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Talabat

Qatar-US strategic ties strengthen

Qatar Airways signs deal for up to 210 Boeing jets, the biggest in history, as Trump praises Amir as 'A Great Leader'



Amir receives US president



Amir affirms that Qatar and the US enjoy exceptional relations and strong bilateral co-operation, with a shared vision to advance economic, trade, and investment ties for the benefit of both friendly nations

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani led well-wishers to welcome US President Donald Trump upon his arrival at Hamad International Airport yesterday for a two-day state visit to the country. The plane of the US president was escorted by a squadron of Qatari Amiri Air Force aircraft upon entering Qatari airspace. (QNA)

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held a session of official talks with President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, at the Amiri Diwan yesterday.

The talks began with His Highness the Amir welcoming the US president and his accompanying delegation and wishing them a pleasant stay. His Highness expressed his great delight at this historic visit – the first state visit by a US president to Qatar.

His Highness the Amir added the agenda will cover several issues,

Qatar-US ties excellent: Amir

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani confirmed that Qatar and the USA have excellent relations and great bilateral co-operation. His Highness the Amir said in a post on his official account on the X platform that through extraordinary talks with the US President Donald Trump in Doha, they are giving a new impetus to the existing strategic co-operation between the two

countries in various fields. His Highness added that Qatar and the US have excellent relations and great bilateral co-operation, and they look forward together in light of the enormous potential of the two countries to push them to a deeper and more advanced level in the fields of trade, economic and mutual investment, to serve common interests and benefit the two friendly peoples. (QNA)

primarily investment, energy, and military and security co-operation. Stressing the importance of establishing peace in the region,

His Highness the Amir hailed his long-standing acquaintance with the president and his efforts to achieve peace in the region. His



Highness the Amir hailed the president as a man of peace and voiced hopes that their shared aspirations will be attained.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir expressed his happiness that the US will host the FIFA World Cup 2026 and the 2028 Olympic

Games, highlighting the two sides' existing co-operation in this regard. **To Page 16** **Pages 14, 15, 16**

Amir meets Saudi crown prince in Riyadh



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, on the sidelines of the GCC-US Summit, held yesterday at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh. **To Page 16**

Amir holds dinner banquet for US president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held an official dinner banquet in honour of President of the friendly United States of America Donald Trump and the accompanying delegation at Lusail Palace yesterday. During the banquet, His Highness the Amir delivered a speech, in which he welcomed the US President and the accompanying delegation, indicating that relations between the two countries are constantly developing in order to achieve the interests of their two friendly peoples. **To Page 16**



Amir participates in GCC-US summit

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani participated, along with the leaders of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states, and US President Donald Trump, in the GCC-US Summit, held yesterday at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh. The summit was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, along with members of the official delegation. (QNA) **Page 16**

Qatar Airways places largest orders for Boeing aircraft, GE engines

Qatar Airways announced that the national carrier has placed the largest aircraft order in its history with manufacturing partner Boeing.

As part of its strategic fleet growth plan, the landmark order includes up to 210 Boeing wide-body jets – 160 firm and 50 option, which is the largest wide-body order and the largest 787 Dreamliner order in the American



aerospace company's history. Qatar Airways has also signed an agreement with GE Aerospace for more than 400 engines, including 60 GE9X and 260 GEnx engines, with additional options and spares, to power its next-generation Boeing 777-9 and Boeing 787 aircraft – the largest wide-body engine purchase in the history of GE Aerospace.

Qatar Airways Group Chief

Executive Officer Badr Mohammed al-Meer said: "We are happy to announce our agreement with Boeing and our partnership in the largest wide-body aircraft order in Boeing's history and the biggest aircraft order in our history. This is a critical next step for Qatar Airways on our path as we invest in the cleanest, youngest and most efficient fleet in global aviation."

To Page 15 **Business Page 8**



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Qatar to take part in World Health Assembly

Qatar will participate in the meetings of the 78th session of the World Health Assembly to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from May 19-27, and in several meetings and accompanying events.

This include, most notably the meetings of the 62 session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health and its Executive Office on May 18 and 19, and the second strategic dialogue between Qatar and the World Health Organisation (WHO) on May 16.

The Qatari delegation to the meetings is headed by HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim bin Saad al-Mahmoud.

Qatar will also organise an event



HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim bin Saad al-Mahmoud

alongside the World Health Assembly titled "Accelerating the Impact of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030 - Investing in a Continuum of Care and Age-Friendly Environments", on May 19 at the United Nations Palace in Geneva, with broad participation from countries and relevant international organisations.

The World Health Assembly meetings this year are held under the theme "One World for Health" and will address several important issues, including the health situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

The meetings will also discuss

several critical issues under the four pillars of the WHO, which include ensuring that another billion people benefit from universal health coverage, improving health and well-being for another billion people, protecting another billion people from health emergencies, and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation in providing better support to countries. The discussions will focus on strengthening the global health emergency prevention, preparedness, and response framework, non-communicable disease prevention, sustainable financing, antimicrobial resistance, and the WHO's global strategy on health, environment, and climate change.

Katara Publishing House hosts book signing for *Famous Camel Breeds in the Gulf* at DIBF

As part of the 34th edition of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), the Katara Publishing House pavilion hosted a book signing event for author Khaled Mohsen Hazam Andeila's book, *Famous Camel Breeds in the Gulf*.

Director of Katara Publishing House Amira Ahmed al-Muhanadi stated that one of the most engaging aspects of the pavilion is the launch of its latest publications, drawing significant interest from visitors.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), author Khaled Andeila explained that his book documents the most renowned camel breeds in the Gulf, aiming to preserve reliable information about these breeds before it fades away. The research and publication process took approximately three years.

Andeila noted that one of the biggest challenges was the scarcity of written sources on Gulf camel breeds, leading him to rely heavily on oral accounts from elderly experts who possess in-depth knowledge of the subject.

He verified stories by comparing them with the few existing sources available.

Highlighting Qatar's deep-rooted connection with camels, Andeila referenced historical records showing that Qatar was renowned for a particular breed known as "Al Qatariyat".

Historians also noted that Qatar was known for a thriving camel market, trading prized breeds. The nation has long possessed exceptional racing camels that remain significant in Qatari cultural heritage and Nabati poetry.

Andeila emphasised that camel racing in Qatar, both historically and in modern times, holds numerous milestones deserving attention from heritage researchers.

He also revealed that he is currently working on an expanded and revised second edition of his book, following requests from camel enthusiasts in Qatar and neighbouring Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE, where he has received additional insights into both historic and modern camel breeds. - QNA

Nibras Publishing House's vast collection highlighted

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Among the new and popular publishers in Qatar at the 34th edition of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) *Gulf Times* interviewed author and publisher, Mohammed Salaan al-Marri, who stated: "Nibras Publishing and Distribution House is participating in the 34th DIBF with 15 titles over the past year, launching seven of them at this year's edition of the book fair."

"All books are written by Qatari authors, with the exception of one by Palestinian author Faten Azzam. All books focus on knowledge, including novels, scientific books, and specialised media works."

Al-Marri added: "The house has programmes that support digital literature, which includes digital books alongside paper books, but the house also explores literary practices and digital books."



Mohammed Salaan al-Marri. PICTURES: Tawfik Lamari

"Therefore, Nibras House makes all its publications available on its online store for a QR5 subscription for a week. This is intended to promote the global spread of these books, making them easily accessible."

He further said: "The house offers a podcast or bookcast, which are audio summaries of all its publications. As well as the Siraj Cultural Club, a club that brings together young people in Qatar, both



Nibras stand.

citizens and residents, for cultural activities.

"The publishing house also provides the Dar Nibras Literary Fund, which subsidises Qatari authors' publishing costs. This fund is funded by government ministries, contributing to the development and enhancement of the Qatari library with publications by Qatari authors."

Al-Marri commented: "Our most notable publications this

year are by Dr Ahmed Abdulmalik, a Qatari, Gulf, and Arab narrator, with two publications: *When the Sails Leave*, a collection of very short stories, and *Meliora*, a novel about an air hostess.

"We also have a book on children's libraries, their organisation, and their arrangement by Faten Azzam."

A memoir by a Qatari librarian, *Supervisor on an Old Shelf*, summarises professional practices. Another publication, *The Art of Influence*, explores the secrets of media campaigns by Mohammed Salaan al-Marri, the owner of Nibras Publishing. We are participating with these titles.

"We wish our staff success, this is the first participation in the DIBF for Nibras Publishing and Distribution, which has been in operation for a year."

Al-Marri said that the turnout at the publishing house is excellent, and that attendance at the fair in general has increased significantly, which is truly heartening.

Safa al-Sawaf participates in DIBF

The Doha International Book Fair exhibition features several publications by author Safa Ramadan al-Sawaf.

Al-Sawaf explained that her first publication, *Safa's Thoughts* is an emotional book that expresses inner revelations and human experiences lived by any individual in various situations.

The second publication, *When Hearts Speak*, explores human experiences that blend joy and adversity. As hearts speak truthfully about their owners who have faced life's difficulties and learned from its ups and downs. Al-Sawaf emphasised that the book highlights the importance of choosing positivity. The third publication, titled *Messages from Heart to Heart*, features cards containing images of the Qatari environment in three-dimensional designs, along with illustrations by artist Dima Rand al-Sharif.



Safa Ramadan al-Sawaf

New book on local birds

Sheikh Hassan Abdulrahman Hassan al-Abdullah al-Thani signed his book *Twirat Al-Fala in the Qatari Environment* at the Katara Publishing House pavilion during the ongoing Doha International Book Fair in the presence of a notable turnout from readers interested in heritage and the environment.

Ameera Ahmed al-Muhannadi, director of Katara Publishing House, said that *Twirat Al-Fala in the Qatari Environment* is one of the few books about birds in Qatar.

This publication stands out by preserving the original names of the birds as passed down by ancestors, thereby helping to maintain Qatari cultural heritage.

The author explained that his book focuses on "Twirat Al-Fala", a diminutive term referring to small wild birds that are beloved in Qatar for their tasty meat, beautiful colours, or their entertaining and creative movements, such as those of the "Umm Salim bird" and the "Quba' bird" during nesting and mating seasons, or for their reputation of approaching humans without fear.

When asked why he wrote the book, he said: "I noticed that the younger generations were mispronouncing or altering the names of native Qatari birds due to a lack of knowledge. So, I decided to write a book that preserves the traditional names of these beloved birds as passed down from our ancestors without alteration. I only added some basic information about each bird's appearance, feather colours, and general behaviour in nature."

He clarified that the birds mentioned in this book are the most well-known in Qatar, though not all of them, since the country hosts a wide variety of birds,



including peaceful species, birds of prey, wild birds, aquatic birds, and nocturnal birds.

The author promised his readers at the book launch that a future edition will include a larger number of Qatari bird species, possibly titled "The Tree of Qatari Birds", which will catalogue over 400 birds in collaboration with professional young Qatari photographers.

He also revealed that he is working on other books, including one about animals, reptiles, and lizards in the Qatari environment, and a separate book on insects that will feature their traditional names and high-resolution images captured in their natural habitats - images that are sure to amaze readers.



'Alf Talks' discusses influence of history on novel

The "Alf Talks" symposium, organised by the Fadaat Media Group as part of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), hosted writer and researcher Tayseer



Part of the symposium.

Khalaf in a cultural debate presented by writer Hala Kawtharani, at the Cultural Salon at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center.

During the debate, writer Tayseer Khalaf addressed the profound relationship between the novel and history and emphasised that history is not merely a time

period for fictional events, but rather represents a rich field for exploring and understanding reality. It is an essential resource for literary imagination. She explained that the historical novel opens the way for the writer to reconstruct events with an artistic spirit, revealing the unspoken and reviving characters and situations from new perspectives. She also highlighted a number of her famous novels and their most prominent characters, including "Darwin's Finches", explaining that it is based on a real historical event: the Ottoman Empire's participation in the Chicago International Exhibition of 1893. She followed the details of that participation, the cultural representations and political contradictions it entailed, and the way it ended, revealing the multiple dimensions of the Ottoman presence on the global scene at the end of the 19th century.

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Safari's 20th anniversary celebrations begin



Safari, a leading hypermarket group in Doha, began its 20th anniversary celebrations yesterday at a ceremony at Safari Mall in Abu Hamour, a statement said. Safari Group chairman Hamad Dhafar al-Ahbbabi, Safari Group of Companies chairman Aboobacker Madappat, director and general manager Zainulabideen and managing director Shaheen Backer, along with other Safari management representatives and staff who have been working at Safari for

twenty years, launched the '1 Am Twenty' promotion by cutting a cake. Safari, began its victorious journey with the opening of its first hypermarket branch on Salwa Road in Qatar in 2005, followed by Safari Mall in Abu Hamour in 2010, Safari Hypermarket in Al Khor in 2019, Barwa Village in Al Wakra in November, the Industrial Area in December 2022, and Birkat Al Awamer in 2024. Running alongside the '1 Am Twenty' promotion is the

Buy One Get One promotion. Through this offer, customers can buy one and get one free on selected brands of clothing, footwear, and ladies' bags. Safari has also created an opportunity for 10 customers to win Safari gift voucher of QR500 each by taking a photo or selfie in front of the '1 Am Twenty' display, specially set up in all Safari outlets, and posting it to Instagram according to the photo contest rules. The winners will be selected through a draw. In addition, customers can win

one of 25 Toyota Raize cars through the raffle coupon, which can be obtained with every purchase of QR50 from any Safari outlet. The 'Safari Win 25 Toyota Raize Cars Mega Promotion' offers customers the chance to win big. The third draw of the mega promotion will be held at Safari Hypermarket in Barwa Village. Four winners will be selected in each of the first five draws, and five winners will be selected in the final draw, all of whom will receive a Toyota Raize car.



Culture minister launches stamp on Dar Alkutub Al Qatariya reopening

HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani launched on Tuesday a postage stamp marking the reopening of Dar Alkutub Al Qatariya.

The launch at the Ministry of Culture's pavilion at the 34th Doha International Book Fair was attended by HE President of Civil Service and Government Development Bureau Dr Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak al-Khalifa and Syrian Minister of Culture Mohammed Yassin Saleh.

The new issue was a result of co-operation between the Ministry of Culture and Qatar Post to document the history of Qatar's

first national library, which was set up in 1962 as an incubator for culture, arts, literature and heritage in Qatar.

Director General of Dar Alkutub Al Qatariya Ibrahim al-Burahashim al-Sayed said the new issue was inspired by the designs of old stamps and reflects the legacy of classic Qatari stamps.

For his part, Qatar Post Chairperson Faleh Mohammed al-Naeimi said the new stamp documents the history of an institution that holds a special place in the hearts of Qataris as a cultural beacon that has contributed to the dissemination of knowledge for generations. (QNA)



'DIBF provides opportunity to deepen Gulf cultural relations'

Bassam al-Bassam, Director General of the General Department of Publishing at the General Authority for Literature, Publishing and Translation and head of the Saudi delegation to the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), said that the kingdom's participation in the fair affirms the depth of Gulf cultural relations. It embodies the Kingdom's belief in the role of culture as a solid bridge for dialogue and human rapprochement.

In statements to Arabic daily *Arrayah*, al-Bassam said: "The Kingdom is attending this year with a delegation that carries the fragrance of history and the spirit of the present. At a fair where Gulf voices converge around the table of knowledge and books. "Our presence in Doha is not only an extension of our fraternal cultural relations with Qatar, but rather an expression of a



Bassam al-Bassam



The Saudi pavilion.

unified knowledge fabric forged over the centuries through poetry, storytelling, and inspiring narratives."

He added: "This participation comes within the framework of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which has placed culture and creativity at the heart of its development project and made literature and

translation essential tributaries of national identity and effective tools for building bridges of cultural communication."

Al-Bassam emphasised that Saudi literature today carries the heritage of the Arabian Peninsula and is paving its way toward broader horizons of dialogue. Particularly through

translation, as an effective means of creative openness to other cultures and embodying the contemporary image of the Kingdom to the world in multiple languages.

He further said: "In this distinguished Gulf forum, we find in the DIBF a renewed opportunity to say that books are not only a repository of knowledge, but also a message of a nation, the pulse of a society, and the voice of a civilization that believes that dialogue is the noblest path to convergence."

Al-Bassam pointed out that a large number of books have been translated as part of the Tarjam initiative, which aims to translate books from other languages into Arabic. He noted that the Tarjam initiative provides grants and incentives to translators for translating books from Arabic into other languages and vice versa.

Snoonu Powers Digital Transformation at Doha International Book Fair 2025



In a strategic collaboration that embodies the intersection of digital innovation and social responsibility, Snoonu, Qatar's leading national app in technology and smart services, has announced its partnership with the Doha International Book Fair 2025 for the second consecutive year. The initiative aims to deliver a fully integrated digital experience for visitors and book lovers across Qatar.

The fair, which will run until May 17 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, features wide participation from prominent Arab and international publishing houses. Through Snoonu, visitors can browse and order books directly from the app with home delivery, allowing more people across Qatar to enjoy the fair's offerings—even without being there in person.

This collaboration reflects Snoonu's growing role as a trusted national partner in cultural and digital transformation initiatives. It goes beyond e-commerce to support Qatar's broader digitalization goals, showcasing how technology can enhance public engagement with national events.

Building on the positive momentum from last year, Snoonu has enhanced its participation in the 2025 edition of the Doha International Book Fair with a series of thoughtful, community-driven initiatives. Among the highlights is a special guided tour organized in collaboration with Best Buddies and SDG Ambassadors, designed to foster inclusion and provide an engaging cultural experience for children and youth from diverse backgrounds. In addition, Snoonu is surprising app users throughout the fair with daily rewards and exclusive offers to enrich their experience. The company will also honour over 300 volunteers who contributed to the success of the event through a dedicated appreciation ceremony—



celebrating their commitment and invaluable support to one of Qatar's most prominent cultural gatherings.

Visitors can use the Snoonu app's "S-City" section to explore and book all fair-related activities. A dedicated "S-Charge" station at the venue ensures guests can keep their devices powered throughout their visit.

The response from users has been overwhelmingly positive, with praise for the app's ease of use, smooth delivery process, and interactive design. Purchases made through the app also contribute to Snoonu's "Millions Await Giveaway" campaign, offering users a chance to win cash prizes.

Snoonu's involvement at the fair underlines its commitment to enriching Qatar's cultural landscape through innovation. By merging convenience with creativity, Snoonu is helping to turn the Doha International Book Fair into a more inclusive, tech-savvy event—setting a benchmark for smart cultural engagement in the region.

Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar

Healing Hands Essay Competition



We are pleased to announce the annual Healing Hands Essay Competition, which encourages young people to share their views on becoming a doctor in Qatar. Four lucky winners will receive valuable prizes.

Essay topic: The Social Consequences of Obesity

"The Social Consequences of Obesity" is the theme for this year's Healing Hands Competition. Obesity is a significant health issue affecting many people. One adverse social consequence of obesity is body shaming—criticizing a person's physical appearance using negative comments, social media posts, and subtle gestures and behaviors. Body shaming is a serious societal problem that can cause feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and emotional distress, as well as raise the risk of engaging in extreme weight loss measures. Body shaming also poses an obstacle to making sustainable lifestyle changes, with more rapid and aggressive options like anti-obesity medications and bariatric surgery becoming more accessible. In your own words, write an 800-word essay examining the social consequences of obesity in Qatar. Consider why body shaming occurs, how it can be resisted, and what steps can be taken to improve the social and emotional health of individuals with obesity. You could also discuss measures that healthcare professionals can take to educate their patients, and explore how society can shift its perspective on more aggressive interventions, viewing them as adjuncts rather than replacements for lifestyle modifications.

Write an 800-word essay in English to explore this topic. Please note that the submission deadline is: May 17, 2025.

General Terms and Conditions

- Competition is open to all Qatari nationals currently enrolled in high schools
- The essay must be the student's original work and written in English
- The applicants need to fill an online application to submit their essays
- Proof of nationality and latest school report are needed.

For more information visit our website at: <https://qatar-weill.cornell.edu/>



For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Outreach and Educational Development at: healinghands@qatar-med.cornell.edu or call 8521 4492

Al-Misnad meets Omani delegation



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with the visiting Omani national team responsible for preparing reports related to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, headed by Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court and Secretary-General of the Administrative Affairs Council for Judiciary of Oman Sheikh Khalid bin Rashid al-Manwari. During the meeting, HE al-Misnad briefed the Omani national team on the experience of discussing Qatar's national report before the International Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. She emphasised the importance of strengthening co-operation between the two countries and continuing the exchange of expertise and best practices among Gulf countries. (QNA)

Speaker meets Kuwaiti ambassador



Shura Council Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met yesterday with Kuwait's ambassador Khaled Badr al-Mutairi. Both sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and advance it, particularly in the parliamentary field. (QNA)

Draft law on combating doping in sports placed before Cabinet

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani (pictured) chaired the Cabinet's weekly meeting at the Amiri Diwan yesterday. Following the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi stated the following: The Cabinet considered the topics on its agenda, where it was informed of the Shura Council's approval of a draft law on combating doping in sports.

The draft law aims to establish a comprehensive legislative framework to combat doping in sports in Qatar, in accordance with the provisions of the International Convention Against Doping in Sports.

The Cabinet gave – in principle – approval to a draft law amending certain provisions of Law No 23 of 2006 on the Legal Practice Law, and to present a draft on the "Sharek" platform for a period of

seven days to express any views and observations regarding it. The preparation of a draft law by the Ministry of Justice comes as a first step within an integrated plan that the ministry is working on, in co-ordination with the relevant authorities, to comprehensively update the legal organisation of the legal profession, and within the framework of the ministry's strategy aimed at raising the efficiency of legal work in the country and contributing to strengthening the legal and practical capabilities of all components of the justice system in the country, in addition to harmonising the provisions of the law with the provisions of Amiri Decree No 3 of 2025 on the organisational structure of the Ministry of Justice in a manner that meets the requirements of state litigation lawyers to enable them to carry out their duties in representing ministries and other government agencies, public bodies and institutions before judicial authorities at home and abroad.



The Cabinet also approved the draft decision amending some provisions of Decision No 12 of 2024 on the Establishment of a Permanent Committee for Managing Visitor Entry to the State of Qatar (Hayya Platform).

The draft decision, prepared by the Ministry of Interior, aims to expand the committee's mandate, with the goal of attracting targeted groups with distinguished residences and facilitating their entry and residence procedures in

the country. These groups include investors, property owners, entrepreneurs, and individuals with talents in the fields of technology, science, creativity, sports, culture, and the arts.

It approved the draft Cabinet decision on the employment system for state lawyers.

The draft resolution, which was prepared by the Ministry of Justice, comes within the framework of redefining the procedures for appointing state lawyers and organising their employment affairs in a manner that is consistent with the tasks assigned to them in light of the competencies stipulated by Amiri Decision No 3 of 2025 on the organisational structure of the Ministry of Justice.

The Cabinet also approved the draft Cabinet decision on procedures for initiating lawsuits related to government agencies. The draft resolution, prepared by the Ministry of Justice, comes within the framework of the national initiative to develop justice sys-

tems aimed at achieving prompt justice. It aims to regulate the procedures for managing lawsuits filed by or against government agencies, establish appropriate legal foundations for activating reconciliation and settlement initiatives, and create an effective and appropriate legal framework for utilising the services of law firms in accordance with the latest methods.

The Cabinet approved a draft agreement between the governments of Qatar and Italy on security co-operation in the field of securing the 2026 Winter Olympic Games, a draft agreement between the governments of Qatar and Benin on regulating the employment of workers from Benin in Qatar, in addition to a draft co-operation agreement between the two governments in the field of higher education and scientific research, as well as a draft memorandum of understanding on mutual recognition of seafarers' certificates between govern-

ments of Qatar and Benin.

The Cabinet also approved the draft core contribution agreement to support the core budget of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for the years 2025-2026 between the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the draft core contribution agreement between QFFD and the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the years 2025-2026, and the draft letter of intent between the government of the State of Qatar and the WHO regarding the Qatar co-operation strategy 2024-2030.

The Cabinet wrapped up its meeting by reviewing the results of the work of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking for 2024, and a report on the results of the participation of Qatar's delegation, headed by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry, in the Qatari-Russian Business Forum. (QNA)

Al-Hammadi meets envoys



HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi met yesterday with Bosnia and Herzegovina's ambassador Ahmed Halilovic (above). The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries. HE the Secretary-General also met with Singapore's ambassador Pong Kok Tian. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation relations between the two countries. (QNA)



Qatar signs participation contract for International Horticultural Expo in Japan

QNA
Tokyo

Qatar has officially signed a participation contract for the International Horticultural Expo 2027 Yokohama, becoming the first country to conclude such an agreement with the host nation, Japan. Representing Qatar at the signing ceremony was ambassador to Japan and the Commissioner-General of Qatar Pavilion, Jaber bin Jarallah al-Marri.

The Japanese side was represented by Commissioner of the International Horticultural Expo 2027 Koshikawa Kazuhiko and the Secretary-General of the Expo, Masato Komura, which will be held under the theme "Scenery of the Future for Happiness" from March 19 to September 26, 2027, in Yokohama, Japan.

Qatar's participation reflects its commitment to maintaining an active international presence



and supporting global exhibitions and events focused on sustainability and environmental issues. It also highlights Qatar's contribution to initiatives aimed at addressing global challenges and underscores the deepening strategic partnership between Qatar and Japan, especially in the areas of sustainable devel-

opment, cultural exchange, and knowledge sharing.

During the signing ceremony, the ambassador reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to participate and co-operate with the Japanese side to ensure the success of Expo 2027 Yokohama and to help achieve its objectives of offering effective solutions to

global environmental challenges and promoting sustainable lifestyles for the well-being of future generations.

This participation follows the great success of Expo 2023 Doha, which Qatar hosted for the first time in the Middle East and North Africa region from October 2, 2023, to March 28, 2024, under the theme: "Green Desert, Better Environment." The event saw broad international participation and attracted millions of visitors from within Qatar and abroad.

Expo 2027 Yokohama represents a continuation of international co-operation in horticultural exhibitions, building on the remarkable success of Expo 2023 Doha. At the closing ceremony of the Doha Expo, Expo 2023 Secretary-General Dr Fayqa Ashkanani officially handed over the expo flag to Deputy Secretary-General of the Japan Association for the International Horticultural Expo 2027 Hayami Sato.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, TAYSHAUN LIMIN
holder of

PHILIPPINES Passport No. P8843590A
QID No. 30660801265

hereby change my name

from

TAYSHAUN LIMIN

to

TAYSHAUN BOCABIL LIMIN

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ANASTASIYA AGAFONOVA
holder of

Turkmenist Passport No. A0754939
QID No. 29279500024

hereby change my name

from

ANASTASIYA AGAFONOVA

to

ANASTASIIA AGAFONOVA

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Manga Award entries invited



The Embassy of Japan in Qatar has announced the call for entries for the 19th Japan International Manga Award. Established in 2007, the award celebrates and honours manga artists who make significant contributions to the worldwide promotion of manga culture. Artists of all backgrounds and languages are encouraged to participate and share their unique narratives by June 30, 2025. More information is available at <https://www.manga-award.mofa.go.jp/en/application/19/index.html>. For any inquiries, the embassy may be contacted on eojqatar@dh.mofa.go.jp

Qatar Philatelic and Numismatic Center hosts GCC exhibition

The Qatar Philatelic and Numismatic Center is holding a GCC stamps exhibition from May 12 to 31 at the Sheikh Saoud bin Mohamed Al-Thani Hall at the centre's headquarters in Al Sadd.

The exhibition includes a number of glass stamp frames, each containing 16 panels featuring stamps issued by the Arab Gulf states.

This aims to strengthen the bonds of co-operation and building connections between stamp and currency collections in the Gulf states.

The Qatar Philatelic and Numismatic Center works to foster



and spread the hobby of stamp and numismatic collecting, promote it, create conditions for its development, and provide all means and methods for its members to practice this hobby. (QNA)

GU-Q graduate named 2025 Yenching Scholar at Peking University

Brian Cody Wibowo (SFS'25), a graduate of Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), has been selected as one of 114 scholars worldwide to join the 2025 cohort of the Yenching Academy of Peking University, one of the most competitive and renowned postgraduate programmes in the world.

With an acceptance rate below 3%, the programme attracted thousands of applicants worldwide and enrolled students from more than 40 countries to pursue an interdisciplinary master's degree focused on China's changing role on the global stage.

Hailing from a small town in Sumatra, Indonesia, Brian built an academic and advocacy career at Georgetown that

spanned institutional reform, regional research, and global policy dialogue. Graduating cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service in International Economics, Brian was known for his campus thought leadership and exceptional research focusing on diasporic governance, development policy, and Southeast Asia-China relations. As a Kalorama Fellow through Georgetown, he conducted comparative fieldwork on Chinese clanhouses in Penang and Medan, analysing their roles in mediating identity and authority under colonial rule. He presented this research at the 2025 Yale Undergraduate Research Conference, where he was awarded second place in humanities research.

He also participated in Georgetown Global Dialogues, facilitating critical conversations on post-development, degrowth, and the future of political economy. As a member of GU-Q's Honor Council, Brian worked closely with his peers to co-author the university's first AI academic policy, developing ethical frameworks for student use of generative technology. As one of two students selected to represent Georgetown as a U7+ Alliance of World Universities Fellow, at the NEXT Milan Forum, he co-developed policy recommendations on legacy admissions and international student equity, later reviewed by Group of Seven (G7) university leaders.



Brian Cody Wibowo on the graduation day.



VCUarts Qatar opens 'Year End Show 2025'

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) has opened its Year End Show: Art and Design Now 2025 to the public. The exhibition will run until July 5 at M7 in Msheireb Downtown Doha.

A special opening event drew a full house of over a thousand attendees, including key figures from Qatar's creative industries, industry partners, members of the joint advisory board, university leadership, faculty, and proud family and friends of the graduating students.

The exhibition showcases the innovative and often boundary-pushing work of VCUarts Qatar's graduating students. It features projects from the undergraduate programmes in Art History, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Painting + Printmaking, and Fashion Design, as well as the Master of Fine Arts in Design programme. For the first time, the exhibition also includes contributions from Foundation Year students and the newly launched Bachelor of Fine Arts in Kinetic Imaging.

Students have explored a wide range of media and techniques in their final projects, incorporating light, sound, video, animation, textile design, silk printing, fabrication technology, typog-



raphy, coding, digital painting, screen printing, lithography, and photographic techniques. The result is a dynamic and diverse showcase of creativity and technical skill.

"Reflecting on the extraordinary range of themes and creative expressions presented by our students, I'm truly inspired by the depth and originality of their work," said, Amir Berbi, dean of VCUarts Qatar. "This year's cohort has produced an outstanding body of work that speaks to a wide array of ideas – from vibrant celebrations of Qatari culture to innovative designs that carry powerful messages of hope, sustainability, and social awareness. The M7 space

provides a dynamic and fitting backdrop for this diverse showcase of emerging talent. I encourage the public to experience it firsthand – there's something meaningful and memorable for everyone."

The launch also coincided with 'Hayakom', VCUarts Qatar's traditional welcome event for newly admitted students for the Fall 2025 semester. After visiting the campus, incoming students and their families were invited to continue on to explore the Year End Show at M7, offering them a firsthand look at the creativity, energy, and achievement that define the school's dynamic academic and artistic culture.

AlRayan Bank launches 'AlRayan Go' with AI-driven campaign

AlRayan Bank has introduced AI-driven communication, marking a pioneering step in Qatar's banking sector as part of its comprehensive digital transformation journey. The launch is spearheaded by 'AlRayan Go', supported by a fully AI-generated campaign that sets a new benchmark for innovation, security, and customer engagement in the financial industry.

AlRayan Bank becomes the first bank in Qatar to integrate AI technology into its external communications, introducing the soon-to-be-revealed AI avatars, Jassim and Noor, who will lead customer interaction and support communication initiatives. Jassim and Noor will take the lead in delivering dynamic, interactive, and bilingual content, available in English, Arabic, and the Qatari dialect, setting a new standard for AI-driven communication in the region. Part of the bank's broader digital strategy, the initiative showcases AlRayan Bank's suite of digital products and services through modern, technology-



forward communication practices, aligned with the demands of a fast-evolving digital landscape. "Our goal is to redefine how we connect with our audience by incorporating cutting-edge technology into our communication practices. Jassim and Noor symbolise our commitment to pioneering the next generation of AI-powered communication and maintaining a leadership position in the digital space.

"This initiative reflects our vision to continuously innovate and provide customers with personalised, efficient communication experiences. Whether addressing queries or introducing new offerings, the avatars will play a central role in engaging our diverse audience. This is one of the mediums we will use to promote the bank's image going forward," said Eman al-Naemi, AGM - Corporate Communications at AlRayan Bank.

Media personality Sheikha al-Mannai on Alaraby 2

Qatari media personality Sheikha al-Mannai appears as a guest on *Kyf Alhal?* (Arabic for how are you?), the podcast show hosted by Milad Hadchiti on Alaraby 2.

In this inspiring conversation, al-Mannai reflects on key moments in her professional journey and shares deeply personal experiences that have shaped her outlook on life.

During the episode, al-Mannai emphasised the importance of lifelong learning and personal growth. Highlighting how her transition into the media sector provided a powerful platform to spotlight critical social issues – an opportunity she noted is rarely available in other fields.

She also opened up about her personal journey battling cancer, revealing the challenges she faced and the invaluable lessons she learned along the way. She described the experience as "a turning point" that strengthened her resilience and will to live, especially with the emotional support of her family and loved ones.

During the interview, al-Mannai expressed concern about the growing presence of unqualified individuals discussing mental health on social media and urged the public to remain grounded in values and authentic



Screen shot of the interview.

knowledge amid the increasing commercialisation of information.

Host Milad Hadchiti underscores the power of real-life stories to uplift others, saying: "A story of cancer recovery doesn't just offer hope to patients – it sends a message of strength to anyone facing major challenges in life."

The programme *Kyf Alhal?* airs every Tuesday at 8.30pm Doha time on Alaraby 2 channel. It can also be watched later via the on-demand service on the Alaraby Plus app.

Nine QF school students honoured with Education Excellence Award

Nine students from Qatar Foundation's (QF) Pre-University Education (PUE) schools were recognised with the 18th edition of the Education Excellence Award, representing primary, preparatory, and secondary levels.

The award honours outstanding academic performance, community engagement, and leadership, reflecting the holistic, high-quality education QF provides.

Among the honourees is Saad Fahad al-Qahtani, a 19-year-old graduate of Qatar Academy Doha, part of QF's PUE. He is currently in his first year at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, a QF partner university.

Reflecting on receiving the Platinum Medal in the Distinguished High School Student category, al-Qahtani said: "It was an unforgettable moment of pride and gratitude, a culmination of



Ali al-Sulaiti

years of hard work, and a powerful source of inspiration to move forward with confidence and responsibility."

Al-Qahtani noted the challenge of balancing academic excellence



Al-Jouri al-Thani

with leadership and community involvement, crediting time management and goal commitment for his success.

"What earned me this medal was a well-rounded commitment



Jassim Hamad Ahmed al-Mudhahka

to excellence, academically, in leadership, and through innovation, driven by a genuine passion to serve my community and a constant desire for self-improvement."



Sabah al-Naimi

He added that his family played a vital role in his journey, emphasising that the values he was raised with and the constant encouragement he received helped him overcome challenges and move

forward with confidence and determination toward his goals.

Jassim Hamad Ahmed al-Mudhahka, an 11-year-old student from Qatar Academy Al Khor and recipient of the Gold Medal in the Primary School category, said: "While the award recognises my dedication and active participation, it also motivates me to keep striving and achieving," he said.

Among the nine award recipients were Hamad al-Musnad, Mohammed al-Muhammadi, and Sabah al-Naimi from Qatar Academy Al Khor, each receiving a Platinum Medal; Sabah al-Thani and Abdulrahman al-Dabbagh from Qatar Academy Doha, who earned Platinum and Gold Medals respectively; Ali al-Sulaiti, awarded a Gold Medal from Tariq Bin Ziad School; and Al-Jouri al-Thani, who received a Platinum Medal from Qatar Academy for Science and Technology.

Qatar Charity launches 'Greatest Days' Dhul-Hijjah campaign

Under the theme "The Greatest Days", Qatar Charity (QC) has launched its Dhul-Hijjah campaign for the year 1446 AH (2025), aiming to implement a wide range of humanitarian and development projects, and distribute sacrificial meat (Adahi) in 40 countries, including Qatar.

Chief Communication Officer at Qatar Charity Ahmad Yousef Fakhroo urged the public to embrace the spiritual significance of Dhul-Hijjah's first ten days, a period deeply revered in Islam.

He cited a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these ten days." Fakhroo called on philanthropists to compete in good deeds, hasten their generosity, and support the "Greatest Days" campaign.

The goal, he emphasised, is to reach as many beneficiaries as possible through the Adahi (sacrificial meat) distribution project and diverse humanitarian and development initiatives. He expressed unwavering confidence in the Qatari community's enduring charitable spirit, which continues to support humanitarian causes across generations, especially during sacred times.

Qatar Charity's Adahi project, supported by generous donors, plans to distribute meat from around 45,300 sheep and cattle across 40 countries, including Qatar, reaching over 850,000 people in need.

In Qatar, the Adahi project will distribute sacrificial meat from 4,000 sheep to around 30,000 individuals, spreading the joy of Eid.

Beneficiaries include sponsored or-



phans and their families, low-income households, farm labourers, and expatriate communities. Distribution will be carried out through Al Meera, in co-operation with expatriate communities.

Outside of Qatar, the meat of nearly 41,300 sacrifices is expected to be distributed to about 826,000 people in 39 countries across Africa, Asia, and Europe. The focus will be on crisis-affected countries and regions such as Syria, Palestine, including Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, and Somalia.

Qatar Charity's Udhhiyah distribution will also take place in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kosovo, Nepal, Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, Palestine, Syria, Tanzania, Niger, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Ethiopia, Indonesia, India, Lebanon, South Africa, Malaysia, Yemen, Chad, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Turkiye, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, Mauritania, Togo, Benin, and Burundi.

Beyond Udhhiyah, "The Greatest Days" campaign invites contributions to broader

relief efforts, including food baskets with essential supplies for malnourished children and impoverished families. Aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate poverty and hunger, aid is expected to be distributed in Somalia, Chad, Kenya, Pakistan, Sudan, Ivory Coast, and Yemen, in addition to delivering aid to Rohingya and Sudanese refugees.

"The Greatest Days" campaign also seeks support for development projects, including water and economic empowerment projects, which will benefit needy families in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Bangladesh, Gambia, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Syria, Senegal, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Albania, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Ghana, Kenya, and Pakistan. Additionally, the campaign will provide humanitarian aid and implement other vital projects. (QNA)

Carnegie Mellon University, Qatar Foundation extend partnership for another decade

The partnership of knowledge between Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and Qatar Foundation (QF) has been extended for a further ten years.

The extension agreement was signed by HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, Vice-Chairperson and CEO of QF, and Farnam Jahanian, president of CMU, at a ceremony attended by Timmy Davis, US ambassador to Qatar.

HE Sheikha Hind said: "When Qatar Foundation began to create an entirely new model of learning three decades ago, we sought international partners in education to support us in our mission - partners who offered the highest quality of education in fields vital to the development of our nation and region, and whose values mirrored our own.

"Carnegie Mellon University was one such partner, bringing to Qatar its world-class academic programs, its future-focused ethos of curiosity, and its commitment to providing oppor-



Dignitaries at the signing ceremony.

tunities for the acquisition of knowledge that stretch beyond its student body and into the wider community. Over 20 years on from its establishment, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar's devotion to excellence, inquiry, and engagement has made it part of the knowledge fabric of our nation - nurturing agents of change, inspiring entrepreneurs, and driving innovation.

"As we adapt to, and seek to harness the benefits of, an increasingly AI-influenced world, Carnegie Mellon University in

Qatar's expertise in this field is just one of the many ways in which it will continue to equip our next generation of national and regional leaders, and support the continuing development of Qatar and its people. Our pride in calling Carnegie Mellon University our partner in knowledge is matched by the anticipation of what we can achieve together in the years to come."

Jahanian noted: "The extraordinary partnership between Qatar Foundation and Carnegie Mellon University has flourished over

the last 20 years. It is a partnership rooted in mutual trust and a shared commitment to leverage education as a platform for global engagement and a driver of economic opportunity and a better future for all. We are so proud of what we have accomplished together and the renewal of our partnership will allow us to continue this legacy of impact and strengthen the already strong partnership between our Pittsburgh campus and CMU-Q."

Michael Trick, dean of CMU-Q, added: "The partnership between Carnegie Mellon and Qatar Foundation is based on the shared vision of the transformative impact of education. For more than 20 years, this campus has provided an exceptional education for students from Qatar and around the world who may not otherwise have had access. Thanks to the vision and generosity of Qatar Foundation, more than 1,400 students have completed their undergraduate education at CMU-Q."



QatarDebate Center to host conference on May 19-20

QatarDebate Center, a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), has announced it will host the second edition of the International Conference on Debate and Dialogue (ICDD) on May 19-20 at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC).

The ICDD, which brings together elite debaters, youth dialogue leaders from around the world, as well as prominent researchers and academics, aims to foster rich intellectual and scientific dialogue that bridges academic research with contemporary knowledge issues and expands its application in both academic and societal contexts.

QatarDebate stated that the ICDD seeks to promote a global culture of debate and employ dialogue as a tool for community development. It also aims to establish a high-level academic platform that enriches the fields of argumentation and debate, intersecting with disciplines such as philosophy, education, linguistics, and Islamic studies. The conference further focuses on utilising research findings to improve cognitive practices across academic and social spheres.

The event will host distinguished academics and researchers from around the world. Notably, Prof Christopher W Tindale from the University of Windsor in Canada will speak on the first day on the topic "How Others Argue: Cross-Cultural Argumentation as a Vehicle of Understanding".

On the second day, Prof Hammou Nakari from Morocco's Mohammed V University will present "The Logic of Disputation".

This year's edition builds on the success of the inaugural conference held in 2023, which welcomed over 800 participants from Qatar and abroad, marking a strong launch and establishing the event's global intellectual standing.

Programmes Director at QatarDebate Abdulrahman Al Subaie emphasised that the second ICDD reinforces the Center's leading role in promoting a culture of dialogue and both regionally and internationally. He noted that the event represents a qualitative leap, further cementing QatarDebate's position as a global platform for constructive dialogue and aligning with its mission to support scientific research in this field.

The previous edition featured the signing of several cooperation agreements with internationally

recognised institutions. The upcoming conference is also expected to witness the signing of new agreements and strategic partnerships.

The first day of the conference will feature several parallel sessions, including: "Munazara in Islamic Manuscripts" (in collaboration with Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University (FSMVU)), "Best Practices in Debate Training", "Argumentation: Theoretical Perspectives and Models", "Debate Formats: Cultural Variations and Educational Outcomes", "Discourse and Argumentation in Political Conflicts", and "Jadal and Munazara: Applications in Islamic Jurisprudence and Thought".

Additional sessions will explore themes such as improving debate adjudication practices, integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into debate education, the impact of debate on academic and cognitive skill development, case studies of political debates in the Arab world, and the historical and legislative dimensions of jurisprudential argumentation.

Day two will continue with sessions addressing a range of intellectual themes, including: "Argumentation: Arab and Islamic Perspectives", "The Impact of Debate on Enhancing Critical Thinking and Language Learning", "The Use of AI in Argumentation: Limitations and Possibilities", "Reimagining Education Through Debate: Insights and Case Studies", and "Behind the Panel: Exploring the Practice and Philosophy of Debate Judging".

In parallel with the academic sessions, the conference will feature events highlighting youth leadership. A group of young dialogue leaders will present a youth dialogue forum that addresses major global issues.

In addition, the conference will host a unique interactive exhibition in partnership with Jordan's Crown Prince Foundation (CPF). The exhibit will feature rare historical and cultural manuscripts on the art of debate in Islamic civilisation, in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Culture, FSMVU, and with technical support from Qatar Museums (QM), which is overseeing the exhibition's design.

The second ICDD also benefits from prestigious academic partnerships with several institutions, including the University of Windsor (Canada), FSMVU and Ibn Haldun University (Turkiye), and Ez-Zitouna University (Tunisia). (QNA)

Liwan Design Studios and Labs to launch Crafts Residency programme in June

Liwan Design Studios and Labs has announced the launch of its Craft Residency programme next month, titled "Future Traditions and the New Authentic".

The six-month programme is dedicated to designers and craftspeople based in Doha. The residency will provide six selected local designers with a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in Qatar's vibrant design ecosystem, engage deeply with its cultural and creative fabric, and collaborate with skilled artisans and manufacturers.

"The Liwan Craft Residency represents our commitment to nurturing Qatar's design talent while honouring our cultural heritage," said the Director of Liwan Design Studios and Labs, Aisha Nasser Alsowaidi.

With the theme "Future Traditions and the New Authentic", the residency challenges designers to reimagine traditional craft and cultural narratives for contemporary contexts. Participants will explore how Qatar's rapid modernisation can coexist with its deep-rooted heritage, creating a unique space for creative exploration that honours the past while shaping the future.

Director of Liwan stated that this residency's conceptual focus, "Reimagining the Oasis: Our Design Ecosystem", invites designers to examine the oasis beyond its environmental function as a metaphor for cultural continuity, community resilience, and resourcefulness. She explained that throughout history, oases have been essential to survival in Qatar's desert environment, serving

as vital trade and cultural hubs that fostered exchanges between nomadic tribes and merchants. Participants will investigate the oasis as a design principle by exploring its three tangible and intangible aspects: Resourcefulness and Sustainability; Cultural and Social Spaces; Symbolism and Materiality.



The Liwan Craft Residency is open to designers and craftspeople based in Doha with a strong background in product design, craft, or interdisciplinary design practices. Only six participants will be selected for this residency

Alsowaidi noted that designers are encouraged to explore how traditional Qatari crafts can be adapted for modern use, while investigating the intersection of heritage and innovation, examining how emerging technologies like AI, digital fabrication, and sustainable practices can enhance traditional craft meth-

odologies. They are also invited to contemplate the evolving meaning of authenticity in their work, focusing on creating designs that remain locally rooted in Qatari cultural traditions yet possess international resonance and contemporary relevance.

The programme includes mentorship sessions with experienced designers, curators, and industry professionals; hands-on craft workshops with Doha-based artisans; community engagement through public workshops; and collaborative opportunities with local factories and craftspeople. Residents will also be provided with a dedicated studio space at Liwan and a budget of QR40,000 to cover material and production costs.

The residency will culminate in a major exhibition at the second edition of the Doha Design Biennale in April 2026, showcasing the participants' work and positioning them within Qatar's growing creative scene.

The Liwan Craft Residency is open to designers and craftspeople based in Doha with a strong background in product design, craft, or interdisciplinary design practices. Only six participants will be selected for this residency.

Applicants will be asked to submit a written concept proposal responding to the brief, design drafts, portfolio, CV, and a statement about their interest in traditional crafts and potential collaborations. The application deadline is May 20, with interviews scheduled for May 27 and final results to be announced on June 2. (QNA)

Fnac Qatar joins 34th Doha International Book Fair

Fnac Qatar is participating in the 34th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), running until May 17 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, a statement said.

Since 2014, Fnac has been participating in the DIBF, even before opening its first store in Qatar. Bader al-Darwish, chairman and managing director of Darwish Holding, said: "At Fnac Qatar, our mission goes beyond retail. We aim to build bridges between cultures and generations through the power of books and learning. Our partnership with the French embassy and the French Institute in Qatar for this year's Doha International Book Fair reflects our shared commitment to nurturing curiosity, creativity, and lifelong learning."

Patrick Poinot, deputy head of mis-

sion at the French embassy in Qatar, said: "Together, we celebrate the French language, literature, and the universal values of knowledge and cultural dialogue that the Doha International Book Fair brings to life. France and Qatar have a strong friendship, with more than 300,000 people speaking French in Qatar."

At DIBF, the French embassy, the FIQ and Fnac Qatar's booth features a rich programme of activities, including special workshops for students from prominent French and international schools in Qatar.

Elsa Mroziewicz, the award-winning multidisciplinary artist and author, will lead five days of pop-up workshops and youth reading sessions. Using tablets available on site, visitors will be able to scan a 4sqm work of art where the hidden

animals will be set in motion thanks to AI technology. The mural printing called 'La Forêt Universelle/The Universal Forest', is designed by Mroziewicz and Cécile Palusinski. Mroziewicz will launch a mediation workshop on this project, guiding the users in their search for endangered species. This work is at the intersection of art, storytelling, and ecology.

Fnac will also promote the distinguished author, Dr Serge Tillmann, through a book signing ceremony celebrating his latest publication, *FRAGMENTS #1 - À Ceux Qui Vivent En Nous. Dedicated to his parents and inspired by his expertise in contemporary history, Dr Tillmann's work offers a moving reflection on human identities, heritage, and the transformative power of education.



Awqaf showcases diverse activities at DIBF



The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs is participating in the 34th Doha International Book Fair where the ministry showcases its diverse activities and highlights its efforts in serving religion and society.

According to an official statement from Awqaf, the ministry's pavilion includes several booths representing its various departments. Through these booths, Awqaf displays its scientific, jurisprudential, advocacy, and endowment publications while showcasing its programmes that target citizens and residents, children and adults, researchers, students, and the

general public. The General Directorate of Endowments' booth occupies a prominent position in the pavilion to showcase a range of endowment projects and endowment documents. It provides explanations of the concept of endowment and its disbursements. It also introduces the public to the Centre for Endowment Studies, which conducts scientific studies and seminars to develop endowment work and showcases a number of the centre's publications.

The corner also features an Awqaf ATM, which enables visitors to directly contribute to all Awqaf banks in cash, by credit

card and via mobile phone. This ATM is one of the devices widely used in public places and a modern payment method provided by the General Administration. It reflects the development of Awqaf tools and their responsiveness to modern requirements while providing donors with a variety of easy-to-use solutions. This step comes within the framework of the administration's efforts to spread the culture of Awqaf and facilitate individual participation in supporting various Awqaf initiatives and serving the community.

The Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance participates through

'Islamweb' section through interactive activities and various publications to introduce the public to the content of the Islamic Library, fatwas, and website services. The Boys and Girls Corner on Islamweb is a popular destination for children where drawing and colouring activities are held. Approximately 400 gifts are distributed daily, The Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre (Fannar) is also participating through a dedicated booth showcasing its multilingual publications and awareness-raising and educational programmes targeting communities. The centre is also presenting a

virtual reality film titled *Journey to Mecca* in addition to an introductory film about the centre's mission and efforts, which will be shown on the pavilion's screen.

The Department of Islamic Affairs is displaying a collection of its most prominent publications in the field of Islamic heritage. The Department of Islamic Research and Studies presents a range of scholarly publications. The department also launched two new publications during the exhibition. Awqaf's participation in the fair embodies a comprehensive model of cultural, intellectual, and advocacy presence.

MoECC launches book entitled *Salem and the Turtle*

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has launched the book *Salem and the Turtle* by Najat al-Bakhrani, an employee in the Awareness Section of the Public Relations Department at the ministry.

The launch took place as part of the ministry's participation in the ongoing 34th edition of Doha International Book Fair. The book aims to raise environmental awareness among children with focus on sea turtles and the ways to protect them from extinction to instil the concepts of sustainability and the preservation of biodiversity in the marine environment.

Al-Bakhrani stressed that *Salem and the Turtle* delivers a direct en-

vironmental message to children in a simplified and engaging storytelling style, aiming to educate them on the importance of protecting marine creatures, especially turtles, which are considered as part of the country's environmental heritage.

She noted that the story is based on accurate scientific information, prepared and reviewed in co-operation with the relevant department at the MoECC. She also pointed out that the ministry has made significant strides in protecting this peaceful creature through the Sea Turtle Nesting Project, which has been implemented since 2003, contributing to the release of tens of thousands of young turtles into their natural habitats.



Awqaf marks Int'l Day of Families



The Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs organised various preaching activities and events to mark the International Day of Families.

The activities, according to an official statement from Awqaf, included various training courses and lectures on the status of the family in Islam and the importance our true religion attaches to it. This was done through a set of legislation and directives contained in the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Prophetic Sunnah regarding marital and family life and explaining its status in Islam.

These lectures and courses addressed the importance of family cohesion and the status Islam places on the family. They also emphasised its commitment to its well-being, as it constitutes the solid nucleus of society. This well-being is achieved through the family's well-being and is affected by the imbalances and challenges

families face in raising children, managing family disputes and other challenges.

Training course was organised for a number of Qatari Imams and preachers under the title 'The Family in Islam! The course addressed Shariah, legal and educational aspects by examining the legal provisions of marriage, Qatari family law and addressing various educational stages and age groups. This course aims to enable participants to become more effective and influential in their skills of understanding and providing family counselling. It also aims to address the challenges facing families.

It also aims to raise awareness in society about family culture and how to address the problems and challenges facing families in marital relations, raising children, and other challenges that require awareness and understanding of their dimensions.

A scientific course was held on 'family building skills' for fe-

male employees working in various departments of Awqaf. The course covered topics such as raising children, understanding marital relationships, and methods for dealing with and resolving marital disputes. The goal is to achieve family stability through sound and correct child-rearing, a deeper understanding of Islamic law and its provisions related to these aspects.

This course was presented by a select group of Awqaf officials. At the end of the course, certificates of appreciation were awarded to participants.

The Women's Activities Section of the Department of Religious Call and Guidance organised programmes that included lectures, seminars, and meetings under various titles. All of these aimed to increase religious, social, and psychological awareness of married life, develop skills for resolving marital and family disputes and introduce the skills and methods for renewing married life.

AI as personal guide for book fair visitors

The 34th edition of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) witnessed a qualitative transformation in the level of services provided, thanks to the intelligent use of digital technologies and AI, which received widespread acclaim from visitors and participants alike.

Attendees emphasised that AI has become a personal guide within the exhibition halls, as the interactive screens spread throughout facilitate access to books and publishing houses. Visitors can enter the title of a book or an author to immediately obtain the exact location of the pavilion and booth number.

In a remarkable step towards inclusivity, the exhibition provided digital services dedicated to the blind and those who speak foreign languages such as English and French. Enhancing the ease of the experience and increasing visitor interaction from various groups.

The DIBF confirms that the knowledge future is integrated with AI, not only in facilitating access to information, but also in transforming the exhibition visit experience into a smart, interactive, and inclusive journey for all age groups and cultures.

Huda al-Otaibi from the Qatar National Library explained that the publishing house has launched a technology that relies on AI to produce verses of poetry or short stories based on three words selected by the user.

Algorithms generate creative text that reflects the visitor's interests. She also showcased another technology that analyses handwritten patterns and identifies their type. Along with booths displaying digital publications, such as issues of *Doha Cultural* magazine since its founding in 1969. As well as a review of the development of engraving and writing from the pre-Islamic era to the present day.

Volunteer Fahad al-Dosari emphasised that artificial intelligence has directly contributed to facili-



tating the visitor experience. Explaining that smart search and guidance services have reduced time and effort and contributed to a smooth and comprehensive interactive experience.

Visitor Mohammed al-Badr praised the use of barcodes in every corner of the exhibition, which enables visitors to browse publishing houses' publications and the latest and most popular books quickly and simply. He emphasised that everything is clear and easy, thanks to AI.

Abdulrahman Ali Malhia, Head of the Legal Awareness Department at the Ministry of Justice, explained that the ministry has used AI technologies for the first time to provide simplified legal content for children, including interactive AI-powered models of judges and prosecutors, making learning fun and engaging for children. He noted that this step represents a qualitative leap in spreading legal culture and community awareness using the latest technologies.

Ehsan Center concludes 8th Scientific Research Competition

The Center for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan) conducted the closing ceremony of the 8th season of the Ehsan Scientific Research Competition. The ceremony was held under the patronage of HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, and in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council, and AFAQ Group. During the ceremony, the top three winning students in the preparatory and secondary categories were honoured by Acting CEO of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work Khalid bin Mohammed al-Kuwari, and Executive Director of Ehsan Manal Ahmed al-Mannai. The results were as follows: In the preparatory stage, first place went to students from Salah Ad-Din Al-Ayyubi Preparatory School for Boys for their project on using artificial intelligence to protect parking spaces for the elderly.



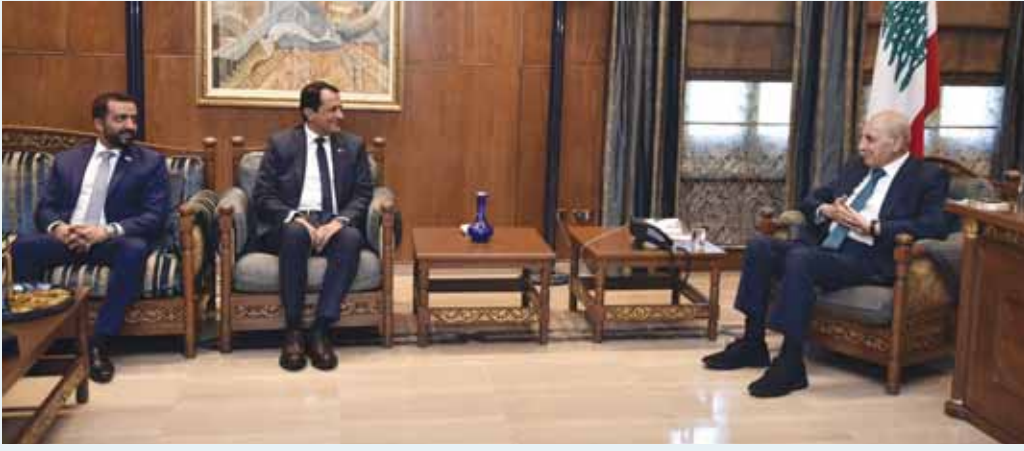
Second place went to students from Rawdat Rashid Primary, Preparatory and Secondary School for Girls for their research project on designing smart glasses that translate voices into Arabic speech to assist the hearing-impaired elderly. Third place went to students from Al Daayen Primary Independent School

for Girls for their project on designing a SKA device to irrigate the hamstrings of the elderly while driving and travelling long distances. At the secondary level, first place was awarded to students from Ibn Seena Secondary School for Boys for their project on a self-turning and moving bed equipped with biometric sensors for

the elderly and patients with disabilities. Second place went to students from Al Ghuwairiya Secondary School for Girls for their research project on the effect of pilates exercises on the elderly's self-motivation. The third place went to students from Al Shaima Secondary School for Girls for their project, on using hologram technology to help the elderly adapt to their surrounding environment from the perspective of caregivers. During the ceremony, cash awards were distributed to all students whose projects reached the final stage, in recognition of their efforts in presenting practical solutions and innovative ideas targeting the well-being of the elderly. The ceremony also honoured the judging panel for their transparent scientific and professional evaluation, as well as the supporting entities that contributed to the competition's success, most notably the MoEHE, QRDI Council, and AFAQ Group.

Executive Director al-Mannai expressed pride in the competition's success, stating that the event embodies the belief in the role of youth in bringing about real change in society and reflects the centre's ongoing commitment to empowering future generations to embrace research and innovation as a means of improving the quality of life for the elderly. The competition, aimed at middle and high school students, saw 40 participants submit 20 research papers focused on improving the lives of the elderly. Guided by a team of dedicated teachers, the students conducted purposeful research evaluated by eight impartial, accredited judges. An accompanying exhibition preceded the closing ceremony, where the projects were showcased to visitors and interested parties, providing a platform to showcase and interact with the students' innovations before winners were officially announced. (QNA)

Lebanese Speaker, PM meet Qatari ambassador in Beirut



Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met in Beirut yesterday with Qatar's ambassador Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. The two sides discussed the co-operative relationships between the two countries.



Lebanese Prime Minister Dr Nawaf Salam met in Beirut yesterday with Qatar's ambassador, Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. Both sides discussed bilateral relations, along with a range of topics of shared interest. The prime minister expressed his gratitude for Qatar's supportive role towards Lebanon under all circumstances. For his part, the ambassador reiterated Qatar's enduring position on standing side by side with Lebanon and its commitment to the country's stability. (QNA)

QRDI Council, Switzerland National Scientific Foundation sign agreement

QNA
Doha

Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation (QRDI) Council and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) have officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance scientific collaboration and innovation between Qatar and Switzerland.

The signing ceremony, which took place in Doha, was attended by a distinguished Swiss delegation led by State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation of the Swiss Confederation Martina Hirayama. The MoU establishes a framework for future co-operation across various research domains, opening avenues for joint research initiatives between Qatari and Swiss scientists.

Secretary-General at QRDI

Council Eng Omar al-Ansari said, "This partnership with the Swiss National Science Foundation represents a strategic milestone in advancing QRDI Council's mission to drive impactful research, development, and innovation. By enabling collaboration, knowledge exchange, and talent mobility, it supports the growth of innovation capacity and fosters enduring links between our scientific communities - contributing to both national progress and global engagement."

President of the SNSF Research Council Torsten Schwede stated, "This MoU will enable us to kick-start co-operation between the SNSF and QRDI, to the benefit of both our research communities. The first step will be to encourage the mobility of our researchers and could lead to the establishment of a joint research programme in areas of strategic importance to both countries. We want the processes

to be as simple as possible and look forward to co-creating these partnerships with our QRDI colleagues."

The collaboration will be actively advanced through four key areas of co-operation designed to encourage research engagement and promote meaningful scientific exchange between Qatar and Switzerland.

A coordinated communications campaign will raise awareness across both communities, while a jointly hosted webinar will introduce the Scientific Exchanges instrument to researchers in both countries.

As a pilot initiative, the collaboration will be evaluated based on initial interest and outcomes, guiding future phases of development. To further support engagement, QRDI Council supported by the Leading House MENA, will facilitate networking opportunities to help researchers identify



suitable collaborators, with the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) amplifying these efforts through its own communication channels. The visit began with speeches from State Secretary for Education, Research Martina

Hirayama, and Secretary-General of the QRDI Council Omar al-Ansari. The event then concluded with the formal MoU signing ceremony and a networking session. This new partnership supports Qatar's vision for innovation and

research excellence, which aligns with the Qatar National Vision 2030. By building international partnerships and empowering local talent, Qatar is further strengthening its research and innovation ecosystem.



QRCS launches phase 2 of 'Road to Stability' initiative in Lebanon

With funding from Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) and Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs have launched phase 2 of the "Road to Stability", an initiative aimed at supporting the poorest Lebanese families affected by the recent war on Lebanon.

The overall purpose of the project is to enhance the financial stability of the most vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian families in Lebanon. Earlier, phase 1 had been completed for the benefit of Syrian refugee families in Lebanon, in collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

This newly launched phase, which focuses on the affected Lebanese families, is funded by QFFD and implemented in partnership with Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs. Based on regular assessments and surveys conducted by the ministry to identify the most affected people, 3,325 Lebanese families were selected to receive monthly cash aid for three months. It is another episode of the constructive collaboration between QRCS and Lebanon's Ministry of

Social Affairs as part of the country's social safety net programmes, designed to empower the families most in need and enhance their resilience. During the ceremony, the participants expressed their hope that this co-operation would serve as an effective model for unified humanitarian efforts, thanks to the generous support from QFFD and close co-ordination among Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs, QRCS, and other humanitarian partners in Lebanon.

In his keynote speech on behalf of QFFD, Qatar's ambassador to Lebanon Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani said, "This project comes at a time when Lebanon is experiencing critical circumstances, which entails lending a hand for the country to come through the recent crises and wars. The project's name indicates the importance of stability sought by all the Lebanese people, as well as Qatar's keenness to preserve it with unlimited support, for Lebanon to further pursue progress and recovery."

Lebanon's Minister of Social Affairs, Hamin al-Sayed, stated, "I would like to express my deep appreciation to QRCS, which has

always been committed to professional and dignity-respecting humanitarianism. We owe a debt of gratitude to QFFD and the government and people of Qatar for this significant contribution, which is a testimony to the humanitarian, social, economic, and developmental ties between our two nations." Assistant Secretary-General for Communication and Fundraising at QRCS, Mohamed Ahmed al-Beshri, commented, "This project is not just a technical intervention or financial support. It is a true manifestation of our humanitarian and fraternal responsibility towards the families who suffer from harsh living conditions. Human dignity is indivisible. Standing up for the most vulnerable people is a moral duty underlying our institutional endeavours. We at QRCS believe that sustainable partnerships built on mutual trust are the solid foundation for any successful humanitarian intervention. We are proud of our strong partnership with Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs and highly value the substantial and continuous contributions by QFFD, our strategic and permanent partner in the humanitarian journey."

QCS launches tobacco awareness drive for Indonesian community



Qatar Cancer Society (QCS), in partnership with the Embassy of Indonesia, organised a key awareness event aimed at the Indonesian community in Qatar. The event was part of the QCS campaign on lung cancer awareness under the theme 'Break Free.. Quit Now', coinciding with World No Tobacco Day. Indonesian ambassador Ridwan Hassan, embassy representatives, public figures, media, and many Indonesian community members from various sectors, as well as participants from the Qatari and international communities were present. The event aimed to raise health awareness, particularly concerning lung cancer, one of the most prevalent cancers linked to smoking. The campaign also encouraged participants to adopt healthier lifestyles and highlighted the importance of early detection as an effective method for prevention and treatment. There was a panel discussion, survivor testimonies, interactive Q&A sessions, and free medical services from Naseem Medical Centre. The event concluded with a call for the continuation of such awareness initiatives and their expansion to include all communities in Qatar, in a collective effort to promote cancer prevention, early detection, and healthy lifestyle practices, particularly in combating smoking.

QC provides economic projects in Yemen

Qatar Charity (QC), supported by generous donors, provided 35 income-generating projects for mothers of sponsored orphans in Yemen, a statement said.

The initiative aims to economically empower these women, helping them achieve self-reliance, and live with dignity. It marks a significant shift from financial dependence to sustainable development. Each beneficiary family received a full set of tools and equipment to start small-scale pastry and desert production businesses.

The beneficiaries can now produce and sell baked goods, creating a sustainable source of income to support their households. Asya Mohammed, a widow who used to borrow baking tools from neighbours, shared her joy: "I always dreamed of owning my own equip-



ment - today, I received more than I ever imagined. I am truly grateful to Qatar Charity and the kind donors. I am determined to make my project a success." Umm Ahmed,

a mother of several orphans, described the project as a turning point. "It will cover rent and my children's education, moving us from hardship to hope," she said.

Closure of Mall of Qatar tunnel



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary partial traffic closure of the Mall of Qatar tunnel for road users coming on the service road from Ahmed Bin Ali Stadium towards Doha from May 16 until May 20 from 2am to 10am. The closure in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic is to carry out routine road maintenance. Ashghal has urged road users to reroute to nearby streets to reach their destinations. Ashghal will install road signs advising motorists of the temporary closure and has requested all to follow and abide by the speed limit to ensure safety.

Chevrolet Camaro models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in co-operation with Jaidah Motors & Trading Co, has announced the recall of Chevrolet Camaro 2020-2022 models, as the transmission control valve in some of these vehicles may be susceptible to excess wear over time, resulting in a gradual loss of pressure within the transmission control valve that can cause harsh shifting. In rare cases, the wheels may experience a momentary lock up, and if

this happens while driving, there is increased risk of a crash.

The ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs. The ministry said it will coordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out. The

ministry urges all consumers to report any violations or breaches by contacting the Consumer Protection and Combatting Commercial Fraud Department, which receives complaints, suggestions, and inquiries through the following communication channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, ministry's accounts on social media: @mociqatar, ministry's Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices)

GCC-US partnership stands on solid ground: al-Budaiwi

QNA
Riyadh

Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah emphasised that the relationship between the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries and the United States has evolved over decades into a strong strategic partnership that extends beyond security to include co-operation in various fields.

Speaking at the GCC-US Summit in Riyadh, Sheikh Meshal noted the summit is taking place amid complex international circumstances, marked by escalating crises, conflicts, and unconventional challenges that transcend national borders. He commended the GCC's unified stance in supporting the region's security and stability, expressing gratitude to US President Donald Trump for his continued commitment to engaging with GCC leaders to strengthen co-operation based on mutual partnership and a shared vision for a future of peace, stability, and development.

The Amir of Kuwait emphasised the economy as a central pillar in Gulf-US relations, expressing optimism about launching joint initiatives in smart infrastructure investment, innovation, entrepreneurship, fair trade, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). He praised the strong investment ties between the United States and GCC nations, particularly Kuwait, and expressed hope for further expansion of strategic investments.

Sheikh Meshal reaffirmed the unity of the GCC in maintaining firm positions in defence of regional and global security, rejecting any actions that could destabilise the region, threaten sovereignty, or undermine territorial integrity and natural resources.

He proposed establishing a Gulf-US forum for cultural and educational exchanges, joint research, youth empowerment, and the promotion of tolerance and cultural understanding.

Regarding regional issues, Sheikh Meshal expressed hope that the summit would serve as a gateway to addressing pressing concerns in the Middle East, particularly the stalled

Trump at Gulf-US Summit: US supports regional efforts for Palestinian future

peace process. He stressed the need for a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue in line with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, ensuring the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Diplomatic efforts

He also underscored the importance of international efforts to ensure Syria's security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity while ending external interference and alleviating humanitarian suffering. The Kuwaiti Amir welcomed Oman's diplomatic efforts, which led to a ceasefire agreement in Yemen, expressing hope that the truce would secure free navigation and smooth international trade flow. Additionally, he commended US efforts in resolving global conflicts, including mediating ceasefires between India and Pakistan and working toward ending the Russia-Ukraine war.

Concluding his speech, Sheikh Meshal emphasised the GCC's belief that regional stability is a shared responsibility, affirming that the partnership with the United States remains a cornerstone in maintaining security and prosperity in the region.

King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah has affirmed the depth and importance of the strategic partnership between the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries and the United States. Addressing the GCC-US Summit held in Riyadh yesterday, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah praised US President Donald Trump's diplomatic vision and approach aimed at promoting peace and resolving conflicts, as fully consistent with that launched by Arab leaders at the Bahrain Summit in May 2024.

He commended Trump's decision to lift economic sanctions on Syria, expressing his aspiration for further co-operation to achieve a safe, stable, and prosperous region. This policy represents a unique opportunity to move together toward achieving a just



US President Donald Trump speaks at the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

and lasting peace that guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people through a two-state solution, preserves regional security and stability, and contributes to making the region free of weapons of mass destruction, thus preventing an arms race.

King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah highlighted the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's role in proposing and supporting peace initiatives and defusing wars, perhaps the most important of which recently was the ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. He hailed the GCC-US strategic integration to achieve security and development as a key pillar for preserving achievements and fulfilling people's aspirations for a more prosperous and flourishing future.

Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Co-operation Affairs and Special Representative of the Sultan of Oman Sayyid Tariq al-Said has affirmed that GCC-US relations are a long-term strategy, and aim for laying the foundations of security, stability, and prosperity. In his address to the GCC-US Summit in Riyadh, the Omani Deputy Prime Minister added that GCC-US relations are embodied in a shared commitment to achieving integration and mutual co-operation in political, economic, technological, and defence interests, and working together to resolve regional and international crises and challenges.

Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al-Said expressed deep concern over the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, resulting from decades of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. He said that this ongoing injustice, coupled with the international community's inability to achieve a just peace, was at the heart of many regional challenges.

Historic steps

He maintained that there was a glimmer of hope given historic steps taken towards establishing peace and stability in the region. He expressed Oman's appreciation for the role played by the US President in ending the conflict in Yemen and restoring safe navigation in the Red Sea. The GCC-US partnership stands on solid ground and is manifested across areas of trade, investment, education, energy, and defence, said GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed al-Budaiwi.

Addressing the GCC-US Summit in Riyadh, al-Budaiwi added that 10 working groups are overseeing this partnership. The GCC states continue to lead in traditional energy markets and are moving forward with pioneering partnerships with the US in the fields of clean energy and environmental innovation, he added.

Al-Budaiwi elaborated that such relations are strengthened by the presence of tens of thousands of GCC students in American uni-

versities and the spread of American academic branches in the region, in addition to deep-rooted defence relations embodied by qualitative deals and shared bases, making this partnership a unique model of multidimensional strategic integration.

The Secretary-General reiterated the GCC states' steadfast position in supporting the Palestinian people and supporting them at all levels. US President Donald Trump stated during the Gulf-US Summit in Riyadh on Wednesday that the United States supports all regional efforts aimed at securing a future for the Palestinian people.

He also affirmed his administration's decision to lift sanctions on Syria and highlighted Lebanon's opportunity to build a prosperous state at peace with its neighbours. Trump emphasised the Gulf countries' leadership role in fostering stability and prosperity in the Middle East, stating that the whole world is watching the Middle East, and many observe with admiration the opportunities emerging in this region. He stressed that Gulf nations are at the forefront of establishing a peaceful and prosperous Middle East, adding that he has seen this prosperity, witnessed great unity and friendship, and spent time engaging with leaders before this summit. He also said that the world is watching the Middle East, and many admire the opportunities available in this region.

US president's visit to Saudi strengthens partnership: FM

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah has affirmed that US President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia carried special significance and demonstrated the two countries' keenness to strengthen the partnership to achieve common goals.

During a press conference yesterday following the conclusion of President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, the Foreign Minister pointed to the depth of economic relations and the distinguished partnership between the two countries, noting that the total volume of trade between the two countries from 2013 to 2024 amounted to approximately \$500bn.

He added that the Saudi-US Investment Forum witnessed dozens of meetings with private sector leaders and the largest companies in both countries, resulting in partnership opportunities worth \$600bn, including agreements exceeding \$300bn in various fields.

The partnership also encompasses several development and pivotal sectors, and supports efforts to diversify the Saudi economy and the opportunities available in strategic and promising sectors in the US economy in the long term, contributing to achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

The Saudi FM praised the US President's announcement to lift sanctions on Syria, appreciating this important step toward rebuilding Syria and expressing his hope that this would contribute to Syria's stability and progress. He noted that the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the US discussed developments in several countries, including Yemen, Lebanon, and Sudan, affirming Saudi Arabia's full support for everything that would achieve security and stability and create conditions for development and prosperity in the region.

The foreign minister emphasised the agreement of the Saudi and US leaderships on the necessity of halting the war in Gaza, releasing the hostages, ensuring the flow of humanitarian and relief aid, and working to achieve a just and lasting peace.

The Kingdom also affirmed the principle of a two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. **(QNA)**

Gaza rescuers say 80 killed in Israeli strikes

AFP
Gaza City

Gaza rescuers said at least 80 people were killed in Israeli bombardment across the Palestinian territory yesterday, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to US envoy Steve Witkoff about the release of hostages. Negotiations for the release of the captives held in Gaza have been ongoing, with the latest talks taking place in Doha, where US President Donald Trump was visiting yesterday.

Netanyahu's office said the premier had discussed with Witkoff and his negotiating team "the issue of the hostages and the missing". Fighting meanwhile raged in Gaza, where civil defence official Mo-

ammed al-Mughayyir told AFP 80 people had been killed by Israeli bombardment since dawn, including 59 in the north.

AFP footage from the aftermath of a strike in Jabalia, northern Gaza, showed mounds of rubble and twisted metal from collapsed buildings. Palestinians, including young children, picked through the debris in search of belongings. Footage of mourners in northern Gaza showed women in tears as they knelt next to bodies wrapped in bloodstained white shrouds. "It's a nine-month-old baby. What did he do?" one of them cried out.

Hasan Moqbel, a Palestinian who lost relatives, told AFP: "There are no homes fit for living. I have no shelter, no food, no water. Those who don't die from air strikes die from hunger, and those

who don't die from hunger die from lack of medicine."

Israel's military on Wednesday urged residents in part of a Gaza City neighbourhood to evacuate, warning that its forces would "attack the area with intense force". From the occupied West Bank, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said Wednesday he favoured a "ceasefire at any price" in Gaza, accusing Netanyahu of wanting to continue the war "for his own reasons".

Mohammad Awad, an emergency doctor in northern Gaza's Indonesian Hospital, told AFP that supply shortages meant his department could not properly handle the flow of wounded from the Jabalia strike. "There are not enough beds, no medicine, and no means for surgical or medical treatment, which leaves

doctors unable to save many of the injured who are dying due to lack of care", he said.

Awad added that "the bodies of the martyrs are lying on the ground in the hospital corridors after the morgue reached full capacity. The situation is catastrophic in every sense of the word." Israel imposed an aid blockade on the Gaza Strip on March 2 after talks to prolong a January 19 ceasefire broke down.

The resulting shortages of food and medicine have aggravated an already dire situation in the Palestinian territory, although Israel has dismissed UN warnings that a potential famine looms. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday called for "the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, unimpeded humanitarian access and an immediate



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

cessation of hostilities," in Gaza. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said the humanitarian situation in Gaza was "ever more dramatic and unjustifiable". A US-led initiative for aid distribution under Israeli military security drew international criticism as it appears to sideline the United Nations and existing aid organisa-

tions, and would overhaul current humanitarian structures in Gaza.

Medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres said the plan would make "aid conditional on forced displacement" and vetting of the population. It added in a statement that Israel was creating "conditions for the eradication of Palestinian lives in Gaza".

'Too good to be true': investors eye Syria after Trump sanctions move

Reuters
Damascus/London

An end to US sanctions on Syria is expected to mark a new era for an economy devastated by 13 years of war, opening the way for investment flows from the Syrian diaspora, Türkiye, and Gulf states that back the new government. Business executives, Syria's finance minister, and analysts told Reuters they anticipated an influx of capital into the bankrupt economy once sanctions are lifted in line with President Donald Trump's surprise announcement, notwithstanding the many challenges still facing the deeply-fractured nation.

Billionaire Syrian businessman Ghassan Aboud told Reuters he was making plans to invest, and expected other Syrians with international business ties to be doing the same. "They were scared

to come and work in Syria due to the sanctions risks ... This will completely disappear now," said Aboud, who lives in the UAE.

"I'm of course planning to enter the market, for two reasons: I want to help the country recover in any way possible, and second, the ground is fertile: any seed planted today can result in a good profit margin," he said, outlining a multi-billion dollar plan to boost Syrian art, culture and education.

The lifting of sanctions would radically reshape an economy already set on a new course by Syria's new rulers, who have pursued free-market policies and shifted away from the state-led model adopted during five decades of rule by the Assad family. The United States and other Western powers imposed tough sanctions on Syria during the war that spiralled out of protests against Bashar al-Assad's rule in 2011. Washington kept them in place after he was toppled

in December, as it formulated its Syria policy and monitored the actions of the new administration led by interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former Al Qaeda commander.

Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, which both support Sharaa's government, had urged Washington to lift the sanctions. Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said on Wednesday there would be many investment opportunities once that happens. The conflict has turned many urban areas to rubble and killed hundreds of thousands of people. More than 90% of the 23mn Syrians live below the poverty line, UN agencies say.

"There's a real chance for a transformational change in Syria and the broader region," said Timothy Ash, senior sovereign strategist for emerging markets at RBC BlueBay Asset Management. Turkish firms and banks are expected to benefit from the lifting

of sanctions, said Onur Genc, chief executive officer of financial group BBVA, whose group comprises Garanti BBVA, the second-largest private bank in Türkiye.

"For Türkiye, it's going to be positive because there's a lot of reconstruction needed in Syria. Who's there to do that? The Turkish companies," he told Reuters. "The lifting of the sanctions would allow the Turkish companies to go there now much better, and the Turkish banks to be able to finance them - so it will help," he said.

Syria's pound has strengthened since Trump's announcement. Currency traders said it was hovering between 9,000 and 9,500 to the dollar on Wednesday, compared to 12,600 earlier this week. Before the war in 2011, it traded at 47. Syrian Finance Minister Yisr Barnieh told Reuters that investors from the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, among others, had been making inquiries about

investing. "Syria today is a land of opportunities, with immense potential across every sector-from agriculture to oil, tourism, infrastructure, and transportation," he told Reuters. "We call on all investors to take this opportunity."

Watching footage of Trump meeting Sharaa in Riyadh on Wednesday at his Damascus office, Karam Bechara, general manager of Shahba Bank in Syria, described excitement in the business community. "It's too good to be true," he said. "We're on the right track now internationally unless something happens in Syria that derails the process," he said.

Syria remains fragile. Some armed groups have yet to turn their weapons over to the government, Kurdish autonomy demands are a point of friction, and sectarian violence has left minorities afraid of Sharaa's rule, despite his promises of protection and inclusive governance. Israel opposes

Sharaa, and has bombed Syria repeatedly. Jihad Yazigi, editor of a leading newsletter on Syria's economy, Syria Report, said the US decision was transformative because it sent "a very strong political signal" and opened the way for its reintegration with the Gulf, international financial organisations, and Syria's big diaspora in the West. Imad al-Khatib, a Lebanese investor, said he had accelerated his plans to invest in Syria after Trump's announcement. Together with Lebanese and Syrian partners, he carried out a feasibility study for a \$200mn waste sorting plant in Damascus two months ago. On Wednesday morning, he sent a team of specialists to Syria on Wednesday to begin preparations. "This is the first step ... and larger steps will follow, God willing. We will certainly work to attract new investors because Syria is much larger than Lebanon," he told Reuters.



Merz aims for Europe's 'strongest conventional army'

AFP
Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz pledged yesterday to build up "the strongest conventional army in Europe" as the continent faces a hostile Russia while the Ukraine war rages on.

"This is appropriate for Europe's most populous and economically powerful country," Merz told parliament. "Our friends and partners also expect this from us. Indeed, they practically demand it."

In his first major address to the Bundestag since his government was inaugurated last week, Merz vowed to "provide all financial means necessary" for the long-underfunded defence forces.

Germany, with its dark World War II history, has long been reluctant to spend big on its military and funding dropped off sharply after the Cold War as European

countries relied on Nato heavy-weight the United States for security.

US President Donald Trump has demanded that Germany and other allies spend more on common defence and thrown into doubt Washington's future commitment to the transatlantic military alliance.

Merz has pledged a greater diplomatic and security role for Berlin in Europe at a time of high geopolitical tensions.

He warned yesterday that "anyone who seriously believes that Russia would be satisfied with a victory over Ukraine or with the annexation of parts of the country is mistaken".

His government has already cleared the way for a spending "bazooka" worth hundreds of billions of euros in extra funding for defence and infrastructure by getting a fiscal plan passed by the previous parliament.

"Strengthening the Bundeswehr (armed forces) is our top pri-



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz delivers his first government statement during a session at the Bundestag, the German lower house of parliament, in Berlin yesterday. (AFP)

ority," Merz said. "The German government will provide all the financial resources the Bundeswehr needs to become Europe's strongest conventional army."

"Strength deters aggressors, while weakness invites aggres-

sion," he added.

He also emphasised continued support for Ukraine but also said that "we are not a party to war, and we don't want to become one".

"Our goal is a Germany and a

Europe that are so strong together that we never have to use our weapons," Merz said. "To achieve this, we will have to assume more responsibility within Nato and the EU."

For now, the challenges are huge. In recent years, Germany's Bundeswehr has been mocked for equipment failures, including helicopters that cannot fly and rifles that do not shoot straight.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine over three years ago jolted the centre-left former chancellor Olaf Scholz into action.

He announced €100bn (\$112bn) in extra defence spending, which has allowed Germany to meet the Nato target of 2% of GDP.

But much remains to be done, and the parliamentary commissioner for the armed forces, Eva Hoegl, recently warned that the military still had "too little of everything".

Major orders have been placed, including for new German-built submarines, but they will take

years to build and deliver.

Germany halted military conscription under chancellor Angela Merkel, but Merz said steps would be taken to rebuild troop strength.

"We will create a new, attractive voluntary military service," he said.

"There are many young people in our country who want to take responsibility for Germany, its defence capability, and its security. We want to and we will promote this."

Defence Minister Boris Pistorius later suggested in parliament that the recruitment drive may not stay voluntary.

"We have agreed that we will initially rely on voluntary participation, creating a military service that is initially based on voluntary participation and is intended to encourage young people to serve their country," he said.

"And I say quite deliberately and honestly, the emphasis is on 'initially' in case we cannot recruit enough volunteers."

Pakistan returns captured Indian border guard

AFP
New Delhi

Pakistan returned a captured border guard to India yesterday, in a fresh sign of detente after a ceasefire ended four days of conflict between the nuclear-armed South Asian rivals.

The guard was captured a day after an April attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that killed 26 people and sparked tit-for-tat missile, drone and fighter jet attacks.

No group claimed responsibility for the April 22 attack but India blamed Pakistan for backing it. Islamabad rejects the accusations and has called for an independent probe.

"Purnam Kumar Shaw, who had been in the custody of Pakistan Rangers since 23 April 2025, was handed over to India," India's Border Security Force said in a statement.

The handover was "conducted peacefully and in accordance with established protocols," it added.

"I am very happy today," Shaw's wife Rajani, who is pregnant, told reporters following the announcement.

She had earlier told the Indian Express newspaper that before the ceasefire she had "lost all hope".

Pakistan's army announced yesterday a new death toll from the fighting, saying India's "unprovoked and reprehensible dastardly attacks" killed 40 civilians, half of them women and children.

It also said 13 military service members had been killed during operations.

India has said that 15 civilians and five soldiers died on its side.

Despite mutual claims of initial violations, the ceasefire still appeared to be holding yesterday.

The flare-up in violence was the worst since the rivals' last open



Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (front, right) along with the country's Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir (front, left) on their visit to Pasrur Cantonment in Sialkot, Punjab province. (AFP)

conflict in 1999 and sparked global shudders that it could spiral into a full-blown war.

The Pakistani military has said it downed five Indian jets without any losses of its own.

India has not disclosed losing any aircraft, although a security source told AFP at least three fighter jets had crashed on Indian territory.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a televised address to the nation Monday that Pakistan had chosen to attack rather than help it fight "terrorism".

"If another terrorist attack against India is carried out, a strong response will be given," he said.

Modi wrote on X Tuesday that he had met with service members involved in the conflict.

"India is eternally grateful to our armed forces for everything they do for our nation," he said.

Sharif held a call with UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday in which "he expressed concerns over the continued provocative and inflammatory remarks by Indian leadership, as a threat to the fragile regional peace", his office said in a statement.

Pakistan's foreign ministry said that it rejected Modi's "provocative and inflammatory assertions" and his "propensity to fabricate

misleading narratives to justify aggression".

"Make no mistake, we will closely monitor India's actions and behaviour in this regard in the coming days. We also urge the international community to do the same," it added in a statement.

Sharif also warned India about suspending a key water supply treaty, calling it his country's "red line".

"Don't even think of touching the water treaty," Sharif said after India suspended it in the wake of the attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that sparked the latest conflict.

Germany arrests 3 Ukrainians over Russian sabotage plot

AFP
Frankfurt

German prosecutors said yesterday they had arrested three Ukrainians accused of plotting sabotage attacks on goods transports for Russia, amid soaring tensions between Moscow and Berlin.

The suspects, detained in Germany and Switzerland, had told individuals "believed to be acting on behalf of Russian state authorities" that they were ready "to commit arson and explosive attacks on goods transport in Germany", federal prosecutors said.

The accused allegedly aimed to send packages from Germany containing explosive devices to recipients in Ukraine, which would go off as they were being transported, they said.

Germany has been on high alert for sabotage plots directed from Moscow since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine led to a rapid deterioration in ties.

In a speech to parliament yesterday, new Chancellor Friedrich Merz accused Russia of targeting Germany and other European countries with acts ranging from cyberattacks, espionage and sabotage to disinformation, poison attacks and murders.

Such acts were "overwhelmingly the work of the Russian government and its helpers," he said, accusing Moscow of "attempts at division and destabilisation".

In the latest case yesterday, one of the suspects, partially identified as Vladyslav T, posted two

test packages in Cologne at the end of March, which contained GPS trackers, prosecutors said.

The order to send them was given by Yevhen B, who provided the contents from the packages via the third suspect, Daniil B.

The suspects, arrested between Friday last week and Tuesday, are "strongly suspected" of acting as foreign agents for the purpose of carrying out sabotage, prosecutors said.

They are also accused of plotting to commit arson and cause explosions.

Vladyslav T and Daniil B, arrested in the German cities of Cologne and Konstanz, respectively, have been remanded in custody.

Yevhen B was detained in the Swiss canton of Thurgau, and is due to appear before a judge after being transferred to Germany.

Moscow-Berlin relations have been in the deep freeze since Russia invaded Ukraine and the West imposed a barrage of punishing sanctions.

Germany, Kyiv's second-biggest military back after the United States, has been shaken by a string of alleged sabotage and espionage cases linked to Russia.

In a case separate from yesterday's arrests, media recently reported that European intelligence services believed that Russia was behind a plot to plant explosive devices on cargo planes.

Several people reportedly implicated in the operation, which saw parcels explode at two DHL depots last July, were thought to be low-level operatives hired by Moscow.

Court slams Brussels over Von der Leyen vaccine secrecy

A top court yesterday ruled that the European Commission had failed the transparency test by declining to release text messages sent by Ursula von der Leyen to the head of Pfizer as the bloc tried to secure Covid vaccines.

Siding with *The New York Times*, which brought the case, the Court of Justice of the European Union (EUCJ) said the commission did not give "plausible" explanations as to why it did not hand over the texts to the US daily.

The ruling is a blow to Von der Leyen, the commission president, and gives weight to critics who have accused her of centralised and opaque decision-making. In a sharp rebuke of the EU's top leadership body, the Luxembourg based court wrote that "the Commission cannot merely state that it does not hold the requested documents".

It "failed to explain in a plausible manner why it considered that the text messages exchanged in the context of the procurement of Covid-19 vaccines did not contain important information", the court added in a statement. The verdict, which can be appealed, quashes the commission's decision not to hand over the messages and sends the EU executive back to the drawing board in its duty to respond to *The New York Times* request.

However, given the uncertainty around whether the messages have been deleted or not, what happens next is not overly clear.

The commission said it "will adopt a new decision providing a more detailed explanation" in response to *The Times* — while also considering whether to appeal yesterday's verdict.

"Transparency has always been of paramount importance for the Commission and President von

der Leyen," it said in a statement.

The case centred on elusive exchanges between von der Leyen and Albert Bourla, chief executive of Pfizer — which was chosen by the bloc as its main vaccine supplier at the height of the pandemic.

The New York Times, which revealed the existence of the messages, sued the commission in 2023 after Brussels declined to produce them following a freedom of information request.

The newspaper hailed the ruling as a "victory for transparency and accountability", saying it sent "a powerful message that ephemeral communications are not beyond the reach of public scrutiny". The commission argued it could not find the texts because they had not been recorded and archived — something it says is done only when the content is deemed "substantive".

But such reasoning was rebuffed by the lower chamber of the EUCJ, which chastised the EU body for not having explained what searches it carried out to find the documents, and why it no longer had them.

"The Commission has not sufficiently clarified whether the requested text messages were deleted and, if so, whether the deletion was done deliberately or automatically or whether the President's mobile phone had been replaced in the meantime," it said. The EU moved swiftly after the Covid pandemic emerged in 2020 to secure vaccines for member countries to buy for their citizens and residents at a time of massive global demand for the shots. But many aspects of the procurement from Pfizer have been kept confidential, leading to accusations of a lack of transparency — and several legal proceedings in Belgium and with EU courts.

Tom Cruise dazzles Cannes for *Mission: Impossible* premiere

Tom Cruise hit the Cannes Film Festival's red carpet yesterday to a live band rendition of the *Mission: Impossible* theme song as organisers pulled out all the stops to celebrate what may be the action star's last appearance in the franchise.

Expectations had been high for Cruise's return to Cannes three years after he had presented *Top Gun: Maverick* with a colourful jet flyover. He could be seen mouthing "wow" and "bravo" to the band during the performance. Cruise, 62, greeted fans who had been waiting hours in the French Riviera resort town's unrelenting sun before joining the other stars of *Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning* to walk the carpet.

Fellow cast members Hayley Atwell, Pom Klementieff, Greg Tarzan Davis, Angela Bassett, Esai Morales and Hannah Waddingham posed with Cruise, even snapping a few selfies themselves, before heading into the red-bedecked Grand Lumiere Theatre. US actors Zoe Saldana and Eva Longoria, as well as Andie MacDowell, sporting a suit, and Cannes jury member Halle Berry were also spotted on their way to



US actor and producer Tom Cruise arrives for the screening of the film *Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning* at the 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes yesterday. (AFP)

the Cannes premiere. Cruise reprises the role of agent Ethan Hunt for the eighth time in the latest iteration in the series from director Christopher McQuarrie due to hit US theatres on May 23.

With a budget of about \$400mn, the new *Mission: Impossible* is one of several big-name films

that cinema operators are hoping will help them stay on the road to recovery this year, five years after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Box office receipts totalled \$8.6bn last year in the United States and Canada, 25% below the pre-pandemic heights of \$11.4bn in 2019.

RULING

South Korea jails two over courthouse riot

A South Korean court handed two men jail terms yesterday for their role in a January riot which saw supporters of impeached ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol attack a court building. Protesters stormed the Seoul Western District Court in January this year after a judge extended the detention of Yoon - South Korea's first sitting head of state to be arrested - over his brief imposition of martial law. The protesters used fire extinguishers to break doors and smash windows, entering the court building and vandalising it. The Seoul Western District Court sentenced two men to one year and six months, and one year in prison, respectively.

ACCIDENT

Japanese military training plane crashes

A Japanese military training plane crashed near a lake shortly after takeoff with two people on board, authorities said yesterday. "A T-4 training aircraft that belongs to the Air Self-Defence Force crashed at 3.08pm (0608GMT) after radar lost (it) near a lake... after taking off at Komaki Air Base" in central Japan, Defence Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters. Nakatani said two people were on board, without revealing their identity. "We don't know what caused the aircraft to crash, but we will continue to do our utmost to save lives," he said, adding that the military has been carrying out search operations.

LAW AND ORDER

Suspended death sentence for ex-chief of China chip giant

China handed a suspended death sentence to the former head of a major state-owned maker of high-end semiconductors, state media said. Zhao Weiguo, former chairman of semiconductor Tsinghua Unigroup, came under official investigation in 2022 and was formally accused of graft the following year. Tsinghua Unigroup rose to become one of the country's leading chipmakers after a string of acquisitions, but accumulated huge debts under Zhao's chairmanship. A court in northeastern China yesterday found Zhao guilty of massive embezzlement, illegal profiteering and intentionally harming the interests of a listed company, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

FALLOUT

Sri Lanka to monitor bus drivers with AI

Sri Lanka will use artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor bus drivers and make seat belts mandatory on public transport, a government minister said yesterday, after the country's worst bus crash in two decades killed 23 people. Buses are to be equipped with driver monitoring systems from next year, while seat belts will become compulsory on public transport from June, Transport Minister Bimal Rathnayake told reporters in Colombo. It came after an overcrowded bus carrying dozens plummeted into a precipice on Sunday. The changes are aimed at "educating motorists to develop a better driving culture and improving safety standards", Rathnayake said.

Australian-made rocket set for historic space launch

AFP
Sydney

An Australian company says it aims to make the first orbital test launch of a locally-developed rocket today, carrying a jar of Vegemite as its payload.

The three-stage Eris rocket is set to fly from a spaceport near Bowen on the east coast, said its developer, Gilmour Space Technologies.

If successful, it would be the first Australian-made rocket to make an orbital launch from Australian soil.

After securing approval from the Australian Space Agency, take-off is expected within a multi-day window starting today, weather permitting, chief executive Adam Gilmour said yesterday.

But he's not setting his hopes too high for now.

If it actually orbits Earth "I would probably have a heart attack, actually, because I'll be so surprised, but deliriously happy", Gilmour said.

"Look, we're going to be happy if it gets off the pad - 10, 20, 30 seconds of flight time: fantastic. So orbit is just not in the realm of my belief right now, even though it's theoretically possible."

The 23-metre vehicle - designed to launch small satellites into low-Earth orbit - is being prepared for takeoff from Abbot Point, about 1,000km up from the Queensland capital Brisbane.

Weighing 30 tonnes fully fuelled, it relies on a "fairly unique" hybrid propulsion system, using a solid inert fuel and a liquid oxidiser, which provides the oxy-

gen for it to burn, Gilmour said.

The payload for the test flight is a jar of Vegemite - a popular Australian toast topping - but the rocket design is for a capacity of 100-200kgs, with further upgrades being developed.

The test launch comes after about a decade of research by the company, which is backed by private investors including venture capital group Blackbird and pension fund HESTA.

"Look, we're going to be happy if it gets off the pad - 10, 20, 30 seconds of flight time: fantastic. So orbit is just not in the realm of my belief right now, even though it's theoretically possible"

"This is the first time an Australian company has done the design, build, manufacture, as well as the launch site. So we've done everything," Gilmour said.

The company, which has 230 employees, hopes to start commercial launches in late 2026 or early 2027, he said, and then to rapidly grow revenues.

"This is a test launch, which is normal for rockets, and we're going to see how we go and get as much data as we can - the more flight time we get the better," Gilmour said. A second rocket was already being built for launch sometime around the end of the year.

"We're going after the small sat business," he said.

"There's thousands and thousands of satellites that need to be launched into low orbit and there's not enough rockets. The signs are so clear about that, so we've just got to move as fast as we can."

Srinagar security



An Indian paramilitary soldier stands guard along a street in Srinagar, India, yesterday.

India rejects China renaming of places in Arunachal state

Reuters
New Delhi

India yesterday said it rejects China's move to rename places in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh where the Asian neighbours share a border, adding that the Himalayan territory was an integral part of India.

Beijing has renamed places in Arunachal Pradesh in the past as well and the issue has been an irritant in ties between the two countries, especially as they deteriorated sharply after a deadly military clash elsewhere on their border in 2020.

They reached an agreement in October to step back from their four-year military stand-

off in the western Himalayas, leading to disengagement of troops.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing that Beijing had "standardised some place names in (Arunachal Pradesh), which is entirely within China's sovereignty" - repeating what has been Beijing's standard response.

Beijing says Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls Zangnan, is a part of South Tibet - a claim New Delhi has repeatedly dismissed.

"Creative naming will not alter the undeniable reality that Arunachal Pradesh was, is, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India," India's foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said yesterday.

In April last year, China made a similar move by renaming about 30 locations in Aru-

nachal Pradesh, which India dismissed as "senseless" and reaffirmed the region's status as an "integral part" of the country.

India and China share a poorly demarcated 3,800km frontier and fought a brief but brutal war in 1962. There have also been infrequent clashes between their troops, with 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers killed in the 2020 fighting.

The India-China exchange comes days after India and Pakistan ended four days of intense military fighting.

The Indian strike came in response to an April 22 attack on tourists in Kashmir which killed 26 men.

Pakistan said it had nothing to do with the attack on the tourists, adding that India's strike was aimed at civilian targets.

IMF, Bangladesh reach agreement on \$1.3bn payout

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) yesterday announced it has reached agreement to expand an existing multi-billion-dollar loan programme with Bangladesh and to authorise a \$1.3bn payout.

The IMF expects Bangladesh's export-driven economy to grow by just 3.8% this year, causing a significant early challenge for the new government of Muhammad Yunus, which took power last year after the toppling of the autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina.

That would be the lowest growth rate outside of the Covid-19 pandemic for more than two decades, according to IMF data.

"Amid significant macroeconomic challenges, the authorities requested an augmentation," of the existing loan programme by around \$762mn, IMF Bangladesh mission chief Evan Papageorgiou said in a statement following a visit to the country.

Dhaka drenched



A cyclist rickshaw puller takes shelter under the canopy of his vehicle during rainfall in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday.

South Korea Starbucks in a froth over presidential candidates names

AFP
Seoul

Starbucks in South Korea has banned customers from using the names of the country's presidential candidates - or the disgraced ex-president - for their orders, the coffee giant said yesterday.

South Korea is holding snap presidential elections on June 3, to decide who will replace impeached former president Yoon Suk-yeol, ousted last month for his disastrous attempt to impose martial law in December.

In South Korea, Starbucks stores run a "Call My Name" service, which allows customers to select a nickname - which they input via the Starbucks app - that baristas use to announce orders when complete.

Customers will not be able to use the names of all seven presidential candidates, including frontrunner Lee Jae-myung, and main conservative rival Kim

Moon-soo, until after the vote, the company said.

Starbucks said that they had taken the action, which was announced this week as official campaigning started, based on past experience of customers misusing the "Call My Name" feature during previous elections.

The feature is a "unique Starbucks service designed to build a sense of connection between store staff and customers", the company said in a statement.

"We do not take any religious or political stance, and we actively monitor and restrict the use of negative language, profanity, sexually explicit content, or any expressions that may be difficult or inappropriate for our staff to call out."

The company is also banning customers from using the name of ex-president Yoon, who has been stripped of office and is facing an ongoing criminal trial on insurrection grounds.

Indians buy 14mn ACs a year, and need many more

AFP
New Delhi

Arati Verma is about to join the growing ranks of Indians installing air conditioning, scraping together savings to secure relief from sometimes deadly temperatures that can reach nearly 50C.

A record 14mn AC units were sold in India last year, with a nine-fold increase in residential ownership forecast by mid-century. That will give millions safer and more comfortable conditions at work and home.

But it will also drive demand for electricity that is generated most-

ly by burning climate-warming coal, and increase the hot AC exhaust air expelled into the country's stifling streets.

For Verma, the priority is securing some immediate relief. Her sales and marketing work means she must visit multiple stores a day, battling blazing heat.

"Coming home after a long day I want some comfort," said the 25-year-old, who earns Rs30,000 (\$350) a month and will pay Rs50,000 (\$584) to install air conditioning in her spartan two-room home.

"Earlier I would sleep on the terrace, but these days it's so hot even in the night, AC has become a necessity," she said in a poor

neighbourhood of the capital Delhi.

India is the world's fastest-growing AC market, despite only about seven percent of households currently owning units.

The boom could mean the world's most populous country needs to triple electricity production to meet demand, experts say.

The nation of 1.4bn people is already the world's third-biggest producer of climate-warming greenhouse gases, burning through 1bn tonnes of coal in 2024-25, according to a government statement.

"AC penetration across India is primarily driven by weather con-

ditions, a growing middle class, favourable consumer financing options and widespread electrification," said K J Jawa, the India chief of Japanese AC manufacturer Daikin.

"Today, ACs are no longer regarded as a luxury indulgence, but a productivity and need investment - as a good night sleep is imperative for our mental and physical wellness," he said.

Verma had to pay Rs13,000 (\$150) as a down payment, with the rest divided over monthly instalments.

"I could have bought gold with that money, which would have been a good investment, but I gave priority to the AC," she said.

According to the meteorological department, 2024 was India's hottest year since thorough records began in 1901, with sizzling temperatures following a global pattern of extreme weather driven by climate change.

The brutal summer heat can melt tarmac on the roads and puts millions of people at risk, with nearly 11,000 people dying due to heat stroke in India between 2012 and 2021, according to government data. Ironically, the refrigerants inside AC units and the coal-generated electricity that powers them only exacerbate global warming. Widespread AC use also raises outdoor temperatures by expelling indoor heat. Studies

- including by the World Health Organisation and UN-Habitat - show that the heat-generating motors inside AC units can themselves push up temperatures in urban areas by one degree Celsius or more.

Before buying an AC, Verma relied on a traditional air cooler - a noisy fan-run device that blows cool air off water-soaked pads.

But filling the cooler with water and making sure it did not become a haven for disease-carrying mosquitoes required great effort.

Sales are brisk at Imperial Refrigeration in Delhi's old quarters, with a steady stream of customers braving the afternoon heat.



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World hunger monitor faces 'large gap' after US aid cuts

For years Luis Treminio has provided guidance to farmers in El Salvador, using a US-backed famine monitoring system to boost crop production and help prevent hunger.

Armed with public bulletins and regular food security alerts produced by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), Treminio would relay the critical data to farmers.

But it was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and has been operating at sharply reduced capacity since President Donald Trump ordered a spending freeze on USAID in January.

"It's a very important early warning system tool," said Treminio, who heads the Salvadorian Chamber of Small and Medium Agricultural Producers, an association of about 125,000 corn, beans, sorghum and rice growers.

"If the programme's early warning alerts disappear, I think producers would have worse losses than we already do," he said.

FEWS NET provided forecasts six to twelve months in advance, with drought and weather monitoring to help farmers plan when to plant their crops.

The FEWS NET programme has shifted to a new website under the US Geological Survey (USGS) but with limited information, dealing a blow to those who relied on the service from local farming associations and international aid groups to governments and policymakers.

USAID cuts have significantly affected humanitarian organisations around the world that were working on life-saving programmes from vital HIV health care to land demining and food aid.

Created by the US government in 1985 after devastating famines in East and West Africa, FEWS NET reports have been a key resource for organisations deciding where and how to deploy humanitarian relief.

On January 27, Chemonics International, which manages FEWS NET, received a stop-work order from USAID. Two days later, FEWS NET's original website went dark and has been offline ever since.

According to Mike Budde, USGS FEWS NET programme manager, work is underway to get the new website fully functioning, but it is likely to take some time.

"The USGS FEWS NET website is in no way a replacement or replication" of the original site, Budde told Context/the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an e-mail.

"There is a large gap in the resources we provide" compared with the earlier website, he said.

"That said, we are in the process of coordinating across our science team to make available some of the information previously posted on that site in the interim."

Across Africa, food security experts and humanitarian workers said FEWS NET has been indispensable to humanitarian and development work - providing data-driven insights into food security, climate impacts and emerging crises. Its regular assessments and early warning reports enabled aid workers to anticipate and respond to acute food insecurity, especially in regions in East and West Africa affected by drought, conflict and economic shocks, they said. For example, during periods of severe drought or conflict, FEWS NET's monthly and seasonal forecasts integrating climate data, crop conditions and market analysis helped identify vulnerable communities and prioritise interventions.

This ensured that aid reached those most at risk before situations escalated into full-blown emergencies. "FEWS NET's comprehensive approach... has supported ActionAid Ethiopia and partners in designing holistic responses to complex crises," said Tinebeb Berhane, ActionAid Country Director in Ethiopia. "The network's evidence-based recommendations are widely used not only by NGOs but also by government bodies and international agencies for coordinated humanitarian planning and policy action."

By leveraging FEWS NET's robust early warning systems and localised data, Berhane said her organisation strengthened its anticipatory action and contributed to effective, targeted and life-saving assistance for vulnerable populations.

Erin Lentz, associate professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin and an expert on international food security, said FEWS NET was "trying to do better early warning, how to think about these things holistically".

"That's hard to do and takes a lot of training, understanding of global economic factors, requires the ability to think about how these things directly impact people's lives and livelihoods," she said.

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Trump visit bolsters Qatari-US co-ordination on Gaza ceasefire

US President Donald Trump's visit to Doha seeks to further bolster the bilateral strategic partnership amid regional and international developments that require close co-ordination between both sides, HE Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari, said.

Interviewed by Qatar News Agency (QNA), Dr al-Ansari added the visit demonstrates Qatar's key regional and international efforts across a variety of issues, including regional security, energy, and mediation to resolve disputes through peaceful means and diplomatic channels, and highlights the two sides' keenness to reinforce frameworks for dialogue and joint co-operation.

The visit agenda will most likely include talks on security and defence co-operation, the Palestinian case and developments in the Gaza Strip, and economic and investment partnerships, he said.

Dr al-Ansari voiced hopes that the visit would further advance the joint Qatari-US-Egyptian mediation efforts regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip. He reiterated that enhancing co-ordination with international partners, especially the US, is key to helping diplomatic efforts to establish a ceasefire, streamline humanitarian aid access, and ensure the protection of civilians.

Dr al-Ansari noted that Qatar is committed to its humanitarian and diplomatic role and continues to work with all parties to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable truce, ensuring the alleviation of the suffering of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. He added that the US president's visit is an important opportunity to unify efforts and increase international pressure to end the escalation and prepare the conditions for resuming the political process.

Dr al-Ansari added that Qatari-US relations represent a successful model of strategic co-operation, as both sides contribute to supporting efforts to achieve calm and peace through joint co-operation and co-ordination on numerous regional and international issues. This reflects the level of mutual trust and ongoing cooperation between the two countries to achieve global and regional stability.

He indicated that the partnership between Qatar and the US has proven its ability to positively influence the situation through close cooperation within the framework of joint mediation, in addition to ongoing efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement in Gaza, conclude



HE Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari, Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

a hostage exchange deal, and end the war. He also explained that Qatar and the US cooperated closely on the Afghan issue, and this co-operation resulted in significant success in the evacuation operations of approximately 120,000 people. Dr al-Ansari noted that Qatari mediation, in co-ordination with the US, played a prominent role in reaching the peace agreement between the US and the Taliban, signed in Doha in 2020.

Highlighting the humanitarian aspect of bilateral relations, he said both sides have collaborated across the spheres of relief, development, education, and health, through partnerships with international organisations, UN agencies, and charitable institutions.

The two countries share a common vision on the importance of supporting people affected by crises and disasters, he added, highlighting their co-operation to address humanitarian crises around the world and provide aid to communities suffering from conflict, based on established principles of respect for human dignity.

Dr al-Ansari added that these values are clearly demonstrated in the close co-operation between the two countries, alongside Egypt, through joint mediation aimed at halting the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, reaching a ceasefire agreement, exchanging hostages, and delivering aid, despite significant challenges.

This joint humanitarian role also reflects the depth of the strategic partnership and mutual trust between the two countries and their commitment to achieving regional and international stability.

He added that Qatar can play a pivotal multi-area role in supporting the US's efforts for regional and global peace and stability. He pointed out that the State of Qatar possesses extensive experience in mediation and has successfully mediated a number of regional and international conflicts, making it a reliable partner for the US in facilitating dialogue and building bridges of trust with various parties. Qatar participates actively in international efforts to combat terrorism and extremism through security co-operation and information exchange, in addition to its support for development and humanitarian projects in conflict zones, which contributes to enhancing societal stability and reducing the drivers of violence. These efforts affirm Qatar's commitment to being an effective and influential partner in the peace efforts led by the US at the regional and international levels, he said.

Regarding US efforts to resolve the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, Dr al-Ansari stated that Qatar appreciates the US's efforts to resolve major international crises, primarily the Russia-Ukraine crisis, as well as the dialogue with Iran on the nuclear issue. He hailed these initiatives as a manifestation of the US's commitment to seeking diplomatic solutions that preserve regional and international security and stability.

Qatar welcomes the talks held between the US and Iran in Muscat, mediated by Oman, and commends the positive spirit that prevailed and the statements made by both parties regarding them, he added, reaffirming Qatar's full support for diplomacy and dialogue as an approach to resolve all outstanding issues between the US and Iran, within the framework of its firm belief in the importance of consolidating security and peace and promoting stability, peace, and development at the regional and international levels.

This vision is part of the robust and strategic partnership between the US and Qatar, which has proven its strength and stability across various US administrations, reflecting the depth of institutional relations between the two countries.

Dr al-Ansari stressed that dialogue is the best option for resolving international crises and conflicts, reiterating Qatar's appreciation for the US's key role in promoting peaceful political processes on the international stage. (QNA)

Qatar: A model of quiet diplomacy

Mediation to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, dialogue, and preventive diplomacy is a top priority in Qatar's foreign policy and a constitutional commitment. Article 7 of the Permanent Constitution, issued in 2003, states: "The foreign policy of the state is based on the principles of strengthening international peace and security by means of encouraging the peaceful resolution of international disputes, supporting the right of peoples to self-determination, not interfering in the domestic affairs of other states, and co-operating with all peace-loving nations."

Qatar has adhered to these principles and led successful mediation efforts since 2004, resulting in conflict resolutions and hostage releases in various parts of the world. These efforts have addressed ceasefires, the restoration of diplomatic relations, prisoner exchanges, support for national dialogues, border dispute resolutions, humanitarian assistance, and comprehensive peace agreements in regional and international conflicts.

Qatar has chosen this role based on the belief that mediation is the most effective way to prevent or de-escalate conflicts and to reduce the rising human, economic, and developmental costs. Accordingly, it has played an active role in promoting mediation in co-operation with the international community, including the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, as well as with friendly countries, notably the United States.

Qatar's record of mediation is filled with notable successes in resolving disputes between countries, political groups, armed factions, and opposition forces. These successes are attributed to the state's reliable, effective, and neutral diplomacy, its strong relations with all parties, and its co-ordination with the United Nations General Assembly.

Among the most prominent achievements of Qatari mediation is the peace agreement signed in February 2020 between the United States and the Taliban, which marked the end of a 19-year war and paved the way for US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Qatar also successfully mediated a prisoner exchange in August 2023 between the US and Iran, involving the release of five Iranians detained in the US and the unfreezing of \$6bn in Iranian funds. In December 2023, Qatar announced the success of its mediation between the US and Venezuela, which led to the release of 10 American prisoners in exchange for a Venezuelan detainee held by the US, after several rounds of mediation.

In March 2025, Qatar facilitated the release of two American citizens, George Gleesman and Faye Hall, from Afghanistan. The US Department of State publicly thanked Qatar for its essential role and support in securing the release of American citizens in distress.

Additionally, in January 2025, Qatar, in co-ordination with the US and Egypt, successfully mediated a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas. The agreement included a prisoner and detainee exchange and lasted two months. Despite the subsequent resumption of Israeli aggression, Qatar's efforts continue,

Mediation
A Firm Qatari Principle Strengthening Doha-Washington Relations

Mediation to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, dialogue, and preventive diplomacy is a top priority in the State of Qatar's foreign policy and a constitutional commitment.

Most notable achievements of Qatari mediation

- 2020**: The peace agreement signed between the United States and the Taliban
- 2023**: Securing a prisoner exchange between the US and Venezuela and between the US and Iran
- Jan. 2025**: Agreement for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip between the Israel and Hamas
- Mar. 2025**: Doha hosted a trilateral meeting between Qatar, Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

21 years of successful mediation efforts since 2004

Tools for the success of Qatari mediation

- Reliable, effective and neutral diplomacy
- Strong relations with all parties
- Coordination with the UN General Assembly

The outcomes of mediation

- Strengthening relations between Doha and Washington
- Spreading the culture of dialogue and calm diplomacy
- Qatar has proven itself as a reliable partner regionally and globally.
- Promoting security and stability in the region and worldwide

These efforts extended from Sudan to Yemen, and through Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Afghanistan

underscoring its commitment to alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Earlier, in November 2023, Qatar also brokered a four-day humanitarian truce, extendable, which facilitated the exchange of 50 civilian women and children hostages held in Gaza for Palestinian women and children imprisoned in Israel. The truce also allowed for increased humanitarian aid, including fuel for critical services. Doha's mediation efforts have extended beyond the Middle East. Qatar has played a crucial role in peace initiatives in Sudan, Yemen, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Afghanistan - regions where Qatari diplomacy has gained significant recognition.

On March 18, 2025, Doha hosted a trilateral summit between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, and President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The leaders reviewed progress in the Luanda and Nairobi peace processes and reaffirmed their commitment to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, as agreed during the joint East African Community and Southern African Development Community summit in Dar es Salaam on February 8, 2025.

Presidents Kagame and Tshisekedi expressed their gratitude to Qatar and His Highness the Amir for hosting the productive meeting in Doha, which fostered trust and advanced efforts toward sustainable peace in the region.

Qatari mediation has also contributed to reuniting children separated due to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine since February 2022, demonstrating Qatar's humanitarian and neutral stance in global crises.

These achievements have significantly strengthened Qatar's bilateral relations with the United States. Washington continues to recognise and commend Qatar's role in promoting international peace, security, and dialogue. Qatar's mediation strategy is rooted in promoting a culture of calm diplomacy, trust-building, and conflict prevention, reinforcing its stature as a dependable international partner.

HE Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reaffirmed Qatar's appreciation for the fruitful co-operation between the Afghan caretaker government and the US. He emphasised that Qatar consistently seeks to activate mediation as a tool for resolving complex international disputes peacefully, grounded in its foreign policy principles prioritising dialogue and stability.

Qatar's track record includes 21 years of successful mediation since 2004, marking a legacy of effective diplomacy. Its impartiality, integrity, and dedication have earned it credibility as a neutral arbiter trusted by all parties.

In summary, Qatari mediation has produced tangible diplomatic results, including:

- Strengthening Doha-Washington ties
- Spreading the culture of dialogue and calm diplomacy
- Positioning Qatar as a reliable regional and global partner
- Promoting security and stability in conflict-affected regions

These sustained efforts reflect Qatar's unwavering dedication to mediation, peace-building, and international co-operation on all levels. (QNA)

Qatar's ambassador: US president's visit to Doha, important step in enhancing ties, supporting Gaza mediation efforts

QNA
Washington

Qatar's ambassador to the US HE Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad al-Thani affirmed that President Donald Trump's visit to Doha is a significant step in strengthening both countries' long-standing ties, spanning over five decades. He added that this visit reflects the US administration's appreciation of Qatar's active role in supporting the stability and prosperity of the region.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said that this visit is clear proof of the depth and strength of Qatar-US relations on all levels, the mutual trust and respect shared by both countries' officials, in addition to the United States' recognition of Qatar's significant efforts, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, in promoting security and stability in the region.

HE Sheikh Meshal added that the anticipated meeting between the Amir and President Trump will be an opportunity to exchange views on a range of regional and international issues of mutual concern, including the

developments in Palestine, the Iranian nuclear deal, and the situations in Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, along with addressing energy supplies' security in addition to ways to maintain the security and stability of the Gulf region and the Middle East.

He pointed out that this visit will provide a unique opportunity for the leaders of both countries to discuss ways to end the war in the Gaza Strip, rebuild the Strip, and advance efforts to revive the peace process based on international legitimacy resolutions and the two-state solution, ensuring the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the June 4, 1967, borders.

Regarding the significance of the visit, the ambassador said that Qatar being one of the few stops on President Trump's regional tour carries great political significance, reflecting the US administration's recognition of the State of Qatar as a vital partner in foreign policy and the unprecedented level of trust between the two countries.

He added that this visit reaffirms Qatar's distinguished position in the international arena, thanks to its wise policy in place for more than two decades, which makes strengthening relations with the US a core



HE Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad al-Thani

focus, alongside Qatar's prominent role in conflict mediation.

He went over three indicators of the depth of Qatari-American relations: the uninterrupted Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue since its launch in 2018, Qatar's role as the US's diplomatic representative in Afghanistan, a historic step reflecting mutual trust, and Qatar's designation as a major non-Nato ally, a status that highlights the US's appreciation of Qatar's growing international role.

In the same context, HE Sheikh Meshal said that President Trump's visit to Doha will contribute to enhancing joint mediation efforts between Qatar, the US, and Egypt to end the war in Gaza, adding that over the past 15 years, Qatar has played a pivotal role in de-escalating tensions caused by Israeli attacks in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank. The ambassador noted that successive US administrations have highly appreciated Qatar's mediation efforts and have consistently supported the continuation of this active role. He pointed out that Doha has intensified its diplomatic efforts since Oct 7 to halt the Israeli aggression and alleviate the suffering of civilians, successfully brokering ceasefires in November 2023 and January 2024, which led to the release of several detainees from both sides.

He added that President Trump's visit would enhance co-ordination between Doha and Washington to support the Qatari-Egyptian mediation, in order to contribute to the final resolution of the war.

He highlighted that Qatar's foreign policy regarding international issues is set apart by its commitment to promoting peace

and stability through peaceful mediation, turning Doha into a preferred destination for international mediation. He noted that this approach has received widespread US support, particularly on issues such as Afghanistan, Palestine, and the release of American hostages.

He added that Qatari-US co-operation on the Afghan issue has ranged from hosting negotiations to supporting evacuation efforts after the collapse of the Afghan government. Qatar played a pivotal role in the success of the largest evacuation operation in history, leaving a significant positive impact on both US officials and media circles.

HE Sheikh Meshal emphasised that the Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue was an important milestone in institutionalising bilateral relations, adding that the annual meetings provide a platform to discuss ways to enhance cooperation in various areas, including trade, security, climate change, energy, and investment. He also expressed his anticipation for the upcoming session of the Strategic Dialogue to build on the positive momentum in bilateral relations and further strengthen the multifaceted partnerships between the two countries.

Qatar-US strategic partnership built on trust, shared interests

For over 50 years, Qatar and the US have laid the foundations for a comprehensive strategic relationship characterised by stability and gradual development. Today, it has become one of the key models of bilateral alliances in the Middle East and the world, built on a solid foundation of close, multifaceted co-operation and shared interests across various fields, particularly diplomacy, defence, energy, and the economy.

Since diplomatic relations were established between Doha and Washington in 1972, they have gone beyond the traditional framework of diplomatic cooperation to be an advanced model of integrated partnership, reflecting an active presence on international issues of mutual concern, ranging from diplomacy, foreign policy, political mediation, and support for international humanitarian efforts, to military and defence co-operation, and extending to vital areas such as energy, economics, and investment.

This process culminated in the designation of Qatar a major non-Nato ally of the US in February 2022, a step that underscores the depth of mutual strategic trust and opens new horizons for the bilateral defence partnership in the face of growing global and regional challenges.

The Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue is also a crucial institutional mechanism in managing and guiding this growing partnership. Since its launch in 2018, it has provided a regular platform for discussing issues of common interest and enhancing co-ordination between the two countries. Its sixth round in Washington in March 2024 addressed a wide range of vital issues affecting regional and international security and stability and produced milestones, including an amendment to the bilateral defence co-operation agreement and a memorandum of co-operation on biometric data-sharing to enhance law enforcement and counter-terrorism co-operation. The dialogue also explored ways to expand the economic and trade partnership and promote cultural exchange.

Additionally, discussions covered regional and international challenges, such as the situations in Gaza, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Ukraine, and ways to find solutions for them, along with other strategic issues such as global food security, educational development, emerging technology, climate change, and clean energy transition.

The joint statement of the last round reflected a convergence of views on many complex global issues and included unambiguous American praise of Qatar's role in supporting regional and international stability efforts, ensuring the flow of global energy supplies, and providing humanitarian assistance to those in need in various regions around the world, particularly in Gaza, Afghanistan, and

the Sudan. Both sides affirmed their commitment to deepening the existing strategic partnership, with the next round of the dialogue to be held in Doha.

In terms of diplomatic efforts to resolve outstanding regional and international issues, the Qatar-led mediation efforts have become a key milestone in international diplomacy, particularly in its bilateral relations with the US. Washington sees Qatar as an essential partner in resolving critical regional issues that require high sensitivity and a deep understanding of the region's complexities, given its extensive and balanced network of relations in the region and its wise approach to dealing with complex issues.

This was clearly evident in the role Doha played in the peace talks between the US and the Taliban, which culminated in the historic Doha Agreement in February 2020, paving the way for the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan.

This agreement was a true embodiment of Washington's confidence in Qatar's sound and effective diplomacy in supporting efforts to achieve international peace and security.

With the escalation of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip since October 2023, Qatar has played a pivotal diplomatic role in efforts to achieve a ceasefire and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid, through tripartite coordination with Egypt and the US. This effort resulted in several temporary ceasefires, the last of which occurred in January 2025, before it was violated by the Israeli occupation.

Qatari diplomatic engagement was not limited to the Palestinian and Afghan arenas, but extended to other highly sensitive issues, such as the relationship between the US and Iran. In August 2023, Qatar mediated a detainee exchange agreement between the US and Iran, thus reflecting the confidence of the US Administration in Qatari efforts to manage even complex international files.

The achievement drew widespread praise from Tehran, Washington, and the broader international community, underscoring the effectiveness of Qatari diplomacy in delivering results under challenging circumstances. Qatar's balanced and multifaceted role has cemented its status as a key regional diplomatic hub and a focal point for international mediation efforts. This is reflected in its strong, long-term strategic partnership with the US.

On the economic front, Qatar and the US enjoy strong and diverse trade and investment relations. The US is the largest foreign direct investor in Qatar and a major source of vital industrial equipment, particularly in the oil and gas sectors, which represent the backbone of the Qatari economy.

American companies play a vital role in developing Qatar's en-

ergy infrastructure, particularly in the liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry, in which Qatar holds a leading global position thanks to its strategic investments and significant expansion in this sector in recent years.

The economic partnership between the two countries is estimated at more than \$200bn, a figure that reflects the significant Qatari investments in the US, which contribute to the creation of tens of thousands of job opportunities in the US market, according to data issued by official authorities in both countries.

In turn, the Qatari market hosts more than 120 fully American-owned American companies, in addition to about 640 joint ventures between Qatari and American investors, making the US Qatar's fifth-largest trading partner in terms of total trade volume.

In the field of education and culture, Qatar occupies a prominent position as a regional centre for science and knowledge, with Education City in Doha hosting branches of several prestigious American universities, such as Georgetown University in Qatar and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar.

This academic co-operation effectively contributes to promoting scientific and cultural exchange between the two peoples. It plays a significant role in preparing a new generation of young Qatari talents and equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge, in accordance with the highest international standards. This serves the goals of building a knowledge-based economy, which Qatar considers the cornerstone of achieving its National Vision 2030.

In the context of ongoing efforts to strengthen the strategic partnership between Qatar and the US, President Donald Trump's visit to Doha is of particular importance as a pivotal step toward consolidating frameworks for co-operation in various vital fields.

This visit comes at a critical time, as the region and the world are experiencing numerous challenges and transformations. The US seeks to reevaluate its regional alliances and strengthen its relations with the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, particularly in the areas of defence cooperation, expanding the scope of economic partnerships, and exchanging views on regional and international issues of common interest.

This visit carries profound strategic implications, reflecting the US' commitment to deepening its relations with Qatar, which it considers a reliable and effective partner in the region. It also represents an important milestone for deepening the strategic dialogue between Doha and Washington, affirming the shared commitment to maintaining regional stability, and strengthening the existing strategic partnership between the two countries. (QNA)

Envoy: Trump visit shows strength of Qatar ties

US ambassador to Qatar Timmy Davis has emphasised that President Donald Trump's visit to Doha confirms the strength of bilateral relations and the deepening level of co-operation between them, pointing out that these relations, which are based on mutual respect and shared interests, have never been stronger than they are now.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said that high-level engagements between the leaders of the two countries continue to affirm this strategic partnership, as the US and Qatar work together to combat terrorism, expand trade and investment, and promote regional stability. He added that the two countries remain trusted allies, committed to fostering peace, prosperity, and global co-operation.

Davis indicated that the US and Qatar work together on a broad range of strategic issues, including security co-operation, economic collaboration, and diplomatic engagement on regional and global challenges. As allies, the two countries continue to work together to promote peace, stability, and prosperity.

He stressed that high-level visits serve as an opportunity to strengthen the shared commitments and explore new areas of co-operation that benefit both nations and contribute to broader international efforts.

Regarding the role of the annual strategic dialogue between the US and Qatar in promoting bilateral relations, the ambassador said that the US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue has played a cru-



Timmy Davis

cial role in advancing ties across multiple sectors. "Together, we have strengthened collaboration on trade, security, and diplomatic initiatives. Our economic co-operation continues to expand into promising new sectors, including healthcare, information technology, cybersecurity, and other emerging technologies," he added.

Concerning the joint mediation efforts between the US, Qatar, and Egypt on the situation in Gaza, the ambassador said that the three countries recognise the urgent need for progress in Gaza, with a shared commitment to regional stability and humanitarian relief. The trilateral co-operation has been instrumental in ceasefire negotiations, working to prevent renewed violence and ensure humanitarian aid reaches civilians in need.

He commended Qatar's vital role in conflict mediation, and together, stressing that the US continues to work with Qatar to push for sustainable solutions and long-term peace in the region.

Davis noted that Qatar is a major non-Nato ally and home to the

largest US military presence in the Middle East, which serves as a strategic hub for US operations in the region and a major source of US investment.

He added that this status reinforces Qatar's role as a strategic defence partner, enabling enhanced military co-operation, security co-ordination, and access to advanced US defence technology. "As Secretary of State Marco Rubio's discussions with Qatar's leadership reaffirmed our shared commitment to regional security remains unwavering, Qatar's security is our security," he added.

He stressed that Qatar remains an invaluable partner in US efforts to promote global peace and stability. From securing the release of US nationals in complex situations, such as Gaza, Iran, Afghanistan, and Venezuela, to mediating ceasefire negotiations and facilitating hostage releases, Qatar's diplomatic efforts have been crucial to advancing shared security objectives.

He indicated that Qatar and the US collaborate on a range of regional and international issues, including Lebanon's security, Syria's stability, and Qatar's significant contributions in Afghanistan. He added that beyond the Middle East, Qatar plays a vital role in diplomatic mediation across Africa, reinforcing its position as a trusted global partner.

The ambassador emphasised that the US and Qatar remain committed to multilateral co-operation, working through international institutions to strengthen security, humanitarian relief, and conflict resolution worldwide. (QNA)

Qatar Airways places largest orders for Boeing aircraft, GE engines

From Page 1

This is so we can meet the strong demand as we seamlessly connect passengers to the world better than anyone."

He noted: "After two consecutive years of record-breaking commercial performance and with this historic Boeing aircraft order - we're not simply chasing scale - we are building strength that will allow us to continue to deliver our unmatched products and customer experiences. We thank our partners at Boeing for answering the call and look forward to a future of continued smart growth together." The order includes 130 787 Dreamliners, the long-range, ultra-efficient wide-body airplane family that has delivered a 25% fuel-use improvement and superior comfort for passengers.

It also includes 30 777-9s, the world's largest twin-engine airplane that is designed to set new standards in efficiency by reducing fuel use and emissions by 25% compared to the airplanes it replaces, while elevating the passenger flight experience. The deal also includes options for an additional 50 787 and 777X airplanes. Boeing Commercial Airplanes President and CEO, Stephanie Pope, said: "We are deeply honoured

that Qatar Airways has placed this record-breaking order with Boeing, one that solidifies their future fleet with our market-leading wide-body airplane family at its centre. "Our team is looking forward to building 787s and 777s for Qatar Airways into the next decade as they connect more people and businesses around the world with unmatched efficiency and comfort." Qatar Airways currently operates more than 150 Boeing airplanes, including 777 and 787 passenger jets and 777 Freighters. With this new purchase, Qatar Airways will become the largest Dreamliner operator in the Middle East. Qatar Airways' largest wide-body engine deal in GE Aerospace history: The new GE Aerospace agreements solidify the company's commitment to Qatar's thriving aviation industry and build on the previous order for 188 GE9X engines, bringing the total to 248 engines.

The addition of GE9X engines for the Boeing 787 fleet supplements their existing 124 engine order, further strengthening the national carrier's commitment to efficiency and performance. The two deals also include service agreements to cover the maintenance, repair, and overhaul of the GE9X and GE9X engines. Al-Meer, said: "Our latest agreement with GE Aerospace reflects our

confidence in the performance of the GE9X and GE9X engines to power our fleet of Boeing 777-9 and 787 aircraft. These next-generation engines are critical components in our strategy to ensure our fleet remains modern and efficient. Qatar Airways has ambitious plans for the future, and we value our continued partnership with GE Aerospace and their commitment to supporting our operational needs."

GE Aerospace Chairman and CEO, H Lawrence Culp, Jr, said: "We are extremely honoured to deepen our relationship with Qatar Airways and grateful to them for placing their trust in us with our largest ever wide-body engine deal.

"Our wide-body engines - the GE9X and GE9X - are marvels of modern engineering, with the durability and reliability to power flight across the longest distances. We appreciate President Trump's support for this historic agreement."

Qatar Airways has one of the most modern fleets in the industry and these historic orders with Boeing and GE Aerospace will solidify that leadership for years to come. An industry leader, Qatar Airways has been named 'World's Best Airline' by Skytrax for an unprecedented eight times, and is further investing in its fleet as part of its long-term growth strategy.

Qatar-US strategic ties strengthen

From Page 1

The US president extended his sincere thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for the warm welcome and generous hospitality he and his accompanying delegation received.

Affirming his deep and long-standing friendly relations with His Highness the Amir since their first meeting, Trump expressed his aspirations for further co-operation with His Highness at the highest level to establish peace regionally and globally.

President Trump also expressed his deep gratitude to His Highness the Amir for his leadership and the mutual friendship that unites them. The talks explored ways to boost existing strategic co-operation across various fields, primarily in defence, economy, investment, energy, education, and cybersecurity, as well as joint efforts to enhance international peace and security. Also on the table were issues of common concern and the latest regional and international developments, particularly in the Middle East.

The session was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE Amiri Diwan Chief Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani al-Thani, along with Their Excellencies the ministers and senior officials.

On the US side, the session was attended by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth, Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent, Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, along with senior officials and members of the official delegation accompanying the president. His Highness the Amir and the US president held a one-on-one discussion on bilateral relations, regional and international developments, and joint efforts to promote peace and stability. Upon arriving at the Amiri Diwan, the US president was accorded an official reception ceremony that included a 21-gun salute. Also, there was an Arda dance performance in front of the Amiri Diwan, featuring cavalry teams, including purebred Arabian horses and camels, symbolising the Qatari environment and authentic national heritage.



Amir, Trump witness signing of agreements

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and US President Donald Trump witnessed the signing of an agreement and a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between the two countries at the Amiri Diwan. His Highness the Amir and President Trump witnessed the signing of an agreement to purchase aircraft from Boeing, a statement of intent for defence co-operation, a letter of offer and acceptance for MQ-9B drones, and a letter of offer and acceptance for the FS-LIDS anti-drone system.

The landmark order includes up to 210 Boeing wide-body jets - 160 firm and 50 option, which is the largest wide-body order and the largest 787 Dreamliner order in the American aerospace company's history. Qatar Airways has also signed an agreement with GE Aerospace for more than 400 engines, including 60 GE9X and 260 GEnx engines, with additional options and spares, to power its next-generation Boeing 777-9 and Boeing 787 aircraft - the largest wide-body engine purchase in the history of GE Aerospace.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and the US president signed a joint declaration of co-operation between the government of Qatar and the US government. The signing ceremony was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and a number of ministers and senior officials. On the American side, it was attended by members of the official delegation accompanying the US president.



Talks, agreements to take ties to new level, say Amir and Trump

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani confirmed that the talks and his meeting with President of the friendly US of America Donald Trump yesterday dealt with the distinguished bilateral relations that unite the two countries, in addition to discussing several issues, especially developments in the region.

This came during joint press statements made by His Highness the Amir and the US president, following the

signing ceremony of an agreement, memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and official talks at the Amiri Diwan yesterday, during which they discussed strategic cooperation relations between the two countries, ways to support and develop them in various fields, especially in the fields of defence, economy, investment, energy, and joint efforts to strengthen international security and peace.

His Highness the Amir pointed out that the MoUs signed between the two countries will contribute to pushing bilateral relations to an advanced level, expressing his deep thanks to the US president for his historic visit to Qatar.

For his part, the US president said that he discussed, for many hours with His Highness the Amir, international issues, foremost of which is the Ukrainian issue, noting the possibility of resolving the Iranian issue, where he praised the support and assistance of His Highness the Amir in this regard.

He also referred to the commercial co-operation that resulted from this visit, noting that it will witness developments in the defence field in the future. Trump praised the long friendship he has with His Highness the Amir, and expressed his keenness to strengthen work with him.



Amir participates in GCC-US summit



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani participated, along with the leaders of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states, and US President Donald Trump, in the GCC-US Summit, held yesterday at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh. The summit was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, along with members of the official delegation accompanying the Amir. (QNA)

Amir meets Saudi crown prince in Riyadh

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At the outset of the meeting, the Saudi crown prince conveyed to His Highness the Amir the greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, along with his wishes for continued health and happiness, and for the Qatari people's enduring progress and prosperity. His Highness the Amir entrusted the Saudi crown prince with conveying his

greetings and sincere wishes to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, wishing him continued health and well-being, and further progress and prosperity for the brotherly people of Saudi Arabia. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and their brotherly peoples, as well as prospects for further strengthening and developing these ties to serve their shared interests. They also reviewed

regional and international developments and the topics on the summit's agenda. The meeting was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and a number of members of the official delegation accompanying the Amir. On the Saudi side, the meeting was attended by Minister of Defence Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. (QNA)

Amir holds dinner banquet for US president

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His Highness noted the close co-operation between the two countries in many fields, especially energy, referring in this regard to the Golden Pass Project to receive Qatari liquefied natural gas, which will be launched in the US during the presidency of President Trump, and will provide America and other countries with liquefied gas, in addition to the Golden Triangle Project, which will also be launched in the same presidential period. His Highness also pointed to other large Qatari investments in the US, which include technology, artificial intelligence and hospitality sectors. His Highness the Amir stressed the keenness of Qatar and the US and their peoples to establish peace in the region and the world, noting the joint diplomatic efforts of the two countries to stop the war in the Gaza Strip, work to protect all civilians, especially women and children, and ensure the release of all hostages. For his part, the US President



Donald Trump delivered a speech thanking His Highness the Amir for the good reception and hospitality, stressing his happiness at being the first American president to visit Qatar, expressing pride in his friendship with His Highness the Amir, and praising the Amir's achievements in building Qatar's renaissance and development. He also noted Qatar's role in supporting the Palestinian issue, looking forward to its assistance in negotiations with Iran, in addition to benefiting

from its experience in hosting and organising the football World Cup in 2026. The banquet was attended by Her Highness Consort of His Highness the Amir Sheikha Jawaher bint Hamad bin Suhaim al-Thani. It was also attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and a number of Their Excellencies the ministers, Sheikhs, dignitaries, senior state officials and businessmen.