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Amir visits 35th Doha International Book Fair



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited yesterday morning the Doha International Book Fair in its 35th edition held at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). At the outset of the tour, His Highness the Amir explored "This is Qatar" book project, which was launched as the Guest of Honour initiative for this year's edition, and was presented with the new prominent publications, titles, and participating publishing houses from Qatar and various Arab and foreign countries. His Highness the Amir was briefed on the accompa-

nying cultural programmes and events as well as the cultural and knowledge-based initiatives presented by the exhibition. His Highness also visited the "Doha Children's Zone" activities, which featured educational and interactive programmes and met with young writers. During the tour, His Highness the Amir was accompanied by HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulafi and HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, along with a number of Their Excellencies ministers and senior officials. (QNA) Page 12



تميم بن حمد
@TamimBinHamad

"I was struck by the diversity and intellectual richness I witnessed during my tour today through the halls of the Doha International Book Fair 2026, which embodies the pivotal role of culture in supporting our country's efforts aimed at entrenching awareness of the importance of the Arabic language and identity, and the role of reading in the renaissance of nations and the advancement of societies. My deepest thanks to those organizing the fair."

Adahi sales begin under national initiative

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Municipality, yesterday launched the National Initiative to Encourage Local Production and Support Adahi Animals for 1447 AH, with sales running until the fourth day of Tashreeq, corresponding to May 30. The initiative is aimed at supporting local production and making Adahi animals available to citizens at affordable rates.

Citizens are entitled to purchase one Adahi animal per Qatari ID, provided the beneficiary is at least 18 years old, the ministry said in a statement yesterday. Both locally bred and imported sheep have been priced at QR1,000. The animals are available at Widam Food Company's livestock yards in Al Shamal, Al Khor, Umm Salal, Al Wakrah, Al Shahaniya, and Abu Nakhl, as well as through the company's mobile application.

Fees for slaughtering, cutting, packaging, and loading total QR50 - QR16 for slaughtering, cutting, and packaging, and QR34 for loading - payable through separate vouchers.

Citizens benefiting from the initiative may use the slaughtering, cutting, and packaging voucher from the launch of the initiative until the end of December 2026 if they do not wish to have the animal slaughtered immediately, the ministry added.

PM honours Doha Institute's graduates



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani attended yesterday the graduation ceremony for the 10th cohort of master's students from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, in the presence of a number of Their Excellencies the Ministers, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies Azmi Bishara, and several board members.

Held at the Sheraton Doha Hotel, the ceremony celebrated the graduation of 246 students, including 163 from the School of Social Sciences and Humanities and 83 from the School of Economics, Administration,

and Public Policy. The graduates represent 32 nationalities, including 100 graduates supported by the Qatar Fund for Development through the State of Qatar Scholarship Program for International Students. The 73 graduates are Qatari nationals.

The prime minister, Vice-Chairman of the Institute's Board of Trustees Sheikh Dr Abdullah bin Ali bin Saud al-Thani, President of the Doha Institute Dr Abdelwahab el-Affendi, Vice-President for Academic Affairs Dr Amal Ghazal, and the deans of the colleges presented the certificates to the graduates.

Director of the Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Abdulaziz al-Horr also participated in present-

ing certificates to the graduates of the executive master's programme in Diplomatic Studies and International Co-operation, offered by the Doha Institute in partnership with the Diplomatic Institute.

With the graduation of this cohort, the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies has celebrated the graduation of ten cohorts since its establishment, totalling 1,886 graduates. Many of these graduates have continued their academic pursuits by enrolling in doctoral programmes at prestigious universities around the world, while others hold professional, academic, and research positions in local, regional, and international institutions. (QNA)



محمد بن عبدالرحمن
@MBA_AIThani_

"We congratulate the graduates of the tenth cohort of master's students at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies on this academic distinction. We are all confident that the knowledge and experience they have acquired will contribute to preparing competencies capable of serving the State of Qatar and the countries of the sponsored students, and to contributing to achieving the aspirations of our societies. We wish them every success in their future endeavours."

PM, Egyptian FM review situation

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call from Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Co-operation and Egyptian Expatriates Badr Abdelatty.

They discussed relations between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen them as well as developments in the region, particularly those related to the ceasefire between the US and Iran and efforts aimed at de-escalation in a way that contributes to enhancing security and stability in the region. The PM stressed the need for all parties to respond positively to the ongoing mediation efforts, which would pave the way for addressing the root causes of the crisis through peaceful means and dialogue, leading to a sustainable agreement that prevents renewed escalation. He reaffirmed Qatar's steadfast commitment to engaging with all regional and international partners in pursuit of a diplomatic resolution to the ongoing crisis. He noted that sustained dialogue and co-ordinated diplomacy remain the most viable path towards a lasting settlement that safeguards the region's security. (QNA)

COMMUNITY
See Pages 5 & 6

Lekhwiya wraps up 1st phase of 2026 training



Special Operations Command personnel advance in formation during the joint final exercise at Zekreet Camp, marking the conclusion of the first phase of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) 2026 training programme. Page 2

Pakistan leads new mediation push

AFP, Reuters
Islamabad/Washington/Tehran

Pakistan's army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir was due in Tehran yesterday for fresh talks aimed at salvaging stalled efforts to end the US-Israeli war on Iran, as President Donald Trump warned that negotiations were on the "borderline" between a deal and renewed strikes.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio however, voiced cautious hope of progress. "I believe the Pakistanis will be travelling to Tehran today. So hopefully that'll advance this further," he told reporters.

Iran's ISNA news agency said Munir's visit was aimed at continuing "talks and consultations" with Iranian authorities, without providing further details. Three sources told Reuters the army chief - a powerful figure



Field Marshal Asim Munir

with a growing role in Pakistan's foreign relations - was possibly heading to the Iranian capital for a new round of mediation.

"We're speaking to all the various groups in Iran to streamline communication and so things pick up pace," one source familiar with the negotiations said. "Trump's patience running thin is a concern, but we're working on the pace at which messages are relayed from each side."

Pakistan hosted in April the only direct negotiations between US and Iranian officials since the war began during that round, greeting both delegations on their arrival and displaying remarkable bonhomie with US Vice-President JD Vance. But the talks ultimately did not lead to a breakthrough, with Iran accusing the US of making "excessive demands". To Page 4

Amir's message delivered to Malawian president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a written message yesterday to Malawi's President Arthur Peter Mutharika pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. The message was delivered by Qatar's ambassador to Malawi Fahad Rashid al-Muraikhi during his meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs George Thapatula Chaponda. - **QNA**

Al-Khulaifi meets Czech prime minister in Prague



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis on the sidelines of the GLOBSEC Forum, held yesterday in Prague. They discussed the bilateral co-operation, relations between the two countries, and ways to support and strengthen them, as well as developments in the regional situation, particularly those related to the ceasefire between the US and Iran, and efforts aimed at de-escalation to enhance security and stability in the region. HE al-Khulaifi reaffirmed Qatar's full support for all efforts aimed at resolving disputes through peaceful means and strengthening the foundations of peace and stability at the regional and international levels. - **QNA**



Minister holds meetings on sidelines of GLOBSEC Forum

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held meetings yesterday, on the sidelines of the GLOBSEC Forum in Prague, with Uruguay's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mario Lubetkin, Czech Republic's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Marie Chatardova, and chairman of the Czech parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security Committee Dr Pavel Fischer. The meetings reviewed bilateral relations and explored ways to strengthen and expand co-operation, in addition to exchanging views on regional and international issues of mutual interest. They also discussed regional developments, particularly the ceasefire between the US and Iran, as well as ongoing efforts to reduce tensions and promote stability. HE Dr al-Khulaifi stressed the need for prioritising dialogue and diplomacy in addressing crises and resolving conflicts, reaffirming Qatar's continued efforts to support de-escalation and advance stability at both regional and international levels. - **QNA**



Qatar attends 13th World Urban Forum in Baku

Qatar took part in the 13th session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku, under the theme *Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities*.

A delegation from the Ministry of Social Development and Family represented Qatar at the forum, headed by Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Affairs Fahd Mohammed al-Khayarin.

The delegation included a number of senior officials and specialists.

This participation reflects Qatar's commitment to strengthening its presence at international forums and exchanging global expertise in the field of sustainable urban development and innovative housing solutions.

During the forum sessions, al-Khayarin addressed several topics related to "Experiences and effective financing solutions to enable individuals to own homes in housing projects", emphasising that Qatar National Vision 2030 prioritises family and social stability through the development of a comprehensive housing system.

He noted that Qatar's experience has witnessed a thorough transformation from traditional housing projects to the development of smart cities and integrated communities such as Lusail City and the Msheireb Downtown Doha project, which is the world's first fully sustainable urban regeneration project.

The official also highlighted the ministry's digital successes, particularly the unified national platform "Binaa", which has streamlined housing and financing procedures to record levels, transforming the citizen's journey into a flexible digital system.

Al-Khayarin concluded by emphasising the importance of activating partnerships with the banking sector to reduce the workload and expedite completion, stressing that the future of housing lies in balancing innovation, sustainability, and social privacy. - **QNA**



Deputy PM meets Uzbek defence minister

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani met yesterday with Uzbekistan's Minister of Defence Lieutenant-General Shukhrat Kholmukhamedov and his accompanying delegation, during their visit to Qatar. They discussed the latest developments and security updates in the region, along with aspects of military co-operation and joint co-ordination in light of the current circumstances. The meeting also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on military co-operation between the defence ministries of both nations. Senior officers and officials from both sides attended the meeting. - **QNA**



Health minister leads delegation to Geneva meeting

Qatar participated in the 64th session of the Council of Arab Health Ministers held yesterday in Geneva alongside the meetings of the World Health Assembly.

HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud led Qatar's delegation to the session.

The session addressed key topics, foremost

among them the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the occupied east Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and the occupied Syrian Golan, and co-ordination of a unified Arab position to safeguard the region's priorities amid ongoing discussions on reforming the global health governance system, and the role of the Arab Fund for Health Development.



The meeting also addressed the Arab Strategy for maternal, child and adolescent health in the Arab region, the Economic and Social Council resolution on the promotion of the right to family planning in the Arab states and the analysis of the challenges and opportunities associated with low fertility rates, and the Arab Authority for Blood Transfusion Services. - **QNA**

Amiri Guard celebrates graduation of basic training course participants

The Amiri Guard School celebrated yesterday at Lahsaniya Camp the graduation of a number of basic training courses, marking the conclusion of the first phase of the 2026 training season, in the presence of HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatari Armed Forces Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Jassim bin Mohammed al-Mannai and HE the Amiri Guard Commander Major-General Staff Mohammed bin Sultan al-Suwaidi.

The ceremony was also attended by the deputy commander of the Amiri Guard, the deputy commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), the inspector-general of the Amiri Guard, assistant commanders of the Amiri Guard, and a number of senior officers from the Qatari Armed Forces, the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), and the Amiri Guard.

The ceremony included the graduation of two joint foundational security and VIP protection courses, two foundational self-defence courses, a rapid intervention course, and a tactical first aid course for close protection personnel.



In a speech delivered on the occasion, acting commander of the Amiri Guard School Captain Mohammed Khalfan al-Mansouri presented the most prominent and advanced training and qualification programmes included in the courses, which aimed to refine the skills and capabilities of participants and enhance performance and readiness levels.

The graduates performed a final demonstration showcasing the core skills acquired during the training period.

The display featured scenarios simulating methods of dealing with threats and sources of danger through specialised exercises related to VIP security and protection, as well as self-defence skills reflecting the combat readiness of the course participants, alongside rapid intervention and tactical first aid drills for close protection operations.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, HE Lt-Gen al-Mannai honoured the top graduates. - **QNA**



Lekhwiya concludes phase 1 of 2026 training programme

The Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) concluded the first phase of its 2026 training programme at Zekreet Camp, in the presence of HE the Lekhwiya Deputy Commander Staff Major-General Mohammed

Misfer al-Shahwani, along with senior military and security officials from across the country.

The ceremony marked the graduation of nine training courses organised by the Internal Security Force Training Institute,

with the participation of 489 trainees from military and security entities in the country, as well as participants from sisterly countries.

The event also featured a joint final exercise simulating multiple security threats, which was aimed at enhancing operational readiness and rapid response capabilities.

The graduated courses included the foundational Lekhwiya Operations Course for officers, explosives handling, riot control for other ranks, urban combat operations, three foundational Lekhwiya Operations courses for other ranks, in addition to motorcade skills, joint patrols, and motorcycle training courses.

The training plan is designed to meet the needs of various Lekhwiya units and external entities, contributing to improved performance efficiency and strengthened personnel readiness in line with evolving security challenges. - **QNA**



QFFD takes part in Global Partnerships Conference

The Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) participated in the Global Partnerships Conference, held in London and co-hosted by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), and British International Investment (BII).

The conference convened heads of state, ministers, multilateral institutions, philanthropic foundations, private sector leaders, and innovators to confront the most pressing challenges facing the global development agenda.

The QFFD's participation underscores its commitment to advancing sustainable, inclusive development through high-impact partnerships and reflects Qatar's recognition that at a moment when humanitarian aid is contracting globally, the imperative for strategic and diversified cooperation has never been greater.

The conference addressed an increasingly urgent reality: as traditional aid flows recede, the world's most vulnerable communities face compounding crises, from economic instability and fragile health systems to conflict, climate disruption, and forced displacement.

Against this backdrop, the Global Partnerships Conference served as a critical platform to forge the modern and diverse coalitions, spanning governments, multilateral organisations, the private sector, and civil society, that the scale and complexity of today's challenges demand.

Through its engagement at the conference, the QFFD reaffirmed Qatar's position as a principled and forward-looking development partner, committed to innovative financing, resilient economic growth, and the long-term self-sufficiency of the communities it serves.

The QFFD's portfolio of partnerships spans fragile and conflict-affected states, emerging economies, and global institutions, channeling investment into health, education, food security, and climate resilience with a consistent emphasis on impact and sustainability.

As the global development landscape undergoes fundamental transformation, the QFFD remains steadfast in its mission: to advance strategic global partnerships, mobilise diverse financing for development, and contribute to a more resilient, prosperous, and equitable world. - **QNA**

Lebanon's President Aoun meets Qatar's ambassador



Qatar's ambassador to Lebanon Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani met yesterday with President Joseph Aoun. They discussed the bilateral co-operation and relations between the two countries, along with ways to support and strengthen them, as well as the latest developments in Lebanon and the region. Aoun expressed his appreciation for Qatar's continued support to Lebanon. Sheikh Saoud reaffirmed Qatar's steadfast commitment to Lebanon and its keenness on its stability. - **QNA**

Qatar's charge d'affaires meets Eritrean minister



The acting charge d'affaires of Qatar's embassy in Asmara, Ghanem bin Mohamed al-Maadeed, met yesterday with Eritrea's Minister of Foreign Affairs Osman Saleh Mohammed. They discussed co-operation and relations between the two countries. - **QNA**

Al Jazeera wins most gold Telly awards in 2026

Al Jazeera Media Network won the highest number of gold awards at the 47th Telly Awards this year, outperforming all competitors.

The organisers of the Telly Awards - one of the world's leading media awards - announced the winners on Tuesday.

This year's edition featured nearly 14,000 entries from 55 countries.

Al Jazeera English received 12 gold awards, most of them for investigative reports and programmes produced by the channel on Palestine, India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, in addition to a documentary on the targeting of journalists.

Al Jazeera Media Network's Digital Division won four gold awards for the programme *Start Here*, the *True Crime Reports* podcast, the *On The Ground* series, and the *Decoloniza* series by AJ+ Español.

In addition to the gold awards, Al Jazeera Media Network won 47 silver awards and 27



bronze awards across various categories.

The Telly Awards have been presented annually since 1979 to honour outstanding media productions.

Among the networks that participated in this year's competition were Paramount, Dis-

covery, Warner Bros, and National Geographic.

The Telly Awards judging panel includes more than 250 experts from major media and digital institutions, including Google, HBO, and Netflix.

Plenty of options this summer for Eid al-Adha celebrations

Eid in Qatar brings together a vibrant mix of entertainment, culture and family-friendly experiences, offering something for everyone.

Taking place during Visit Qatar's "Hala Summer" season, the festive period is marked by a diverse calendar of events across the country, making it an ideal time to explore the destination.

From live performances to exhibitions and interactive experiences, Qatar offers a well-rounded programme that combines celebration with discovery.

This Eid, residents can enjoy a relaxing staycation across Qatar's leading hotels and resorts, enhanced by exclusive "Hala Summer" offers.

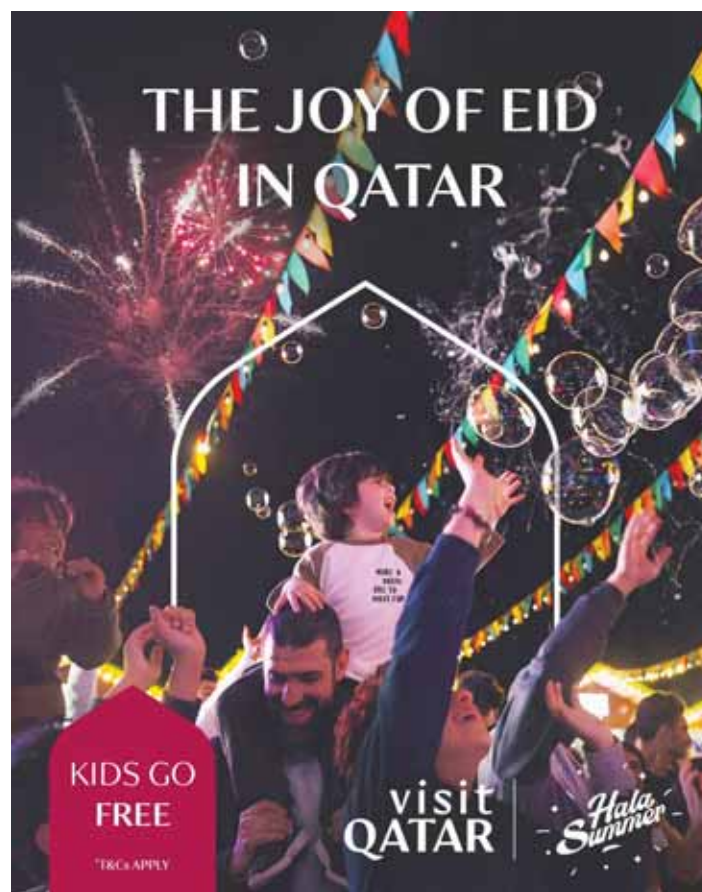
From beachfront retreats to city escapes, the festive period presents an ideal opportunity to unwind while making the most of seasonal promotions across accommodation, dining, and leisure.

As part of the wider "Hala Summer" campaign, running until September, more than 100 hotels and resorts are offering added value for families, including the "Kids Go Free" initiative.

The offer allows up to two children aged under 12 to stay and dine at no additional cost.

In addition to hotel packages, families with confirmed bookings can access a wide range of complimentary and discounted experiences, including selected desert safaris, cultural tours, and marine activities, as well as promotions at theme parks and water parks - making it easy to plan a memorable Eid break without leaving the country.

For those looking to make the most of the Eid break outdoors, Qatar offers a wide range of water-based and coastal experiences for residents of all ages.



From thrilling attractions at Desert Falls Water & Adventure Park and Meryal Waterpark to the laid-back coastal setting of Fuwairit Kite Beach, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the holiday outdoors.

Beachgoers can also spend the Eid break unwinding at Qatar's most popular public beaches, including Katara Beach, West Bay Beach and 974 Beach, each offering a unique seaside experience, from family-friendly facilities and watersports to vibrant beachfront

dining and entertainment.

Across the country, beach clubs and open-access shores provide opportunities for relaxation, swimming and outdoor activities, making Qatar's coastline an ideal setting to enjoy the Eid holiday.

During Eid, residents can enjoy a variety of live performances and family-friendly shows taking place across Doha.

The Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra will present a concert featuring Mozart and Bartók on May 23.

Additionally, Fontana Circus, the region's first travelling water circus, continues its run at Hyatt Plaza until May 31, offering visually engaging performances suitable for all ages.

At the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), the children's musical *Jamal Jamal* will take place on May 27-29, the first three days of Eid al-Adha, providing an interactive theatre experience for younger audiences.

Residents and visitors can also attend *Wagef! with Mina Nader* on May 23 at Abdulaziz Nasser Theatre, while a range of live entertainment and performances will be hosted across key venues and malls throughout the Eid period.

Eid offers an opportunity to explore Qatar's cultural and creative scene, with Sneaker Con Doha taking place on May 29-31 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC), bringing one of the world's largest sneaker exhibitions to the capital.

Across Qatar Museums (QM) and cultural institutions, exhibitions continue throughout the Eid period, including "Empire of Light: Visions and Voices of Afghanistan" at the Museum of Islamic Art until May 30, and "Resolutions: Celebrating 15 Years of Mathaf" at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art until August 8.

At Fire Station: Artist-in-Residence, multiple contemporary exhibitions will continue until May 31.

Eid in Qatar offers a compelling mix of entertainment, leisure and cultural discovery.

Whether with family or friends, the summer season offers an opportunity to experience Qatar through a wide range of activities, events, attractions, offers and promotions that go beyond Eid activities.

QLC prepares to celebrate 'Qiyadat 2026' graduation

Under the patronage of HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC), the centre is preparing to host the graduation ceremony of its thirteenth cohort, "Qiyadat 2026", on May 24.

The ceremony marks another milestone in the QLC's ongoing mission to develop national leadership capabilities.

The new cohort comprises 166 graduates, representing distinguished national talents from various sectors across Qatar.

The graduating class comprises 122 participants from the QLC's National Leadership Programmes and 44 graduates from the Executive Master's in Leadership Programme, delivered in collaboration with Georgetown University and Qatar University.

The ceremony is expected to be attended by a number of ministers, senior officials, leaders from public and private sector institutions, and graduates' families, in a national occasion that underscores the importance of investing in human capital.

The event will also feature an official address by HE Sheikha Al Mayassa, highlighting the QLC's role in shaping future leaders and enhancing their leadership capabilities.

Established in 2008 by Amiri Decision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the QLC is one of the nation's leading institutions dedicated to leadership development and executive education.

The centre develops national talent through advanced educational and training programmes delivered in partnership with leading national and international universities and institutions.

Since its establishment, the QLC has graduated hundreds of national leaders and professionals across various government and private sector entities, reinforcing its role as a key contributor to the achievement of Qatar National Vision 2030.



QU showcases tangible achievements in inclusive digital accessibility for PWDs

Qatar University (QU) highlighted a range of achievements accomplished by its Inclusion and Special Needs Support Centre, marking Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD), observed on May 21.

The efforts align with the university's vision to serve as a model of excellence in inclusive education and uphold the right of all individuals to equitable learning opportunities.

Haya al-Kuwari, section head of Accommodation and Community Outreach at the QU, said: "GAAD is an opportunity to reaffirm that digital accessibility is no longer optional; it has become an urgent necessity to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities."

"At QU, we operate within a comprehensive framework of policies and procedures that embraces diversity and guarantees all students the right to an inclusive and equitable educational experience," she said.

Al-Kuwari highlighted several of the Inclusion and Special Needs Support Centre's key achievements, including the provision of assistive technology and technical support services across the university.

The centre offers a range of assistive technology solutions, including information and communication technologies, devices, and software designed to enhance the academic performance of students with disabilities.

Each student is assessed individually by an assistive technology specialist to identify the most suitable solutions for their specific needs and to receive appropriate training in their use.

Al-Kuwari also noted that the university has established specialised assis-



tive technology laboratories on campus as well as facilities for assessment and training.

Furthermore, the centre has worked on converting educational materials into accessible and alternative formats that accommodate different types of disabilities and learning needs.

Al-Kuwari emphasised that the Inclusion Centre believes inclusive technology is the key to empowering students.

"These achievements would not have been possible without the university leadership's belief in the importance of investing in people and the collective efforts of all stakeholders," she said. "We affirm that our journey toward a barrier-free university is ongoing, and we will continue striving to enhance accessibility and inclusion."

The QU's Inclusion and Special Needs Support Centre provides services to students with physical, visual, and hearing disabilities, as well as students with learning difficulties, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, chronic illnesses, and tempo-



rary disabilities, in accordance with the latest standards and policies that ensure complete confidentiality and non-discrimination.

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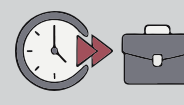
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Minister inaugurates medical unit at Qatar's Haj Mission

HE the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Ghanem bin Shaheen bin Ghanem al-Ghanem, who is also the head of Qatar's Haj Mission, inaugurated yesterday the mis-

sion's medical unit in the sacred sites of Saudi Arabia.

The initiative aims to enable pilgrims from Qatar to perform their Haj rituals in a safe and reassuring environment through an inte-

grated medical system operating around the clock across the various pilgrimage sites.

During the visit, HE al-Ghanem inspected the clinics designated for men and women, including triage and rapid assessment rooms, observation and medical isolation rooms, and pharmacies fully equipped with medicines, treatments, and essential medical supplies.

He also reviewed the technical and medical equipment installed at the clinics.

The minister was briefed by the head of the medical unit, Dr Khalid Abdulhadi, on the readiness of the medical clinics and the operational plans in place for the Haj season.

Dr Abdulhadi explained that the unit includes a distinguished team of specialists in family medicine, emergency medicine, infectious diseases, and ear, nose, and throat care, in addition to nursing, ambu-



lance, and pharmacy teams.

He affirmed that the medical unit operates 24 hours a day with qualified medical and technical personnel capable of handling various health conditions and emergencies.

Dr Abdulhadi added that the unit's strategy extends beyond treatment to include prevention, monitoring, rapid response, and full co-ordination with health authorities in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

He stressed that the safety and wellbeing of pilgrims remain a top priority, noting that Qatar has mobilised all available resources and qualified medical personnel to safeguard pilgrims throughout their Haj journey.

Dr Abdulhadi further noted that the medical services unit operates within an integrated co-ordination framework involving the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Public Health, Hamad Medical Cor-

poration, and the Primary Health Care Corporation, alongside Saudi health authorities.

During the inauguration, HE al-Ghanem also launched the "Rapid Response Ambulance Scooter" and the updated version of the emergency suit, the "HT Rescue Jacket".

Both will be deployed during the current Haj season to support rapid medical intervention in the sacred sites, particularly in crowded areas and locations difficult for ambulances to access. - QNA



Police Academy marks graduation of specialist courses

The Police Academy, represented by the Police Officers Institute, celebrated the graduation of a number of mandatory and specialised courses held during the first half of 2026.

The ceremony was attended by HE Major-General Dr Abdullah Yusuf al-Mal, the legal adviser to the Minister of Interior and general supervisor of the Police Academy, along with several officers representing the participating security and military entities.

During the first half of this year, the Police Officers Institute organised 34 mandatory and specialised courses, with the participation of 650 officers from various security and military agencies.

The courses included the Intermediate Officers Course, the First Officers Course, the Weapons and Marksmanship Course, and the Infantry and Weapons Instructors Preparation Course.

These programmes reflect the Police Acad-

emy's commitment to advancing specialised qualification and enhancing practical and field skills in accordance with the highest approved training standards.

The ceremony featured a documentary film showcasing the stages of training and qualification, as well as the honouring of outstanding participants and entities that contributed to the success of the training programmes, along with the distribution of certificates to the course graduates. - QNA



Honour for military and civilian entities

The Police Academy organised a ceremony to honour the military and civilian entities participating in the final exercise of the second batch of the Security Command and Staff Programme, which was conducted at the academy's Virtual Security Operations Centre.

Police Academy vice-president and Police College director Colonel Dr Fahad Saeed al-Subaie attended the ceremony, along with representatives of the military and civilian entities participating in the exercise.

The exercise comes as part of the Police Academy's efforts to develop the security and leadership capabilities of students in the Security Command and Staff Programme and the second-tier leaders programme, through realistic simulations of contemporary security scenarios, which contributes to enhancing integration and co-ordination among participating entities, raising the level of readiness and professional competence, and developing mechanisms for decision-making, joint institutional work, and crisis response.

The ceremony included a visual presentation of the exercise's implementation phases, along with honouring of the participants and entities that contributed to the success of the final exercise. - QNA



Tickets for biggest edition of Qatar Toy Festival now available

Qatar Calendar has announced the launch of ticket sales for the biggest edition of the Qatar Toy Festival, taking place this year under the theme *More Fun, Endless Joy*.

The festival will be held at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) on July 1-31, offering families and visitors an exceptional entertainment experience as part of Visit Qatar's "Hala Summer" campaign.

Visitors can secure their tickets through ticketing platforms from <https://visitqatar.com/intl-en/events-calendar/qatar-toy-festival>.

The festival also offers a variety of ticket packages designed to suit individuals and families.

The General Admission Ticket (QR50 on weekdays and QR70 on weekends) grants one person entry for one day only.

The Unlimited Fun Ticket (QR80) offers access to all festival activations, zones and stage performances, while the Fast Track Ticket (QR300) provides a more flexible and expedited experience.

For families, the Family Admission Ticket (QR200 on weekdays and QR280 on weekends) allows entry for five people for the price of four for one day.

Visitors seeking a premium experience can opt for the VVIP Ticket, priced at QR1,500, which offers an exclusive one-day experience for four people, including access to all activations and experiences, entry to the VVIP lounge with dedicated family hospitality, exclusive meet-and-greet opportunities with selected characters, as well as fast-track access across all activities.

As part of its commitment to delivering an inclusive and accessible experience for all families, entry will be free for children aged under one year, as well as individuals with special needs, upon presentation of a valid ID at the entrance gates.

This year's edition of Qatar Toy Festival is set to be the largest and most interactive in its history.

Organised in collaboration with Spacetoon Group, the festival will span more than 23,000sq metres across four halls.

It will feature themed zones catering to all interests, in addition to an immersive stage hall hosting a series of concerts and live performances.

The Qatar Toy Festival forms part of Visit Qatar's ongoing efforts to deliver a dynamic, year-round calendar of experiences for residents and visitors alike, while reinforcing Qatar's position as a leading destination for family-focused entertainment and large-scale events.

From Page 1

A ceasefire on April 8 halted the fighting launched weeks earlier by the US and Israel, but no lasting peace agreement has been reached.

"It's right on the borderline, believe me," Trump told reporters on Wednesday. "If we don't get the right answers, it goes very quickly. We're all ready to go."

He said that a deal could come "very quickly" or "in a few days", but warned Tehran would have to provide "100% good answers".

The deepest splits remain over Iran's

Pakistan leads new mediation push

stockpile of near-weapons-grade enriched uranium and control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump vowed Washington would not allow Iran to retain the material.

"We will get it. We don't need it, we don't want it. We'll probably destroy it after we get it, but we're not going to let them have it," he said.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei has, however, issued a directive that the uranium should not be sent

abroad, two senior Iranian sources said.

Top officials in Tehran believe shipping the material out would leave Iran more vulnerable to future US-Israeli strikes.

The sources said "feasible formulas" remained, including diluting the stockpile under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision.

Tehran's chief negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf accused Washington of preparing fresh attacks, warning of a "forceful response".

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said that Tehran was studying the latest US points while reiterating demands for the release of frozen assets and an end to the US naval blockade.

The impasse continues to batter the global economy.

The Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, remains largely shut, with Iran allowing only a trickle of vessels through under a new toll regime.

US crude rose 3.22% to \$101.42 a barrel, while Brent climbed to \$107.71.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) warned the market could enter the "red zone" in July and August.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) cautioned that a prolonged closure could trigger "a severe global food price crisis".

Rubio also criticised North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) allies for refusing to back Trump's campaign.

"He's not asking them to commit troops," he stated. "But they refuse to do anything. We were very upset about that."



Malaysian embassy showcases Batik, Songket heritage in Doha



The Embassy of Malaysia in Doha, together with the Ladies Association of the Embassy (Perwakilan Doha), organised a cultural showcase titled "Timeless Charms of Malaysia's Batik & Songket" at Andaz Hotel Doha on May 17, 2026. The event highlighted Malaysia's rich multicultural heritage, vibrant traditions and warm hospitality

through a series of cultural performances and fashion presentations featuring the country's iconic Batik and Songket attire. The guest of honour was HE Sheikha Najla Faisal al-Thani, Director of the Heritage and Identity Department at the Ministry of Culture. The showcase was also attended by members of the Spouse of Heads of Mission in

Qatar (SOHOM), the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests from the Qatar Women Association, and members of the international community in Qatar. In her remarks, Madam Idayuwati Binti Azilan, spouse of the Malaysian ambassador to Qatar, said Malaysia and Qatar continue to enjoy warm, close and positive-driven relations, underpinned by

excellent engagements at the leadership level and growing cooperation in trade, investment, tourism, education, and people-to-people exchanges. She added that events of this nature further strengthen friendship, cultural understanding and goodwill between the two countries. The evening also celebrated Batik and Songket as among Malaysia's



most treasured cultural heritage elements, with batik in particular continuing to hold a special place in Malaysian identity and cultural diplomacy. Guests were treated to Malaysian cuisine, traditional dance performances, cultural showcases and a fashion presentation inspired by the many ethnic communities that form Malaysia's unique cultural tapestry. The programme reflected Malaysia's long-standing values of harmony in diversity and multicultural coexistence. The embassy also placed on record its appreciation to members of the Malaysian community in Qatar, including the Irama Dance Group and dedicated volunteers – particularly Malaysian women in Doha – for their valuable contributions in making the event a success.

The programme additionally launched the local promotion of Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026), Malaysia's national tourism campaign aimed at welcoming 35mn tourists. Through the initiative, Malaysia hopes to attract more visitors from Qatar and the region to experience its rich culture, natural beauty, world-class hospitality and diverse culinary traditions. Prior to the commencement of the event, Malaysian ambassador Faizal Razali held discussions with HE Sheikha Najla on tourism collaboration between the two countries as well as on cooperation in the preservation of cultural heritage. The evening concluded with renewed aspirations to further strengthen the bonds of friendship, cultural appreciation and cooperation between Malaysia and Qatar.

ICC felicitates CBSE toppers



Indian Cultural Centre, under the aegis of the Embassy of India, organised a felicitation ceremony on May 18 at ICC Ashoka Hall to honour the Grade 10 and 12 CBSE toppers from various CBSE schools in Qatar. Indian ambassador Vipul attended the event as the chief guest. ICC general-secretary Abraham K Joseph welcomed the guests and dignitaries followed by opening remarks by ICC head of HR, Admin and Consular, Rakesh Wagh. Addressing the students, Vipul

congratulated them on their outstanding achievement and extended his best wishes for their future pursuits. ICC president A P Manikantan congratulated the students and acknowledged the dedication and support of teachers and parents in shaping their success. ICC Advisory Council chairman P N Babu Rajan was also present on the occasion. The evening concluded with a vote of thanks by ICC vice president Shantanu Deshpande. The event was seamlessly hosted by Drishti.

BPS shines in CBSE Grade XII exams with 117 students scoring above 90%

Birla Public School unveiled a spectacular display of academic brilliance at the Senior School Certificate Examination of Grade XII 2025-26 in the results declared by the CBSE Board on May 13. The exceptional students of BPS demonstrated remarkable excellence through their outstanding performance in the examinations. The students' dedication and commitment to education have proved vital to the school's motto, "Enlightenment through Education." Some 465 students of Birla Public School appeared for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination

(Class XII) in March 2026. Of these, 117 students scored above 90%, and overall, 424 students scored above 75% - distinction. The School Topper & Science stream topper is Shubham Tejas Mehta with score 99%. The 2nd topper is Advik Jain (Science stream) with score 98.8%. The 3rd topper is Priyansh Kailashchandra Nainwal with score 98.2% (Science stream). The school secured a total of 42 centums. List of subjects which have centum (100 out of 100): A total of 955 A1s scored in various subjects.



Shubham Tejas Mehta



Advik Jain



Priyansh K Nainwal



Serah Rose Shibu



Ammu Mariam Thomas



Martha Geordy



Rachel Maria Fernandez



Afrin Sathik Batcha



Anusha Kar



Gayathri Ramaswamy



Lena Jojo

In the Humanities stream, Serah Rose Shibu secured first place with 97.4%, while Ammu Mariam Thomas and Martha Geordy shared second place with 97% each. Rachel Maria Fernandez secured third place with 96.6%.

In the Commerce stream, Afrin Sathik Batcha secured first place with 96%, followed by Anusha Kar in second place with 95.8%. Gayathri Ramaswamy and Lena Jojo shared third place with 95.2% each. The chairperson, Maria Pakal-

matom; the vice-chairman, Dr Mohan Thomas; Members of the Board; the principal; staff; and parents congratulated the students on their stellar performance. The Board also congratulated the teachers for delivering on its

objective of Quality Education to all. It is the teachers whose coordinated efforts helped in producing excellent results. The trio of students, teachers and parents have made the school proud once again.

Shantiniketan Indian School girls triumph at SOP Athletic Meet



Shantiniketan Indian School (SIS) celebrates its students' outstanding achievements at the prestigious SOP Athletic Meet 2026, organised by the Qatar Athletic Federation. Competing against several schools across Qatar, SIS athletes displayed exceptional talent, determination, and sportsmanship, bringing laurels to the school. The Preparatory Girls' Relay Team clinched the gold medal with an impressive performance. The winning team included Segu Beevi, Haniya Ettonnil, Ilhan Kadeeja, and Zahwa Abdul Azeez. Adding to the glory, the Primary Girls' relay team secured the silver medal, with Mihan Anas, Shriya Chandramangalam, Atiyah Shakkeer, and Rafa Muhammad Baruk showcasing remarkable teamwork and spirit.



In individual events, Niha Ajmal won Gold in long jump, while Mihan Anas earned bronze in long jump, Samrah Sajath secured bronze in shot

put, and Ifah achieved bronze in high jump. The principal, vice principal, senior headmaster, and senior operations manager congratulated the

winners and appreciated the Physical Education Department for its dedicated guidance and support in nurturing young athletic talent.

MES Girls' Athletics Team excels with impressive medal tally at Qatar SOP

The MES Girls' Athletics Team delivered an outstanding performance across all categories at the Primary, Preparatory, and Secondary Girls' Athletics Competition, held recently under the aegis of the Qatar School Olympic Programme at Qatar Sports Club.

The event featured a wide range of athletic competitions, including relay races, Long Jump, High Jump, and the 200m race. The MES team's rigorous training, dedication, and perseverance were evident in their remarkable accomplishments, as the team secured a total of 12 medals: 5 Gold, 2 Silver, and 5 Bronze.

The athletes excelled not only in relay events but also in indi-

The MES team secured a total of 12 medals: 5 Gold, 2 Silver, and 5 Bronze

vidual track and field disciplines such as Long Jump, High Jump, and the 200m race. Gigi P Abraham, a faculty in the Department of Physical Education trained the students to glory.

The remarkable achievements of the MES athletes brought great pride and distinction to the institution. The principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, extended her heartfelt congratulations to the accomplished athletes, praising their determination and efforts in upholding and enhancing the school's prestige.



DPS organises blood donation drive with HMC

A single unit of blood can save multiple lives, and DPS-Modern Indian School once again stepped forward for this noble cause by organising its 9th blood donation drive, in collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation on May 14.

The campus witnessed an inspiring display of compassion and social responsibility as 57 staff members came forward wholeheartedly to donate blood and support a life-saving cause. The overwhelming participa-

tion transformed the initiative into a remarkable example of kindness and service to humanity. The team from HMC appreciated the enthusiasm and active involvement of the DPS-MIS fraternity, which contributed immensely to the drive's success. Sr principal Asna Nafees said: "We will continue to associate ourselves with such meaningful initiatives in the future. Every donor became a beacon of hope, proving that even a single act of kindness can save lives!"



Rajagiri Public School achieves outstanding result in Grade 12

Rajagiri Public School has once again etched its name in academic excellence with a phenomenal performance in the Grade XII Board Examinations this year. Of the 80 students who appeared for the examinations, 75 secured Distinction, reflecting the institution's unwavering commitment to academic excellence.

A total of 36 students secured centum in various subjects; nine each in Mathematics and Biology, six in English, four in Computer Science, two each in Psychology, Physical Activity Trainer and Economics and one each in Business Studies and Informatics Practices.

From the Science stream, Shreya Sara Aju emerged as the school topper with an impressive

97.2%. Eshan Marwan secured the second position with 96%, while Jeel Vijaykumar Patel stood third with 95.2%. From the Commerce stream, Michelle Antony topped with a remarkable 97.2%. Bilal Ibrahim secured the second position with 94.6%, and Natasha Ropafadzo achieved the third position with 93.2%.

The school management, principal and staff extended their heartfelt congratulations to all the students for their stupendous achievement. They also appreciated the relentless efforts and dedication of the teachers and parents whose support and guidance played a vital role in this outstanding success.

 Shreya Sara Aju	 Eshan Marwan	 Jeel Vijaykumar Patel
 Michelle Antony Thomas	 Bilal Ibrahim Khan	 Natasha Ropafadzo Maponga

MES honours school nurses

As part of the observance of International Nurses Day, the Guides Unit of the Girls' Section of MES Indian School organised a special programme to recognise and honour the dedicated service, compassion, and unwavering care rendered by the school nurses towards the well-being of students and staff.

On this occasion, Gincy Wilson, Shiju Sebastian, Praseela

K A, and Soumya were felicitated for their sincere service and committed support. The principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, presented tokens of appreciation to the nurses as a gesture of gratitude and esteem.

The programme was conducted under the guidance of the teachers in charge, Blessy Peter and Mary Diana, whose efforts ensured the event's successful execution.



Loyola School records sterling performance in CBSE Grade 12 exams

Loyola International School once again brought laurels to its name with a sterling performance in the CBSE Grade 12 Board Examinations 2025-26. Of the 70 students who appeared, the school recorded an impressive average of 84.53%, with 20 students crossing the 90% mark,

underscoring a culture of academic discipline and excellence. The results reflected strong performances across both streams, with 43 students from Science and 27 from Commerce appearing for the examinations. In Science, Sivnanda Raj led the chart with 98.8%, followed

by Noel Saji at 97% and Daiwik Jayarama Suvarna at 94.8%. In Commerce, Srinidhi Jagannath emerged as the top scorer with 99.8%, trailed by Neha Karim with 99.2% and Rasmiyah Rahma with 96.8%. A further highlight of the results was the impressive 20 centums secured by students

across various subjects. The board members, principal, staff, and parents congratulated the students and appreciated the teachers for their coordinated efforts behind the excellent results. Principal Bhavna Vijaykumar also commended the entire school community, thanking the

students, parents, and faculty for their dedication and support. She described the achievement as a shared success that reflects Loyola's spirit of perseverance, purposeful learning, and pride in scholarship. The achievement has sparked pride across the school community, standing as a tribute

to the students' determination, the faculty's steadfast guidance, and the enduring support of parents. With this success, Loyola International School reaffirms its commitment to academic excellence, character building, and the pursuit of distinction in every sphere of learning.

LOYOLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
Congratulations for 100% CBSE Results 2025-26!
GRADE XII - PERFECT CENTUMS

 ENGLISH: 100/100	 ENGLISH: 100/100	 MATH: 100/100	 BIOLOGY: 100/100	 BIOLOGY: 100/100	 IP: 100/100	 IP: 100/100
 IP: 100/100	 IP: 100/100	 IP: 100/100	 IP: 100/100	 IP: 100/100	 IP: 100/100	 ECONOMICS: 100/100
 BS: 100/100	 BS: 100/100	 MARKETING: 100/100	 MARKETING: 100/100	 MARKETING: 100/100	 MARKETING: 100/100	 MARKETING: 100/100

LOYOLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
 Affiliated to CBSE, New Delhi, Affn. No. 6630206
Congratulations for Grade-XII CBSE Results 2025-26
100% Results

SCIENCE TOPPERS			COMMERCE TOPPERS		
 98.8%	 97%	 94.8%	 99.8%	 99.2%	 96.8%
 94.4%	 93.4%	 92.8%	 95.8%	 95%	 93.4%
 91.2%	 91%	 91%	 90.6%	 90%	 90%

Taiwan president says 'happy' to talk to Trump

AFP
Taipei

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said yesterday he would be "happy" to talk to US leader Donald Trump, a conversation that would break more than four decades of diplomatic protocol and drew pre-emptive ire from China.

Trump told reporters on Wednesday that he would speak to Lai, as the White House weighs arms sales to the democratic island.

It was the second time since a summit in Beijing last week that Trump has said he would call the Taiwanese leader.

Such communication would be the first time since Washington switched diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing in 1979 that serving presidents of Taiwan and the US would speak to each other.

Lai said Taiwan was "committed to maintaining the stable status quo in the Taiwan Strait" and that "China is the disruptor of peace and stability", the Tai-



Taiwan President Lai Ching-te speaks at a news conference on the second anniversary of his taking office, at the presidential building in Taipei. (Reuters/File Photo)

wanese foreign ministry said in a statement.

— China 'firmly opposes' call —

Lai would be "happy to discuss these matters with President Trump", the statement said.

"I'll speak to him. I speak to everybody," Trump said, adding that he had a great meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his state visit to Beijing last week.

"We'll work on that, the Taiwan

problem," Trump said.

China's foreign ministry said yesterday it "firmly opposes official exchanges" between the US and Taiwan, as well as US arms sales to the island.

"China urges the US to implement the important consensus reached during the meeting between the Chinese and US heads of state, honour its commitments and statements, handle the Taiwan

question with the utmost prudence," ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a press briefing.

He added that Washington should "stop sending wrong signals" to Taiwan.

After wrapping up his trip to Beijing, Trump suggested arms sales to Taiwan could be used as a bargaining chip with China, which claims the island is part of its territory and has threatened to seize it by force.

Since then, Lai's government has been on the offensive, insisting that US policy on Taiwan has not changed and that Trump made no commitments to China on arms sales to the island.

Taiwan relies heavily on US support to deter any potential Chinese attack, and has been under intense pressure to increase its spending through investment in American firms.

In 2016, shortly after his first election victory, president-elect Trump accepted a phone call from then Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen, angering Beijing and stunning diplomats, world leaders and China watchers.

Xi may visit N Korea as early as next week, Yonhap reports

Reuters
Seoul

Chinese President Xi Jinping may visit North Korea as early as next week and will try to act as a mediator between North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump, Republic of Korea's Yonhap news agency reported, quoting a senior government official. Another government source was cited by Yonhap as saying a team of Chinese security service and protocol officials was in Pyongyang recently and that a visit by Xi late in May or early June was likely. Xi, who hosted Trump last week, will try to act as a mediator between Trump and North Korea's Kim, the senior official was quoted as saying in the report released late on Wednesday.

Trump, who met Kim three times in his first term to negotiate the North's nuclear programme, has said he would be open to meeting the North Korean leader again and that he had a good relationship with him.

Republic of Korea's foreign ministry said the government hopes exchanges between North Korea and China contribute to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and that China can play a constructive role, while declining to comment directly on the report of Xi's visit.

China is a key economic and political ally of North Korea and the two have made efforts to reinforce ties that had cooled during the Covid-19 pandemic. North Korean leader Kim visited Beijing last year and stood alongside Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin at a major military parade.

Korea, US held talks on revising management of DMZ



A North Korean soldier stands guard at his guard post inside North Korean territory, in this picture taken from Paju, Republic of Korea. (Reuters/File Photo)

Reuters
Seoul

Republic of Korea and the US discussed potential changes in how parts of the heavily fortified border with North Korea are managed at recent defence talks in Washington, Seoul's defence ministry said yesterday.

The issue was discussed at a bilateral integrated defence consultative body, a ministry spokesperson said, adding there had been "progress". She denied reports that it could result in joint or divided control of the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ).

"It is not joint management. Nor is it divided management," the spokesperson told a briefing. "It (is) making DMZ management in some sections more realistic."

The DMZ marks a buffer zone along the line where the 1950-53 Korean War — when China and North Korea battled UN forces led by the US — ended with an

armistice, not a treaty.

The UN Command oversees the DMZ under the armistice agreement, and the defence ministry spokesperson said Seoul respected its authority while consulting with Washington on technical arrangements for some areas.

The comments come as Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung has said his country would seek to reclaim wartime operational control from the US during his term, which runs through to 2030.

The US currently would command allied troops in the event of war on the Korean peninsula, but successive Republic of Korea governments have sought to regain wartime operational control. Republic of Korea's Unification Ministry has also recently shifted language on North Korea. Its 2026 white paper said Republic of Korea and North Korea effectively exist as two states, while Seoul still seeks eventual unification.

Philippines orders arrest of fugitive senator

AFP
Manila

The Philippine government yesterday ordered police to arrest a senator wanted by the International Criminal Court over his role in ex-president Rodrigo Duterte's deadly drug crackdown.

Senator Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa, who served as the nation's police chief, was the enforcer of the drug war that killed thousands of people in the Philippines.

Dela Rosa is on the run after fleeing the Senate building last week, hours after a shooting incident between government agents and senate security personnel.

"I would like to confirm that the Philippine law enforcement agencies... are now tasked to

effect the arrest of Senator Ronald 'Bato' dela Rosa," Justice Secretary Frederick Vidua told reporters.

The ICC last week unsealed an arrest warrant against Dela Rosa, accused along with Duterte and other "co-perpetrators" of the crime against humanity of murder.

After a dramatic chase up the senate stairs on the same day, government agents who failed to arrest him later paused the effort as the senate leadership gave him sanctuary.

The Philippine Supreme Court's interim ruling on Wednesday denying the Philippine police chief's bid for a temporary restraining order means the ICC warrant can now be enforced, Vidua added.

"We're pursuing this so that the ends of justice may be achieved," Vidua added, warning that "there are consequences" to anyone who would

try to help Dela Rosa avoid arrest.

His lawyer said Wednesday he will appeal the Supreme Court ruling.

Former president Duterte was arrested last year and is awaiting trial by the ICC in The Hague on charges stemming from the drug crackdown.

The drug war left thousands of people dead, mostly drug users and low-level traffickers from urban slums according to human rights monitors.

Philippine police say more than 6,000 drug suspects were killed in legitimate police operations during the Duterte presidency in 2016-2022.

Dela Rosa served as national police chief from 2016 to 2018 during the early phase of Duterte's anti-drug campaign and was elected to two successive six-year terms in the Senate after retiring from the force.

Malaysia takes TikTok to task over 'offensive' content against king

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia has ordered TikTok to take immediate steps to improve how it regulates harmful content following the circulation of posts deemed "grossly offensive" to the country's royals, the communications regulator said yesterday.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) said the social media platform owned by China-based ByteDance failed to "take sufficient and timely action" on a fake account that carried the allegedly defamatory posts against Sultan Ibrahim, the country's current king.

The content included material deemed "grossly offensive, false, menacing and insulting in nature, including AI-generated videos and manipulated images", the regulator said.

"MCMC take serious view of any misuse of online platforms to disseminate content that is grossly offensive, false, menacing or detrimental to public order, particularly where it involves the institution of the king and the Malay rulers," it said in a statement.

"Such matters fall within the broader context of race, religion and royal issues, which are highly sensitive, undermines public order, national harmony and respect for constitutional institution."

The regulator added that "despite prior notifications and engagements, TikTok's moderation response to the content has been found unsatisfactory, particularly in ensuring prompt removal and preventing further dissemination of harmful material."

MCMC said it had issued a statutory demand requiring TikTok to take immediate steps to enforce stronger measures against harmful content.

"The issuance of the statutory demand requires TikTok to... also provide a formal explanation regarding its moderation failures," MCMC said.

AFP has contacted TikTok for comment.

The Southeast Asian nation has intensified oversight of social media platforms in recent years amid a sharp rise in harmful online content.

In March, local media reported that Malaysia Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said the government planned to block children under 16 from signing up for social media accounts by the end of June.

Sultan Ibrahim took the throne in 2024 under the country's unique constitutional monarchy system where nine state rulers who hail from centuries-old Islamic royalty take turns ruling every five years.

The monarchy has been a stabilising institution in Malaysian society and politics.

Indonesia says eight miners killed by Papua rebels

AFP
Jayapura

Separatists in Indonesia's restive eastern Papua region have shot and killed eight gold miners they claimed were undercover members of the security forces, the military said yesterday.

The miners were attacked while working in the far-flung district of Yahukimo, Papua Pegunungan province on Wednesday, military spokesman Wirya Arthadiguna said in a statement.

The victims, he said, were "civilians panning for gold in the area".

The West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB), however, said it had carried out a successful "cleansing operation" against "soldiers/police officers disguised as illegal gold miners".

TPNPB spokesman Sebby Sambom said the operation was in retaliation for the deaths of two of its members at the hands of the military in Yahukimo last week.

Wirya said the military has deployed teams to track down the shooters and evacuate the victims' bodies by helicopter.

Security in the area will be stepped up, he added.

Papua, which shares an island with Papua New Guinea, is a former Dutch colony that declared independence in 1961.



Indigenous Papuans and university students take part in a protest against the government's National Strategic Projects (PSN) and increased military presence in Papua, which demonstrators say threaten traditional lands and the rights of Indigenous Papuans, outside the Southwest Papua governor's office in Sorong yesterday. (AFP)

Indonesia took control two years later, followed by a 1969 referendum in which 1,000 Papuans out of a population of some 800,000 voted in favour of integration.

Papuan independence activists regularly criticise the vote and call for fresh polls, but Jakarta says its sovereignty over Papua is supported by the UN.

Last year, separatists killed at least 11 gold miners in Yahukimo, according to the military, in another case in which the targets were accused of being

undercover soldiers.

In 2022, 10 civilians were shot dead in a rebel ambush, and eight telecoms workers were killed in another attack in what the guerrillas said was a war zone.

Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights is investigating the killing of more than a dozen civilians, including women and children, in a military operation in the Papuan village of Kemburu in April.

The military claimed it had taken out rebel fighters.

Vietnam imports more fuel amid Iran war

Reuters
Hanoi

Vietnam ramped up imports of refined oil products after the outbreak of the Iran war to offset a drop in crude supplies for the country's refineries, customs data shows. The shift helped the Southeast Asian industrial hub cushion the impact of the Gulf crisis. But it also contributed to an unusual trade deficit for the export-reliant economy and a sharp rise in consumer prices, which jumped 5.46% in April, above the 4.5% target set by the government.

In the March to April period, Hanoi increased its imports of refined oil products by nearly 17% from a year earlier by volume and by 144% in dollar terms, according to a Reuters analysis of Vietnam's customs data. The country purchased more from Malaysia and Republic of Korea to offset falling fuel shipments from Singapore and China.

Over the two months, Republic of Korea exported nearly as much refined oil to Vietnam as its top sup-

plier Singapore, raising shipments by more than 60% from the same period a year earlier to 610,000 metric tonnes, one-third of the country's oil product imports.

Imports of Malaysian oil products nearly doubled to 403,000 tonnes, surpassing China as Vietnam's third-largest provider of refined oil products. Supplies from China fell about 17% in the two-month period, which especially impacted the aviation sector since before the crisis the country depended on Chinese shipments for more than half of its jet fuel needs.

Vietnam won exemptions from China's fuel export restrictions imposed right after the Iran war began on February 28. That allowed fuel deliveries of 189,000 metric tonnes in the two months, although shipments nearly halved from March to April. Vietnam's two refineries have secured crude oil supplies for several more weeks, but "if the war in Iran continues for much longer, the energy situation in Vietnam will be very complicated," said Nguyen Thanh Son, a Hanoi-based energy analyst who was formerly an executive with

state-owned coal miner Vinacomin. Oil imports in March and April slipped 37% from a year earlier as Vietnam was forced to replace supplies from its top provider Kuwait, which are hampered by the the Strait of Hormuz blockade.

Kuwait was still Vietnam's main crude supplier in March as cargoes shipped before the outbreak of the war were delivered.

But with no Kuwaiti shipments arriving in April, Vietnam turned to other exporters. The country's largest refinery at Nghi Son, which buys the bulk of the Kuwaiti oil, said it took in supply from the US and Africa. Ship-tracking data provider Kpler reported other imports from the United Arab Emirates and Nigeria. Imports in May have already exceeded those in the past two months, with new supplies from Oman and Angola, Kpler data shows. Higher domestic production of crude oil also helped ease the shock, "but the situation will remain difficult," as output cannot be raised quickly, said Nguyen Quoc Thap, chairman of the Vietnam Petroleum Association.

Australia 'disappointed' by owner's resistance to forced port sale

Australia's defence minister Richard Marles said yesterday that Canberra was "disappointed" the Chinese leaseholder of the strategic Darwin Port was challenging efforts to return it to local ownership. Private Chinese company Landbridge acquired a 99-year lease

to Darwin Port in 2015, prompting criticism of Australia from then-US president Barack Obama. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese pledged last year to return the northern port — which sits across the harbour from a defence base hosting 2,000 US Marines annually

and tarmacs upgraded for US bomber aircraft — to Australian ownership.

"We're committed to putting the Port of Darwin back into Australian hands," Marles told reporters yesterday on a visit to Darwin. (AFP)



Halved net migration a boost for beleaguered Starmer

AFP
London

Net migration to the United Kingdom fell last year by nearly half to 171,000, its statistics agency said yesterday, providing some relief on a key issue for under-fire Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

The number of non-EU citizens arriving for work-related reasons fell by 47% in 2025, which was “the main reason for the continued fall in net migration”, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

Starmer — and his predecessors — have been under intense pressure to curb immigration after decades of growth and despite the 2016 Brexit vote and departure from the European Union four years later.

The drop in legal migration comes as the number of undocumented migrants arriving on UK shores in small boats after crossing the Channel dropped slightly since a high in 2022, though they remain in the tens of thousands, according to statistics released last month.

The issue is expected to feature prominently in a high-stakes by-election in northwest England next month that could determine Starmer's political fate, as potential leadership rival Andy Burnham bids to return to parliament.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer visits a children's activity centre in Essex, yesterday. (Reuters)

The latest figures are the lowest since early 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the ONS.

Starmer welcomed them, noting they showed a 82% fall over three years.

“I promised to restore control to our borders. My government is delivering,” he wrote on X.

“I know there's more to do, we're introducing a skills-based migration system that rewards contribution and ends our reliance on cheap overseas workers,” he said.

The falling numbers follow more stringent requirements for those applying for work visas introduced by the previous Conservative government and continued by Starmer.

The government has also tight-

ened criteria in other areas such as students bringing dependents.

Starmer's Labour Party was elected in a landslide election victory in July 2024 after voters punished the Conservatives over a string of issues including soaring net migration.

Interior Minister Shabana Mahmood said the figures showed the government was controlling Britain's borders while insisting the country was still welcoming “those who contribute”.

“Net migration is now at 171,000, down from a high of 944,000 under the Conservatives,” she added on X.

The ONS estimated the 2025 figure for net migration — the difference between the numbers of people arriving in the UK and those leaving — was down from 331,000

at the end of 2024.

The population of the UK — made up of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — currently stands at around 70mn.

The lower figures come after net legal migration ran at historically high levels for a number of years after Britain formally left the EU in January 2020, peaking at nearly one mn (944,000) in the year to March 2023.

Before their ouster the Conservatives toughened work visa rules, with Starmer announcing a further tightening last May.

But reducing small boat crossings remain a thorny challenge.

More than 200,000 migrants have arrived that way since records began in 2018, interior ministry statistics showed earlier this month.

Last year, a total of 41,472 migrants landed on England's southern shore after making the dangerous crossing from northern France — an increase on the previous year, though down from a high of 45,774 in 2022.

The arrivals have seen support for the hard-right party Reform UK surge in recent local elections.

Separate figures issued by the interior ministry showed a 12% drop in people who claimed asylum in the UK in the year to March.

Some 94,000 people applied for asylum over that period, the figures showed.

India wants return of stranded ships before sending more to Gulf

Reuters
New Delhi

India wants to secure the return of its ships stranded in the Gulf before sending any vessels back to load fuel, a senior government official said yesterday. “Our priority is to get all our ships out of the Strait of Hormuz,” said Mukesh Mangal, additional secretary at India's ministry of ports, shipping and waterways.

India will send vessels to the west of the Strait of Hormuz “when-ever the situation becomes conducive”, he added.

India's shipping ministry is co-ordinating with the foreign ministry and a decision on sending vessels back will be taken after all stranded ships return, Mangal told a press conference.

He said 13 Indian-flagged vessels and one Indian-owned vessel are still stuck on the west side of the Strait.

Thirteen vessels loaded with energy cargoes, mostly liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), have so far transited out of the Strait since its effective closure due to the conflict which began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

Before the war, India sourced more than 40% of its crude oil imports and about 90% of its LPG, which is used for cooking, from the Middle East through the Strait of Hormuz. India now faces one of its worst cooking gas supply disruptions in decades, with shipments through the Strait largely halted due to the conflict.

Record number of climbers scale Everest's Nepal side



Bianca Adler, 18, who claims to be the youngest Australian to climb Mount Everest, poses for a picture along with her mother Fiona Adler and father Paul Adler, upon her arrival after climbing Mount Everest in Kathmandu, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Kathmandu

A record number of climbers reached the summit of Mount Everest in a single day from the southern face of the peak in Nepal, officials said yesterday, estimating the total at about 275.

The world's highest peak can be scaled from either the southern side in Nepal or the northern face in China's Tibet, but Chinese authorities have closed the route this year.

Nepal's tourism department said an estimated 275 people scaled the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) peak on Wednesday, noting that a higher number had reached the peak in 2023 from both sides.

Officials said the final number will be tallied after the climbs are verified, which require photographs and statements from the climber's expedition company and guides.

“This is the highest ever number of single-day summits in the history of Mount Everest expeditions who have reached the peak of Mount Everest,” Himal Gautam, spokesman for

the department, told AFP.

“We still need to verify the official data, as we must issue certificates to them.”

In 2023, a higher number of mountaineers from China and Nepal sides reached the top of the Everest in a single day, he added without giving a number.

A climbing boom has made mountaineering a lucrative business in Nepal since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa made the first ascent of Everest in 1953.

The country has issued a record 492 Everest permits this season, with a city of tents set up at the foot of the mountain for climbers and support staff.

Approximately 600 people, including mountaineers and support staff, have climbed Everest since the start of this year's spring climbing season last month.

The high numbers have rekindled concerns about overcrowding on the mountain, which straddles the Nepal-China border, especially if poor weather shortens the climbing window.

The climbing season is likely to wrap up by the first week of June.

Cuba outraged after US indicts Raul Castro

AFP
Havana

Cubans expressed their shock and indignation after the US indicted former president Raul Castro on murder charges, a stunning new step in President Donald Trump's pressure on the communist state.

The charges against the ex-leader — who at 94 years old remains influential in Cuban politics — have fuelled speculation that Trump will try to topple the crisis-hit island, culminating a US pressure campaign which has blocked months of crippling oil blockades.

Authorities in Cuba and abroad slammed the indictment, the latest step-up in Trump's international interventions after the Iran war, the US toppling of Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro and threats against Greenland.

The charges against Raul Castro — younger brother of Fidel Castro, the late iconic US nemesis who led Cuba's communist revolution that culminated in 1959 — stem from the deadly downing of two civilian planes manned by anti-Castro pilots in 1996.

Cuban authorities called on citizens to protest the “despicable” indictment, with the official newspaper Granma urging Cubans to gather outside the US embassy in Havana today at 0730 (1230 GMT).

“This isn't really an accusation,



People hold signs outside Versailles Restaurant in support of charges announced by US federal prosecutors against the former Cuban president in Miami. (AFP)

something from more than 30 years ago, but rather a public attack on a public figure,” Fabian Fernandez, a 30-year-old accountant, told AFP in Havana.

“It's a matter of politics and public image,” he added.

In addition to murder, Castro has been charged with conspiracy to kill Americans and destruction of aircraft.

The Cuban government said in a statement that the 1996 shoot-down was “legitimate self-defense” against an airspace violation.

“We expect that he will show up here by his own will or by another way and go to prison,” acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told a news conference in Miami attended by Cuban-Americans who cheered the announcement.

Pedro Leal, a 65-year-old retiree, accused Washington of hurting ordinary Cubans.

“What the US government is doing here now, aside from the energy blockade preventing us from bringing in fuel, honestly, it's criminal,” he said. A four-month US oil blockade, part of a campaign to undermine Cuba's communist leadership, has brought the island's already battered economy to the brink of collapse.

Cubans have suffered power outages of up to 20 hours a day and taps running dry. Runaway inflation has caused the price of basic goods to soar and mountains of trash have piled up on the streets of Havana.

Iris Herrera, a 58-year-old self-employed woman, said she worried about a US military in-

tervention in Cuba.

“I do not agree with a war by the US here in Cuba,” she told AFP.

“It's inhumane, because there will be deaths, there will be many deaths.”

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel wrote on X that the charges carry no legal basis and “add to the file they are fabricating to justify the folly of a military aggression against Cuba.”

China led international reaction to the charge, saying it “firmly supports” Cuba and urging the US to de-escalate tensions with the country. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a press briefing yesterday that Washington “should stop brandishing the sanctions stick and the judicial stick against Cuba and stop threatening force at every turn.”

Beijing's comments came after the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier and its escort warships entered the Caribbean Sea, the military's Southern Command said on Wednesday.

“Welcome to the Caribbean, Nimitz Carrier Strike Group!” the Southern Command posted on X, alongside a video flaunting the ship's capabilities.

Trump has hailed the indictment as a “very big moment” but played down prospects of moving on Cuba.

“There won't be escalation. I don't think there needs to be. Look, the place is falling apart. It's a mess, and they sort of lost control,” he told reporters on Wednesday.

Cuba has accepted US aid offer: Rubio

AFP
Miami

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday that Cuba accepted an offer of \$100mn in aid but that it was unclear if Washington would agree to Havana's terms.

Cuba has publicly only said that it was reviewing the offer made by Rubio and tensions have risen after the US on Wednesday indicted the country's influential former president Raul Castro on murder charges.

“They say they've accepted it. We'll see if that means it” will work out, Rubio told reporters in

his home city of Miami as he left for a Nato meeting in Sweden.

“We're not going to do humanitarian aid that falls into the hands of their military company that they have. And then they take that stuff and they sell it at the dollar stores and put the money in their pocket,” Rubio said.

Rubio, a Cuban-American and vociferous critic of the communist government in Havana, said that the US was hoping to avoid the use of force.

The indictment in Miami of the 94-year-old former president over a 1996 downing of two aircraft raised speculation that President Donald Trump could use the charges as a pretext to attack the

island and seize him.

“The president always has the option to do whatever it takes to support and protect the national interest and national security of the US,” Rubio said.

“That said, our preference is always a diplomatic solution,” he said.

But Rubio also made clear he believed Cuba posed a threat.

“Cuba not only has weapons that they've acquired from Russia and China over the years, but they also host (a) Russia and Chinese intelligence presence in their country, not far from where we're standing right now,” he said.

“So Cuba has always posed a national security threat to the US.”

Bolivia, Colombia expel each other's ambassadors

AFP
La Paz

Bolivia and Colombia expelled each other's ambassadors Wednesday in a spat over anti-government demonstrations choking La Paz and other cities.

Bolivia said it was expelling Colombia's envoy over “interference” by its left-wing President Gustavo Petro, who called the rallies a “popular insurrection.”

Bolivian farmers, labourers and miners have for weeks been demonstrating over the economic policies of new centre-right President Rodrigo Paz.

Later Wednesday, Colombia's foreign ministry said Bolivia's ambassador will depart Bogota.

“By way of reciprocity, a conclusion of functions is announced for Mr. Ariel Percy Molina Pimentel,” Bolivia's ambassador in Colombia, according to a statement from the foreign ministry in Bogota.

Petro, known for his broadsides against right-wing governments, labelled the protests an insurrection against “geopolitical arrogance” at the weekend and offered to mediate the crisis.

Bolivia's foreign ministry said the expulsion of ambassador Elizabeth Garcia arose from a “need to preserve the principles of sover-



Demonstrators take part in a march, which organisers have dubbed a “defence of democracy,” to rally against road blockades and what they call pressure measures used by protesters calling for the resignation of Bolivia's President Rodrigo Paz, amid the country's economic and fuel crisis, in La Paz. (Reuters)

eignty, non-interference and mutual respect between states.”

It did not say when Garcia would leave the Andean country.

Petro slammed the expulsion, saying it pointed to a “drift to extremism” in Bolivia.

Speaking to Colombia's Caracol Radio, he charged that unless the Bolivian government engaged in “broad national dialogue” the country could face a “massacre of the population.”

Paz's administration has accused the protesters of an attempted coup by former left-wing president Evo Morales, a fugitive from justice being sought for al-

leged trafficking of a minor.

Washington has expressed strong support for Paz and echoed his “coup” allegations.

Paz ended two decades of socialist rule, which began under Morales, when he was elected last year in the middle of the worst economic crisis in four decades.

He scrapped longstanding fuel subsidies in hopes of stabilising the country's dwindling dollar reserves but has so far failed to stabilise the economy.

On Monday, riot police in La Paz fought running battles for hours with protesters calling for Paz's resignation.

Venezuela leader 'to travel to India for oil talks'

Venezuela's president will travel to India next week to discuss selling oil, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday, an unusual announcement of a foreign leader's travel that shows the new US influence over Caracas.

Rubio mentioned the trip by interim President Delcy Rodriguez, in power since US forces deposed Nicolas Maduro in January, as the top US diplomat left on his own trip that will take him to India starting tomorrow.

With India's growing economy hit by the chaos set off by the US and Israeli attack on Iran, Rubio said, “We want to sell them as much energy as they'll buy.”

“We also think there's opportunities with Venezuelan oil. In fact, it's my understanding that the interim president of Venezuela will be travelling to India next week as well,” he said.

“There's a lot to work on with India. They're a great ally, a great partner.” Rodriguez, while publicly critical

of the operation that snatched Maduro, a leftist nemesis of Washington, has won praise from President Donald Trump for co-operating with the US, including by assisting oil companies.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves.

Rodriguez made her first foreign trip as interim president earlier this month to The Hague to defend Venezuela's claims in a territorial dispute with Guyana before the International Court of Justice. (AFP)



Damaging another person's property

Allah, The Most High, has prohibited usurping other people's property and has imposed liability for whatever is damaged of the property taken without right even if it was by mistake. Whoever damages another person's property -- that is considerable -- without its owner's permission, is financially liable to make up for it.

Imam al-Muwaffaq, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "There is no juristic disagreement in this regard, whether or not the damage is intentional, and whether or not the one causing it is legally accountable."

Similarly, whoever causes the damage of another person's wealth is financially liable for it. For example, when one opens a gate causing what is locked in to be lost or stolen, or when one unfastens a container causing what is therein to be wasted and damaged, he is liable for them. Likewise, if someone ties a riding animal in a narrow street causing a passer-by to stumble and be harmed or injured, he has to pay him for the damage caused. This is exactly like the one who parks a car in the middle of the street, and as a result, another car or a person is hit, whereby damage is caused, the one who parked the car is liable to make up for the damage. This opinion is based on the Hadith reported by Ad-Daraqutni and others, which reads: "If one ties a riding animal in one of the pathways of the Muslims, or in one of their markets, and it treads on someone (or something) by one of its front or back legs, one is liable for it." [Ad-Daraqutni and Al-Bayhaqi]

The same ruling applies when one leaves clay, a piece of wood or a stone in a pathway or digs a hole in it, causing harm or injury to a passerby. In the same way, if someone throws watermelon peels or lets water in the street, causing a passerby to slip and get injured, he is to make up for it. People who do all such actions are financially liable for the resulting damage, as such deeds are regarded as transgression.

Unfortunately, there are many such instances of carelessness everywhere nowadays; too many holes are heedlessly dug on the roads and streets, too many blocks and obstacles are put therein, and too much damage is caused by that heedlessness due to the lack of control and supervision. Some people may even occupy streets as if they were their own, dedicating them for their own use, causing harm to those passing by without caring for the sins they are committing in this way or the punishment that awaits them.

Among the matters that incur financial liability is when one has a mad dog that assaults the passersby or bites any of them. The owner of the dog is liable to make up for the resulting damages or injuries, for having such a dog is an act



of transgression. On the other hand, if someone digs a well in his courtyard for his own benefit, he is financially liable for any damage that might be caused through it; he is obliged to keep it in a condition that prevents harming the passersby. However, if he leaves it without such precautions, he is deemed a transgressor.

Moreover, if someone owns cattle, he is obliged to keep them away from damaging other people's crops especially at night; otherwise he is financially liable for whatever they damage. The Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), judged in such a case: "The owners of property (i.e. cattle) should keep it during the daytime and they are liable for the damages they (the cattle) cause during the night-time." [Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawood, and Ibn Majah]

The owner of a domestic animal is not liable for it during the daytime, except if he releases it close to what it usually dam-

ages. Imam al-Baghawi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Scholars hold the opinion that the owners of grazing cattle are not liable for the people's properties they (the cattle) damage during the daytime. However, their owners are liable for whatever they damage during the night, for it is conventional that the owners of gardens and orchards are to protect them properly during the daytime while the cattle owners are to detain them during the night-time. Thus, whoever breaks this habit has deviated from the convention. This is in case the owner of the cattle is absent, but if he is there, he has to pay for what his cattle have damaged."

In the Qur'an, Allah mentions a story about Prophets Dawood (David) and Sulayman (Solomon), may Allah exalt their mention, and their judgment concerning a similar case of damage. Allah, The Exalted, Says (what means): {And [mention] David and Solomon, when they judged

concerning the field -- when the sheep of a people overran it [at night], and We were witness to their judgment. And We gave understanding of the case to Solomon, and to each [of them] We gave judgment and knowledge. And We subjected the mountains to exalt [Us], along with David and [also] the birds. And We were doing [that].} [Qur'an 21:78-79]

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "According to the Qur'an, Sulayman, may Allah exalt his mention, was clearly favoured by understanding the wisdom of liability on equal terms. The sheep were grazing at night and damaged a grape orchard. Dawood, may Allah exalt his mention, judged that the shepherds should pay the exact value of the damage, and then he estimated the sheep and found that their value was equal to the compensation for the damage. Therefore, he gave judgment that all the sheep should be given to the owner of the orchard. However, Sulayman, may Allah exalt his mention, judged that the owners of the sheep were liable for the damaged orchard and that they should pay its exact equivalent in compensation by cultivating the orchard until it returns to its original state. He did not also deprive the owners of the orchard of the crops that were supposed to be yielded from the time of damage until the time of recovery. Thus, Sulayman, may Allah exalt his mention, gave the owners of the orchard the sheep so as to benefit from them as much as the sheep owners used to benefit from the orchard. In other words, they would utilise the shepherds' sheep in return for the fruits they missed of their orchard until the orchard was recultivated by the shepherds (in compensation). So, Sulayman, may Allah exalt his mention, evaluated the two guarantees and found them equal, and that was an example of the knowledge Allah favored him with and the wisdom He praised him for."

If an animal has been led or ridden by someone, he is liable only for whatever it damages with its front organs, such as the forelegs or the mouth. Yet, he is not liable for what is damaged by the animal's hind parts such as the hind legs, for the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "There is no compensation for whatsoever is damaged (or killed or injured) by a beast's leg." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "The injuries or damages caused by animals like cows, sheep, and the like are not to be compensated (by the owner) if they are off a leash. This occurs, for example, when an animal breaks loose from the person leading it and then causes damage. In this case, there is no financial liability on the owner for the damage provided that the

animal is not used to biting and that its owner has not been negligent in detaining it at night and keeping it away from marketplaces and people's gatherings."

The same opinion is maintained by some other scholars, who state that there is no compensation (for the damage caused) if the animal escapes and wanders about aimlessly without a leader or a rider, unless it is a wild beast.

In addition, if someone is attacked by a human being or an animal, and killing is the only way to stop them, there will be no compensation on that person in case he killed them. This is because killing here is a means of self-defence which is permissible, so there is no liability for its consequences. Moreover, the killing of an assaulter is intended to prevent its harm, so one will not be regarded as a killer when one kills it in self-defence. Rather, the assaulter itself will be regarded as a self-murderer in this case. Sheikh Taqiyyud-Deen, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "A person has to stop the assaulter, and if it cannot be stopped except by killing, it is permissible for the attacked person to do so according to the unanimous juristic agreement in this regard."

Among the objects for which there is no compensation in case of damage are musical and entertainment instruments, crosses, wine containers, and books on misguidance, superstition, dissoluteness and profligacy. This is implied in the Hadith related by Imam Ahmad, may Allah have mercy upon him, on the authority of Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, who narrated that the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, ordered him to get a knife and then he, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, went to the markets of Madinah, where there were leather containers of intoxicants brought from Ash-Sham (The Levant); the region covering Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, added that those leather containers of wine were torn by knives in the presence of the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, who commanded his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, to do the same [Ahmad]. This Hadith proves the religious obligation of destroying such immoral things without giving anything in compensation. Still, this should be carried out under the control and supervision of the authorities so as to guarantee public interests and prevent any evil or corruption resulting thereof.

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



Countering evil with a better deed

Interacting with others in life is necessary, as a person is surrounded by neighbours, relatives and colleagues in institutions of study and workplaces. Due to this dealing with different types of people, it is natural to be made susceptible to harm from some of them. Suppose that every such act one is subjected to, is met by an evil one in its like, in return -- regardless of whether this harm is slight or great, or intentional or not -- the communities would turn into a jungle. People will abandon good traits and live without regulations or rules.

To prevent the Muslim community from this detestable scenario, Allah The Almighty commanded His believing slaves to resist evil with something good, when He Says (what means): {And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.} [Qur'an 41:34]

Undoubtedly, the ultimate act that is superior to countering evil with its like, is to pardon and be compassionate, or at the least, to turn away and avoid further embroiling oneself. Dear brother and sister! By adopting this noble moral, you are safeguarding your own self-respect and rationality. Therefore, you have to keep yourself away from the provocation of foul people in order to be one of the true servants of Allah The Almighty. He describes them Saying (what means):

{And they who turn away from laghw (anything from falsehood, and that includes association, other minor sins and all useless speech, ac-

tions and concerns; furthermore, busying oneself with that which does not concern him is included).} [Qur'an 23:3]

{And when they hear ill speech, they turn away from it and say: "For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace will be upon you; we seek not the ignorant."} [Qur'an 28:55]

{And when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace.} [Qur'an 25:63]

When one treats an abuser in a wholesome manner, he or she would suppress his or her anger, thereby becoming one of those whom the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, referred to when he said: "He who stifles his rage while he is able to give vent to it, Allah will summon him in front of all people on the Day of Resurrection and let him choose from the Hoor (maidens of Paradise) as he pleases."

Furthermore, one of the greatest benefits of repelling evil with a better deed is that the enemy who wants to inflict harm and evil, often converts into a defending supporter and a devoted friend. There is a wondrous magic in good manners that it can be more influential than physical force and vengeful will. Thus, antagonism changes into a different sentiment, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.} [Qur'an 41:34] That is why Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, advised: "Use your forbearance to ward off the ignorance of those who harm you with [that trait of theirs]."

We have observed the best of all creatures, Muhammad, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, not only tolerating the maltreatment of the violent, but also overlooking that and pardoning them. 'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, described him, saying: "He does not counter evil with evil, rather he absolves and forgives." This was also the example of the righteous people, may Allah be pleased with them, who followed the methodology of the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam. One of them was insulted by someone once, so he said to him: "If you are mistaken, I ask Allah to pardon you; and if you are correct, I ask Him to forgive me."

Although we are all required to adopt this trait, a person in a position of power is worthier of doing so more than others. That is why among the final instructions of the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, before his death, was: "Whoever is given authority over something in the Ummah of Muhammad and has the power to harm or bring benefit to anyone, then he should reward those who do good and pardon those who commit evil." A man once came to the Prophet complaining about his servant, saying: "I have a servant who is a wrongdoer and an oppressor. Should I beat him?" The Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Forgive him as much as seventy times per day."

Also, a person whose relatives treat him unjustly is particularly in need of this quality. He or she should not meet their ill behaviour with evil in return; rather, he or she has to pardon, forgive and increase in compassion. It was narrated that a man came to the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I have some relatives with whom I maintain ties of kinship and they sever them; I pardon them and they oppress me; I treat them kindly and they harm me. Should I then treat them in the same way?" The Messenger of Allah, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, replied: "No, then you would all be sinners; rather, you should be better and maintain the ties of kinship and as long as you are in that state, you will have a protector and supporter appointed from Allah with you."

Repelling vice with a better deed is the remedy that restores damaged social relations. It reforms what has been corrupted and renews that which is effaced. With this treatment, the manifestations of goodness are revived, people race each other in virtuous acts, the gates of iniquity are blocked to Satan and evil does not find any means to spread. Instead, beneficence will prevail and the motives and consequences of vice will be eradicated.

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

Prophet's guidance concerning Eid day

1. He (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) used to always perform the two Eid prayers in the Musallaa (outside prayer grounds). He only performed this Salaah in the Masjid one time, due to rain.
2. He (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) used to wear his best clothing when he went out for the two Eid prayers.
3. He (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) used to eat an odd number of dates before going out for the Eid al-Fitr (prayer). As for the Eid al-Adha (prayer), he would not eat until he returned from the Musallaa, in which case he would eat from the Ad-heeyah (sacrificed animal).
4. He (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) used to take a Ghusl (complete bath) for both of the Eids.
5. He (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) used to go out to the two Eid prayers walking.
6. Whenever he (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) reached the Musallaa he would begin with the Salaah - without Adhaan and without 'Iqaamah, and without saying "as-Salaatu Jaami'atan" (i.e. "Salaah, in Congregation").
7. Whenever he (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) finished the Salaah, he would stand - facing the people - while the people would be sitting. Then, he would deliver the religious advice and exhortation; and he would begin the Khutbah with 'Praise of Allah'.
8. He (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) gave permission to those who attended the Eid prayer to either sit for the Khutbah or leave.
9. He (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) used to go (to the place of prayer) by one road and return by another road.

[Summarised from 'Zaad al-Ma'ad Fee Hadyi Khair al-'Ibaad' by by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah]



Ebola, hantavirus outbreaks sign of our 'dangerous' times?

The deadly hantavirus and Ebola outbreaks are only the latest crises in "dangerous and divisive" times, the World Health Organization (WHO) chief said.

Opening the body's annual decision-making assembly in Geneva, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus spoke of the new Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which he declared an international health emergency over the last weekend, and the rare hantavirus outbreak on the MV Hondius cruise ship.

The two "are just the latest crises in our troubled world", he told the gathering of health

ministers and high level delegates from around the world.

"From conflicts to economic crises to climate change and aid cuts, we live in difficult, dangerous and divisive times," said Tedros, who was expected to elaborate on the risks during his main address to the week-long World Health Assembly.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose country has been hailed for allowing the stricken MV Hondius to anchor off its Canary Islands last week for the evacuation of passengers and crew, stressed that "protecting others is the best way to protect ourselves".

"No country can save itself" on its own, he said in a surprise address to the assembly, receiving a standing ovation. Currently, "defending common sense has become a form of rebellion", he charged, lamenting an ongoing "pandemic of egoism".

The 2026 World Health Assembly comes after a particularly difficult year for WHO, weakened by the announced US withdrawal and deep funding cuts. "The WHO's budget has been reduced by around 21%, or nearly \$1bn. Hundreds of jobs have been eliminated, programs have been reduced," Swiss Health Minister Elisabeth Baume-Schneider

noted in her address. "The WHO had to, and was able to, undergo profound reform in the midst of the emergency."

Suerie Moon, co-director of the Global Health Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute, also suggested WHO had weathered the storm, and that the hantavirus crisis provided "a clear illustration of why the world needs an effective, trusted, impartial, reliably-funded WHO", she added.

Disagreement between wealthy and developing nations has meanwhile blocked closure on the WHO's landmark 2025 pandemic treaty. Countries had aimed to finalise during this

year's assembly a key annex to the agreement, which deals with sharing access to pathogens with pandemic potential, then sharing benefits derived from them such as vaccines, tests and treatments.

But they appeared set to grant themselves another year to finalise stalled negotiations. It also remains unclear what, if anything, will be decided on the withdrawal of the United States and Argentina.

US President Donald Trump handed in a one-year notice to withdraw from WHO on his first day back in office in January 2025. Argentina soon followed suit.

The WHO, whose constitution

does not include a withdrawal clause, has not confirmed either withdrawal. The United States reserved the right to withdraw when it joined the WHO in 1948 - on condition of giving one year's notice and meeting its financial obligations in full for that fiscal year. While the notice period has expired, Washington has still not paid its 2024 or 2025 dues, owing around \$260mn. When WHO's executive board met in January, Israel submitted a resolution to approve Argentina's withdrawal - something countries are expected to discuss during the assembly - but not a word was said about the US. - AFP

Heightened security at Nato meeting



A Swedish police officer stands guard outside the venue ahead of the meeting of Nato Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Helsingborg, Sweden. Nato foreign ministers gather in Helsingborg on May 21-22 for talks focused on security, defence co-operation and regional stability. (AFP)



Qatar, Unesco renew call to protect biodiversity

The world celebrates the International Day for Biological Diversity every year on May 22, amid intensive efforts to protect planet Earth - especially the lives of animals and plants, which form a cornerstone of human well-being now and in the future. They provide ecological balance, biological diversity, and an important source of resources that support the survival of ecosystems.

However, indicators show that biodiversity is deteriorating at an unprecedented rate, as about 75% of terrestrial environment and 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions. This has prompted international organisations to sound the alarm over the risk of extinction threatening nearly one million species of animals and plants.

Experts attribute this worsening crisis, despite all efforts, to climate change, rising pollution levels, overexploitation of resources - especially forests - destruction of water sources, urban expansion at the expense of green spaces, and harmful human practices. This has sparked global calls for measures capable of transforming our lifestyles and renewing humanity's connection with nature. Here, Unesco plays a leading role in global efforts to protect biodiversity by linking science, nature, and culture.

GLOBAL MODELS

Unesco-designated sites, which cover nearly 10mn sq km across 195 countries, are considered global models for integrating biodiversity conservation with sustainable development. Collectively, World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, and Unesco Global Geoparks cover 6% of the Earth's landmass. They represent key areas where people strive to live in harmony with other living organisms and exchange knowledge for the benefit of all.

Mangrove forests are among the most important ecosystems for storing carbon, protecting coastlines, enhancing resilience to climate change, and supporting biodiversity. Approximately 26% of the world's mangrove forests are found in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, these forests are rapidly declining due to habitat

As the world marks the International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22, global attention has turned to the accelerating loss of ecosystems and species driven by climate change, pollution and human activity. In Qatar, authorities and environmental experts are intensifying efforts to protect wildlife, restore natural habitats and preserve biodiversity for future generations

The establishment of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Qatar, is now under Unesco protection.

fragmentation and overexploitation of natural resources.

To address this, Unesco's "MangRes" project works to restore mangrove forests in seven World Biosphere Reserves through scientific initiatives led by local communities. One of the most significant efforts is the Biosphere Reserves project in the Amazon River region, which aims to halt forest degradation, preserve biodiversity and ecosystems, and support alternative livelihoods for local communities and indigenous peoples.

Since 2021, Unesco projects have supported more than 42 initiatives aimed at rehabilitating ecosystems and creating sustainable job opportunities for local communities. These efforts combine scientific knowledge with local and indigenous knowledge to reduce negative impacts on biodiversity and strengthen resilience to climate change.

In the same context, Unesco's Environmental DNA (eDNA) Expeditions is a global citizen science initiative aimed at advancing knowledge of marine biodiversity and the impacts of climate change on the distribution patterns of marine life across Unesco World Heritage marine sites. It is the world's first global use case for detecting ocean

biodiversity with citizen-science using shared eDNA collection approaches. The sampling campaign engaged 250 citizen scientists across 19 countries, who identified over 4,000 species through eDNA sampling.

The biosphere reserves are founded on the principle that communities and ecosystems thrive together. Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including civil society and business organisations, are active partners in protecting and restoring ecosystems while building resilient, sustainable livelihoods.

Unesco Global Geoparks are established through a bottom-up process that combines environmental conservation with sustainable development while engaging and empowering local communities. There are currently 229 Unesco Global Geoparks in 50 countries.

QATAR'S HERITAGE

In Qatar, natural resources represent a central part of the country's heritage that will be passed on to future generations. Biodiversity plays an important role across all ecosystems by acting as a natural regulator that helps maintain soil fertility, pollinate crops, control insects and epidemics, and support other

activities that fall within the national strategic environmental and climate priorities.

Qatar National Environment and Climate Change Strategy also aims to improve efforts to conserve and restore natural ecosystems and protect their unique characteristics. It seeks to ensure that the people of Qatar have access to clean air, pure water, food, and resources. To achieve this, the country is implementing effective management plans to conserve more than 25% of its total land area by 2030 through restoration programs, protection of threatened marine and terrestrial life, sustainable fishing practices, and the preservation and restoration of Qatar's natural habitats.

In this context, Assistant Director of the Wildlife Development Department Dr Dhaif Heedan told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that enhancing wildlife and preserving biodiversity in Qatar's terrestrial and marine environments were a major focus of the ministry's plans for 2025 and 2026. These efforts included implementing projects to protect sea turtles at Fuwairit Beach, monitoring nesting sites, and rescuing injured turtles, in addition to protecting mangrove trees, marine habitats, and endangered species.

Dr Dhaif Heedan said that the ministry continued implementing projects to fence and rehabilitate natural areas and plant native trees and plants such as acacia, jujube, and ghaf trees, with the aim of restoring vegetation cover and improving natural habitats for wildlife.

The ministry also worked to combat invasive species, conduct field studies and surveys on biodiversity, develop environmental databases, strengthen partnerships with academic institutions, the private sector, and the local community, and implement awareness programs and environmental initiatives that support sustainability and preserve natural resources for future generations.

HUMAN ACTIVITIES

He also warned of the dangers posed by certain human activities such as overgrazing, vehicle damage to vegetation, marine pollution, and invasive species that present challenges impacting ecosystems and biodiversity, noting that the ministry relies on specialized field teams and well-defined operational plans that mandate the application of occupational safety procedures and the provision of appropriate equipment for fieldwork, including modern monitoring and surveillance technologies.

According to the Ministry of Environment's website, Qatar launched the seed dispersal initiative, aimed at supporting natural vegetation cover, alongside the national campaign to remove the harmful mesquite tree. In addition, there are various initiatives to protect endangered species or to propagate animal species that were once found in Qatar, such as the protection of the hawksbill sea turtle, which began in 2003, and the establishment of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, which is now under Unesco protection. Attention is also being given to the annual migration seasons of whale aggregation areas, turtle nesting sites, and dugong habitats, as well as the development of nature reserves, islands, and reefs.

Regarding the government's complementary role with environmental centers, Head of the

Nature Conservators Centre Saif al-Hajari told QNA that enhancing wildlife and preserving biodiversity in Qatar is a joint effort undertaken by government agencies such as ministries, universities and their affiliated research centers. There are also special initiatives by civil society organizations and nature reserves that complement the efforts of government agencies to achieve common goals in protecting endangered species and preserving natural habitats, such as the Arabian oryx, the sand gazelle, the houbara bustard and the ostrich, noting that a number of these animals have been released into the reserves for years to reintroduce them to their natural environment.

He added that the efforts of specialized centers also include protecting marine life, such as whale shark monitoring programs, dugong tracking, and sea turtle conservation, in addition to marine ecosystem restoration efforts like mangrove cultivation and propagation projects to enhance the coastal environment and coral reef and seagrass restoration programs.

Furthermore, Dr al-Hajari pointed to the importance of studying terrestrial and marine ecosystems, monitoring and documenting biodiversity, and developing databases for marine organisms. He noted the launch of the Biodiversity Database Project and the Arabian Oryx Genome Project, which is considered one of the most prominent projects in this field.

Regarding the environmental and social challenges affecting ecological balance and biodiversity, Dr al-Hajari stressed the importance of strengthening environmental laws and regulations to a level that keeps pace with international legislation, expanding nature reserves, adopting sustainable practices, and implementing environmental rehabilitation projects and utilizing scientific research and technology. Qatar has ratified several international agreements and protocols, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. (QNA)

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 Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
 Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
 Kamran Rehmat

📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
 ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
 ☎ 4435 0478 (News)

📞 4446 6404 (Sport)
 📞 44466636 (Home delivery)
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Sharif to visit China for talks overshadowed by Iran war

AFP
Beijing

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will head to China this weekend for talks with President Xi Jinping, Beijing said yesterday, without specifying whether the war in Iran would be discussed.

Islamabad and Beijing have both sought to mediate in the Middle East conflict, sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran in late February.

A ceasefire agreement since April 8 has halted hostilities, but American President Donald Trump warned on Wednesday that the window for diplomacy was closing.

"The leaders of China and Pakistan will have an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and issues of common concern," said Chinese ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun of the Saturday to Tuesday visit.

Islamabad did not immediately confirm the visit yesterday.

Guo added that China would work with Pakistan to "make positive contributions to the early restoration of peace and stability in the Middle East".

"China supports Pakistan in playing a fair and balanced mediating role in promoting

peace and ending the war," he said.

Pakistan has emerged as a central mediator between the US and Iran, hosting talks last month.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met Sunday in Tehran with Iran's chief negotiator and speaker of parliament, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir was due in Tehran yesterday, Iranian media reported.

China has played a quieter role, shepherding phone calls and meetings with officials of affected Gulf countries.

After high-profile talks with President Xi in Beijing last week, Trump told Fox News the Chinese leader had offered China's help to open the Hormuz Strait — the key oil route largely blocked since the war erupted.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged Islamabad this month to "step up mediation efforts" in the Middle East, speaking to his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar in a call.

In the past two weeks, Beijing has hosted visits from Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

This would be Sharif's first visit to China in 2026 after he went last year for a Shanghai Co-operation Organisation meeting in Tianjin

— hosted by Xi in late August — and a massive military parade in Beijing shortly after.

Pakistan and China have maintained close diplomatic and strategic relations for decades, often describing their partnership as an "all-weather friendship" that is "higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the oceans, sweeter than honey and stronger than steel".

The countries — which share a 523-kilometre (325-mile) long border and call themselves as "Iron brothers" — yesterday celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations, with commemorative messages shared by Xi, Sharif and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari.

China is Pakistan's largest trading partner and a major investor, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and has poured tens of billions of dollars to fund massive transport, energy and infrastructure projects.

The visit comes just as Rubio is set to travel to India, Pakistan's neighbouring rival.

The two countries also co-operate closely on defence, trade, and regional security.

Last May, Islamabad used Chinese-made military hardware, including fighter jets, against India during a brief conflict.

Their ties have strengthened further in recent years amid shifting geopolitical dynamics in South Asia, particularly in relation to India.

Rubio denounces Nato refusal to help on Iran



Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks to the press before boarding his plane at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Miami

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday renewed criticism of Nato for not supporting the US war on Iran, as he headed to alliance talks in Sweden.

"There are many countries in Nato that agree with us that Iran can't have a nuclear weapon, that Iran is a threat to the world," Rubio told reporters in Miami before leaving for the talks among Nato foreign ministers in Helsingborg, Sweden.

President Donald Trump "said, fine, I'm going to do something about it," Rubio said.

"He's not asking them to commit troops. He's not asking them to send their fighter jets in. But they refuse to do anything," he said.

"We were very upset about that."

The US and Israel jointly attacked Iran on February 28. Trump did not consult Nato ahead of time and key European allies have voiced scepticism over the need for war, with US and Israeli claims of an im-

minent Iranian nuclear threat highly disputed and Tehran's retaliation sending global oil prices soaring.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez denounced the war as illegal and refused to let US jets use bases in his country.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Iran was "humiliating" the US in negotiations, infuriating Trump whose administration quickly announced that the US was pulling 5,000 troops from bases in Germany.

"I've been a strong supporter of Nato my entire career," said Rubio, a former senator.

But he continued: "I know why Nato is good for Europe, but why is Nato good for America? Because it gives us bases in the region that allow us to project power during a contingency in the Middle East or somewhere else."

"So when that is the key rationale for why you're in Nato, and then you have countries like Spain denying us the use of these bases, well then, why are you in Nato? That's a very fair question," he said.

He added that other countries were more helpful, previously singling out Portugal for praise.

Italy and Spain urge EU sanctions on Israeli minister

AFP
Rome

Italy and Spain have called on the EU to sanction Israel's far-right national security minister, who posted a video showing detained activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla forced to their knees with hands bound.

A global outcry erupted after Israeli minister Itamar Ben Gvir published a video Wednesday showing the heavy-handed treatment of foreign activists from the flotilla who were detained at sea by Israel and awaiting deportation at the southern port of Ashdod.

In the video, dozens of activists are seen forced to kneel with their foreheads to the ground and their hands tied.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called the treatment of the activists "unacceptable".

Tajani wrote on X yesterday that he had requested sanctions against the minister for "seizing the activists in international waters and subjecting them to harassment and humiliation, in violation of the most basic human rights".



People take part in a flash mob entitled "In the same boat" to protest against the detention and treatment by Israel of activists participating in the Global Sumud Flotilla, in Milan, yesterday. (AFP)

His comment came a day after Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called the activists' treatment "intolerable" and demanded an apology by Israel.

On Wednesday, Sanchez wrote on X the "images of Israeli Minister Ben Gvir humiliating members of the international flotilla in support of Gaza are unacceptable. We will not tolerate anyone mistreating our citizens".

In Ireland, a leaked letter revealed Prime Minister Micheal

Martin urging the EU chief for "further action" against Israel over the activists' treatment.

In the letter to European Council President Antonio Costa that was leaked to AFP yesterday by an unnamed government source, Martin condemned Israel's "shocking treatment of EU citizens" and "unacceptable behaviour" by Ben Gvir.

The letter dated Wednesday called for a discussion about the matter at the next European

Council meeting in June.

"At the very least, this must include the banning of products from Israeli settlements and the suspension of parts if not all of the EU's Association Agreement with Israel," Martin said.

That June 2000 agreement — a treaty that sets a framework for co-operation — includes a clause requiring respect for human rights.

Sanchez called sanctions against Ben Gvir a "matter of urgency" for Brussels, saying that he had already in September announced a ban on the minister entering Spain.

Also yesterday, the United Kingdom announced it had summoned Israel's most senior diplomat in Britain following "the inflammatory video".

The video, which was captioned "Welcome to Israel", also showed Ben Gvir heckling the activists while waving an Israeli flag.

The activists had departed from Turkey last week on around 50 vessels under the Global Sumud Flotilla.

It was the latest attempt by activists to breach Israel's blockade of Gaza, after Israeli forces intercepted a previous convoy last month.

France, Netherlands dismantle VPN linked to cybercrime

AFP
Paris

France and the Netherlands have dismantled a VPN used by cybercriminals to conceal their identities during ransomware attacks and data theft, EU police agency Europol and a French prosecutor said yesterday.

Luxembourg, Switzerland, Romania, Ukraine

and Britain helped in the operation on Tuesday and Wednesday to take down 33 servers linked to the criminal service across Europe, they said.

The virtual private network called "First VPN", which rerouted connections via a third party to avoid identification, was promoted on Russian-speaking cybercrime forums, Europol said.

It "had become deeply embedded in the cybercrime ecosystem, appearing in almost every

major cybercrime investigation supported by Europol in recent years," the EU agency said.

Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud said teams interrogated the VPN's main administrator based in Ukraine in the presence of French investigators, after France opened an investigation in 2021 over its users targeting French victims.

Canada, Germany, Romania and the US supported the investigation, Europol said.

Ukraine boosts border security with Belarus over attack fears

AFP
Kyiv

Ukraine yesterday said it is ramping up security in regions bordering Belarus after warning for weeks of a possible fresh attack launched from the territory of Russia's chief regional ally.

Kyiv has sounded the alarm that Russia may use Belarus — a springboard for its 2022 invasion of Ukraine — to stage a new offensive from the north, including towards the capital.

Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) said its units and the army were "carrying out a comprehensive set of enhanced security measures in the northern regions of our country".

The measures — including stepped up checks of individuals and properties — "will serve as an effective deterrent to any aggressive actions or operations by the enemy and its ally", the SBU said in a statement.

The Kremlin on Monday dismissed Ukraine's allegations as "an attempt at further incitement".

Russia and Belarus began joint nuclear drills this week involving thousands of troops, planes and



Military trucks drive along a road during nuclear forces exercises at an unidentified location in Belarus, yesterday. (Reuters)

strategic missile forces, with the two sides rehearsing the "commanding" of strategic nuclear weapons yesterday, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Amid the exercises, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Wednesday that his country was "preparing responses to every possible course of enemy action — if the Russians do indeed dare to expand their aggression".

Zelensky pledged to strengthen fortifications along the border in his evening address yesterday.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said yesterday that his country posed "no threat to any-

one", but that Belarus was ready to defend Russia in "every possible way", without elaborating.

Ukrainian military expert Sergiy Zgurets told AFP that a fresh offensive from Belarus was unlikely, given the political risks for Minsk, adding that Ukraine had substantially fortified its northern border since 2022.

"I would tend to see this more as pre-emptive informational measures on the Ukrainian side," he said.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, with the war having spiralled into Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II.

Merz pitches making Ukraine EU 'associate member'

AFP
Brussels

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has proposed making Ukraine an "associate member" of the EU without voting rights, while Kyiv goes through the lengthy process of joining fully, a letter seen by AFP yesterday said.

The plan — first floated by Merz with EU counterparts last month — would see Ukraine's leader attend the bloc's summit but not be able to cast a vote.

Kyiv would have a representative at the top table of the EU's executive, the European Commission, and non-voting members of the European parliament.

Under the proposal, outlined by Merz in a letter to EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa, the bloc's mutual assistance clause would apply to Ukraine, and it could benefit from parts of the EU's budget.

"It is obvious that we will not be able to complete the accession process shortly, given the countless hurdles as well as the political complexities of ratification processes," Merz wrote.

"What I envisage is a political solution that brings Ukraine substantially closer to the European



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the day of the German-Ukrainian government consultations, at the Chancellery in Berlin. (Reuters/File Photo)

Union and its core institutions immediately."

Ukraine is pushing to speed up its bid to join the 27-nation European Union as it fights Russia's invasion on the battlefield.

Kyiv's progress was blocked by Hungary's nationalist former premier Viktor Orban, but his election defeat by rival Peter Magyar has raised hopes Kyiv could now move forward.

Merz's plan could face scepticism from both Germany's EU counterparts and from Ukraine.

"Either we accept someone or we don't," Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico told reporters at a press conference,

slamming the idea.

Candidates had to meet a series of conditions to enter the club, Fico said, suggesting that Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia were further along, and no exception should be made for Ukraine.

Kyiv is desperate to keep up momentum towards joining the bloc and fears that any suggested interim solutions will see it stranded in a halfway house.

The German leader insisted he still wants Ukraine to eventually become a "full member" and urged launching "all negotiation clusters" immediately.

He said it would not be membership-lite.

Amir tours Doha International Book Fair



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited yesterday the Doha International Book Fair in its 35th edition, held at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). His Highness the Amir explored *This is Qatar* book project, which was launched as the Guest of Honour initiative for this year's edition, and was presented with the new prominent publications, titles, and participating publishing houses from Qatar and various Arab and foreign countries. His Highness the Amir was briefed on the accompanying cultural programmes and events, as well as the cultural and knowledge-based initiatives presented by the exhibition. (QNA)



Large, growing public turnout for rich, diverse events at DIBF

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) continues to draw large and growing crowds with its rich and diverse programme of events, ranging from discussions on transformations in visual culture to the Qatar National Library (QNL) pavilion, which blends innovation with storytelling, as well as the launch of specialised series.

A discussion on the transformations shaping visual culture took place during the intellectual seminar titled 'The Theory of Arab Art', presented by critic and academic Dr Nizar Shaqroun, adviser at the Ministry of Culture, and moderated by writer Mohammed Yousef al-Arki.

The seminar examined the global shifts influencing visual culture, the connection between art and the creation of meaning and awareness, and the status of visual arts within contemporary Arab culture, particularly their marginalisation in contrast to the dominance of literature and written discourse.

Dr Nizar Shaqroun stressed that the image is no longer merely an aesthetic element or visual medium, but has evolved into a central language in shaping contemporary knowledge and awareness. He noted that people today live in a world increasingly dominated by images and visual



Youth at QNL interactive pavilion.

rhythm, whether through digital media, social platforms or modern artistic expression.

Nearby, the Qatar National Library (QNL) is participating in the DIBF with a diverse and interactive pavilion that blends innovation, storytelling and cultural exploration, offering an educational and entertaining experience for visitors of all ages.

Readers today are no longer satisfied with simply consuming books; many are also seeking

deeper and more personalised literary experiences. Artificial intelligence has even entered the realm of reading identity and literary curiosity.

Among the pavilion's standout attractions is "Meet Your Literary Twin," which uses AI to connect visitors with authors whose writing styles align with their reading preferences. Another feature, "You Are the Hero of the Story," is designed for children and allows them to appear in personal-



(From left) Mohammed Yousef al-Arki and Dr Nizar Shaqroun.

ised digital stories featuring their names, images and personalities.

The pavilion also includes the interactive "Qatar Story" game, which tests knowledge of the country's history through the library's application, alongside the "Ibn Battuta" experience, which takes visitors on a cultural journey through the library's heritage collection of manuscripts, maps and rare photographs.

Amid these innovations, Qatari writer and researcher Salwa Hussein al-Baker launched a specialised series on human resources management at the Rosa Publishing House pavilion during the DIBF.

The series comprises three academic and professional publications aimed at university students and professionals in the sector, offering updated content that keeps pace with labour market developments while strengthening the practical application of the field.

In statements to the press, al-Baker said the publications were developed in response to the growing need for modern Arabic references that simplify human resources concepts and connect them to practical workplace applications.

She added that the series seeks to bridge the gap between university curricula and the evolving demands of the professional sector.

The series consists of three main titles. The first, *Concepts*



Salwa Hussein al-Baker signing her series.

and *Theoretical Foundations in Human Resources Management*, explores the evolution of administrative thought and addresses topics such as planning, job analysis, recruitment, training, and performance evaluation, as well as organisational justice and digital transformation in human resources.

The second book, *Training and Development*, examines mechanisms to build human capacity and enhance professional competencies. It reviews methodologies for identifying training needs,

designing programmes and measuring training impact, while also highlighting the future of training in light of technological advancements and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The third title, *Human Resource Management Strategies*, focuses on applying modern management concepts in the workplace, covering strategic planning, talent management, organisational leadership, decision-making, and the role of human capital in helping organisations achieve a competitive advantage.

Manga titles captivate readers at DIBF 2026

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Japanese manga titles are proving to be a major attraction at the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), captivating young readers and parents with their diverse stories and artistry. The event will run until May 23 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

Originating in Japan, manga refers to a wide range of comic books and graphic novels that span genres from adventure and fantasy to slice of life and romance. Known for their distinctive art styles and cinematic storytelling, manga have become a global phenomenon, appealing to readers of all ages and inspiring adaptations in film, television, and gaming.

Alexis Galadriel, an incoming Grade 8 student at Philippine School Doha, described the fair's extensive manga selection as "refreshing" compared to the limited collections in local bookstores.

"It was deeply exciting to see such a wide range of comics available," she said, and explained that reading manga with friends



Visitors browse shelves featuring Japanese animation classics, including Hayao Miyazaki's *The Wind Rises*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Castle in the Sky*, and *Ponyo*, alongside other popular titles. PICTURES: Peter Alagos.

and family had created memorable bonding moments and even sparked critical discussions.

Alexis explained that many of the comics she has read carry lessons through morals and symbolic undertones, often centred

on friendship and family ties. She said these stories taught her that unity among people, especially friends, is essential in life. Beyond that, manga had also instilled in her a sense of gratitude for what she already has. As an aspiring art-

ist, Alexis added that the detailed and cinematic panels make manga a valuable study in visual storytelling. Julie Ann, the mother of Alexis, said manga can enrich a child's reading experience by offering diverse art styles and genres that ca-



Crowds gather at a stall showcasing manga favourites like *Demon Slayer* alongside contemporary novels, underscoring the fair's diverse offerings.

ter to different interests. She added that while her children explore titles independently, they often discuss and recommend favourites together. "Manga promotes creativity, perseverance, and resilience, adding more meaning to a child's reading journey," she noted. For Budz Castillo, a Human Performance and Care Specialist at Qatar Shell, manga offers cultural insights but also raises concerns about age appropriate exposure.

"I grew up reading DC and Marvel comics, so I don't mind my son,

JC, taking an interest in similar literature. But some modern manga can be quite graphic in visuals and language, so I prefer slow exposure until he is older," he explained.

Castillo acknowledged that the genre reflects Japanese traditions and worldviews, contributing to inclusivity and diversity at the fair. Both Julie and Alexis expressed hope that future editions of DIBF will continue to expand manga offerings, underscoring the genre's growing role in Qatar's literary landscape.