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QIA teams up with Blue Owl for \$3bn data centre push

By Pratap John
Business Editor

The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), the country's sovereign wealth fund, and Blue Owl Capital have entered into a strategic partnership agreement with the objective of creating a digital infrastructure platform intended to accelerate global compute available to leading hyper-scalers amid surging cloud and AI transformation.

QIA's contribution to the partnership is expected to help launch a digital infrastructure platform with more than \$3bn of initial data centre assets and is expected to grow over time.

In addition, QIA brings to the partnership a global investment perspective, a long-term capital base, and a deep experience in infrastructure and technology sectors aligning with Blue Owl's permanent capital strategy.

Mohammed Saif al-Sowaidi, CEO, QIA said: "We are pleased to partner with Blue Owl in this transformational digital infra-

structure platform. This partnership aligns with QIA's strategy to engage with leading global firms that are addressing the world's growing demand for data centres.

"QIA and Blue Owl are committed to scaling digital infrastructure that will meet the growing demand for data storage and computation requirements globally, with a particular focus on increasing data connectivity."

Doug Ostrover and Marc Lipschultz, Co-CEOs of Blue Owl said: "We are honoured to partner with Qatar Investment Authority in advancing the global data centre ecosystem. QIA's commitment to innovation aligns seamlessly with our strategy to provide financing solutions to large-scale, resilient, digital infrastructure portfolios.

"Together, we aim to meet the surging demand for data connectivity and power the next generation of digital transformation."

Blue Owl's digital infrastructure strategy is part of Blue Owl's Real Assets platform and is focused exclusively on investing in the mission-critical assets power-

ing cloud and AI innovation. "As of June 30, 2025, the strategy has raised \$39bn of capital, investing in 104 facilities across 28 global markets."

QIA was founded in 2005 to invest and manage the state reserve funds; it is among the largest and most active sovereign wealth funds globally.

QIA invests across a wide range of asset classes and regions as well as in partnership with leading institutions around the world to build a global and diversified investment portfolio.

With over \$284bn in assets under management as of June 30, Blue Owl invests across three multi-strategy platforms: credit, real assets and GP strategic capital.

Anchored by a strong permanent capital base, Blue Owl provides businesses with private capital solutions to drive long-term growth and offer institutional investors, individual investors, and insurance companies differentiated alternative investment opportunities that aim to deliver strong performance, risk-adjusted returns, and capital preservation.

PM attends joint GCC-US meeting



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated in the joint ministerial meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries and the United States of America, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. During the meeting, the latest developments in the Middle East, particularly in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, were discussed, as well as ways to de-escalate the situation in the region through dialogue and diplomatic solutions. **(QNA)**

Italy, Spain deploy vessels to protect Gaza aid flotilla

Reuters
Rome

Italy and Spain have deployed naval ships to assist an international aid flotilla that has come under drone attack while trying to deliver aid to Gaza, potentially ratcheting up tensions with Israel, which strongly opposes the initiative.

The Global Sumud Flotilla is using about 50 civilian boats to try to break Israel's naval blockade of Gaza. Many lawyers, parliamentarians and activists, including Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg, are on board.

The Italian defence ministry said a frigate that was dispatched on Wednesday, hours after the GSF was targeted on its way to Gaza, would be replaced by an-

'Pretty close' to Gaza deal: Trump

US President Donald Trump said he spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday amid a push to end the war in Gaza, adding that he believed a ceasefire deal was "pretty close." "We spoke with Bibi Netanyahu today, and we spoke to all the leaders in the Middle East who are great people, and we're getting pretty close to having a deal on Gaza and maybe even peace," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

other vessel, adding that the aim was to protect people.

"It is not an act of war, it is not a provocation: it is an act of humanity, which is a duty of a state towards its citizens," Defence Minister Guido Crosetto told the upper house of parliament on the decision to send a ship.

The Italian foreign ministry said Belgium, France and other European nations had asked them to help provide assistance to their

citizens on the flotilla if needed.

Italy had proposed a compromise whereby aid supplies could be dropped off in Cyprus and handed over to the Catholic Church's Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which would then distribute them in Gaza. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said Israel backed the idea.

However, the Italian delegation rejected that suggestion on behalf of the flotilla yesterday.

Sarkozy sentenced to five years in prison



A court yesterday sentenced former French president **Nicolas Sarkozy** to five years in prison over

a scheme for late Libyan dictator Muammar Gadhafi to fund his 2007 presidential run. In a verdict that will make the right-winger the first French postwar leader to serve jail time, the Paris criminal court convicted Sarkozy, 70, on criminal conspiracy charges. The court ordered that Sarkozy should be placed in custody at a later date, with prosecutors to inform him on October 13 when he should go to prison. He was also fined 100,000 euros (\$117,000) and banned from holding public office. **Page 9**

Trump's Shariah law claim 'nonsense'

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday dismissed US President Donald Trump's claim that London's mayor plans to impose Islamic law on the British capital as "nonsense". Trump made his comments in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Tuesday in which he took aim at Sadiq Khan, the first Muslim to become Mayor of London. Starmer told reporters in London there were "a few things" on which he and Trump disagreed, despite a successful and amicable state visit by the president earlier this month. "This is one of them. The idea of the introduction of Shariah law is nonsense, and Sadiq Khan is a very good man and actually driving down serious crime," he said.

COMMUNITY
See Page 6

Trump suggests he may lift sanctions on Turkiye

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump suggested the US could lift sanctions on Turkiye and allow it to buy US F-35 jets as he kicked off talks with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan yesterday, but said he wanted Ankara to stop purchases of Russian oil.



Trump bidding farewell to Turkish president following a meeting in the Oval Office at the White House yesterday.

Erdogan's first visit to the White House in about six years started off with a warm welcome from Trump. Seated side by side in the Oval Office, Trump called Erdogan a highly respected man. "He's respected very much in his country and all throughout Europe and throughout the world where they know him," Trump said, gesturing to Erdogan. "It's an honour to have him." Trump said they remained "friends" while his predecessor Joe Biden was in office.

Asked whether he was willing to make a deal to sell F-35s to Turkiye, Trump told reporters: "I think he'll be successful in buying the things that he wants to buy." Trump also said he could lift sanctions against Turkiye "very soon," and that "if we have a good meeting, almost immediately."

Under Trump, who has closer personal ties with Erdogan, Ankara is hoping for a better relationship.

'Duck Release' to support out-of-school children



Education Above All Foundation, in partnership with Place Vendôme Qatar, brought together children, families, educators, and mallgoers for the 'Duck Release' activation, held at the latter's fountain area yesterday. The initiative forms a central part of EAA's 2025 'Back to School' campaign. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen. **Page 12**

'Trump understands very well risks of West Bank annexation'

Arab and Muslim countries warned Donald Trump about the grave consequences of any Israeli annexation of the West Bank - a message the US president "understands very well," Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said yesterday. Speaking to reporters at the White House later, Trump signalled he had received the message, saying: "I'm not allowing Israel to annex the West Bank."

Trump met leaders and officials from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Turkiye, Indonesia and Pakistan on Tuesday to discuss the nearly two-year-long war in Gaza between Israel and Palestinian resistance group Hamas. The meeting took place at the UN on the sidelines of the annual General Assembly.

"The Arab and Muslim countries made very clear to the president the danger of annexation of any type in the West Bank, and the risk that poses, not just for the potential of peace in Gaza, but also to any sustainable peace at all," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud told reporters at the United Nations yesterday. "And I feel confident that President Trump understood the position of the Arab and Muslim countries, and I think the president understands very well the risks and dangers of annexation in the West Bank," he added. **(Reuters)**



PM meets Dutch counterpart, FM



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Dick Schoof and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands David van Weel. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral co-operation and the means to enhance it, discussing the latest regional developments, particularly in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to several issues of joint interest. HE the Prime Minister stressed during the meeting on the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to reach regional de-escalation through dialogue and peaceful means.

Official

Amir sends cables of congratulations to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the anniversary of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Amir sends cables of congratulations to Malawi’s president-elect

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, on his election as President of the Republic of Malawi, wishing him success and further progress and prosperity for relations between the two countries.

Qatar participates in meeting of Global Development Initiative

Qatar participated in a high-level meeting of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), held on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Qatar was represented at the meeting by Director of International Organisations Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sheikhha Hanouf bint Abdulrahman al-Thani.

Qatar participates in high-level event on climate action

Qatar participated in a high-level event on climate action, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Qatar was represented in the meeting by HE the Minister of International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad. **(QNA)**

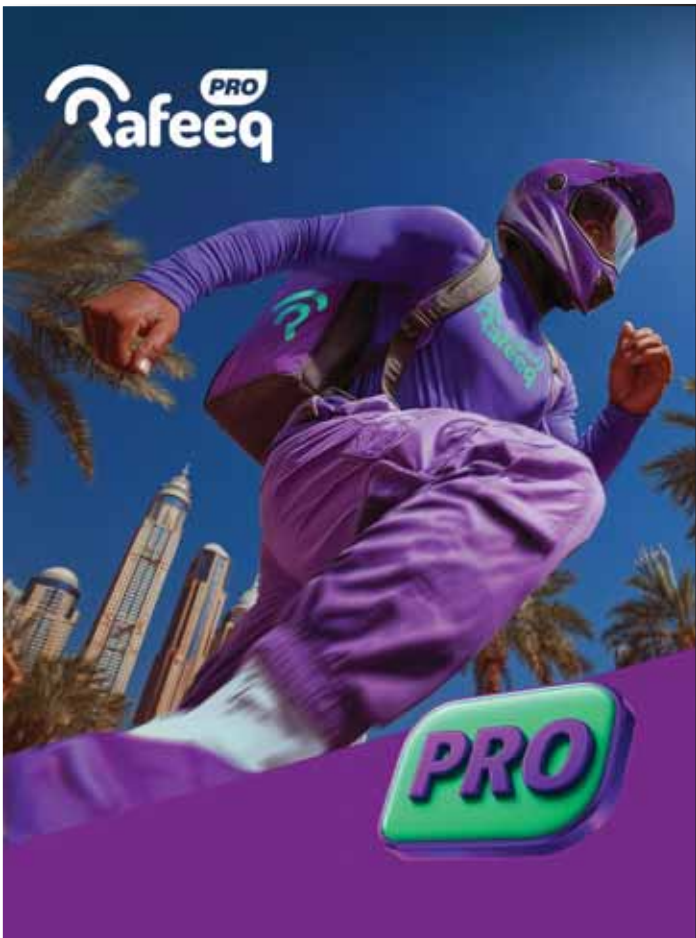
Rafeeq Launches “Rafeeq Pro” Subscription – Unlimited Free Delivery and Exclusive Benefits for Just 35 QAR/Month

Rafeeq, Qatar’s leading delivery platform, today announced the launch of Rafeeq Pro, an innovative subscription service designed to make everyday convenience more affordable. For just 35 QAR per month, subscribers unlock unlimited free delivery on participating brands and a wide range of exclusive monthly benefits such as cash back, free essential services across Rafeeq’s ecosystem.

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“Rafeeq Pro is our way of giving back to the community of Qatar



from the only Qatari e-commerce platform by making convenience more affordable” said Abdullah Thamer Al-Humaidi, CEO of Rafeeq. “We know our customers order frequently, and delivery fees add up. With Rafeeq Pro, for just 35 QAR a month, our users unlock significant savings, flexibility, and a better overall experience.”

The launch of Rafeeq

Pro reflects Rafeeq’s continued commitment to innovation and customer-first solutions in Qatar’s growing digital economy.

How to Subscribe

Users can activate Rafeeq Pro directly through the Rafeeq app with one click, instantly unlocking all benefits.

For more information, visit the Rafeeq app or website.

PM meets Oman FM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al-Busaidi. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. It focused on reviewing bilateral relations, enhancing co-operation and discussing the latest developments in the region-particularly in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. They also addressed several topics of common interest. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign



Affairs stressed the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to de-

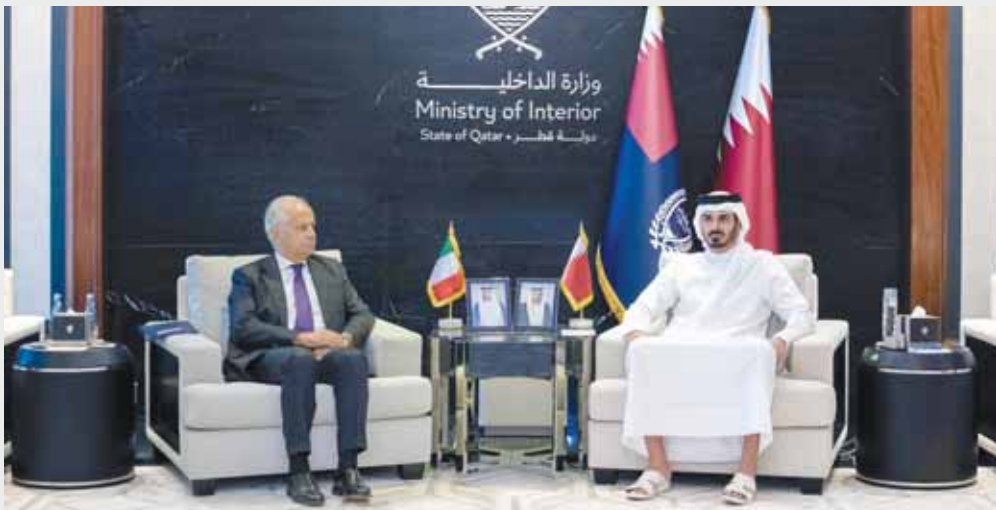
escalate tensions in the region through dialogue and peaceful means.

PM meets US Senate member

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Senator Chris Murphy, Member of the Senate for the State of Connecticut in the friendly United States of America, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with the strong strategic relations between Qatar and the United States as well as the means to enhance them besides several issues of mutual interest. **(QNA)**



Interior minister discusses security relations with Italian counterpart



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met with Minister of the Interior of the Italian Republic Matteo Piantedosi, who is visiting the country. The meeting reviewed aspects of co-operation between the two countries in security fields and ways to strengthen and develop them, in addition to discussing a number of issues of mutual interest. The meeting also witnessed the signing of a co-operation agreement to secure the Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games. During the meeting, HE Sheikh Khalifa presented his Italian counterpart with a commemorative gift, a Smith & Wesson revolver manufactured in 1957, which is considered part of the policing heritage in the State of Qatar. **(QNA)**



Kuwait crown prince reaffirms unwavering support for Qatar against Israeli aggression

QNA
New York

Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khaled al-Hamad al-Sabah reaffirmed Kuwait’s unwavering solidarity with the State of Qatar in the face of the recent Israeli aggression, stressing that any attack on Qatar is a direct attack on all member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and a threat to their security and stability.

In Kuwait’s address to the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, delivered on behalf of the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, he said the Israeli assault constitutes a blatant violation of international conventions and a clear breach of the sovereignty of a full member

of the international community. He added that the attack targeted a country that has consistently worked to promote peace and stability in the region and the world. The Crown Prince stressed that Kuwait strongly condemns this unjustified act of aggression and stands united with Qatar, believing that the unity of the GCC is capable of confronting any threats against its members. He added that the Council’s strength derives from its cohesion and solidarity in facing crises and challenges. He noted that the two extraordinary summits held recently, one for GCC leaders and the other the emergency Arab-Islamic summit, reflected a firm and unified stance against the attack. In their final communiques, the leaders rejected any violations that threaten the region’s security and stability and declared full support for Qatar. He

affirmed Kuwait’s commitment to all decisions and recommendations issued by the two summits. Sheikh Sabah Khaled al-Hamad al-Sabah highlighted the dire situation in the Gaza Strip, which for nearly two years has endured a suffocating blockade, collective punishment, and the killing of tens of thousands of innocent civilians, most of them children and women, alongside the use of starvation as a weapon of war by the occupying power. He said such actions amount to a living example of the crime of genocide. He also expressed Kuwait’s appreciation for the efforts of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States to achieve a ceasefire, and praised the step taken by several friendly countries to officially recognise the State of Palestine, calling on the rest of the international community to follow their example.

Qatar attends ministerial roundtable on healthcare in Gaza Strip

Qatar participated in a ministerial roundtable meeting on healthcare in the Gaza Strip, hosted by the United Kingdom, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Qatar was represented by HE the Minister of Public Health Mansour bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud.

HE the Minister stressed that the humanitarian catastrophe facing civilians in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli aggression constitutes war crimes, emphasising that the world cannot remain silent in the face of this tragedy.

He called for immediate action to stop the aggression, save lives, and protect health facilities and their workers. He also highlighted the role played by Qatar, its leadership and people, in standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the State of Palestine as a whole, and its commitment to assisting them.

He also noted that Qatar continues its efforts to find a just solution despite the treacherous attack launched by Israel against the State of Qatar in a desperate attempt to undermine any hope for peace and an end to the

war. During the roundtable meeting, participants heard firsthand testimonies from doctors and healthcare workers who worked in the Gaza Strip, who provided vivid accounts of the tragedies they experienced there.

The roundtable was attended by British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and President of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Dr Younes al-Khatib.

HE the Minister of Public Health also participated in a number of

events accompanying the meetings of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, including the event 'One Vision, One Future: Rallying Global Momentum on NCDs for Generations to Come,' organised by the Sultanate of Oman, 'The Political Economy of Implementing Primary Health Care: Key Policy Shifts,' organised by Kazakhstan, and 'A Global Movement to Improve Survival and Reduce Suffering for Children with Cancer and other Catastrophic Diseases,' organised by Uzbekistan and the World Health Organisation, in addition to other entities.



Minister of state holds meetings with top officials on UNGA sidelines

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met with Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Amina Mohammed, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral co-operation between Qatar and the United Nations in the fields of sustainable development and humanitarian action. During the meeting, HE al-Misnad reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting the UN's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and address global humanitarian challenges. For her part, the UN Deputy Secretary-General praised Qatar's contributions and its growing role in supporting



UN initiatives at both the regional and international levels. Both sides agreed to continue consultations and co-ordination to serve shared priorities and strengthen their partnership.



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met with Dr Rola Abdullah Hussein Dashti, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with areas of co-operation between Qatar and ESCWA in sustainable development, empowering the most vulnerable groups, and supporting humanitarian efforts in the region. During the meeting, HE al-Misnad reaffirmed Qatar's interest in strengthening partnerships with regional and international organisations to achieve common goals in development and economic prosperity. For her part, Dr Dashti praised Qatar's active role in supporting development and humanitarian work and emphasised ESCWA's commitment to expanding avenues of co-operation with Qatar. Both sides agreed to continue co-ordination and consultations on future programs and initiatives that serve economic and social development in the region.



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation, Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, held talks with Executive Director of UN Women, Dr Sima Bahous. The meeting, held on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, discussed the co-operation between the State of Qatar and UN Women.



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation, Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, met with United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly in New York. It reviewed aspects of co-operation between the State of Qatar and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. **(QNA)**

Big 5 Construct, Index Design return

Big 5 Construct Qatar, described as 'the country's largest construction event,' returns to the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre from October 14-16. The event, co-located with Index Design Qatar, is held under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani.

The exhibitions will host over 250 international and regional brands showcasing products, solutions, systems and services from more than 25 countries, including China, India, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the UAE and the US. More than 10,000 industry professionals are expected to attend the events, including contractors, consultants, architects, project owners, fit-out specialists and distributors.

Commenting on the exhibitions, Muhammed Kazi, senior vice-president, dmg events, said: "Qatar's construction sector is showing strong momentum, contributing \$5.3bn to the national GDP in Q1 2025 and with nearly \$311bn in construction projects underway, the opportunities are significant.

"Big 5 Construct Qatar and In-



dex Design Qatar bring together the suppliers, contractors and decision-makers who make these projects possible, helping to ensure the right expertise and partnerships are in place to support sustainable growth and the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030."

"These events present a crucial platform for Qatar's construction and interiors industries at a time of rapid national development," said Rawad Sleem, co-founder and general manager, NeXTfairs. "By bringing together local insight

with international expertise, we are empowering stakeholders to collaborate, exchange knowledge and shape the future of Qatar's built environment while enabling sustainable growth."

Big 5 Construct Qatar and Index Design Qatar are co-located with Cityscape Qatar. Registration for the free-to-attend events is now open for trade and industry professionals over 18. More information is available from www.big5constructqatar.com | www.index-qatar.com

QLA voices support for Global Sumud Flotilla

The Qatar Lawyers Association (QLA) affirmed its humanitarian and legal support for the Global Sumud Flotilla, describing it as a peaceful civil initiative aimed at delivering aid to civilians in the Gaza Strip. The association praised the efforts of all participating organisations and individuals.

In a statement, the association expressed deep concern over the threats and intimidation faced by the flotilla in its humanitarian mission to break the unlawful and unjust blockade imposed on Gaza and deliver urgent aid to its residents.

The association condemned the crimes committed against the Palestinian people in Gaza,

including killing and starvation, and called on the international community, the UN Security Council, and international courts to take immediate and effective action to stop these crimes and prosecute the perpetrators before the International Criminal Court.

It also denounced all forms of threats or attacks targeting the civilian flotilla and its crew, stressing that any attempt to obstruct its humanitarian mission constitutes a blatant violation of international law, particularly the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Such actions infringe on the principle of freedom of navigation and hinder the delivery of essential needs to the besieged

population of Gaza, in clear breach of international obligations to protect civilians during armed conflicts, especially the four Geneva Conventions.

The Qatar Lawyers Association emphasised that these violations undermine the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the obligation to ensure safe passage for humanitarian and relief aid.

It called on the international community and relevant organisations to fulfil their legal and moral responsibilities and take urgent measures to halt these violations and ensure the timely delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. **(QNA)**

Minister of state holds talks on UNGA sidelines

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a series of high-level bilateral meetings in New York, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly. HE Dr al-Khulaifi met separately with several senior officials, including Minister of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Yvan Gil Pinto; Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the Republic of Mali, Abdoulaye Diop; UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo; State Secretary for Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik; State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain, Diego Martinez Belio; US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye Nuh Yilmaz. The discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations, enhancing areas of co-operation, and exchanging views on key regional and international developments. The meetings came as part of Qatar's active diplomatic engagement during this year's UN General Assembly, aimed at advancing its international partnerships and contributing to dialogue on pressing global issues. **(QNA)**

Alfardan Auto Spa offers premium services

Alfardan Auto Spa provides a comprehensive suite of premium automotive aesthetic services, designed for car owners who value exceptional care, protection, and craftsmanship, a statement said. The carefully curated selection of premium services combines expert techniques with globally trusted products to elevate and protect every vehicle.

At the core of these offerings is the application of Paint Protection Film (PPF) and car wrapping, both utilising high-performance materials from Hexis, a renowned French brand.

The PPF acts as an invisible shield against stone chips, scratches, and environmental wear, preserving the vehicle's original paint with flawless clarity and resilience.

The car wrapping service allows for sophisticated customisation through a wide

array of colours and finishes, transforming the vehicle's appearance with style and precision. Enhancing both comfort and aesthetics, window tinting is performed with advanced films by SunProtech, offering up to 73% total solar energy rejection and 99% UV protection, reducing heat and glare while adding a refined touch of privacy.

For long-term surface care, two new innovative coatings Ceramic+ and Evo+ from ProTech Monte-Carlo, the Monaco-based brand known for its luxurious automotive treatments, have been introduced. These state-of-the-art products deliver exceptional gloss, hydrophobic properties, UV resistance, and durability, preserving the finish with minimal maintenance.

ProTech Monte-Carlo also provides advanced polishing and interior detailing solutions that rejuvenate the vehicle's

appearance, restoring depth and clarity to the exterior paint as well as to interior surfaces. Backed by the technical excellence of Hexis, SunProtech, and ProTech Monte-Carlo, Alfardan Auto Spa combines trusted global brands with expert craftsmanship to deliver a complete luxury detailing experience.

While the standard of service and materials remains uncompromisingly high, offerings are thoughtfully curated to suit all car ranges providing refined, high-end results tailored to each vehicle, with solutions that reflect elegance, protection, and individual style. With branches in The Pearl Island, Salwa Road, and Jery Al Samur, Alfardan Auto Spa brings its signature blend of global-quality products and expert care closer to clients – delivering a consistent, luxury experience across all locations, the statement added.





UDST in pact with three UK tech firms

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has signed an academic collaboration contract with three globally recognised UK-based companies: Metaverse Learning Limited, MX Reality Limited, and vGather Limited (Metaverse Hub), marking a milestone in advancing innovation, immersive education, and applied research in Qatar.

The parties will engage in several key initiatives, including joint applied research projects, and integration of cutting-edge Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Mixed Reality (MR) technologies into education, a statement said yesterday.

The companies will also provide training for UDST faculty, internships for students, and contribute to UDST's research proposals and industry-driven initiatives. Joint events, conferences, workshops, and seminars will also be organised to promote knowledge exchange and enhance applied learning outcomes.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president of UDST, commented: "This collaboration is a strategic step toward embedding immersive technologies into applied education and research at UDST. It will enrich the learning experience for our students by allowing them to engage with state-of-the-art VR, AR, and MR tools, and will open new pathways for applied research in areas of national and global relevance. Together, we are positioning UDST as a hub for innovation in Qatar and the wider region, aligned with the national vision for knowledge-based development."

Dr Majid al-Kader, CEO of mXReality, said: "This partnership represents a powerful collaboration between UDST and our group of businesses — mXReality, Metaverse Learning, and Metaverse Hub. Together, we are committed to accelerating the digital transformation of learning by bringing immersive technology, AI, and innovation into the hands of students. By combining UDST's academic excellence with our expertise in creating engaging, future-focused digital platforms, we will give learners the tools and confidence to succeed in an increasingly dynamic global workforce." This collaboration highlights UDST's commitment to aligning academic learning with real-world innovation, ensuring students and faculty gain access to transformative technologies and global expertise, the statement added.



MoT wraps up Bicycle Master Plan workshop

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) yesterday wrapped up a workshop on updating the Qatar Bicycle Master Plan (QBMP). The event was the third and final in a series of consultative workshops largely attended by the government and private entities concerned, experts and transportation and urban planning specialists.

"The ministry has been following a collaborative approach since the project's inception, aiming to develop a safe and integrated infrastructure network for bicycles and micromobility devices in step with urban expansion and growing needs of the population," a MoT statement said.

The project also furthers the goals of the 3rd Qatar National Development Strategy (NDS3) and MoT Strategy 2025-2030 fostering the efficiency of public services and improving the quality of life.

The workshop focused on QBMP's development journey, final schemes, implementation programme, and bike infrastructure planning and design guide. The implementation programme defines implementation priorities in various areas countrywide and relevant authorities' responsibilities. The guide helps ensure that bicycle networks and facilities and micromobility devices are integrated with the overall transportation system.

The MoT is committed to working closely with stakeholders and partners from all industries to ensure integrated efforts for best national outcomes in line with the national orientation toward more efficient and sustainable transportation systems, thereby solidifying Qatar's profile as a trailblazing hub in adopting sustainable transit solutions, the statement added.



Closure on Al Waab Street

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary nighttime partial closure on Al Waab Street in the section between Nasser Bin Salmeen Al-Suwaidi Interchange and Al Waab Interchange from Sept 25 until Oct 7 daily from 12 midnight to 5am. The closure is in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic to carry out maintenance and development works. Ashghal has urged all road users to use nearby alternative routes to reach their destinations, adhere to the speed limits and follow directional signs to ensure safety.



Katara hosts event to celebrate Qatar-Austria diplomatic ties

QNA
Doha

All 32 at Katara Cultural Village hosted a special cultural event titled: Culinary Arts. The event was organised by Katara in co-operation with the Austrian embassy in Doha, as part of the celebrations marking 50 years of diplomatic relations between Qatar and Austria.

It was interspersed with serving one of the most illustrious Austrian dishes in an awe-inspiring atmosphere that embodies the spirit of cultural exchange and humanitarian engagement among peoples.

This event came as part of Katara's mission to support cultural diversity and overtone to the world's civilisations, and hosting such activities literally nurtures the cultural scenes in Qatar, endowing the public with an opportunity to have a closer look at the mores of peoples, something that substantially promotes cultural dialogue which Katara



has always been striving to consolidate through international events, said General Manager of Katara, Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti.

For her part, ambassador of Austria, Erika Bernhard, expressed her gratification for this participation, emphasising that culture is the true bridge between nations, and there is a belief in the criticality of these bridges to promote people-to-people friendship and understanding.

As part of the shared heritage between the two nations in cuisine and cooking, Bernhard added that the embassy is pleased to serve the apple strudel, a symbol of Austrian hospitality, alongside the creation of a dish that combines traditional and local elements as a reflection of the deep relationship and friendship with Qatar.

Katara continues to organise numerous events in collaboration with various diplomatic missions, thereby contributing to strengthening the people-to-people bridges of understanding and Doha's stature as a global destination for dialogue and cultural diversity.

Qatar Cleanup Week concludes



The Ministry of Municipality's General Cleanliness Department has concluded the activities of World Cleanup Day 2025 (Qatar Cleanup Week) under the supervision of the Office of the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Services Affairs. The activities, sponsored by the Seashore Company, were held during September 14-20 with the participation of more than 1,444 volunteers. The closing ceremony was attended by the General Cleanliness Department director Muqbil Madhour al-Shammari, assistant director Mohamed Faraj al-Kubaisi, other officials and representatives of the participating entities. The activities included cleanup campaigns across 13 beaches and three islands with the participation of several municipalities, government, and community entities. The campaigns resulted in the collection of 4.56 tonnes of various waste, including 2.2 tonnes of general waste, 1.26 tonnes of recyclable materials, and 1.1 tonnes of wood and bulky waste. The campaigns covered Al Wakra Public Beach, Al Wakra Family Beach, Abu Fentas, Simaisma Family Beach, Al Kharaij, Abu Samra, Zekreet, Al Shamal Corniche, Fariha, Al Thakhira, Umrih, Doha Umm Al-Maa, and Sealine Public Beach. The activities also extended to three islands: Al Safliya, Lekhwair, and Umm Jateelah.

Qatar takes part in meeting on AU's Somalia mission



Qatar has participated in the High-Level Meeting on Financing for the African Union (AU) Mission for Support and Stabilisation in Somalia. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi chaired Qatar's delegation to the meeting, which was held on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting was convened at the invitation of the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia. - **QNA**

Al-Muraikhi leads Qatar delegation at informal meeting of CICA Council of Foreign Ministers



Qatar participated in the informal meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). The meeting was convened on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The delegation was headed by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi. - **QNA**

Qatar attends 18th Global Governance Group Meeting at the UN

Qatar took part in the 18th ministerial meeting of the Global Governance Group (3G), held on the sidelines of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Representing Qatar at the meeting was HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi.

In his address, HE Dr al-Khulaifi emphasised that recent years have demonstrated that the effectiveness of the international system fundamentally depends on collective commitment to renewing the foundations of global governance, making it more inclusive, equitable, and resilient.

He reaffirmed Qatar's full support for efforts to reform the multilateral system, ensuring the inclusiveness and transparency of global governance, and enhancing the capacity of international institutions to effectively respond to the evolving needs of member states, especially developing countries.

HE Dr al-Khulaifi underscored Qatar's investments in digital transformation and information technology to boost government efficiency, alongside fostering partnerships with civil society and the private sector in public policy formulation.

On the international front, he added, Qatar continues to play an active role by providing development and relief aid, contributing to mediation and peace efforts, and promoting intercultural and international dialogue.

He described the Global Governance Group as a promising platform to rebuild trust in the international system, strengthen North-South solidarity, and ensure no one is left behind. - **QNA**

Qatar is 'a trusted regional partner, key to Gaza diplomacy': UN official

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Co-ordinator Tom Fletcher has stated that Qatar's humanitarian diplomacy has played a pivotal role, starting with facilitating ceasefire talks in the Gaza Strip and negotiations for the release of hostages, and extending to pressing for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said that these diplomatic efforts are backed by sustained funding, which ensures the continuity of vital humanitarian programmes and opens the door for timely and sustainable life-saving actions.

The official noted that amid the challenging circumstances facing the humani-

tarian system, Qatar has emerged as one of the most reliable partners in the region.

Fletcher added that since the opening of the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Doha in 2023, co-operation has grown stronger with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar Fund for Development, Qatar Charity, Qatar Airways, and others.

He pointed out that in this year alone, Qatar and its institutions have directed more than \$410mn toward humanitarian response efforts, with this support extending to UN agencies, Red Crescent societies, and both national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In the face of massive funding shortfalls affecting humanitarian programmes, Fletcher emphasised that Qatar's support is not only generous but also strategic.

From backing the UN Central Emergency Response Fund and the local pooled funds, to shaping humanitarian policy through mediation and advocacy, Qatar deploys multiple forces simultaneously of political will, humanitarian diplomacy, consistent funding for life-saving response efforts, and a commitment to strengthening institutions.

To adapt to an era of shrinking budgets, Fletcher said that he is leading a reset of humanitarian operations to make their system more prioritised and efficient.

He noted that funding cuts have had a significant impact, with the Central Emergency Response Fund shrinking from \$576mn in 2024 to around \$400mn this year.

The official concluded his interview by stressing the need for strong support against indifference and impunity, full funding for life-saving relief operations, and unwavering backing for the core principles that guide humanitarian workers.

He also underscored the necessity of protecting civilians, including humanitarian workers who are being killed in record numbers, from attacks, as mandated by international humanitarian law. - **QNA**



Qatar Media Corp elected second VP of ASBU's Radio Committee

Qatar Radio general programme supervisor Jaber Mohammed al-Surour has been elected as a representative of the Qatar Media Corporation to the position of second vice-president on the Standing Radio Committee of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU).

This election was made in implementation of the recommendations of the Executive Council at its 93rd meeting, and was approved by the Union's General Assembly at its 35th regular session, held in the Tunisian capital on September 22-25, in accordance with the principles, conditions and mechanisms for electing this position. - **QNA**

Italian minister visits Qatar's National Command Centre



Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantadosi has visited Qatar's National Command Centre (NCC) as part of his official visit to the country. Piantadosi was accompanied by the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Security Affairs Sheikh Nayef bin Faleh bin Saud al-Thani. During the visit, he was briefed on the latest technologies and advanced systems used in the fields of command and control, as well as crisis and emergency management. - **QNA**

MoPH, NPC launch National Vaccination Coverage Survey

Fieldwork for the National Vaccination Coverage Survey in Qatar begins on Wednesday, implemented by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in partnership with the National Planning Council (NPC), and will continue until December 24, 2025.

The National Vaccination Coverage Survey is the first of its kind in Qatar.

The survey aims to measure vaccination coverage rates and related determinants in a scientific and comprehensive manner, thereby enhancing health security and ensuring

the continued provision of the highest levels of protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

The survey targets a random sample of more than 11,000 households representing the entire population of Qatar, both citizens and residents, who have children aged between one and under seven years.

Data will be collected from parents through household visits and by reviewing their children's vaccination cards.

The survey will be conducted in co-op-

eration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and in accordance with internationally recognised standards in this field, to ensure the quality of data and the reliability of results.

The MoPH encourages all families selected for the survey to support the field teams and researchers.

Members of the public may also contact the Qatar Healthcare Unified Contact Centre on 16000 for any enquiries regarding the survey and its field teams.

Katara inaugurates 'Reflections Art' exhibition

Katara Cultural Village has inaugurated the exhibition "Reflections", showcasing 23 artworks, created by legendary Qatari visual artist Yasser Gaessa over the course of a year.

The artefacts revolve around the theme of reflection, as well as exploring its human, natural, and intellectual dimensions.

The showcase will remain open to the public until October 5, offering an incredible opportunity to reflect on the relationship between humans and their surroundings, and to examine how personal emotions and life experiences manifest in nature, in turn reflecting upon the broader human experience.

The themes of the artworks range from natu-

ral reflections, such as those found in water, sky, and light, to human reflections that mirror inner states of contemplation, anxiety, and serenity, alongside pieces that explore the dialectic between the external world and the inner reservoir of human experience, rendered in a visual composition that strikes a delicate balance between reality and imagination.

Katara general manager Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti emphasised that Katara has always been committed to nurturing the fine art scene on both the domestic and Arab stages through hosting outstanding artistic experiences.

Gaessa said that the showcased artworks

have been a years-long product of his experience in press graphic design and fine art, with these two arts imbuing his paintings with a special identity, in terms of techniques and visual structures.

He added that the overarching concept of the exhibition is built on the notion of reflection, conceived as a mirror of the human relationship with the world around them, noting that in many instances, the individual becomes a reflection of their environment and the nuances of daily life they experience, while in other cases, the environment mirrors what is internally harboured in terms of emotions and experiences. - **QNA**

DFI amplifies Palestinian voices at festival

The Doha Film Institute (DFI) has affirmed its unwavering commitment to empowering important Arab voices by bringing urgent stories from Palestine to the forefront during its upcoming Doha Film Festival.

At a time when Palestinian lives and histories are under siege, the DFI said in a statement that the festival offers its screens as a platform for memory, dignity, and hope.

It presents a diverse selection of powerful works that embody the human spirit of Palestine, which the world cannot afford to ignore.

The compelling slate of features includes the acclaimed opening film *The Voice of Hind Rajab* by Kaouthar Ben Hamia, Kamal Aljafari's deeply personal *With Hassan in Gaza*, the evocative *Once Upon a Time in Gaza* by Arab and Nasser Tarzan, and a special screening of Annemarie Jacir's *Palestine 36*, a landmark work that demonstrates the depth of Palestinian cinematic storytelling and its vital place in the global cultural landscape.

"These films are not just stories on screen, they are urgent testaments of truth, survival and resist-

ance and are voices of a people who refuse to be silenced," said Director and DFI chief executive Fatma Hassan Alremaih.

"They carry with them the memories, the pain and the enduring hopes of Palestinians, refusing erasure and demanding recognition," she stated. "In supporting these films, we pay tribute to the courage of their creators and stand with Palestine, ensuring their stories are seen, heard, and remembered."

"At the Doha Film Festival, we are honoured to provide a platform where these voices are amplified to echo across the world and inspire change," Alremaih added.

Taking place on November 20-28, the Doha Film Festival (DFF) represents the bold next chapter in Doha Film Institute's mission to nurture regional talent and champion urgent and authentic stories in cinema.

The festival will transform iconic locations across Doha, including Katara Cultural Village, Msheireb Downtown Doha, and the Museum of Islamic Art, into vibrant hubs of cultural exchange, bringing together filmmakers, storytellers, and audiences from every corner of the globe. - **QNA**

Qatar takes part in Amman Book Fair

The Amman International Book Fair 2025 kicked off yesterday under the theme *Jerusalem, the Capital of Palestine*.

The fair will continue until October 4, with Qatari participation, represented by the Ministry of Culture.

Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain, the director of the ministry's Libraries Department and director of the Doha International Book Fair, said Qatar's pavilion allows visitors to view a variety of literary and cultural publications and gain insight into the Qatari cultural scene.

This year's Amman International Book Fair features participation of 400 publishing houses from 22 Arab and foreign countries. - **QNA**



Closure on Environmental Street

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary closure at Environmental Street from Rawdat Umm Lekhba Intersection towards Markhiyah Intersection from 11pm on September 25 until 5am on September 28.

Doha Debates workshop in Argentina

The Doha Debates, a Qatar Foundation (QF) platform for global dialogue, in partnership with the Years of Culture initiative, hosted a workshop bringing together 20 students from Qatar, Chile, and Argentina as part of the Qatar-Chile and Argentina 2025 Year of Culture. The event was held in preparation for the main gathering scheduled for today in Buenos Aires. - **QNA**

MoEHE concludes orientation for award

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) concluded yesterday the orientation sessions for the 19th edition of the Qatar Scientific Excellence Award, holding nine meetings at the ministry's headquarters and online.

Applications for the Qatar Scientific Excellence Award will open on October 1, with the deadline for electronic submissions set for October 31. Results will be announced in December 2025, and the award ceremony will take place on February 3, 2026. - **QNA**

Malaysian community in Qatar celebrates 68th National Day

The Embassy of Malaysia in Qatar, in collaboration with the Malaysian community, hosted a special National Day and Hari Malaysia celebration titled 'Malam Aspirasi Merdeka'.

The event brought together more than 350 Malaysians living in Qatar, including professionals, their families, and members of the business and media communities.

Attendees, dressed in their national attire, sang the national anthem and pledged the Rukun Negara, Malaysia's national principles, at the start of the event.

In his keynote address, Faizal Razali, Malaysian ambassador to Qatar, highlighted the significance of the year's national theme, 'Malaysia Madani: Rakyat Disantuni' (Malaysia Madani: A Nation that Cares for Its People).

The envoy also noted Malaysia's current chairmanship of Asean and the upcoming Visit Malaysia Year 2026. He encouraged all Malaysians in Qatar to remain united and uphold the nation's reputation through excellence, integrity, and mutual respect, as their actions abroad reflect the country's image. The event showcased the diverse Ma-



laysian community and its rich cultural heritage. Guests enjoyed traditional Malaysian cuisine and a video presentation on Malaysia's progress and diversity.

The celebration featured various cultural and patriotic performances by Malaysian community groups.

Kompang, a traditional Malay frame drum performance was presented by Kelab Kompang Qatar. This group instrument is typically played at weddings, cultural shows, and official events.

Joget, a folk dance performed by Irama group, is known for its spirited, graceful movements and playful interactions between dancers.

A medley of Inang and Zapin dances were performed by Permata Tari group. The Inang is an elegant court dance, while the Zapin is a rhythmic folk dance with intricate footwork, influenced by Arab traders.

Dikir Barat, traditional performance by Kelab Kebudayaan Al Khor, featured



a group of people who sing and chant rhythmic verses in unison, often in a call-and-response format.

Sumazau, a traditional dance of the indigenous Kadazan-Dusun people of Sabah, was performed by Tunas Bayu group. The dance, a symbol of unity and thanksgiving, features graceful arm movements that mimic a bird's flight.

Pang5 Dukhan, a cultural group, demonstrated Silat, Malaysia's national martial art.

The ambassador also invited Dareen al-Bayya, a young Palestinian orphan from Gaza, and her brother, Kinan, to the

celebration. The siblings miraculously survived an Israeli air strike in 2024 that killed nearly 70 members of their family. Seriously injured and in a coma for two weeks, Dareen was rescued and brought to Doha by the Qatari Government for medical care. At the event, the envoy presented the siblings with contributions from the prime minister of Malaysia.

The celebration not only strengthened the connection among the 6,202 Malaysians residing in Qatar, but also reinforced the values of patriotism, solidarity, and pride in their nation's accomplishments, a statement added.

Teachers' workshop at Noble International School

A two-day training workshop on the theme 'Teachers: Builders of Creative Minds' was organised at Noble International School. The aim was to equip educators with innovative teaching strategies and inspire them to adopt creative approaches that meet the evolving needs of 21st-century learners.

In his welcome address, principal Dr Shibu Abdul Rasheed emphasised the importance of continuous professional development for teachers in shaping students. Coach India Academy director Nizam A P was the resource person. Through interactive sessions and practical

demonstrations, he urged teachers to bring innovation into classroom practices, promote student-centred learning, and cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills. He also highlighted the role of technology and creative activities in enhancing student engagement and imagination.

Teachers participated actively in discussions, group activities, and experience-sharing sessions, exploring innovative practices such as project-based learning, creative assessments, and collaborative classroom methods. Vice-principals Jayamon Joy, Robin K Jose, Shihabudeen M and Smitha N, were present.



Indian workers sports meet



Under the guidance of the Embassy of India, Doha and with the collaborative efforts of Amrit Uttar Pradesh Navrang Sanskritik Mandal (AUPNSM) and Bihar Social Forum (BSF), Qatar, an Indian Workers Sports Meet was organised at an air-conditioned multi-purpose indoor hall.

More than 250 blue-collar Indian workers from diverse companies and backgrounds participated in football tournament, Carrom, Wicket-hitting and Tug-of-War.

In football, Team Mangal (from Roots Qatar) emerged champions, while Team Vikram secured the runners-up spot. Tug-of-War was won by Team Shershah.



Indian embassy first secretaries Eish Singhal and Harish Pandey presented trophies and medals.

AUPNSM president Nita Mishra and BSF president Satyendra Pathak led the organis-

ers. AUPNSM founder Ashutosh Mishra thanked organising team members Nikhil Srivastava, Abhishek Srivastava, Ajay Rai, Arun Verma, Arshad Chowdury, Vinod Mishra and acknowledged the sup-

port from the Embassy of India in making the event a success.

BSF founder Irfan Ansari thanked his organising team members Imam Hussain and Abdul Rahman. Roots Qatar was the lead sponsor.

DPS MIS hosts silver jubilee teachers' appreciation

DPS-Modern Indian School management hosted a silver jubilee teachers' appreciation dinner. President Yasir Nainar, patron Aisha bint Hammam, vice-president George Thomas, executive committee members, principal Asna Nafees, vice-principals, headmistress and coordinators were present. Nainar appreciated the teachers' commitment, and welcomed new council members, while also acknowledging the founders' vision of a quality school. Thomas praised teachers as guiding

lights shaping generations, and directors Rocky Fernandes, Sonny Varghese, Gopi Varadhan, and Sreedharan Kunhiramath highlighted their lifelong influence, societal contributions, and the importance of using AI thoughtfully in education. The principal thanked the school management, chief patron Mohammed bin Hammam al-Abdulla and patron Aisha bint Hammam and reflected on the school's 25-year journey. Teachers gave a musical presentation and a dance drama.



Cultural programmes mark Onam festivities



The Mar Thoma College Alumni Doha Chapter held its Onam celebration with various cultural programmes. Alumnus Rev Jose Abraham, on

a visit to Doha, inaugurated the event. Alumnus and Malankara Orthodox Church Doha vicar Fr Sherin Thomas gave the Onam message.

President Anish George Mathew presided. Alumni patron Raju Mathew, general secretary Nisha Jacob, and vice-president Sheela Sunny also addressed



the gathering. Alumni family members who excelled in Grades X and XII were honoured with awards. Alumni members who completed 25 years in Qatar were

also felicitated with mementos.

The programmes were led by treasurer Jacob M Mathew, Onam celebration programme convener Joseph P George,

and committee members Jen-son Thomas, Siby Abraham, Siju Mohan, Lijo Raju, Jiji John, Sheen Philip, Sally Raju, and Varghese P C.

OFFICIAL

North Korea’s foreign minister to visit China soon

North Korea’s Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui will visit China soon at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the North’s official KCNA news agency reported yesterday. China’s foreign ministry said yesterday that Choe will be in China from September 27 to 30, making her second visit to the ally in less than a month. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un participated in a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in early September. Xi is expected to visit South Korea to attend the Asia-Pacific Co-operation Summit scheduled for October 31-November 1 in Gyeongju, Korea’s foreign minister said last week.

DECISION

Hong Kong, Chile, Bangladesh, Lanka look to join RCEP bloc

Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Chile and Bangladesh are seeking to join the China-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world’s largest trade bloc. The RCEP currently consists of China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and all 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. RCEP officials, who are meeting on the sidelines of a gathering of Asean trade and economic ministers in Malaysia this week, said they had few objections to accepting new applicants. “We are of course in support of any countries that are willing to join the RCEP,” Indonesia’s Vice-Minister of Trade Dyah Roro Esti Widya Putri said.

TRAGEDY

Seven monks killed in Lanka cable car accident

Seven Buddhist monks, including three foreigners, were killed when their cable-pulled rail car snapped and crashed down a mountainside in north-western Sri Lanka, police said yesterday. The victims were crowded into the small makeshift cabin as they headed to meditation units atop a mountain within the vast Na Uyana forest monastery late on Wednesday night, police said. “There were 13 monks in the car. Two managed to escape with minor injuries, but four others are in a critical condition,” a police official said. He said among the dead were monks from India, Russia and Romania. The monastery is located 130kms northeast of the capital, Colombo.

OPINION

Thai minister calls for troop reductions with Cambodia

Thailand and Cambodia should scale back military presence along their shared border and work to de-escalate tensions, Thailand’s new foreign minister said. Formally sworn into office along with Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul a day earlier, Sihasak Phuangketkeow stressed the need to uphold the ceasefire agreed by Thailand and Cambodia at the end of a five-day conflict in July. He told reporters on his first day as foreign minister that his priority is to secure peace between the two Southeast Asian neighbours. The two countries need to implement the joint actions that were agreed during a dialogue earlier this month, he added.

N Korea in last stage of ICBM development, says S Korea

Reuters/AFP
Seoul

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung said North Korea was in last stage of developing an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), though it was yet to master re-entry technology. Lee, who is visiting New York for the United Nations General Assembly, hosted an investor relations session yesterday at the New York Stock Exchange, where he explained security risks linked to North Korea. Earlier yesterday South Korea’s Unification Minister Chung Dong-young claimed North Korea is believed to possess up to two tonnes of highly enriched uranium. The North has long been known to hold a “significant” amount of highly enriched uranium, the key material used to produce nuclear warheads, according to South Korea’s defence ministry. But in a rare public confirmation, South Korea’s unification minister said that “according to estimates by experts including the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) they (North Korea) currently hold around 2,000kgs of highly enriched uranium at a purity of 90% or higher.” “Even at this very hour, North Korea’s uranium centrifuges are operating at four sites,” Chung told reporters. “Only 5kg to 6kg of plutonium is enough to build a single nuclear

bomb,” said Chung, adding that 2,000kg of highly enriched uranium, which could be reserved solely for plutonium production, would be “enough to make an enormous number of nuclear weapons.” Enriched uranium is the key ingredient for making nuclear bombs, as it can be turned into plutonium through combustion in a nuclear reactor. Enrichment must be pushed to more than 90%, the concentration termed weapons-grade, that is needed for the critical mass to set off the chain reaction leading to a nuclear explosion. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 42kgs of highly enriched uranium is needed for one nuclear weapon; 2,000kgs would be enough for roughly 47 nuclear bombs. Chung said that “stopping North Korea’s nuclear development is an urgent matter”, but argued that sanctions will not be effective and that the only solution lies in a summit between Pyongyang and Washington. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said this week that he was open to US talks provided he can keep his nuclear arsenal, according to a report by the official Korean Central News Agency. North Korea, which conducted its first nuclear test in 2006 and is under rafts of UN sanctions for its banned weapons programmes, has never publicly disclosed details of its uranium enrichment facility until last September.

Thai mall displays ‘Mt Rushmore’ of Trump, Putin, Xi, Kim



A caricature of Mount Rushmore, depicting world leaders US President Donald Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and Russian President Vladimir Putin, is displayed to promote a fair at a shopping mall, in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday.

Hong Kong, southern Guangdong reopen after cyclone Ragasa

Reuters
Zhuhai/Hong Kong

Hong Kong and several coastal cities in China’s southern Guangdong province reopened businesses, transportation services and schools yesterday after the world’s most powerful tropical cyclone this year lashed the region. Ragasa brought the densely populated city to a standstill from Tuesday afternoon, after sweeping through the northern Philippines and Taiwan where it killed 14, before making landfall on the southern Chinese city of Yangjiang on Wednesday.

More than 100 people were injured in Hong Kong, where authorities imposed the highest typhoon signal 10 for most of Wednesday. Hong Kong resumed flights out of its international airport yesterday after a 36-hour suspension. By Wednesday evening businesses and transport services were reopening in the neighbouring tech hub of Shenzhen, with cleaning teams clearing downed trees and branches from the roads. Local media reported extensive flooding in multiple districts in the Chinese coastal city of Zhuhai. Shopkeeper Yang Yanna was picking through soaked packaging for luxury brand tea and cigarettes, estimating over 300,000 yuan (\$42,100)

of damage. “I’ve been here for over 10 years, and (the typhoons) have never been this intense,” Yang said. “I thought the floodwater would be the height of these chairs, or a bit higher, no problem. But it rose higher than we expected.” Nearby, a home goods seller named Nie tried to salvage sodden toothpaste boxes. “Since the pandemic, it’s been extremely difficult to run a business,” Nie said. “Everything we do is at a loss... And now you come in and there’s nothing.” Huge waves crashed over areas of Hong Kong’s eastern and southern shoreline on Wednesday, with widespread flooding submerging some roads and residential properties.

Woman keeps daughter’s body in freezer for 20 years

Japanese police yesterday said they had arrested a 75-year-old woman who allegedly confessed to keeping the body of her daughter in a freezer for two decades. Investigators on Tuesday found the body of an adult woman in a deep freezer at the home of Keiko Mori in Ibaraki prefecture, northeast of Tokyo, said a local police spokesman on condition of anonymity. Mori “said it was her daughter”. Makiko, who was born in 1975 and would be 49 or 50-years-old if alive, the spokesman said. “Decay was advancing,” he added, noting that an autopsy would be conducted to determine the cause of death. Mori came to police on Tuesday with a relative to report that she had kept the body in the freezer. When investigators visited the house with Mori, they found the body dressed in a T-shirt and underwear, kneeling face-down inside the freezer, the spokesman said.

Tokyo Game Show preview day



People attend the preview day for the annual Tokyo Game Show at Makuhari Messe in Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture yesterday.

Philippines cancels classes, flights as new storm looms

AFP
Manila

The Philippines shut schools and scrapped flights yesterday as a fresh storm threatened to hit just days after a super typhoon killed nine people in the archipelago. Severe Tropical Storm Bualoi is forecast to intensify into a typhoon today and then slam into the southern end of the Philippines’ largest island, Luzon. “Widespread flooding and landslides in mountainous areas are possible,” Benison Estareja from the nation’s weather service told a briefing. The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, putting millions of people in disaster-prone areas in a state of constant poverty. Scientists warn that storms are

becoming more powerful as the world warms due to the effects of human-driven climate change. Authorities warned of a “high risk of life-threatening storm surge” of up to 10 feet with the coming storm. The Philippine Coast Guard said around 1,500 people were stranded in ports of Bicol, the region where the typhoon is forecast to hit. Thousands were also still displaced in the rain-soaked nation after Super Typhoon Ragasa passed over the country’s far northern end and killed at least nine people. The weather bureau said the outer bands of Bualoi might also bring rains to the northern Philippines. “These rains are continuous and may cause renewed flooding, and landslides, especially in areas that are already saturated,” Civil Defence Administrator Harold Cabreros said.

Taiwan minister attends event on sidelines of UN assembly

Reuters
Washington

Taiwan’s Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung was in New York this week and met diplomatic allies on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, according to the president of a small Pacific state and a source with knowledge of the matter. Lin’s visit came after he published an op-ed article on the website of conservative US outlet Newsmax, calling on the world body to recognise Taiwan, part of a long-standing campaign by Taipei. It was the first time a Taiwan-

ese foreign minister was known to have been in New York during the so-called UNGA Week, for which world leaders gather in the city each year. Taiwan, formally known as the Republic of China, is barred from attending official UNGA events as Beijing has held China’s UN seat since 1971. Lin attended a reception in New York on Monday hosted by American Global Strategies (AGS), a consultancy set up by former US national security adviser Robert O’Brien and former US national security council chief of staff Alexander Gray, said a source familiar with the event.

Taiwan’s foreign ministry declined to comment. The office of the presidency of the Pacific Island state of Palau, one of the few remaining countries that recognises Taiwan diplomatically, published photographs on its Facebook page of Lin, showing him at the AGS reception with Palau President Surangel Whipps and Gray. Gray served with O’Brien in the White House in the first administration of US President Donald Trump. In the background of the photo showing Lin with Whipps and Gray is a US state department official whom the source identified as Charles Harder, a special

envoy for children’s well-being. The reception was held at Le Bernadin, a high-end French restaurant in Manhattan, which has three Michelin stars, the source said. China’s foreign ministry yesterday condemned the US for “allowing” the visit, which it said “provided a stage for Taiwan independence separatist forces to stage their provocations and seek secession.” “We also advise Taiwan’s few remaining so-called diplomatic allies to stop being repeatedly manipulated and exploited by Taiwan independence separatist forces,” ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said at a regular press conference. Beijing yesterday also added

three US firms to a list restricting their ability to trade and invest in the world’s second-largest economy over arms sales to Taiwan. Taiwan is excluded from most international organisations and many gatherings due to objections by China, which claims the democratically governed island as its own. The US, like most countries, does not officially recognise Taiwan but maintains close unofficial ties with Taipei and is required by law to provide the island with the means to defend itself amid increasing pressure from China’s communist government. The state department did not offer a comment when asked about

Lin’s New York visit. Beijing, with which Trump is currently attempting to negotiate a major trade deal, regularly denounces any international recognition of Taiwan or contact between Taiwanese and foreign officials, viewing it as encouraging Taiwan’s separate status from China. Taiwan says it has a right to engage internationally and that China has no right to claim to speak for or represent it. On Monday, the foreign ministers of South Korea, Japan and the US met on the sidelines of UNGA and expressed concern in a joint statement about increasingly frequent destabilising activities around Taiwan.



India’s aviation boom fuels openings for new airline players

Reuters
Montreal

India will require more government oversight as the country’s airlines take delivery of thousands of planes and its fast-growing market is creating openings for new players, the government’s aviation

safety chief said. India is looking at “more responsibility, more safety oversight, more manpower,” with the number of commercial jets in the country nearly doubling over the last decade and with another 2,000 aircraft on order, director general of civil aviation Faiz Ahmed Kidwai said in an interview on the sidelines of the UN aviation agency’s triennial

assembly in Montreal. India is one of the world’s fastest-growing aviation markets, but the June crash of an Air India jetliner has intensified scrutiny of safety standards.

India also faces pilot shortages and a parliamentary committee recently warned that insufficient labour at the air safety regulator potentially jeopardises safety. In

July, the regulator said it found 263 safety-related lapses at the country’s airlines. While the country’s aviation market is dominated largely by two airlines, IndiGo and Air India, travel demand is creating the opportunity for new players. “What we feel is that there is scope for more airlines because the way the sector is growing we need more players,” Kid-

wai said. “If more carriers come, yes, they’ll have an opportunity.”

A record 174mn Indian domestic and international passengers flew in 2024, although that still pales in comparison to the 730mn passengers in China, International Air Transport Association data show.

The Air India plane crash in June, which left 260 people dead in the

worst aviation disaster in a decade, has overshadowed India’s rapid rise as an aviation hub. A preliminary investigation report released earlier by the Indian government showed pilot confusion in the cockpit shortly before the crash after the plane’s fuel engine switches had almost simultaneously flipped from run to cutoff just after takeoff.

India ‘eyes nuke liability fund for major accidents’

Reuters
New Delhi

India plans to set up a nuclear liability fund to cover accident compensation in excess of Rs-15bn (\$169mn) owed by plant operators, in a bid to ease risk-sharing concerns among global suppliers and private firms, two government sources said.

The move holds out potential to unlock long-stalled private and foreign investment in the nuclear industry, by aligning India’s compensation framework with global norms, added the sources, who have direct knowledge of the matter.

The statutory fund, proposed by a new atomic energy bill, would supplement an operator’s capped liability, in a shift from the current ad hoc payout system, said the sources, who sought anonymity because the plan has yet to be made public.

“The fund seeks to bolster the government’s ability to compensate victims in the event of an accident,” said one of the sources.

India’s atomic energy department, the prime minister’s office and the finance ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

India, which plans to expand nuclear power capacity 12-fold by 2047, is relaxing rules to end a decades-old state monopoly and a stringent liability provision so as

to free up private participation and attract foreign suppliers of technology.

Some of the South Asian nation’s big conglomerates, such as Tata Power, Adani Power and Reliance Industries, have begun preparing investment plans.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government is in the final stages of drafting legislation expected to be introduced in parliament’s winter session in December, the sources said. It aims to lure private companies into the areas of atomic energy generation and uranium mining, with foreign players taking minority stakes in nuclear power plants.

It also wants to ease nuclear liability laws by removing the provision exposing suppliers to unlimited liability for accidents. The planned fund would provide a clear legal mechanism to finance compensation beyond the operator’s cap.

For insurance coverage against nuclear accidents, India now relies on a nuclear insurance pool, a policy tool launched in 2015 but not embedded in law.

Though designed to support operator and supplier liability under legislation dating from 2010, it failed to overcome the caution of foreign firms from nations such as France and the US.

Once passed, the new bill will replace the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act of 2010.



Foreign tourists wait for transport outside the airport in Leh yesterday following violent clashes between police and demonstrators.

Security tightened after deadly Ladakh protests

AFP
Leh, India

Indian police patrolled the northern city of Leh yesterday, a day after protests demanding greater autonomy for the Himalayan territory of Ladakh turned deadly when security forces opened fire.

At least five people were killed and about 100 wounded, including 30 police officers.

The city - usually bustling with tourists - appeared deserted, with most main roads blocked by coils of razor wire and guarded by police in riot gear.

A doctor at Leh’s SNM Hospital said they had treated about 100 injured people since Wednesday, some of them police. “We have operated upon six injured people, three of them had bullet injuries and others internal bleeding in the chest and broken ribs,” said the doctor, who asked not to be identified. Protests erupted on Wednesday, with crowds demanding greater autonomy in the sparsely populated, high-altitude desert region that is home to some 300,000 people and which borders China and Pakistan.

India’s ministry of home affairs said that an “unruly mob” had attacked police, reporting in a statement issued late on Wednesday that “more than 30” officers were injured. Protesters torched a police vehicle and the offices of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), while officers fired tear gas and used batons to disperse

crowds. “In self-defence, police had to resort to firing, in which unfortunately some casualties are reported,” the statement said. It did not give any details about deaths.

However, a police officer said “five deaths were reported after the protests”. The officer spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to journalists.

Thinley, 33, who runs an automobile spare parts shop in Leh, was shot in the leg.

“We are exhausted by the government by not listening to our demands”, Thinley said from his hospital bed.

Jigmet Stanzin, 23, said he was injured when he tried to throw back what he thought was a tear gas canister. “It exploded and shattered my hand,” he said.

N Ireland police trawled phone logs for reporters’ numbers in leak hunt

Police in Northern Ireland used journalists’ phone numbers to check for information leaks by officers or staff, but did not carry out “widespread or systemic” improper surveillance, an independent review found. London-based barrister Angus McCullough was asked by chief constable John Boutcher to look at Police Service of Northern Ireland practices between 2011 and 2024 after a court case brought by two Belfast journalists revealed that warrants issued for searches and other surveillance were unlawfully obtained. He concluded there was no evidence of systemic or widespread use of covert measures by the PSNI against journalists, lawyers or others of “special status”. The review raised “significant concerns” about the PSNI conducting trawls of its own communications systems records in “an untargeted wholesale attempt to identify unauthorised contact between PSNI personnel and journalists”. He said he was relieved the practice had been discontinued, having not been used since March 2023, and formally ended in May 2024.

Farage meets BoE governor



Reform UK leader Nigel Farage speaks alongside Reform UK deputy leader Richard Tice (right) outside the Bank of England, before attending a meeting with the bank’s governor Andrew Bailey, in central London yesterday.

Family sagas top 2025 Booker Prize shortlist

AFP
London

Three authors writing about love and loss have made the Booker Prize shortlist for the first time, among the six chosen as contenders for this year’s prestigious award.

The works explore “the ties that bind families together – and the moments of crisis that can pull them apart,” the prize organisers said.

The shortlist features “both classical storytelling and novels that push the boundaries of narrative form”, they added.

“They are all brilliantly written and they are all brilliantly human,” said the chair of the jury, Irish writer Roddy Doyle, who won the prize in 1993 with *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.

Three women and three men are in the running for the title, chosen out of a longlist of 13 authors, which had already been whittled down from 153 entries.

Among them is American writer Susan Choi who makes her debut on the shortlist with *Flashlight*, which follows 10-year old Louisa and her family in the aftermath of her father’s disappearance.

Other newcomers to the list are American journalist and art critic Katie Kitamura with her book *Audition*, about an actress whose life is turned upside down after she meets a troubling man for lunch.

The Rest Of Our Lives by first-time shortlisted author Ben Markovits tackles the issues around older people and the challenges of long-term marriage.

Indian writer Kiran Desai, a previous Booker Prize winner, spent two decades writing her epic “*The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny*”, which at 700 pages is the longest entry on the shortlist.

It is described as “a spellbinding story of two young people whose fates intersect and diverge across continents and years”.

UK mulls support for Jaguar Land Rover’s suppliers

Reuters
London

Britain’s government is considering throwing a financial lifeline to carmaker Jaguar Land Rover’s suppliers after a shutdown caused by a cyberattack was extended until October, a government source said yesterday.

The luxury carmaker owned by India’s Tata Motors has three factories in Britain which together produce about 1,000 cars per day. The

company is losing at least £50mn (\$68mn) a week, according to the BBC, with many of its 33,000 staff told to stay at home.

Business Minister Peter Kyle and Industry Minister Chris McDonald visited JLR on Tuesday and talked to the CEO about how the company can work towards restarting production.

“We have two priorities – helping Jaguar Land Rover get back up and running as soon as possible, and the long-term health of the supply chain,” said McDonald.

“The government is looking at several ways to provide support to JLR suppliers,” the source said.

Schemes under consideration included the government buying component parts from the suppliers to enable them to survive until JLR resumes production, according to a BBC report.

Another option was providing government-backed loans to suppliers, the BBC said, although it added that the idea was not popular with suppliers.

When asked about the govern-

ment stepping in, the business department pointed to a statement on Tuesday in which Kyle said “we are doing everything we can to minimise the impact of this incident.”

The British parliament’s Business and Trade Select Committee was expected to meet companies in JLR’s supply chain later yesterday.

Tata Motors finance chief P B Balaji told the committee’s chair Liam Byrne in a letter dated on Tuesday that JLR was working with its supply partners to prioritise payments to “those with the great-

est need,” adding that JLR intended to settle any outstanding payments “in the coming weeks”.

He said JLR was “fully empowered to take decisions that best reflect the interests of its business and commercial partners,” in the letter, which was published by the committee.

“As part of TML and the Tata Group, JLR benefits from faster, preferential access to competitive credit rates through its global banking relationships,” he said.

“We are engaged across multiple

stakeholders to find solutions to support JLR’s commercial partners and hope to find a practical workable solution at the earliest.”

Mike Hawes, the head of Britain’s automotive trade body SMMT, said the cyberattack’s impact on the supply chain and wider industry on which it depends was “severe and of indeterminate duration”.

He said in an e-mailed statement that SMMT was working with JLR, the government and suppliers to identify what additional supportive measures might be needed.

ICJ drops case against Iran at Paris's request

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said yesterday that it had ended a case at France's request over the detention of two French citizens held in Iran.

France had filed a petition against Tehran at the ICJ in May over the detention of Cecile Kohler, who celebrated her 41st birthday yesterday, and Jacques Paris, 72.

It said the pair were held under a policy that targeted French nationals travelling in Iran "by accusing them of various offences relating to Iranian national security".

Kohler's sister, Noemie Kohler, told AFP that the family had contacted the French government for "clarifications" on the decision to withdraw the request, but "would not try to draw any conclusions" without more information.

Kohler and Paris were arrested in May 2022, accused of spying for Israel.

Their families have described their situation as increasingly desperate.

The Hague-based court said France had requested "the discontinuance of the proceedings" and that this "was not opposed by Iran".

The French application accused Iran of "serious and repeated breaches" of its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

Both countries are parties to the treaty, which regulates consular access.

In July, France told the court that it feared "irreparable harm" to Kohler and Paris, warning that new charges could expose them to the death penalty.

Earlier this month, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a television interview that a prisoner swap involving the French pair was nearing its "final stage", with a proposed exchange for Mahdih Esfandiari, an Iranian woman arrested in France in February for promoting terrorism on social media.

Iran has repeatedly requested her release, arguing that she was unjustly detained. - **AFP**

Two killed in shooting at Brazil school

Two teenagers were shot dead yesterday after gunmen opened fire on a school parking lot in northeast Brazil, the state government said.

Another three were wounded in the incident in the town of Sobral in northern Ceara state.

"The suspects fired the gunshots from the school sidewalk, hitting the victims in the school's parking lot," read the statement. "During the incident, a certain amount of drugs, a precision scale, and packaging were seized from one of the victims." - **AFP**

Trump administration threatens mass firings as shutdown looms

AFP/Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump's administration dramatically raised the stakes yesterday in a clash over a possible government funding shutdown, telling federal agencies to prepare for new mass firings if it goes ahead.

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) warned in a memo that it would go beyond the usual practice of temporary furloughs during previous shutdowns, where Congress cannot agree on spending plans.

Republican Trump is in a tense showdown with congressional Democrats over federal funding ahead of a fiscal deadline of midnight on September 30, which would trigger a fresh political crisis in Washington.

Democrats have rejected Republican proposals, unless some of the spending cuts are reversed and existing healthcare subsidies are extended.

Trump blamed Democrats for the looming shutdown when asked about the plans to lay off federal workers.

"Well, this is all caused by the Demo-

crats. They asked us to do something that's totally unreasonable," Trump told reporters as he hosted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the Oval Office.

Trump sought to wrestle the issue back to his core electoral message of a crackdown on migration, saying of the Democrats: "They want to give money away to illegals, people that entered our country illegally."

Democratic House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries earlier responded to threat of layoffs by telling the White House to "get lost".

Calling OMB chief Russ Vought a "malignant political hack", Jeffries added on X: "We will not be intimidated by your threat to engage in mass firings."

A shutdown would see non-essential operations grind to a halt and hundreds of thousands of civil servants temporarily left without pay.

However, the White House memo, obtained by AFP, also said that layoffs are on the cards.

It said "agencies are directed to use this opportunity to consider Reduction in Force (RIF) notices for all employees" in areas of government bearing the brunt of a shutdown.

The term "reduction in force" is the same

that the Trump administration used during its large-scale firings under tycoon Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) earlier this year.

The White House also ordered agencies to submit their proposed staff reduction plans and inform employees.

The memo blamed "insane demands" by Democrats and accused them of breaking what it called a 10-year trend of reaching bipartisan agreement to avoid shutdowns at the same time of year.

Shutdown battles have become a regular feature of US politics under both Republican and Democratic administrations in an increasingly paralysed and polarised Washington.

Senate Democrats rejected a stopgap funding bill last week that was hurriedly passed by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives as it sought to avert a shutdown.

Trump in turn cancelled a meeting on Tuesday with Democratic leaders in Congress, saying he would not meet with them until they "become realistic" with their demands.

With both chambers on recess this week and senators not returning until Monday, the day before the deadline, time is running

out to keep the US government funded after the end of the fiscal year.

Republicans hold a narrow majority in both chambers of Congress but, due to Senate rules, have to get some opposition support.

House Republicans warned last Friday that their members will not return before the funding deadline, forcing the Senate to vote again and accept their proposal or face a shutdown.

The bill, if passed, would still only be a temporary fix funding federal agencies through November 21.

Congress last faced a shutdown in March, when Republicans refused talks with Democrats over Trump's massive budget cuts and the layoff of thousands of federal employees.

Upon taking office in January, Trump launched a campaign to downsize the 2.4mn-member federal civilian workforce.

Roughly 300,000 federal civilian workers will have left their jobs by the end of 2025, Office of Personnel Management Director Scott Kupor told Reuters in August.

About 154,000 of those employees accepted a buyout and are slated to drop off the US government's payroll on September 30, the last day of the government's fiscal year.

Amazon to pay \$2.5bn to settle Prime enrolment claims

Reuters
Washington

Amazon.com will pay \$2.5bn in fines and reimbursements to Prime subscribers to settle the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)'s allegations that it deceived its customers to generate subscriptions, the FTC said yesterday.

While a win for consumers and the FTC, the settlement is relatively painless for Amazon: the company takes in around \$2.5bn in sales every 33 hours.

Shares of Amazon were nearly unchanged after the news.

Around 35mn Prime customers will be eligible for payout from a \$1.5bn fund, the FTC said.

Amazon will pay \$1bn in fines to the FTC.

The company did not admit wrongdoing as part of the settlement.

Customers who signed up for Prime between June 23, 2019 and June 23, 2025 through certain offers - and who used few Prime benefits afterward - will automatically receive \$51, according to court documents.

The settlement also allows customers to submit claims for payment if they tried to cancel Prime and failed during that time.

Amazon said in a statement that the deal allows it to move forward and focus on customers.

"We work incredibly hard to make it clear and simple for customers to both sign up or cancel their Prime membership, and to offer substantial value for our many millions of loyal Prime members around the world," the company said.

As part of the settlement, Amazon has agreed to create a "clear and conspicuous" button to allow customers to decline a Prime subscription, and to make it easier to cancel. Amazon has also agreed to more clearly disclose the terms of a subscription during enrolment and pay an independent supervisor to monitor compliance.

Amazon said the settlement largely requires it to maintain changes that are already in place, rather than make new ones.

The FTC alleged in its case that, between 2017 and 2022, Amazon executives rejected changes that would make its sign-up and cancellation processes clearer.

The company later adopted changes in 2022, while it was under investigation by the FTC.

The agency sued Amazon the next year.

The FTC started probing Amazon's subscription practices during President Donald Trump's first term and the case was filed during Joe Biden's presidency.

Sarkozy ordered to serve prison time in historic first

Reuters
Paris

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy was sentenced to five years in jail yesterday for criminal conspiracy over attempts to raise campaign funds from Libya, a spectacular downfall for the conservative who led France from 2007-2012.

The sentence, which will soon make Sarkozy the first post-war president of France to be imprisoned, was harsher than many expected and stunned allies and foes alike.

As he exited the courtroom, Sarkozy, visibly moved, expressed his outrage at what he said was a "scandalous" ruling.

"If they absolutely want me to sleep in jail, I will sleep in jail, but with my head held high," he told reporters, adding that he was innocent. "I will not apologise for something I didn't do."

"What happened today... is of extreme gravity in regard to the rule of law, and for the trust one can have in the justice system," he said of the ruling, as his wife, model and singer-songwriter Carla Bruni, stood by him.

Sarkozy was found guilty of criminal conspiracy over efforts by close aides to procure funds for his 2007 presidential bid from Libya during the rule of late dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

He was acquitted by the Paris court of all other charges, including corruption and receiving illegal campaign financing.

"We were shocked (by the sentence) because when we started hearing the decision being read out, we thought his innocence would be recognised," one of his lawyers, Jean-Michel Darrois, told reporters. "We hope the appeals court will see things more clearly and will recognise his innocence."

The prison sentence is enforceable immediately, with the judge saying that Sarkozy would have just a short period to put his af-



Sarkozy and his wife Carla Bruni leave after the verdict in his trial for illegal campaign financing from Libya for his successful 2007 presidential bid, at the Tribunal de Paris courthouse in Paris. - **AFP**

fairs in order before prosecutors call on him to head to jail.

That must happen within a month.

French media said Sarkozy would be summoned on October 13 to be told when he would be jailed.

Authorities did not disclose where he would be jailed, though people familiar with the French judicial system say it could be in the capital's storied La Sante prison, which in the past has housed leftist militant Carlos the Jackal and former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega.

"It's the prison best suited to welcome a profile such as his," said prison guard union representative Wilfried Fonck.

Sarkozy, who has always denied the charges, was accused of making a deal with Gaddafi in 2005, when Sarkozy was France's interior minister, to obtain campaign financing in exchange for supporting the then-isolated Libyan government on the international stage.

The judge said there was no proof that Sarkozy made such a deal with Gaddafi, nor that money that was sent from Libya reached

Sarkozy's campaign coffers, even if the timing was "compatible" and the paths the money went through were "very opaque".

However, she said Sarkozy was guilty of criminal conspiracy between 2005 and 2007 for having let close aides get in touch with people in Libya to try and obtain campaign financing.

From May 2007, he was president and covered by presidential immunity, the court added.

It was the second time this year that a French court handed down a ruling with immediate effect on a major political figure.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen was convicted in March of embezzling EU funds and given an immediate five-year ban on running for office.

Le Pen was prompt to react to Sarkozy's sentencing, saying that it was "a grave danger" that judges were opting for immediately enforceable rulings and not waiting for appeals.

Reactions among French politicians were mixed, with several on the right - including Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau - rushing to give support to Sarkozy, while on the left, the ruling was seen as proof of the independence of the judiciary.

Vincent Brengrath, lawyer for economic justice campaign group Sherpa, which was party to the trial, also welcomed the ruling, saying that it "confirms we have an independent justice system that can be brave".

On the streets of Paris, reactions were equally mixed.

"I think it's a good thing that Mr Sarkozy, the former president of France, is being held accountable for his actions," said student Clement Buy.

However, others disagreed.

"It was the same for Marine Le Pen. We pick fights with people who are involved in politics... other parties are perhaps afraid (of them), that's all," said pensioner Jacqueline Erman.

Curfew declared in Madagascar capital following protests

Reuters/AFP
Antananarivo

Authorities in Madagascar have imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the capital, after protests over frequent power outages and water shortages turned violent, according to a top security official.

Police fired teargas to disperse the thousands of mostly youth protesters who were marching and carrying placards, in Antananarivo, the capital, according to a Reuters witness.

The demonstrators were denouncing the government and demanding restoration of reliable water and electricity across the country.

"There are unfortunately individuals taking advantage of the situation to destroy other people's

property," General Angelo Ravelonarivo, who heads a joint security body that includes the police and the military, said in a statement he read on privately owned Real TV late yesterday.

To protect "the population and their belongings", the security forces decided to impose a curfew from 7pm to 5am "until public order is restored", the statement said.

Madagascar, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, is mired in poverty, and some people blame the government of President Andry Rajoelina, who was re-elected in 2023, for not improving conditions.

During the protests earlier yesterday, a large shopping mall in the capital was looted and then burned, and the homes of two lawmakers were looted and vandalised, according to the Reuters witness.

The protesters, who defied an



Protesters hold a Madagascar flag while looking at police officers as they demonstrate yesterday against repeated water and electricity outages in Antananarivo. - **AFP**

earlier police ban on the demonstration, marched while chanting: "We need water, we need electricity."

They waved banners reading "Let us make our rights heard", "Stop a life of yellow jerrycans and darkness" and "We don't

French navy seizes 10 tonnes of cocaine off west Africa

The French navy has seized nearly 10 tonnes of cocaine worth more than \$600mn from a wooden fishing vessel off the coast of West Africa, French authorities said yesterday.

The seizure by two navy ships on Monday morning followed a tip-off by anti-drug and maritime intelligence authorities and British police, authorities in France's northwestern Atlantic Maritime region said.

The six-person crew of the 20m (66') ship, which sank in the wake of the raid, are set to be handed over to the French courts, said Stephane Kellenberger, the public prosecutor in the port city of Brest.

The operation was part of France's Corymbe naval mission, which has been deployed in the Gulf of Guinea since 1990 to ensure security in an area where piracy is common. - **AFP**

Austria hails 'brain gain' in luring 25 academics away from US

Reuters
Vienna

Austria has lured what it calls 25 "top researchers" away from US institutions including Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Princeton with grants set up in response to the Trump administration's funding cuts targeting universities.

Recipients of the grants of €500,000 (\$587,000) each over two years range from post-doctoral researchers to professors and work in fields such as physics, chemistry and

life sciences, the Austrian Academy of Sciences said in a statement yesterday.

"Thank Trump for this brain gain," the academy's president Heinz Fassmann said.

"We have succeeded in bringing these outstanding individuals from the United States to Austria. They bring with them new ideas, new perspectives and international networks. That is a big win for Austrian science," he added, without naming them.

US President Donald Trump has cracked down on universities over a range of issues like pro-Palestinian protests against US ally Israel's assault

on Gaza, gender minority policies, climate initiatives and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programmes.

The White House has said even with the cuts, the US would still account for the most global research funding.

Austria is among the countries that have responded by seeking to lure away academics currently working at universities in the United States.

In March, 13 European countries including France, Germany and Spain, urged the EU Commission to move fast to attract academic talent.

While Austria is better known for the intellectuals it produced in the

19th and early 20th centuries, such as psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud or quantum physicist Erwin Schroedinger, it currently has four universities in the global Shanghai ranking's top 300.

Recipients of the grants will start work this year at Austrian universities or research institutions.

"At a time when political interference and authoritarian tendencies are encroaching on research and teaching, we are taking a strong stand against them," Austria's minister for science and research, Eva-Maria Holzleitner of the Social Democrats, said.

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H-1B visa – what is it and who are its beneficiaries?

US President Donald Trump imposed new fees on H-1B visas last Friday as part of his wide-ranging crackdown on immigration.

Trump’s executive order, which took effect at 12:01am EDT on Sunday, hikes the fee for H-1B visa applicants to \$100,000. It is a one-time fee applied only to new applicants and not holders of existing visas or those seeking renewals.

Established under the Immigration Act of 1990, the H-1B programme enables US employers to temporarily hire highly skilled foreign professionals in specialised occupations, primarily in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

It requires a bachelor’s degree or higher in the specialty, or its equivalent, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). A prospective employer has to submit a petition to USCIS on behalf of the beneficiary.

This programme caps new visas at 65,000 every fiscal year, excluding 20,000 petitions from those who have earned a master’s or higher degree in the US, or those employed at an American institution of higher education or some non-profit organisations.

India was the largest beneficiary of H-1B visas last year, accounting for 71% of the approved beneficiaries, while China was a distant second at 11.7%, according to government data.

The visa, which is used by big and small tech companies in the United States, is initially issued for a period of three years, after which it can be renewed for another three.

The programme opened the way for American firms to hire millions of highly skilled workers essential to filling talent gaps and keeping them competitive. The programme’s supporters include Elon Musk, a naturalised US citizen born in South Africa, who has himself held an H-1B visa.

The new fees could further constrain a labour market weakened by Trump’s wide-ranging crackdown on immigration

Critics of the H-1B programme, including many US technology workers, argue that it allows firms to suppress wages and sideline Americans who could do the jobs.

An H-1B beneficiary has to be paid at least \$60,000 annually to be considered “exempt” from certain wage rules, a rule that allows smaller employers and startups to hire on this visa. Big Tech pays much higher wages to their H-1B employees.

California has consistently ranked first in the country since 2018 in the number of visa applications received annually, according to data from the USCIS.

The state — home to Silicon Valley and multiple tech giants, including Nvidia and Apple — has received about 62,864 applications so far this year.

Texas follows close behind. The state is especially attractive to companies because of its lower tax policies and several companies have their headquarters in the state, including Oracle and, notably Tesla that moved to the southern state in 2021, following which CEO Elon Musk also shifted his rocket company SpaceX there last year.

New York is next, with New Jersey trailing behind, given their proximity to Wall Street and major financial institutions such as JPMorgan Chase and Jefferies.

Higher visa fees could increase costs and shrink margins of US companies that have long turned to India and other countries to fill technology roles to meet surging domestic demand. It could further constrain a labour market weakened by Trump’s wide-ranging crackdown on immigration that he has pursued since taking office in January. While artificial intelligence could help plug some staffing gaps, higher costs from visa sponsorships could eventually trickle down to clients. Analysts at Jefferies estimate that the visa fee hike will ultimately hit company margins by 100-200 basis points and hurt profits by 4%-13%.

Big Tech, including Amazon.com, Microsoft, Apple and Meta Platforms, rank among the top sponsors for H-1B visas in the United States, according to data from USCIS.

Amazon alone has sponsored over 10,000 visas so far in fiscal 2025. Wall Street banks, including JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, also featured among the top 50 sponsors of the program.

Consultancy companies, including Deloitte, PwC, and Ernst and Young, are also likely to be hit. Outside the US, the most affected would be the Indian information technology sector. Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Tech and LTIMindtree ranked among the top 20 sponsors.

The fee hike could also lead to a drop in the number of students aiming to pursue a degree in the United States.

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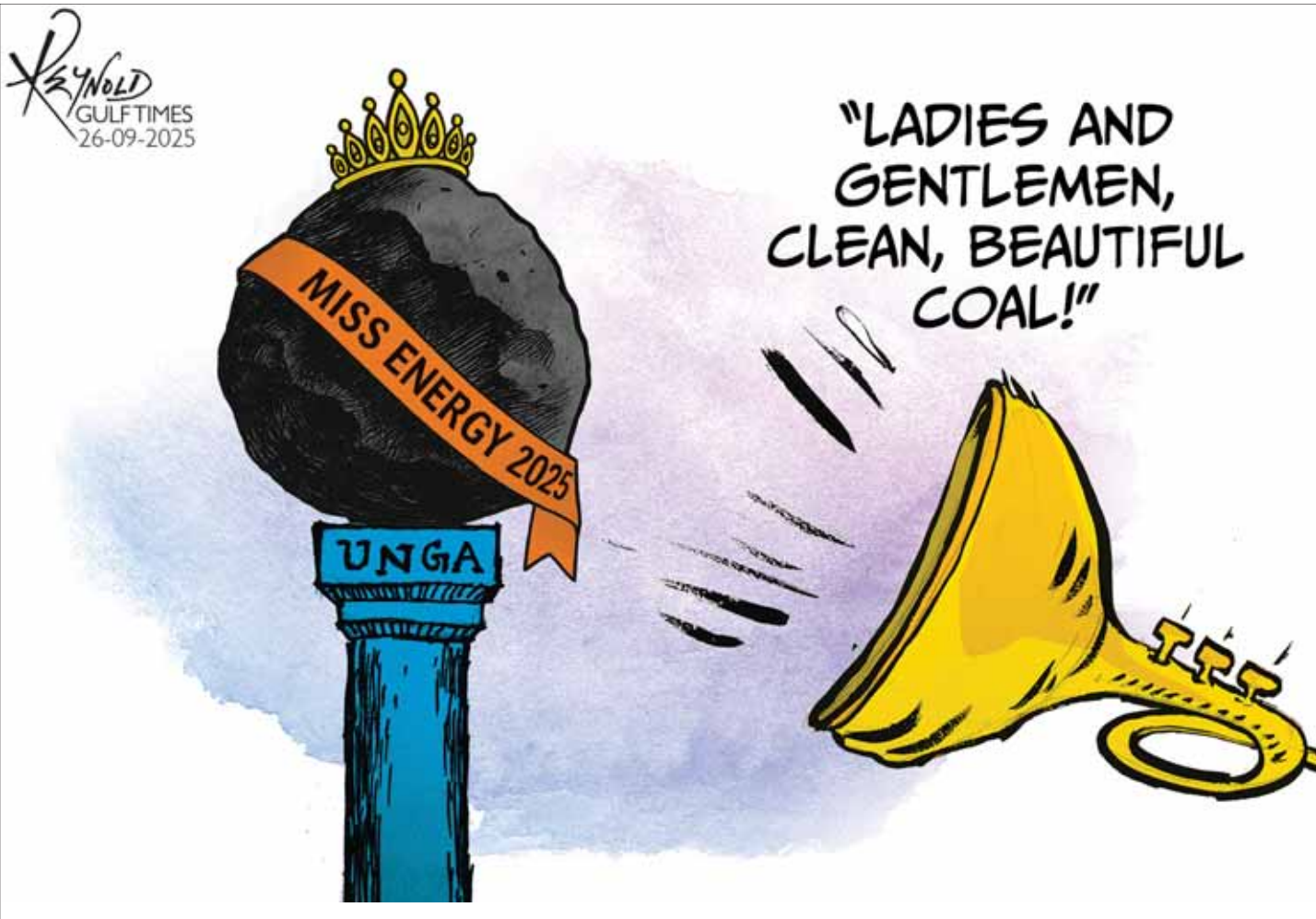
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Alaska residents fear rising energy costs as Trump seeks to drill

Alaska’s dwindling gas reserves raise electricity prices

Solar and wind projects cancelled or on hold in Alaska

Trump administration cuts federal funding for renewables

By Zach Theiler
Washington

For people living in tiny fishing towns in Alaska, boosting wind and solar power would help lower exorbitant electricity prices, but this solution to high costs is under threat now that the government is cutting federal funding for renewable energy.

Alaskans pay nearly twice as much for electricity than the national average.

“It would definitely hurt the community to be forced to pay higher energy prices,” said Matt Goodnow, a resident and financial counsellor for a hospital in Homer, a fishing town on Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula.

“There are a lot of struggling people here,” he said.

Not only is President Donald Trump’s administration planning to phase out federal funding and tax breaks for renewable energy projects, but it is proposing to lift limits set under former President Joe Biden on oil and natural gas drilling in Alaska.

Plans to add wind and solar power sources to the Alaskan energy grid have been upended, with leading companies cancelling or pausing renewable energy projects.

In Alaska’s Railbelt — an electrical grid that includes roughly 75% of the population — analysts expect the cost of power to residents to rise in coming years.

The rising price is largely due to a dwindling supply of readily available liquefied natural gas extracted from the nearby Cook Inlet watershed.

The natural gas is fired to generate about

70% of the Railbelt’s electricity, said Ben Boettger, an energy policy analyst at the Inletkeeper, an environmental nonprofit based in Homer.

But the natural gas fields, most of which were developed in the 1960s, are running low, he said.

“The largest of these are nearing the end of their economic lives,” he said.

A 2023 report by consultants at BRG and Cornerstone estimated current reserves of natural gas in Cook Inlet can meet energy demand until 2027.

After that, exploration for new gas would be required, which could double the cost of electricity for consumers by the mid-2030s, experts say.

As readily available reserves are depleted, accessing new reserves becomes expensive for gas companies, and that cost is passed on to consumers, Boettger said.

The US government recently called for the sale of gas field development leases in Cook Inlet to address the shortage as well as drilling in the remote wilderness of the Alaska North Slope to tap into untouched natural gas reserves.

Gas extracted in the North Slope is currently not accessible to serve as fuel for electricity for the Railbelt.

However, there are plans, led by private developers Glenfarne Group LLC, to expand the infrastructure and connect the power grid to the gas supply, which the company says would stabilise electricity prices.

But the project could cost \$66bn and take several years to complete.

Glenfarne declined to comment. Hilcorp, a gas company that owns most of the

development leases in Cook Inlet, also did not respond to requests for comment.

Meanwhile, there are plans to import liquefied natural gas to fill supply gaps, but prices could be volatile and raise the cost of electricity by 50%, Boettger warned.

Boettger proposes adding wind and solar power, which could be inexpensive and quickly deployable sources for the Railbelt, taking demand off natural gas and helping stabilise the price of electricity.

“Conserving the dwindling gas supply by deploying renewables is an urgent local priority,” Boettger said.

Cancelled projects

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act passed during the Biden administration aimed to boost renewable energy development with grants and tax credits offered through the 2030s.

It helped attract more than \$450mn in planned development of renewable energy sources that serve the Railbelt, including plans to construct the state’s largest solar farm.

For Alaska, with a small consumer market of about 555,000 people living on the Railbelt, the government support was key to making large-scale projects viable for investors, said Boettger.

But the Trump administration has cancelled grants and drastically shortened the timeline for wind and solar development benefiting from tax credits.

Asked about phasing out support for renewables, the Department of Energy highlighted its gas drilling efforts in Cook Inlet and the North Slope.

“Unlike wind and solar subsidies, these provisions will help deliver more reliable, affordable and secure American energy for the entire country, including Alaska, regardless of whether the wind is blowing or the sun is shining,” the department wrote in an e-mail.

The shorter timeline for tax credit benefits is problematic for Alaska, where long, harsh winters and rugged, remote terrain create a short window for construction, said Jennifer Hyde, a federal infrastructure co-ordinator at the Alaska Center, an Anchorage-based nonprofit that advocates for clean energy.

“For a lot of folks, this is going to mean cancelled projects,” said Hyde.

Ben May, founder and CEO of Alaska Solar, the largest solar installer in the state, said eight out of nine solar projects it had in development will likely be cancelled due to funding cuts.

“It’s just depressing and baffling why we wouldn’t want to provide cheaper electricity in a better way,” May said.

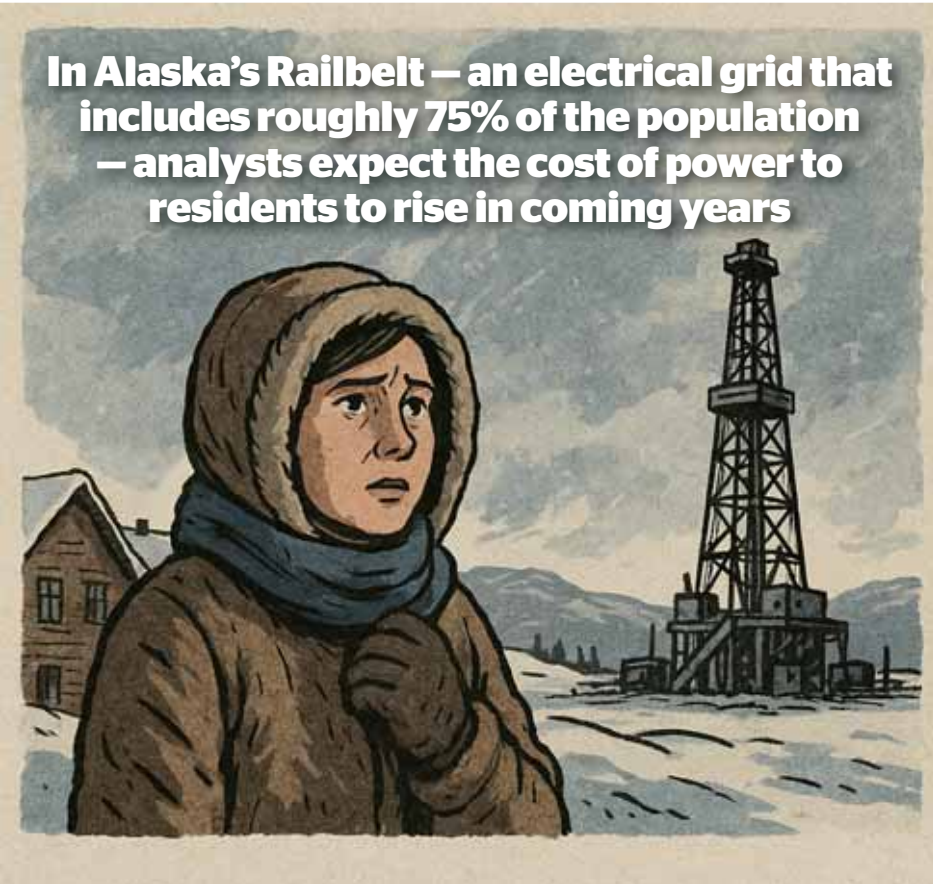
Renewables IPP, another energy developer, has pulled out from plans to build the largest solar farm in the state.

Slated to be operational by 2027, the project would have powered about 9,000 homes along the Railbelt.

The company cited tax credit uncertainty as a key reason the project had become economically unviable.

For Hyde, noting that in summer months the state has almost 24 hours of daylight, it is a missed opportunity to boost solar power.

“We’re taking away our ability to add cheap energy into our system, really, when it matters the most,” she said. — Thomson Reuters Foundation



‘I am as My slave expects Me to be’

It was narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention) said: “Allah, The Exalted, Says, ‘I am as My slave expects Me to be, and I am with him whenever he remembers Me. If he remembers Me to himself, I remember him to Myself, and if he remembers Me in an assembly, I remember him in a better assembly (i.e., the assembly of angels). If he draws closer to Me by a hand span, I draw closer to him by an arm’s length. If he draws closer to Me by an arm’s length, I draw closer to him by a fathom’s length. And whoever comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.’” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Status of the Hadith

This is one of the great *AHadith* of hope that urge Muslims to have good expectations of Allah, The Exalted, and to remember Him abundantly. It also underlines how Allah, The Exalted, draws closer to His Slaves whenever they draw closer to Him by means of performing various acts of obedience.

Having Good Expectations of Allah
The *Hadith* begins with calling the slave of Allah to have good expectations of his Lord at all times and in all states. In the *Hadith*, Allah, The Exalted, explained that He is as His Slave expects Him to be, meaning that He treats him in accordance with his own expectation of His Lord and does for him what he expects of Him, be it good or bad. If a person has good expectations of Allah and hopes for His Reward, Allah will not fail him nor cause his deeds to be lost. Whenever he supplicates Allah, he expects Allah to answer his supplications. If he commits a sin and repents and seeks forgiveness, he expects Allah to accept his repentance, pardon his fault, and forgive his sin. If he performs a good deed, he expects Allah to accept his deed and reward him handsomely. These are all examples of having good expectations of Allah, The Exalted. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Supplicate Allah while certain that your supplication will be answered.” [At-Tirmithi]

Thus, a slave of Allah continues to have good expectations of his Lord and aspire to His Reward in all situations, as the Arab poet Ibn Waheeb said (translation of meaning):

“I supplicate Allah and, verily, by virtue of having good expectations of Him, it is as if I can see His Answer to my supplications with my own eyes!”
Having good expectations of Allah is



The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by Mosques Department, inaugurated the historic mosque in Al Rafiq area of Al Jumailiya following the completion of comprehensive maintenance work. This initiative is part of the ministry's plan to expand and develop mosques across all areas of the country, in line with urban growth, population increase, and Qatar National Vision 2030.

thus among the implications and requirements of *Tawheed* (Islamic monotheism) because it is based on the knowledge of the mercy of Allah, His Might, kindness, omnipotence, and true reliance on Him. When a person attains perfect knowledge of these verities, the fruit that this knowledge yields is having good expectations of his Lord.

In the Qur’an, Allah, The Exalted, dispraises a group of people who had bad expectations of Him, and He underlines that their ill expectations were actually one of the key signs of their hypocrisy and covert wickedness. He Says about the hypocrites when they fled (the battlefield) and abandoned the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, and his Companions during the Battle of Uhud (what means): {...while another faction worried about themselves, thinking of Allah other than the truth – the thought of ignorance...} [Qur’an 3:154] He also Says about the hypocrites and polytheists (what means): {...those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is a misfortune of evil nature...} [Qur’an 48:6]

The *Hadith* urges us to give precedence to having hope in Allah (over having fear of Him), because any sane person who receives this invitation from Allah, The Exalted, would not willingly choose for himself the expectations that will inflict upon him the promised punishment. Rather,

he will choose to have good expectations, which is that Allah will bless him with His Reward, pardon, and forgiveness, and that he will receive the promised recompense (i.e. Allah will treat him in accordance with his good expectations of Him). This is the enjoined hope in Allah, The Exalted, (that is required of a Muslim) especially at times of weakness and need for Him like the situation of a dying person. He should have good expectations of Allah more than anyone else with greater reason, and this is why the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Let none of you die without having good expectations of Allah.” [Muslim; as reported from Jaabir, may Allah be pleased with him]

Therefore, one should strive to perform his duties while believing with certainty that Allah, The Exalted, will accept his deeds and forgive him because He promised to do that and He never fails in His Promise. If he expects Allah to turn him down or that his repentance will be of no avail, then this is despair of the mercy of Allah, and it is a major sin. Whoever dies while despairing of His Mercy, Allah will make his bad expectations come true. This is why some versions of the *Hadith* discussed in this article have the following addition at the end: “...so let him expect of Me whatever he wishes” [Ahmad and others with an authentic chain of narration]

Between Despair and Self-deception

It is noteworthy that having good expectations of Allah, The Exalted, entails good-doing and does not mean at all to give in to idleness, (false) hope for the forgiveness and pardon of Allah or self-deception. Therefore, a slave of Allah should avoid two blameworthy attitudes in this regard: despair of the mercy of Allah, and feeling secure from His Makr (schemes and plans). He should not rely solely on having hope in Allah and having good expectations of Him without duly performing acts of obedience, because this would be foolish, and it also implies feeling safe from His *Makr*. On the other hand, he should not give predominance to fear of Allah over hope in Him lest it leads him to have bad expectations of his Lord and accordingly fall into despair of His Mercy, and both attitudes are blameworthy. Rather, it is obligatory on him to have good expectations of Allah along with diligently performing acts of obedience. Some of the righteous predecessors used to say: “Your hope for the mercy of the One Whom you disobey indicates disillusion and foolishness!”

Rewards for those Who Remember Allah

In the *Hadith*, Allah, The Exalted, underlined the virtues of remembering Him and the rewards for those who

remember Him. He stated that He is with His Slave whenever he remembers Him. Being “with” Allah is a special kind of “with-ness” that involves having His Protection and receiving the blessings of steadfastness and success, as indicated in His Saying to Moosa (Moses) and Haaroon (Aaron) (which means): {[Allah] said, Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both; I hear and I see.} [Qur’an 20:46]

The best manner to remember Allah, The Exalted, is to remember Him with an attentive heart and mind, pondering over the meanings of the Thikr (expressions of remembrance of Allah) being recited, and the best form of remembrance is adhering to His Obligations and avoiding His Prohibitions .

The Reward of Drawing Close to Allah

Allah, The Exalted, then underlined the vastness of His Grace and generosity as well as His closeness to His Slave . He stated that the closer His Slave draws to Him, the closer He draws to him in return. In the Qur’an, Allah, The Exalted, stated that He is near His Slave, Saying (what means): {And when My servants ask you [O Muhammad] concerning Me – indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided.} [Qur’an 2:186] The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “A slave of Allah is nearest to his Lord when he is prostrating to Him, so make abundant supplication (while prostrating).” [Muslim]

The last three sentences in the *Hadith*, wherein Allah, The Exalted, Says: “If he draws closer to Me by a hand span, I draw closer to him by an arm’s length. If he draws closer to Me by an arm’s length, I draw closer to him by a fathom’s length. And whoever comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed,” indicate this great meaning; that the grace of Allah and His Reward are much greater than the good deeds and efforts that His Slave exerts, and therefore He grants His Slave more than what His Slave did for Him. Glorified be Allah! How abundant is His Generosity and how excellent is His Grace !

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



How excellent lawful wealth is in the hands of a righteous person!

Some of the *AHadith* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), are quite terse yet convey a multitude of meanings, and this is no surprise since they were produced by the one who was given the keys of eloquent speech and wise sayings. Some of his statements serve as fundamental principles, general rules, and just standards. On every given topic, there are *AHadith* that are considered all-inclusive fundamental principles under the heading of which all the respective subtopics fall. Some of these terse *AHadith* address the topic of wealth, establishing the correct Islamic viewpoint on wealth and setting fixed criteria for dealing with it and ways of disposing of it.

One of these is the following *Hadith*, which was narrated on the authority of ‘Amr ibn Al-‘Aas, may Allah be pleased with him: “The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, sent for me, commanding me to pack my clothes and arms and go to him. I did what he asked and came to him while he was performing ablution. He looked at me from head to toe then said: ‘O ‘Amr, I want to send you in charge of an army so that Allah will bless you with spoils, and I will give you your lawful share of the spoils.’ I said: ‘I did not become Muslim in pursuit of wealth; I became Muslim out of the desire for embracing Islam so that I would be with the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*!’ He said: ‘O ‘Amr! How excellent lawful wealth is in the hands of a righteous person!’” [Ahmad and Al-Bukhari. Abu ‘Awaanah, Ibn Hibbaan, Al-Haakim, Al-Albaani: authentic]

According to its very wording, the *Hadith* clearly states that wealth is praiseworthy if it is lawfully gained and in the hands of a righteous person. The lawfulness of wealth means that it is pure and earned through lawful means, and the righteousness of the owner means that he uses his lawful wealth in what benefits him and his community. He fulfils the Rights of Allah with regard to his wealth by paying the obligatory Zakat on it and may spend it in charity voluntarily. This is a praiseworthy attitude towards wealth, as evidenced by his saying “How excellent lawful wealth is...”. In the same vein, another *Hadith* lauded wealth when it is lawfully earned and rightfully spent. It was narrated on the authority of Abu Sa‘eed, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “This wealth is sweet (alluring); whoever

earns it lawfully and spends it rightfully, then what excellent help it is!” [Al-Bukhari] In this case, wealth is an excellent means for a Muslim to fulfil the due rights over him, uphold the ties of kinship, relieve the distressed, and spares himself from the humiliation of begging for money, as well as all the other benefits of wealth. The *Shari‘ah* texts that laud wealth and commend richness should be interpreted in this light.

By the same token, the *Hadith* indicates the gravity of the affliction when wealth is in the hands of a wicked, corrupt person; he withholds the Rights of Allah with regard to his wealth, and therefore, it becomes a destructive tool incurring his own destruction and a means of causing mischief on earth. Such a person may also combine the sin of acquiring wealth unlawfully with that of wastefulness. This meaning was stated by the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, in the second part of the previously-cited *Hadith* narrated on the authority of Abu Sa‘eed, may Allah be pleased with him: “...and he who obtains it wrongfully is like one who eats but is never satisfied.” [Al-Bukhari] This is in addition to having a gluttonous soul and a heart overcome by the *Fitnah* (temptation) of wealth. The *Shari‘ah* texts that praise wealth, warn against extravagance, and encourage asceticism and renouncing greediness for the worldly pleasures should be interpreted in this light.

This *Hadith* and the other supporting ones about the enjoined attitude towards wealth – like the one narrated by Abu Sa‘eed, may Allah be pleased with him, in its two parts: “This wealth is sweet (alluring); whoever earns it lawfully and spends it rightfully, then what excellent help it is! He who obtains it wrongfully is like one who eats but is never satisfied,” – they are considered a Prophetic standard and an Islamic methodology of moderation in pursuing wealth, with neither excessive asceticism nor the dispraised accumulation of wealth and exceeding the proper limits in its acquisition and spending.

These *AHadith*, therefore, direct the Muslims towards the correct viewpoint on the true nature of wealth and underline that Islam does not dispraise wealth in an absolute sense, as some Sufis claim, nor does it praise it in an absolute sense. The subject matter of the praise and dispraise here is not the wealth itself but rather the states of people in acquiring, spending, or disposing of it. Whoever seeks (lawful) wealth with the intention of

providing for himself and his dependants and reforming the universe with such wealth by investing and spending it on what is good and beneficial to the individual and community, then how excellent such wealth is!

Some of the Companions were wealthy and successful traders. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was a trader, and his wealth was well spent in support of Islam and the Muslims. It was narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “No wealth has benefited me as much as the wealth of Abu Bakr.” Thereupon, Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, wept and said: “O Messenger of Allah! I and my wealth are only for you, O Messenger of Allah!” [Ibn Maajah, Al-Albaani: authentic] There were many other rich Companions whose wealth was a source of mercy and help for people and which was spent in support of the Islamic causes, like that of the third caliph, ‘Uthmaan, may Allah be pleased with him, who equipped the Muslim army for the Battle of Tabook with nine hundred and fifty camels and rounded them up to one thousand with fifty horses.

As for those who seek after wealth to accumulate it and boast about it, turning it into a means to cause mischief on earth and corrupt the economy through engaging in forbidden transactions such as Riba and gambling, they contribute to the poverty and unemployment in their societies by concentrating wealth in the hands of one social class. Accordingly, wealth, in their hands, becomes a means of destruction and evil, just like Qaaroon, whose story was related in the Qur’an. He wronged his people by dealing with Riba with their wealth and claiming that he had earned and obtained such wealth exclusively by means of his knowledge and efforts! This corrupt viewpoint on wealth and the economic injustice were enough sin for him to deserve the immediate destruction that befell him. Contrary to his aspirations to dominate the earth, Allah, The Exalted, destroyed him by causing the earth to swallow him, and he will continue to sink until the Day of Resurrection. Allah, The Exalted, Says (what means): {And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.} [Qur’an 28:81]

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

‘Water the garden of so-and-so’

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said: “While a man was in a barren tract of land (or a desert), he heard a voice proceeding from a cloud (saying): ‘Water the garden of so-and-so’ Thereupon, the cloud drifted (in a certain direction), and water poured down therefrom over a rocky area. All the streamlets flowed into one large channel. The man followed the water and came upon a man standing in his garden, changing the course of the water with his spade. He said to him: ‘O Slave of Allah, what is your name?’ The man said: ‘So-and-so’ It was that very name which he had heard from the cloud! The man said: ‘O slave of Allah, why do you ask me my name?’ He said: ‘I heard a voice from the clouds which poured down this water, saying: “Water the garden of so-and-so,” mentioning your name. What do you do with it (to receive such divine providence from Allah)?’ The man said: ‘Now that you ask me, I will tell you. I look at the produce of the garden, give one-third of it in charity, use one third for myself and my dependants to eat therefrom, and invest (the remaining) third back into the garden.’” [Muslim]

The detailed story

It may seem to those who perceive things based on their outward appearances that giving in charity to the poor and showing kindness to the needy are nothing but squandering wealth, wasting savings, and reasons for capital shortage.

This is the purely materialistic view on charity, but the Islamic perceptive on it is dramatically different. In Islam, spending in charity is a means to increase wealth and having it blessed, just as a person would sow a seed in the soil and it soon germinates and grows quickly into a tall, lush, and fruitful tree.

Allah, The Exalted, continues to shower His allies and slaves who hasten to give in charity with His kindness. He safeguards them from afflictions, increases their livelihood, blesses them with abundant good and success, and bestows upon them His grace. Could a person endowed with the help and care of his Creator ever be lost?

The best evidence of that is the *Hadith* under discussion. It relates the story of a righteous farmer, endowed with generosity and kindness at a time when such qualities had become rare, who subdued his human nature, which is innately inclined to miserliness and withholding wealth, and elevated himself to a refined spiritual status.

A man was walking in the desert, where water and vegetation are scarce, and he heard a voice saying: “Water the garden of so-and-so.” He marvelled at what he heard in such a deserted place, where not a soul could be seen, and then realised that the voice came from the cloud above him! He was even more amazed and determined to explore the matter.

Filled with curiosity, the man set out behind the moving cloud to know its final destination. It stopped over a stony area full of black rocks, the rain poured down, and the water ran until it reached a garden, where there was a farmer standing to channel and direct the water flow.

The man went to the farmer and asked him what his name was. To his surprise, it was the same name he had heard from the cloud! Naturally, the owner of the garden was surprised by the question, so he asked the man: “O slave of Allah, why do you ask me my name?” The man told him about the cloud and what he had heard and seen and explained to him his sincere eagerness to know the secret behind such divine help and providence he received.

The answer came to reveal the truth and solve the mystery. The owner of the garden used to divide the produce of his garden into three parts; he gave one part in charity for the poor and needy, preserved the second part to provide for himself and his dependants, and invested the third part in the garden.

Reflections on the story

This ray of light from the Prophet’s Sunnah underlines the virtue of charity and its value in the sight of Allah, The Almighty. Giving in charity is a manifestation of human solidarity and a sign of a live conscience, a sense of duty, and responsibility towards others, and this contributes to the strength and cohesion of the community.

The blessings from the cloud that this righteous farmer received were glad tidings for him in the worldly life. As to the honour and blessings which Allah, The Exalted, has prepared for him in the Hereafter, they are far greater.

Among the lessons deduced from the story is that spending on the needy and relieving the distress of Muslims are profitable trade with Allah, The Exalted, in which the investor never loses. Allah, The Exalted, bestows His blessings upon His slaves who spend in charity and increases their wealth. He renders charity a means to increase provisions, as evidenced by the verse that reads (what means): {But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] – He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers.} [Qur’an 34:39] Moreover, the Qudsi *Hadith* reads: “Spend (on charity), O son of Adam, and I shall spend on you.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

The value of work and its position in Islam can also be inferred from the story. This farmer did not isolate himself or renounce the worldly life; rather, he worked hard, availed himself of the available means, sought after earning his livelihood, and then gave in charity. This is how an active nation should be; it builds and strives to assume its proper place among the great nations.

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

Katara opens ‘Winning Entries of Stenin International Press Photo Contest’ exhibition

Katara Cultural Village general manger Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti has opened “The Winning Entries of Stenin International Press Photo Contest” exhibition, organised by Katara in collaboration with the Russian embassy in Qatar.

The opening was attended by Russia’s ambassador to Qatar Dmitry Dogadkin, as well as a number of ambassadors, enthusiasts and media professionals.

The exhibition, running until

September 30 in Katara’s Building 47, highlights creative photographic works by young talents from different parts of the world and presents the winning photos of this year’s edition of the contest.

“The Winning Entries of Stenin International Press Photo Contest” exhibition aims to support and encourage young photographers to present their works and give them a platform to express their artistic visions and document moments in their daily lives.



The displayed works reflect themes of humanitarian, social and cultural causes.

The works received acclaim from the visitors for their strong presentation and technical creativity.

Dr al-Sulaiti said that holding this exhibition shows Katara’s commitment to supporting the visual arts and that Katara is always keen to host global events

that attract both local and international audiences to engage with rich and diverse art.

Journalistic photography, he added, represents a great modern tool to increase social awareness as well as bring cultures together.

Dogadkin said that the contest constitutes a bridge of communication between cultures through the universal language of images.

He added that the exhibition brings out the ability of the talented youth in creatively spreading humanitarian topics.

The envoy additionally praised the distinguished relations between Russia and Qatar and that such events contribute to strengthening cultural dialogue and the bond between the two friendly countries.

The contest, named after late photojournalist Andrei Stenin, is a global platform that celebrates young photographers.



It encourages the exchange of experiences and promotes cultural dialogue through photography.

The contest is the only international event in Russia that helps discover new talents in the field.

It provides support to young photographers, in addition to setting high standards when it comes to the quality of documentary photography in Russia and the world. – QNA



EAA, Place Vendôme host ‘Duck Release’

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

In a vibrant display of creativity and community spirit, Education Above All Foundation (EAA), in partnership with Place Vendôme Qatar, brought together hundreds of children, families, educators, and mallgoers for the “Duck Release” activation, held at the fountain area of Place Vendôme.

The initiative forms a central part of EAA’s 2025 “Back to School” campaign, aimed at raising funds and awareness to support children out of school globally.

The event welcomed participation from students and staff from Assalam Schools, Qatar Academy Sidra, Doha International School, and the Jordanian school.

Families enjoyed a day filled with entertainment, meals, and educational engagement, while also supporting vulnerable children with access to inclusive, high-quality education.

At the heart of the activation was a symbolic gesture, thousands of bright yellow rubber ducks, each representing a donation of QR25, released into the fountain as a sign of solidarity with children who face barriers to education.

Each duck released contributes directly to funding school supplies, scholarships, and classroom rehabilitation in unders-

The initiative forms a central part of EAA’s ‘Back to School’ drive, which is aimed at supporting children out of school globally

erved communities around the world.

“This activation is more than just a playful installation... it’s a powerful symbol of hope and opportunity,” said Taj Sulaiman, the director of Communication and Private Sector Partnerships at the EAA Foundation. “Each duck in the fountain represents a child whose future can be transformed through access to education.”

This event is part of a longstanding collaboration between the EAA Foundation and Place Vendôme, under a broader corporate social responsibility agreement.

Previous joint efforts include the “Eid Gift 2025” campaign, which collected over 74,000 new items for children in Gaza and Syria during Ramadan.



Building on this success, the EAA Foundation and Place Vendôme will sign a new agreement under which the Place Vendôme will continue to support the EAA’s fundraising activities, including the annual “Back to School” campaign, Ramadan initiatives, and other EAA programmes.

This expanded collaboration aims to

generate both funds and public awareness for the EAA Foundation’s local and international projects, reinforcing the shared commitment to ensuring that children out of school globally can access education and hope for a brighter future.

This activation is one of many under the EAA’s 2025 “Back to School” cam-



At the heart of the activation was a symbolic gesture, thousands of bright yellow rubber ducks were released into the fountain as a sign of solidarity with children who face barriers to education.

PICTURES: Thajudheen



paign, which runs until December 31.

The campaign includes fundraising initiatives with EAA partners in Qatar, covering everything from digital donations and charity sports activities to school-led exhibitions and public festivals.

To date, the EAA has reached millions of beneficiaries across 75 countries.

Fire Station celebrates conclusion of Al Ruwad Residency with exhibitions

Fire Station announced the opening of two new exhibitions that mark the completion of its 2024 Al Ruwad Residency.

“Threads of Memory” by Haifa al-Khuzia and “Between Rust and Art” by Ahmed al-Hamar will showcase the creative visions of the two established Qatari artists, as part of Fire Station’s commitment to supporting local talent across career stages.

Al-Khuzia’s “Threads of Memory” reimagines Qatari heritage through contemporary forms.

Drawing on patterns from traditional jewelry, clothing, and textiles, al-Khuzia incorporates handmade ceramics and mixed media to

weave together memory, identity, and cultural continuity.

Her work bridges past and present, honouring heritage while envisioning its future.

“Between Rust and Art” by al-Hamar explores the tension between decay and preservation by reinterpreting elements drawn from daily life into minimal artistic compositions.

His practice is rooted in materiality, texture, and layering.

By inducing rust on iron sheets and interrupting its natural process, al-Hamar creates works that transform cultural motifs into powerful reflections on memory, transformation, and reinterpretation.

Launched in 2021, Al Ruwad Residency supports and fosters dialogue between Qatar-based established and emerging artists.

By providing time, space, and resources, the programme reinforces Fire Station’s role as a hub for artistic exchange and innovation.

The residency also ensures Fire Station’s continued connection to local artists and creates meaningful exchanges through mentorship.

Nominated by Fire Station, Al Ruwad artists participate for up to two years, gaining access to studio space and the opportunity to engage with the wider community through public programmes such as talks and workshops. – QNA

