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Amir pushes diplomacy in calls with UAE, Saudi, US leaders

HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held a phone call yesterday with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan. They discussed the close fraternal relations between the two countries and prospects for expanding bilateral co-operation across various fields in a way that serves their mutual interests. They also exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments and on efforts aimed at advancing political solutions that support security and stability in the region. HH the Amir held a telephone conversation with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud as well. The call, addressed the deep-rooted relations between their two

brotherly countries and discussed ways to support and strengthen them across all fields to fulfill the aspirations of their peoples. Both sides discussed several regional and international developments and exchanged views on diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and promoting political solutions that contribute to regional stability. They emphasised the importance of reaching lasting and comprehensive solutions that address the root causes of the crisis and support sustainable security in the region. HH the Amir also held a phone call with US President Donald Trump. They discussed the latest developments in the region, particularly regional and international efforts aimed at consolidating calm and de-



escalating tensions, foremost among them supporting the diplomatic efforts led by Pakistan to spare the region further tension and preserve international peace and security. The call also addressed the importance of continuing

dialogue to address current issues, safeguarding maritime security and the safety of strategic waterways, and ensuring the smooth flow of global supply and energy chains. HH the Amir affirmed Qatar's firm position calling for prioritising

peaceful solutions aimed at containing the crisis through dialogue and diplomacy, in a way that enhances stability and serves the interests of the peoples of the region and the world. (QNA)

Peace hopes soar amid progress

Reuters
Washington/Tehran

- Trump says Hormuz reopening 'largely negotiated'
- US president in 'very good call' with Gulf leaders

Terms of reference

Al Jazeera reported that the draft Iran peace deal reportedly includes ending hostilities (including in Lebanon), releasing billions in frozen Iranian funds, easing the US naval presence around Hormuz, and pulling US forces farther from Iran. Both sides would then get 30 days — extendable by mutual agreement — to finalise a nuclear deal, while Iran and Oman negotiate transit and control arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz.

US Donald Trump claimed an agreement to permanently end the war in Iran and reopen the Strait of Hormuz had "largely been negotiated" and "would be announced shortly". In a post to his Truth Social account yesterday afternoon, Trump said he had concluded a "very good call" with leaders of Gulf countries and other US allies in the Middle East. "Final aspects and details of the deal are currently being discussed, and will be announced shortly," Trump wrote. "In addition to many other elements of the agreement, the Strait of Hormuz will be opened." The president said he just finished "a very good call" with leaders in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Pakistan, Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain. The possible deal is "subject to finalisation between the United States of America, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the various other Countries, as listed", Trump added. Trump's comments came after mediators in high-stakes talks in Tehran. Iran's ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, says he discussed the "achievements" of



US-negotiations with officials upon his return to Tehran. "With conservative optimism, we can hope that — if the other side is adequately committed — a positive stride is taking shape which is the result of the positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on dignity, the steadfastness of the courageous armed forces, and the resistance of the brave Iranian nation, as well as the initiative and dedicated endeavours of the Pakistani mediator," said Moghadam. The Iranian ambassador also thanked Pakistan for its role in the negotiations. Earlier, Iran and Pakistan submitted a revised proposal to the US to end the war and reopen the

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

I am in the Oval Office at the White House where we just had a very good call with President Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, of The United Arab Emirates, Emir Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, and Minister Ali al-Thawadi, of Qatar, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir Ahmed Shah, of Pakistan, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, of Türkiye, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, of Egypt, King Abdullah II, of Jordan, and King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, of Bahrain, concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran, and all things related to a Memorandum of Understanding pertaining to PEACE. An Agreement has been largely negotiated, subject to finalization between the United States of America, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the various other Countries, as listed. Separately, I had a call with Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu, of Israel, which, likewise, went very well. Final aspects and details of the Deal are currently being discussed, and will be announced shortly. In addition to many other elements of the Agreement, the Strait of Hormuz will be opened. Thank you for your attention to this matter! President DONALD J. TRUMP

Strait of Hormuz, two Pakistani sources familiar with the negotiations told Reuters yesterday. A US response to the proposal is

expected by today, the sources said. An interim deal to end the Iran war is in its final phase and is "fairly comprehensive", one Paki-

stani official involved in the negotiations said. "It is never over till it is done," the official said. But Iran, the US and mediator Pakistan all said yesterday that progress had been made in talks on ending almost three months of war. Iran said it was focused on finalising a memorandum of understanding, or MoU, after its top officials met Field Marshal Asim Munir, the army chief of Pakistan. The Pakistani army said the negotiations had resulted in "encouraging" progress towards a final understanding. Two Pakistani sources involved in negotiations said the deal being negotiated is "fairly comprehensive to terminate the war." To Page 13

PM reviews situation with counterparts

HE the PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held a series of telephone calls with regional and international counterparts to discuss bilateral relations and Pakistan-led mediation efforts between the US and Iran, alongside co-ordination on broader initiatives to support regional de-escalation. The PM stressed the need for all parties to engage constructively with 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. In his call with Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and discussed coordinating efforts to support the mediation aimed at de-escalation. The PM also spoke with Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and National Security Adviser of the UAE Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed al-Nahyan, with whom he discussed bilateral co-operation and stressed the importance of supporting ongoing mediation efforts to reach a lasting peace agreement. In a separate call with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the UAE Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the two sides discussed co-operative relations between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen them. The PM held a call with Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Co-operation and Expatriates Badr Abdelatty, during which the two sides discussed bilateral co-operation relations and ways to further strengthen them. To Page 10

Qatar takes 2022 legacy to UN stage

GT Report

The whistle in Doha may have blown long ago, but the echo carries still. At the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) — represented by Managing Director HE Hassan al-Thawadi — joined a high-level reception to mark World Football Day, a celebration of the imprint left

by the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 even as the world looks ahead to the next chapter. Hosted by the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the UN under the theme "From FIFA World Cup 2022 to FIFA World Cup 2026: A Legacy in Motion," the gathering traced a thread that runs from the floodlights of Lusail to the stadiums of North America, where the United States, Canada and Mexico will share hosting duties this summer.

It was a moment, al-Thawadi suggested, that always belonged to more than one nation. "For the Arab world and the Middle East, Qatar 2022 was a moment of pride that belonged to far more than one country," he told the reception. "It proved that a region too often defined by others could host the world on its own terms with warmth, excellence and a story worth telling." To Page 10



Today's GULF TIMES includes a 4-page supplement on CELEBRATIONS

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Amir of the State of Qatar

His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
Father Amir

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

and to all the honorable people of Qatar
on the occasion of

EID AL ADHA

We hope for more returns of this memorable occasion and wish
that Qatar always enjoys security, welfare and prosperity under
the wise leadership of His Highness The Amir

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Qatar hosts Geneva event on healthy longevity

Qatar convened a high-level event alongside the 79th World Health Assembly (WHA) to explore healthy longevity as a lifelong investment strategy, engaging ministers, leaders, and health experts from around the world.

The event was co-sponsored by Japan, Finland, Thailand, the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), the International Federation on Ageing (IFA), and the World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA).

This diverse international representation demonstrates a unified commitment to narrowing the disparity between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, and to promoting healthy longevity as a central objective in global health and development.

In his opening speech, HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud emphasised that healthy longevity is both a national commitment and a global necessity.

He stated that Qatar's approach is grounded in a prevention-focused strategy and an ambitious vision to serve as a global platform integrating science, policy, finance, and innovation.

Additionally, HE al-Mahmoud underscored the contribution of Qatar's WHO Collaborating Centre on Healthy Ageing in advancing the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s programmes in this domain.

The minister emphasised that the primary objective is not only to increase life expectancy, but also to enhance the quality of those years by promoting health.

High-level event co-sponsored by Japan, Finland, Thailand, the WFPHA, the IFA and the WONCA took place alongside the 79th World Health Assembly in Geneva

He further highlighted that achieving this goal necessitates co-ordinated public policy initiatives, a focus on preventative measures, the development of primary healthcare, and the expansion of cross-sector partnerships.

The high-level event highlighted the importance of adopting an integrated and comprehensive approach that links prevention, primary healthcare, governance, financing, and innovation, thereby improving health outcomes across the life course and enhancing health systems' ability to respond to rapid demographic transitions.

Dr Hanan Balkhy, the WHO regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, reviewed health and epidemiological factors affecting healthy longevity in a region marked by diverse health conditions.

She observed that the Eastern Mediterranean Region exemplifies global challenges, as it includes both countries with advanced health systems and those facing conflict or limited resources.

Dr Balkhy stressed the importance of strengthening primary healthcare to reduce the gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, and identified prevention, early detection, management of non-communicable diseases, and universal health coverage as essential pillars.

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HE al-Mahmoud said that Qatar's approach to healthy longevity is grounded in a prevention-focused strategy.

healthy life expectancy, and identified prevention, early detection, management of non-communicable diseases, and universal health coverage as essential pillars of this approach.

During a high-level panel discussion moderated by World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) chief executive Dr Salim Salama, participants discussed how to turn the concept of healthy longevity into actionable policies by connecting prevention, primary healthcare, governance, financing, and digital technologies.

WFPHA executive director Prof Bet-

tina Borisch addressed the importance of health determinants and the need for healthy longevity policies to incorporate equity and fairness, ensuring that investments and services reach all groups, including those most in need and at greatest risk.

IFA secretary-general Gregor Sneddon advocated for institutional measures to address ageism, identifying it as a significant obstacle to achieving healthy longevity.

He highlighted the necessity of recognising older persons as active contributors to society and as participants in the development of ageing and health policies, rather than solely as recipients of care.

Dr Masami Sakoi, the vice-minister for health and chief medical & global officer at Japan's ministry of health, labour and welfare, presented Japan's experience as a leading example in longevity.

He emphasised that Japan's case demonstrates a strong connection between healthy longevity, labour market participation, and economic stability.

Dr Sakoi further noted that Japan's accumulated expertise and sustained investments offer important lessons for countries in the early phases of demographic transition.

Dr Heli Hatunen, senior ministerial adviser at Finland's ministry of social affairs and health, described Finland's approach to the welfare economy, which incorpo-

rates health and wellbeing into public policy across multiple sectors.

She emphasised that prevention should be viewed as a long-term investment that yields benefits for individuals, society, and the economy, rather than as a burden on public budgets.

Dr Amporn Benjaponpitak, the director-general of the Department of Health at Thailand's ministry of public health, presented Thailand's experience.

She underscored the significance of developing extensive networks of community health volunteers as an effective strategy to enhance prevention at the community level within a universal health coverage framework.

Additionally, Dr Benjaponpitak discussed the role of digital health tools in broadening access to health services, stressing that such advancements should promote health equity rather than exacerbate existing disparities.

Participants affirmed that healthy longevity is an issue at the intersection of health, social, and economic priorities, and that addressing it requires integrated visions that transcend narrow sectoral solutions and move towards more comprehensive and sustainable public policies.

The event concluded with several outcomes and future steps.

Foremost were reinforcing inter-regional dialogue on longevity governance, integrating health determinants into public policies, and maintaining connections with upcoming global events and initiatives, including the WISH. - QNA

More than 120 students take part in WCM-Q 'Doctors of the Future' conference

More than 120 pre-university students from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the US, who aspire to careers in medicine, took part in Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q)'s 'Doctors of the Future' Conference.

The annual conference is open to students, teachers and school counsellors from Qatar and beyond and is designed to give pre-university students a chance to visit the WCM-Q's campus, learn about the college's world-class educational programmes, and discover the wide range of career opportunities available in medicine.

This year's edition was held online.

The event featured the qualifying round of the High School Research Competition, in which 15 teams from 14 schools presented their research posters before a judging panel composed of WCM-Q faculty, researchers and medical students.

The top teams advanced to the final round, after which the top three teams were announced.

Participating students also took part in a panel discussion on applying to medical school, along with a quiz session.

The first prize was awarded to the team from Doha British School - Ain Khaled for their poster titled "HeatSafe: A Wearable Early-



Warning Device for Heat Stress Prevention?"

The research focused on the accuracy of a wearable prototype that records various physiological indicators to detect and warn of early signs of heat stress and contribute to promoting healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages.

Second place went to the team from Hunter College High School in New York for their poster titled

"Air & Genes: What Traffic and Dust Do to Your Body?"

The project compares how pollution leaves molecular fingerprints in the blood across two groups exposed to distinct micro-environments, generating evidence to guide prevention strategies and public health policy.

Third place went to the team from DPS - Modern Indian School for their poster titled "Monoso-

dium Glutamate Exposure and Wellness: Insights for Advancing Qatar's Public Health Targets?"

The research provides a biological basis for evaluating food additives and their impact on long-term cellular health.

Organised by the WCM-Q's Office of Student Outreach and Development, the Doctors of the Future Conference also serves to develop partnerships between the WCM-Q and secondary schools, stimulate student interest in careers in science and medicine and enhance college readiness skills.

Noha Saleh, director of pre-medical administration, student outreach and educational develop-

ment, said: "I am glad to see that the conference has gained real momentum, creating an international platform whereby prospective students can interact with researchers, faculty and medical students in an environment that fosters engagement, participation and collaboration."

Associate dean for foundation, student outreach and educational development programmes Dr Rachid Bendriss said: "At WCM-Q, we are committed to empowering talented and motivated pre-university students to strengthen their skills and gain a clear understanding of what it takes to pursue a successful career in medicine."

EID MUBARAK

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Deputy Amir

and to all the honorable people of Qatar
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We hope for more returns of this memorable occasion and wish that Qatar always enjoys security, welfare and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness The Amir



The launch ceremony was attended by Reyada's leadership team, including managing director Jamsheer Hamza and executive director Dr Abdul Kalam, along with the centre's dental team: Dr Reeba, Dr Randa, Dr Samer, Dr Parheen, Dr Adeeba, Dr Sapna, and Dr Nazreen.

Reyada launches 'Dental Exclusive' to expand advanced dental care services

Reyada Medical Centre officially launched "Dental Exclusive" as part of its ongoing efforts to expand and strengthen the Dental Department with advanced, affordable, and patient-focused services.

The newly introduced concept has been designed to provide complete and comprehensive dental care under one roof, offering patients greater convenience, accessibility, and specialised treatment solutions within Reyada Medical Centre.

The launch ceremony was attended by Reyada's leadership team, including managing director Jamsheer Hamza and executive director Dr Abdul Kalam, along with the centre's experienced dental team: specialist orthodontist Dr Reeba, specialist endodontist Dr Randa, oral and maxillofacial surgery specialist Dr Samer, and general dentists Dr Parheen, Dr Adeeba, Dr Sapna, and Dr Nazreen.

"The expansion of our Dental Department through 'Dental Exclusive' reflects Reyada's vision to provide comprehensive and accessible oral healthcare solutions for the community," Hamza said. "We are committed to ensuring high standards of care through advanced technology, experienced specialists, and a patient-friendly environment."

"'Dental Exclusive' has been introduced to create a more specialised and co-ordinated dental care experience for our patients," Dr Kalam said. "By strengthening our dental infrastructure and extending our services, we aim to offer quality treatment solutions that cater to both general and specialised dental needs under one roof."

"Dental Exclusive" features seven units managed by a dental panel team with more than 20 years of expertise across various dental specialties.

Equipped with cutting-edge technology and designed for easy accessibility, the expanded

Dental Department also ensures co-ordinated care with other specialties within Reyada Medical Centre, allowing patients to benefit from a more integrated healthcare experience.

"Dental Exclusive" will operate throughout the week, offering patients increased flexibility and convenience in accessing consultations and treatments.

It has been specially developed for individuals seeking complete dental care solutions, including general dentistry, cosmetic dentistry, orthodontics, endodontics, and oral and maxillofacial surgery services in one dedicated space.

As part of the launch, Reyada Medical Centre announced free dental consultations across all dental specialties until July 31, encouraging the community to prioritise oral health and benefit from expert professional guidance.

In addition, Reyada has introduced a variety of affordable dental treatment packages covering both general dentistry and cosmetic dentistry services, making quality dental care more accessible to the wider community.

The dental specialists also addressed the gathering, highlighting the growing importance of oral health and the role of modern dentistry in improving overall well-being, confidence, and quality of life.

Reyada Medical Centre, a Joint Commission International (JCI)-accredited multi-specialty healthcare facility, located on C-Ring road, Doha, Qatar, stands as a beacon of excellence in medical care with 18 specialties and a dedicated team of more than 30 doctors.

The centre offers an extensive range of services, including radiology, laboratory, pharmacy, optical, physiotherapy, and more, all designed to provide patients with comprehensive, affordable and quality care.

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Awqaf minister reviews readiness of Qatari pilgrims' camps in Holy Sites

QNA
Makkah Al Mukarramah

HE Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs and Head of the Qatari Haj Mission, Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanim, conducted an inspection tour of the Qatari pilgrims' camps in Mina and Arafat to review preparations and ensure the readiness of facilities and services ahead of the Haj season.

The tour focused on assessing technical, organizational, and medical preparations to ensure Qatari pilgrims can perform their rituals in comfort, safety, and peace of mind.

HE the Minister was accompanied by Consul General of the State of Qatar in Jeddah Rashid bin Saeed al-Khayarin, Assistant Undersecretary for Islamic Affairs at the Awqaf Ministry Khalid bin Shaheen al-Ghanim, Deputy Head of the Qatari Haj Mission Ali bin Sultan al-Musaifri, members of the advisory committee, and several heads of service and technical support units.

The tour began in Arafat, where officials from Makkah Hospitality Company briefed the delegation on development projects and service upgrades carried out at the camps. The company is responsible for preparing and operating the facilities for Qatari pilgrims.

Officials said the camps have been equipped in accordance with the highest standards and specifications approved by the Qatari Haj Mission, providing a fully integrated environment focused on pilgrims' comfort and safety.

The Arafat camp has undergone extensive upgrades over the past two Haj seasons, including improvements to infrastructure and service facilities. The camp features air-conditioned tents, furnished rest areas, cooling systems, paved walkways, and dedicated spaces for worship and relaxation.

The mission has continued to use heat-insulated PVC tents introduced last season, while high-

efficiency air-conditioning systems have been tested to ensure their effectiveness during periods of high temperatures.

Pilgrims will be provided with seating that can be converted into beds, personal tables, and access to open buffet stations offering refreshments, beverages, and meals throughout the day. The camp also includes eight fully equipped restroom facilities for men and women, designed in line with the highest standards of hygiene and safety.

As part of its healthcare preparations, the mission has established separate medical clinics for men and women in Arafat, equipped with consultation, examination, observation, and isolation rooms, as well as pharmacies and emergency facilities.

A fully equipped ambulance, a rapid-response scooter, and advanced emergency medical equipment have also been deployed to strengthen emergency response capabilities within the holy sites.

The healthcare team includes doctors, nurses, paramedics, and pharmacists who will accompany pilgrims throughout the Haj journey to provide continuous medical support. The mission has also provided dedicated facilities and services for elderly pilgrims and persons with disabilities, including specially designed pathways, entrances, and restrooms to facilitate mobility and ensure ease of access throughout the camps.

During a tour of Mina, HE Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanim, inspected the camps, which have been equipped to the highest standards and with the best materials. Separate camps have been designated for men and women, with all essential facilities and services provided for Qatari pilgrims during their stay in Mina.

Officials from Makkah Hospitality Company confirmed that the Mina camps are equipped with multi-purpose seating for each pilgrim, which can be used as a bed or a seat. Each pilgrim also has a dedicated dining and reading table,



HE Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs and Head of the Qatari Haj Mission, Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanim conducts an inspection tour at camp sites.



and each seat is equipped with an individual power outlet with mobile phone charging capabilities. Overhead lockers are also provided for storing personal belongings, contributing to the comfort of Qatari pilgrims and facilitating their daily needs.

The camps also include dining halls and open buffets stocked with refrigerators stocked with water, juices, and cold drinks. These facilities operate around the clock to meet the needs of Qatari pilgrims and provide them with the necessary food and beverages throughout their stay until the last day of Tashreeq. At the conclusion of the tour, HE the Minister commended the significant efforts of Makkah Hospitality Company and its ongoing co-operation with the Qatari Haj Mission units in implementing and equipping the camps according to the highest organizational and service standards.

He also expressed his appreciation for the commendable efforts

of the government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the Crown Prince, and the Ministry of Haj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the advanced facilities and integrated operational system they provide to serve the pilgrims, enabling them to perform their rituals with ease, comfort, and safety.

HE the Minister affirmed that Qatar, under the directives of its wise leadership, places the comfort and safety of its pilgrims at the forefront of its priorities. Through its official mission, Qatar continues to provide a comprehensive system of logistical, medical, and religious services according to

the highest standards, ensuring a safe and convenient Haj experience that reflects the State's distinguished image in serving Qatari pilgrims.

He pointed out that these efforts are in line with the Third National Development Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030, as well as with the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs' strategy (2025-2030), which gives special attention to the Haj file by developing the services provided to pilgrims, enhancing the quality of performance and beneficiary satisfaction, to achieve a model and safe Haj experience befitting the pilgrims of the State of Qatar.

Saudi Health Ministry honours Qatari Haj Mission's medical unit for efficiency

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health honoured the medical unit of Qatari Haj Mission, awarding it a certificate of appreciation in recognition of its medical preparedness and integrated efforts in establishing an advanced health care system to serve Qatari pilgrims during the 1447 AH Haj season.

The recognition was presented during a ceremony for medical offices serving Haj delegations, held under the patronage of Eng Abdullah bin Ali al-Nuaim, deputy minister for licensing and compliance at the Saudi Health Ministry, Dr Khalid Abdulhadi, head of the medical unit of the Qatari Haj Mission, received the award on behalf of the delegation.

The honour recognized the unit's comprehensive preparations and medical infrastructure, which were developed in accordance with the highest medical and organizational standards.

The efforts reflect Qatar's continued commitment to providing the highest levels of health care and safety for its pilgrims and enabling them to perform Haj rituals in a safe and healthy environment.

The medical unit established fully equipped field clinics for men and women in Makkah Al Mukarramah and the holy sites, supported by the latest medical technologies and equipment.

It also deployed specialised medical and nursing staff across a range of fields, including family medicine, emergency care, infectious diseases, ear, nose and throat medicine, pharmacy and paramedic services, to ensure continuous preventive and treatment services around the clock throughout the pilgrimage. The Qatari Haj Mission said the recognition reflected the success of the operational plans and early preparations carried out by the medical unit as part of an integrated system operating with a high degree of coordination among the mission's administrative, technical, medical and service departments. **QNA**

Eid Mubarak

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ExxonMobil



Qatar Calendar reveals programme for first-ever 'Sneaker Con Doha'

Aligned with Visit Qatar's ongoing campaign "Hala Summer", Qatar Calendar has announced the entertainment and activation programme for the inaugural edition of Sneaker Con Doha.

With Redbull as the official entertainment partner and M7 as the official partner, the event is taking place on May 29-31 at Hall 1 of the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

Hosting "The Greatest Sneaker Show on Earth" in Doha for the first time, the three-day event will deliver an immersive celebration of sneaker culture, streetwear, music, sport, and entertainment as part of Qatar Calendar's diverse annual events calendar.

Spanning more than 7,000sqm, the event will feature seven dedicated zones offering visitors an engaging and interactive experience. These include the Kids Zone, Main Stage, Skater Park, DJ Booth, Basketball Court, Graffiti Roaming activations, and roaming entertainment areas, creating a vibrant atmosphere for sneaker enthusiasts, collectors, families and younger audiences alike.

Daily activations will include live DJ performances, beatbox sets, breakdance and hip-hop performances, live music bands, mascot parades, graffiti artists, and roaming performances.

Visitors will also be able to enjoy a range of interactive sporting competitions and watch basketball competitions held in collaboration with the Qatar Basketball Federation.

Additional attractions will include live vintage car displays and a variety of food and beverage kiosks.

The Doha edition will also feature a curated marketplace bringing together global, regional and local vendors offering rare sneakers, limited-edition releases, and streetwear collections.

In addition, Sneaker Con Authenticated will provide on-site verification services.

In addition to the entertainment line-up, the event will host a series of panel discussions between 5.40pm and 6pm daily, bringing together regional and international voices from the sneaker and streetwear industry to discuss trends, authentication, collecting culture, and the evolution of the global sneaker marketplace.

Entry to Sneaker Con Doha is complimentary through pre-registration on Platinumlist.

Visitors can also purchase a dedicated VIP Experience priced at QR500, which includes access for two persons to the VIP Lounge, hospitality services, and assistance from a trained personal shopper.

Tickets and registration are available through Platinumlist via <https://doha.platinumlist.net/event-tickets/sneaker-con-doha>



Malaysian embassy holds blood donation campaign

The Malaysia embassy in Doha recently organised the "Malaysian Community's Blood Donation Drive" at the Qatar National Blood Donation Centre.

Held under the theme *Your Blood, Their Hope*, the initiative was organised in collaboration with the Malaysian Association of Qatar (MAQ), Qatar Blood Donation Services, and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC). The programme received an encouraging re-

sponse from the Malaysian community, with approximately 100 Malaysians residing in Qatar signing up to participate in the humanitarian initiative.

The event was attended by Malaysian ambassador Faizal Razali, who was welcomed by Blood Donation Centre director Salwa Mohammed al-Khamisi.

Also present was MAQ president Dr Mohd Faris Khamidi, embassy officials and members



of the Malaysian community in Qatar.

Razali expressed appreciation to all Malaysians who participated in the initiative and highlighted the importance of community support and compassion in helping save lives.

He also extended his appreciation to the HMC, Qatar Blood Donation Services, MAQ, volunteers, and all parties involved for their support and co-operation in ensuring the success of the programme.

Visit Qatar concludes participation at IMEX Frankfurt '26

Visit Qatar has concluded its participation at IMEX Frankfurt 2026, one of the world's leading trade exhibitions for the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) industry.

The participation included a series of strategic meetings with prominent international event organisers and industry decision-makers, aimed at reinforcing Qatar's position as a leading destination for global business events.

During the exhibition, Visit Qatar highlighted the country's advanced tourism and events infrastructure, including more than 41,000 hotel rooms and over 15 major event venues, most notably the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) and the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC).

The destination also showcased its recent achievements in the business events sector, having secured several international bids in 2025 to host major conferences and events scheduled for 2026 and 2027, reflecting growing international confidence in Qatar's organisational and logistical capabilities. - QNA

Celebrating abilities, not limitations

Hope Qatar marks 20 years of inclusion via science, community

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Innovation, inclusion, and determination took centre stage as the Hope Qatar Centre for Persons with Disabilities hosted its Annual Science Exhibition 2026, celebrating the talents and potential of children with disabilities.

Rows of colourful science models, excited students explaining experiments, and proud families filling the halls created an atmosphere of celebration and purpose at Hope Qatar's Annual Science Exhibition 2026 in Doha.

Held under the theme *Science & Technology*, the exhibition was more than a display of student projects; it reflected two decades of advocacy, inclusion and belief in the abilities of children with disabilities.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, founder and chief mentor Dr Rajeev Mathew Thomas shared the personal story behind the centre's creation. "Hope Qatar was started 20 years ago when I came to Qatar for my elder son Stephen, who has Down syndrome," he said. "At that time, there was no place for him to go. That is where it all started."

From supporting one child, the centre has grown into one of Qatar's recognised institutions for persons with disabilities, now serving 120 children from 19 nationalities with the support of 38 staff members from 12 countries.

Dr Thomas said the centre focuses on both academic and therapeutic development, offering speech therapy, occupational therapy, behavioural therapy and newly introduced programmes including sports therapy and dance and movement.

"We are giving the same quality that I would give my own son," he said. "This is not a business model. We are not running this for profit."

The exhibition itself highlighted the centre's mission to "celebrate abilities, not limitations".

Students confidently presented projects ranging from renewable energy concepts to interactive ex-



Senior students Sadeem Tarek Ahmed and Mohammed Jamisah Zerkhan.

periments, proudly answering questions from visitors and ambassadors attending the event.

Senior students Sadeem Tarek Ahmed and Mohammed Jamisah Zerkhan showcased a solar energy-themed model they had spent weeks preparing.

"I started in April. I painted and made some art, and my teacher explained to me how to make the solar panel," Sadeem said while demonstrating the project's water pump and battery system.

Asked about future ambitions, the students spoke with confidence and optimism.

"I want to become some business or engineering," Sadeem said, while Mohammed added: "I thought I wanted to be a pilot."

For Dr Thomas, those ambitions represent the very purpose of the centre.

"If you give them the chance, they will do wonderful things," he said. "People still sometimes look down upon children with disabilities, and this is not okay for us."



Hope Qatar founder and chief mentor Dr Rajeev Mathew Thomas.

Over the past two decades, Hope Qatar has become known for large-scale awareness initiatives bringing together the wider community.

Dr Thomas recalled programmes that attracted tens of thousands of attendees, including motivational speakers, artists with disabilities and inclusive workshops conducted alongside institutions such as Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar.

He noted that awareness surrounding disabilities in Qatar has changed over the years.

"Today, people are more aware. The government is aware, the leadership is aware," he said, referencing Qatar National Vision 2030 and recent legislation supporting persons with disabilities.

One of the centre's newest initiatives, the "Hope Sadhiki Programme", encourages friendships between children from the wider community and children with disabilities.

"My son Stephen had no friends," Dr Thomas said. "Nobody wanted to invite him to birthdays or take him out because he has disabilities. So now we are bringing children from society and saying: become a buddy for this child."

Beyond science projects and exhibitions, the event ultimately reflected something far more human, the power of community, acceptance and opportunity.

"The future is going to be beautiful. If society gives these children a chance, they will shine," Dr Thomas said.

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Qatar Charity Inaugurates Multi-Service Center in Nouakchott

Qatar Charity (QC) has officially inaugurated a new multi-service center in the Mauritanian capital of Nouakchott. Funded by Qatar's benefactors, the facility is designed to strengthen social development, upgrade basic services, and provide an integrated package of educational, health, Islamic, and economic services to the local population.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Mr. Beitallah Ould Ahmed Laswed, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and H.E. Mr. Shaheen bin Ali Al-Kaabi, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Mauritania, as well as several government officials and local representatives.

Development Impact

During the inauguration ceremony, Mr. Omer Abdelaziz Mohamed, Country Director of Qatar Charity's Mauritania Branch, stated that the establishment of this integrated development facility in Toujounine, in the Nouakchott North Region, reflects the organization's approach of



implementing projects that bring together multiple essential services in one location to maximize development impact.

He added that the center features a mosque to promote Islamic values, a school to educate future generations, and a clinic to provide healthcare in the district. It also includes social spaces and endowment-based commercial shops that will contribute to the sustainability and operation of the facility.

Shared Vision

H.E. Shaheen bin Ali Al-Kaabi, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Mauritania, thanked Qatar Charity for its development efforts in Mauritania through implementing vital projects in education, health, water, and economic empowerment, reflecting its commitment to its noble humanitarian mission.

The Ambassador emphasized that the project represents a practical expression of the deep-rooted historical relations between Qatar and Mauritania, built on mutual respect, fraternity, and a shared vision for achieving comprehensive and sustainable development. He noted that this aligns with the aspirations of H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin

Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar and H.E. President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani to promote human development, ensure dignified living standards, and support stability and growth.

Addressing Essential Needs

Mr. El Hadrami Ould Sidi Mohamed, Deputy Mayor of Toujounine Municipality, emphasized that the center addresses urgent needs in the area. He pointed out that the neighborhood previously lacked a mosque, faced limited healthcare coverage, and experienced overcrowding in schools. He described the project as a comprehensive solution that will meet several essential community needs.

He thanked Qatar Charity for its partnership with the municipality on multiple development projects, and expressed his gratitude to Qatar's leadership, government, citizens, and philanthropists,

voicing his pride in the growing bilateral relations between the two countries.

Continued Efforts

Mr. Beitallah Ould Ahmed Laswed, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, expressed his pleasure in participating in the inauguration of this highly significant multi-service center, which is expected to play a leading developmental role. He thanked Qatar Charity for supporting the government's development efforts, emphasizing that this project represents a new milestone in strengthening fruitful cooperation and relations between the two countries under their respective leaderships.

Qatar Charity has previously constructed several multi-service centers in various regions, including Tintane, Djonaba, Oud Naga, Takilalet, R'Kiz, and Boutilimit, with another center currently under construction in Kiffa.



Qatar Charity Project Boosts Support for Vulnerable Groups in Sudan

Qatar Charity (QC) has implemented a project aimed at strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities and supporting them through livelihood assistance, food security, and healthcare interventions across four Sudanese states: River Nile, Sennar, Al Jazirah, and the Red Sea. The initiative is funded by generous donations from benefactors in Qatar.

During his participation in distributing food baskets to the visually impaired, physically disabled, and the elderly in the Singa locality of Sennar State, Musa Mohammed Mohammed Ahmed, Representative of the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in the state, expressed the appreciation of Sennar's executive



and humanitarian authorities to the government and people of Qatar for their continuous support in health, water, and food sectors. Launching the aid convoy, he called for the continuation of this support in the coming period.

Vulnerable Groups

For his part, Mr. Al Rashid Mohammed Hussein Ayad, Head of the Blind Union in Singa Locality, stated that Qatar has never stopped supporting them during difficult times, highlighting its recent food aid aimed at boosting the resilience of the most vulnerable social segments, particularly persons with disabilities and the visually impaired.

Meanwhile, Mr. Majdi Al-Tayeb, Director of the Al-Noor Center, expressed his gratitude to Qatar Charity for providing 100 food baskets to the visually impaired



in coordination with the Humanitarian Aid Commission in Sennar State, adding, "We thank them all for their efforts, and may Allah reward the benefactors."

Dr. Tariq Osman, Acting Country Director of Qatar Charity's Sudan Branch, stated that the distribution of baskets containing essential food items to the most vulnerable groups will continue. He noted that the project includes 3,130 food baskets, with 700 baskets allocated to Sennar State. Each basket contains 10 kg of sugar, 10 kg of rice, 10 kg of flour, 16 packs of vermicelli, 16 packs of pasta, 5 liters of cooking oil, and tea.

The launch of the food baskets in Sennar State comes days after Qatar Charity's teams distributed aid in River Nile and Red Sea states. This is part of a larger project to enhance the resilience of vulnerable groups across several Sudanese states, benefiting approximately 18,780 individuals across the four states of Red Sea, River Nile, Sennar, and Al Jazirah.

Brisk business for tailor shops ahead of Eid

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Tailors and dressmakers across Qatar are experiencing a significant increase in workload as the Eid holidays approach, driven by a sharp surge in demand for tailor-made garments, particularly the traditional Qatari thobe for men and Abaya for women.

The festive season, which is deeply rooted in cultural and family traditions, has once again become one of the busiest periods of the year for tailoring shops and fashion outlets throughout the country. Across major traditional markets, especially in Doha's popular souqs, tailoring shops are bustling with activity as customers rush to place their orders ahead of the holidays. Many tailoring businesses have reported receiving an exceptionally high volume of requests in recent weeks, making them operate under tight schedules to ensure timely delivery before Eid starts.

The Eid season is widely regarded as an important social and cultural occasion in Qatar, where families gather to celebrate and exchange visits. Wearing new clothes during Eid is considered an essential tradition, particularly among children and young people who eagerly anticipate the festivi-



Demand has been especially strong for men's thobes, which remain one of the most commonly worn traditional garments during religious and national celebrations

ties. Accordingly, customers prefer custom-made attire that reflects elegance, individuality, and cultural identity.

Demand has been especially strong for men's thobes, which remain one of the most commonly worn traditional garments during religious and national celebrations. Customers often order a number of thobes to wear throughout the holiday period and accompanying social events. Similarly, women's abayas continue to represent a major segment of the seasonal market. Many women seek customized designs that incorporate unique embroidery, embellishments, or

modern fashion elements to create a more distinctive appearance. Prices for tailored garments vary depending on the quality of fabric, craftsmanship, and the reputation of the tailor or fashion outlet. Men's thobes are generally available at prices starting from around QR100, although higher-end materials and premium tailoring services can raise the cost considerably. Women's tailored abayas with basic designs typically start at approximately QR500, while luxury versions produced by renowned designers or specialised boutiques can cost several thousand riyals. Despite the seasonal increase

in demand, many customers and shop owners have stressed that clothing prices in Qatar have remained relatively stable over the years. Both Qataris and expatriates noted that only minor increases are sometimes observed during the peak festive seasons, largely due to higher operational pressures and increased demand. Still, the local market continues to offer a wide range of options that cater to different tastes, styles, and budgets.

Accordingly, many tailoring shops have extended their working hours until late hours in the evening to cope with the large number of orders. Some businesses have also recruited additional workers and temporary staff to accelerate work and maintain delivery schedules. However, some tailors continue to receive last-minute orders from customers hoping to obtain new garments before the start of Eid celebrations. Shop owners say the pressure during this period is intense but expected, as Eid consistently represents one of the most profitable seasons for the tailoring and fashion industry in the country. The weeks leading up to the holiday often determine a significant por-



Tailoring shops at Souq Al Ali are experiencing increasing rush ahead of Eid al-Fitr. PICTURES: Ram Chand.

tion of annual revenue for many small tailoring businesses and independent dressmakers.

"The Eid holidays in Qatar are a time of joy, celebration, and family gatherings, and everyone wants to appear at their best on the first day of Eid. For many people, buying a new thobe or abaya is an essential tradition associated with the occasion. That is why we work tirelessly to complete orders before the holidays begin. Failing to deliver on time would be a disappointment for our customers," said a veteran tailor who has been working in Doha for decades.

Qatari artist designs Pierre Gasly's helmet for Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix

For the second year running, Qatar's Years of Culture initiative has teamed up with Pierre Gasly of the BWT Alpine F1 Team to bring contemporary art into the high-speed world of Formula One.

The concept revolves around inviting artists from around the world to design helmets for select races, transforming one of the most-watched sporting platforms into a space for cultural storytelling.

At the upcoming Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix, Gasly will debut a helmet designed by Qatari artist Ghada al-Suwaidi – a layered work that reflects her signature style: playful, culturally rooted, and unmistakably

contemporary. The helmet marks the opening of this year's creative series and highlights Qatar's commitment to elevating emerging voices on international stages. Further artist collaborations are planned for races in Mexico City and Doha, extending the initiative's global reach across the Qatar, Canada, and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture.

A graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, al-Suwaidi has built a practice that moves easily between large-scale murals, illustration, and digital work. Her projects often draw on everyday life in Qatar, from nostalgia, neighbourhoods, to shared visual memories, reinterpreted through

bold colour and contemporary form. She previously contributed to international platforms like the World Wide Walls street art festival and national initiatives, including Posts of Qatar, bringing local narratives into public space.

Her design for Gasly's Montreal helmet reflects this multidisciplinary approach, translating her distinctive visual language onto a new medium that will be seen by millions of fans worldwide. Translating that language onto a Formula 1 helmet, a compact, highly technical object seen by millions, adds a new layer of complexity. But it also reinforces the point of the collaboration: culture is everything. Al-Suwaidi explained her ex-

citement about being part of the project: "I've followed this collaboration since the beginning, so being part of it feels a bit surreal. What excites me most is the scale – knowing something so personal will be seen by millions, in a completely unexpected setting.

"A helmet moves so fast, but I hope it still makes people pause, even for a second, and wonder about the story behind it. That moment of curiosity is where connection starts. It reminds us that creativity, nature, and visual language are things we all share, no matter where we're from."

For the Qatar Grand Prix later this year, Gasly will wear two additional helmets designed by artists from Canada and Mexico,

aligning with the three-country partnership and reinforcing the initiative's emphasis on shared storytelling and cultural exchange across borders.

The collaboration underscores how Years of Culture continues to harness sport as a powerful platform for cultural diplomacy, connecting audiences beyond traditional cultural spaces and introducing new voices through unexpected and high-profile moments.

By integrating artistic expression into global sporting events, the initiative creates opportunities for artists to engage with international audiences while reinforcing the role of creativity in building lasting human connections.



Pierre Gasly will debut a helmet designed by Qatari artist Ghada al-Suwaidi.

Skyline Automotive Wins Prestigious Award from Geely Group

Skyline Automotive, a Jaidah group company and the exclusive distributor of Geely vehicles in Qatar, has continued its remarkable achievements in the automotive sector by winning the Silver Medal Distributor award from Geely Group. The recognition reflects the company's outstanding performance and commitment to the highest standards of operations and customer service.



"This achievement is the result of our firm commitment to delivering the highest standards of quality and operational excellence. Jaidah Group continues to work towards providing an exceptional customer experience throughout every stage of the sales and after-sales journey."



in line with the expectations of the Qatari market and reinforcing Geely's position both locally and regionally."

He added that the award serves as a strong motivation to continue expanding and enhancing services, emphasizing that the company consistently invests in top talent, infrastructure, and modern technologies to ensure the highest levels of operational performance and customer satisfaction.

Commenting on the achievement, Mr. Maher Tinawi, General Manager of Geely Qatar, stated:

"We are deeply honored to receive the Silver Medal Distributor Award from Geely, a recognition that reflects the dedication and hard work of our entire Skyline Automotive team in Qatar."

In recent years, the Geely brand has witnessed remarkable growth in the Qatari market, driven by the continuous evolution of its vehicle lineup, which caters to diverse customer segments while offering advanced technologies and competitive pricing.

After-sales services have also played a pivotal role in this success, with the company relying on a fully integrated system focused on fast service delivery, spare parts availability, and highly efficient maintenance teams – factors that contributed to winning numerous awards reflecting the company's ongoing commitment to quality.

This recognition further reinforces Skyline Automotive's position as one of the leading automotive distributors in Qatar, demonstrating its ability to keep pace with the rapid developments in the automotive industry while delivering a complete customer experience built on innovation and reliability.

Mr. Tao Guoqing, Geely Middle East Qatar Country Manager, stated, "We are proud to see Geely's vision and standards being successfully represented in Qatar through Skyline Automotive. This award reflects not only strong business performance, but also a shared commitment to customer satisfaction, innovation, and operational excellence. Qatar continues to be a strategic market for Geely in the region, and we look forward to further strengthening the brand's presence and delivering even greater value to our customers in the years ahead."

The award was announced during the Geely Auto International Business Partner Conference 2026 held in Hangzhou, China.

This achievement highlights the strong position Skyline Automotive has established in the Qatari market and its dedication to strengthening the presence of the Geely brand by delivering a comprehensive customer experience that includes both sales and after-sales services.

The award was granted based on several key performance criteria, including the development of distribution and service networks, sustainable sales growth across branches and showrooms, operational efficiency, inventory management, after-sales service excellence, customer satisfaction ratings, dealer competitiveness, and financial market performance related to the brand.

On this occasion, Mr. Bertrand Theibaut, Chief Operating Officer of Jaidah Group, expressed his pride in receiving the award, stating:



QSC honours winners of 9th Scientific Exhibition

The Qatar Scientific Club (QSC) honoured winners of the 9th Scientific Exhibition for Innovation and Research, organised in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).

The exhibition featured 61 projects and scientific studies that advanced to the final round from nearly 290 submissions that un-

derwent multiple stages of evaluation and judging, as part of the club's efforts to promote a culture of scientific research and innovation among students and support the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The exhibition drew broad participation from students across different educational levels.

The first day was dedicated to



presenting research projects from the "Researcher" competition for primary and preparatory students, while the second day featured projects from the "Researcher" and "Innovation" competitions for secondary school students.

Representatives from the MoEHE and the Ministry of Sports and Youth attended the event, along with school administrators, super-

visors and participating students.

At the conclusion of the exhibition, officials from the QSC and MoEHE honoured winning students and gold medal recipients.

In the school innovation competition, first place went to the project "Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for User Behaviour Analysis in Cybersecurity" from the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys.

The project "NeuroStride", which focused on the early detection of Parkinson's disease using artificial intelligence (AI), took second place, while a project designing an integrated robotic system equipped with an automatic soil-feeding mechanism from Qatar school for girls placed third.

In the "Researcher" competition for the secondary level, first place was awarded to the study "Automated Irrigation System Using Open-Source Technology" from the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys.

A study on detecting myopia us-

ing neural networks placed second, while a project designing a technological system to reduce impulsive behaviour among people with autism placed third.

At the preparatory level, the research project "Rafi", designed to support communication for children with Down syndrome using technology and AI, won first place.

A project converting sign language into written and spoken language using AI placed second, while a project on safe vehicle speed control and emergency health alerts placed third.

At the primary school level, first place went to a project designing a sustainable smart home integrating renewable energy, AI and smart agriculture.

A project producing bioplastic from bananas took second place, while the "Drink Link" smart project placed third.

In a statement issued yesterday, QSC deputy executive director Abdulrahman Saleh Khamis said that the school innovation competition

aims to foster a culture of innovation and encourage students to transform their ideas into models and projects that can be developed and applied.

He said the initiative contributes to preparing a generation capable of supporting the knowledge economy and advancing the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Khamis also praised the advanced level of the participating projects and the ongoing co-operation with the MoEHE and the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

QSC Administrative and Financial Affairs director Fatima al-Muhammadi said that the "Researcher" competition is being held for the ninth consecutive year since its launch in 2017.

She said the two competitions have become an important scientific platform for developing students' research and innovation skills by combining scientific methodology with practical applications and modern technologies. - QNA



QRCS, QC, Sidra Medicine conclude programme helping children in Yemen with heart conditions

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), Qatar Charity (QC), and Sidra Medicine have concluded a specialised medical convoy for paediatric cardiac surgery and catheterisation in Yemen.

Over one week, the volunteer team of medical professionals has been performing medical examinations, interventions, and life-saving surgeries for many children with congenital heart defects.

The mission was more than successful, with a total of 107 free medical interventions for children (86 cardiac catheterisations and 21 open-heart surgeries) performed by the visiting consultant and specialist cardiologists, who were assisted by the medical staff at the Cardiovascular and Kidney Transplant Centre in Taiz.

In terms of capacity-building, the programme involved a specialised training workshop for the medical staff at the host centre on ultrasound-guided arterial catheterisation techniques, to increase their skills and enhance the quality of medical services provided for critical cases, particularly in paediatrics.

During the closing ceremony, the medical team was recognised for their dedicated efforts to serve and take care of the Yemeni children with heart conditions.

The ceremony also honoured the representatives of the three partners - the QRCS, QC, and Sidra Medicine - whose contributions helped make this medical project a significant success.

The organisers praised the level of co-ordination with local authorities and medical facilities in Yemen.

They emphasised that such effective humanitarian partnerships help overcome the challenges facing the Yemeni health sector and give patients, especially children, a fresh hope for having a normal and stable life.

Eng. Ahmed al-Sharaji, the head of the QRCS



representation office in Yemen, said: "This medical convoy represents the QRCS's commitment to providing continued and diverse humanitarian assistance for the people of Yemen, especially in healthcare."

"Together with our partners, we work to support Yemeni health facilities, bridge the gap in financial and human resources, and make them able to keep serving the population," he said. "Also, transfer of expertise and capacity-building ensure sustainable and better healthcare for patients in the long term."

Dr Abdullah al-Nuaim, the director of the QC's office in Yemen, commended that achievement.

"We are proud of what we have accomplished, alongside our partners at the QRCS," he said. "This joint humanitarian intervention was not just a one-time response, but rather a practical manifestation of our 2026-30 strategy, which deals with empowerment, sustainability, and maximised impact at top priorities."

"Today, we are working to deliver health projects that not only meet immediate needs but also leave a lasting developmental impact that makes a real difference in the lives of the most vulnerable people in Yemen," Dr al-Nuaim

added. "This convoy sought to alleviate the suffering of children with weak hearts, allowing them to live normally like other children."

"This medical project was an essential humanitarian opportunity to perform over 100 major medical interventions for sick children within a short timeframe, with a view to improving their lives and reshaping their future," said project manager Dr Monira al-Aini. "We focused on the highest quality and safety standards, while engaging local medical professionals throughout, helping to develop their expertise and upgrade paediatric cardiac surgery and catheterisation services in the country."

The success of the medical convoy was the outcome of cumulative efforts and fruitful partnership.

Earlier, the QRCS and QC had supported the Cardiovascular and Kidney Transplant Centre in Taiz with state-of-the-art cardiac catheterisation equipment.

As a result, the centre increased its capacity and performed more diagnostic and interventional catheterisation procedures free of charge for children and older people.

This, by extension, helped ease the financial and health burden on poor patients. - QNA

Qatar's pioneering AI voice consultant launches today

Qatar is launching today the country's first AI voice consultant at the Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel. Developed by RAG Global Business Hub, the artificial intelligence (AI)-powered platform supports investors and businesses with 24/7 multilingual assistance in 29 languages across corporate structuring, immigration, regulatory guidance, government liaison, and strategic business advisory services.

Ministry recognised by Police Academy



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has received a certificate of appreciation and gratitude from the Police Academy in recognition of its efforts and contributions to the success of the Security Command and Staff Programme organised by the academy, aimed at supporting national competencies in security and leadership fields. The Police Academy also honoured the ministry's employees who participated in the programme, in appreciation of their participation and engagement throughout the programme.

Demand rises for thermal window tinting at car accessories shops

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Car accessory and heat insulation shops across the country are experiencing a significantly high demand for thermal window tinting and vehicle body protection services as temperatures climb and the summer season begins.

Several car accessories shop managers and traders noted that demand for thermal insulation products typically starts increasing in early May each year.

They said heat insulation films have become among the most sought-after automotive products during summer due to their ability to reduce heat penetration and block harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays, while preserving vehicle interiors and exterior paintwork.



Industry experts said that the Qatar market offers a wide variety of insulation materials and paint protection films, differing in quality, efficiency, and warranty periods.

They added that more and more customers now prefer premium-quality products despite the higher prices, seeing them as a long-term investment that reduces maintenance costs and improves fuel efficiency.

According to traders, prices vary depending on the material used and the level of service provided.

Basic thermal insulation packages start around QR200, while premium options can be up to QR600.

Full-body vehicle protection packages, meanwhile, may exceed QR7,000 in some cases.

Mahmoud Dioub, a sales manager at a specialised automotive accessories store, said the increasing demand reflects greater consumer awareness of the benefits of thermal insulation in creating a more comfortable driving environment and protecting vehicle paint from damage.

He noted that the market includes globally recognised brands, which offer high heat-rejection performance without compromising visibility or violating traffic regulations.

Dioub added that customers are placing increasing importance on warranty coverage and the reputation of service providers, especially given the presence of some companies that cease operations after a short period, leaving customers without maintenance or replacement support under warranty.



Ahmed Mosleh, manager of another car accessories shop, stressed the importance of complying with technical and legal regulations when installing thermal insulation and paint protection films.

He emphasised the need to adhere to the legally permitted tint percentages specified in vehicle registration documents, as well as following proper safety standards during installation.

Meanwhile, trader Othman Ahmed said prices tend to rise during the summer season due to higher demand, in addition to differences in service quality between shops, including installation environments, speed of delivery, and customer hospitality services.

Mohamed Faisal, sales manager at another specialised outlet, said that the market relies heavily on customer recommendations and previous experiences, noting that Qatari consumers generally prefer established and reputable shops to ensure service quality and reliable warranty support.

Accordingly, automotive technicians urged vehicle owners to avoid counterfeit or low-quality products, warning that extreme summer heat can damage inferior insulation materials, potentially causing additional harm to the vehicle's body and negatively affecting its exterior appearance.

Texas A&M University at Qatar commencement ceremony celebrates 154 engineering graduates



Qatar Foundation partner university, Texas A&M University at Qatar, has recognised more than 150 engineering graduates during its commencement ceremony. Students earned bachelor's degrees in chemical engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, and petroleum engineering, along with master's degrees in chemical engineering, marking the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance and dedication.

Wala Abdelhalim, who spoke on behalf of the graduates, reflected on the experiences, friendships and moments that shaped the class throughout their journey at Texas A&M at Qatar. "Engineering teaches us to solve problems, but this place taught us something deeper than that. It taught us resilience. It taught us how to keep moving forward even when the path ahead was uncertain. It taught us how to carry responsibility not only for ourselves, but for the people beside us. And I think that matters far more than any title we leave here with today," she said.

During the ceremony, Dr Cesar Octavio Malavé, dean of Texas A&M at Qatar, encouraged the new engineers to carry forward the knowledge, resilience and values they developed during their time at the university as they begin the next chapter of their careers. Students were formally inducted into The Association of Former Students by Mohammed al-Shareef, Class of 2012 and president of the Qatar A&M Club, officially welcoming them into Texas A&M University's global alumni network of more than 500,000 former students worldwide.



MoFA candidates graduate in Executive Diplomacy Program

QNA
Doha

Under the patronage of HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has graduated 12 distinguished diplomats from the Executive Master's Program in Diplomacy and International Cooperation.

The graduation ceremony formed part of the 10th cohort of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI), held at the Sheraton Hotel in Doha. The program is the result of an academic partnership between MoFA's Diplomatic Institute and the DI, aimed at equipping Qatari diplomats with advanced skills in diplomacy, international relations,

policy-making and global cooperation.

The ceremony was attended by a number of dignitaries, senior officials, members of diplomatic and academic corps, as well as the graduates' families, where the diplomats were honoured in recognition of their academic excellence and professional commitment throughout the program.

HE Director of the Diplomatic Institute, Dr Abdulaziz al-Horr, said the initiative reflects the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' commitment to investing in national human capital and preparing qualified diplomats to represent the State of Qatar effectively on the international stage.

Graduates expressed pride in completing the program, praising the ministry's support for developing national talent and reaffirming their commitment to serving the country and contributing to Doha's diplomatic efforts.

Turtle Day seeks protection of endangered marine species

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has marked World Turtle Day, observed annually on May 23, by reaffirming Qatar's commitment to protecting sea turtles and preserving their natural habitats as part of the country's broader environmental conservation strategy.

The ministry further stressed the ecological importance of marine turtles, particularly endangered species, as key indicators of healthy marine ecosystems and balanced coastal environments. The ministry noted that safeguarding sea turtles remains an integral part of Qatar's national efforts to conserve biodiversity and protect marine wildlife.

Field teams from the Wildlife Development Department, working in coordination with the Marine Protection and Nature Reserves departments, continue to monitor the 2026 nesting season of the hawksbill turtles, which began in late March across several key coastal sites. These include Fuwairit beach, Al Ghariyah beach, Al Maroona beach, and Ras Rakan Island.

Wildlife Development Department assistant director Dr Dhaif Heedan pointed out that the current nesting season has so far recorded more than 150 nesting cases, underscoring the significance of Qatar's coastal habitats and the suitability of the country's environmental conditions for sustaining the lifecycle of hawksbill turtles.

He noted that monitoring teams observed repeated returns of female turtles to the same nesting locations, a scientifically recognised behaviour known as "site fidelity." Some females were documented returning multiple times during the season, laying as much as 85 eggs on each visit. This behaviour highlights



the critical importance of these nesting grounds and the need for their continued protection.

In the meantime, Dr Haidan identified abandoned fishing cages and damaged fishing nets left in the marine environment as among the most serious direct threats to sea turtles. He called on fishermen and sea-goers to cooperate by adopting responsible practices and avoiding the disposal or abandonment of fishing gear that could harm marine life.

Accordingly, the ministry reported the recent discovery of three dead green turtles near the Al Safliya Island area. Necessary samples were collected to scientifically document the cases and determine the causes of death, supporting ongoing monitoring and conservation efforts aimed at reducing risks to marine turtles in their natural habitat.

In addition, specialised teams re-

sponded to several reports involving injured and exhausted green and hawksbill turtles, providing the animals with the required veterinary care. Further, the Wildlife Development Department recently organised a specialised training workshop for staff from the Nature Reserves Department. The workshop focused on scientific methods for taking accurate measurements of sea turtles during nesting seasons, as well as the use of an approved digital monitoring and documentation system to record, isolate, and number nesting sites in the field.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to continuing the protection of sea turtles and their natural habitats, while calling on government entities, civil society organisations, and members of the public to support national conservation efforts and help preserve Qatar's valuable marine environmental heritage.

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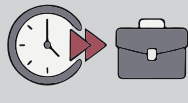
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PM reviews situation with counterparts

From Page 1

In his conversation with Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi, discussions focused on ongoing efforts to achieve peace and reinforce regional security and stability. The PM reaffirmed Qatar's unwavering support for efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement to end the crisis.

He further emphasised that freedom of navigation remains a fundamental principle that cannot be compromised, warning that any closure of the Strait of Hormuz or attempts to use it as a means of pressure would further deepen the crisis and threaten the vital interests of countries across the region. He also underscored the importance of adhering to international law and the principles of good neighbourliness.

The PM discussed bilateral relations and regional diplomatic efforts with Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan, with the talks focusing on strengthening co-operation between Doha and Ankara.

He also spoke with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom Yvette Cooper, discussing bilateral co-operation and ways to further strengthen it.

The PM concluded the round of calls with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and Expatriates Affairs of Jordan Ayman Safadi, exploring ways of strengthening co-operation between the two countries. (QNA)

Qatar takes 2022 legacy to UN stage

From Page 1

That story, he made clear, was never meant to end with the final whistle. "We never intended the tournament to be a moment in isolation," he said. "From the day we won the bid, our ambition was to build something that would outlast the final whistle - in infrastructure, in expertise, and in the connections forged between people. Today, we see that ambition come to fruition as the lessons learned in Doha continue to shape how the world delivers its greatest sporting experiences."

Those lessons are now being packed and posted abroad. The SC and FIFA recently signed a knowledge and expertise transfer Memorandum of Understanding to support the delivery of the 2026 finals. Under it, a dedicated team of SC experts from Qatar has fanned out across Host Cities in the United States and Canada, sharing what they know across a wide span of operations, while a second contingent observes the choreography

of a tournament stretched across three nations and two borders.

The pedigree is hard to argue with. As the first World Cup staged in the Middle East and the Arab world, Qatar 2022 rewrote the benchmarks for innovation, operational efficiency and fan experience, offering a compact, sustainability-minded blueprint that has since informed how major events are delivered the world over.

Doha has scarcely paused for breath since. The country went on to host the AFC Asian Cup in 2023, and in 2025 wrote a fresh entry in the record books by staging the finals of three FIFA competitions in the space of three weeks - the inaugural 48-team FIFA U-17 World Cup, the FIFA Intercontinental Cup and the FIFA Arab Cup.

And the welcome mat stays out. Later this year Qatar opens its doors again for the second of five consecutive editions of the FIFA U-17 World Cup, running from 19 November to 13 December - proof, if any were needed, that the legacy is still very much in motion.

Battle of wills between Trump and his party ahead of midterm

Reuters
Washington

Republicans in the US Congress have revolted over President Donald Trump's \$1.776 bn fund for people he says were victims of government "weaponisation," setting the stage for a searing battle less than six months before midterm elections. On Thursday, the Senate called timeout on a \$72 bn spending bill on immigration enforcement, which has become a battleground over the "anti-weaponisation" fund, after many Republican senators demanded that it either be killed or subjected to tough guardrails.

Democrats, meanwhile, have also pledged to use the immigration bill to stage an attack on the fund. Just one day earlier, Senate Majority Leader John Thune blocked \$1 bn in federal funding for a lavish White House ballroom that Trump has already begun building. He said he did not have the Republican votes for it.

On Friday, Trump shot back. "I am helping others, who were so badly abused by an evil, corrupt, and weaponised Biden Administration, receive, at long last, JUSTICE!" the president wrote on his social media platform.

This battle of wills between the president and his party, stoked by recent primary election victories of Trump-endorsed challengers over sitting lawmakers, threatens to intensify when Congress returns from recess next month, and could reverberate into the November midterms.

"The American people are going to reject this out of hand," Republican Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina said of the anti-weaponisation fund, whose beneficiaries could include those convicted in connection with the attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

While many Republican senators were uncharacteristically mum coming out of a Thursday meeting on the spending bill, Tillis and others were clear on just how politically unpalatable the president's demands had become.



US President Donald Trump speaks during a swearing-in ceremony for new Chairman of the Federal Reserve Kevin Warsh in the White House on Friday. (AFP)

"(The fund) could potentially compensate someone who assaulted a police officer, admitted their guilt, got convicted, got pardoned and now we're going to pay them for that? That's absurd," Tillis, who is not running for reelection, said in a Thursday interview with *Spectrum News*.

Republican Representative Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, who faces a tough reelection battle this fall, teamed up with Democratic Representative Tom Suozzi of New York on legislation to prohibit the payment of any claims submitted to the fund.

Retiring Representative Don Bacon of Nebraska said the ballroom and anti-weaponisation funds in the immigration spending bill had become "poison pills" for House Republicans who face tough reelection campaigns.

With Republicans holding only slim majorities in both houses of Congress, it would only take a handful of defiant lawmakers to defeat Trump's proposals.

But skepticism runs deep that congressional Republicans, who until recently have been loyal to the president on matters from

tariffs to spending cuts to the Iran war, were ready to break ranks.

"We've heard this talk for 10 years now of rebellion and cracks in the coalition. It has never happened," said Doug Heye, a long-time Republican strategist.

He said Republicans are "constantly capitulating" on matters important to Trump, and that any revolt would be "light years" away.

Many of Trump's backers in Congress, including Republican Representatives Abraham Hamadeh of Arizona and John Rose of Tennessee, have stepped up to defend him.

"Not a single congressional Republican was elected to oppose President Trump," Hamadeh posted on X, adding: "Yet an insurgency is already brewing" in the Senate. "STOP slamming the brakes on the America First agenda."

Peter Ticktin, an attorney representing more than 400 January 6 defendants, said he was confident his clients will receive payouts despite congressional pushback.

"They're fools if they think this is going to work," Ticktin said of Senate Republicans who oppose the fund. "It's still going to

go through, and those opposing the fund will suffer in future elections."

Meanwhile the Democrats, while largely powerless as the minority party in both houses of Congress, are seizing on what they see as the president's politically tone-deaf proposals.

They have contrasted the plight of US consumers struggling amid inflation to pay their bills, with Trump's lavish ballroom plans and the large sums of government money he might direct to the January 6 rioters or other allies.

"Is it possible on May 21, 2026, Republicans finally found an ethical bridge too far?" Senator Dick Durbin, the second-highest-ranking member of the Democrats' Senate leadership, said at a Thursday press conference.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer on Thursday portrayed Republicans as being in the throes of a "meltdown" over the ballroom and what they call a Trump "slush fund."

One possibility for congressional Republicans after they return from recess on June 1 is to seek some sort of middle ground.

One source familiar with the maneuverings, who asked not to be identified, said there are discussions about proposed guardrails on the fund, such as standards for who would serve on a commission overseeing it, or requiring judicial review of it.

At the very least, Democrats will likely do what they can to force their opponents to cast politically difficult votes on amendments to the spending bill.

Democratic Senator Chris Coons of Delaware this week told reporters he had drafted 13 such amendments.

One would bar payments to January 6 rioters who assaulted law enforcement at the Capitol, while others would prohibit the use of any taxpayer money to make payments, and require all payments to be made public if the fund survives, a spokesperson for the senator said.



People rally in support of the government's plans to increase defence spending in Taipei yesterday. (Reuters)

Taiwan awaits US to approve arms sale

US arms sales to Taiwan take years to process and are unrelated to the war with Iran, a source familiar with the matter said, after a senior US official suggested there was a pause due to the need to have enough arms for the conflict.

Taiwan, which China views as its own territory, has been waiting for the US to approve an arms sale that Reuters reported could be worth up to \$14 bn.

US President Donald Trump sowed uncertainty in Taipei by saying, after meeting China's President Xi Jinping this month, that he was undecided on whether to approve the package.

On Thursday, acting US Navy Secretary Hung Cao told a Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee hearing that there was a pause on arms sales to Taiwan to make sure the US had the munitions needed for the Operation Epic Fury attack on Iran.

The source familiar with the matter noted that Trump has said he would decide on the Taiwan arms sales soon.

"These sales take years to process and are unrelated to Operation Epic Fury," the source said, referring to the war the US and Israel launched in February. "The US military has more than enough munitions, ammo, and stockpiles to serve all of President Trump's strategic goals and beyond."

The US is bound by the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to provide Taiwan with the means to

defend itself, and has said since Trump met Xi that its policy toward Taiwan remains unchanged.

A White House official told Reuters that as Trump has said, he will make a determination in a fairly short time regarding a new Taiwan arms package, and noted the \$11 bn package already approved in December.

"In his first term, President Trump approved more arms sales to Taiwan than any other President in history," the official added.

Taiwan's government said on Friday it had not received any information about US arms sales delays. Taiwan says it faces a stepped up threat from China, whose warships and warplanes operate around the island almost daily, and needs to boost its deterrence.

On Saturday, Taiwan's National Security Council Secretary-General Joseph Wu wrote on X that China had deployed over 100 ships in recent days along the first island chain, referring to an area which stretches from Japan down through Taiwan and into the Philippines.

"In this part of the world, China is the one & only PROBLEM wrecking the status quo & threatening regional peace & stability," he added, including a graphic on their location.

China's defence ministry did not answer calls seeking comment. China has repeatedly called for the US to stop arms sales. (Reuters)

De La Espriella favourite ahead of Colombia's presidential election

Reuters
Bogota

Right-wing candidate Abelardo De La Espriella received a surge in voter support in the final week leading up to the first round of Colombia's presidential election, nearly tying with leftist Ivan Cepeda, whom the latest poll predicts he would defeat in a runoff.

An AtlasIntel poll released on Saturday, the last to be issued before the May 31 vote, put Cepeda — the ruling party's candidate — in the lead with 38.7% of the vote, followed by businessman De La Espriella with 37.3%. However, the poll estimated that in a potential runoff vote between the two, De La Espriella would receive 50% of the vote and Cepeda just 41.3%.

The survey was based on 4,531 interviews conducted between May 18 and 21. With one week to go until the election, De La Espriella surged by 4 percentage points from AtlasIntel's last poll, while Cepeda gained 1 percentage point.

Paloma Valencia, of the right-wing Centro Democratico Party, trailed with 14.3% of voter intention, down by just over 2 percentage points. The poll predicted she would nevertheless beat Cepeda in a runoff with 44.6% to 41.5%.

Cepeda has pledged to continue the path set by current President Gustavo Petro, Colombia's first-ever leftist president, by deepening social reforms to reduce inequality and pursuing peace talks with illegal armed groups.

De La Espriella has vowed to end negotiations and take a tough stance on crime and drug trafficking, offer incentives for private investors and entrepreneurs and boost the country's mining and energy sectors.

Valencia promised to expand the size of the armed forces and national police, launch an offensive against criminal gangs and guerrillas, promote businesses and cut taxes. The opposition's campaign promises would mark an about-turn from the current administration of Petro, a former M19 rebel.

Rubio renews ties with India after Trump's China visit

Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Saturday called India a natural partner and invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, turning the page at least rhetorically on friction despite newfound US warmth towards China.

One week after joining President Donald Trump on a state visit to Beijing, Rubio — visiting both Asian powers for the first time — flew to New Delhi and met Modi for more than an hour, inviting the premier to visit the White House soon.

"The world's oldest democracy in the US and the world's largest democracy here in India are natural partners now and in the future," said Rubio, sporting a tuxedo in the searing heat as he entered a gala dinner for business and political leaders at the US ambassador's residence.

Cutting a ribbon earlier at a new US embassy building, Rubio said the US-India relationship lay "at the cornerstone of our approach to the Indo-Pacific". Such glowing statements were for decades routine between the US and India.



Marco Rubio during a ceremony for an annex building at the US embassy in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

But Trump has shattered assumptions about US foreign policy and last year took his distance from India, whose leaders avoid the lavish, personal praise that the US president has come to expect from allies.

Trump last year imposed punishing tariffs on India, which were eventually eased, and India was barely mentioned in his administration's national security strategy. Trump, despite limited concrete announcements in Beijing, spoke of the US and China as

a "G2" — a formulation resented by US allies who fear being shut out of Washington's dealings with a rising China.

India has also been alarmed by Trump's strident anti-immigrant rhetoric and his crackdown on visas used by tech professionals.

In its latest move, the Trump administration on Friday said applicants for US residency, even when in the US legally, need to leave to apply, likely tearing apart many immigrant families.

In an interview with India's NDTV news network in New Delhi, Rubio said the move was aimed at addressing a global "migratory crisis" and was "not about India" specifically. But he acknowledged, "there's going to be some inconvenience".

Before leaving on Tuesday, Rubio will also take part in a meeting of foreign ministers of the so-called Quad — Australia, India, Japan and the US. China has long been suspicious of the Quad, calling it an attempt to encircle it.

The Iran war has also seen the diplomatic re-emergence of India's traditional adversary Pakistan, which has positioned itself as the key mediator for Washington, with its powerful army chief visiting Tehran. The US was a Cold War partner of Pakistan but gradually prioritised relations with India, annoyed by Islamabad's role in Afghanistan.

Trump was ecstatic after Pakistan said he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize over his diplomacy in its short war with India last year.

Modi irritated Trump by not crediting him with ending the war between India and Pakistan. (AFP)

Tens of thousands rally in Serbian capital demanding elections

AFP
Belgrade

Tens of thousands of demonstrators massed in central Belgrade yesterday to renew calls for early elections that grew out of the anti-corruption movement sparked by a deadly rail station disaster.

Since the station canopy collapse in November 2024 in Novi Sad, which killed 16 people, calls for a transparent investigation into what happened have snowballed into a push for early polls.

Yelling the movement's signature slogan, "The students are winning," to the din of drums and whistles, crowds streamed through the city to Slavija Square in the centre. Large banners hanging from trees, T-shirts, badges and stickers also bore the slogan.

The organisers had called for a rally between 6:00 pm (1600 GMT) and 8:00 pm.



A drone view of demonstrators attending a student-led protest in Belgrade yesterday. (Reuters)

"The goal of today's protest is for all of us to gather again and to make it clear to people that we are still here, that we are fighting and working, that we have not and will not stop," 24-year-old architecture student Anđela told AFP.

Some marchers carried Serbian

flags or ones representing their university faculty, while others who had travelled from around the country held banners with the names of their towns.

Students in high-vis tops served as stewards while war veterans and bikers were also present to protect

the crowd.

Police chief Dragan Vasiljevic told a news conference the force estimated the turnout at 34,000. No independent estimate was available.

"Today, a clear message is being sent," said another marcher, pen-

sioner Zoran Savic.

"Change must come, Serbia must become a democratic state, the rule of law must be present for everyone, meaning the rule of law equally for everyone," he said.

"And Serbia must be part of the democratic, European community."

The protests have not stopped since the Novi Sad disaster, with one demonstration in March 2025 bringing as many as 300,000 together.

The students leading the movement hope Saturday's demonstration will relaunch their campaign to push nationalist President Aleksandar Vucic to call early elections. Vucic, who regularly raises the issue, suggested on Thursday that they could take place in autumn.

While the protests have passed off peacefully for the most part, some have been marred by clashes in recent months, with several protesters saying they were attacked

by masked government supporters. "So far, we have had no significant or serious incidents," police chief Vasiljevic said early on Saturday evening.

"We hope that the remainder of this public gathering will proceed peacefully and safely, and that the dispersal at the end of the gathering will pass just as peacefully as the arrival."

On Friday, the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner warned that Serbia's rights situation had worsened, citing attacks on activists and journalists, shrinking civic space and alleged police abuses at protests.

"After a year and a half of protests, people have not given up and have not lost their strength," said Ivan Milosavljevic, a demonstrator who came from eastern Serbia.

"The strength of the protests can be seen in the number of people here today. We will continue until this anti-people regime is removed."



Israeli strike kills five Gaza police officers, child: hospital

AFP
Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

An Israeli strike killed five police officers and a child in the northern Gaza Strip on Saturday, said rescuers and the Palestinian territory's police force, which operate under Hamas authority.

Gaza's civil defence agency reported six people killed and "a certain number of injured" after an airstrike targeted a police site in the al-Tuam area.

The al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City confirmed that it received six bodies, which included those of five police officers and one

child born in 2011.

An AFP correspondent there saw at least three bodies wrapped in white shrouds.

The police force in Gaza said five of its officers were killed, adding that two missiles had been fired on the police site in al-Tuam.

A witness said the attack targeted a tent used by police, located next to a checkpoint.

An Israeli military source told AFP the army had targeted "Hamas terrorists" in the area.

A ceasefire has been in place since October, but Israel reserves the right to strike targets it deems a threat.

Gaza remains gripped by daily violence as Israeli strikes continue,



At least 890 Palestinians have been killed since the October 10 ceasefire, according to Gaza's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

with both the military and Hamas accusing one another of violating the truce.

The Hamas government's inte-

A displaced Palestinian man carries a girl while standing amidst the debris of a building destroyed by an Israeli strike yesterday. (AFP)

rior ministry said 42 police officers have been killed in the territory since the ceasefire took effect.

In a statement, Hamas denounced what it described as "a crime" against police officers intended "to spread chaos in the Gaza Strip".

At least 890 Palestinians have been killed since the October 10 ceasefire, according to Gaza's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

Media restrictions and limited access in Gaza have prevented AFP from independently verifying casualty figures or freely covering the fighting.

Hospital damaged as Israeli strikes in Lebanon continue

AFP
Beirut

Israel kept up strikes on Lebanon yesterday, hours after overnight raids on the country's south and east, including one that damaged a hospital, its chief executive told AFP.

Israel's military has been pounding Lebanon despite an April 17 ceasefire, while Lebanese movement Hezbollah has also kept up attacks.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli airstrikes on around a dozen locations in the south yesterday including one targeting an agricultural area, "wounding several Syrian workers".

The NNA said an overnight strike in the southern city of Tyre that targeted a site near the hospital caused "severe damage" to the facility.

An AFP correspondent saw shattered glass, ceiling panels blown out and damaged medical equipment at the multi-storey Hiram hospital.

The Israeli military late on Friday night had issued



Smoke rises following Israeli bombardment on the village of Jibshit in southern Lebanon yesterday. (AFP)

evacuation warnings ahead of strikes on two locations in Tyre, saying it would target "Hezbollah facilities".

Accompanying maps advised people to leave areas within 500 metres (yards) of the target buildings, with the Hiram hospital shown within the advised evacuation area.

The hospital's CEO Dr Salman Aydi told AFP that around 40 patients were in the facility when the warning was

issued, including seven in intensive care.

"We took the patients to a safer location" elsewhere inside the hospital, he said, adding that none were harmed but some 30 staff sustained minor injuries.

He said an evaluation of the damage was ongoing and that the hospital has remained operational, though the emergency department briefly closed.

He said it was the third strike near the facility since the latest Israel-Hezbollah war erupted on March 2.

Israel's army said yesterday that it had targeted "Hezbollah infrastructure sites in Tyre" overnight where operatives from the Iran-backed group worked to "plan and execute attacks" against Israeli soldiers.

"Prior to the strike, steps were taken to mitigate harm to civilians, including the issuing of advance warnings, the use of precise munitions, and aerial surveillance," it added.

Another AFP correspondent saw heavy damage at both targeted sites in Tyre, with a man searching for his belongings among the debris at one location.

Israel's army also targeted east Lebanon overnight, saying it struck a "Hezbollah underground compound" used to manufacture weapons.

Lebanon's Hamas-aligned group Jamaa Islamiya and its armed wing the Al-Fajr Forces said yesterday in a statement that one of its members was killed in an Israeli strike in east Lebanon.

France bans Israeli minister Ben Gvir from entering country

France announced yesterday it has banned Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir from entry for mocking bound activists seized by Israeli soldiers on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla.

"From today, Itamar Ben Gvir is banned from entering French territory" after "his reprehensible actions towards French and European citizens" who were part of the humanitarian flotilla, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on X.

He added that, with Italy, he was also calling for European Union-level sanctions against the far-right Israeli minister.

The ban follows a global outcry after Ben Gvir published a video on Wednesday showing the heavy-handed treatment in Israeli custody of foreign activists from the flotilla.

They were detained by Israel after its soldiers seized them in international waters.

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



Ben Gvir, Israel's minister of national security. (AFP)

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

After the outcry, Israel said it was deporting the activists. Thirty-six French nationals were on board the flotilla, the latest attempt by activists to breach Israel's blockade of Gaza after Israeli forces intercepted a previous convoy last month.

While Barrot said France disapproved of the flotilla's actions, arguing they served "no useful purpose", he added that "we cannot tolerate French nationals being threatened, intimidated or brutalised in this way, especially by a public official."

Spain has also urged the

EU to sanction Ben Gvir while the United Kingdom summoned Israel's most senior diplomat in Britain following "the inflammatory video".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Ben Gvir's treatment of the activists was "not in line with Israel's values and norms", but he kept the security minister in his post.

Netanyahu had earlier denounced the humanitarian aid mission as a "malicious scheme" intended to support Hamas.

The activists had departed from Turkey last week on around 50 vessels under the Global Sumud Flotilla. Israel controls all entry points into Gaza, which has been under an Israeli blockade since 2007. (AFP)

Zelenskiy warns Russia preparing to strike Ukraine with hypersonic missiles

Reuters
Kyiv

Russia is preparing a strike against Ukraine using a hypersonic Oreshnik ballistic missile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Saturday, citing intelligence from Ukraine, the US and Europe.

The warning came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his military to prepare options for retaliation against Ukraine for a drone strike on a student dorm in the Russian-controlled Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine's military denied responsibility for that attack.

"We are seeing signs of preparation for a combined strike on

Ukrainian territory, including Kyiv, involving various types of weaponry. The specified intermediate-range weapons could be used in such a strike," Zelenskiy said in an X post that did not mention the drone attack.

Russia has already attacked Ukraine twice with the Oreshnik, a missile which President Vladimir Putin has boasted is impossible to intercept because of its reported velocity of more than 10 times the speed of sound.

Moscow first fired an Oreshnik against what it said was a military factory in Ukraine in November 2024. On that occasion Ukrainian sources said the missile was carrying dummy warheads, not explosives, and caused limited damage.

The second attack was in Janu-

ary 2026, and the missile struck Lviv region in the west of the country.

"We are drawing the attention of our partners in the US and in Europe to the fact that the use of such weapons and the prolongation of this war also sets a global precedent for other potential aggressors," Zelenskiy said.

The leaders of Britain, France and Germany in January described Russia's use of an Oreshnik ballistic missile in western Ukraine as "escalatory and unacceptable".

Zelenskiy said that Kyiv counts on a response from the world and on a "response that is not post factum, but preventive."

Pressure must be put on Moscow so that it does not expand the war, he added.

Pakistan PM Sharif begins China visit

AFP
Beijing

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in China yesterday, Chinese state media said, kicking off a four-day trip overshadowed by the Iran war.

The Chinese foreign ministry has yet to confirm whether the pair will discuss the conflict in the Middle East, which Islamabad and Beijing have both sought to mediate in.

US President Donald Trump has described the stop-start negotiations with Iran as teetering on the "borderline" between renewed attacks and a deal to end the war, which began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in February and

has engulfed the Middle East and roiled the global economy.

Sharif "arrived in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, yesterday to begin a four-day official visit to China," state news agency Xinhua said, without elaborating.

Earlier in the week, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said only that "issues of common concern" would be discussed.

Guo has said 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 historic face-to-face talks last month that failed to yield a lasting agreement.

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

After high-profile talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing last week, Trump told Fox News the Chinese leader had offered Beijing's help to reopen the Strait of Hormuz — a 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.

Ousted Turkish leader calls for party congress in 40 days

Reuters
Istanbul

The ousted leader of Turkey's main opposition party called yesterday for a new party congress to be held as soon as possible — in some 40 days — after a court ruling earlier this week unseated its leadership, fuelling a political crisis in the country.

A Turkish appeals court on Thursday annulled the results of a 2023 congress of the Republican People's Party (CHP), at which Ozel was elected, citing unspecified irregularities.

In his place, the court reinstated former CHP Chairman Kemal Kilicdaroglu, a divisive figure who lost to President Tayyip Erdogan in elections earlier that year.

"Everyone wants one thing: that the congress be held as soon as possible — within about 40 days," Ozel told reporters.

He said that 110 of the CHP's 138 lawmakers had elected him as head of the party's parliamentary group on Saturday and he would chair the

CHP's parliamentary meetings, rather than Kilicdaroglu.

The ousted CHP leadership under Ozel has previously condemned the court ruling as a "judicial coup" and Ozel promised to fight it through legal appeals and to personally remain "day and night" in the CHP's Ankara headquarters.

Speaking to reporters, reinstated leader Kilicdaroglu called on CHP members to avoid internal divisions and said the party must protect its "moral values" in the face of criticism.

"During this process, it is crucial to carefully avoid talk that could divide the party's grassroots," he said.

Earlier on Saturday, state media said Turkish police had detained 13 people under an investigation into the 2023 congress.

The Istanbul chief public prosecutor's office said the 13 suspects were detained across seven provinces over allegations of interference in delegates' voting during the 2023 congress, state-owned Anadolu news agency re-

ported yesterday.

They face charges of "violating the law on political parties", "accepting bribes", and "laundering assets derived from crime", the statement said.

Search and seizure operations were carried out at the suspects' addresses in the provinces of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Sanliurfa, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis and Malatya.

Analysts said that this week's court ruling, seen as a test of Turkey's shaky balance between democracy and autocracy, could prolong Erdogan's 23-year rule even as the country risks another setback in its long battle against soaring inflation.

The next national election is set for 2028, but would need to be brought forward if Erdogan, 72, and facing a term limit, wants to run again.

The court ruling was seen as raising the chances of an early vote.

The government denies criticism that it uses courts to target political rivals, saying the judiciary is independent.



Supporters gather during a protest attended by the leader of Republican People's Party (CHP) Ozgur Ozel at their party headquarters in Ankara on Friday. (AFP)

Symposium on History of Science in Islamic Civilization begins

QNA
Doha

The Symposium on the History of Science in Islamic Civilization, stemming from the International Conference on Orientalism, commenced yesterday. Organized by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, in collaboration with the Islam and Muslims Initiative, the symposium will continue for two days.

The opening ceremony was attended by HE Minister of Education and Higher Education Lollwah bint Rashid bin Mohammed al-Khater and HE Undersecretary of the Ministry Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi along with senior education officials, a distinguished group of scholars, researchers, academics, and other interested parties from Qatar and beyond, as well as several ambassadors of Arab and

Islamic countries accredited to Qatar.

Participants emphasized the importance of reviving the Arab and Islamic scientific heritage and highlighting the contributions of Muslim scholars to the progress of human civilization. They stressed that studying the history of science provides a gateway to understanding the development of scientific knowledge and drawing inspiration for building the future, in addition to its role in strengthening cultural identity and reinforcing confidence in the nation's ability to contribute to scientific and intellectual advancement.

The speakers emphasized that modern studies in the history of science have moved beyond the traditional approach of simply invoking the past, becoming a multidisciplinary field of research that connects science with social, cultural, and intellectual contexts, benefiting from modern digital transformations in indexing and scientific analysis.



The symposium opened with a speech by head of the symposium's scientific committee Prof Mahmoud al-hamza who welcomed the attendees and expressed his gratitude to the researchers for their valuable participation, hoping that



the symposium would achieve its desired objectives. This was followed by the keynote lecture delivered by the distinguished historian, Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, on new trends in the study of the history of Islamic science.

The symposium's proceedings were divided into two academic tracks, which included intensive academic sessions on: The history of science and Islamic scientific thought, networks of transmission of ideas and sciences to

and from the Islamic world and concluded with a session on the history of medicine in Islamic civilization.

The second track was designed for the public to simplify the learning outcomes. It included a panel discussion titled "The duality of religion and science," as well as an open dialogue with educational consultant and thinker Dr. Ibrahim Al Khalifi.

The first day of the symposium concluded its activities in the main theatre of the Doha International Book Fair with an open discussion moderated by Dr Fella Lahmar with Dr Shoab Malik about his book, 'Seven Classical Perspectives for Islam and Science'.

The discussion was well-attended with significant interaction from interested individuals and visitors to the fair. The symposium will continue to cover additional topics including mathematics, astronomy, and the philosophy of science, amidst widespread interest in its anticipated outcomes.

Russia-Ukraine war: Now Norway in 'defence' mode

AFP
Oslo

War is now a possibility in Norway, by the prime minister's own admission. The country, which borders Russia, has gone into "total defence" mode, preparing its population for the worst in light of the fighting in Ukraine.

Dug beneath a peaceful park, the St Hanshaugen air raid shelter, one of Oslo's largest, can take in 1,100 people behind its heavy metal doors if ever the worst comes to pass.

The air is chilly, the lights dim and the toilets basic: it's far from cosy, but is designed to protect against the threat of bombings and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials.

"Today we have about 18,600 shelters, (enough to protect) a little less than 50% of the population" of 5.6 mn people, the head of Norway's Civil Defence Oistein Knudsen told AFP.

"Quite a few of them need to be upgraded. They were built during the Cold War. They are humid. They're old," he said.

Nato member Norway wants to reinstate the obligation for new large buildings to be equipped with air raid shelters, a requirement lifted in 1998 after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The idea is not to build costly, top notch shelters, but basic protection against threats like drones, which now dominate battlefields.

"My Ukrainian colleagues are fighting an existential war on their own territory, and still they take time to share experiences," Knudsen said.

"And just listening to what they're experiencing, attacks on the civilian population, what it means to operate as a civil defence force in times of war, those experiences are invaluable."

Building shelters is among the 100 proposals included last year in a white paper.



A tunnel in one of Oslo's largest bomb shelters in Hanshaugen. (AFP)

The government also wants to increase the number of men and women in the civil defence by 50% to 12,000, require all municipalities to establish "local preparedness councils", and raise the food self-sufficiency rate to 50% by 2030.

Separately, households are urged to stock enough supplies to last seven days.

"We have enjoyed the luxury in Norway for many decades of being able to spend our resources on other things," said state secretary Kristine Kallset at the public security ministry.

"When the security situation deteriorated, we realised there are a number of things we need to do to ensure our preparedness also accounts for war in the worst-case scenario," she told AFP in the government's new offices.

The buildings were recently inaugurated after they were destroyed by a bomb set off by right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik in 2011. Ironically, they do not have an air raid shelter.

In his New Year's address,

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store warned fellow citizens that "war could once again come to Norway".

The country has declared 2026 the year of "total defence", a concept aimed at preparing all facets of society - military, administrations, companies, etc - for a major crisis or war.

"The current threat picture - whether it's the climate crisis, rivalry between superpowers, the war in Ukraine, the Middle East, or pandemics - is much more interdisciplinary than it was 20 years ago," said Jarle Lowe Sorensen, a crisis management expert at the University of Southern Norway.

"We're on the right track in terms of preparedness... but there are bureaucratic, legal and organisational mechanisms that often hinder the proper functioning of the system and prevent everything from fitting together in a truly optimal way," he said.

For instance, the geographic areas of responsibility for police, firefighters, health services and

the national guard are not always the same, making coordination difficult.

On the streets of Oslo, people's awareness and preparedness varies. "It's not something I think about in my day-to-day life, but I do have my own little emergency kit," said 51-year-old business owner Oystein Ringen Vatnedalen.

"I've got some cash set aside, I've thought through a few scenarios - where I'd go, who I'd look after - and I've got a DAB radio, water, and everything the authorities recommend."

By contrast, 48-year-old sustainability consultant Kathe Hermstad hasn't made any particular preparations.

"The most important thing is to have a network and community around you" to help each other, she said.

According to a Civil Defence study, 37% of Norwegians say they have boosted their preparedness over the past year, but only 21% fear a war on the country's soil in the next five years.

Peace hopes soar as US, Iran cite progress

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Sources have told Reuters the proposed framework would unfold in three stages: formally ending the war, resolving the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz and launching a 30-day window for negotiations on a broader agreement, which can be extended.

US President Donald Trump said he would discuss the latest Iran draft agreement with advisers and might make a decision today, Axios reported, citing an interview with Trump.

One of the Pakistani sources said there was no guarantee the US would accept the memorandum. If the US and Iran agree, the MoU would lead to further talks after the Eid holiday ends on Friday.

Pakistan's mediation push aims to narrow differences between Iran and the US after weeks of war that have left the vital Hormuz waterway closed to most shipping despite a nervous ceasefire, upending global energy markets.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio repeated Trump's demands: "Iran can never have a nuclear weapon. The straits need to be open without tolls. They need to turn over their enriched uranium."

Rubio, who is visiting India, said some progress had been made and work was continuing.

"Even as I speak to you now, there's some work being done. There is a chance that, whether it's later today, tomorrow, in a couple

days, we may have something to say," Rubio told reporters in New Delhi.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said: "The trend this week has been towards a reduction in disputes, but there are still issues that need to be discussed through mediators. We will have to wait and see where the situation ends in the next three or four days."

Pakistan's army chief Munir left Tehran yesterday after talks with Iran's top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi.

Baghaei said the issue of the US blockade on Iran's shipping was important, but that its priority was ending the threat of new US attacks and the ongoing conflict in Lebanon.

Qalibaf said Iran would pursue its "legitimate rights," both on the battlefield and through diplomacy, but added that it could not trust "a party that has no honesty at all," an allegation Iran has made several times before.

He said Iran's armed forces had rebuilt their capabilities during the ceasefire and that, if the US "foolishly restarts the war," the consequences would be "more forceful and bitter" than at the start of the conflict.

Despite weeks of conflict, Iran has preserved its stockpile of near-weapons-grade enriched uranium as well as missile, drone and proxy capabilities.

Clashes at Spain airport as Gaza activists return

Police detained four people at Bilbao airport in northern Spain yesterday following clashes that broke out after activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla returned home, officials said.

The incident occurred as supporters gathered in the arrivals hall to welcome six campaigners as they arrived on a flight from Turkey after having been detained by Israeli forces.

When a relative of one of the activists tried to approach them, a police officer forcefully prevented him from doing so, leading to scuffles between both sides, public broadcaster TVE reported.

Images broadcast by the station showed police striking people with batons at the airport and pinning others to the ground while being jeered by onlookers.

Four people were arrested for serious disobedience, resisting arrest and assaulting law enforcement officers, the Basque regional police force, the Ertzaintza, said in a statement.

"Following what happened at the airport, the Ertzaintza internal affairs division has launched an investigation to determine whether the officers' conduct complied with procedures," it added. (AFP)

Ebola claims more lives, other African countries seen at risk

AFP
Addis Ababa

Uganda confirmed three new Ebola cases yesterday and the Red Cross said three volunteers died in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, amid warnings the deadly virus could spread to several more African countries.

The World Health Organisation has declared the outbreak of the highly contagious haemorrhagic fever an international emergency.

Yesterday, the African Union's health agency warned that more countries on the continent were at risk of being affected by the Ebola virus, in addition to the DRC and Uganda.

"We have 10 countries at risk," said Jean Kaseya, head of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), listing Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwan-

da, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

Kaseya said "high mobility and insecurity" in the region were helping spread the disease.

The new cases confirmed in Uganda yesterday bring to five the total confirmed in the east African country since it was detected there and in the DRC on May 15. One person has died.

The health ministry named the new patients as a Ugandan driver, a Ugandan health worker and a woman from the DRC. All are alive.

Ebola is a deadly viral disease that spreads through direct contact with bodily fluids. It can cause severe bleeding and organ failure.

The current epidemic centres on the conflict-wracked eastern DRC, where it was detected in Ituri province before spreading to South Kivu.

There are 82 confirmed cases and seven confirmed deaths in the vast, unstable DRC, alongside almost 750 suspected cases and 177



A sanitation worker from the Bunia city government sprays chlorine at the central market yesterday. (Reuters)

suspected deaths, the WHO said on Friday.

The Red Cross said on Saturday that three Congolese volunteers had died in Ituri after apparently contracting Ebola there.

The three "were carrying out dead body management activities on March 27 as part of a humanitarian mission unrelated to Ebola," said the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

"At the time of the intervention, the community was not aware of the Ebola virus disease outbreak... They are among the first known victims."

Ebola has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa in the past half-century.

On Friday the WHO raised the risk from Ebola in the DRC to its highest level - "very high".

It said the risk in central Africa was "high" but the global risk remained "low".

The outbreak, which experts suspect was circulating under the radar for some time, is caused by the less common Bundibugyo strain, for which there are no approved vaccines or treatments.

On Thursday, Uganda suspended public transport to the DRC after confirming its first two cases - one infection and one death - involving Congolese nationals who crossed the border.

It said the driver confirmed infected on Saturday had been at the wheel of the vehicle in which one

of the ill Congolese nationals had travelled to Uganda.

The health worker was exposed to the virus when treating that Congolese patient.

The third case was a Congolese woman who had visited Uganda and tested positive for Ebola after returning to the DRC.

The eastern DRC has been plagued for three decades by conflict involving a litany of armed groups.

State services in rural areas of Ituri have been largely absent for decades.

South Kivu is controlled by the Rwandan-backed armed group M23, which has never had to manage an epidemic like Ebola.

"This is everyone's problem," Congolese Health Minister Samuel Roger Kamba told a news conference in Addis Ababa alongside Kaseya.

He said the Kinshasa government needed to have "total control" of the DRC territory to stop the virus spreading.

High hopes dashed: Britain's cost-of-living woes snare PM Starmer

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's failure to allay concerns about the cost of living is driving dissatisfaction with his government among Britons, adding to economic grievances dating back to the 2008 global financial crisis. Starmer won the biggest parliamentary majority since 1997 for his Labour Party in 2024 after 14 years of Conservative-led government. But less than two years on, Labour is polling at 17% and Starmer's future as leader is in doubt. "People were hoping for better things than what has actually transpired, so I think

that feeds through to some of the negativity we are seeing now," said Neil Bellamy, consumer insights director at GfK, which has surveyed British household sentiment since 1974. Starmer is not alone: his French and German counterparts Emmanuel Macron and Friedrich Merz have equally poor ratings, in no small part due to economic unhappiness. Consumer morale readings in their countries have plunged to near three-year lows since the Iran war began in late February. OECD data shows consumer sentiment has declined more in Britain than G7 peers since Starmer came to office,

while polling company YouGov shows the economy overtook immigration as Britons' top worry late last year. A surge in inflation to more than 11% after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine - which coincided with bond market turmoil under Liz Truss' brief premiership - pushed sentiment indicators to a record low from which they never quite recovered. The conflict in Iran has renewed pressures, driving oil prices up almost 50%. While wage growth has been fairly strong since the pandemic, it has not kept pace with price rises and household after-tax income in real terms is 0.4% lower than at

the end of 2019. "The cost of living crisis is still very much fresh in the minds of people. They see inflation going up again and it's a bad hit at a bad time," said Stephen Millard, deputy director at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. Pantheon Macroeconomics' chief economist Rob Wood agreed Britain "does stand out for its inflation concerns". Inflation has been above the Bank of England's 2% target for all but four months in the past five years. That is one reason why BoE interest rates are more than 1.5 percentage points higher than the

European Central Bank's, adding to the cost of Britons' mortgage repayments. Cost of living increases have been concentrated in highly visible areas such as food, fuel and hospitality, with food prices now more than a third higher than at the start of 2022. "If you go to the supermarket to buy your daily products ... they're a lot more expensive than they were four or five years ago," Bellamy said. This has not been lost on Starmer, who on Wednesday postponed a planned rise in fuel tax and whose finance minister Rachel Reeves has shifted some environmental

levies away from energy bills and into general taxation. On Thursday, Reeves announced a raft of smaller measures ranging from free summer bus travel for schoolchildren to reduced tariffs on imported nuts. There is a long-running and heavily political debate about the more deep-rooted sources of Britain's economic difficulties. These range from austerity imposed after the global financial crisis to the harm caused by Brexit, rising taxation or the persistent regional inequalities highlighted by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, a leading challenger to Starmer. — Reuters

Bolivia reels under nationwide protests



Security forces use tear gas during nationwide protests aiming to press Bolivian President Rodrigo Paz's government to roll back austerity measures and address rising costs of living, in El Alto, Bolivia, yesterday. (Reuters)



Despite US pressure, Cuba may not turn out like Venezuela

By Patricia Zengerle
Reuters

US President Donald Trump's administration has been stepping up pressure on Communist-controlled Cuba, after using the military in January to remove Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. Here is why Cuba may not be Venezuela 2.0, even though Caracas had been a key supporter of the island's government. In Venezuela, then-Vice President Delcy Rodriguez took over as US forces seized Maduro in a lightning raid on Jan 3 and has served as acting president since.

Rodriguez was Maduro's deputy, but there is no similar deputy to Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel, or former President Raúl Castro, the 94-year-old former president the US indicted this week in a bid to increase pressure on Havana.

"The security apparatus in Cuba has dismantled, systematically dismantled, every alternative or potentially alternative power source," said Orlando Pérez, an expert on US-Latin America relations at the University of North Texas in Dallas.

Venezuela also has a popular opposition leader, Nobel laureate Maria Corina Machado, who won elections in 2024 but was not allowed to take power and hopes to return to her home country this year for free elections. Cuba has no similar figure. Raúl Rodriguez Castro, grandson of the former president, met this month with CIA Director John Ratcliffe during a rare visit by a US spy chief to Havana, fueling talk he might agree to work with Washington. But the younger Castro has no formal position in the Cuban government and is not expected to betray his family. He attended a rally in Havana on Friday to protest his grandfather's indictment.

Cuba has been a US antagonist for decades, since Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution. Trump is strongly supported by hardline Cuban-Americans in Florida, who have

- Unlike Venezuela, Cuba lacks a clear opposition leader or succession plan
- Cuba is more cohesive and ideologically entrenched, raising risk of resistance
- US legal constraints and Cuba's state-run economy limit options for change



Raul Guillermo Rodriguez Castro, known as "El Cangrejo", grandson of former Cuban president Raul Castro, attends a pro-government rally called by Cuban authorities to protest US policies toward the island, including the indictment of Raul Castro, in Havana. (Reuters)

pushed for US-instigated regime change for decades. The Republican US president has made clear he wants to see change in their homeland.

In the past, Cuba was seen as a threatening Soviet satellite, an uncomfortably close 90 miles from Florida, and more recently as a potential site for Chinese influence in the Western Hemisphere. But Russia's attentions have shifted elsewhere since the fall of the Soviet bloc, and Cuba's economic problems have diminished its ability to confront the US.

Experts say instability in Cuba also threatens a migration crisis. Its people have been living largely without power due to the US blockade and could opt to flee the island in case of war or chaos. Cuba's military is more ideologically entrenched and cohesive than Venezuela's and more

likely to put up a fight. Dozens of Cuban agents were killed in Venezuela in January when they were providing security for Maduro, but survivors would have learned from that raid how US forces operate.

Cuba is also seen as more advanced in surveillance and intelligence, especially after years of cooperation with Russia and China.

Venezuela has natural resources, and US companies have been lining up to produce oil in the South American country, which has seen exports jump.

Cuba does not have any similar resource. Its state-run tourism industry was behind other Caribbean destinations in price and quality even before this year's steep downturn, which has been exacerbated by shortages tied to Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign, a US blockade and threats of tariffs for countries that

provide it with fuel.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, an outspoken Cuba hawk who is also national security adviser, is seen as the force behind the Trump administration's Cuban policy. Rubio, a Florida native and the son of Cuban immigrants, has run for president before and is expected to seek the office again. A major change in Cuba could burnish his political ambitions, but a failure poses major risks at a time when the US faces huge budget deficits and is already waging a campaign in Iran that has been estimated to cost billions of dollars per day.

Washington's ability to change relations with Cuba is limited by the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, which ties the lifting of a decades-long US embargo to specific political change such as the creation of a democratically elected government.

Trump changed US business relations with Venezuela by removing Maduro, leaving its government in place without even announcing plans for free elections.

In Cuba, he could not legally do so without a dramatic shift by Cuban officials, who have refused so far to cooperate. Cuba's situation is more complicated because the country's economy lacks a private sector. It is dominated by Gaesa, a military conglomerate subject to US sanctions that controls most of the island's top hotels, largest port, top commercial bank and a vast array of supermarkets, gas stations and remittance businesses.

Washington also justified the Venezuela raid by saying Maduro's government was involved in "narcoterrorism." Cuban officials have not faced such charges, and in fact its government says it has been cooperating with the US against drug trafficking.

Early childhood screening for type 1 diabetes may be beneficial for patients

By Nancy Lapid
Reuters

Type 1 diabetes can be detected in children with a blood test by the family pediatrician long before symptoms develop or an emergency occurs, researchers reported, suggesting more widespread early screening may be in order.

Most children who developed full-blown type 1 diabetes in this study had no family history of the disease, which means screening should not be limited to those with a family history, the researchers said in a report in JAMA. "The ability to detect type 1 diabetes early through screening and monitoring is a significant breakthrough with vast potential to reach a broad population and change the course of the disease for those who will develop it," Esther Latres of Breakthrough T1D, which helped fund the research, said in a statement.

Families often don't recognize the early-warning symptoms of diabetes such as excessive thirst, weight loss, or fatigue, leading to development of diabetic ketoacidosis, a severe medical emergency, the researchers noted.

In the study in Germany, more than 220,000 children were tested for early stages of type 1 diabetes during routine pediatric care. A small blood sample is analyzed for the presence of at least two different types of islet autoantibodies, which are immune cells that mistakenly attack the pancreas.

Children with islet autoantibodies but normal blood glucose levels are considered to be in stage 1. Families receive information, education, and access to specialized diabetes centres where regular follow-up examinations then take place.

In stage 2, the first signs of impaired glucose metabolism appear. In stage 3, insulin is required. At the first screening, 590 children, or roughly 0.3%, were found to have early-stage type 1 diabetes. Eventually, 212 of them progressed to stage 3. After five years, the probability of progressing from an early stage to clinical type 1 diabetes was 36.2%, researchers reported.

Once an early stage was diagnosed, there was no difference in disease progression in children with and without a family history, they noted. "The long-standing argument that early-stage disease cannot be readily identified - and therefore cannot efficiently or effectively be studied or targeted - no longer holds," Dr Jamie Felton and Dr Emily Sims of the Indiana University School of Medicine, who were not involved in the study, wrote in an editorial. "The findings suggest that the time to seriously consider general population screening has arrived," they concluded.



The 35th Doha International Book Fair at the DECC, which concluded yesterday, witnessed a huge public turnout since its opening on May 14. **PICTURES:** Ram Chand

Experts discuss how to build a reading culture, love of books

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), which concluded yesterday, has drawn exceptional public interest and readers, as well as attracting screen generations to books.

The main stage at the DIBF hosted an introductory session on the "Reading Guide" initiative, titled "A Journey to Building a Reading Culture", in the presence of HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani.

The seminar was moderated by Jassim Abdulrahman al-Khoury and featured presentations by Houda al-Rashed, head of the "Reading Guide" service, and service participants Mohammed al-Tamimi and Ibrahim al-Janahi, along with Abdullah Suhail, a participant in the "Reading Guide" service from *Doha Magazine*.

They reviewed the initiative's experience, objectives, operational mechanisms, and its role in promoting a culture of reading among various sections of society.

The session addressed the launch of the initiative and the motivations behind it.

Al-Rashed emphasised that the "Reading Guide" concept was conceived with the support of the minister of culture.

She noted that no project can succeed without genuine and sustained support, and that the initiative's primary goal is to empower readers within society and broaden the reach of reading across all age groups, thereby enhancing cultural and intellectual awareness.

Al-Rashed explained that the first edition of the initiative was successful with adults, prompting the development of the "Little Reading Guide" to promote children's participation in reading.

This aims to solidify their early relationship with books and encourage them to cultivate a reading habit from a young age.

She added that the initiative began with the collaborative efforts of the team before expanding to include participants from diverse cultural and educational fields.

Al-Rashed also addressed the mechanisms for selecting participants, explaining that it relied on personal interviews and specific criteria, including social activity and participation in cultural events and competitions.

Those accepted also underwent specialised training programmes and workshops aimed at training them to evaluate books and provide appropriate reading guidance to the public according to their age



Participants in the session on the 'Reading Guide' initiative.

and cognitive needs, thus ensuring a comprehensive learning experience within the service.

Al-Tamimi explained that the "Reading Guide" directs its services to various age groups, from children to academics.

He pointed out that researchers represent an important section of beneficiaries, as they rely on the service to access specialised scientific references to support their research and academic studies.

Al-Tamimi emphasised that the initiative contributes to building bridges of knowledge between the reader and the appropriate source.

Al-Janahi explained that the team relied on multiple surveys to gauge users' needs, in addition to employing artificial intelligence (AI) to suggest personalised reading content based on participants' interests, whether novels, religious books, or adventure stories.

He noted that this experience was presented through interactive screens within the service's website, making the reading experience more engaging and appealing, especially for children.

Suhail also emphasised that the "Reading Guide" service within *Doha Magazine* represents a comprehensive guidance platform.

He explained that it is available to all age groups and helps readers choose content that suits their interests, thus reinforcing the magazine's role as an interactive space that supports a culture of reading and serves various sections of society.

Further, intellectuals were drawn to the Cultural Salon which hosted a seminar organised by the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, titled "Recent Publications in the Field of Dialogue: An Analytical Reading of Contemporary Studies on Interfaith Dialogue".

The seminar was moderated and presented by Dr Sekou Marafa Touré, an academic researcher in Islamic thought.

It featured Dr Ibrahim Mohammed Zein, professor of Religious and Sectarian Studies at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, and Dr Salem al-Kouri, a professor at Qatar University.



DIBF director Jassim al-Buainain (left) with a *Difaq* presenter.

Difaq show on Alaraby 2 airs episode dedicated to DIBF

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

As part of its special coverage of major cultural events in Qatar, *Difaq*, covering the 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) from the channel's pavilion at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

The episode highlighted the atmosphere of the fair, widely regarded as one of the Arab world's leading literary and publishing events, bringing together more than 520 publishing houses from 37 countries and featuring over 1.8mn books across a wide range of fields and disciplines.

As part of the coverage, the programme hosted several prominent cultural and literary figures, including DIBF director Jassim al-Buainain, Egyptian publisher Fatma Elboudy, Syrian novelist Abdullah Maksud, and Iraqi novelist Maysaloon Hadi.

The discussions explored topics related to publishing, exile, identity, and the social and cultural transformations shaping the Arab world today.

The episode also shed light on Qatari publishing houses and their growing role within the local and Gulf cultural scene, alongside a segment dedicated to the Palestinian presence at the fair through Palestinian publishers and publications centered on memory, identity, and contemporary Palestinian storytelling.

Commenting on the special coverage, programme director Mohammed Osama said: "This episode reflects the programme's commitment to covering Qatar's leading cultural events and reinforcing the channel's role as a cultural platform that engages with the region's intellectual and creative developments."

"Through our on-ground coverage at the DIBF, we aim to present a vivid picture of Qatar's cultural scene and engage with the key intellectual and creative conversations shaping today's cultural landscape," he added.

Difaq airs daily on Alaraby 2, with all episodes also available on demand via the Alaraby Plus app.

The seminar highlighted the speakers' latest scholarly works.

Dr Zein presented the story and content of his book, published in English, titled *The Covenant with God: The Cornerstone of Islam*, co-authored with researchers Ahmed

al-Wakil and Dr Halim from Griffith University in Australia.

Dr al-Kouri discussed the philosophy behind his book, *Common Doctrinal Principles in the Abrahamic Religions and Establishing the Foundations of Coexistence*.

Gulf book fairs driving new business model for Arab publishing industry

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Book fairs across the Gulf are increasingly evolving from cultural showcases into major commercial engines for the Arab publishing industry, with publishers relying on the region's rapidly expanding literary events for direct sales, translation deals and international market access.

Industry organisations and cultural institutions say that Gulf states are investing heavily in publishing infrastructure as part of broader efforts to diversify their economies and strengthen cultural influence.

The Arab Publishers Association reported that first-edition book production in the Arab world rose to approximately 93,000 titles during 2022 and 2023, describing it as an "unprecedented rise" linked to growing youth interest in reading and publishing activity across the region.

Publishing analysts say Gulf nations have become particularly important because they combine strong government funding, high consumer spending and large-scale international fairs capable of attracting global publishers.

The International Publishers Association has highlighted growing international participation by Gulf publishing institutions in rights, translation and licensing initiatives.

The commercial role of Gulf book fairs has expanded significantly beyond retail book sales.

Organisers now dedicate substantial space to professional networking, rights negotiations and distribution partnerships between Arab and international publishers.

A 2025 industry briefing by publishing consultancy The New Publishing Standard noted that recent Doha fairs have expanded professional networking and publisher exchange programmes.

The report also identified Gulf fairs as growing entry points for international publishers seeking access to Arabic-speaking markets, particularly as demand for

translated fiction, children's literature, and educational content rises.

Cultural institutions in the UAE and Qatar have simultaneously increased investment in translation initiatives and digital publishing platforms.

The recently announced partnerships are aimed at expanding Arabic digital libraries and audio-book platforms while strengthening international translation co-operation with publishers in Europe and Asia.

International fairs in Frankfurt, Beijing, New Delhi and Rabat have also been used to promote Arabic publishing rights and expand the international visibility of Arab authors.

Analysts say these investments reflect a broader shift in the economics of Arab publishing, where Gulf governments increasingly view books and translation industries as strategic cultural assets rather than purely commercial sectors.

Unesco recently described the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) as one of the region's leading literary platforms, highlighting record international participation and the growing role of books in regional cultural diplomacy.

At the same time, publishers continue to face structural challenges, including limited regional distribution networks, piracy concerns and uneven readership levels across Arab markets.

Still, Gulf fairs are increasingly functioning as stabilising commercial hubs for publishers navigating those difficulties.

For many smaller Arab publishers, participation in Gulf fairs now represents one of the few opportunities to generate substantial direct consumer sales while simultaneously securing regional partnerships.

The result is a publishing economy increasingly centred not only on books themselves, but on fairs, rights exchanges, translation funding and cultural branding – a model reshaping how the Arab publishing industry operates across the region.

This is Qatar encyclopaedia available in 17 languages

During the 35th Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), the Ministry of Culture launched the *This Is Qatar* encyclopaedia in 12 new languages.

Originally available in English, French, Spanish, Turkish, and Italian, the ministry has worked in co-operation with several embassies in the country to make it available in Urdu, Hindi, German, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Greek, Dutch, Portuguese, Russian, Filipino, and Korean.

At the opening of the DIBF on May 14, the ministry had announced that *This Is Qatar* was this year's guest of honour.

The director of the ministry's Department of International Co-operation, Nasser al-Maliki, said that *This Is Qatar* is a cultural project that introduces Qatar to the world in a comprehensive manner, reflecting its history, cultural identity, and developmental and humanitarian achievements.

Being a soft power tool to strengthen Qatar's cultural presence globally, he added, the encyclopaedia offers a modern knowledge-based discourse that addresses peoples in their own languages.

Through *This Is Qatar*, the ministry seeks to promote cultural dialogue and openness, while also showcasing Qatar as a country where authenticity and modernity blend, al-Maliki added, stemming from the ministry's conviction in culture's role as a bridge among nations and peoples.

The official said that launching the encyclopaedia in multiple new languages comes as part of the ministry's commitment to delivering Qatari cultural content to the widest possible range of communities and cultures around the world, thereby strengthening the country's presence on the international cultural scene.

The Department of International Co-operation is working to employ the encyclopaedia in the framework of cultural diplomacy, reaching out to embassies and international cultural and academic institutions for *This Is Qatar* to increasingly feature in exhibitions, events, and joint cultural programmes.

The department is also working on forging partnerships with universities, research centres and international libraries to make Qatari cultural content accessible to researchers and those interested in Arab and Gulf cultural affairs, al-Maliki added.

This Is Qatar is a cultural investment in soft power, presenting Qatar's narrative to the world, underscoring that a country's image is no longer shaped solely through politics or economics, but also through its ability to present its identity, values, and culture in a compelling and relatable way.

The encyclopaedia's significance lies in introducing foreign readers to Qatar beyond stereotypes, al-Maliki continued, thereby promoting a genuine and balanced understanding of the country.

Making *This Is Qatar* available in multiple languages reflects the ministry's belief in the importance of communicating with peoples in their own languages and cultures.

The official said that *This Is Qatar* will feature at international book fairs, academic programmes, intellectual forums, and university libraries as a cultural reference presenting Qatar in a contemporary and accurate manner, in addition to being a cultural medium adopted by the country's embassies and cultural centres abroad.

Al-Maliki said that *This Is Qatar* embodies the ministry's vision of "Heritage, Influence, and Legacy" through investing in Qatari heritage to create a cultural and intellectual influence that reaches across the world. – QNA

Arab Book Award winners affirm role of cultural prizes

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Arab Book Award organised a dialogue session with several of its winners as part of its participation in the recently concluded 35th Doha International Book Fair.

The session was attended by Dr Najji al-Sharif, executive director of the award, and featured Dr Mahmoud al-Ashiri, winner of the second cycle, as well as Dr Ahmed Sanoubar and Muhammad Halawa, founder and director of Kunooz Al-Ma'rifa Publishing House, winners of the third cycle.

The session was moderated by Dr Mohammed Khaled al-Rahawi.

The session began by emphasising the importance of the book as the fruit of integrated intellectual and cognitive effort, and the role of cultural prizes in highlighting serious scholarly output and encouraging researchers and publishers to produce high-quality works that enrich the Arab library.

Speaking about his book, *The Oral Linguistic Heritage*, Dr al-Ashiri explained that the work was based on teamwork and collaboration among the participating researchers.

He noted that the diversity of disciplines contributed to producing a precise and comprehensive scientific study that deserved recognition.

Dr al-Ashiri emphasised that the award served as a significant incentive for him to con-



tinue his research and scholarly output, considering the win a starting point for a broader intellectual journey, not a final destination.

Dr Sanoubar discussed his experience with his book, *Authority and its Impact on the Narration and Criticism of Hadith*.

He pointed out that the work relied on a rigorous scientific methodology based on statistics and historical analysis, and presented new perspectives in its field.

Dr Sanoubar added that following the winning works from previous cycles was a significant motivator for developing his research project, emphasising that cultural awards provide researchers with moral recognition that encourages them to continue their scholarly contributions.

In the publishing industry session, Halawa discussed Dar Kunooz Al-Ma'rifa's philosophy in selecting books for publication.

He explained that the publishing house focuses on the quality of content, the originality of the idea, the soundness of the language, and

the intellectual value of the work, in addition to its alignment with the publishing house's intellectual and cultural vision.

Halawa also emphasised the importance of scientifically and linguistically reviewing works, ensuring respect for intellectual property rights, and exploring opportunities for book distribution and participation in cultural exhibitions and awards.

The speakers affirmed that the DIBF has become a prominent cultural platform that brings together writers, publishers, and researchers from various countries, contributing to the exchange of expertise and strengthening the Arab cultural movement.

They stressed that the Arab Book Award has become a landmark in supporting Arab thought and original intellectual production.

It is worth noting that the award continues to accept nominations until May 28 for its fourth edition, which is dedicated to verifying books on beliefs, the principles of religion, Islamic philosophy and the principles of jurisprudence.



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