



## Qatar Insurance

Financial Results (Q1 2026)

Gross Written Premiums (GWP)

**13%** ▲

QAR 3.2B

Net Profit

**6%** ▲

QAR 217M

Investment Income:

**10%** ▲

QAR 238M

Insurance Service Results:

**70%** ▲

QAR 130M

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# GULF TIMES


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SCAN TO SHOP

## PM opens largest edition of DIBF amid fanfare

By A Staff Reporter/QNA  
Doha

There is a particular kind of hush that settles over a great book fair in the moments before its doors swing open – the breath drawn between silence and the long murmur of pages – and yesterday that hush belonged to Doha, as HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani inaugurated the 35th edition of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, an event that will keep its doors and its volumes open to the public until May 23.



It was, by any measure, a gathering worthy of the occasion. Their Excellencies sheikhs, ministers, heads of diplomatic missions, senior officials and guests of the fair walked the aisles alongside the Prime Minister, who moved unhurriedly between the pavilions of Qatari, Arab and international publishers, pausing over the latest books, the patient calligraphy of manuscripts, and the cultural works mounted by the Ministry of Culture, government entities

and participating institutions. At the heart of his tour, the prime minister launched the “This Is Qatar” book project – the signature offering of this year’s guest of honour initiative, and a quiet but deliberate act of self-portraiture by a country accustomed to telling its story in many tongues. The numbers, when they came, read almost like a paean to abundance. Organised by Qatar’s Ministry of Culture, this year’s edi-

tion has gathered 520 publishing houses from 37 Arab and foreign countries into 910 booths, beneath whose modest signage rest more than 1.85mm books spanning some 231,000 titles. Organisers said 143 new books would be launched during the fair, threaded between 46 panel discussions, 69 workshops and 46 seminars on the main stage – a programme of such density that one suspects the calendar itself had to be persuaded to make room. **To Page 4**

## Qatar makes strong tourism start in the first quarter

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

Qatar received around 1.13mm visitors during the first quarter of this year, indicating strong growth in the country’s tourism sector, newly released data from Qatar Tourism has shown.

The figures reveal a particularly strong start to the year, with January alone accounting for 646,000 visitors, which is over half of the quarterly figures’ total, followed by 423,000 in February and 63,000 in March.

The considerable drop in visitors during March could be attributed to various factors, such as the timing of Ramadan and shifting travel patterns, according to industry experts, which is also part of the seasonal tourist patterns.

However, the overall prospective of the tourism sector in the country remains firmly positive, building on Qatar’s post-2022 FIFA World Cup tourism surge, which significantly elevated the country’s global profile, generating more international interest in exploring the country.

The largest number of visitors during this period came from the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC)

countries, accounting for 36% of total arrivals with around 408,000 visitors. In recent years, Qatar has become a major hub and a growing attraction for GCC tourists due to several factors. It mainly includes geographic proximity and easy access to the country, in addition to Qatar’s sophisticated, high-end tourist facilities and infrastructure, coupled with the country’s keenness to maintain and highlight its authentic heritage, traditions, and culture. Such elements have made GCC families feel at home in Qatar while enjoying excellent holiday experiences within a family-friendly atmosphere.

Tourists from Europe account for the second-largest number of visitors during the first quarter of 2026, contributing 26.8% of visitors, around 303,000. The influx of tourists from European countries has grown steadily in recent years, supported by expanded flight connectivity and targeted promotional campaigns. Airlines such as Qatar Airways have played a central role in this expansion, linking Doha to more than 170 global destinations and positioning Hamad International Airport as a major transit hub, in addition to various tourist programmes and easy-entry visa procedures. **To Page 4**



## PM, Canadian FM discuss relations



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada Anita Anand, currently visiting the country. They discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them, in addition to the regional developments, including efforts related to the ceasefire between the US and Iran and broader de-escalation initiatives aimed at enhancing regional stability. The two sides also signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a strategic dialogue between the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. **(QNA)**

### Mauritania president’s message for Amir received by premier

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a written message from Mauritania President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. The message was handed to HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, during his meeting yesterday with Mauritania’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Co-operation, and Mauritians Abroad Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, who is visiting the country. **(QNA) Page 2**

### Qatar, Turkiye in consultations

Qatar and Turkiye have held the first round of political consultations between their foreign ministries in the Turkish capital, Ankara. The talks yesterday were co-chaired by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi and Turkish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Musa Kulaklikaya. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and explored ways to further develop co-operation across various fields. **(QNA)**

# Xi warns Trump against mishandling Taiwan

Reuters  
Beijing

China’s President Xi Jinping warned US President Donald Trump yesterday that mishandling the countries’ disagreements over Taiwan could push China-US relations to a “dangerous place,” as the two leaders met for a closely watched summit.

Xi’s remarks on Taiwan, the democratically governed island claimed by Beijing, came in a closed-door meeting of the leaders of the world’s two largest economies that ran more than two hours, China’s foreign ministry said.

They represented a stark – if not unprecedented – warning during a pomp-filled occasion that was otherwise friendly and relaxed, although the US summary of the talks made no mention of Taiwan.

According to Chinese state media Xinhua, Xi, referring to Taiwan, told Trump: “If handled poorly, the two countries could collide or even enter into conflict, pushing the entire China-US relationship into an extremely dangerous place.”

Taiwan has long been a flashpoint in the

US-China relationship, with Beijing refusing to rule out the use of military force to gain control of the island and the United States bound by law to provide Taipei with the means to defend itself.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is with Trump in China, confirmed to NBC News that the issue of Taiwan was discussed, saying the Chinese “always raise it on their side, we always make clear our position and we move on to the other topics.”

The US summary of the talks focused on the leaders’ shared desire to reopen the key waterway of the Strait of Hormuz, effectively closed due to the Iran war, and Xi’s apparent interest in buying American oil to reduce China’s dependence on Middle East supplies. With Trump’s approval ratings dented by a war with Iran that shows no signs of abating, the first visit by a US president to China in nearly a decade has taken on added significance as he searches for economic wins.

“There are those who say this may be the biggest summit ever,” Trump told Xi in brief opening remarks, after a ceremony that featured an honour guard and throngs of children waving flowers and flags at Beijing’s Great Hall of the People. **Page 7**



US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing yesterday. **(Reuters)**

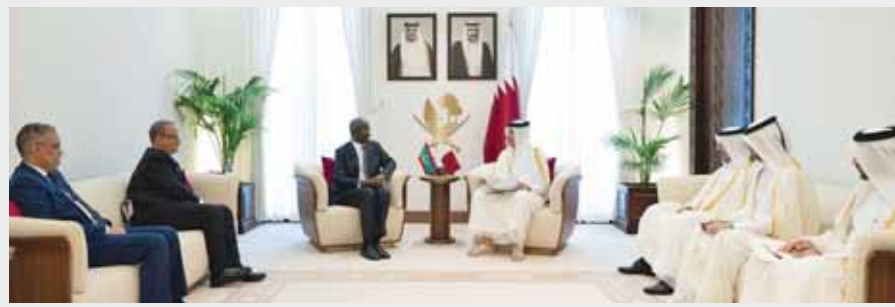
### Qatar welcomes Yemen detainee release accord

Qatar welcomed the agreement reached by the Yemeni parties at the conclusion of negotiations held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, on the release of 1,600 detainees linked to the conflict in Yemen. In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar’s full appreciation for the efforts made by Jordan, the United Nations, International Committee of the Red Cross, and the concerned parties that contributed to reaching the agreement. The ministry reiterated Qatar’s full support for all regional and international efforts aimed at ending the Yemeni crisis through dialogue and peaceful means, in a manner that serves the security and stability of Yemen and its brotherly people, and reinforces sustainable peace in the region. **(QNA)**

COMMUNITY

See Pages 5 & 6

## Amir receives written message from Mauritania president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has received a written message from Mauritania's President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. The message was handed to HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani during his meeting yesterday with Mauritania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Co-operation, and Mauritians Abroad Dr Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, who is visiting the country. - **QNA**

## Ministry of Transport takes part in UK Rail 2026

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) is taking part in the UK Rail 2026, which started on Wednesday in Birmingham, UK.

The MoT's participation comes within the framework of its approach that aims at solidifying successful partnerships and constructive dialogues, while keeping pace with latest world policies and trends in the transportation industry.

Such MoT engagements are also aimed at cementing co-operation with countries and international bodies, holding bilateral meetings that serve national interests and exchange of expertise.

The two-day event, which brings together leaders from across the UK rail sector, rail projects and operators, rolling stock OEMs (original equipment manufacturers), suppliers, innovators, and technology solution providers, tackles numerous important themes, including customer experience, digital innovation, artificial intelligence (AI), sustainability and decarbonisation.

Other key themes include signaling systems, smarter rail control and monitoring, smarter rail infrastructures, funding, rail assets management, and relevant services.

UK Rail 2026 and its accompanying exhibition serve as the definitive platform for the entire value chain - designed to help visitors find and compare solutions, solve infrastructure challenges, and grow their professional network alongside the industry's key players. - **QNA**

## Qatar donates navigation equipment to Beirut airport

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Transport, has provided a grant to Lebanon's ministry of public works and transport in support of Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, including navigation equipment and technical systems.

Qatar's ambassador to Lebanon Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani participated in the official handover ceremony held at the airport, with the attendance and sponsorship of Lebanon's Minister of Public Works and Transport Fayez Rasamny, charge d'affaires at the US embassy in Lebanon Keith Hannigan, airport security commander Brigadier-General Fadi Kfoury, and other officials.

Sheikh Saud stressed in remarks during the ceremony that the grant reflects the deep ties between the two countries and Qatar's firm commitment to supporting Lebanon.

The envoy emphasised that at a time when Lebanon is facing delicate circumstances that require joint efforts to confront current challenges, Qatar continues to stand by its side through supporting official and vital institutions, including Beirut International Airport, in a way that contributes to enhancing its operational capabilities and improving the level of services provided.

He also expressed his appreciation to Rasamny for the constructive co-operation, and to all officials and staff at Beirut International Airport for their outstanding efforts and dedicated work in serving this vital facility.

Rasamny thanked Qatar for its grant and continued support, affirming that this gratitude would only grow, and that Qatar has always stood by Lebanon, particularly amid the country's economic challenges and growing burdens and needs. - **QNA**

## Deputy PM, Canadian minister hold talks

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani met yesterday with Canada's Minister of National Defence David McGuinty and the accompanying delegation during their visit to the country. They discussed the latest security developments in the region, and aspects of military co-operation and joint co-ordination under the current circumstances. The meeting was attended by senior officials from both sides. - **QNA**



## Qatar takes part in 7th ministerial session of IOFS General Assembly

Qatar participated in the seventh ministerial session of the General Assembly of the Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS), held yesterday via videoconference.

The session marked the conclusion of Qatar's presidency of the sixth session, with the presidency of the General Assembly handed over to Kazakhstan.

The delegation was headed by HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah, who expressed Qatar's appreciation to Kazakhstan for hosting the current session.

He also commended the efforts of the IOFS General Secretariat

and member states in advancing the organisation's objectives and strengthening its role in achieving food security and sustainable agricultural development.

HE al-Attiyah affirmed Qatar's commitment, since assuming the presidency of the sixth session of the General Assembly held in Doha in 2023, to supporting the organisation's mission of enhancing food security, developing agricultural co-operation, and strengthening integration among member states.

He noted that during its presidency, Qatar worked to support the organisation's strategic direction by hosting high-level meet-



## PM meets United Nations deputy secretary-general

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with United Nations (UN) Deputy Secretary-General Amina J Mohammed, who is visiting the country. They discussed co-operation, relations between Qatar and the international body, and ways to enhance and develop them. They also emphasised the role of the UN and its efforts aimed at promoting security at the regional and international levels. - **QNA**

ings that contributed to the development of the Strategic Plan for Food Security in OIC Member States for the period 2026-35, in addition to enhancing coordination with partner institutions.

The minister stressed that the meeting represents an opportunity to reaffirm the collective commitment to making food security a strategic priority, considering the growing global challenges facing

food and agricultural systems and the need for responses grounded in co-operation, innovation, and shared responsibility.

He also underlined the importance of strengthening the organisation's institutional and financial capacities to ensure the sustainability of its programs, enhance its performance efficiency, and sustain voluntary support for its initiatives and projects.

HE al-Attiyah announced Qatar's support for the establishment of the International Gene Bank initiative of the IOFS, reflecting its continued backing of the organisation's programmes and initiatives.

He also reiterated Qatar's full support for Kazakhstan as it assumes the presidency of the next session of the General Assembly. - **QNA**

# MoECC launches digital service for the safe disposal of electronic waste

## Environment ministry holds session on strategic directions for 2026 climate change conferences

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Climate Change Department, held a session on the strategic directions of climate change conferences for 2026.

The session is part of the ministry's preparations to monitor developments in international climate negotiations and the key issues on the agenda of the 31st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP31).

The session was aimed at providing an overview of the course of negotiations and reviewing the main issues and topics on the COP31 agenda, contributing to enhancing the readiness of national cadres concerned with climate change issues, and strengthening their ability to keep pace with international developments and participate effectively in upcoming meetings and conferences.

In the first segment, the session addressed the prospects of COP31 by reviewing key decisions and negotiation issues, including unilateral trade measures, the mitigation work programme, just



transition, implementation of the outcomes of the global stocktake, as well as the global goal on adaptation, climate finance discussions, and articles related to co-operation mechanisms under the Paris Agreement.

In the second segment, the session discussed mechanisms for organising delegations participating in subsidiary body meetings and Conferences of the Parties, methods for engaging with negotiation tracks, procedures for submitting interventions and viewpoints, and ways to participate efficiently and effectively while taking national circumstances into account.

It also reviewed the general structure of the negotiations and key practical guidelines for participants.

The MoECC emphasised the importance of early preparation for participation in climate conferences and following negotiation files related to climate change, in a way that strengthens the presence of Qatar in international climate forums and supports its efforts to address climate issues through a balanced national approach that considers sustainable development requirements and relevant international commitments. - **QNA**

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has announced the launch of a new digital service for the safe disposal of electronic waste through its official website.

In a statement released yesterday, the ministry said that the service allows individuals to submit requests for the disposal of electronic waste through the ministry's website, in co-operation with licensed national companies that receive, transport and handle the waste in accordance with approved environmental requirements.

The service is accessed by submitting an electronic request and specifying the type of waste and its location, after which co-ordination will be made with the competent authority to collect and transport the waste in a safe manner.

The director of the MoECC's Industrial Inspection and Pollution Control Department, Dr Mohammad Aayed al-Shammari, said that the digital service for the safe disposal of electronic waste through the ministry's website is a step within a broader national path to develop waste management, moving it from traditional methods to a more organised and efficient system based on digital solutions, increasing community participation, and strengthening partnership with the private sector.

He said that electronic waste has become an important environmental issue, in light of the expansion in the use of electrical and electronic devices and the accelerating pace of their replacement.

This, he said, calls for the development of practical solutions that help in collecting, sorting and directing them to approved routes, instead of remaining in homes or being disposed of improperly.

Dr al-Shammari pointed out that the success of modern environmental initiatives does not solely depend on the efforts of the government sector.

The official stressed that electronic waste requires special management, given that it may contain hazardous materials, such as heavy metals, batteries, and some components that may affect the environment and human health if disposed of improperly.

Dr al-Shammari stated that the ministry is proceeding with the implementation of quality initiatives that contribute to establishing a culture of sustainability and reducing reliance on traditional waste disposal methods, in line with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. - **QNA**

## Ashghal 'committed to accessibility in healthcare facility design'



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has said that it is committed to integrating accessibility features for people with disabilities into the design and construction of healthcare facilities, helping improve access to services, independence, and quality of life.

In a post on X, Ashghal said its healthcare projects follow accessibility-focused design standards, including wide corridors, accessible entrances and parking, automatic doors, wheelchair-accessible restrooms, and Braille signage for visually impaired visitors.

The authority added that these efforts are part of broader goal of creating inclusive public spaces and ensuring equal access to healthcare services for all members of the community. - **QNA**

## Minister meets China's special envoy for Afghanistan

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with China's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Yue Xiaoyong, who is visiting the country. They discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan and ways to strengthen joint international efforts to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. HE Dr al-Khulaifi reaffirmed Qatar's full support for efforts aimed at resolving conflicts through peaceful means and to bolster peace and stability regionally and internationally. - QNA



## Ottawa 'keen to enhance partnership with Doha'

Canada has reaffirmed its support for Qatar and the wider Gulf region amid escalating regional tensions, with Foreign Minister Anita Anand condemning "unjustified retaliatory attacks by Iran" against several countries in the region.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA) during a visit to Doha, she said Canada is committed to strengthening strategic ties with Qatar and maintaining stability in the Gulf, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz.

Her visit marks the third trip to the region this year and comes at a time of heightened concern over maritime security and the risk of disruption to global energy supplies.

Anand said that Ottawa and Doha had signed a new 10-year strategic partnership agreement covering trade, defence, cyber-security, culture, education and tourism.

"We are looking to build a strong and enduring relationship with the State of Qatar," she said.

The Canadian minister also praised Qatar's diplomatic role in regional mediation efforts, saying that the two countries shared common positions on de-escalation, the protection of civilians and the need for a permanent ceasefire in conflict zones.

Anand said that discussions with Qatari officials had strengthened co-operation on regional diplomacy and efforts to safeguard freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important shipping routes for oil and liquefied natural gas exports.

During the visit, she held talks with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, which she described as "highly productive".

The agreement signed following the meeting is expected to expand bilateral co-operation in areas including defence, security, visa procedures and tourism.

The minister also thanked Qatar for its co-operation on security



planning related to the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which Canada will co-host with the United States and Mexico.

She said that Canadian and Qatari teams are working closely together on preparations for major sporting events, drawing on Qatar's experience hosting the 2022 tournament.

Canada has expressed concern over any potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz, warning that

disruption to shipping lanes could affect global trade and energy markets.

Anand said that Canada would continue supporting Qatar's diplomatic efforts to ensure the uninterrupted flow of trade, including exports of liquefied natural gas, fertilisers and helium.

She is expected to return to the Gulf region next month to attend a meeting of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC). - QNA

# 5 convicted of bribery and money laundering

The Public Prosecution has announced that the Criminal Court of First Instance has convicted a female Qatari employee and four Arab nationals, while acquitting another defendant, after the Attorney-General referred them to trial on charges related to offering and accepting bribes, mediating bribery, abuse of official authority, and money laundering.

According to the Public Prosecution, investigations were launched following a complaint filed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry against one of its employees for committing administrative violations.

The violations involved processing commercial licence applications for shisha cafes and massage and relaxation businesses for a commercial establishment in violation of applicable laws and regulatory procedures.

Investigations revealed that the employee had received bribes from the other convicted individuals in exchange for facilitating the transactions.

The total value of the bribes amounted to QR201,140.

The Public Prosecution stated that investigations and support-

ing inquiries, in addition to confessions by several of the convicted defendants, confirmed the commission of the offences.

In a statement, the Public Prosecution said the court sentenced the employee to four years' imprisonment and imposed a fine equivalent to the value of the bribe for the offences of accepting bribes and abuse of official authority.

The Qatari was also sentenced to one year in prison and fined QR2mn on charges of money laundering.

An Egyptian national convicted of offering the bribe was sentenced to four years' imprisonment and fined an amount equal to the bribe for bribing a public official.

He was additionally sentenced to one year in prison and fined QR2mn for money laundering and will be deported after serving his sentence.

The court sentenced the remaining convicts, who hold Tunisian and Egyptian nationalities, to four years in prison each and imposed financial penalties for participating in the bribery of a public official.

The court acquitted one of the defendants of all charges brought against him. - QNA

## Qatar Calendar announces 'Summer Splash' at Meryal Waterpark Beach

Qatar Calendar has announced the launch of "Summer Splash", a month-long family entertainment experience taking place at Meryal Waterpark Beach from June 1-30.

Featuring Nickelodeon's globally recognised characters from PAW Patrol and SpongeBob SquarePants, the event will bring together immersive entertainment, interactive activities, and live performances in one exciting destination for families and visitors of all ages.

Presented by Qatar Calendar, organised by Events & Entertainment Enterprises (E3) in partnership with Paramount and Spin Master, and produced by EventBox, the event forms part of Visit Qatar's "Hala Summer" campaign.

The initiative reflects Visit Qatar's continued commitment to delivering engaging, family-focused experiences that enrich the country's year-round events calendar and further strengthen Qatar's position as a leading regional destination for entertainment and leisure.

Transforming Meryal Waterpark Beach into a vibrant world inspired by PAW Patrol's Adventure Bay, the event will feature a wide range of themed activations and immersive experiences.

Families can enjoy interactive activities, live stage performances, and memorable photo opportunities inspired by both PAW Patrol and SpongeBob



SquarePants, within dedicated air-conditioned themed zones designed to spark creativity, imagination, and unforgettable shared family moments.

The PAW Patrol-themed area will invite guests to meet characters including Chase, Marshall, Rubble, and Skye through daily meet-and-greet sessions.

Visitors can also take part in a range of themed activities, including sliding down the iconic Look-out Tower, flying like Skye in an AR trampoline experience, joining Marshall in "Fighting Fire with Marshall", and exploring the interactive Sea Patroller digital experience.

Meanwhile, the SpongeBob SquarePants-themed area will feature an interactive live stage show starring SpongeBob, Patrick, Squidward, and other familiar characters.

Families can also participate in underwater-themed activities and enjoy special opportunities to meet SpongeBob and Patrick in person.

In addition, key outdoor activations will include beach soccer, a volleyball experience, a sand play area, water gun battles, themed tents and beach balls, as well as water inflatable floats across the park pools, all designed to enhance the overall event experience.

The event is free to attend and will take place daily from 6pm to 11pm throughout the month of June at Meryal Beach.

## Aspetar and Awqaf to organise Haj health seminar for Qatari pilgrims

Aspetar, Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, in co-operation with Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Haj and Umrah Affairs Department, will organise a health awareness seminar for Qatari pilgrims this year under the title "Your Health Completes Your Journey".

The initiative aims to equip pilgrims with reliable medical guidance that supports them in performing the Haj rituals in safe and healthy conditions.

The virtual seminar will take place on May 17 at 6.30pm, and will be open to all officially registered pilgrims in Qatar through a Microsoft Teams link.

At the end of the session, participants will have the opportunity to engage with Aspetar experts and ask questions, allowing the seminar's benefits to extend into practical, real-world guidance for pilgrims.

"The seminar reflects the hospital's scientific and community mission and its commitment to serving local community through evidence-based medical awareness," said Aspetar marketing and communication director Khalid Abdulrahman al-Naama.

He noted that Haj requires both physical and mental preparation, given the crowding and varying



temperatures pilgrims may face.

The official added that Aspetar seeks to present its expertise in an accessible way that helps pilgrims remain healthy and perform their duty with confidence.

The seminar will highlight key health topics relevant to the Haj journey, including physical preparation, proper nutrition, fatigue management, foot health, sleep quality, and psychological balance.

It will also address common field challenges such as heat stress, crowding, and sleep deprivation, while offering practical advice on choosing suitable footwear, maintaining hydration, organising time, and preventing food-related health issues.

The scientific programme has been designed to meet the needs of pilgrims and will begin with guidance on preparing the body and supporting movement during the rituals, with particular emphasis on preventing foot injuries caused



Khalid Abdulrahman al-Naama

by extensive walking. It will cover ways to maintain calm in crowded settings, improve sleep routines, and adopt nutritional habits to reduce the risks of dehydration and digestive problems.

This initiative reflects Aspetar's continued approach of launching evidence-based awareness programmes that translate medical knowledge into practical public benefit, support the health of the Qatari community, and enhance quality of life during major religious and seasonal occasions.

## Waldorf Astoria Lusail Doha unveils 'Serenity Pool'

Waldorf Astoria Lusail Doha has announced the official opening of its newest experience, the Serenity Pool, an adults-only sanctuary designed for guests seeking tranquility, privacy, and refined leisure, elevating the resort's facilities to new heights.

The Serenity Pool introduces a concept centred on relaxation and exclusivity, blending serene waters, refined ambience, and uninterrupted moments of leisure.

Guests can bask under the warmth of the sun, and enjoy seamless access to a

private - creating the ultimate coastal retreat.

Marking the occasion, Waldorf Astoria Lusail Doha partnered with L'Occitane en Provence, the globally celebrated French Maison founded in 1976 and renowned for its luxurious skincare, fragrance, and wellness products crafted from authentic natural ingredients.

Inspired by the sun-kissed landscapes and traditions of Haute-Provence, L'Occitane celebrates Provençal savoir-faire while creating moments of well-being and connection to nature.

Today, the brand reaches customers worldwide through over 3,000 boutiques, 100 spas, and 2,500 partner hotels, alongside its lifestyle cafés, including locations in Dubai and Riyadh.

Bringing its signature elegance and wellness philosophy to Doha, L'Occitane will transform the Serenity Pool with a month-long takeover from May 13 to June 13.

During this exclusive collaboration period, the pool will be transformed through exclusive L'Occitane en Provence branding, immersing guests in a refined, sensorial setting inspired by the spirit and beauty of Provence.

The launch will spotlight the brand's iconic almond-based collection - celebrated for its nourishing, soothing, and delicately scented properties - of-



fering guests an immersive experience that captures the essence of summer and self-care.

Open to both hotel guests and day-pass visitors, the experience is complemented by a fresh and curated menu, inspired by vibrant summer flavours.

From light bites to refreshing sips, every detail has been thoughtfully crafted to enhance long, leisurely days by the wa-

ter, inviting guests to unwind in a vibrant coastal setting with effortless comfort and seaside charm.

With its blend of refined leisure, coastal beauty, and sensorial luxury, the Serenity Pool sets a new standard for adult escapes in Doha - establishing itself as the ultimate summer destination for adults, a setting defined by sunlit ease, refined energy, and unforgettable ambience.



## Qatar participates in 125th GCC Financial and Economic Co-operation Committee meeting

The State of Qatar participated yesterday in the 125th Meeting of the Financial and Economic Co-operation Committee of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), held via videoconference.

HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari led Qatar's delegation to the meeting that brought together the ministers of finance from across the GCC member states.

The meeting reviewed a series of outcomes from key regional technical committees, including the GCC Central Banks Governors' Committee, the Customs Union Authority, and the Committee of Heads and Directors of Tax Departments. Participants also assessed the latest progress reports from the GCC

Common Market Committee.

Discussions focused on the General Secretariat's report regarding measures taken in response to current regional and international economic developments. Additionally, the ministers examined the implementation mechanisms for decisions aimed at combating harmful practices in international trade.

The committee further addressed the progress of ongoing free trade agreement negotiations between the GCC and various international blocs. The session concluded with a follow-up on the latest milestones toward achieving comprehensive economic unity among the GCC countries. (QNA)

## Police Academy celebrates graduation of Senior Officers Course at The Torch Hotel

The Police Academy, represented by the Police Officers Institute, has celebrated the graduation of its Senior Officers Course in a ceremony held at The Torch Hotel, attended by Police Academy president Major-General Abdulrahman Majid al-Sulaiti and other senior officers. The three-week course brought together 22 officers of the rank of colonel and included a range of theoretical and practical lectures and programmes designed to enhance leadership, administrative, security, and institutional capabilities, and to strengthen professional competence in line with the requirements of modern policing. Certificates were awarded to the graduates at the conclusion of the course.

The Senior Officers Course is a mandatory strategic programme and represents an important milestone in the professional development of participating officers. (QNA)



## Msheireb Museums hosts QU's annual architecture exhibition

Msheireb Museums hosted the annual exhibition "Architectonics: From Education to Impact", featuring graduation projects and academic coursework developed by more than 40 undergraduate students and alumni of Qatar University (QU).

Organised by the QU's Department of Architecture and Urban Planning at the College of Engineering, the exhibition traced the evolution of architectural concepts from foundational academic coursework to final thesis projects.

It reflects how emerging architects in Qatar are responding to environmental, social, and urban challenges while preserving the country's cultural identity.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, prominent Qatari architect Ibrahim Jaidah, chief executive and chief architect of the Arab Engineering Bureau, honoured a selection of promising projects, underscoring the importance of supporting the next generation of architects in Qatar.

The selection of Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD) as the exhibition venue carried particu-

lar significance.

Following three years of intensive architectural research, the city adopted a distinctive Qatari design vision embodied in the "Seven Architectural Concepts", a framework that integrates the spirit and aesthetics of traditional Qatari architecture with modern technology and sustainable design principles.

Through this approach, documented in publications such as Building on Tradition - The New Architectural Language of Qatar and Msheireb Museums: Transforming Doha's Heritage Houses, and through collaboration with internationally renowned architects, academics, and urban planners, the MDD has become a global model for sustainable urban regeneration.

For participating students, the city served as a living reference and a practical case study of what architecture rooted in scientific research and national heritage can achieve.

"Hosting this exhibition at Msheireb Museums is a natural extension of the identity of these heritage houses," said Msheireb Museums director-general Abdulla al-Naama. "Built within a city



shaped by years of architectural research grounded in Qatari heritage, the museums provide spaces that enable young architects to engage with the concepts and ways of thinking that shaped the MDD."

The projects featured in the exhibition were developed in collaboration with national and international entities, including the Ministry of Municipality, Qatar Museums, Caravane Earth, and the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), as well as leading international firms such as OMA/AMO and Herzog & de Meuron.

These collaborations reflect a shared commitment to advancing architecture as a discipline rooted in science, interdisciplinary thinking, and design excellence.

diversification strategy adopted by Qatar Tourism.

Over the past decade, the country has significantly expanded its hospitality infrastructure, with hotel room capacity more than doubling since 2015. According to estimates, Qatar now has over 40,000 hotel keys, ranging from luxury properties operated by global brands to boutique accommodations that reflect local culture. The country has adopted an approach that places strong emphasis on quality and sustainability. Besides, the country has launched various initiatives to encourage eco-friendly tourism, where people can enjoy nature while maintaining its components and help it grow and prosper.

## Minister, Sudan counterpart discuss ICT co-operation

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali bin Mohammed al-Mannai met yesterday with the Minister of Communications and Digital Transformation of the Republic of the Sudan, Engineer Ahmed al-Diriri Ghandour, and the accompanying delegation, in the presence of the ambassador of the Republic of the Sudan to the State of Qatar Badr Eldin Abdullah Mohammed Ahmed. The two sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral co-operation between the two countries in the fields of communications, information technology, and digital transformation, in addition to key initiatives and projects related to the development of digital infrastructure. They also explored opportunities for exchanging expertise in areas of mutual interest, contributing to supporting digital transformation efforts in both countries. (QNA)



## Abdullah Abdulwahab targets table tennis gold at GCC Games Doha 2026

By Shaima Sheriff  
Staff Reporter

Months of international preparation, demanding training sessions and growing expectations are shaping Qatar's table tennis ambitions as national player Abdullah Abdulwahab continues his campaign at GCC Games Doha 2026.

The Qatari athlete, who has also been selected to represent Qatar at the Table Tennis World Cup 2026, said the team entered the tournament determined not only to compete, but to challenge for gold medals across categories.

Abdulwahab said he prepared for the tournament through a training camp in Doha before competing at the World Championship in London, which lasted nearly 12 days. Following the international tournament, the team returned to Qatar for an intensive preparation programme involving twice-daily sessions.

"We came back to Qatar and



Abdullah Abdulwahab

started practising morning and afternoon sessions for around 10 days," he said. "We are really fully prepared to play this tournament and to take the gold medal."

His comments reflect the increasing professionalism and international exposure shaping Qatar's table tennis programme as the country continues investing in athlete development ahead of major global competitions.

Abdulwahab's own journey highlights that progress. Alongside competing regionally, the player has now secured a place at

the 2026 Table Tennis World Cup, underlining his emergence as one of Qatar's promising talents in the sport.

So far, Qatar has secured positive results in the tournament, with Abdulwahab confirming that the national team earned a bronze medal in the team event and advanced deep into multiple categories.

"Until now, we have a bronze medal in the team event," he said. "We also reached the semi-finals in the men's doubles and the mixed doubles."

At the time of the interview, Abdulwahab was preparing to begin his singles campaign later in the day, carrying the momentum of Qatar's early success into the individual rounds.

Beyond medals, the tournament also reflects the broader development of table tennis within Qatar and the Gulf region, where competition levels continue to rise alongside stronger investment in training, international participation and youth development.

## PM opens largest edition of DIBF amid fanfare

From Page 1

Speaking to Qatar News Agency, Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain, Director of the Libraries Department at the Ministry of Culture and Director of the fair, set out the contours of a cultural festival that has long since outgrown the simple act of selling books. Lectures, literary discussions and workshops will run across disciplines, he said, and the winners of the second Doha International Book Fair Award — six categories devised to honour Qatari and international authors and publishers — will be announced before the fair closes.

On the main stage, a cultural programme will assemble writers, intellectuals and academics from Qatar and abroad to argue, in the civilised way of such gatherings, about literature and thought, while the cultural salon will quieten itself for book signings and dialogue sessions with authors. There will be "Reading Guide" sessions to steer the bewildered visitor through the shelves, and a dedicated "Doha Children's Zone" of interactive performances for the young — for whom, in the end, every book fair is really built.

Qatar's own writers will be much in evidence. The Qatari Authors Forum, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, will mount a sustained programme of cultural, educational and intellectual events, gathering writers, researchers and academics from inside and outside the country.

More than 100 new publications by Qatari authors and residents will be launched during the fair, alongside over 25 intellectual seminars, 15 specialist lectures and 12 discussion sessions on cultural and social questions — a tally that suggests local literary life is in robustly good health.

The fair will open daily from 9am to 10pm, except on Fridays, when visitors will be admitted from 3pm until 10pm. Special attention, organisers said, had been paid this year to children and young readers, including a mobile library bus that has already wound its way through some 12 schools, carrying the rumour of reading to the country's classrooms.

The Doha International Book Fair is, after all, among the oldest and largest of its kind in the region. First launched in 1972 under the supervision of Qatar's national library authority, it was held every two years before turning annual in 2002, and since 2010 it has welcomed a guest country at each edition — the United States, Türkiye, Iran, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, France, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Palestine among them. To stand at its threshold this week, then, is to stand inside more than half a century of accumulated reading — and to be reminded that a city, like a person, is in part the sum of the books it has chosen to keep.

## Qatar makes strong tourism start in Q1

From Page 1

Further, Asia and Oceania accounted for 21.1% of the visitors to the country within the same period, with around 238,000 visitors, reflecting Qatar's increasing appeal in long-haul markets. Other Arab countries contributed 7.2%, followed by the Americas at 6.7% and Africa at 2.3%. Such broad distribution of visitors strongly indicates the success of the tourism

## QM's archaeology event discusses achievements, future direction

QNA  
Doha

The Archaeology Department at Qatar Museums (QM) organised an introductory event yesterday at Qatar National Theatre under the title "Presentation of Achievements and Future Directions". The event brought together a distinguished group of experts and researchers specialising in archaeology at Qatar Museums.

The event, attended by Director of the National Museum of Qatar, HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Hamad al-Thani along with officials from various government sectors and academics, was held in celebration of the International Day for Monuments and Sites, observed annually on April 18.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Director of the Archaeology Department at Qatar Museums, Faisal Abdullah al-Nuaimi said the event is being organised for the second consecutive year to highlight the department's key scientific activities, showcase the latest discoveries and research projects, and shed light on efforts to preserve Qatar's cultural heritage. He added that the gathering

also serves as a platform for discussion and knowledge exchange among specialists and those interested in archaeology.

Al-Nuaimi revealed that the department's future projects are focused on linking historical periods from prehistory through successive eras, emphasising the importance of archaeology in preserving the memory of place, connecting the past with the present, and helping shape perspectives for the future.

Addressing the department's priorities and whether its focus lies on terrestrial or maritime archaeology, al-Nuaimi explained that land-based archaeological work is generally more manageable from both logistical and scientific perspectives. Fieldwork in desert environments, he noted, is often more stable, secure, and accessible for excavation and study.

He pointed out, however, that maritime archaeology presents greater technical complexity, as work at sea requires specialised equipment, precise operational mechanisms, and the ability to overcome the challenges posed by marine environments.

Al-Nuaimi stressed that the sea is deeply intertwined with the history of human settlement in



Qatar, as communities relied on it for centuries for fishing, pearl diving, and maritime trade. He noted that recent findings indicate some discovered underwater sites date back to relatively later periods.

"At the same time," he said, "there are also much older sites in the north and other parts of the country, reflecting the significant chronological diversity of Qatar's archaeological heritage."

He concluded that both terrestrial and maritime archaeology are equally important and constitute essential parts of Qatar's history and cultural identity. Nevertheless, maritime archaeology currently requires greater attention due to the advanced technical and research capabilities it demands, as well as the many secrets that remain undiscovered beneath the sea.

Experts and researchers participating in the event emphasised the importance of ongoing efforts in archaeological research, surveying, excavation, documentation, and the preservation of Qatar's cultural heritage.

They also reviewed major achievements and field and research projects on land and at sea, highlighting the diversity of archaeological work and the integration of scientific, technical, and field efforts aimed at safeguarding cultural heritage for future generations.

During the first session, Dr Wafaa Suleiman, an expert in underwater cultural heritage at Qatar Museums, presented the preliminary findings of the archaeological marine survey conducted off the coast of Al Ruwais. Dr Farhan Skl, an archaeology expert, delivered a presentation on

the current activities of the Excavation and Site Management Section, while Al-Anoud al-Mutawa presented a paper on the sorting and documentation of artifacts from the Freiha site.

Dr Robert Carter, an archaeology expert, also discussed the latest excavation results from Early Islamic period sites in northern Qatar, a project partially funded by entities within the country.

During the second and third sessions, Dr Mostafa Azmi, archaeology expert, presented a lecture titled "Al Jassasiya Rock Carvings: Diversity, Richness, and Challenges of Preservation". Margaux Dubau led attendees through a presentation on archaeological science activities, while Farid al-Shishani discussed "Heritage Preservation in Practice: Enhancing Access, Understanding, and Sustainability of

Archaeological Collections." Aisha Mubarak al-Hamad also offered attendees insight into "A Day in the Life of an Inspector".

Dr Sinan al-Nuaimi presented a paper entitled "Documentation of the Islamic Cemetery at Fahd bin Ali Palace", while the sessions concluded with a presentation by archaeology researcher Emad Tabhout on "Preventive Archaeological Surveys and Test Excavations at the Jubeyib Site: A Study Within the Dukhan Solar Power Project". Noura al-Humaidi, Head of the Survey and Research Section at the Archaeology Department, delivered the closing remarks.

The Archaeology Department at Qatar Museums is responsible for the protection, preservation, and documentation of the country's cultural heritage and archaeological sites. The department conducts excavation projects and archaeological research, promotes preventive archaeology, and raises public awareness of discoveries through partnerships and public lectures. It also oversees the documentation and management of underwater and terrestrial archaeological sites, including efforts to protect submerged cultural heritage and carry out field archaeological surveys.



## MESIS holds Investiture Ceremony 2026-27

MES Indian School, Abu Hamour Branch (MESIS) celebrated the Investiture Ceremony in the esteemed presence of chief guest Ashraf Sharafudheen, director of Academics, MES Governing Board, who motivated our young leaders to lead with vision, confidence, and integrity. The occasion was also graced by distinguished guests Sajeeb Bin Abutty, director, MES Governing Board; Faizal Mayan, director, MES Governing Board; and Shaheed Alungath, director, MES Governing Board. Principal Pramila Kannan delivered the welcome address

and inspired the gathering with her encouraging words. The newly elected student council members took the oath to uphold the values and vision of the institution with dedication and excellence. Heartfelt congratulations to Head Boy, Monish Raj Sekar, Head Girl, Naja Mehadin Nazer, and all the office-bearers as they begin this meaningful journey of leadership and service. May they continue to inspire others, lead with purpose, and make a lasting positive impact within and beyond the school community.



DPS-Modern Indian School celebrated the exceptional achievement of its students in the CBSE Class XII (AISSCE) Examinations 2025-26, once again reaffirming the institution's long-standing tradition of academic excellence. Naveen Manikandan emerged as the school topper with an outstanding score of 98.4%, followed by Sharvi Patwardhan with 97.4%. Anujraghava Thirukonda Sivakumar and Ameera Zulaika also delivered exceptional performances, securing 97% each. In the Science stream, Naveen Manikandan secured the top position with 98.4%, while Anujraghava Thirukonda Sivakumar followed closely with 97%, and Praveen Manikandan achieved an impressive 96.8%. In the Commerce stream, Neha Susan Denny emerged as the topper with 96.2%, followed by Anaya Rose George with 95.4% and Ummehani Aliasgar Karjatwala with 93.2%.

## DPS-Modern Indian School celebrates Class XII achievers



Naveen Manikandan



Anujraghava T Sivakumar



Praveen Manikandan



Ameera Zulaika



Neha Susan Denny



Anaya Rose George



Ummehani A Karjatwala

Sharvi Patwardhan topped the Humanities stream with 97.4%, while Ameera Zulaika secured 97%. Joanne Mary Ashish and Anushka Shailesh Alurkar also excelled with 95.4% each. The remarkable performance of the Class XII students reflects their dedication, perseverance, and commitment to excellence. These outstanding results stand as a

testament to the strong academic culture fostered at DPS-Modern Indian School and the collective efforts of students, teachers, and parents alike. The management, senior principal, senior vice-principal, vice-principal, and headmistress extended their heartfelt congratulations to all the achievers for bringing laurels to the institution. The school also

expressed sincere appreciation to its faculty members for their unwavering guidance and to parents for their constant encouragement and support. The CBSE Class XII Results 2025-26 mark yet another significant milestone in the continuing journey of excellence at DPS-Modern Indian School, inspiring future batches to strive for even greater success.



Sharvi Patwardhan



Joanne Mary Ashish



Anushka Shailesh Alurkar

## Ideal Indian School students excel in Class XII exams



Afrin Salma



Aalaa Husham



Omer Abdelmagid



Deann J Menezes



Sara Hafiz Muzamil



Mohammed Akber



Huda Mohd. Afzal



Ayat Hafiz Ahmed H

Ideal Indian School (ISS) produced an outstanding 100% result in CBSE Class XII Board Examination. Out of 262 students who appeared for the examinations, 208 secured a Distinction, while 54 secured a First Class. Afrin Salma Mohammed J

topped with 98.8% in the Science Stream, followed by Aalaa Husham with 98.6%. The third toppers in the Science stream are Omer Abdelmagid and Deann Jerald Menezes, with 97.8%. In the Commerce Stream, Sara Hafiz Muzamil secured the top

position with 97%, followed by Mohammed Akber with 93.6%, and Huda Mohd. Afzal secured the third position with 92.8%. Ayat Hafiz Ahmed H and Manasa Vinu emerged as toppers in the Humanities Stream with 98.6%, while Haniya Manha secured second

position with 98%, and Syeda Aysha third with 96.4%. The school director and chairman, president, acting principal, and heads of sections congratulated the students and lauded the staff's efforts.



Manasa Vinu



Haniya Manha



Syeda Aysha

## Shantiniketan Indian School achieves outstanding results

Under the curriculum prescribed by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the All India Senior School Certificate Examination (AISSCE) results for Grade XII were published based on previous assessments conducted during the academic year, due to the cancellation of the Board Examination. Shantiniketan Indian School has once again demonstrated academic excellence, with its Grade XII students achieving outstanding results in the CBSE AISSCE March 2026 examinations. The results reflect the consistent efforts of students, the dedicated

guidance of teachers, and the strong academic support provided by the institution. The school management, president and principal congratulated the students, staff, and parents on the excellent results and expressed confidence that the achievers will continue to excel in their future academic pursuits. Jusna Sultana emerged as the first rank holder with an exceptional 98%, followed by Rida Saman, who secured the second rank with 97.4%, and Madiha Asraf, who achieved the third rank with 97.2%. In the stream-wise category, Rida



Jusna Sultana



Rida Saman



Madiha Asraf



Eimman



Abdulbaset Abdulbaki

Saman topped the Science stream with 97.4%, while Eimman emerged as the Commerce stream topper with 95.6%. Jusna Sultana secured the top position in the Humanities stream with an impressive 98%.

Students who achieved A1 grades in all subjects include Jusna Sultana, Abdulbaset Abdulbaki, Rida Saman, Parvathi Peethambaran Nair Renuka, Madiha Asraf, and Bazeera Abdul Azeez.

Among the students who secured 90% and above were Jusna Sultana with 98%, Rida Saman with 97.4%, Madiha Asraf with 97.2%, Parvathi Peethambaran Nair Renuka with 97%, and Amit Pandaran

Sivadasan with 97%. In the subject toppers category for English Core (301), Abdulbaset Abdulbaki, Rida Saman, Parvathi Peethambaran Nair Renuka, and Madiha Asraf each scored a perfect 100 marks.

# COMMUNITY



Athulya Anil Kumar    Fardan Sharfuddeen    Ahmad Khalil Thakur    Fathima Sana Pookkayil    Riza Fatin    Aafreen Fathima    Muhammad Sufiyan Patel

## MES sets record-breaking triumph

MES Indian School has set an exceptional benchmark of academic excellence by achieving a record-breaking 100% pass rate in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Examinations 2026 in Class XII. In the Science Stream, Athulya Anil Kumar secured the distinction of School Topper with 99% marks, followed by Fardan Sharfuddeen, who achieved 98.8% to claim the second position, while Ahmad Khalil Thakur and Fathima Sana Pookkayil and Riza Fatin shared the third position with 98.4%. In the Commerce Stream, Aafreen Fathima Mohamed Anwardeen and Muhammad Sufiyan Patel emerged as the joint first position holders with 99.8%, followed by Afsa Abdul Malik, Nivedya Sudhir and Austin John Abhilash in the second position with 99.6%, and Azza Bent Nizar, stood third with 99.2%. In the Humanities Stream, Alvina Sakeer and Lubna Abdul Latheef achieved the top position with 99.6% marks, while Fathima Riyaz and Huda Fatima Salim secured the second position with 99%, and Amina Shajehan attained the third position with 97.4%.

Demonstrating an extraordinary standard of academic excellence, 208 students achieved a perfect centum across various subjects. A total of 71 students accomplished an outstanding feat of securing A1 grade in all five subjects. They are: Muhammad Sufiyan Patel, Aafreen Fathima Mohamed Anwardeen, Austin John Abilash, Afsa Abdul Malik, Nivedya Sudhir, Alvina Sakeer, Lubna Abdul Latheef, Azza Bent Nizar, Athulya Anil Kumar, Fathima Riyaz, Huda Fatima Salim, Fardan Sharfuddeen, Ahmad Khalil Thakur, Fathima Sana Pookkayil, Riza Fatin, Rihaan Nowfal Ambalath Veettil, Fathima Iqbal, Khadeeja Halen, Nabith Eshan Kuyimil, Minha Manaf, Rasan Abdul Hameed, Mohammad Kamal Ali Badran, Hadiya Hashim Moonnuthem Kullathil, Zainab Samir Meman, Raihan Abdusathar, Amina Shajehan, Mohammed Abdul Muqet, Syed Dawar Abbas, Nimisha Jiji Abraham, Haya Hameed, Aysha Zerine, Shiza Zainab, Fidha Salim, Eldo Thomas Isac, Aayisha Farheen Mohamed Anwardeen, Michelle Looovis, Aisha, Kesav Shanker Mohan, Fathima Riyaz,

Hareem Tambe, Mohammad Areeb Faisal Hajwane, Fayha Haneef, Rushdha Fathima Saleed, Safiya Zayan Musliya Akath, Jewel Mary Mathew, Khadija Shueb Kazi, Harichand Prajina Sheejith, Amna Fathima Tharuppeedikayil Abdul Manaf, Ayisha Zenha, Fadi Fathima, Zayana Zameel Kolakkat, Simin Baby, Akhil Kanjhoor Joby, Prasanna K P, Ghazal Abdul Saleem, Muhammed Salman, Ayeshathul Afana, Nada Zubair, Manthan Deepak Naidu, Muhammed Rayyan Karuvadi, Nimisha Liz Abraham, Nasif Mohamed Ismail, Alfie John Subi, Arshad Aman Padipatta, Susan Saji, Liyana Fathima, Muhammed Nabhan Nisam, Musadiq Yoonus, Abishek Vijay Anand, Bushra Mohammed Hanif Nazir and Jaidevi Jaikrishna. The school management and the principal extended their heartfelt congratulations to the students and staff for their outstanding achievements. The principal also expressed sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Embassy of India, and the School Management for their unwavering support and guidance.



Afsa Abdul Malik    Nivedya Sudhir    Austine John Abhilash  
Azza Bent Nizar    Alvina Sakeer    Lubna Abdul Latheef  
Fathima Riyaz    Huda Fatima Salim    Amina Shajehan

## Podar Pearl reaffirms academic excellence



Shazelle Maria    Aditi Kumar    Zahabiya Idris Saifee

Podar Pearl School heralds yet another year of exemplary academic accomplishment in the CBSE Grade XII Board Examinations for the academic year 2025-2026, further reaffirming the institution's steadfast commitment to scholastic excellence and holistic education. The school community takes immense pride in the outstanding achievements of its students, whose unwavering dedication, resilience, and intellectual prowess have once again brought great distinction and honour to the institution. In the Science Stream, Shazelle Maria secured the first position with an outstanding 481 mark (96.2%). Aditi Kumar achieved second with 480 marks (96%), while Zahabiya Idris Saifee secured the third position with 471 marks (94.2%). In the Commerce Stream, Shivani Eranki emerged as the school topper with an exceptional 492 marks (98.4%), setting a benchmark of academic excellence. Darius Agnelo Carasco secured the second position with 468 marks (93.6%), followed closely by Shawn Arun Mathew, who achieved the third position with 467 marks (93.4%).

Further underscoring the school's consistent academic standards, an impressive 72.13% of students secured distinction in the Grade XII Board Examinations. The school also takes immense pride in acknowledging students who achieved centum scores in subjects including Biology, Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence, Economics, and Psychology, reflecting both academic rigour and subject mastery. Speaking on the occasion, the school management expressed immense pride in the students' accomplishments and appreciated the relentless efforts of the faculty and the unwavering support of parents in nurturing academic success. The management, principal, vice-principal, teaching and non-teaching faculty of Podar Pearl School extend their heartfelt congratulations to all the achievers and wish them continued success in their future academic and professional pursuits. With a steadfast focus on quality education, innovation, and holistic growth, Podar Pearl School continues to inspire young minds to strive for excellence and emerge as confident global citizens.



Shivani Eranki    Darius Agnelo Carasco    Shawn Arun Mathew

## Noble pupils shine in CBSE Grade 12

Noble International School has achieved a remarkable milestone in the Grade 12 CBSE board examination (AISSE) 2025-26, recording a 100% pass result. The entire school community is celebrating this exceptional accomplishment with immense pride. Abrin Reji emerged as the topper of the Science stream, securing an outstanding 97%. Amal Shibu secured the second position with 96.6%, while Arathi Suresh Nair secured the third position with 95%. In the Commerce stream, Hari Vaishnavi emerged as the topper with an impressive 98%, followed by Fidha Zakkir Hussain with 96.4%, and Minha Asma in third place with 93.6%. Their remarkable performances significantly contributed to the school's overall success. Further highlighting this achievement, 20 of 84 students scored 90% or above. Students who secured 90% and above are: Hari Vaishnavi, Abrin Reji, Amal Shibu, Arathi Suresh Nair, Fidha Zakkir Hussain, Shradha Sreeraj, Mohammed Omar Khan, Hazim Ahmed, Asna Shaheer, Minha Asma, Reuben Roby, Asmaa Mohammed, Diyana Samir Balooch, Ammar Aslam, Abdel Aziz, Fathima Rena, Krrish Manish Shah, Shivansh Sharma, Mohammed Maki, and Aazim Bin Yoosuf.



Abrin Reji    Amal Shibu    Arathi Suresh Nair  
Hari Vaishnavi    Fidha Zakkir    Minha Asma

The school management, comprising Chairman Hussain Mohammed U, general secretary Basheer KP, finance director Shoukath Ali Taj, academic director Muneer Ahammed, and director Mohammed Ashraf, along with other board members, principal Dr Shibu Abdul Rasheed, and the vice principals, appreciated the hard work and dedication of both students and teachers. They congratulated all the achievers and encouraged students to continue striving for excellence in their academic journey.



## Rang Tarang 2026 held at DPS-MIS

DPS - Modern Indian School inaugurated its flagship intra-school art event, "Rang Tarang 2026 - Every Stroke Tells a Story," earlier this month with a vibrant splash of colours, a swirl of boundless imagination, and countless stories waiting to unfold. Organised by the Art Department, the art extravaganza brought together 3,982 students, from Kindergarten to Grade XII across both the morning and afternoon sessions in a heartwarming celebration of creativity and self-expression. Declaring the event open, senior principal, Asna Nafees remarked that every child possesses the power to dream, create, and express emotions through the language of art. Senior vice-principal, Soma Bhattacharjee, while inaugurating the afternoon art con-

clave, expressed that art inspires young minds to observe the world with sensitivity, think beyond boundaries, and discover beauty in imagination. The entire campus transformed into a living canvas of artistic brilliance while the classrooms blossomed into vibrant studios filled with colour, curiosity, and quiet concentration. From the youngest learners sketching their first ideas to senior students crafting profound and meaningful compositions, each stroke reflected a unique voice, a personal story, and the limitless spirit of creativity that defines the DPS community. As the first edition of this initiative, the event laid the foundation for a cherished tradition that will continue to inspire young minds and celebrate the beauty of artistic expression for years to come.



## BPS celebrates International Workers' Day and 'Joy of Giving'

Birla Public School celebrated International Workers' Day and 'Joy of Giving' with great zeal and enthusiasm on May 3 for Grades KG I to IV. The event offered young learners an opportunity to express their gratitude to community helpers and to promote kindness and social responsibility. The students came dressed in their favourite community helper costumes. The celebration began with an introductory session by the class teachers on International Workers' Day. The teachers discussed the role and importance of community helpers and emphasised their valuable contributions to society. The concept of kindness and empathy was explained to the students. The students spoke



about their costumes and the community helpers they represented, and this fostered confidence and communication skills. A vibrant Community Helpers Parade was held, with students walking confidently in an orderly procession. The parade showcased the costumes of community helpers, such as doctors, police officers, and teachers. It also connected with Qatar's heritage by referring to traditional helpers like fishermen and pearl divers. The parade created a lively atmosphere and reinforced the importance of community helpers in our society. The grade 4 students



presented a vibrant and thoughtful assembly acknowledging the contributions of the ancillary staff at the school. As a part of the celebration, students presented thank-you cards to the community helpers. The 'Joy of Giving' activity encouraged children to express gratitude to the school's ancillary staff. The event was graced by the presence of the principal, Dr Anand R Nair, the vice-principal, Edna Fernandez, and the headmistresses, Josephine Fernandes and Shruti Boodle. The school leaders appreciated the students' enthusiastic participation. The International Workers' Day and 'Joy of Giving' celebration at Birla Public School was an enriching experience for the students. Through these events, the school promotes the values of dignity and appreciation for all workers.

# Trump predicts 'fantastic future together' with China

AFP  
Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping warned his US counterpart Donald Trump that missteps on Taiwan could push their two countries into "conflict", a stark opening salvo as they met in Beijing yesterday at a superpower summit.

Trump had arrived in China with accolades for his host, calling Xi a "great leader" and "friend", as he predicted their countries would have "a fantastic future together".

But beyond the pomp as he welcomed Trump, Xi in less effusive tones said the two sides "should be partners and not rivals", while highlighting the issue of Taiwan - which Beijing claims as its territory - straight off the bat.

"The Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations," Xi said, according to remarks published by Chinese state media shortly after the start of the talks, which lasted two hours 15 minutes.

"If mishandled, the two nations could collide or even come into conflict, pushing the entire China-US relationship into a highly perilous situation," Xi added.

Trump's trip to Beijing is the

first by a US president in nearly a decade, with the grand reception belying a roster of unresolved trade and geopolitical tensions between the two countries.

Xi greeted Trump with a red-carpet welcome at the opulent Great Hall of the People, with military band fanfare, a 21-gun salute and a host of schoolchildren jumping and chanting "welcome!"

Seemingly enjoying the ceremony, Trump said "the relationship between China and the USA is going to be better than ever before".

Xi instead referenced an ancient Greek political theory about the risks of war when a rising power rivals a ruling power.

"Can China and the US transcend the so-called 'Thucydides Trap' and forge a new paradigm for major-power relations?" Xi asked, adding that "cooperation benefits both sides, while confrontation harms both".

There has been plenty of the latter since Trump's last visit in 2017, with the two countries having spent much of 2025 embroiled in a dizzying trade war and at odds on many major global issues.

Taiwan is a longstanding sore point.

The US recognises only Beijing



People gather to watch US President Donald Trump's motorcade drive by in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

but under domestic law is required to provide weapons to Taiwan for its defence.

China has sworn to take the self-ruled democracy and has not ruled out using force, ramping up military pressure in recent years.

Following Xi's yesterday's comments, Taipei called China the "sole risk" to regional peace, and insisted "the US side has repeatedly reaffirmed its clear and firm support".

Trump had said on Monday he would speak to Xi about US arms sales to Taiwan, a departure from Washington's historic insistence

that it will not consult Beijing on the matter.

The White House said the initial talks on Thursday had been "good", though it did not mention Taiwan in the readout.

Adam Ni, editor of newsletter China Neican, told AFP that while Xi's "blunt language" was not uncommon in Chinese foreign policy, it was unusual coming from the leader himself.

China has been "signalling a desire for US compromise on Taiwan", the National University of Singapore's Chong Ja Ian told AFP. Xi's demand could suggest



China's President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump arrive to attend a state banquet at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

"they see some opportunity to convince Trump", he said.

In its brief readout, the White House said the leaders talked about the Iran war, an issue which analysts have said could weaken Trump's position, having already forced him to postpone this trip.

The two sides "agreed that the Strait of Hormuz must remain open to support the free flow of energy", the White House said.

According to the Americans, Xi also said China was opposed to the militarisation of the vital waterway, or any attempt to charge for its use.

The Chinese foreign ministry earlier said the Middle East had been discussed but did not give further details.

The two men also discussed economic co-operation, with Trump hoping for business deals on agriculture, aircraft and other sectors.

Elite businessmen in his delegation, including Nvidia's Jensen Huang and Tesla's Elon Musk, were at the welcome ceremony

and joined for a portion of the Trump-Xi talks, the White House said.

Xi told the executives China's "doors to the outside world will open wider and wider", state media reported.

The Chinese president said pre-summit talks between top officials in South Korea on trade had "reached results that were generally balanced and positive".

He urged both sides to "safeguard the current hard-won positive momentum", with the presidents set to discuss extending the one-year tariff truce reached during their last meeting in October.

The Ukraine conflict and North Korea were also discussed at yesterday's meeting, China's foreign ministry said.

Taking a break from negotiating, the two men visited the Temple of Heaven, a World Heritage site where China's emperors once prayed for good harvests.

They will return to the Great Hall of the People this evening for a state banquet.

## Myanmar proposes death sentence for cyberscam offences

AFP  
Yangon

Myanmar published a parliamentary bill yesterday proposing the death sentence for those who detain or violently coerce victims into working in online scam centres.

Internet fraud factories have flourished in war-torn Myanmar, part of Southeast Asia's thriving scam economy, targeting web users worldwide with romance and cryptocurrency investment cons.

The multibillion-dollar black market attracts many willing employees, but repatriated foreigners have also reported being trafficked to sites in Myanmar and tortured by scam centre operators.

The draft legislation would allow capital punishment for "vio-

lence, torture, unlawful arrest and detention, or cruel treatment against another person for the purpose of forcing them to commit online scams".

The "Anti-Online Scam Bill" also includes a maximum sentence of life in prison for those who "run an online scam centre" and those who "commit digital currency scams (crypto scams)".

Myanmar's military-backed parliament - which many analysts describe as a rubber-stamp legislature - is next scheduled to sit in the first week of June.

The civil war triggered by a 2021 military coup has seeded instability across Myanmar, which monitors say has created fertile ground for organised crime groups to set up shop in fortified compounds.

Victims in the US alone were scammed out of more than \$20bn

through such schemes last year, according to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

It has also ramped up tensions with neighbouring China, which has become irked at the number of its citizens founding scam centres, working in them and falling victim to them, according to analysts.

Over the course of Myanmar's five-year civil war, China has intermittently thrown its weight behind both rebels and the military to suit its security and economic interests, monitors say.

It has favoured the military recently, backing a junta-run election that shut out opposition parties including the National League for Democracy of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been detained since the coup.

The "Anti-Online Scam Bill"

is the first legislation presented by the new government that is headed by coup leader Min Aung Hlaing, who assumed the role of civilian president last month.

Democracy watchdogs dismiss the government transition as a bid to rebrand military rule and put an end to the pariah status Myanmar's leadership has endured since the coup.

The new government has touted concessions, including announcing Suu Kyi's move from prison to house arrest two weeks ago, although critics dismiss such measures as an attempt to launder its image.

The anti-scam bill promises a new committee to cooperate with other countries to combat the illicit industry, another apparent invitation for foreign engagement with the new government.

## Malaysia to seek compensation from Norway over scrapped defence deal

Reuters  
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's defence minister said yesterday the country planned to claim compensation and was considering legal action over Norway's decision to revoke export approvals for a naval strike missile (NSM) system intended for Malaysian combat ships.

In an escalating diplomatic row, Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin said the government had already paid nearly 95% of the contract value when Norway pulled the approvals in March, just days before the missile systems were due to be delivered.

The defence arm of Norwegian group Kongsberg said in 2018 it had agreed a 124mm euro (\$145.23mn) contract with the Royal Malaysian Navy to supply NSM missiles for six littoral combat ships. Mohamed Khaled said yesterday there was a second deal to supply the system to two other naval vessels.

"We are doing the computation right now - we would not only claim the amount that we have paid, but also the damages arising from the breach of contract," he told reporters, according to a recording of his remarks provided by the ministry to Reuters. The Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry repeated that certain licenses related to the export of specific defence technology to Malaysia have been revoked due to Oslo's export control regulations. "It is regrettable that this affects Malaysia," the ministry said, adding that the security policy landscape in Europe and globally has changed significantly in recent years during which

the government has strengthened controls on defence technology.

"Exports of some of the most sensitive Norwegian-developed defence technologies will be limited to our allies and closest partners," it said.

It added that Oslo values its relationship with Malaysia and looked forward to a constructive dialogue.

Kongsberg said last week licensing decisions were handled wholly by Norwegian authorities and that it had complied with all applicable regulations.

Norway's decision to cancel the approvals caught Kuala Lumpur by surprise with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim saying it was "unilateral and unacceptable," and he objected in a phone call with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

The decision would have grave consequences for Malaysia's defence operational readiness and "undoubtedly carry broader ramifications for the regional balance," Anwar said. "Signed contracts are solemn instruments. They are not confetti to be scattered in so capricious a manner," he said.

"If European defence suppliers reserve the right to renege with impunity, their value as strategic partners flies out the window," Malaysia's ships project, launched in 2011, was supposed to supply the navy with five of six planned vessels by 2022 at an initial cost of 6 billion ringgit, but the local shipbuilder tasked with building them failed to deliver.

The delivery of the first vessel, scheduled for August this year, has been delayed until December due to late equipment deliveries from manufacturers and ongoing re-work issues.

## Seoul court orders N Korean leader to compensate Korean War POWs

AFP  
Seoul

A court in Seoul ruled yesterday that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un must pay a total of 105mn won (\$70,474) in damages to five former Korean War prisoners, the third such ruling against Pyongyang.

The Seoul Central District Court told AFP it ordered Kim to pay 21mn won to each of the five plaintiffs, all former South Korean soldiers who were captured during the 1950-53 Korean War and forcibly held in the North for decades.

The plaintiffs include Koh Kwang-myun and four other sur-

vivors, among only six former South Korean prisoners of war still alive and residing in South Korea.

The men, all now in their 90s, were captured by Chinese communist forces during a reconnaissance mission and taken to what is now North Korea.

They were not repatriated despite the armistice agreement in July 1953.

Koh endured forced labour for years at a POW camp and later at a coal mine in North Hamgyong Province before escaping in November 2001, the court said.

Another plaintiff, Choi Ki-ho, was also forced to work in coal mines in North Hamgyong Province for more than five decades.

Lee Sun-woo lost three fingers while being captured during the war.

It remained unclear whether the men would ever receive compensation from Pyongyang.

The two Koreas remain technically at war because the 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

Thursday's ruling was the third time former South Korean POWs have won damages against Kim and North Korea, according to local reports, although none has yet succeeded in collecting compensation.

Some plaintiffs have moved to seize North Korean assets under Seoul's control - such as copyright fees for Pyongyang's state

television broadcasts - but the legal process remains ongoing.

Former POW Han Jae-bok and two others won a landmark ruling in 2020 ordering the North to pay a total of 42mn won in damages, the first ruling of its kind in South Korea, according to the South's Yonhap news agency.

Yonhap said the court proceeded with Thursday's case through "public notification" after determining there was no practical way to notify the North or Kim about the lawsuit.

Public notification is a legal process in South Korea in which a court posts notice of legal documents in an official gazette when they cannot be delivered directly.

## Lebanon to call on Israel to cease fire at Washington dialogue, says official

Reuters  
Beirut

Lebanon will demand Israel cease fire at face-to-face talks in Washington on Thursday, a senior Lebanese official said, as Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel continued to trade blows despite a US-backed truce declared last month.

The talks between Lebanese and Israeli envoys will mark the sides' third meeting since hostilities reignited between Hezbollah and Israel on March 2. Beirut is attending despite strong objections from Hezbollah.

Fought in parallel to the US-Iran conflict, the Hezbollah-Israel war has rumbled on since US President Donald Trump declared a ceasefire on April 16 - though hostilities have largely been contained to southern Lebanon since then.

The ceasefire is due to expire on Sunday.

With Lebanon's health ministry reporting 22 people killed in Israeli strikes on Wednesday, including eight children, the senior Lebanese official said the Lebanese delegation would seek "a ceasefire that Israel implements".

The Israeli military said an explosive drone launched by Hezbollah fell within Israeli territory near the border and injured several Israeli civilians.

Israel has kept troops in a self-declared security zone in south Lebanon, saying this aims to shield northern Israel from attack by Hezbollah, which fired hundreds of rockets and drones at Israel during the war.

The Israeli military said it carried out a new wave of attacks on Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon on Thursday.

Hezbollah said it carried out 17 attacks on Israeli troops in the south on Wednesday.

When the April 16 ceasefire was announced, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Hezbollah's disarmament would be a fundamental demand in peace talks with Lebanon.

The Washington meetings mark the highest-level contact between Lebanon and Israel in decades.

Both Lebanon and Israel are broadening their delegations for this round, after the sides were represented by their ambassadors to Washington in the previous two meetings.

Lebanese Presidential Special

Envoy Simon Karam and Israel's Deputy National Security Adviser Yossi Draznin will participate in the talks, as well as senior Israeli military representatives, a State Department official said.

The talks are due to take place on Thursday and Friday, the State Department has said.

The US-led mediation between Lebanon and Israel has emerged in parallel to diplomacy aimed at ending the US-Iran conflict. Iran has said that ending the war in Lebanon, triggered by Hezbollah when it opened fire in support of Tehran on March 2, is one of its demands for a deal over the wider conflict.

Trump hosted the last meeting between the Lebanese and Israeli ambassadors to Washington at the Oval Office, saying at the time he looked forward to hosting Netanyahu and Aoun in the near future, and that he saw "a great chance" the countries would reach a peace deal this year.

Aoun later said the timing was not right for a meeting with Netanyahu, and that Lebanon must first secure "a security agreement and a halt to the Israeli attacks, before we raise the issue of a meeting between us".

## Palestinian president pledges polls, reforms to PLA at Fatah conference

AFP  
Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas pledged to press ahead with reforms to the Palestinian Authority (PLA) at a gathering of his Fatah party yesterday, saying he was also prepared to hold long-delayed presidential and parliamentary elections.

Fatah kicked off a three-day conference to elect a new central committee, its highest leadership body, for the first time in 10 years as it faces existential challenges in the wake of the Gaza war.

"We renew our full commitment to continuing work on implementing all the reform measures we pledged," Abbas said in an address, also vowing fresh elections, without providing a timeline.

Noting the decades-long Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the 90-year-old veteran leader said holding the gathering "on our homeland's soil confirms our determination to continue on the democratic path".

Late yesterday, Abbas was unanimously re-elected as the

leader of the Fatah movement, according to the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

His re-election also ensures that he will continue serving as the head of the party's central committee.

Abbas and the Palestinian Authority are under mounting pressure from the US, the European Union and Arab states to implement reforms and hold elections, amid widespread accusations of corruption and political stagnation, as well as the body's declining legitimacy among Palestinians.

Fatah's central committee is expected to play a key role in the post-Abbas era.

Key figures competing to replace Abbas include Jibril Rajoub, the current secretary general of the committee, and PA deputy Hussein al-Sheikh.

The conference comes as the Palestinian national movement faces some of its "most serious challenges in our struggle", Rajoub told AFP ahead of the congress.

He expressed hope that the conference, repeatedly delayed, would contribute to "ensuring and protecting the establishment of a Palestinian state on the

world's agenda and protecting the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people".

In recent decades, Fatah's popularity and influence have dwindled amid internal divisions and growing public frustration over the stagnation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The sense of disappointment led to a surge in support for rival Hamas, which made huge political gains in the occupied West Bank in 2006 elections that it won handily, before going on to expel Fatah from the Gaza Strip almost entirely after a bout of factional fighting.

Hani al-Masri, director of the Palestinian Centre for Policy Research and Strategic Studies (Masarat), told AFP that Fatah now merely uses the PLO to provide itself with legitimacy, "a legitimacy that is eroding in the absence of a unified national project, elections and national consensus".

Rajoub maintained that the conference was a first step towards "putting the Palestinian house in order, to build a partner for establishing a (Palestinian) state".



# Iran urges Brics nations to condemn ME conflict

Reuters  
New Delhi

Iran's foreign minister urged Brics nations yesterday to condemn what he called violations of international law by the US and Israel, as diplomats from emerging economies met for talks in Delhi in the shadow of war in the Middle East.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi accused US ally the United Arab Emirates of direct involvement in military operations against Iran, in a rare moment when Iranian and Emirati officials have been in the same room since the US-Israeli war against Iran began on February 28.

Araqchi said Iran was a "victim of illegal expansionism and warmongering". He asked the Brics+ grouping — comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the UAE — to resist "Western hegemony and the sense of impunity that the US believes it is entitled to".

"Iran therefore calls upon Brics member states and all responsible members of the international community to explicitly condemn violations of international law by the US and Israel," he said.

Later, he told the gathering that the UAE was "directly involved in the aggression against my country", the Iranian semi-official Mehr news agency reported. The UAE was represented by its Deputy Foreign Minister Khalifa Shaheen al-Marar.

In response to the US and Israeli attacks on Iran, Tehran launched strikes on Gulf States including the UAE. Their differences could make it difficult for Brics, which operates by consensus, to agree on a joint statement.



India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (sixth left, front) and foreign ministers of Brics nations pose for a family photograph with delegates of partner countries during the Brics Foreign Ministers' meeting at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

It was not immediately clear how or whether the UAE and other nations attending the Brics+ meeting had responded to Araqchi's remarks.

India, whose partnership with the UAE is deepening, is the Brics chair for 2026 and is one of the parties most affected by Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz since the war.

The waterway usually handles about a fifth of global oil shipments, and its blockade has triggered one of the biggest supply disruptions in recent history. India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and a big user of the strait, has suffered big supply disruptions and lost sailors in attacks on ships in the Gulf.

Although a ceasefire is in place, sporadic attacks have continued.

"Continuing tensions, risks to maritime traffic, and disruptions to energy infrastructure highlight the fragility of the situation," Indian

Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said. "Safe and unimpeded maritime flows through international waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea, remain vital for global economic well-being."

Without naming any sides, he also noted the "increasing resort to unilateral coercive measures and sanctions inconsistent with international law and the UN Charter".

"Such measures disproportionately affect developing countries," he said. "These unjustifiable measures cannot substitute dialogue, nor can pressure replace diplomacy."

In a visit to Beijing coinciding with the Brics meeting, US President Donald Trump discussed the Iran war with China's President Xi Jinping, and a White House official said they agreed that the strait should be open, and that Tehran should never obtain nuclear weapons.

## India slams attack on vessel off Oman

AFP  
New Delhi

India's foreign ministry condemned an attack of an Indian-flagged ship off Oman as "unacceptable" yesterday, with maritime security monitors reporting the cargo vessel had sunk.

New Delhi did not give further details on the attack on Wednesday, and the fate of the unnamed ship, nor who it believes was responsible.

"The attack on an Indian-flagged ship off the coast of Oman yesterday is unacceptable, and we deplore the fact that commercial shipping and civilian mariners continue to be targeted," India's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"All Indian crew on board are safe, and we thank the Omani authorities for rescuing them," it added, without giving further details.

Maritime security firm Vanguard named the cargo vessel with 14 crew as the MSV Haji Ali, and said it had reports that it had sunk off the coast of Limah, Oman — just south of the Strait of Hormuz — after an explosion.

Vanguard said it was reported to be transporting livestock from Berbera in Somalia's breakaway Somaliland region to Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, when there was a "suspected explosion believed to have been caused by a

drone or missile strike".

It said a "fire reportedly broke out onboard, forcing the crew to abandon ship before the vessel sank".

India's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to request for further information about the vessel.

Iran has largely blocked shipping through the Strait of Hormuz — which normally carries about one-fifth of the world's oil and LNG shipments in peacetime — since the outbreak of war with the US and Israel on February 28.

The US has imposed its own naval blockade on Iranian ports despite a fragile ceasefire in place since April 8.

Disruptions around Gulf shipping routes and the Strait of Hormuz continue to drive volatility in oil and gas markets, increasing pressure on energy-importing economies, including India.

"India reiterates that targeting commercial shipping and endangering innocent civilian crew members, or otherwise impeding freedom of navigation and commerce, should be avoided," New Delhi added.

India is hosting talks with foreign ministers from the Brics bloc yesterday, including Iran's Abbas Araqchi.

Araqchi, speaking in New Delhi, made no mention of the attack, but insisted that the Strait of Hormuz "is open for all" commercial vessels who "co-operate" with its navy.

## Minister quits ahead of possible challenge to Starmer

AFP  
London

Britain's health minister Wes Streeting announced yesterday that he had resigned, paving the way for him to launch a leadership challenge against embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

In his resignation letter to Starmer, which Streeting posted on X, he said: "It is now clear that you will not lead the Labour Party into the next general election".

He added that he had "lost confidence" in Starmer's leadership, and a debate about what comes next for the ruling party "needs to be broad, and it needs to be the best possible field of candidates".

Streeting, 43, did not say whether he had the required support of 81 Labour MPs — 20% of the party in parliament — to trigger a contest.

Starmer, who led his Labour party to victory in 2024 elections ending 14 years of Conservative rule, is fighting to save his job after disastrous local and regional polls last week.

Four junior ministers have resigned and more than 80 Labour MPs have urged him to quit, but he has vowed to cling on and more than 100 lawmakers from the ruling party have called for him to stay.



British Health Secretary Wes Streeting walks on Downing Street, on the day of the State Opening of Parliament, in London. (Reuters/File Photo)

Yesterday, his former deputy Angela Rayner announced that UK tax authorities had "cleared" her of deliberate wrongdoing in a tax affair, opening the way for her to compete in a potential leadership race.

The 46-year-old insisted she would not be the one to trigger a contest, but told the Guardian newspaper she would play "whatever role I can" to "deliver the change".

Rayner, a left-wing figurehead hugely popular among Labour's grassroots activists, also called on Starmer to "reflect" on his position.

She was forced to step down in September for underpaying a property duty, but said yesterday the UK

tax authority HMRC had exonerated her of "the accusation that I deliberately sought to avoid tax".

Rayner quit as deputy PM and housing, communities and local government minister after an investigation found she had breached the ministerial code over the purchase of a flat in southern England. Media reported she had paid off £40,000 (\$54,000) in outstanding tax.

Streeting is popular on the right of Labour, but is disliked by MPs on the left who would prefer Rayner or Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham as leader.

Burnham is currently blocked from running as he does not have a seat in the Westminster parliament.

His supporters want Starmer to set a detailed timetable for his departure that allows Burnham to stand.

Starmer's spokesman insisted yesterday that the prime minister was going nowhere.

He "is purely focused on governing. He is getting on with the job of doing just that," the spokesman told reporters.

Voters last week punished Starmer over his 22 months in power in local ballots which saw huge gains for the hard-right Reform UK party and the left-wing populist Greens at Labour's expense.

The Labour Party lost control of the devolved Welsh parliament for the first time and failed to make up ground on the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) in the parliament in Edinburgh.

Rayner earlier stopped short of calling for Starmer to resign, but said voters were frustrated with the way the government was being run.

Starmer has vowed to fight any contest and came out fighting on Monday, pledging to do better and prove his doubters "wrong".

He has been backed by several senior cabinet ministers, including Finance Minister Rachel Reeves, who urged colleagues yesterday not to put the economy "at risk" by "plunging the country into chaos" with a leadership challenge.

## Congress party appoints Satheesan as Kerala CM

AFP  
New Delhi

India's main opposition party Congress named the chief minister for the southern state of Kerala yesterday, after a rare decisive election victory.

The Congress party, led by Rahul Gandhi, was a dominant force for decades — but has dramatically lost ground to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and now directly controls just four states.

The win was the lone bright spot for Congress in the state elections held in April and May, which saw Modi's BJP consolidate its dominance after setbacks in the 2024 national parliamentary election.

Congress lawmakers chose 61-year-old veteran leader V D Satheesan (pictured) to lead the relatively prosperous state of approximately 36mn people, state party leader Deepa Dasgupta told reporters in New Delhi.

In Kerala, a Congress-led alliance defeated the Left Democratic Front after two consecutive terms, winning 102 of 140 seats and ending India's last Communist-led state government.

Congress now controls four states — Kerala, Karnataka and Telangana in the south, and the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh in the north.

Modi's BJP celebrated a landmark victory in West Bengal this month, expanding its dominance beyond the Hindi-speaking heartland of north and central India, into the largely Bengali-speaking state of more than 100mn.

Analysts say the BJP's victory is one of its most significant since Modi was first elected prime minister in 2014.

In West Bengal, the BJP defeated Mamata Banerjee, leader of the regional All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), a key figure in India's wider Congress-led opposition alliance.



## Princess Catherine wraps up Italy visit with pasta class

AFP  
Reggio Emilia

Britain's Princess Catherine wrapped up a trip to Italy yesterday with a pasta-making class on her first official overseas visit since her 2024 cancer diagnosis.

Catherine prepared "tortelli" — a regional speciality similar to ravioli — at a farmhouse hotel near the city of Reggio Emilia.

Looking a bit unsure of herself, the Princess of Wales kneaded the dough, applied a filling and cut out the pasta shapes as Ivan Lampredi, a chef, assisted her.

"Sorry, I'm very slow," she could be heard saying at one point.

"Don't worry," Lampredi later told her as she cut the pasta.

Earlier in the day, she visited an Italian preschool practising nature-based learning and a centre to teach children about recycling.

The visit by the Princess of Wales, whose husband Prince William is the heir to the British throne, was focused on early years education.

The subject is close to the princess's heart as a mother of three children — George, 12, Charlotte, 11, and Louis, eight.



Britain's Kate, Princess of Wales, visits the "Salvador Allende" Scuola dell'infanzia in Reggio Emilia, yesterday. (Reuters)

Kate, as she is widely known, was greeted by hundreds of cheering onlookers in Reggio Emilia at the start of her visit on Wednesday.

The 44-year-old's last official trip abroad was in December 2022 when she travelled to Boston with William for the awarding of the environmental Earthshot prize.

She announced in March 2024 that she had been diagnosed with

cancer, without revealing which type, and said that she had begun chemotherapy.

In January 2025 she said she was in remission from cancer, and since then she has been gradually returning to public royal duties.

She set up the Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood in 2021, working to highlight the importance of a child's early years.

## Hantavirus cruise passengers head to Australia

AFP  
Sydney

Six passengers who sailed on a hantavirus-affected cruise will fly to Australia from the Netherlands yesterday while dressed in full protective gear, the Australian government said.

The six — four Australians, a Briton who lives in Australia, and a New Zealander — were in "good health", showed no symptoms, and recently tested negative for the virus, Health Minister Mark Butler told a news conference in Canberra.

The Australian government has secured a plane and crew, due to leave the Netherlands at 0730 GMT yesterday, with all aboard required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

The plane is expected to arrive today at an air force base in the Western Australian capital, Perth, located next to a 500-bed quarantine facility where the six will be required to stay for at least three weeks, Butler said.

"This is one of the strongest



A chartered aircraft transporting six passengers who sailed on a hantavirus-affected cruise, to Australia departs from Eindhoven Airport, in Eindhoven yesterday. (AFP)

quarantine arrangements in response to this hantavirus outbreak you will find anywhere in the world," Butler said.

"They will be subject to testing when they arrive in Australia, and they will be in full PPE during the duration of the flight, so there is no risk of transmission."

He did not provide further

details about the passengers or say where the plane would refuel — a question that had reportedly complicated flight arrangements.

The government has yet to determine how to handle the passengers' isolation after the initial three-week quarantine, given the virus' potential incubation period of 42 days, the minister said.

## Italians die in Maldives diving incident: foreign ministry

Five Italian nationals have died following a scuba diving accident in the Maldives, Italy's foreign ministry said yesterday. The incident occurred in the Vaavu Atoll, where the group had been attempting to explore

a series of underwater caves at a depth of around 50 metres (165ft), the foreign ministry statement said. It did not give any details about the identities of the victims or the exact cause of the accident.

The foreign ministry said an investigation was underway, adding that the Italian Embassy in Sri Lanka was working to contact the victims' families and provide consular assistance. (Reuters)



# The virtues of the first 10 days of Dhul-Hijjah

Praise be to Allah Who has created time and has made some times better than others, some months and days and nights better than others, when rewards are multiplied many times, as a mercy towards His slaves. This encourages them to do more righteous deeds and makes them more eager to worship Him.

This season of worship brings many benefits, such as the opportunity to correct one's faults and make up for any shortcomings or anything that one might have missed. Each of these special occasions involves some kind of worship through which people may draw closer to Allah, and some kind of blessing through which Allah bestows His favour and mercy upon whomsoever He, Almighty, Wills.

The Muslim must understand the value of his life, increase his worship of Allah and persist in doing good deeds until the moment of death. Allah Almighty says (what means): "And worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty (death)." [Qur'an 15:99] The commentators said: "The 'certainty' means death."

Among the special seasons of worship are the first 10 days of Dhul-Hijjah, which Allah has preferred over all the other days of the year. Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these 10 days." The people (the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them) asked: "O Messenger of Allah, not even Jihad in the path of Allah?" He, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Not even Jihad in the path of Allah, except in the case of a man who went out to fight giving himself and his wealth up for the cause, and came back with nothing (lost both his property and life)." [Al-Bukhari]

This text and others indicate that these 10 days are better than all the other days of the year, with no exceptions, not even the last 10 days of Ramadan. But the last 10 nights of Ramadan are better, because they include the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree), which is better than a thousand months. Thus the various reports may be reconciled. [See Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 5/412]

## The virtues of these 10 days:

The virtues are based on many things:

1. Allah Swears an oath by 10 days



of Dhul-Hijjah, and swearing an oath by something is indicative of its importance and great benefit. Allah says (what means): "By the dawn and by the 10 nights (i.e. the first 10 days of the month of Dhul-Hijjah)..." [Qur'an 89: 1-2]

Ibn 'Abbaas, Ibn Az-Zubayr, Mujahid and others of the earlier and later generations, may Allah have mercy upon them, said that this refers to the first 10 days of Dhul-Hijjah. Ibn Katheer, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "This is the correct opinion." [Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 8/413]

2. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, encouraged people to do righteous deeds because of the virtue of this season for people throughout the world, and also because of the virtue of the place - for the pilgrims to the Sacred House of Allah.

3. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, commanded us to recite a lot of Tasbeeh ("SubhaanAllah"), Tahmeed ("Al-hamdu Lillaah") and Takbeer ("Al-lahu Akbar") during this time. 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "There are no days greater in the sight of Allah and in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Him than these 10 days, so during this time recite a great deal of Tahleel ("Laa ilaaha illAllah"), Takbeer and Tahmeed." [Ahmad]

4. These 10 days include the Day of 'Arafah, on which Allah perfected His Religion. Fasting on this day will expiate for the sins of two years. These days also include the Day of Sacrifice, the greatest day of the entire year and the greatest day of Haj, which combines acts of worship in a way unlike any other day.

## Shall you offer a sacrifice?

The Sunnah indicates that the one who wants to offer a sacrifice must stop cutting his hair and nails and removing anything from his skin, from the beginning of the 10 days until after he has offered his sacrifice, because the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "When you see the new moon of Dhul-Hijjah, if any one of you wants to offer a sacrifice, then he

should stop cutting his hair and nails until he has offered his sacrifice." According to another report he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "He should not remove (literally, touch) anything from his hair or skin." [Muslim]

The Prophet's, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, instruction here makes one thing obligatory and his prohibition makes another Haraam (prohibited), according to the soundest opinion, because these commands and prohibitions are unconditional and unavoidable.

However, if a person does any of these things deliberately, he must seek Allah's forgiveness but is not required to offer (an extra) sacrifice in expiation; his sacrifice will be acceptable. Whoever needs to remove some hair, nails, etc. because it is harming him, such as having a broken nail or a wound in a site where there is hair, can do so, and there is nothing wrong with that. The state of Ihraam is so important that it is permitted to cut one's hair if leaving it will cause harm. There is nothing wrong with men or women

washing their heads during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, because the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, only forbade cutting the hair, not washing it.

The wisdom behind this prohibition of the one who wants to offer a sacrifice from cutting his hair, etc., is so that he may resemble those in Ihraam in some aspects of the rituals performed, and so that he may draw closer to Allah by offering the sacrifice. So he leaves his hair and nails alone until the time when he has offered his sacrifice, in the hope that Allah will save him in his entirety from the Fire. And Allah knows best.

If a person has cut his hair or nails during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah because he was not planning to offer a sacrifice, then he decides later, during the 10 days, to offer a sacrifice, then he must refrain from cutting his hair and nails from the moment he makes this decision.

Some women may delegate their brothers or sons to make the sacrifice on their behalf, then cut their hair during these 10 days. This is not correct, because the ruling applies to the one who is offering the sacrifice, whether or not he (or she) delegates someone else to carry out the actual deed. The prohibition does not apply to the person delegated, only to the person who is making the sacrifice, as is indicated in the narration. The person who is sacrificing on behalf of someone else, for whatever reason, does not have to adhere to this prohibition.

This prohibition appears to apply only to the one who is offering the sacrifice, not to his wife and children, unless any of them is offering a sacrifice in his or her own right, because the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, used to sacrifice "on behalf of the family of Muhammad," but there are no reports that say he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, forbade them to cut their hair or nails at that time.

If a person was planning to offer a sacrifice, then he decides to go and perform Hajj, he should not cut his hair or nails if he wants to enter ihraam, because the Sunnah is only to cut hair and nails when necessary. But if he is performing Tamattu' [whereby he performs 'Umrah, comes out of ihraam and enters ihraam anew for Hajj], he should trim his hair at the end of his 'Umrah because this is part of the ritual.

# Hajj contemplations

This is a journey that was taken by Prophets and Messengers before you.

Those who take the path of the Prophets magnify the tawheed of Allah and His House. There are those, however, who come to perform Hajj and their hearts are attached to other than Allah. They invoke the dead and the righteous, whether present or absent. This is the opposite of tawheed, it is Shirk no matter what they call it because it is setting up rivals besides Allah. So, free your intention from any kind of devotion to other than Allah. Repent and come with a sincere heart submitting to Allah remembering what Ibraaheem and his son Ismaa'eel said when they were raising the foundations of Allah's House, the Ka'aba.

"O our Rabb! Accept from us and make us submit to You in Islam and show us our manaasik (all the rites of Hajj) and accept our repentance." - Qur'an 2:128

2. You are set to depart and you may or may not return to your home. Make this journey to Allah's House as Allah wants it. Think of the next journey that is surely coming, the one that leads to the meeting of Allah, Most High. This raises questions like: What did I prepare for that Day? Am I following Allah's Commands? Am I a follower of the Sunnah of Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam)? Do I really know of Allah? Am I a believer that Allah is above the seven heavens over His 'Arsh as He has stated in His Book and as His Messengers have asserted? Am I a believer that believes Allah has a true Face that suits His Majesty as He has affirmed in the Qur'an and as has been affirmed by His Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam)? Am I a believer in all of Allah's Names, Attributes and Actions which He has affirmed in His Book and by His Messengers? Or do I just take and accept by my doubt, rejecting, or distorting (through what is called figurative interpretation of His Attributes) the meanings of Allah's Attributes and Actions?

And invoke not any other ilaah (god) along with Allah, la ilaaha ilaa huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), Everything will perish save His Face, His is the Decision, and to Him (all) shall be returned. - Qur'an 28:88

3. Know, may Allah's Mercy upon you, that when you reach the meeqaat there is another meeqaat that is still to come. It is the meeqaat (appointed meeting) on the Day of Resurrection:

Say (O Muhammad): (Yes) verily, those of old, and those of later times. All will surely be gathered together for an appointed Meeting of a known Day. - Qur'an 56:49-50

4. When you start saying the talbiyah remember the Command of Allah to Prophet Ibraaheem:

And proclaim to mankind the Hajj. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from deep and distant (wide) mountain highways (to perform Hajj). - Qur'an 22:27

The talbiyah you make is in response to Prophet Ibraaheem's proclamation to visit Allah's house of worship. Allah is Most Great.

5. Upon entering Makkah remember that

you are in the Secure Sanctuary:

Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary (Makkah), to which are brought fruits of all kinds, a provision from Ourselves, but most of them know not. - Qur'an 28:57

Let one commit himself to repentance, having a good opinion of Allah, hoping that Allah will grant him security from His Punishment.

6. You will enter one of the gates of al-Masjid al-Haram. Then there you are before the magnificent House of Allah, Most High, the Ka'aba. Now you see what you hoped to see for a long time. Thank Allah for making this possible and hope that He will grant you the greatest reward of seeing His Majestic Face on the Day of Resurrection. This thankfulness is not just in saying "alhamdu-lillaah," but also by obeying Allah while on Hajj and for the rest of your life.

7. You start your tawaaf knowing that it is a great time for magnifying Allah the Exalted. Remember Him by His Names, Attributes and Actions. Also while in tawaaf try to reflect upon the time when Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) was prevented from doing the same thing you are doing today. Then think about what he did in clearing out the site from the symbols signifying worship to other than Allah! All idols were demolished. Busy yourself with du'aa. Ask Allah, the Most Great to make you hold to the correct belief and Path of the salaf and make you die on it. Ask Allah to save you from all forms of Shirk and Bid'ah.

8. While in sa'yi, contemplate on Haajar, the mother of Ismaa'eel, when she asked her husband Ibraaheem: "Did Allah order you to do this (leaving her and her baby Ismaa'eel in Makkah)? He said: "Yes." Her great response was: "Then He (Allah) will not neglect us!" Think about this great dependence upon Allah when you are in the sa'yi walking the same path which Haajar took in search for water and for the means of life around the mounts of Safa and Marwah. Think about her endurance, perseverance and truth in Allah. The sa'yi exemplifies the strong belief that we are in need for the One Who Sustains and Provides - Allah, the Exalted.

Think about Ibraaheem's invocation on his way homeward to Palestine:

O our Rabb! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley with no cultivation, by Your Sacred House (the Ka'aba at Makkah); in order, O our Rabb, that they may offer prayers perfectly, so fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks. - Qur'an 14:37

Men and fruits came to Makkah from many places. Ibraaheem returned to visit and later to share with his son Ismaa'eel the noble task of raising the foundations of the Ka'aba.

9. The standing on 'Arafat is the Hajj. The crowds should remind you of the Day of Resurrection. Humble yourself to Allah, manifest your 'uboodiyyah to Him Alone through du'aa, sincere intention and strong

determination to free yourself from the sins of the past and to build up a commitment to rush for doing what is good. Think of becoming a better person when you return. Rid yourself of false pride and showing off because it may ruin what you may gain on this day.

10. You gathered the pebbles and you are about to embark on stoning the jamaraat. This is an act of obedience and remembrance of Allah, Most Magnificent. The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "When you cast the small pebbles (ie at the jamaraat), it will be a light for you on the Day of Resurrection."

11. When performing the sacrifice remember that saying of Allah, the Most High:

It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah, but it is your devotion that reaches him. - Qur'an 22:37

12. When you have completed your Hajj, do not think that the remembrance of Allah has ended. Listen to what Allah says:

So when you have accomplished your manaasik (ie the rites of Hajj) remember Allah as you remember your forefathers or with a far more remembrance. - Qur'an 2:200

Special note: If you go to Madinah then the objective of your visit should be according to the Sunnah and not bid'ah. Your intention is to set on a journey to visit the Prophet's mosque and not his grave. When you reach the mosque and you pray upon entering then you may go to the grave and say, "As-salaama 'alayka ayyuhan-nabiyy!" The same salaam is also mentioned when you pass by Abu Bakr and 'Umar without innovations like:

- a. Visiting the grave of the Prophet before praying in the mosque.
- b. Making du'aa facing the grave.
- c. Seeking nearness to Allah by means of the Prophet. This is a prohibited form of tawassul.
- d. Seeking intercession from the Prophet.
- e. Placing the hands upon the grills around the room containing the Prophet's grave to seek blessings, etc.

Remember the Prophet's sayings: "Do not make my grave an 'Eid (place of celebration)..."

"May Allah's curse be on the Jews and Christians for taking the graves of their Prophets as places of worship."

"Those before you took the graves of their Prophets as places of worship. Do not take graves as places of worship for verily I forbid you to do so."

13. The Hajj journey is not meant to gain any material reward. It is a selfless sacrifice solely for Allah, Most Majestic. It demands true love and fear of Him. It should be performed with full consciousness of one's heart, with full humility and submission to Allah. It should not be thought of as a tourist-type excursion or be performed as mere physical rites. It develops sincerity, piety, humility, self-control, sacrifice, and true knowledge of the meaning of submission and obedience to Allah, Most High. It helps the pilgrim to be a better person who is devoted to Allah in every aspect of life.

## Types of worship and deeds to be performed during the 10 days:

One must understand that these days are a great blessing from Allah to His slave, which is appreciated properly by the actively righteous. It is the Muslim's duty to appreciate this blessing and make the most of the opportunity, by devoting these ten days to paying more attention to striving hard in worship.

Among His blessings to His slaves, Allah has given us many ways in which to perform righteous deeds and worship Him, so that the Muslim may be constantly active and consistent in his worship of his Lord.

Among the righteous deeds which the Muslim should strive to perform during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah are:

1. The performance of Hajj and 'Umrah, which are the best of deeds that may be done. And what indicates their superiority are a number of narrations, one of which is the saying of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam: "Performance of 'Umrah is an expiation of the sins committed between it and the previous 'Umrah, and the reward of the Hajj which is accepted by Allaah, Most High, is nothing but Paradise." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

2. Fasting: It is recommended to fast on the nine days and especially on the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah. There is no doubt that the act of fasting is one of the best deeds, and it is from what Allah, Most High, has chosen for himself, as in the Sacred Hadith: "Fasting is for Me (Allah), and it is I who give reward for it. Verily, someone gives up his sexual passion, his food and his drink for my sake..." [Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmithi, An-Nasaa'i and Ibn Maajah]

Also, from Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, who said that the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "No servant (of Allah, Most High) fasts one day in the way of Allah, except that Allah, the Most High, removes his face from the fire because of it (the distance of travelling) seventy years." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Fasting the Day of 'Arafah will be credited with Allah by forgiving one's sins of the previous year and the following year." [Muslim]

3. Uttering the mention of Allah: It is recommended to utter Takbeer ("Al-lahu Akbar"), Tahmeed ("Al-hamdu Lillaah"), Tahleel ("La ilaaha illallah") and Tasbeeh ("Subhaanallah") during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah in the Mosque, at home, on the street and every place where it is permitted to mention Allah and mention His name out loud, as an act of worship and as a proclamation of the greatness of Allah, Most High. He The Most High, says (what means): "...And mention the name of Allah on known [i.e., specific] days..." [Qur'an 22: 28]

4. Performing more good deeds in general, because good deeds are beloved by Allah and will bring a great reward from Him. Whoever is not able to go to Hajj should occupy himself at this blessed

time by worshipping Allah, praying, reading Qur'an, supplicating, giving charity, honouring his parents, upholding the ties of kinship, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, and other good deeds and acts of worship.

5. Offering sacrifice. One of the good deeds that will bring a person closer to Allah during these 10 days is offering a sacrifice, by choosing a high-quality animal. It is the Sunnah of our father Ibraaheem, may Allah exalt his mention - from when Allah The Most High, redeemed his son by the great sacrifice (of an animal in his place). The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, slaughtered (sacrificed) two horned rams, black and white in colour, and he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, slaughtered them with his own hands, mentioned the name of Allah (saying Bismillaah), said Takbeer (Allaahu-Akbar), and placed his foot on their sides (while slaughtering them). [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

6. Sincerely repenting. One of the most important things to do during these ten days is to repent sincerely to Allah and to give up all kinds of disobedience and sin.

Repentance means coming back to Allah and foregoing all the deeds, open and secret, that He dislikes, out of regret for what has passed, giving it up immediately and being determined never to return to it, and to adhere firmly to the Truth by doing what Allah loves. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Verily Allah has a sense of 'Ghayrah' (honor, prestige and anger over violation), and Allah's sense of Ghayrah is provoked when a person does that which Allah has made prohibited." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

7. It is incumbent for the Muslim (who is not making Hajj) to make every effort to perform the 'Eid Prayer wherever it is performed, and to be present for the Khutbah (sermon) and benefit.

He must know the wisdom behind the legislation of this 'Eid (celebration). It is a day of thankfulness and performing deeds of righteousness. So, he must not make it a day of wildness, pride and vanity. He should not make it a time of disobedience and increase in forbidden things such as music, singing, uncontrolled amusement and the like - those things which could cause the cancellation of the good deeds done in these 10 days (of Dhul-Hijjah).

There is much to be gained, so make the most of the opportunity afforded by these invaluable and irreplaceable ten days. Hasten to do good deeds, before death strikes, before one regrets his negligence and failure to act, before one is asked to return to life but only when prayers will never be answered, before death intervenes between the hopeful one and the things he hopes for, before one is trapped with his deeds in the grave. (Taken from Al Jumu'ah magazine)

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**GULF TIMES**

# Iran, Ukraine wars deliver worst hit in years to oil refining output

Refinery attacks tied to the wars in Iran and Ukraine have knocked out nearly 9% of global oil refining capacity in recent months, deepening a fuel supply crunch and likely delaying recovery by months after fighting ends.

The Iran war has not only slashed energy supply by disrupting tanker traffic out of the Gulf, but marks the biggest hit to refining since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, with damage to facilities and crude shortages forcing cuts in processing.

“The current tightness will continue to underpin the refined product market,” Saxo Bank analyst Ole Hansen told Reuters. “Not least considering the damage done to refineries.” Crude prices have surged, with benchmark Brent hitting \$126 a barrel in April, a four-year high. Some prices have risen even faster, including jet fuel, which hit a record high in March.

Tightened supply has forced refiners, traders and retailers to tap crude and fuel inventories to meet demand. About 500mn barrels of oil have been drawn from stocks, TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanné said on April 29, adding the figure could rise to 1bn barrels given the time needed to restart facilities and deliver to Asia. “Even if the war was to end quickly, prices are expected to remain at high levels,” he said.

Daily demand for liquid fuels including petrol, diesel, jet fuel and fuel oil derived from crude is about 104mn barrels. The Iran war had shut as much as 3.52mn barrels per day of refining capacity as of May 7, according to industry monitor IIR.

## The Iran war had shut as much as 3.52mn barrels per day of refining capacity as of May 7

Refineries impacted include the 550,000 bpd Ras Tanura plant, Saudi Arabia’s largest. It has restarted, though some units are undergoing turnaround, Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser said on Monday.

Two of Kuwait’s three refineries – Mina Al-Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah – were hit by drones. Both, as well as the 615,000 bpd Al-Zour refinery, Kuwait’s largest, have lowered processing rates. War between Russia and Ukraine has also removed an additional 1.42mn bpd, IIR said. Reuters calculations show Ukrainian drone attacks aimed at disrupting Moscow’s war machine have forced about 700,000 bpd in Russian crude processing capacity offline between January and May at 16 sites.

Across Asia and Europe, a shortage of crude has reduced refinery processing volumes by about 3.8mn bpd, according to JPMorgan analysts. The outages linked to the two wars equal almost 9% of the 100.5mn bpd of global refining capacity, according to IIR.

“Lower refinery runs in Asia and Russia have had a disproportionately large impact on gasoil and diesel,” FGE analyst Qilin Tam said. “We see the balance in Asia flipping from a solid regional surplus to a glaring regional deficit.”

Oil product stocks on May 7 in oil hub Singapore hit their lowest in more than nine months, official data showed. Europe could face jet fuel shortages as early as June if Gulf supplies are not fully replaced, the International Energy Agency has said.

Reflecting that shortfall, Nigeria’s giant 650,000 bpd Dangote refinery almost doubled its exports of jet fuel to Europe in April, Kpler data showed. EU diesel prices at the pump hit a record 2.11 euros per litre in April, according to European Commission data, reflecting lost Gulf supply and halted intake from Russia, once Europe’s top supplier, over the Ukraine war.

The refining industry entered the year with limited spare capacity after closures during and since the pandemic, Energy Aspects analyst George Dix said. About 9.69mn bpd of capacity closed between 2019 and 2026 because of the pandemic, operational issues, poor economics and the gradual rise of electric vehicles, IIR data showed, or about 10% of current working capacity.

A return to normal is likely to take months. The IEA expects processing at Gulf refineries to fall to 8.7mn bpd this year, down 900,000 bpd from 2025. It has also lowered its forecast for Russian crude runs in 2026, pegging them as low as 4.8 million bpd in the second quarter versus around 5.2 mn bpd earlier this year, citing Ukrainian attacks. — Reuters

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# The water effect: Why we feel different by the sea

**Neuroscience is catching up to what coastal communities have always known; proximity to water changes how we think, feel, and recover**

By Ahmed al-Hassan  
Doha

There is a moment just before sunset, when the light over Doha turns a particular shade of gold and the air begins to cool. Behind you, the hum of the city fades and in front, there is only water, flat and wide, stretching toward the horizon. A seagull crosses overhead while water moves gently against the edge of the dock.

Most people would pass through this moment without naming it. However, something in the body responds all the same, a loosening in the chest, a shift in the pace of your breathing, and a sense that the weight you carry has started to lift. Along the waterfront at Old Doha Port, moments like this are part of the rhythm of the place. What feels like a private, passing experience turns out to be something science has spent the last decade trying to measure. What the body already knows, researchers are only now looking to fully explain.

**What blue spaces do to the mind**

Scientists use the term blue space to describe any visible body of water including oceans, rivers, harbours, and coastal promenades. The research into what these environments do to us has grown steadily, and the findings point consistently in one direction, regular exposure to these environments is associated with lower levels of stress, improved mood, and better overall mental health. The question is not really whether water changes how we feel, it is why.

Water has a quality that psychologists often call ‘soft fascination’: The idea that something can hold the eye without demanding anything



from the mind. Unlike a screen or a meeting or a spreadsheet, it asks nothing of you. Your gaze follows the surface. The brain, relieved of the relentless processing that fills most of a working day, begins quietly to recover. The mind rests while the eyes stay open.

**The sound of recovery**

The body is listening too, even when the mind is not. The acoustic environment of a coastal setting plays a distinct role. Studies in psychoacoustics have shown that rhythmic, low-frequency sounds, such as lapping waves, distant marine engines, or the call of seabirds, activate the parasympathetic nervous system (Buxton et al., 2021). This is the body’s counterweight to the fight-or-flight response: it lowers heart rate, slows breathing, and eases muscular tension. The sounds do not need to be consciously noticed to have an effect. Instead, the nervous system responds to what is not being asked of it.

Old Doha Port has its own acoustic character. The sound of a seagull carries across the water, and somewhere beneath it, the low knock of a dhow against its mooring keeps its own irregular time. For people who spend most of their time in an office or even hearing the noise of traffic, it

is the quality of these sounds, unscheduled, undesigned, that register differently. It becomes a quieting effect that arrives from the outside and works its way in.

**Horizon, space, and the nervous system**

There is another, often overlooked, dimension to blue spaces: the open horizon. In dense urban environments, the visual field is constantly interrupted by buildings, traffic, screens, and signage. The brain processes each of these inputs, and over time, the accumulated cognitive load contributes to fatigue, irritability, and reduced capacity for decision-making.

A waterfront reverses that equation. When the eye reaches an unbroken line between sea and sky, the brain receives a signal that the immediate environment is safe and spacious. Breathing deepens, and the nervous system begins to regulate itself. At Old Doha Port, this is part of the character of the place. The horizon is wide, the sky is uncluttered, and the view extends toward the water without interruption. For residents, the port’s waterfront offers a rare point of visual openness, a piece of coastline where the built environment gives way to the natural one.

**Why it matters here**

In a fast-moving city, spaces that allow for pause are not always easy to come by. Much of urban life is defined by enclosed environments, structured routines, and constant visual and mental input. What makes waterfront settings different is not just their openness, but their ability to interrupt that rhythm.

At Old Doha Port, that shift is immediate. The transition from city to sea is not gradual; it happens within a few steps. One moment, you are within the pace of the city. The next, you are facing open water, with nothing between you and the horizon. That contrast is part of what makes the experience so effective.

It is not about distance or escape. It is about proximity to a different kind of environment. One that slows the pace, softens the noise, and gives the mind a point to settle on, even briefly.

None of this is to say that standing by the water will cure anything. Mental health is complex, and no single environment can substitute for professional care when it is needed. But the research is consistent on one point: the environments we spend time in shape how we feel, how we think, and how well we recover from the demands of daily life.

What Old Doha Port offers, perhaps without anyone having designed it this way, is one of the few places in the city where the conditions for that kind of recovery exist naturally. The water, horizon, sounds, and space come together in a way that feels naturally harmonious.

And on any given evening, if you watch the people walking along the waterfront, you can see it working. A father sitting on a bench, looking out. A couple walking slowly, saying nothing. A teenager with headphones, staring at the horizon.



## Merz calls for more investment, less subsidies in EU budget

AFP  
Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz urged the European Union yesterday to reform its budget to include more investments and reduce subsidies, but rejected any joint borrowing by EU nations to do so.

The 27 EU nations are wrangling over the bloc's 2028-2034 budget, with so-called frugal nations like Germany and the Netherlands opposing a big increase in spending proposed by the bloc's executive Commission.

"We cannot meet the challenges of the 21st century with a 20th-century budget," the conservative leader declared in Aachen, Germany, in a speech at the ceremony awarding the Charlemagne Prize to former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi.

In a hard-hitting report on European competitiveness in 2024, Draghi called for a fundamental change of course by the bloc to stay in the race against the US and China, notably through joint investments.

Merz supported Draghi's call, criticising the fact that the EU's budget "has remained, in its content and structure, practically unchanged over the past decades".

He lashed out at the fact that "more than two-thirds of European funds go to redistribution and subsidies".

The EU has long relied upon subsidies and redistribution to assuage the impact from disruptions caused by reducing internal trade barriers, as well as to help integrate poorer nations as the bloc has expanded east.



The former president of the European Central Bank and former Italian prime minister Mario Draghi (left) talks with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz after Draghi was awarded the 2026 International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, yesterday in western Germany. (AFP)

Merz called on the bloc to cut its budget and step up investments meant to boost competitiveness and defence.

However the German leader reiterated his opposition to the mechanism advocated by Draghi to fund the investments: joint borrowing by EU nations.

"Excessive indebtedness threatens sovereignty and limits the capacity to act," said Merz, whose comments were likely also directed to a domestic political audience.

Last year, after years of inaction, Germany reluctantly relaxed its strict constitutional borrowing limits to bolster investment in defence and infrastructure.

In his speech accepting the Charlemagne prize, awarded to someone who advances European unity, Draghi expressed scepticism of the EU's drive to sign multilateral free-trade deals to lift growth, a policy strongly supported by Germany.

"New trade deals are easier to

agree than confronting the unfinished work at home, because that work forces choices Europe has long preferred to avoid: to confront the established rent positions and the vested interests that gain from an incomplete single market and fragmented energy markets," Draghi said.

The former Italian premier, who led the ECB from 2011 to 2019, is widely seen as having saved the euro during the bloc's debt crisis.

Draghi's replacement at the head of the ECB, Christine Lagarde, delivered a similar message about the European single market being unfulfilled and the responsibility of national leaders to act upon Draghi's report.

"The US and China have entered a new age of industrial strategy and geopolitical competition — intensified by tariff wars and rare-earth battles — and all this amid the worst energy crisis on record," Lagarde said in a speech delivered the previous evening.

## PM Sanchez addresses Fatah meet as Palestinians face 'profound difficulty'

AFP  
Ramallah

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez addressed a conference of the Fatah party on behalf of the international Socialist movement yesterday, reiterating the latter's commitment to a two-state solution at a time of "profound difficulty" for the Palestinian people.

The Socialist premier has been an outspoken supporter of the Palestinian cause and critic of Israel's conduct of the war in Gaza, and Spain was among several European countries to formally recognise a Palestinian state in 2024.

"As the Socialist International, we reaffirm our commitment to a just and lasting political solution based on international law and peaceful coexistence," Sanchez said in a prerecorded video message played at the conference.

"The two-state solution remains the necessary framework to move forward towards that goal."

During Fatah's three-day general conference that kicked off in Ramallah yesterday, the movement will vote to elect a new central committee, its highest leadership body.

The committee is expected to play a key role in the post-Abbas era, with some wondering whether the 90-year-old leader might finally step down after more than two decades at the helm, despite the lack of a clear heir apparent.

"This congress takes place at



Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez appears on a screen during the 8th General Conference of Fatah in Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. (Reuters)

a time of profound difficulty for the Palestinian people and for the region, a moment that calls for responsibility, unity and political leadership," Sanchez noted.

"The Socialist International has collaborated closely with Fatah and its historical leadership from Yasser Arafat to President Mahmoud Abbas, contributing to efforts aimed at achieving a negotiated solution that will bring peace, stability and prosperity to all Palestinians."

Fatah has historically been the main component of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation

(PLO), which includes most Palestinian factions but excludes Islamist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

In recent decades, Fatah's popularity has dwindled in the face of endemic corruption, internal divisions and growing public frustration over the stagnation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

At the conference, Abbas pledged to press ahead with reforms within the Palestinian Authority, saying he was prepared to hold long-delayed presidential and parliamentary elections, a long-standing request from the US and the European Union.

# Russia pummels Kyiv, denting peace hopes

AFP  
Kyiv

Russia pummelled Kyiv for hours early yesterday, firing hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles in an attack that killed at least 10 people and further shredded hopes of a halt to Moscow's grinding invasion.

AFP journalists in the capital heard air raid sirens wailing across the city before several hours of thunderous explosions and flashes in the sky sent Kyiv residents running to shelter in metro stations.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia had launched 675 attack drones and 56 missiles, mainly at Kyiv, adding its air defence units had downed 652 of the drones and 41 missiles.

"Everything was burning. People were screaming... people were shouting," Andriy, a Kyiv resident still wearing a nightgown and with blood stains on his shirt, told AFP near a collapsed Soviet-era residential building.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said 20 sites in the capital were damaged, including homes, a school, a veterinary clinic and other civilian infrastructure.

"As of now, we know that a total of 10 people have died in Kyiv as a result of the Russian massive



Rescuers work at the site of an apartment building damaged during Russian missile and drone strikes, in Kyiv, yesterday. (Reuters)

attack," he said in his evening address.

Seven bodies were pulled from the rubble of a single destroyed residential building — three men, three women, and a young girl, police said. Another 45 were wounded.

Russian attacks also wounded people in the southern regions of Odesa and Kherson, and in the eastern region of Kharkiv.

"These are definitely not the actions of those who believe the war is coming to an end. It is important that partners do not remain silent about this strike," Zelensky said.

Ukraine said it shot down 94% of all drones and 73% of the missiles fired by Russia.

"The most difficult challenge is defending against ballistic missiles," he said.

A slew of Ukraine's allies, including the United Kingdom, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, the Netherlands, Moldova, and Slovakia, condemned the fatal attacks.

"By bombing civilians, Russia demonstrates less its strength than its weakness: it is running out of solutions on the military front and does not know how to end its war of aggression," French President Emmanuel Macron said.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said the attacks on Kyiv showed that Russia "openly mocks" efforts to end the war.

## US pledges extra \$1.8bn for UN aid

AFP  
UN

The US yesterday pledged an additional \$1.8bn for UN humanitarian aid in 2026, after President Donald Trump slashed foreign assistance under his "America First" agenda.

The additional payment brings the total US aid package for the UN this year to \$3.8bn — still far less than before Trump's return to the White House in January 2025.

"These funds will save more lives around the world, but also drive forward the reforms that we put in place for efficiency, accountability and lasting impact," US ambassador Mike Waltz told reporters in New York.

The funding comes on top of \$2bn the US promised in December for humanitarian work in 18 countries, which it released in exchange for UN commitments to reforms.

Washington has accused UN aid programmes of being inefficient

and undermining American values by adhering to "radical social ideologies" related to diversity.

"We found that when the UN does what it does best, delivering humanitarian aid in remote, difficult locations, at scale with a reliable and affordable supply chain, it can and does succeed," Waltz said.

"It's only, then, when the organisation strays from its core mission that it tends to not perform nearly as well as it should," he added.

Waltz also rejected narratives that the US has "walked away" from humanitarian aid as "absolutely false."

In 2025, the US remained the leading donor to humanitarian response plans worldwide but with a major drop: \$2.7bn compared with \$11bn in 2024.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said the latest US pledge "will allow humanitarians to reach millions of people in the most urgent crises with lifesaving support."

The UN says that it needs \$33bn

in 2026 to support 135mn people impacted by wars, epidemics, climate change and natural disasters.

But faced with a drop in funding, humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher in December presented a streamlined plan that requires \$23bn to help 87mn of the people most at risk.

For now, the plan is only funded at \$7.3bn.

"With this fresh funding, we will save millions of lives," Fletcher said of the latest US commitment at yesterday's news conference.

"This allocation will allow us to accelerate and expand on the progress made, saving lives, reforming the system, defending the impartiality and neutrality of humanitarian action."

Beyond humanitarian funding, the US paid nothing in 2025 towards the regular UN budget, to which it is typically the largest contributor.

Washington's outstanding arrears amount to around \$2bn for the regular budget, and \$2.2bn for peacekeeping operations.

## Ecuador captures leader of major gang

AFP  
Quito

Ecuadorian police yesterday captured a leader of the powerful drug trafficking gang Los Lobos in an operation observed by AFP.

President Daniel Noboa, one of US President Donald Trump's staunchest allies on the continent, has prioritised targeting cocaine traffickers since he came to power in 2023.

He has deployed soldiers on the streets and in prisons, launched dramatic raids on drug strongholds, and declared frequent states of emergency — measures fiercely criticised by human rights groups.

Interior minister John Reimberg led yesterday's operation to capture Eduardo Gomez, in which 22 locations were raided and 15 people arrested.

Dozens of elite police officers moved through deserted streets in southern Quito before arrest-



Police arrest Eduardo Gomez, alias "Gordo Paul", a leader of Los Lobos drug trafficking group, in Quito in the early hours yesterday. (AFP)

ing Gomez in a house.

"He is the most dangerous criminal we have here in the city of Quito," Reimberg, wearing a bulletproof vest, told reporters.

Tied to Mexico's Jalisco New Generation Cartel and boasting thousands of members in Ecuador, Los Lobos is one of the country's "most powerful and innovative criminal organisations," according to non-governmental group Insight Crime.

Gomez was arrested along with his partner, who authorities say

managed logistics for activities including drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping and illegal gold mining.

Around 70% of the drugs produced by Colombia and Peru, the world's largest and second-largest cocaine producers, respectively, are shipped through Ecuador.

Despite Noboa's hardline policies, homicides in Ecuador have increased, ticking up to over 9,200 violent deaths last year, a record high.

## Cuba's electrical grid suffers partial collapse

Reuters  
Havana

Cuba's electrical grid suffered a partial collapse early yesterday morning, the country's grid operator UNE said, snuffing out power across eastern Cuba and testing the patience of Cubans already exhausted from seemingly interminable blackouts amid a US fuel blockade.

By mid-morning officials had restored power to some essential services in the region, the grid operator said, though much of Cuba east of Camaguey, including the island's second-largest city, Santiago de Cuba, remained largely without electricity.

The Caribbean island of nearly 10mn people has reached a tipping point this month, as summer heat sets in and the vast majority — including in the capital Havana — now suffer without electricity for 20 hours or more each day.

The blackouts dramatically worsened in January after US President Donald Trump threatened tariffs on any nation supplying the island with fuel. Venezuela and Mexico, once the country's top suppliers of crude oil, have since cut off shipments.

Trump has predicted Cuba would "collapse" and has said he wants to oust the current communist-run government.

Cuba's energy and mines min-



Electric vehicles travel along an avenue as Cuba's electrical grid suffered a partial collapse, cutting power across eastern Cuba, in Havana, yesterday. (Reuters)

ister said on Wednesday that the island had completely run out of fuel oil and diesel, both critical to powering the island's electrical grid, and blamed blackouts on the US blockade.

Widespread protests broke out across Havana on Wednesday evening as the power cuts in some parts of the city spanned 24 hours or more, threatening to spoil frozen food reserves and making sleep all but impossible for many residents.

"The country has no fuel and that's no lie," said Rodolfo Aragon, a 55-year-old small business owner who said he saw little hope for the future amid Cuba's conflict with the US. "Our economy has hit rock bottom."



## PM opens 35th Doha International Book Fair



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani inaugurated yesterday the 35th edition of the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), which will run through May 23 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC). The exhibition features 520 publishing houses from 37 countries across 910 booths, bringing together a wide range of local, regional, and international literary and cultural works.

The opening ceremony was attended by a number of sheikhs, ministers, heads of diplomatic missions, senior officials, and guests of the fair. - QNA



## Doha Book Fair 'embodies Qatar's cultural development journey'

HE the Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library (QNL), Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari, stated that the 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) serves as a testament to Qatar's cultural evolution and the vibrant intellectual dynamism currently spanning various fields.

In statement to the Qatar News Agency (QNA) during the fair's opening, HE Dr al-Kawari noted that the continuous surge in cultural events and intellectual activities, despite regional challenges, underscores the stability and confidence inherent in Qatar's steady development process.

He emphasised that the fair has secured its position as a

premier cultural milestone within the Arab world, distinguishing itself annually through its sophisticated pavilion designs and the increasing diversity of publications, countries, and participating publishing houses.

Regarding the QNL's involvement, HE Dr al-Kawari highlighted the institution's prominent presence at the fair.

He noted that although the library is relatively young, it has successfully solidified its status as a leading cultural hub, housing a collection of over 1.5mn books and hosting year-round educational events that significantly enrich the national cultural landscape.

In a similar statement to the QNA, prominent Qatari me-

dia figure Saad bin Mohammed al-Rumaihi commended the Ministry of Culture for its exceptional organisation of the event.

He noted that the fair reflects the high priority Qatar places on literature and the empowerment of intellectuals.

Al-Rumaihi praised the continuous expansion of the fair's scale and the quality of its accompanying seminars, lectures, and exhibitions, which collectively foster a growing cultural movement and enhance social awareness.

The DIBF, hosted at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC), runs until May 23 and features more than 520 publishing houses from 37 countries. - QNA

## Physical books 'retain appeal amid AI boom'

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

Despite the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital platforms, physical books continue to hold a unique appeal for readers, according to Mihad Magdi Abdulrahman of Samarkand, a participant at the 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF).

Speaking to *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the fair at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC), she described books as a "true friend" that not only provides knowledge but also helps develop a wide range of personal and academic skills.

Samarkand, an independent bookstore and book distribution company in Doha, specialises in English and Arabic books, children's literature, educational materials, stationery, and gifts.

Abdulrahman said the experience of reading a printed book goes beyond simply learning its content.

"Reading any book is not just knowing about its content; it can open other doors," she said, as she encouraged readers to explore more.

While acknowledging the convenience of online reading and AI-powered tools, Abdulrahman stressed that physical books still offer distinct advantages, particularly in terms of health and credibility.

"Most of us are wearing glasses now be-

cause of the lights of electronics," she said, referring to prolonged screen exposure.

She added that books remain reliable companions, especially while travelling, including road trips, or in places without internet access.

Abdulrahman highlighted the credibility of printed books compared with online information, where content can often be edited or altered.

She noted that, unlike many online platforms, where content can be easily altered or edited by anyone, printed books retain their original credibility, aside from personal notes added by readers.

At the same time, she believes AI and the Internet should not be viewed as threats to books or publishing, but rather as complementary tools that can support readers and writers.

Abdulrahman said that readers can use AI to learn about books and receive recommendations, stressing that both technology and physical books can coexist and complement each other.

She emphasised that AI should serve as a guide rather than a replacement for credible sources.

"Use it as a tool, not as a source," she stressed. "Use it as a tool to lead us to the source."

Discussing challenges facing publishers today, Abdulrahman said the market has become increasingly competitive, with AI also making publishing easier and faster.



The 35th Doha International Book Fair opened yesterday at the DECC

Right: Visitors gather around the Samarkand booth at the 35th DIBF, as the Doha-based bookstore highlights the enduring appeal of printed books amid the growing influence of artificial intelligence and digital platforms.

PICTURES: Joey Aguilar

She noted that AI has become deeply integrated into the publishing industry, helping writers and publishers edit, reorganise, and refine their work according to publishing standards more efficiently, significantly reducing the time required for manual review and editing.

Despite the changing landscape, she expressed optimism about the future of books and lauded the strong turnout at this year's fair.

"This is my second time participating with Samarkand and I really enjoy it," she said. "The crowd is good, and we have plenty of fiction and non-fiction books. I hope everyone joins us here at the book fair and doesn't miss this chance."

Organised by the Ministry of Culture, the 35th edition of the DIBF opened yesterday with broad participation from



Arab and international publishing houses, alongside a diverse cultural programme. This year's fair features over 1.85mn

books, including 231,000 titles, with 520 publishing houses from 37 countries taking part across 919 booths.

### Jordan minister praises Qatar's role as culture hub

Jordan's Minister of Culture Mustafa Rawashdeh has said that his country's participation in the 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) reflects the depth of relations between the two countries and highlights their longstanding cultural ties.

On the sidelines of the fair's opening ceremony, he praised Qatar's role as a cultural hub, expressing pride in the participation of Jordanian publishing houses.

Rawashdeh also underscored the significance of the publishing sector in Jordan, describing it as one of the most important creative cultural industries that receives strong attention from the ministry.

He noted that the strong presence of Jordanian publishers and visitors at the fair reflects the role of book fairs in strengthening communication and fostering cultural dialogue, emphasising the role of knowledge in building civilisations and bringing nations closer together. - QNA

## Debut novel *Hearts Out of Service* by Qatari set for launch

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The debut novel *Hearts Out of Service* by Qatari author Sheikh Ghanem al-Kubaisi is among the titles scheduled for launch during the 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF).

She has already given an earlier preview of her book at the Katara Library for Arabic Fiction.

It received appreciation from Dr Ahmed Jamal, media personality Buthaina Abdul Jalil, and Ahmed Samir, as well as from many who are interested in literature, culture, and media, and is likely to be enjoyed by readers during the fair.

*Hearts Out of Service* is a literary work that draws on the depths of human experience, offering a poignant perspective on the silent emotions and inner transformations individuals undergo under the weight of life.

The book employs a style that relies on human sensitivity and genuine feeling, delving into those hidden



The book by Sheikh Ghanem al-Kubaisi (second left) will see its launch at the DIBF.

spaces that are often felt rather than spoken, and lived in a silence laden with detail by every individual.

The book also delves into the human psyche with a unique contemplative touch, where heartbreak intersects with flashes of hope, and silence becomes a language deeper

than words, attempting to capture what lies hidden behind faces when the world wears them and their capacity for expression shrinks.

The various stories express the emotions that overwhelm a person, emotions they sometimes struggle to articulate.

## Kuwait showcases diverse cultural, intellectual and heritage publications

The director of the Book Fairs and Distribution Department at Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Khalifa al-Rabah, has affirmed that Kuwait's participation in the 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) offers a vital platform to showcase a diverse array of cultural, intellectual, and specialised Arab heritage publications.

In a statement to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Rabah noted that Kuwait's pavilion consistently draws significant public interest and a high turnout of visitors.

This, he said, is attributed to the inclusion of renowned Kuwaiti periodicals and series, such as *World of Knowledge*, *Al-Arabi Magazine*, *Global Creativity*, *World Culture*, *World of Thought*, and *Cultural Heritage*, all of which reflect Kuwait's cultural identity and its enduring contributions to the Arab intellectual landscape.

Al-Rabah further emphasised that Kuwait's presence in this prominent event aligns with the NCCAL's strategic vision to support joint cultural projects among Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states.

He added that such participation strengthens co-operation and the exchange of expertise, underscoring the deep relations and cultural ties shared between Kuwait and Qatar.

The official also commended the high standard of organisation and the quality of services at the DIBF.

He lauded the comprehensive accompanying cultural programme, stating that the fair's excellence in execution ensures the continued success of the current edition. - QNA

Each story leaves space for readers to project their own thoughts and experiences onto it, thus granting the texts multiple dimensions of interpretation.

The book is also distinguished by its unique style and the variety of story lengths, reflecting a renewed literary vision that combines emotional intensity with profound human depth.

During the preview event, attendees expressed appreciation for the profound humanistic approach that the author presents in her debut work, and for the book's transparent literary treatment of human emotions and experiences, framed by reflection and emotional honesty.

This publication is a continuation of the evolving cultural and literary scene in Qatar, which is witnessing a growing presence of Qatari literary voices, thanks to the state's ongoing support for culture and creativity, and its commitment to enhancing the status of Qatari writers and enriching the local literary movement and the Qatari library.