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# HAYYAKOM TO QATAR







#### **BUSINESS** | Page 1

World Bank forecasts 2.8% growth for Qatar's economy in 2025







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# Doha 2036 Olympic bid: Proven, tested, ready

By Rizwan Rehmat

oha deciding

oha deciding to join the Olympic Games 2036 race wasn't an afterthought of any kind. For the last 30-odd years, the Qatari capital has carefully charted its journey using sports as a means to bring the entire Middle East region together. Not only that, Doha over the last three decades also built a purposeful narrative that sports spectacles like the FIFA World Cup, the Asian Games and World Championships can be successfully hosted and savoured by those investing heavily in the global sports industry.

From hosting the then biggest edition of the Asian Games in December 2006 — welcoming more than 10,000 athletes and officials from 45-member countries of

the Olympic Council of Asia — to staging the 2022 FIFA World Cup involving 32 teams, Qatar has proudly showcased its mighty sporting ambitions in front of billions of sports fans around the world.

From opening the world's largest indoor sports facility — the Aspire Academy in 2005 — to constructing 8 state-of-the-art football stadiums for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar clearly has gone beyond the debate on what it wants to achieve through sports.

Five years ago, Doha put together a hard-to-beat Asian Games bid for the 2030 edition. Now, the Qatari capital will welcome athletes for the 2030 Asian Games. This will be the second Asiad to be hosted in Doha. When Doha joined the 2030 Asian Games race, the Qatari capital's bid file showed that it had 90% of



the sports infrastructure ready in the country. That sealed the deal for Doha.

Over the course of the last three decades, Doha has successfully hosted world championships in boxing, cycling, gymnastics, track

and field, swimming, handball, table tennis, shooting, triathlon and football. In 2027, Qatar will host the FIBA World Cup. With Aspire Academy carefully picking and grooming young talent – that is nurtured by world-class coaches

and trainers in various disciplines — Qatar is not only known for hosting events but developing athletes from a young age.

With Qatar hosting round-theyear leagues in football, basketball, volleyball, athletics, handball, cricket, tennis, snooker and billiards, shooting, cycling, horse racing and showjumping, and many other sports, Doha continues to wave the lag of optimism and carry on the Olympic Movement with absolute conviction that sports have to be a way of life for those living in the country, region and around the world.

Whenever Qatar has hosted top-flight championships, it has also attracted sports fans who use the hub of global air travel — the Hamad International Airport — to come and visit the country. With Qatar adding more than 35,000 hotel rooms for the 2022 FIFA World Cup alone,

the tourism industry in the country has never been in a more buoyant mood than it is enjoying right now. With Qatar currently hosting the FIFA Arab Cup 2025 — just days after it hosted the FIFA U-17 World Cup — Doha is abuzz with hundreds of thousands of regional and global visitors watching the matches live. Qatar welcomed more than a million fans for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Sports fans don't come to Qatar to just enjoy watching the games live. The fan stay — from within the region or elsewhere — is something they cherish. Travelling within Qatar is a royal luxury enjoyed by commuters. Apart from enjoying their stay in great hotels and dining at fabulous restaurants, visitors and residents use the state-of-the-art Metro system to significantly cut commute times and travel hours across the country. **To Page 3** 

#### Qatar attends peace deal signing between DRC, Rwanda in US

Qatar participated in the signing ceremony of the historic Peace and Economic Agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda, hosted yesterday by the Government of the United States of America in Washington.

Qatar was represented at the ceremony by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi. The agreement represents an important step toward ending the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It also comes as a continuation of previous agreements that Oatar and the US helped facilitate and strengthen, including the Washington Agreement signed on June 27 of 2025, the Doha Declaration of Principles signed on July 19 of 2025 between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the March 23 Movement (M23), and the Doha Framework Peace Agreement signed on Nov 15 of 2025 between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congo River Alliance/March 23 Movement (M23).

In this context, HE al-Khulaifi affirmed Qatar's continued support for mediation efforts aimed at promoting peace, stability, and development in the region, stressing the importance of constructive engagement and adherence to the implementation of all agreed commitments.

# WSJ Tech Live Qatar concludes with global participation

The Wall Street Journal Tech Live conference concluded yesterday after three days of high-profile panels, featuring distinguished global CEOs, technology leaders and investors. This marks the conference's first-ever edition outside the United States and its debut in the Middle East and North Africa.

COMMUNITY

See Page 6

# PM, Sheikha Al Mayassa to speak at Doha Forum

**By Joey Aguilar** Staff Reporter

he opening of the Doha Forum 2025 tomorrow will witness Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani speaking at the first panel discussion, titled 'Mediation in a Time of Fragmentation'.

HE Sheikh Mohammed will be joined by Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President, European Commission; Jose Manuel Albares, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Co-operation, Spain; and Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkiye at the session, which will be moderated by CNN's Chief International Anchor.

Themed 'Justice in Action: Beyond Promises to Progress', the 23rd Doha Forum will take place at Sheraton Grand, Doha from December 6-7 under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.



HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani



Bringing together world leaders, policymakers, and experts from across the globe, organisers noted that the Forum will convene diverse voices to exchange perspectives and explore pathways toward a more just, balanced and sustainable world.

Part of the programme also includes a Newsmaker Interview at 11.45am with Minister of State for Energy Affairs and QatarEnergy president and CEO HE Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi.

HE Dr Majed al-Ansari, Adviser to the Prime Minister and official spokesperson for Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs will speak at a session on 'Gulf – EU Relations in the Age of Strategic Isolation', at 12pm, along with high-level participants from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and Italy.

A session, titled 'Global Trade Tensions: Economic Impact and Policy Responses in Mena;' will see Qatar's Minister of Finance HE Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari sharing his views on how countries in the Mena region navigate rising global trade and policy uncertainty.

Qatar Museums chairperson HE
Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad
bin Khalifa al-Thani will also take
part in a talk on 'Humanity's Next
Chapter: Innovation and Impact
from the Global South; along with
Gates Foundation chair Bill Gates,
and Dangote Foundation president
Aliko Dangote.

#### Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council meets in Riyadh



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, yesterday co-chaired the eighth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council, in Riyadh. During the meeting, the Council's General Secretariat working team reviewed the outcomes of the subcommittees and their working groups over the past period. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Saudi Foreign Minister, also signed the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of the Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council. **(QNA) Page 2** 

#### FIFA Arab Cup: Qatar held to 1-1 draw by Syria

Hosts Qatar were left on the brink of a group-stage exit after Omar Khribin's 90th-minute thunderbolt earned Syria a dramatic 1-1 draw at the FIFA Arab Cup yesterday, leaving Julen Lopetegui's side needing a must-win match against Tunisia to stay alive in the competition. Qatar had looked set for their first victory after Ahmed al-Aaedin's header, but Khribin's late strike compounded the pressure on the hosts. Earlier, Palestine fought back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Tunisia, moving to the cusp of a first-ever knockout berth. The results mean Palestine and Syria can qualify with draws when they play each other on Sunday, while Qatar must beat Tunisia to have any chance of progressing. Even with victory, Qatar may still need: Syria to lose to Palestine, or a favourable swing in goal difference if Syria draw and Qatar win big. **Sport Page 1** 

# New MoFA HQ to be built on Corniche

**QNA** Doha

atar yesterday announced that it is dedicating a key site on Doha's water-front to a new headquarters for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is known globally for its mediating role. Created to establish a more visible civic presence for the nation's diplomatic service and offer the public unprecedented access to the Ministry complex, the project will transform a prominent section of the city's iconic Corniche.

Through an invited international competition, the commission to



An architect's rendition of the proposed Ministry of Foreign Affairs Headquarters on the Corniche.

design the headquarters has been awarded to architect Frida Escobedo, founder and principal of the Mexico City and New York-based Frida Escobedo Studio.

Rising beside the waters of Doha Bay, the 70,000 square metre (750,000sq ft) complex will be a combination of new construction and the adaptive reuse of a beloved historic structure at the site, set within an abundantly landscaped environment.

The initiation of the plan to create the new complex, aims at making this building the first major one to be constructed in decades in the coastal area that curves northward from Qatar's seat of government, the Amiri Diwan. To Page 3

#### Al-Misnad meets Sri Lankan envoy



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with ambassador of Sri Lanka to Qatar Roshan Sithara Khan Azard. The meeting discussed bilateral co-operation and ways to support and strengthen it, in addition to the humanitarian situation, urgent needs, and recovery plans following Cyclone Ditwah, which struck Sri Lanka. **(QNA)** 

# Qatar Mediation Forum to host global experts on Dec 7-8

QNA

The Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, in partnership with the Doha Forum, will organise the Qatar Mediation Forum 2025 on Monday and Tuesday. The forum will bring together a select group of diplomats, policymakers, and mediation experts, particularly from the United Nations, the African Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Crisis Group, to discuss the pressing challenges facing conflict mediation.

In a statement, the centre noted that the forum will be held against a backdrop of escalating armed conflicts, weakening diplomatic norms, and increasing geopolitical tensions, all of which are placing increasing pressure on peacemaking processes globally.

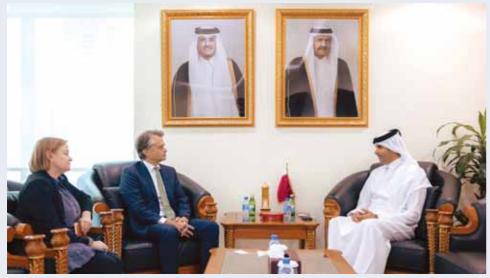
In this context, Director of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Dr Ghassan al-Kahlout said that the Qatar Mediation Forum represents an investment in developing informed and well-considered mediation practices, adding that at a time when the rules of peacemaking are undergoing significant transformations, the forum raises difficult questions about the future. He noted that it will bring together mediators working on the ground and experts in the field of peacemaking.

Dr al-Kahlout emphasised that the success of the previous edition of the forum reflects Qatar's commitment as a key player in international mediation and highlights its ongoing efforts to promote global peace and security. He pointed out that key topics will be addressed that are reshaping the mediation landscape globally

obally. The first day will include panel discussions on mediation in a changing international system, the role of the Gulf States in regional co-operation, and the potential of diplomacy to address great power competition and nuclear risks.

The second day will also include panel discussions addressing lessons learned from ongoing conflicts, such as those in Sudan. the Gaza Strip, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as discussions on mediation in a multipolar world, protecting mediators from attacks, and supporting mediation at the local level. All sessions will revolve around the overarching theme of how principles-based mediation can adapt in a rapidly changing world. A report will be issued at the conclusion of the event, summarising key insights and formulating recommendations to help practitioners and experts strengthen effective and inclusive mediation efforts.

#### **Qatar special envoy in Doha meetings**



HE the Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Faisal bin Abdullah al-Hanzab, met yesterday with Special Envoy of the German Federal Foreign Office for the Horn of Africa, Heiko Nitzschke, who is visiting the country. The meeting discussed political, security, and humanitarian developments in the Horn of Africa, as well as a number of issues of mutual interest.



HE al-Hanzab also met with United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan Richard Bennett, currently visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed joint efforts between the State of Qatar and the United Nations, particularly regarding the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. (QNA)

#### **Qatari-Saudi committee holds session**



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, yesterday co-chaired the eighth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council, in Riyadh. During the meeting, the Council's General Secretariat working team reviewed the outcomes of the subcommittees and their working groups over the past period. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Saudi Foreign Minister, also signed the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of the Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council. (QNA)

#### Saudi envoy presents credentials



HE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday a copy of the credentials of ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the State Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Saad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs wished the ambassador success in fulfilling his duties, affirming the commitment to providing all necessary support to strengthen bilateral relations and foster closer co-operation across various fields. **(QNA)** 

# Qatar's permanent representative to UN meets Ukraine's Deputy FM



HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met with Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Betsa Mariana at the Permanent Mission headquarters in New York. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relation and ways to support and strengthen them, particularly within the framework of multilateral co-operation. The deputy FM of Ukraine expressed her gratitude to the State of Qatar for its efforts in reuniting Ukrainian children with their families, as part of its ongoing mediation aimed at reuniting families separated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. (QNA)

# Ministry launches digital platform for people with disabilities

**QNA** Doha

he Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has launched a special electronic portal for persons with disabilities on its official website, in conjunction with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The initiative celebrates this important segment of society and enables them to access all services through the creation of a comprehensive database.

In a statement, the ministry said that the comprehensive database classifies persons with disabilities into four categories (hearing, visual, physical, and intellectual) in order to provide the necessary services and support to all employees with disabilities. The ministry added that this step aims to strengthen the rights of employees working at the ministry, empower them to perform their duties effectively, and ensure they receive all services, rights, and privileges available to them. This initiative comes as the

ministry announced the establishment of a team specialised in human rights and persons with disabilities, chaired by Director of the Department of Islamic Research and Studies Sheikh Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Ghanem al-Thani. The team will follow up on the affairs of employees with disabilities working at the ministry and ensure they receive all rights and privileges that guarantee a suitable and safe work environment, in addition to access to information, guidance, and electronic services designed to facilitate workflow and enhance the quality of professional life for people with dis-

In his speech during the launch of the electronic platform, Sheikh Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Ghanem al-Thani stressed that the ministry's human rights and disability team represents one of the pioneering initiatives through which the ministry seeks to leverage technology to serve persons with disabilities and enable them to access all rights and services they need while performing their duties. He added that the initiative

reflects the ministry's ongoing commitment to empowering this important segment of society and ensuring the participation of all employees in a fair and safe work environment. He pointed out that launching the platform and establishing the team represent a major step in supporting the rights of persons with disabilities and demonstrate the ministry's keenness to keep pace with the best initiatives and practices in this field. He said that the creation of the platform came after extensive meetings with employees with disabilities at the ministry to identify the types of services they need.

This pioneering step is aligned with the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs' vision and strategy to support and empower persons with disabilities. It also reaffirms its commitment to human rights principles guaranteed by Islamic law, which has given great attention to persons with disabilities, in a way that meets societal aspirations and enhances the ministry's role in caring for and supporting individuals with disabilities.



## QNL president honoured by Association of Arab Universities

The Second Forum for the Arab World's International Day for Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development has named HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari, Minister of State and president of Qatar National Library (QNL), as the 2025 Personality of the Year for Social Responsibility and Sustainable

The forum, organised by the Department of Sustainable Development and International Co-operation of the General Secretariat of the Arab League, was held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo vesterday, under the patronage of the Association of Arab Universities.

The selection of HE Dr al-Kawari as Personality of the Year reflects the Association's recognition of Qatar's pioneering role in education, culture, and creative development, and underscores QNL's distinguished efforts as a beacon of human creativity and

cultural enlightenment, a QNL statement said.

Dr al-Kawari received a formal invitation to attend the forum from Prof Amr Ezzat Salama, secretarygeneral of the Association of Arab Universities and honorary president of the Arab Council for Social Responsibility, who expressed the forum's appreciation for Qatar's role in supporting education, culture, and the advancement of the Arab region.

HE Dr al-Kawari, expressed his gratitude for the honour, stating: 'This is a tribute to every Arab intellectual and educator who has planted a seed of knowledge or a seedling of culture in our good Arab land. It is not recognition of me personally as much as it is recognition of the 'cultural diplomacy' message that Qatar believes in, and it honours the role that Qatar National Library plays in building bridges of knowledge between our nation's heritage and its present,



linking its past with its future." Speaking on the importance of knowledge and fostering innova-

tion, HE Dr al-Kawari, added: "In Qatar, we share with our Arab brothers the same vision that knowledge is the first pillar of responsibility, and that making knowledge accessible and encouraging innovation are the shortest paths to achieving true sustainable development. Our greatest responsibility toward our societies lies in combating ignorance, preserving Arab memory from being lost, and making science accessible to every seeker of truth. This represents social responsibility in its highest sense - equipping the Arab mind with the tools that enable it to face the challenges of the

He emphasised that this honour recognises "an idea that Qatar, leadership and people, has believed in: that culture is not a luxury but a responsibility, that knowledge is not an option but a duty, and that youth are not only the future but the present that we must empower

HE Dr al-Kawari outlined the main pillars of QNL's social responsibility and sustainable development, which include: democratising knowledge through the Qatar Digital Library project and other resources; building a reading and informed society through the 'Qatar Reads' and its 'One Book, One Doha' campaign; preserving heritage and historical memory; comprehensive accessibility and empowering everyone through the Sensory Room, assistive technologies, and the 'Manara' open science platform; and cultural diplomacy and building bridges for international dialogue through partnerships with leading global institutions.

He dedicated the honour "to our Arab youth, to the talents in whom we see the making of the future, to the minds that need only an opportunity to create, and to the hearts that carry the dreams of their homelands," emphasising that "the real investment is not in buildings, but in people — in their values, knowledge, and will."

### New MoFA HQ to be built on Corniche

#### From Page 1

To enhance the visibility of the Ministry's mission of mediation, conflict resolution, and cultural diplomacy, the 1985 General Post Office - known for its distinctive modernist 'pigeonholes' will be assimilated into the complex. This major public building will be preserved and adapted in part as a space for public programming associated with the Ministry's role in cultural diplomacy.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani said," I am grateful to His Highness the Amir for his vision for the nation. MoFA's new headquarters that will be built, will represent an icon for the nation's diplomacy, and a source of pride for our people through reflecting Qatar's leading global role in diplomatic negotiations and fostering productive international dialogue and cooperation. Many thanks to HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani for her role in ensuring that this new home for the Ministry will support all our needs within an extraordinary architectural landmark."

HE the Chairperson of Qatar Museums, Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani led the competition in her role as Chairperson of Qatar Blueprint, a comprehensive initiative to guide development across the nation in co-operation with public entities and the private sector. Creation of the new Ministry headquarters will include a public cultural component in the repurposed General Post Office. The project advances Qatar Blueprint's goals for urban and architectural planning, heritage preservation, adaptive reuse initiatives, and excellence in architectural design.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said, "I thank His Highness the Amir for elevating Qatar's global position and role. I also thank HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs for his efforts to elevate Qatar's role as a prominent and active player in international diplomacy. Sincere appreciation goes to Ashghal, Qatar's Public Works Authority, for its co-operation throughout the competition. I warmly congratulate Frida Escobedo, a major international talent, on her selection to design the new Ministry headquarters. Her design furthers our commitment to heritage preservation through sustainability and adaptive reuse while giving Qatar its next architec-

tural masterpiece." Frida Escobedo's humanscaled and courtvard-centred design envisions the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs complex in Doha as a rhythmic composition of volumes that build on one another, creating a threshold between Qatar's heritage and its global future.

Gently terracing northward, the new construction will preserve sightlines of the iconic General Post Office, incorporating elements into its façade as part of a vital adaptive reuse endeavour, while visually anchoring the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the site's history.

The building's exterior will form an enveloping structure composed of vertical pillars that balance shade, privacy and transparency, and an inviting interior will feature a series of green patios designed for reflection, gathering, and art. This dialogue between architecture and landscape will extend into the General Post Office, whose ground floor will be transformed into an exhibition space that transitions into a covered garden. Rooted in the nation's ongoing investment in diplomacy, art, and architecture, the project reaffirms Qatar's role both as a cultural anchor for Doha and a symbolic gateway to the world.

Frida Escobedo Studio, with Buro Happold engineers and Studio Zewde landscape designers, was selected out of an initial group of 40 invited architectural teams and a shortlist of seven. In keeping with the mission of the Ministry, the selection process was fully international, with architects from every continent invited to participate. The competition was organised and managed by Malcolm Reading Consultants on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Qatar

#### paring to welcome and highlighting aspects the public to a special event of national identity and its

QNL to host Al-Dakka Festival tomorrow

atar National Library (QNL) is precelebrating Qatar National Day, the "Al-Dakka Festival", set to take place tomorrow (Dec 6). This event forms part of the "Cultural Mosaic" series launched by the library to promote awareness of the beauty of Islamic civilisation and to shed light on the cultural diversity that characterises human societies.

programme scheduled from 12pm to 4pm, both in Arabic and English, offering a celebration of Qatari heritage cultural diversity. The festival takes its name from the Qatari word "Dakka," which refers to a long bench or seat, symbolising the warmth and camaraderie of people gathering together. Inspired by this meaning, the library aims to create a space for visitors to connect and inter-

The festival will also offer visitors the opportunity to enjoy heritage experi-

ences that reflect aspects of traditional Qatari life, in addition to interactive family activities suitable for all ages. This makes it an ideal destination for families wishing to celebrate the National Day in an atmosphere that combines knowledge and enjoyment.

The festival also offers cultural and artistic programmes that introduce visitors to Qatar's history and highlight the contemporary presence of its culture in light of the comprehensive renaissance the country is witnessing.



#### **Kuwait Theater Festival fetes Ghanem al-Sulaiti**

**QNA** Kuwait

The 25th Kuwait Theater Festival kicked off yesterday and is set to continue until December 11. The festival honoured Qatari artist Ghanem al-Sulaiti as the guest of honour of this edition for his contribution to the Gulf and Arab theatre and drama by having a deep impact on the audience and playing a part in developing the theatrical

This edition also celebrates the Kuwaiti artist Mohammed al-Mansor as the personality of the festival in appreciation for his work that contributed to the Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab art scene. The opening ceremony featured an artwork that detailed the most notable Kuwaiti poets and writers who documented the sea, land and Bedouin life of the State of Kuwait.

The 25th Kuwait Theater Festival



includes a number of theatrical performances, workshops, and discussion panels. It will also award six theatrical performances.

Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman al-Mutairi, stated that the festival solidified its position in the community and proved its impactful role on the Arab art scene.

On his part, Assistant Secretary-General at the Kuwaiti National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Musaed al-Zamel, said that the festival, which is celebrating its golden jubilee, comes as part of efforts to honour the long history and role of the State of Kuwait in the emergence of the theatre and creative movement. Al-Zamel, who also serves as the manager of the 25th Kuwait Theater Festival, added that the first two editions of the event (1989 and 1990) included performances that embodied the journey of the movement, which was shouldered by its early pioneers.

#### Doha 2036 Olympic bid: Proven, tested, ready

#### From Page 1

With youth turning to healthy lifestyles and following their favourite players on the pitch ever so much. Oatar has played a torchrole in pushing its sports agend: every country in the region and the rest of the Asian continent. Even in the broadcasting sector, Qatar's belN Sports Network is watched – with multiple language options by millions of homes around the world, thanks largely to its spectacular sports coverage throughout the year, 24x7. Doha's bid for the 2036 Olympic Games delivers on every promise made by the Qatari leadership. With unmatched sporting

infrastructure in the country, to A-grade travel logistics, to organisational skills learned from hosting world cups and championships. Doha is ahead of the game. Sports builds bridges and promotes a healthy lifestyle and Oatar is leading the show or this front. Yet, the athlete and fan experience extends far beyond the pitch. Qatar's cultural scene seamlessly blends deep-rooted heritage with modern innovation, anchored by landmarks like the Museum of Islamic Art and the vibrant Katara Cultural Village. By offering a world-class environment for both competition and cultural discovery, Doha 2036 promises an Olympic Games that will be remembered forever.





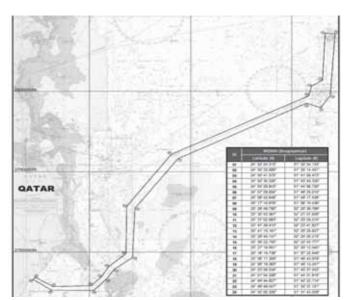
#### **Public Announcement**

To all Ships, Fishermen and Mariners Marine Survey works in Mesaieed Port by Vessels Horizon Nomad Subsea Survey Works Qatar from 01-Dec-2025 to 31-Mar-2026

Pursuant to and under directives from the Department of Seafarers Affairs and Registration, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen that Horizon Geosciences intends to undertake Marine Survey works of Mesaieed Port (NGL Jetty & SPM), AL KARKARA, IS, MM & ISND fields in the locations bound by the coordinates shown in the diagram below by Survey Vessels Horizon Nomad.

All Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations.

Horizon Geosciences takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation, following publication of this notice.



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# Qatar Charity distributes aid to refugees and IDPs in Mali

tributed food assistance and hygiene kits to rerugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mali, in coordination with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and in collaboration with the National Commission for Refugees.

The initiative included the distribution of 450 food baskets and hygiene supplies, benefiting 320 refugee families and 130 IDP families in the Baganda camp on the outskirts of Bamako. The effort aims to alleviate hardship and improve living conditions for vulnerable communities.

The distribution was carried out in the presence of Hamad bin Muazzi al-Shammari, acting Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of Qatar in Mali; Pierre Camara, UNH-



CR's Representative in Mali; and Said Zoulgami, Country Director of Qatar Charity's Mali branch.

Al-Shammari emphasised that the initiative reflects Qatar's commitment to supporting humanitarian efforts and easing the suffering of those most in need, noting that Oatar will continue to provide assistance to pro-

mote stability in the region. Camara expressed appre-

ciation for the fruitful co-operation between UNHCR and its partners, praising Qatar's positive role in supporting refugees and displaced persons. Zoulgami affirmed that Qatar Charity will continue implementing impactful projects in Mali to improve living conditions for benefi-

It is worth noting that Qatar Charity signed a strategic co-operation protocol

with UNHCR last month in Bamako, Mali, to bolster humanitarian response and provide vital support to refugees, IDPs, and host communities across the country.

The milestone agreement builds on a longstanding partnership between the two organisations, spanning key sectors like protection, education, water and sanitation, livelihoods, housing, and social cohesion.

## **QU** concludes 7th Entrepreneurs Deal competition

atar University (QU) has concluded the seventh edition of the "Entrepreneurs Deal" competition, which featured more than 50 student-led entrepreneurial projects competing to present innovative solutions before a judging panel composed of internal and external experts and specialists.

The participating students showcased a diverse range of projects spanning technology, services, and social innovation, attracting attendance from entrepreneurship enthusiasts, students, and academic faculty.

The winning teams received financial awards totalling QRI5,000 to support the development of their entrepreneurial ideas and help transform them into viable, growth-ready ventures.

Assistant QU professor of management Dr Sara al-Maadeed, founder of the semester-long initiative and a member of the QU's Centre for Entrepreneurship, stated that the competition enabled students to engage directly with key stakeholders in Qatar's entrepreneurial ecosystem and



learn from experienced entrepreneurs, private-sector partners, supporting institutions, and academics.

The seventh edition builds on the success of previous years, which witnessed the emergence of noteworthy projects, some of which have evolved into sustainable student initiatives.

Other teams received additional support from local business incubators to continue developing their business models.

The "Entrepreneurs Deal" competition is part of the QU's ongoing efforts to strengthen the innovation landscape and enhance students' capabilities in entrepreneurship.

The initiative provides a practical platform that brings together training, mentorship, and real-world experience, offering students opportunities to advance their ideas into impactful ventures that serve the community. The Fitbit team, supervised by Dr Yassine Talaoui and comprising students Mohammed al-Lahlouk, Abdullah al-Thani, and Abdullah al-Khater, won the award for "Best Video".

The Hope Bus team, supervised by Dr Allam Farha and made up of students Amina al-Rumaihi, Wasaif Mohsen Khawar, Raghad al-Marri, Bashayer al-Ansari, and Shahad al-Mahmoud, received the award for "Best Roll-Up".

The second-place award in the female category, valued at QR3,000 and presented by the Centre for Entrepreneurship, went to the Naqsha team supervised by Maisoun Sewailem, with team members Munira Dhafer al-Hajri, Nouf Ali al-Jassim, Shahad Ali al-Jassim, Al-Anoud Rashid al-Yehri, and Al-Sheikha al-Mohannadi.

The first-place award in the female category, valued at QR6,000, was awarded to the "Fa'idh" team supervised by Dr Allam Farha, with students Sharifa al-Jadi'a, Wasan al-Ruwaili, Zainab Khaled Smati, Al-Dana al-Hajri, and Eman Saad.

In the male category, the VR Cafe team, supervised by Dr Mazin al-Edeinat and comprising students Khalid Hassan al-Maarafi, Al-Sheikh al-Sheikh, Abdulrahman Mohammed Abu al-Ala, Abdullah Mohammed al-Kuwari, and Thamer Abdul-Salam al-Yafei, received the first-place award valued at OR6,000.

The initiative team extended its gratitude to sponsors Jassim al-Ashar, the chief executive of Al-Tatweer for Training, Consultancy and Events, and Nawaf Telfat from Al Rayan Bank.

# QF students shine at International Space Challenge 2025 in Singapore



atar Foundation (QF) students continue to strengthen their global presence in scientific innovation after achieving major international success at the International Space Challenge 2025 in Singapore.

The competition brought together top student teams from around the world to develop future-focused solutions that support space sustainability.

The "Karisoma" team from the Qatar Academy for Science and Technology (QAST), part of the QF's Pre-University Education (PUE), won the "New Challenger Award" – one of the top awards given to promising scientific projects – for their project "DebriX".

It is an integrated system that uses artificial intelligence (AI), orbital tracking, and laser pulses to address the issue of space debris and protect Earth's orbit.

Meanwhile, the "Quartex"

team from the Education City High School (ECHS), comprising of high school students from Qatar Academy Doha, Qatar Academy for Science and Technology and Qatar Academy Sidra, also part of the QF's PUE, presented "Lunar Base Revolution", a self-sustaining agricultural system designed for space environments.

The project received strong praise when presented to Singapore's minister of sustainability. "When our team was announced as a winner, I felt overwhelming gratitude and happiness," said ECHS Grade 11 student Sophia Firdaus. "I didn't join to win, I joined to learn. This achievement proved to me that passion and patience are the real

keys to success."

"Time was our biggest challenge, but we focused on working efficiently and dividing tasks clearly," she said. "Even during moments of exhaustion, supporting each other and remembering why we started kept us going."

"This award is an inspiring achievement in my academic journey," said QAST Grade 11 student Karthik Joshi. "Competing at a global level strengthened my passion for science and engineering and motivated me to explore new paths in technology and space."

"It also reflects the continuous progress our academy is making in offering strong opportunities in innovation and research," he said. QAST Grade 12 student Mari-

The competition brought together top student teams from around the world, including Qatar.

am al-Zarrad said she joined the competition to challenge herself and expand her knowledge without expecting to win.

She added that the achievement boosted her confidence and confirmed that having diverse knowledge is essential for creativity and fresh thinking.

"We worked as one team, dividing tasks based on each person's interests and supporting each other at every stage," al-Zarrad said. "I encourage every student to focus on their own abilities instead of comparing themselves to others, because comparisons weaken creativity."

"Success begins when we trust ourselves and take the first step," she added

Saifuddin Aftab, STEM (science, technology, engineering

and mathematics) co-ordinator at the ECHS and part of the QF's PUE, said: "It was an exceptional experience for our students."

"Their projects demonstrated a high level of teamwork, creativity, and scientific research," he said. "Their participation in Singapore enriched their cultural experience and offered a rare opportunity to present their work to ministers and government officials."

"The PUE's Gifted and Talented Programme played a key role in supporting the students by providing the right environment, facilitating logistics, and guiding their ideas from the early stages until they became fully developed projects," Aftab added. "What truly stood out was the combination of innovation and high-quality presentation, which earned our students strong recognition from the competition's programme leaders."

### Must-visit experiences at Brouq this weekend



atar residents and visitors will have the opportunity to explore and experience a weekend of adventure and family-friendly fun at Brouq, dubbed as Visit Qatar's signature desert activation.

Running until January 17, the festival features new experiences and expanded programming for everyone to enjoy.

Thrilling experiences await at the Desert Escape Zone, where the new 25m Adventure Tower and Qatar's longest zipline promise visitors unforgettable experiences.

The zone also features open-air

dining areas and live entertain-

The Film City zone has been transformed into a cultural hub featuring falcon photo opportunities, henna art, traditional and musical performances, and story-telling sessions running throughout the day.

Children can also enjoy puppet shows, face painting, and caricature classes.

General admission is QR50 for adults and QR30 for children under 12.

Brouq is open from 2pm-9pm on weekdays, 1pm-9pm on Fridays, and 10am-9pm on Saturdays.

#### Ooredoo announces sponsorship role at World Arabian Horse Championship Supreme 2025



oredoo has announced its role as the "Exclusive Telecom Sponsor" for the prestigious World Arabian Horse Championship Supreme 2025, set to take place on December 5-6 at the Old Doha Port.

The World Arabian Horse Championship Supreme 2025 is a global celebration of heritage, elegance, and excellence, bringing together the finest Arabian horses and top breeders from around the world.

The competition reflects the enduring beauty, endurance, and cultural significance of the Arabian horse, a breed deeply rooted in the traditions of the region.

As Exclusive Telecom Sponsor, Ooredoo will deliver cutting-edge connectivity and digital solutions, ensuring a seamless experience for participants, organisers, and visitors.

The sponsorship underscores Ooredoo's commit-

ment to supporting Qatar's cultural and sporting landscape while enabling world-class technology and innovation.

"We are honoured to support this exceptional

"We are honoured to support this exceptional championship that celebrates Qatar's rich heritage and global distinction," said senior Ooredoo Qatar marketing and communications director Sabah Rabiah al-Kuwari.

"Through this partnership, Ooredoo reaffirms its commitment to connecting communities and enhancing national events with advanced technology and intelligent connectivity."

The event is free for the public to attend, with VIP

hospitality options available for guests seeking an elevated viewing experience.



Live, hosted an exclusive evening titled An Evening with Steve Harvey on December 3 at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC)'s Al Mayassa Theatre.

The evening drew an audience of more than 1,500 people, demonstrating the strong interest and demand for this unique experience.

Throughout the evening, global entertainer, entrepreneur, and influential thought leader Steve Harvey shared a compelling series of insights on leadership, entrepreneurship, and personal development

His dynamic storytelling and candid reflections created an inspiring and memorable experience



An Evening with Steve Harvey on Wednesday at the ONCC.

for the audience, leaving a lasting motivational impact.

npact.
This formed part of Visit Qatar's ongoing col-

laboration with MELT Live to bring internationally recognised, world-class experiences to the



# FIFA Arab Cup **Qatar offers** barrier-free experience

#### **Accessibility features in place for** disabled fans at the regional competition, as tournament organisers mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities

s the world marked International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Wednesday, the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 Local Organising Committee (LOC) reaffirmed its commitment to delivering a barrier-free tournament experience, while ensuring that mega-sporting events leave a long lasting legacy of accessibility in the country.

"Our commitment towards delivering accessible tournaments is rooted in our strong belief that football is for everyone." said LOC Operations executive director Rashid al-Khater. "The Arab Cup holds great significance to fans across the region, and we are ensuring that disabled fans are able to enjoy all of the excitement and passion that underlines this competition."



The Arab Cup has accessibility features in place to ensure that disabled fans are part of the football action.

"This tournament will carry forward Qatar's rich sporting legacy that is built around accessibility and inclusivity," he

The Arab Cup has accessibility features in place to ensure that disabled fans are part of the football action.

All six stadiums hosting matches offer disabled fans a number of accessible seating options, including wheelchair accessible seats and spaces for fans with limited

Accessibility features extend to dedicated parking space, bathrooms and concession stands.

Audio descriptive commentary is available for select matches for blind and partially sighted football fans.

Fans can download the 3annak app, enter the code "FAC25", and select the audio channel of their choice.

Using personal headphones, fans can listen to a detailed commentary of match details, including important information about the ambience in the stands and even the players' facial reactions.

The service enables blind and partially sighted fans to experience the football action in a barrier-free manner.



Sensory rooms are available for fans with neurodivergent needs at Lusail, Education City and Al Bayt stadiums.

The rooms allow fans with sensory needs to watch matches in a quieter space, equipped with assistive technology and managed by expert staff.

A number of disabled children took to the pitch as player escorts at select matches during the tournament, including the opening match at Al Bayt Stadium.

This provided disabled children with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to play an active role in the prestigious regional competition.

Fans can purchase accessibility tickets by sending an e-mail to: accessibility.tickets@sc.qa

A dedicated team is set up to manage all accessibility ticket requests.

Once an e-mail is sent, fans will receive an automated reply requesting them to submit Proof of Eligibility.

Ticket holders must carry their Proof of Eligibility when entering stadiums.

Companion tickets are also available for people assisting an accessibility tick-

# Abdulrahman al-Ashgar

Visit Qatar, Ironman Group sign deal to

70.3 L

bring Ironman 70.3 triathlon to Doha

### **Vodafone Qatar to give away more than 100** prizes throughout FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025

fficial Technology Sponsor of FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, Vodafone Qatar, has announced a lineup of tournament activations that will run across multiple venues, offering fans more than 100 prizes to be won throughout the competition. Renowned presenter Abdulrahman al-Ashqar will be present at Vodafone Qatar's fan engagement booths in the activation zones at Al Bayt Stadium, Lusail Stadium, and Khalifa Interna-

He will host live games and trivia questions, giving fans the chance to win prizes.

These booths will feature entertainment activities, including football video games, and interactive challenges.

Vodafone Qatar will also celebrate fans through its special "Fan of the Match" activation, rewarding standout supporters who bring exceptional energy, spirit, and passion to the stadiums.

The initiative is part of Vodafone Qatar's ongoing commitment to elevate the fan experience and bring supporters closer to the excitement of the tournament.

Fans are encouraged to visit Vodafone Qatar's social media channels for activation schedules, and updates.

### 'Identities of Perfection' solo exhibition inaugurated at MDD

By Tawfik Lamari Staff Reporter

n the heart of Mshereib Downtown Doha (MDD), a place where heritage meets innovation, Al Markhiya Gallery inaugurated "Identities of Perfection", a solo exhibition featuring the works of the late Egyptian artist Hazem

El Mestikawy.

The exhibition is a dialogue architectural language where merges with contemporary geom-

etry. collaboration between Msheireb Museums and Al Markhiya Gallery, the works are installed within the historic walls of Mohammed Bin Jassim House, one of four heritage houses restored as part of the Msheireb Museums spaces.

El Mestikawy's artistic practice sits at the intersection of architecture, sculpture, and optical illusion.

Through site-responsive installations, the works reshape space, seeking to achieve a balance between geometric order and visual

Drawing inspiration from ancient Egyptian heritage influenced by modern abstraction, El Mestikawy's works reinterpret traditional elements.

His use of mashrabiyas, Arab ornamentation, and geometric networks create pure, contemplative compositions that speak to both the intellect and emotion.

El Mestikawy's preferred materials - cardboard and corrugated paper - introduce a deliberate fragility that reflects on temporality, colour, and human creativity.

Through contrasts of texture and tone, he created a rhythmic visual balance that echoes the logic of geometry.

Located within the MDD, a district whose architecture celebrates modernity as a living framework for daily life, the Mohammed Bin Jassim House provides a space where El Mestikawy's works resonate naturally.

**Works of late artist Hazem El** Mestikawy depict 'dialogue' between architectural language



The late Hazem El Mestikawy.

The Mohammed Bin Jassim House deepens this dialogue between architecture and space, connecting past and present.

On the sideline of the inauguration ceremony, Msheireb Museums curator Bashir Mohammed told Gulf Times: "'Identities of Perfection' is a tribute to the late Hazem El Mestikawy."

"His legacy continues to expand our understanding of the form and geometry," he said. "I see Hazem not only as an artist, but (also) as a researcher and a philosopher."

"His approach in every single work is a profound investigation to the form, the balance, and to the essence of the beauty itself," Mohammed added.



**Bashir Mohammed** 

### **By Shaima Sheriff** isit Qatar has signed an agreement with The

Ironman Group in Doha to bring the globally recognised Ironman 70.3 triathlon series to Doha for the first time, with the inaugural race scheduled for the first quarter of 2027. The event, dubbed Visit Qatar Ironman 70.3 Doha, is expected to attract elite athletes, age-group

sports destination. "Bringing the Ironman 70.3 series to Qatar reflects our continued ambition to position the country as a leading global hub for major international sporting events," said Visit Qatar chief executive

competitors, and supporters from across the world,

further strengthening Qatar's position as a global

Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi said. "This agreement strengthens Oatar's growing sports tourism sector and showcases its ability to deliver world-class experiences supported by exceptional infrastructure, and an unmatched visitor offering," he said. "Together with our partners, we are committed to delivering a race that meets Qa-

tar's ambition, and global vision." The triathlon will feature a swim, bike, and run, with courses designed to showcase Doha's urban scenery and some of the country's most iconic landmarks, organisers said.

Ironman Group chief executive Scott DeRue told Gulf Times that Qatar stood out as a natural choice for hosting the race.

#### DeRue and al-Mawlawi at the signing ceremony in Doha. PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam "This is one of the most incredible destinations in the world for sport, with a rich history of hosting major sporting events," he said." DeRue added that the event is an early-season race that is perfect for athletes getting ready for big spring and summer races because it will provide qualifying spots for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship. He highlighted Doha's distinctive appeal for ath-

"The beauty of the city, its culture, and how wel-

letes, citing the city's landscape, culture, and hos-

coming the community is were all really important factors in bringing Ironman to Qatar," DeRue said, describing the announcement as the result of long-

#### **Upgraded government** scholarship system will be launched soon: official

The final stages of launching the upgraded electronic government scholarship system are underway, a Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) official has said.

Noora al-Ansari (pictured), director of the MoEHE's Scholarship Department, told Arabic daily Al-Raya that the team is currently working with the assistant undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs to finalise the technical preparations for the official launch.

She confirmed that the new system is an improved version of the existing system, with comprehensive updates that benefit the user and enhance integration among relevant entities.

Al-Ansari added that this system serves not only students but also the higher education sector and partner organisations, such as strategic companies collaborating with relevant government education institutions.

This, she said, strengthens data integration and streamlining



procedures among all parties. The official stated that the system is scheduled to be launched this week or the next, after all necessary technical updates are completed.

She noted that the full features of the system will be revealed at the start of the registration period, allowing students and the community to see the impact of the significant improvements that have been implemented.

# **#IAS\_NUQ's InterAsian**Digitalities initiative introduces new framework

he Institute for Advanced Study in the Global South at Northwestern University in Qatar (#IAS\_NUQ) has introduced 'TransAsian digitalities' as a new framework for examining digital life beyond Westerncentric epistemic genealogies.

From InterAsian to TransAsian digitalities, a special issue of *First Monday*, co-edited by #IAS\_NUQ director, Clovis Bérgere and NU-Q dean and CEO, Marwan M Kraidy, reconceptualises Asia as a dynamic, interconnected formation defined by relationships, continuities, divergences, and differences rather than fixed geographic boundaries.

Founded in 1996, First Monday is one of the earliest openly accessible, peer-reviewed journals dedicated to Internet research. This special issue is the culmination of the two-year InterAsian



Digitalities initiative at #IAS\_NUQ, a sub-project launched in spring 2023 of the Institute's core research theme, Southern Digitalities. It was developed through workshops, panels, and conferences in Australia, Lebanon, New Zealand, Qatar, and the United

States, alongside the Arab Council for the Social Sciences' InterAsia Partnership.

"We are shifting to TransAsian digitalities because we believe the prefix trans-, which reflects forces operating across and within different nation-states, socio-cultural spheres, and domains of political and economic activity, rather than simply between them, as intersuggests, better reflects the interdisciplinarity and transnationalism inherent in our approach, and better captures the excellent contributions in this special issue," noted Kraidy, and Bergère, in the co-authored introduction.

The special issue brings together five research papers and a reflection essay authored by #IAS\_NUQ fellows, affiliates, and international scholars, illustrating how perspectives grounded in Asia and the Global South are reshaping the study of the digital. Together, these works move beyond the critique of Westerncentric epistemologies to propose new ways of understanding digital life that arise from the region's own histories, networks, and intellectual traditions.



### 5th Annual Day at Mesis

ES Indian School (Mesis), Abu Hamour Branch, celebrated its 5th Annual Day titled 'Mesis Trance 2025 - From Tales Untold, Our Dreams Unfold'. Indian embassy deputy chief of mission Sandeep Kumar was the chief guest. Ministry of Education and Higher Education's Qatar History inspector Dalal al-Anzi was the special guest.

Members of the MES Governing Board 2025, including Kashif Jaleel, Dr Najeeb K P, Aneesh P A, Firos Kolathayil, Hashim N M, Ashraf Sharafudheen P T, Sajeeb bin Abutty, Ansar T K, Hazmal Ismail, Faisal Mayan, Ahamed Isham, Badarudheen Gulam Mohiyuddin, Najeeb M A, and Shaheed Alungath along with the management members of IES Education City, Chittilappilly, Kerala, and leaders of various commu-

nity associations were present.

The grand unveiling of the Dreamcatcher-inspired concept captivated the audience with its symbolic depth, followed by the

release of the new school anthem.

Principal Pramila Kannan in her annual report, highlighted the school's milestones and applauded the students for their commendable achievements in academics, co-curricular activities and character development.

The chief guest quoted Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's iconic words, "Dream is not that which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let you sleep," urging students to pursue their aspirations with passion and persistence. The cultural performances by students showcased classical dance, modern choreography, dramatic storytelling and dreamthemed presentations.



#### **Annual club contest**



The annual club contest for Aurora Toastmasters Club of District 116 was a medley of inspiration, laughter, teamwork and camaraderie. The event showcased the members' efforts to develop their public speaking skills. Poornima Raj was the contest manager.

### Qatar University College of Pharmacy honours 167 students

atar University (QU)'s College of Pharmacy (CPH) recognised the academic excellence of 167 distinguished students from the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters during the 13th Annual Dean's List Ceremony. The honoured students — across the General Pharmacy and Professional Pharmacy programmes — achieved a GPA of 3.5 or higher, reflecting their commitment to academic excellence and professional growth.

The ceremony opened with remarks by Professional Year 3 pharmacy student Osama Khater, followed by welcome remarks from CPH dean Prof Karim El-Zubi, and the formal announcement of the students named to the Dean's List.



ney and encouraged students to

embrace continuous learning as they prepare to assume leadership roles in the healthcare sector.

"Returning to CPH reminded me of the growth that comes from embracing opportunities and staying curious," she said.
Prof El-Zubi stated that stu-

Prof El-Zubi stated that students who earned a place on the Dean's List this year have demonstrated outstanding dedication to their studies and to the

pharmacy profession. "We are proud of their achievements and look forward to their continued success."

CPH assistant dean for student affairs Reem al-Mannai. said: "At the College of Pharmacy, we remain committed to supporting students academically and personally so they can thrive during their time at QU and in their future careers."





ES Indian School's KG Day was celebrated under the theme 'Whimsical Wonders.' Indian embassy second secretary Bindu N Nair was the chief guest. The governing board members from MES and IES Education City, Chittilappilly, Kerala, were present.

The young performers presented a welcome dance that beautifully traced a journey 'from the sands of Arabia to the vibrant hues of India's tricolour,' show-casing elegance, energy, and cultural richness.

The highlight was a giant storybook prop opened with a magic wand by the chief guest along with principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, MES board president B M Siddique, general secretary Dr Najeeb, and co-curricular and cultural activities director Ahamed Isham.

The chief guest lauded the school's continuous efforts in holistic development. From Balloon Dance to Gaon Ki Rangoli, each performance radiated energy and sparkle. The celebration culminated with a dance performance where the teachers joined their little stars on stage.

The magical journey came to a close as the principal folded the giant storybook. Earlier, section head Sufera Ashraf welcomed the gathering and academic co-ordinator Suja Mathew anchored the programme.







### Don't look back in anger on Brexit, German president tells UK



Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (centre) arrives to speak to a joint session of members of parliament in the Royal Gallery at the Palace of Westminster in central London yesterday. (AFP)

London

Pritain and the EU must repair relations damaged by Brexit, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier told UK MPs yesterday, drawing a parallel with the reunion of the famously warring Oasis brothers.

Speaking in the royal gallery on the second day of a three-day state visit, the first by a German head of state in 27 years, Steinmeier said after Brexit people were "disappointed and sometimes unable to understand the decision" and there was "a feeling of uncer-

But both sides had decided "not to stay stuck in these feelings", he said, speaking in English.

"Don't Look Back in Anger, as one of the most famous songs by Oasis puts it so well," he told MPs. "If you don't mind my saying so, I think that is typically British. Keep calm and carry on - look ahead pragmatically, move on."

He returned to the metaphor at the end of speech, describing how the reunion between Liam and Noel Gallagher this year after 16 years apart and their sold-out Oasis tour created "the greatest pop event of the past decade".

"Cool Britannia is alive! Our relations may have changed, but, my dear Britons, our love remains. So let us look not to the past, but rather together to the future," he said.

#### Closer ties

Steinmeier highlighted the Kensington Treaty signed between Germany and the UK in July, marking closer security and defence co-operation. He also pointed to the first EU-UK summit since Brexit in May, which aimed to reduce trade barriers.

Concrete projects include a German-British electricity interconnector due in 2028 and plans for youth mobility agreements to ease obstacles for students, he said.

"Yes, Brexit has created obstacles," Steinmeier said. "We need to change this. And we are working on it."

The renewed focus on UK-European ties comes after Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which sparked the continent's largest land war since World War II.

"We are seeing the resurgence of imperial ambitions, the attempt by destabilising forces to divide us and pit us against one another. And that is precisely why we must stand united," Steinmeier said, noting that the UK, Germany and France have worked closely together on Ukraine policy.

Steinmeier's state visit follows his British counterpart King Charles III's to Germany in March 2023, his first overseas trip as monarch and the first by a British monarch in over a decade.

On Wednesday, Charles hosted Steinmeier at a banquet at Windsor Castle, where both hailed their countries' deep ties.

The visit will continue on Friday in Coventry, which was heavily bombed in World War II, where both British and German air force personnel will participate in a remembrance ceremony.

### Putin found 'morally responsible' for nerve agent death in UK

**AFP** Londor

The UK yesterday sanctioned Russia's intelligence service and summoned Moscow's ambassador after an inquiry found President Vladimir Putin bore "moral responsibility" for the death of a British woman in a 2018 nerve agent attack.

Mother-of-three Dawn Sturgess, 44, died after spraying herself with what she thought was perfume from a discarded bottle of chic Nina Ricci fragrance - but turned out to be the deadly chemical Novichok.

The public inquiry found the bottle had been dumped in the city of Salisbury in southwest England after two suspects thought to be Russian spies brought it there in a failed attempt to assassinate former double agent Sergei Skripal in March

The inquiry's report found the assassination attempt "must have been authorised at the highest level, by President Putin", and concluded the Russian leader bears "moral responsibility" for Sturgess's death

four months later. "It is clear that this attack showed considerable determination and was expected to stand as a public demonstration of Russian power," the report concluded. Following its publication. London said it had summoned the Russian ambassador to answer for Moscow's "ongoing campaign of hostile activity".

The UK also sanctioned the Russian intelligence agency blamed for the attack, the GRU, "in its entirety", the foreign ministry said, as well as 11 "actors behind Russian statesponsored hostile activity".

Russia has repeatedly denied involvement in the attack, but UK government officials have long sus-

pected Putin of authorising it. The attack against Skripal led to what was then the largest-ever expulsion of diplomats between Western powers and Russia, and a limited round of sanctions by the West. Those sanctions have now been outstripped by the UK's response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The attempt on Skripal's life is the latest in a line of espionage thrillerworthy episodes to damage UK-

Russian relations. A previous British inquiry found in 2016 that Putin "probably approved" the 2006 killing in London of ex-spy Alexander Litvinenko, a prominent Kremlin critic, with ra-

dioactive polonium. Skripal and his daughter Yulia were found slumped unconscious on a park bench in the city of Salisbury in March 2018 after the door handle to Skripal's house was daubed with Novichok. They survived after intensive hospital treatment

and now live under protection. The bottle containing "Novichok made in Russia" was brought to Salisbury by two suspects, Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov - thought to be GRU agents, the report states. It was dumped by them in the city after they likely used it to attack the Skripals.

"The conduct of Petrov and Boshirov, their GRU superiors, and those who authorised the mission up to and including, as I have found, President Putin, was astonishingly reckless," the inquiry chair, former senior judge Anthony Hughes, said

after the report was published. "They, and only they, bear moral responsibility for Dawn's death," said Hughes, adding Sturgess was "the entirely innocent victim of the cruel and cynical acts of others".

The inquiry found that while there were some "failings" in the handling of Skripal's security, it was not "unreasonable" for British intelligence to believe there was no high risk of assassination.

# **President Putin in India** for defence, trade talks

New Delhi

ussian President Vladimir Putin arrived in India yesterday for a two-day visit aimed at deepening defence ties, as New Delhi faces heavy US pressure to stop buying oil from Moscow.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was at the airport to welcome the Russian leader in person, greeting him on the red carpet with a hug, before riding together in the same car. Putin, on his first visit to India since the Ukraine war, is accompanied by his Defence Minister Andrei Belousov, with possible deals on fighter jets and air defence systems expected to be discussed.

In an interview with India Today, Putin said he was "very happy" to be meeting "my friend" Modi.

"The range of our co-operation with India is huge," he said in remarks translated by the broadcaster, citing ship and aircraft manufacturing, nuclear energy and space exploration.

The Indian premier said he was "delighted to welcome my friend, President Putin to India".

"Looking forward to our interactions later this evening and tomorrow" Modi said in a post on X He will host Putin for a private dinner yesterday evening, fol-

lowed by a summit meeting today. "India-Russia friendship is a time tested one that has greatly benefitted our people," Modi added, posting a picture of them from

inside the car. Trade relations are expected to feature prominently as India walks a diplomatic tightrope - relying on strategic Russian oil imports while trying not to provoke US President Donald Trump during



Russia's President Vladimir Putin is welcomed by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi upon the Russian leader's arrival at Palam Air Force Base in New Delhi vesterday. (AFP)

ongoing tariff negotiations. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said talks to expand the supply of Russia's advanced S-400 air defence systems had an "important place

on the agenda". Indian media reports suggested Moscow may also offer co-production of Russia's Su-57 fighter jets. India is one of the world's top arms importers and Russia has long been a principal supplier.

But New Delhi has also sought alternative suppliers, as well as boosting domestic production with the Russian share of India's arms imports falling from 76 percent in 2009-13 to 36 percent in 2019-23, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Putin's visit comes after Trump imposed 50-percent tariffs on most Indian products in August, citing Delhi's continued purchases

of Russian oil - revenue Washington argues helps fund the war in

India, the world's most populous nation, has become a major buyer of Russian oil, saving itself billions of dollars and providing Moscow with a much-needed export market after it was cut off from traditional buyers in Europe because of the war. But Delhi has recently cut down on crude imports under pressure from sanctions on Russia's top oil producers Rosneft and Lukoil.

The Indian government fears any fresh energy or defence deals with Russia could irk Trump, with possible ramifications on trade negotiations with Washington.

Peskov said Moscow wanted to "maintain and increase the volume of our bilateral business with India, without allowing anyone to interfere".

New Delhi-based think-tank Observer Research Foundation, told AFP: "There may be some reduction in energy purchases - under US pressure - but the overall direction of the ties will be maintained because both countries need each other at the strategic level." A senior Indian foreign ministry

Nandan Unnikrishnan, of the

official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was a need to address the trade imbalance "one way or the other". Bilateral trade reached \$68.7bn

in 2024-25 - almost six times higher than the pre-pandemic levels - but Indian exports accounted for only \$4.88bn.

Delhi has been pressing Moscow for expanded market access for its key industries including pharmaceuticals, automobiles and the service sector.

### French President Macron urges China to push for peace, rebalance trade

**AFP** Beijing

**▼**rench President Emmanuel Macron appealed to Xi Jinping to help end the war in Ukraine and to tackle trade deficits as the two leaders met in Beijing yesterday.

For Macron, making his fourth visit to China while in office, the three-day trip is an opportunity to shore up support for a ceasefire in Europe's deadliest conflict since WWII, as well as to attract more Chinese investment in France.

China - a major Russian trading partner - has said it takes a neutral stance on the war, refraining from condemning Moscow's invasion. Yesterday, Xi reiterated his support for an end to the hostilities, telling Macron that "China supports all efforts committed to peace and hopes that all parties will reach a fair, lasting and binding peace agreement that is acceptable to all parties".

Xi and First Lady Peng Liyuan gave Macron and his wife Brigitte a grand, red-carpet welcome to the Chinese capital, complete with an honour guard and row of flagwaving children. All smiles as he entered the cavernous Great Hall of the People, Macron blew kisses to the crowd while a band played the national anthems of both countries. After the ceremony, Macron



France's President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron are welcomed upon their arrival at Chengdu International Airport in southwestern China's Sichuan province yesterday. (AFP)

told Xi that France and China must overcome their "differences".

The Chinese leader echoed Ma-

cron, calling for "more stable" ties. Their tete-a-tete comes amid fresh attempts to broker an end to the nearly four-year war in Ukraine, with Macron leading a push to counter a US-backed plan widely criticised for echoing Russia's demands. "We must continue to work towards peace and stability in the world, and in Ukraine and other regions affected by war," Macron told Xi, adding: "Our capacity

to work together is decisive." "I hope that China will join our call and our efforts to achieve, as soon as possible, at least a ceasefire in the form of a moratorium on strikes targeting critical infrastructure," he said.

Macron, who will host the G7 summit next year, also urged Beijing to work with the grouping for "more balanced, fairer" rulesbased economic governance.

Macron's three-day visit to Beijing follows a trip to Paris by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, who urged Europe to stand by Kyiv as Washington pushes a plan to end the war. "We share the view that the war must be brought to a fair end." Zelensky wrote on social media after Monday's talks with Macron, which also included phone calls with other European leaders.

#### Family voices new alarm for Hong Kong's jailed Jimmy Lai

The children of Hong Kong's jailed pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai are voicing new alarm for his health, saying his condition has continued to deteriorate. Lai, who turns 78 next Monday, has been behind bars since late 2020 as China clamps down on the financial hub to which it promised a separate system when Britain handed it over in 1997. Lai, a diabetic, has been kept in solitary confinement without air conditioning in a jail where summer temperatures rise to 44 Celsius (111 Fahrenheit), his children said. "He has lost a very significant amount of weight, visibly, and he is a lot weaker than he was before," said his daughter Claire Lai, who left Hong Kong after seeing her father several months ago. "His nails turn almost purple, gray and greenish before they fall off, and his teeth are getting rotten," she told AFP on a visit to Washington, where the family is seeking to rally support for her father. Hong Kong's government condemned what it called

"fact-twisting" reports on Lai's treatment, including from AFP. "These reports seek to smear (Hong Kong's government) by misleading the public," the Chinese territory's authorities said in a statement.

"The HKSAR government has emphasised time and again that the medical services received by Lai... in custody are adequate and comprehensive," they added. Claire Lai said that guards refused to let her father, a devout Catholic, receive communion and that they made small gestures to try to demoralise him. After learning he enjoyed curry sauce, "instead of having extra curry sauce, he has no curry sauce at all," she said. "It's little things like that that are extremely petty," she said. A successful businessman, Lai founded the Apple Daily, an outspoken prodemocracy tabloid. He faces at least 15 years in prison effectively a death sentence - on charges of foreign collusion related to mass protests in Hong Kong in 2019 against Beijing's encroaching power.

#### Critically ill Bangladesh ex-PM Zia to be flown to UK

Bangladesh's critically ill former prime minister Khaleda Zia, a key figure in elections slated for next year, is to be flown by air ambulance to Britain, her doctor said yesterday.

Zia, 80, is in intensive care in the capital Dhaka, after she was admitted to hospital last month with symptoms of a lung infection.

Despite years of ill health and imprisonment, Zia vowed in November to campaign in elections set for February 2026 - the first vote since a mass uprising toppled her arch-rival Sheikh Hasina last year. Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party is widely seen as

"If everything goes well, we will take Khaleda Zia to London by Qatar's Royal Air Ambulance," her personal doctor AZM Zahid Hossain told reporters. No exact time was given for the flight, but a helicopter drill took place near the hospital with medics suggesting it could happen within hours. The flight was agreed by a medical board of doctors from Bangladesh, as well as from Britain, China and

the United States. "Doctors will accompany her to ensure a smooth journey," Hossain said. Zia was jailed for corruption in 2018 under Hasina's government, which also blocked her from travelling abroad for medical treatment.

She was released last year, shortly after Hasina was forced from power. Zia's son, Tarique Rahman, 60, has lived in London since 2008, saying he fled politically-motivated persecution.

He is seen as her political heir, but while he has said he would run for office, he has not been in

Bangladesh for 17 years. Since Hasina's fall, Rahman has been acquitted of the most serious charge against him, a life sentence handed down in absentia for a 2004 grenade attack on a Hasina rally, which he denies.

Interim leader Muhammad Yunus has called for prayers for Zia, who he called a "source of utmost inspiration for the nation"

Special prayers for Zia are planned for Friday in mosques and other places of worship. (AFP)

## Trump hosts Congo, Rwanda leaders in latest peace push

Reuters

Washington

S President Donald Trump welcomed the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda together in Washington yesterday to sign new deals aimed at stabilising a war-scarred region and attracting Western mining investment.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi are expected to pledge their commitment to an economic integration compact already agreed to last month, as well as a US-brokered peace deal reached in June but still not implemented. Their countries will sign agreements on critical minerals, security, and economic partnerships, according to a White House official. Analysts say US diplomacy has paused the escalation of fighting in eastern Congo but has failed to resolve core issues. The M23 rebel group, supported by Rwanda, seized the two largest cities in eastern Congo earlier this year in a lightning advance that raised fears of a wider war.

The Republican US president has been eager to burnish his diplomatic credentials. Since Trump returned to office in January, his administration has intervened in conflicts from the Middle East to Ukraine and beyond. Those efforts have



US President Donald Trump (**left**) participates in the signing ceremony of a peace deal with the President of Rwanda Paul Kagame and the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Felix Tshisekedi at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, vesterday (**AFP**)

brought mixed results: a Gaza deal, but also criticism that he should focus on domestic, cost-of-living concerns instead. Voters give him low marks on his handling of the economy.

The agreement, however, may not change the humanitarian crisis on the ground. Fighting continued yesterday, with clashes between the rebels and Con-

golese army reported in several areas of South Kivu province. A spokesperson for M23 accused government troops of bombing several civilian areas.

Congo's army and M23 rebels have accused each other of violating existing ceasefire agreements that were renewed last month. At a news conference in Washington on Wednesday, Congolese official Patrick Muyaya blamed M23 for recent fighting and said it was "proof that Rwanda doesn't want peace." M23 is not attending the meeting in Washington. It is also not bound by the terms of any Congo-Rwanda agreement. A White House official said the deal signing "recommits the parties to the peace process" and reflected "months of intensive diplomacy led by

President Trump, who made it clear to both the DRC and Rwanda that the status quo was unacceptable."

Denis Mukwege, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 for his response to sexual violence in Congo, said the deals were driven more by the scramble for strategic minerals than by a genuine effort to end bloodshed. He said the peace deal would do little to support victims.

"For me, it is clear that this is not a peace agreement," he told Reuters in an interview in Paris. "The proof: this morning, in my native village, people were burying the dead while a peace agreement was being signed. The M23 continues to seize territory." Rwanda denies backing M23. Kigali has said its own forces have acted in self-defence against ethnic Hutu militiamen linked to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when more than 1 million people were killed. A group of United Nations experts said in a July report that Rwanda exercises command and control over the rebels. M23 says it is fighting to protect ethnic Tutsi communities in eastern Congo. The rebel group's advances mark the latest episode in ethnic rivalry in Congo's eastern borderlands with Rwanda, the source of conflict for three decades.

Two devastating wars in the African Great Lakes region between 1996 and 2003 cost millions of lives. The latest cycle of fighting has killed thousands of people and displaced hundreds of thousands more.



This screengrab made from surveillance footage released by the FBI on March 9, 2021, shows the person suspected of placing pipe bombs in Washington, DC, on January 5, 2021. (AFP)

### FBI arrests man suspected of planting bombs on eve of 2021 Capitol riot

US authorities have arrested a man suspected of planting pipe bombs in Washington the night before the January 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump, two officials briefed on the matter said yesterday.

The FBI released surveillance video, offered a \$500,000 reward and received hundreds of tips in a years-long search for the suspect they believe was involved in the incident that took place nearly five years

The footage, from January 5, 2021, showed a person putting a bomb near a bench outside the Democratic National Committee building. The suspect placed another bomb at the Republican headquarters. Both sites are near the Capitol.

The suspect is Brian Cole, Jr., of Woodbridge, Virginia, according to two sources briefed on the matter.

Cole, 30, lives with his parents and works for a bail bond company, one of them said.

The suspect is expected to make an initial court appearance in Washington, according to a source briefed on the matter.

The bombs were discovered on the same day supporters of Trump stormed Congress in an attempt to stop lawmakers from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election victory. Police deactivated the bombs and neither exploded.

In the January 6, 2021, melee at the Capitol, rioters surged past police barricades, assaulting about 140 officers and causing more than \$2.8mn in damage.

Trump pardoned nearly everyone criminally charged for participating in the riot, some 1,500 people, when he returned to office in January.

## Pakistan to let humanitarian aid into Afghanistan, say officials

Pakistan will temporarily allow UN relief supplies into Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, in the first partial border opening since deadly clashes erupted between the two neighbours in October. The countries have been locked in an increasingly bitter dispute since the Taliban authorities retook control in Kabul in 2021. Islamabad accuses its neighbour of harbouring militants that launch cross-border attacks, charges the Afghan government denies.

"In response to formal requests from UN agencies... the government of Pakistan has approved a limited and specific humanitarian exception to allow movement of their containers to Afghanistan," a government official not authorised to speak to the media told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The supplies include food, medicine and medical equipment, and "other essential goods related to health and education", the official said. The aid transfers will take place in "three phases", though the official did not specify when the first phase would begin.

# EU hits Meta with antitrust probe over plans to block AI rivals from WhatsApp

**Reuters** Brussels

U regulators launched an antitrust investigation into Meta Platforms yesterday over its rollout of artificial intelligence features in its WhatsApp messenger that would block rivals, hardening Europe's already tough stance on Big Tech.

The move, reported earlier by Reuters and the *Financial Times*, is the latest action by European Union regulators against large technology firms such as Amazon and Alphabet's Google as the bloc seeks to balance support for the sector with efforts to curb its expanding influence.

Europe's tough stance — a marked contrast to more lenient US regulation — has sparked an industry pushback, particularly by US tech titans, and led to criticism from the administration of US President Donald Trump.

The European Commission said that the investigation will look into Meta's new policy that would limit other AI providers' access to



WhatsApp, a potential boost for its own Meta AI system integrated into the platform earlier this year.

EU antitrust chief Teresa Ribera said the move was to prevent dominant firms from "abusing their power to crowd out innovative competitors". She added interim measures could be imposed to block Meta's new WhatsApp AI policy rollout. "AI markets are booming in Europe and beyond," she said.

"This is why we are investigat-

ing if Meta's new policy might be illegal under competition rules, and whether we should act quickly to prevent any possible irreparable harm to competition in the AI space." A WhatsApp spokesperson called the claims "baseless", adding that the emergence of chatbots on its platforms had put a "strain on our systems that they were not designed to support", a reference to AI systems from other providers.

"Still, the AI space is highly

competitive and people have access to the services of their choice in any number of ways, including app stores, search engines, e-mail services, partnership integrations, and operating systems." The EU was the first in the world to establish a comprehensive legal framework for AI, setting out guardrails for AI systems and rules for certain high-risk applications in the AI Act.

Meta AI, a chatbot and virtual assistant, has been built into WhatsApp's interface across European markets since March. The Commission said a new policy fully applicable from January 15, 2026, may block competing AI providers from reaching customers via the platform. Ribera said the probe came on the back of complaints from small AI developers about the WhatsApp policy. The Interaction Company of California, which has developed AI assistant Poke.com, has taken its grievance to the EU competition enforcer. Spanish AI startup Luzia has also talked to the Commission, a person with knowledge of the matter said.

### Russian attacks cut power, heating for tens of thousands

**Reuters** Kyiv

ens of thousands of people were left without power and heating in southern Ukraine after Russian attacks on the frontline city of Kherson and Ukraine's largest seaport, Odesa, authorities and a top energy provider said yesterday.

Russia has sharply increased its attacks on Ukraine's energy and utilities sector as winter approaches, plunging swathes of cities and regions into darkness.

State oil and gas firm Naftogaz said a heat and power plant in the southern city of Kherson had been "almost completely destroyed." Regional governor Oleksandr Prokudin said the attack left 40,500 customers without heat. "This is a purely civilian facility providing

heat to residents," Naftogaz CEO Sergii Korteskyi wrote on X. "Such targeted bombing is terrorism."

Kherson, a frontline city that was for several months occupied by Russian forces after Moscow's invasion in February 2022, comes



Damaged parts of the Naftogaz gas facility, following Russian missile and drone attacks, in Ukraine. (**AFP**)

under Russian missile, drone and artillery attack on an almost daily basis. Separately, Ukrainian energy company DTEK said yesterday that Russia attacked its energy facility in the southern Odesa region overnight, leaving

51,800 households without power.

In Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, where Russian forces are grinding forward in the battlefield, attacks left about 60,000 residents without power, Kyiv's energy ministry said.

# Italy sweatshop probe snares more luxury brands

**AFP** Milan

Talian prosecutors yesterday named Gucci, Prada, Versace and Yves Saint Laurent as among 13 luxury brands suspected of using subcontractors who exploited migrant workers in Italy, as part of a growing investigation into sweatshop conditions.

Milan prosecutor Paolo Storari issued requests for information about alleged abuses by the brands, although they are not yet under formal investigation.

not yet under formal investigation.

It is the biggest expansion to date of a probe launched last year into the luxury sector, which has exposed wage and working hour violations, safety breaches

and substandard housing for staff.
"As part of the investigations... there

have been reports of Chinese workers being employed in conditions of severe exploitation," Storari wrote to the brands in documents made public yesterday.

The document reveals that luxury bags, wallets and clothing were found during searches of Italian workshops employing Chinese and Pakistani workers under exploitative conditions.

It requests information including internal governance documents and audit information related to the brands' supply

The documents were sent to some of the fashion industry's high-flyers, from Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and Alexander McQueen — which form part of French luxury group Kering — to Givenchy, which is part of French giant LVMH.

Prosecutors also named Italian brands Prada and its new acquisition, Versace, as well as Ferragamo, Pinko, Dolce & Gabbana, Missoni, Off-White, Coccinelle and German sportswear giant Adidas.

None of the brands immediately replied to AFP requests for comment.

Milan prosecutors have already launched investigations against Tod's, Loro Piana, Dior's Italian subsidiary Manufactures Dior, Giorgio Armani Operations, Alviero Martini and Valentino

All but Tod's were placed under temporary court administration in order to correct compliance issues and establish systems to avoid future abuses.

on Wednesday, a Milan judge allowed Tod's more time to complete an evaluation of their supply chain controls as prosecutors seek to impose a temporary advertising ban and outside administra-

The probes have cast a spotlight on the near-ubiquitous practice of luxury brands subcontracting work to suppliers, who in turn contract to others, amid ever-tighter margins and scant oversight of labour conditions.

Under Italian law, companies can be held responsible for offences committed by representatives — such as approved

suppliers — acting in their interest. Italy's government has gone on the offensive, with Industry Minister Adolfo Urso saying the reputation of "Made in

Italy" brands was "under attack".

Campaigners against sweatshops, however, say, the brands themselves impose prices on their contractors that are too low, driving them to subcontract to second- and third-tier suppliers where

oversight is lacking.

Deborah Lucchetti, Italy's co-ordi-

nator for the Clean Clothes Campaign, called worker exploitation a "structural phenomenon" within the sector.

"Made in Italy cannot be a stage on which to celebrate astronomical profits built on the denial of dignity to those who sew, assemble, and finish products," she said in a statement yesterday.

The request for information from prosecutors follows inspections at five suppliers used by multiple brands, as re-

cently as November.

Between three and 19 workers, most of them Chinese but also Pakistani, worked at each supplier and were named in the documents.

Some of the brands targeted are the parent companies' Italian subsidiaries, such as Yves Saint Laurent Manifatture, Alexander McQueen Italia and Givenchy



# Islam is not a new message

ince the creation of man, there have been many Divine messages and Prophets, may Allah exalt their mention, sent by God to humankind. Numerous messages were revealed to many Prophets, who were sent to different nations at different times. However, all these messages, from the first to the last, contained the same in essence. They all called people to worship only The One True God and to do righteous deeds. Allah, Most Exalted, Says (what means): "Truly, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam..." [Qur'an 3:19]

According to the verse above and other verses in the Qur'an, the message that all Prophets called people to was Islam. Since there is only One True God, the message of God must also be One.

However, this message varies in general laws, codes of life and worship (but not in the essential beliefs) according to the diversity of nations, times, conditions, customs and cultures. Every form of this message was sent to a particular nation for a particular time, except the last message revealed to Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), which was sent to all people and all nations till the Day of Judgment.

Allah Almighty, informs us in the Holy Our'an that many Prophets uttered the word 'Islam' or 'Muslim' such as Nooh (Noah), Ibraaheem (Abraham), Ismaa'eel (Ishmael), Yoosuf (Joseph), Moosaa (Moses), may Allah exalt their mention.

Allah, The Most High, tells us about Nooh when he warned his people of disbelief saying (what means): "But if you turn away (from accepting my doctrine of Islamic Monotheism, i.e. to worship none but Allah), then no reward have I asked of you, my reward is only from Allah, and I have been commanded to be of the Muslims." [Our'an 10:72]



Ibraaheem and Yaaqoob (Jacob), may Allah exalt their mention, enjoined Islam upon their sons. Allah Almighty Says (what means): "And this (submission to Allah, Islam) was enjoined by Abraham upon his sons and by Jacob (saying) 'O my sons! Allah has chosen for you the (true) religion, then die not except while you are Muslims." [Qur'an 2:132]

Ibraaheem and Ismaa'eel, may Allah exalt their mention, invoked their Lord when they were raising the foundations of the house, the Ka'aba at Makkah, (what means): "Our Lord! And make us Muslims (in submission) to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation (in submission) to You..." [Qur'an 2:128]. Allah Says in the Our'an (what means): "(Solomon

said): 'Be not haughty with me but come to me in submission (as Muslims)?"

When 'Eesaa (Jesus), may Allah exalt his mention, came to know of his people's disbelief, he said to them (what means): "...Who will be my helpers in Allah's Cause?' The disciples said: 'We are the helpers of Allah; we believe in Allah, and bear witness that we are Muslims (i.e. we submit to Allah)?" [Qur'an 3:52]

The last of Allah's prophets, Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, was sent to present Allah's revelation in its final form and for the last time. This was necessary because the message delivered by the previous Prophets and Messengers, may Allah exalt their mention, had been

corrupted or distorted by their followers. Allah took it upon Himself to guard

the last message (i.e. the Qur'an and hence Islam) from corruption. He says in the Qur'an (what means): "Verily, it is We Who have sent down the message (i. e., the Qur'an) and surely, We will be its guardian." [Qur'an 15:9]

This message is called Islam, which means submission to the will of the only True God, Allah. In this way, all nations are invited to Islam and Allah will not accept any religion from them except Islam.

Allah Says (what means): "And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers."

The verse mentioned above makes it clear that when we say there is only one religion, it is meant that there is only one true religion. Allah Almighty, mentions the belief and religions of the polytheists in the Holy Qur'an (which means): "Say: 'O disbelievers, I worship not that which you worship. Nor will you worship that which I worship. And I shall not worship that you which are worshipping. Nor will you worship that which I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion (Islamic Monotheism)." [Qur'an 109:1-4]

To conclude, Islam is the religion, which was given to Aadam, may Allah exalt his mention, the first man and the first prophet of Allah, and it was the religion of all the prophets sent by Allah to humankind. The name of God's religion - Islam - was not decided upon by later generations of man. It was chosen by Allah Himself and clearly mentioned in His final revelation to man. In Islam it is obligatory to have belief in all Messengers, may Allah exalt their mention and their messages in the original forms revealed by Allah. Surely, it is the only way, which can lead people to success in this life and to Paradise in the Hereafter.

Allah's Messenger, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "By Him (Allah) in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, there is none from among the Jews and Christians who hears about me and then dies without believing in the Message (i.e. Islam) with which I have been sent, but he will be from the dwellers of the (Hell) fire." [Muslim]

Article source: http://www.islamweb.net/



# Causes of provision

n an authentic narration narrated by Abdullah ibn 'Umar, in Ibn Majah's Kitab al Fitan, which is also mentioned in Al-Hakim's Al-Mustadrak, as well as by al-Baihaqi and al-Bazzar, we learn about several causes of most fascinating consequences. The following can be deduced from that narration:

- Rain is withheld when Zakat is not paid, and it would not fall at all were it not for animals.
- Illnesses not seen before appear when immorality spreads among people and when it becomes
- $\bullet$  Lack of provision and injustice of rulers towards their people occurs when those people cheat in • Allah sends an enemy to a people that takes
- from their hands that which they like, when those people leave their covenant with Allah and His Messenger and leave the Book and the Sunnah.
- Discord among people occurs when leaders do not judge by Allah's Book and when they choose from it what they like and leave the rest.

One can wonder, how many secular so those usually perceived as intellectuals are there that fail to understand Allah's Sunan yet spend their lives trying to understand causes of many happenings in the universe? More importantly, how many of us fail to understand true reasons behind various disasters in our own Muslim countries? ... Thankfully, we can correct this by learning.

What follows is a mention of two major causes of provision, many of which are mentioned in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Among other causes of provision and development are Jihad in the Path of Allah, Hijrah for the sake of Allah, Haj and 'Umrah, leaving sins, da'wah to Allah, seeking forgiveness and repentance, good behaviour towards the weak and spending for the

#### Tawakkul - Relying and depending on Allah Allah the Exalted said:

"And whoever relies upon Allah – then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent." [At-Talaaq: 3]

"If you relied on Allah with a true reliance, He would provide for you the same as He provides birds: they set off in the early morning with empty stomachs and return back at the end of the day with full stomachs." [At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad]

Shaykh Fadl Ilaahi said: "The one who relies upon Allah with a true reliance is provided for as birds are provided for, and how would it be otherwise, when he has relied upon the Ever-Living who does not die, and whoever relies on Him, He will suffice him." [Mafaatih ar - Rizq, 36]

Tawakkul in the Qur'an:

Tawakkul is enjoined in the Qur'an in many places

and is a lofty station: "And upon Allah let the believers rely." [Ibrahim: 11]

"And rely upon the Ever-Living who does not die."

'So worship Him and rely on Him." [Hood:123]

Tawakkul is a cause of Allah's love for His servant: "Verily, Allah loves those who rely on Him." [Aal 'Imraan: 159]

Tawakkul is a condition of iman and a distinguishing mark of the believers:

"And upon Allah rely if you are believers." [Al-

"The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely." [Al-Anfaal:2]

The believer knows that no harm and no benefit can come except by Allah's permission, that He gives and withholds and that He owns everything in the universe. She or he knows that no one can give what Allah withholds, and that no one can withhold what

Lastly, relying on Allah does not mean that one leaves striving in this world. Allah says:

"So walk among its slopes and eat of His provi-

sion" [*Al-Mulk*: 15] "And when the prayer has concluded, disperse within the land and seek the bounty of Allah." [Al-

#### Taqwaa

"And whoever fears Allah – He will make a way out for him. And will provide for him from where he does not expect." [At-Talaq: 2-3]

Ibn 'Abbas said: "'And will provide for him from where he does not expect': meaning from where he does not hope." [Zaad al Masyr 8:291-292]

"And if only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allah, We would have opened [i.e. bestowed] upon them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they denied [the messengers], so We seized them for what they were earning [of blame for their sin]." [Al-A'raaf 96]

Ibn 'Abbaas said: "Meaning, We would enrich them with what is good, and facilitate it for them from every side." [Tafsir Abi Sa'ood 3/253]

"And if only they had upheld [the law of] Torah, the gospel and what has been revealed to them from their Lord [the Qur'an], they would have consumed [provision] from above them and from beneath their feet [i.e. in great abundance]. Among them are a moderate [i.e. acceptable] community, but many of them – evil is that which they do." [Al-Maa'idah:

Ibn Mas'ood said: "At-Taqwaa is that Allah is obeyed and not disobeyed, that He is remembered and not forgotten, and that He is thanked and not shown ungratefulness." [At-Tabaraani in Al-Kabeer

# Tawheed the essence of Islam

iterally Tawheed means to make something one or to call it one. In English when something is made one it is deemed to be unified. However, in Islamic terminology Tawheed means to believe that Allah is the one and only God. It is sometimes referred to as monotheism, however in the purest sense in that no other entity can in any way have the attributes or be equivalent or even in competition with Allah. All acts of worship that a person does should be to Allah or for Allah Alone. For example, prayer should only be to Allah, religious animal sacrifice should only be done in Allah's name, and fighting to establish and protect religion (Jihad). Tawheed is therefore the central concept upon which all of Islam rests.

#### Importance and benefits of Tawheed:

 Tawheed is the essence of Islam and the mainspring of its strength. All other laws, beliefs and commands of Islam stand firm on this foundation. Take it away, and there is nothing left of

• Tawheed is the call of all the prophets to their people. And verily We have sent among every nation a Messenger proclaiming "Worship Allah Alone and avoid all false deities". (Qur'an 16:36)

• Tawheed is the only reason for the world's creation. "And I created not the Jinns and Men except that they should worship Me." (Qur'an 51:56) By declaring sincere belief in Tawheed, a disbeliever will become a Muslim. Conversely, a Muslim will become a disbeliever (kaafir) if he rejects any aspect of it.

• By Tawheed we achieve salvation from Eternal punishment in the Hereafter, right guidance in this world, and forgiveness for sins. Allah states in the Qur'an: "Verily Allah does not forgive associating partners with Him (Shirk) however He forgives all other sins as He pleases." (Qur'an 4:48). The Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: The worshipper's right on Allah is that He will not punish those who worship none besides Him [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

• Whoever fulfils Tawheed will be admitted to the Garden (Al-Jannah) in the Hereafter. The Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, has stated: Verily Allah has promised that whosoever does not commit Shirk shall enter Al-Jannah (the Garden in the Heaven). [Al-Bukhari)]

• It is the reason for solving peoples' sadness because true happiness will be achieved if persons realise Tawheed within their heart. They will also

never feel psychologically enslaved even if physically captive.

• It is the only reason for Allah's pleasure and rewards. In another aayah (verse) in the Qur'an Allah says: If you reject faith then know that Allah is in no need of you and He does not accept disbelief from His slaves. (Qur'an 39:7) Disbelief is nothing but a manifestation of shirk which is the opposite of Tawheed.

• The acceptance of all of one's religious deeds is based upon Tawheed. Allah states: Whoever accepts a religion other than Islam it shall be rejected by Allah and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers. (Qur'an 3:85). Islam is nothing if not an embodiment of the belief in Tawheed.

• Tawheed prevents man from eternally remainng in the Hellfire. The Prophet Muhamm llaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, stated in an authentic report: Whoever dies and has so much as a mustard seed of faith in his heart shall enter Al-Jannah.

#### Sources of Islamic 'aqeedah:

The Qur'an is the Revelation which Allah sent down to His Messenger Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and has been passed forth to us both in form and in content in an uninterrupted transmission. Meaning, it can be verified as coming from the lips of the Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, It is the last scripture to be revealed to mankind. As the actual word of Allah in its original form in the Arabic language it is the first and foremost source of Islamic 'ageedah Allah says: And we did not send any Messenger before you but we inspired him (saying) none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allah) so worship Me. (Qur'an 21:25)

Hadith in Arabic has the general meaning of speech whether pertaining to religion or not. Then it took a special sense (prophetic traditions), comprising all the Prophet Muhammad's speech, deeds, or tacit decisions.

In this regard, the term Hadith and Sunnah are synonymous. The Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, being the fount from which both the Qur'an and the Sunnah spring was the best to explain what each and every person should believe about Allah. The Prophet stated about himself: I am the most knowledgeable of Allah amongst you and the most fearful of him. And he also stated: Every child is born on Al-Fitra (true faith of Islamic Monotheism) but his parents convert him to Judaism, Christianity or

# How to save oneself from tribulations

he Prophet's Companions, radhiallahu 'anhum, had made every effort to know about the tests and tribulations that will befall Muslims in the future. They therefore continuously asked the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, about them, and how to save themselves from these temptations.

Huthayfah Ibn al-Yaman, radhiallah 'anhu, said: "People used to ask the Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, about good things, but I used to ask him about bad things because I was afraid they might overtake me. I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, we were lost in ignorance and evil, then Allah brought this good (Islam). Will some evil come after this good?' He said: 'Yes'. I asked: 'And will some good come after that evil?' He said: 'Yes, but it will be tainted? I asked: 'How will it be tainted?' He said: 'There will be people who will lead others to a path different from mine. You will see good and bad in them.' I asked: 'And will some evil come after that good?' He said: 'Yes, some people will be standing at

the gate of Hell calling others (to it), whoever answers their call, they will throw him into Hellfire? I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, describe them to us.' He said: 'They will be from our own people, and speak our language? I said: 'What would you advise me to do if I should live to see it?' He said: 'Stick to Al-Jama'ah (the Group) of the Muslims and their Imam.' I asked: 'What if there is no Jama'ah and Imam?' He said: 'Then isolate yourself from all these sects, even if you have to eat from the roots of the trees until death overcomes you while you are in that state?" (Related

by Al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Fitan, 13/35). The Muslims' position regarding war between two Muslim groups

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, gave guidance to the Muslims as to how they should behave in case a war erupts between two Muslim groups. He said: "There will be tribulations! O trulv! There will be tribulations during which the one sitting is better than the one standing, and the one standing is better than the one running to them, truly when they happen, whoever has camels let him stay with his camels, and whoever has sheep let him stay with his sheep, and whoever has a land let him stay in his land? A man asked: 'What about someone who has neither camels, nor sheep, nor land?' He said: 'Let him head to his sword and hit its edge against a stone (to make it unusable), and go as far away as possible. O Allah, have I conveyed Your Message? O Allah have I conveyed Your Message?' Then a man said: "O Messenger of Allah, do you see if I have been forced to join one of the groups, and then a man hit me with his sword, or an arrow hits me and kills me?' He said: 'He will be punished for his sin and for yours, and he will be among the dwellers of Hellfire?" (Related by Muslim, Kitab al-Fitan, 4/2212, No 2887).

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, explained further how one should act if he gets caught in these tribulations. He said addressing Abu Tharr al-Ghifari, radhiallahu 'anhu: "Do you see if people killed each other until Hijarat al-Zayt (a place near Madinah) is drowned in blood, what would you do?

Stay inside your house, and lock your door? Abu Tharr said: 'And if I am not left alone?' He said: 'Then go to those with whom you were before and stay with them.' He asked: 'And should I take my sword with me?' He said: 'Then you would be joining them in what they were doing. No, but if you feared that you might be frightened by the brightness of the shining sword, cover your face with part of your clothing, and let him carry his own sin and yours, and be among the dwellers of Hellfire?" (Related by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, see Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir

Al-Tabari clarified the order of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, to avoid taking part in these kinds of conflicts, saying: 'Tribulations are a test for the Muslim, and forbidding wrong is an obligation upon those who are able to do so. And the one who helps the rightful party has done right, and the one who helps the wrongful party has done wrong, and if the matter is not clear, then that is the case in which these Hadiths apply."

### COMMENT

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### **GULF @ TIMES**

# The G20 must follow through on debt relief

As G20 leaders met in Johannesburg last month, they faced a grim reality: many developing-country governments are spending more than they can afford on debt service. To keep funds flowing to foreign creditors, policymakers have been forced to cut spending on education, healthcare, and infrastructure. These countries have so far avoided default, but at the expense of their own development.

The fact that governments across Africa, Asia, and Latin America must close hospitals and cancel school-lunch programmes to service their debt is not only a moral failure; it is also a strategic one. A world where countries cannot invest in sustainable growth and development will struggle to achieve stability, prosperity, and climate resilience.

Five years ago, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the G20 launched the Common Framework for Debt Treatment to help heavily indebted countries restructure their debts in an orderly, prompt, and equitable manner. But the promised relief has not materialised. According to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 37 out of 67 lowincome countries eligible for concessional funding are in or at high risk of debt distress, yet only four - Chad, Zambia, Ghana, and Ethiopia have applied for restructuring under the mechanism. Their experiences have revealed the weaknesses of the Common Framework: it offers far too little relief - and too late.

In response, the G20 has outsourced the problem to technocratic bodies, tasking them with accelerating the process and increasing relief. While this technical work is important, it is not enough. Debtor countries still fear that the policy is half-hearted. Policymakers now talk less about a "debt crisis" and more about a "debt morass" - a world where everyone is stuck, waiting for a change that never comes.

#### **G20** leaders have already committed to debt reli Now they need banks (MDBs) and the IMF the courage to finish the job

Meanwhile, foreign private creditors have been withdrawing their capital from developing economies since 2022. The message is clear: the risks are too high, and no meaningful solution is in sight. When investors leave, governments are left scrambling to borrow from other source

Multilateral development have come to the rescue. As a result, their share of developing countries' external debt has soared, exceeding 75% in around 20 countries. This creates a

vicious cycle: when multilateral organisations that don't take a haircut in restructurings hold most of a country's sovereign debt, private creditors become even more reluctant to invest.

To escape the debt morass, G20 leaders must restore confidence in the Common Framework and act with a sense of urgency. That means reassuring debtor countries that applications for relief will be handled quickly, fairly, and generously. The recent G20 leaders' communiqué, and their finance ministers' declaration on debt sustainability, merely reiterated the technical work and thus fell short of what is needed. Stronger commitments must be backed by tangible action.

First, G20 leaders must reduce the stigma of restructuring. When debt becomes a drag on growth, seeking relief and committing to reform should be seen as responsible economic governance.

Second, relief must be meaningful. A token reduction that leaves countries with still-limited fiscal space only prolongs the crisis. G20 leaders must proactively replenish debt-relief funds. While taxpayers in high-income countries, many with their own ballooning debts, may balk at these costs, continuing to bail out private creditors indirectly through MDBs is also expensive. The sooner debt relief is provided, the cheaper it will be.

Third, private creditors should be required to do their part. Based on the comparability-of-treatment principle, every dollar of debt relief from official creditors must be matched by private creditors. G20 leaders must support national legislation that enforces this policy. The selfregulatory approach taken over the past two decades by bondholders has not worked with other private creditors - and all it takes is a single holdout creditor to scupper a debt-restructuring process.

Some argue that debt relief will make borrowing more expensive for debtor countries in the future. The reality is their borrowing costs are already prohibitively high. Cleaning up their balance sheets would attract investors more quickly than implementing austerity measures. Investors, having incurred losses, will become more discerning and demand risk premiums from countries that fail to improve their debt management - a welcome incentive for good governance.

The G20 must contend with a confluence of geopolitical, climate, and economic shocks. But the developing world's debt morass cuts across them all. Only by addressing this underlying challenge can we hope to overcome all the others. G20 leaders have already committed to debt relief. Now they need the courage to finish the job. - Project Syndicate

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#### **The Cold Moon**



# Australia's anti-migration populist Pauline Hanson eyes political resurgence



resurgence driven mainly by local factors, analysts say



Living cost pressures and high migration fuel voter dissatisfaction



**Liberal Party plans** revised policy to slow migration **before Christmas** 

**By Kirsty Needham** 

ustralia's flame-haired populist Senator Pauline Hanson and her anti-immigration party have rocketed up opinion polls, nearing a peak seen three decades ago when she first entered politics and pushed conservative parties to harden border policies. The resurgence on's One Nation coincides with US President Donald Trump's tougher message on migration, which has included the US embassy in Australia being instructed to collect migrant-linked crime data as Washington urged US diplomats to lobby against mass migration.

Yet Hanson's revival as a political force is likely more driven by local factors including cost-of-living pressures, housing shortages and historically high migration which have driven voter dissatisfaction, analysts and party officials say.

#### Hanson was 'the original Trump'

**Prime Minister Anthony** Albanese's centre-left Labour Party won national elections decisively in May, and remains ahead in polling.

The conservative opposition Liberal Party, which lost its leader and a swath of seats at the May election, is at a historic low - another factor encouraging right-wing voters to look to One

Nation, several analysts said. "One would argue that

Pauline was the original Trump," James Ashby, Hanson's chief of staff, told Reuters in an interview. "Other politicians and the public have caught up with where her mindset was at. We are being swamped by mass migration in this country." Hanson, 71, made global headlines striding through the Australian parliament in a burka last month, and was barred from the chamber for seven days

One Nation holds just four seats in the parliament's 76-seat upper house, but recent polls indicate it could win more at the next election due by 2028. A Roy Morgan survey of 5,248 people in November showed support for One Nation at 14% nationally, the highest since 1998. Three analysts, including

a Liberal Party official, told Reuters One Nation's polling is putting pressure on the opposition Liberal-National coalition. A former deputy prime minister, Barnaby Joyce, quit the rural-focused National Party last week, and is considering joining One Nation at the next election, his office confirmed.

The Liberals will announce a revised policy to "slow" migration before Christmas, party officials said.

#### One nation influence set to grow, pollster says

One Nation could gain an influential position in the next parliament's upper house, benefiting from Australia's

preferential voting system, said pollster Gary Morgan, executive chairman of Roy Morgan.

"Her vote will be up, no question it will be up, unless a strong leader comes into the Liberal Party," he told Reuters. Unlike Nigel Farage's Reform

in Britain, One Nation will not become a contender for government, because it is unlikely to win lower house seats, he added. Minor parties and

independents took a third of the vote at the 2025 election, continuing a trend which has seen Australia's traditional two-party system eroding. But this was mostly independent moderates who champion action on climate change winning formerly Liberal-held city seats, and such voters aren't swayed by Hanson, said Morgan.

One Nation's goal at the next election is to win lower house seats, Ashby said. He devised the party's strategy to bypass traditional media, directly appealing to voters on social media with a satirical animation series that lampoons myriad 'woke' issues.

"We need to reach voters of all ages, not just with policy, but we also need to reach them with the general understanding of the pain and the hurt they are going through," he said.

The party spent around A\$300,000 (\$197,000) for 100 episodes of the satire featuring Hanson, which he says has drawn 50mn views.

It plans to stream an animated movie to draw voters to town

hall meetings with Hanson and raise funds.

#### **Immigration concerns** grow in Australia

A study released last week showed concern over immigration at the 2025 election doubled to 6%, the highest on record, attributed to "the postpandemic influx of immigrants and the resulting pressure on housing and infrastructure."

"Immigration is clearly tting more political oxy the last few months than in the campaign," said Simon Jackman, co-author of the long-running Australian Election Study.

Arthur Sinodinos was chief of staff to Liberal Prime Minister John Howard when One Nation first burst into politics in 1997. He said a revised Liberal immigration policy could neutralise Hanson's resurgence, as it did previously.

won a come-from-behind victory by adopting a tough border policy after polls highlighted voter concerns over asylum seekers arriving by boat.

At the 2001 election, Howard

"The response was offshore processing to deter boat arrivals and that reinforced the Coalition's electoral position at the expense of fringe groups like One Nation," he said.

However, Sinodinos said immigration levels need to be set with an eye on the economy, and not as a "silver bullet for housing" and cautioned migrant voters would "react negatively if they perceive scapegoating of immigrants for society's ills".

In recent television interviews, Liberal leader Sussan Ley has emphasised infrastructure problems were not caused by migrants.

A Liberal Party official said while One Nation has eaten into the party's base, immigration policy was not about chasing One Nation, but holding the

Australia, population 27mn, saw a net migration gain of 739,000 in 2023 and almost 600,000 last year, mostly due to a backlog of students and workers on temporary visas entering the country after borders were closed during Covid-19, Home Affairs Department data shows.

Labor's immigration minister Tony Burke, who declined to comment for this article, told the ABC last month immigration was "too high, it needed to come down", and would continue to

Australia is a multicultural nation and its citizens feel it deeply when the topic is debated, he added. – Reuters



Australian senator Pauline Hanson talks with members of the media at a driving safety event in the northern Australian town of Townsville in Queensland, Australia, in this file photo. (Reuters)

### COMMENT



# The after-effects of Trump tariffs on India

#### Diversification cannot happen overnight, and for now, there is no substitute for tariff relief from the US

By Shashi Tharoor

S President Donald Trump's doubling of tariffs on a wide range of Indian goods, from a steep 25% to a catastrophic 50%, is reshaping India's export economy. Half of what India sells to the United States – its largest trading partner – is now prohibitively expensive, and ordinary Indians are

suffering as a result.

Over the last two decades, India's share of global exports has inched up, from 1.2% in 2005 to 2.4% in 2023. That may sound modest, but it represents painstaking efforts by exporters, policymakers, and workers, who recognised that trade plays a critical role in enabling countries to climb the development ladder. Trump's tariffs now threaten to knock India down a few

rungs – or worse.

The figures speak for themselves.
In September – the first full month of the tariffs – India's merchandise trade deficit widened to a 13-month high of \$32.15bn, up from \$26.49bn in August, as exports to the US dropped to \$5.4bn, from \$6.9bn the previous month. Trade deteriorated further in October, with India's goods exports to the US falling 9% year on year.

This is not an abstract
macroeconomic story. Bearing the
brunt of the tariff shock are India's
labour-intensive industries –
textiles, apparel, leather, gems and

jewellery, footwear, handicrafts, and seafood – which employ tens of millions of workers, including many women and first-generation industrial employees. While the US administration engages in geopolitical power plays, these workers are worried about feeding their families.

The textiles and apparel sector – one of India's most globally competitive – has been dealt a particularly heavy blow. In 2024-25, India exported \$10.9bn worth of such goods to the US, which accounts for a whopping 35% of India's total apparel exports. Given that margins in this industry were already wafer-thin, often in single digits, the sudden surge in tariffs – from 13.9% to a whopping 63.9% – has effectively shut Indian garments out of their largest market.

Producers cannot simply wait out the tariffs. Already, Bangladesh and Vietnam are stepping in to supply garments, denim, and man-made fibres to US consumers; Pakistan is gaining ground in denim and fleece; and Cambodia is emerging as a hub for fast-fashion knits.

Nearer to America's shores, Mexico and the CAFTA-DR bloc (comprising five Central American countries, the Dominican Republic, and the US) are offering US retailers shorter lead times and tariff-free access. By the time the tariffs on India are eased, supply chains will have been reshaped, and India's hard-won market share will be lost.

The US is also the largest market for Indian carpets and rugs, accounting for nearly 60% of the sector's exports. But US tariffs on these products have now skyrocketed from a mere 2.9% to 52.9%, leading US consumers to turn to goods from Turkiye and China, as well as Turkish-owned mills in Egypt. The same goes for leather: the US accounted for 21.8% of India's total leather and leather-product exports in 2024-25 – the largest share for any single importer - but the US market is now effectively closed

off to Indian producers.

No sector has been hit harder than jewellery. In September, exports of gems and jewellery to the US from Mumbai's Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ) plummeted by 71-76% year on year. Behind this statistic are thousands of artisans, polishers, and small-scale entrepreneurs who suddenly have no orders coming in, no incomes, and no livelihoods.

Many exporters saw the tariffs coming and tried to frontload shipments. That is why India's exports to the US grew 13% year on year during the first half of the current fiscal year, reaching \$45.8bn. But once the full tariff regime took effect, new orders dried up. The stop-gap strategy bought time, but it could not buy resilience.

Reducing India's vulnerability to trade shocks, particularly those emanating from the US, demands a carefully planned diversification strategy. For starters, India should increase its trade linkages within the Global South, taking advantage of growing demand for textiles, leather, and processed foods in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.

India should also work with neighbours like Bangladesh. Sri Lanka, and Nepal to create integrated regional textile and apparel supply chains, thereby ensuring that it remains part of the global garment story, even if direct exports to the US shrink. But this is easier said than done, given the subcontinent's turbulent geopolitics. And India should push harder to operationalise existing free-trade agreements including with Australia and the United Arab Emirates - thereby gaining access to markets capable of absorbing some of the exports that previously would have gone to the US.

But diversification cannot happen overnight, and for now, there is no substitute for tariff relief from the US. While a full reversal appears unlikely any time soon, India might be able to secure sector-specific reductions through diplomacy. Gems and jewellery, for example, could be pitched as a niche sector, in which Indian craftsmanship benefits US consumers.

Meanwhile, India must work to advance a more fundamental internal economic transformation. India still exports largely



low-margin, labour-intensive products. By ascending the value chain to activities like design, branding, and highertech production, India can command higher prices and reduce its vulnerability to tariff shocks. Encouraging domestic consumption, especially by a fast-growing middle class, would also go a long way toward strengthening India's economic resilience.

Trump's tariffs have laid bare the fragility of India's export model, which relies on a handful of markets and a narrow band of relatively low-value-added products.

While this strategy worked when tariffs were low and globalisation

ascendant, it is poorly suited to our current era of protectionism and supply-chain realignment. Only by embracing a new approach – which emphasises diversification, regional co-operation, value addition, and domestic demand – can India emerge from the current upheaval stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to chart its own economic path. – Project Syndicate

• Shashi Tharoor, a former UN under-secretary-general and former Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Human Resource Development, is a member of the Indian National Congress.

# The triple-return ocean economy

**By Peter Bryant** and **Sindre Østgård**San Diego/Oslo

hen investors are deciding where to put their money, they ask fundamental questions about the nature of the opportunity, its risks, and the expected return. When it comes to the ocean, the answer to the last question is particularly compelling: investing in a resilient and sustainable blue economy offers immense environmental, social, and financial returns.

Historically, the ocean has been treated as an open-access resource to be fished, drilled, polluted, and, ultimately, forgotten. This outdated view is both dangerous and costly. As the world's largest carbon sink, a biodiversity hotspot, and a climate regulator, the ocean underpins food systems, economic growth, and weather stability. Advancing regenerative ocean solutions thus provides a hedge against systemic instability by protecting one of Earth's most powerful stabilising forces.

Even though healthy marine ecosystems are productive economic assets that compound in value over time, they continue to be significantly underpriced. According to the OECD's The Ocean Economy to 2050 report, the ocean economy has doubled in real terms from 1995 to 2020, when it contributed \$2.6tn to global GDP and employed more than 100mn people. If it was a country, the ocean would be the world's fifth-largest economy. Marine sectors that build resilience – including offshore renewables, sustainable aquaculture, carbon sequestration, and blue tech – are poised for rapid growth.

Forward-looking investors, recognising that the ocean is the next frontier of innovation and climate adaptation, will act decisively. In fact, without urgent action, the opportunity may slip through our fingers. According to a report by the World Wide Fund for Nature, in collaboration with the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance and Metabolic, continued ocean degradation could jeopardise up to \$8.5tn of value at 66% of globally listed companies over the next 15 years. Commercial fisheries, coastal real estate, tourism, maritime infrastructure, and ports are among the most exposed industries. A more sustainable trajectory could reduce this risk by more than \$5.1tn.

Investors tend to respond to climate and biodiversity risks by hedging their losses and closing their positions, causing market downturns. As a result, they have not yet taken advantage of the multi-trillion-dollar opportunity offered by a regenerative ocean economy. Less than 0.01% of total investments, less than 1% of international philanthropic funding, and less than 1% of official development assistance go to the ocean economy. Venture-capital funding has also fallen short: for example, marine renewable-energy startups received only \$300mn in 2023, even though scaling floating wind turbines, as well as wave and tidal energy, will require roughly \$32bn in annual investment to help close the emissions gap by 2050.

It is not hard to imagine a future where healthy markets, thriving coastal communities, and flourishing ocean ecosystems create a virtuous cycle. Sustainable seafood production is possible only if habitats are protected from industrial pollution, wild catch and aquaculture are practiced responsibly, and consumer behaviour is aligned. But investors are stuck behind the "transition wall" – the mismatch between short-term return expectations and long-term value creation. Institutional capital is currently constrained by seven- to ten-year horizons and risk-averse structures.

Against this backdrop, high-net-worth individuals, whose wealth reached \$90.5tn dollars in 2024, represent



an untapped investor base. Moreover, baby boomers are expected to transfer \$83tn to their children and grandchildren over the next two decades, reshaping asset allocation. Many of these individuals manage their wealth through family offices, which are well-positioned to deploy capital across the spectrum, from philanthropic to market-rate, and have the tools and flexibility to generate returns while driving positive change in the ocean economy.

In June, the Blue Economy and Finance Forum in Monaco, a special event of the third United Nations Ocean Conference, demonstrated the investability of ocean-positive projects. The UN Climate Change Conference in Belém, Brazil, has built on that momentum, further positioning the ocean as both an important climate regulator and a vital investment opportunity.

To seize this opportunity, we must build the foundational architecture for ocean finance: early-stage support, de-risking instruments, and new business models that align investments with the ocean's regenerative potential. We need blended finance structures, concessionary capital, and tailored vehicles that serve investors across the continuum – from philanthropic to institutional.

Preserving the world's oceans is not only a moral imperative; it is also a smart financial strategy. Investing in ocean resilience is a forward hedge, not a sunk cost. Those who move early will shape the instruments, define the standards, and reap the upside.

Ocean health is planetary health, which is the foundation of all economic value. That means the main question capital managers – whether at family offices, philanthropies, pension funds, or other private investment vehicles – should be asking themselves is how to gain exposure to the blue economy. – Project Syndicate

- Peter Bryant is Oceans Program Director at Builders Vision, an impact investing platform.
- Sindre Østgård is Managing Partner at We Are Human, an impact-first venture capital firm, and sits on the board of 2050.do and the Crown Prince of Norway Fund for Future Generations.

# The judge at the end of Europe

By Yanis Varoufakis

et us, for a moment, entertain the fanciful hypothesis that Europe cares about its values. Imagine a Europe where the principles so lavishly inscribed upon the banners of the European project – the rule of law, the dignity of the individual, a commitment to strategic autonomy – are more than just rhetorical filigree for grand speeches in Brussels.

In this parallel Europe, the story emerging from the pages of *Le Monde* concerning Judge Nicolas Guillou, the French magistrate at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, would be the political scandal of the century. It would be the kind of affair that topples governments and reignites a proud European mindfulness.

But we do not inhabit that Europe. In this really-existing Europe, Guillou's ordeal has been shrugged off, a symptom of our continent's descent into a state of uncontested vassalage.

Stripped bare, the facts of the case are disconcerting beyond measure.

Before us we have a French citizen. A magistrate of some note sitting on the bench of the ICC which European diplomacy went to great lengths to establish so as to turn the page from a past in which war criminals could hide behind their governments' shielding. Meticulously following the procedures of his institution in the execution of his sworn duties, this judge authorised arrest warrants for Israel's prime minister and former defence minister for alleged war crimes in Gaza. In response, US President Donald Trump's administration sanctioned Guillou.

The imposed sanctions are a masterclass in the evisceration of European sovereignty. They render Guillou a non-person, not only in the United States, but also in his own country - the beating heart of Europe. He has been locked out of the global digital realm (WhatsApp, all Google apps, and social media like Facebook and Instagram). Even his French bank account is virtually useless, given the ban on all payments that require the co-operation of Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and the supposedly European SWIFT interbank messaging system. As if that were not enough, when he recently tried to book a hotel room in France, Expedia cancelled his reservation a few hours later.

Trump's success at "flooding the zone" with outrageous behaviour must not cause us to miss the significance of these developments. The US government has decided to sanction – or,



essentially, de-person – a European judge for carrying out his official duties in Europe while working in an institution established by Europe's elected representatives at great cost and effort.

The real tragedy is not that Trump is throwing his weight around. It is in the nature of hegemons to bully those who inconvenience them. The real tragedy, or perhaps farce, lies in Europe's reaction. Did our governments respond with a unified, thunderous condemnation? Did they trigger retaliatory measures and immediately create European financial and digital channels to protect their own judiciary and citizens from extraterritorial bullying? Alas, the response was a tragicomic spectacle of utter and complete acquiescence.

European banks, cowed by a stern look from a US Treasury official in Washington, rushed to close Guillou's accounts. European companies, whose compliance departments act as extensions of the US authorities, refuse to provide him services. Meanwhile, European institutions – the Commission and the Council – look the other way, wringing their hands and muttering platitudes about the "complexities" of transatlantic relations. They are not merely failing to protect Guillou; they are actively enforcing US sanctions against their own citizen.

During a week when European leaders loudly protested how the US had sidelined them in drawing up a peace deal for Ukraine, their silence over Guillou's treatment completely normalised the erosion of their authority. From Trump's perspective, they swapped the challenging, messy project of sovereignty for the comfortable decline of a US protectorate. How else could French President Emmanuel Macron have expected Trump to interpret his decision to treat the economic assassination of a French judge on French soil as nothing more than an unfortunate technical glitch or a minor bureaucratic snafu? Did he and Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz really believe that sacrificing their citizens to Trump would gain them a seat at the negotiating table on issues such as Ukraine and Palestine, which are of existential importance to Europe?

No, Guillou's Kafkaesque nightmare should not surprise us. What should be shocking is the silence surrounding it. We should be outraged not only by US actions, but also by Europe's inaction. Guillou's case is a stark metaphor for Europe itself: a union of nation-states that helped build an international court to uphold its values, allowing a foreign power to punish its own judge for doing so, and then helped to enforce the punishment. This is a union that has lost its way, its soul, and its spine, turning Europeans into willing extras in the theatre of our own diminution.

When, in a few years' time, almost everyone is claiming that they opposed Israel's war crimes in Gaza, the world will remember Judge Guillou fondly. But the world will also remember Europe's leading politicians not just for their cowardice but for their inattention to the simple fact that those who fail to uphold their own values become irrelevant. — Project Syndicate

• Yanis Varoufakis, a former finance minister of Greece, is leader of the MeRA25 party and Professor of Economics at the University of Athens.

### Katara events accompanying FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 continue

rents accompanying the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 continue at Katara, drawing large and diverse crowds.

Katara's Corniche was filled with visitors from Arab countries who gathered to enjoy an atmosphere blending art, heritage, and interactive activities.

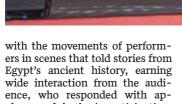
The Qatari *Ardah* performance gave the area a sense of pride and belonging, accompanied by the powerful beating of drums.

Folk ensembles from Palestine, Sudan, and Egypt presented captivating shows, mesmerising spectators with their rhythms and expressions rooted in the Arab cultural identity.

The Palestinian troupe ignited the atmosphere with their *Dabke*, a dance that carries the strength of the land and the charm of tradition, as synchronised footsteps and expressive movements told a story of people and civilisation.

The Sudanese performance spread joy and excitement through lively rhythms and harmonious moves.

The Egyptian performances came with their unique flavour, where folk music harmonised



plause and rhythmic participation. Reflecting Gulf heritage, the Kuwaiti Jahra troupe added a majestic presence through shows carrying the spirit of the sea and the nostalgia of a beautiful past.

The audience enthusiastically

engaged with these artistic displays, crowding around the folk groups, taking photos, and capturing unforgettable moments that express the unity of Arab heritage and the deep cultural bonds among peoples participating in the Arab

Among the accompanying events, the Qatar Social Work Pavilion stood out with a range of interactive activities, competitions,

and children's games that attracted families and added an atmosphere of fun and connection.

Senoono Village also drew large numbers of visitors, offering screens to broadcast matches and enjoyable family activities that enhanced participation and engagement.

Ehsan (the Centre for Elderly Care) made a notable appearance with interactive social programmes

aimed at enhancing intergenerational communication and highlighting the esteemed place of the elderly in society.

The classic car show was another eye-catching attraction, with elegant historic vehicles lined up for visitors to admire as they strolled among them, adding a distinctive celebratory dimension to the festivities.

The events are held daily along Katara's Corniche from 3pm to 10pm. – **QNA** 





# MoI launches 'Associated Activities of Arab Cup Qatar 2025'

he Ministry of Interior (MoI) launched its "Associated Activities of Arab Cup Qatar 2025" yesterday at various locations, bringing together a large number of football fans from Doha and Al Khor.

The Asian Town's Cricket Stadium car parking at the Doha Industrial Area hosted live screening of Arab Cup Qatar 2025 matches, a

number of presentations by the MoI, and gift giving for the public through a raffle draw.

Earlier, the MoI's Public Relations Department announced that the associated activities will also hold cultural and traditional shows by communities and school teams, musical concert by community bands, talent shows, and awareness programmes, in addition to free diabetic

and blood pressure checkup by private clinics.

Other locations for the associated activities.

Other locations for the associated activities, scheduled from 4pm-10pm on December 5, 11, 12 and 18, include Barwa Baraha (Industrial Area), Kreeq Sports Ground (behind Barwa Village and opposite Madinatna) and Al Khor Barwa Recreation Complex in Al Khor Industrial Area.

on Complex in Entry is free.

#### Free shuttle bus service to venues

ree shuttle buses began transporting fans to the venues of "Associated Activities Arab Cup Qatar 2025" at Asian Town, Barwa Baraha and Kreeq Sports yesterday.

The service, organised by the Workers Support and Insurance Fund in co-ordination with Karwa, starts from 3pm to 7pm, deploying buses from Umm Ghuwailina (parking opposite Toyota signal) and Salahuddeen Street (opposite Al Asmakh [Bukhari] Masjid and near Al Watan Centre) to the event locations.

The return service will start from 9pm until 12am to the pickup locations.

The free shuttle services will be available today on December 11-12, and on Qatar National Day (December 18).



The parking area opposite the Toyota Signal.

### Qatar awaits final FIFA World Cup 2026 draw today

The draw for the FIFA World Cup 2026, which will be held in the United States, Canada and Mexico on June 11-July 19, will take place today, with the participation of the Qatar national football team.

A total of 48 countries will take part in next year's World Cup tournament.

The draw will take place at the John F Kennedy Memorial Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, in which the 48 countries will be divided into 12 groups of four teams.

Qatar qualified for the World Cup 2026 after ranking first in Group A in the fourth round of Asian qualifiers, ahead of Oman and the UAE.

This is Qatar's second consecutive participation, and its first through the qualifiers, after participating in the previous edition of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 as host.

FIFA distributed the participating teams into four levels according to the latest ranking issued on November 19, so that the teams of each level would be placed in a separate pot during the draw process.

The host countries will be in the first level regardless of their ranking, while the remaining teams will be distributed among the other pots according to their ranking.

Qatar will be placed in the third level before the draw, which includes Norway, Panama, Egypt, Algeria, Scotland, Paraguay, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, which means that it will not be placed in the same group as them.

same group as them.

The second level consists of Croatia,
Morocco, Colombia, Uruguay, Switzerland, Japan, Senegal, Iran, South Korea,
Ecuador, Austria, and Australia.

The fourth level comprises Jordan, Cape Verde, Ghana, Curacao, Haiti, and New Zealand, along with the four teams (A, B, C, D) that qualified from the European play-offs, and the two teams (A, B) that qualified from the global play-offs.

The draw ceremony will be attended by the coaches of the teams that qualified, officials of the participating national federations, and representatives of the teams that are still in the race for the remaining



qualifying spots through the global and European playoffs.

The 2026 World Cup will witness an unprecedented Arab presence, after seven Arab teams officially secured qualification, namely, in addition to Qatar: Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and

Morocco.

The World Cup play-off, which will be held in March, is expected to raise Iraq's chances of joining the finals, potentially increasing the number of Arab teams to eight, in a historic achievement for Arab football at the World Cup level.

Some Arab teams have a long history in the World Cup, with Tunisia, Morocco and Saudi Arabia recording their seventh participation, while Algeria's participation will be its fifth in history in the 2026 World Cup, and Egypt's fourth.

In contrast, Jordan is making its first appearance in the World Cup as the newest Arab team addition, while Qatar is participating for the second time in a row after its previous hosting of the tournament, and Iraq may return to the World Cup if it passes the global play-off to participate for the second time after its first appearance in 1986.

appearance in 1986.
According to the procedures officially

announced by FIFA, the draw for the FIFA World Cup 2026 finals will begin by placing the 12 teams from each of the four pots

into separate containers.

The three host nations will be placed in Pot 1, while the four pots for the teams that qualified through the European playoffs and the two pots for the teams that qualified through the intercontinental play-offs will be placed in Pot 4, ensuring a balanced distribution of teams during

the draw.

The draw ceremony is scheduled to begin with all the teams from Pot 1 being drawn to groups A to L.

The remaining teams will then be drawn from Pots B through D.

from Pots B through D.
FIFA has imposed specific restrictions

on the World Cup 2026 draw process.

The three host nations will first be designated with different coloured balls to ensure a predetermined selection process: the green ball will represent Mexico, placing them at the top of Group A; the red ball will represent Canada, placing them at the top of Group B; and the blue ball will represent the United States, placing them at the top of Group C.

As for the remaining nine teams in Pot 1, they will be allocated balls of the same

colour, and each team will be placed at the top of the group that will be determined by the draw, thus ensuring an organised

and balanced distribution.

In this context, FIFA was keen to avoid the two highest-ranked teams (Spain, ranked first, and Argentina, ranked second) facing each other before the final (in the event that they topped their groups in the first round), by placing them in two separate paths leading to the semi-finals, in order to maintain a balance in the distribution of teams.

The same will apply to both (France, ranked third) and (England, ranked fourth), where the two paths will be chosen randomly, in an effort to avoid the best-ranked teams facing each other early

As for Pots 2, 3, and 4, each team's position within its group will be determined according to the draw procedure.

This ensures that each team's position within its group is determined based on the pot from which it was drawn and the group it was placed in.

FIFA will apply the principle of no more than one team from the same confederation being in the same group.

This applies to all confederations except UEFA, which has 16 teams participating in the tournament.

Since this number of teams cannot be distributed across the 12 groups, no more than two European teams can be in any one group.

The implementation of the principle of separation means that no more than one team from the same continental federation should be in one group, by applying the continental federations' restriction to the three teams that will compete within each of the two paths related to the two seats allocated for the global play-off in Pot 4.

FIFA had set December 6 as the date for announcing the details of the group stage matches, to achieve the best possible conditions for all teams, and to enable fans in different countries around the world to follow their favourite teams across different time zones, according to the rule followed in determining the stadiums of the matches and the timing of their start. – **QNA** 

#### Qatar Volunteer Centre reports sharp growth

tre, part of the Ministry of Culture, has reported a significant expansion in the country's volunteer base and training activity during 2025, according to its newly released annual statistical report.

The announcement coincides with the UN's International Volunteer Day today 5.

Executive director Moeed al-Qahtani said the report reflects increasing public engagement and the centre's commitment to transparency.

He described the centre as Qatar's main hub for promoting volunteer culture, developing skills, and documenting contributions to community development.

According to the centre's data, 27,012 people are now registered on its volunteer platform – 14,563 men and 12,449 women.

A total of 5,470 volunteers took part in activities this year, with an almost even gender split.

Training also expanded, with 2,404 volunteers completing capacity-building programmes in 2025, while the centre oversaw 58 social, cultural, environmental and humanitarian events across the coun-

The centre highlighted major initiatives, including a leadership programme for volunteer work, a year-round training scheme, specialised volunteering tracks, and annual awards celebrating outstanding contributions.

The UN established International Volunteer Day in 1985 to recognise the contributions of volunteers worldwide and raise awareness of the role they play in community development. – **QNA**