. Allah The Almighty will order that the gates of Paradise be opened to show its greatness and the high status and honour of His Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, in His Sight. This is more effective and greater in showing the perfection of the blessing and the occurrence of joy and happiness than otherwise. This prevents the ignorant man from thinking that it is like an inn for whoever wants to enter. The Paradise of Allah is precious and there are obstacles, wilderness and dangers that must be faced first in order to attain it.

See what excitement the believers will encounter on the Day of Resurrection! Imagine how they will feel – may Allah make you and us among the inhabitants of Paradise. After the horrors and hardships the believers saw befalling the sinners on the Day of Judgment and, before that, the trials and desires they patiently resisted in this life, their longing to see the bliss that Allah The Almighty has prepared for them becomes enormously great.

The greater their longing, the greater the enjoyment of the meeting will be. Thus, Allah The Almighty wanted to increase the longing of the believers at the highest level by letting them stand in front of the gates of Paradise for a period of time while thoughts conflict in their minds and they feel that they are at a distance of two bow lengths or nearer from seeing what Allah The Almighty promised them in this life. After the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, intercedes with his Lord, Allah The Almighty will give him permission to open the gates of Paradise. The Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu*

‘alaihi wa sallam, said: “The distance between two shutters in Paradise equals the distance of a forty-year walk. People throng there like camels that throng to drink water after five days of thirst.” [As-Silsilah As-Saheehah by Al-Albaani]

Can you imagine the width of the gate? It is like a distance of a forty-year walk, i.e. it is impossible to see the end of it, where people crowd as if one has brought camels to water after five days of thirst. Imagine how they will run. Similarly, this will be the state of the people of Paradise in their longing for it. After entering Paradise, its gate will not be shut behind you. Do you know why? Imam Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, will tell you that. He said,

Reflect on the Saying of Allah The Almighty (which means): {Gardens of perpetual residence, whose doors will be opened to them. Reclining within them, they will call therein for abundant fruit and drink.} [Qur'an 38:50-51] and see the verses carrying an elegant meaning. That is when they enter Paradise, its gates will not be closed behind them, but they will remain open. Also, keeping the gates open implies that they go and return freely, and dwell in Paradise and that the angels enter upon them every time with gifts and graciousness from their Lord and what brings them happiness at all times. It is also an indication that Paradise is an abode of security where its inhabitants do not need to close the gates as they needed to do so in this life.

Now, we will leave you to choose which gate you would like to enter Paradise through. The Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said:

Whoever performs a couple of acts of voluntary worship of the same type or spends two things for the Sake of Allah, will be called from the gates of Paradise: O slave of Allah, here is prosperity. He will enter Paradise from the Gate of Prayer if he observed voluntary prayer as his favoured act of worship; from the Gate of Jihad if he was a Mujahid and Jihad was his favoured act of worship; and from the Gate of Charity if he gave voluntary charity as his favoured act of worship; from the Gate of Ar-Rayyaan if he observed voluntary fasting as his favoured act of worship.”

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “O Messenger of Allah! Those who are called from these gates will stand in need of nothing. Will anybody be called from all of those gates?” The Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, replied: “Yes, and I hope that you will be one of them.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Now, choose the gate you wish to access Paradise from, and how excellent if you will be a companion of Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, on the Day of Judgment!

Dear reader do you see the extent to which Allah The Almighty prepared Paradise for His righteous slaves and how He made them long for it before they enter? Has your heart not been softened, dear brother? Do you not long to enter Paradise and experience this bliss?

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



Practical steps towards sincere repentance

Most people are aware of the conditions people must fulfil before their repentance is accepted, namely giving up the sin, regretting the sin, and being determined never to commit it again.

However, in this article we will highlight some practical steps people should follow in order to help achieve sincere repentance. Let us go through these practical steps together with the permission of Allah, The Almighty:

First: Counting all the sins that you have committed since adulthood until the present time in writing.

This is an introduction to repenting for all these sins, because when a person considers all its sins, it will be humble and tend to repent as soon as possible. Here is a list of the categories of sins to help you remember your past sins:

- Sins of the body such as the tongue (backbiting, tale-bearing, lying, and ridiculing others); the eyes (looking at what is prohibited), ears, hands, feet and private parts.

- Sins of the hearts, such as arrogance, envy, aggression, self-conceit, and so on.

- Negligence in performing your duties towards one's parents, relatives and negligence regarding the other duties such as enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, as well as *Da'wah* (calling to Islam).

- Negligence in the acts of worship like delaying the prayer after its due time.

Secondly: Try to count the blessings of Allah upon you in writing.

You should keep counting these blessings until you realise how negligent you are towards the rights of Allah, The Almighty, and continue counting until you despair of counting. Allah, The Exalted, Says (what means): {And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favour of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, humankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful.} [Qur'an 14:34]

Then, you should make a comparison between the blessings that Allah, The Almighty, sends down to you, and your misdeeds that are being sent to Him in return. In this case, you will not be able to resist your tears, your heart will be soft and you will say: “I acknowledge the favours that You have bestowed upon me, and I confess my sins. Pardon me, for none but You has the power to pardon.” [Al-Bukhari]

When you shed tears and feel remorse, you should then move to the third step.

Thirdly: Repentance Prayer

After deserting the sin, you should immediately implement the advice of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), who said: “Whenever one commits a sin, and then performs ablution perfectly, and prays two *Rak'ahs* (units of prayer) after which he seeks the forgiveness of Allah, He will forgive him.” [Al-Albaani: Saheeh]

Then, you should determine that you would never return to sins. In this way, you will live the best day of your life since your birth.

Fourthly: Keep away from bad friends and evil companions.

Sever your relationship with them, because they will prevent you from returning to your Lord. If you succeed in getting rid of them, then this is a great sign that Allah, The Almighty, has accepted your repentance.

Fifthly: You should have a daily programme of acts of worship.

This programme aims at helping you make up for what you missed and compensate your negligence towards the rights of Allah, The Almighty. This programme should include reading parts of the Qur'an, Thikr (words of remembrance) reported from the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, night prayer and fasting. However, the most important thing is that this programme should be gradual and realistic.

Sixthly: You should attend a religious lecture in a mosque once a week on a regular basis.

This step aims at strengthening your relationship with your Lord and the righteous people who are your companions on the road to faith. Accompany those righteous people and never keep away from them.

Finally remember that you are in need of the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and that without Him, you are impoverished in every way.

Remember that you have wronged yourself, so be humble in front of your Lord. Listen to the teacher, Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, who was an excellent example of humble servitude in front of Allah, The Almighty. While referring to some signs of sincere repentance, he said:

“The prerequisites of sound repentance include a special kind of humility in one's heart that does not resemble any other feeling, because it only occurs to the sinful slave. Such a feeling cannot be obtained through hunger, or mere love; rather, it is a feeling beyond all of this. It breaks the heart completely, grabs it and throws it humbly in front of the Lord. There is nothing dearer to Allah, The Almighty, than this feeling, humility and submission on the part of His slave.”

How sweet the words of the slave in this state are when he says:

I ask You by Your Grandeur and my humility to have mercy upon me....

I entreat You by Your strength and my weakness, by Your richness and my poverty to pardon me....

Here I am, the wrongful and sinful slave, before You... You have many slaves other than me, but I have no Lord but You...

I have no shelter other than with You, as there is no escape from You, except to You....

I ask and entreat You, as I am humble, poor, frightened and blind...

I ask You while I am surrendering completely to You, and weeping out of fear of You.... to pardon me...

Such a feeling is a sign of accepted repentance, so, if you lack this feeling, accuse your sincerity and correct your repentance.

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



His Highness the Amir's Consort Her Highness Sheikhha Jowaher bint Hamad bin Suhaim al-Thani and other dignitaries at the graduation of the 48th batch of distinguished female students of the Class of 2025 yesterday.

Left: His Highness the Amir's Consort Her Highness Sheikhha Jowaher bint Hamad bin Suhaim al-Thani honouring a graduate.



Sheikha Jowaher patronises QU graduation

From Page 1

"Furthermore, the university places significant emphasis on its social responsibility," Dr al-Ansari said. "This is reflected in various initiatives that include strengthening co-ordination, offering scientific consultations, and providing specialised training to develop national capabilities."

"The university also works to raise cultural and societal awareness, safeguard Qatari heritage, and uphold Islamic and national values through collaboration with local entities such as Qatar Museums, the Ministry of Social Development and Family, the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, and many other local community institutions," he added.

Dr al-Ansari congratulated the graduates and said: "I urge you to remain committed to lifelong learning, to continuously refine your skills, and to seek wisdom from those who came before you."

"Define your goals clearly, both personal and professional, and pursue them with excellence and resolve," he continued. "Always remember that true success lies in finding balance between your ambitions and your well-being, for the progress of our society depends on the meaningful contributions of each one of you."

"On this occasion, I also offer my sincere congratulations and appreciation to the respected parents, thanking them for their support and encouragement of their daughters throughout their university journey," Dr al-Ansari said.

"I also express my deep gratitude and appreciation to my colleagues – faculty members, staff, and all university employees – for their dedication and efforts in supporting our students and advancing the university's mission to prepare a distinguished generation capable of contributing effectively to building a sustainable future for our beloved nation," he added. "I pray to Allah (SWT) to grant you all success and guidance."

A speech delivered by Manar al-Yafei, a graduate of the College of Education, emphasised the significance of the occasion.

"Since the day our university opened its doors fifty some years ago, it has nurtured minds that have shaped the nation and hearts driven by unwavering dedication," al-Yafei said. "And today, we – the Class of 2025 – stand as a testament to perseverance, patience, and the firm belief that every determined woman will find her place."

"The path we walked was far from easy," she added. "It was marked not just by academic challenges, but by tests of will, moments of doubt, and trials that demanded resolve – measured not in grades, but in resilience, sincerity of purpose, and faith."

Noora Abdulrahman Laram, a graduate of the College of Law, delivered the emcee's address at the ceremony.

"My fellow graduates, on this special day, we stand at the threshold of a new chapter – carrying with us more than just a degree," she said. "We carry the memories of years spent among books and university corridors, years in which we learned that success never comes without effort, and that achievement demands patience."

"We faced challenges that were far from easy, but they built within us an unshakable resolve," Laram added. "We pursued knowledge, driven by our passion and our belief that we are preparing ourselves to serve a country that deserves nothing but the best."

As QU graduates its 48th cohort, the university continues to chronicle a long history spanning decades in which it has heavily contributed to Qatar's development and prosperity, through supplying the labour market with qualified graduates.

The 2025 Graduation Ceremony celebrates all QU graduates across various academic degrees, who have completed their graduation requirements by the end of the following terms: Summer 2024, Fall 2024 and Winter 2025, in addition to those who are expected to graduate by the end of Spring 2025.

A total number of 3,680 male and female graduates celebrate this year as part of the Class of 2025.



QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari addressing the ceremony yesterday.



The graduates celebrate after the ceremony yesterday.