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Private school fees linked to performance

By Tawfik Lamari

Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has launched the first edition of its School Fees Policy for private schools and kindergartens for 2026, which will be implemented starting from the 2027-2028 academic year. The policy aims to regulate the mechanism for approving tuition fees, operating fees, service fees, and optional fees, and to promote fairness and transparency in calculating increases, linking them to the financial, academic, and operational performance of schools.

Omar Abdulaziz al-Naama, assistant undersecretary for private education affairs, affirmed that the policy represents an unprecedented regulatory step in the private education sector. For the first time, it provides a clear and transparent framework governing fee approvals and requests for fee adjustments, achieving a balance between the sustainability of private schools and protecting the interests of parents, while enhancing the quality of educational services. **To Page 11**

SpaceX prices record \$75bn IPO at \$135 a share

SpaceX yesterday priced the biggest-ever US initial public offering at \$135 per share, making Elon Musk's rocket and spacecraft manufacturer one of the world's most valuable companies.

The IPO raised a record \$75bn on the sale of 555.56mn shares, valuing the space, satellite and AI provider at \$1.77tn, a record for an initial offering. SpaceX will rank seventh among US-listed firms when its shares begin trading on the Nasdaq today, though it lost money last year and other mega-caps outpace its revenue by several magnitudes. Yesterday's pricing culminates a months-long effort that realised Musk's most ambitious project yet even as he stood a handful of financial traditions on their head, and as some analysts question whether its lofty valuation is justified. **(Reuters)**

COMMUNITY

See Pages 5 & 6

Amir hails Iran talks progress in Trump call

US president assures all partners onboard in bid for a final deal

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held a telephone conversation yesterday with US President Donald Trump during which they discussed bilateral relations and the latest regional and international developments.

The two leaders discussed the close strategic partnership between Qatar and the United States and explored ways to further strengthen co-operation.

The discussions also focused on diplomatic efforts aimed at reducing tensions in the region. In this context, His Highness the Amir and Trump took stock of the outcomes of consultations and understandings reached between the US and Iran, which have led to progress in the ongoing negotiation process.

The US president said the understandings reached had received the

approval of all concerned parties, with the participation and support of several friendly countries, including Qatar. He added that efforts were continuing to complete the final procedures ahead of an announcement on arrangements for signing an agreement.

His Highness the Amir welcomed efforts to resolve disputes through dialogue and peaceful means, reaffirming Qatar's support for initiatives aimed at strengthening regional and international security and stability and promoting peace and co-operation among countries in the region.

His Highness also expressed his appreciation to President Trump for his efforts in supporting de-escalation and diplomatic engagement.

His Highness the Amir and President Trump have remained in close contact in recent weeks amid heightened regional tensions, underlining the importance both sides attach to consultation and co-ordination during a critical period.



Yesterday's conversation was at least the fourth publicly announced telephone call between the two leaders since late April, following exchanges on April 24, May 23 and May 28, as well as another call on June 3, reflecting the intensity of diplomatic engagement between Doha and Washington on regional security issues.

The latest discussion also highlights Qatar's long-standing foreign



policy approach, which places dialogue, mediation and diplomacy at the centre of efforts to resolve conflicts and prevent escalation. Qatar has consistently advocated peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiations and has frequently served as a trusted intermediary between parties seeking common ground.

The country has played key mediation roles in a number of regional and international files,

while maintaining open channels of communication with all sides as part of its efforts to promote stability and security.

In recent conversations with the US president, His Highness the Amir repeatedly stressed the need to prioritise political and diplomatic solutions, support dialogue among all parties, and avoid actions that could lead to further instability. The emphasis on negotiations with Iran is consistent with Qatar's broader position that sustainable solutions can only be achieved through engagement, mutual understanding and respect for international law.

The recognition by President Trump of Qatar's support for ongoing diplomatic efforts further underscores Doha's growing role as a regional facilitator and bridge-builder, leveraging its relationships with a wide range of international actors to help create conditions conducive to dialogue, de-escalation and lasting peace. **(QNA)**

Trump expects deal 'as soon as this weekend'

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday said the United States and Iran could sign a peace deal as soon as this weekend that would reopen shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

The agreement, if finalised, would be the most significant diplomatic breakthrough yet to end the three-month-old war, which has killed thousands of people and sent global energy prices sharply higher.

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported that Tehran is likely to approve the agreement, though it has yet to give a formal response.

"We just made a great settlement of the war with Iran," Trump told reporters at the White House.

"The strait will officially open as soon as we sign, which could be soon, very soon, maybe over the weekend in Europe," he said. Vice-President JD Vance could sign for the United States, Trump added.

When asked if Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei has approved the deal, Trump said: "I understand the answer is yes."

Trump's announcement came after he called off planned military strikes on Iran, citing progress in talks.

Since mid-March, Trump has repeatedly claimed that a deal with Iran to end the war is close. The two sides have traded strikes throughout the week, straining a ceasefire announced in April.

"It's a very strong memorandum of understanding that is a little conceptual," Trump told reporters.

Trump has repeatedly said that any peace deal must ensure Iran cannot develop a nuclear weapon.

Iran's demands include the lifting of international sanctions, the release of billions of dollars in frozen assets and recognition of its control of the Strait of Hormuz.

"We have a deal that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon, which was the whole purpose of what we had to go through to get this. So it was a very big thing," he said yesterday.

Iranian and Western sources said earlier yesterday that efforts to reach an interim deal to end hostilities had intensified.

Three Iranian sources said a political understanding had been reached, but some issues remained to be discussed in detail. **To Page 11**

Trilateral joint exercise concludes



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday attended the conclusion of the joint trilateral exercise in urban search and rescue, with the participation of specialised teams from Qatar, France and Syria.

The closing ceremony was attended by Syrian Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management Raed al-Saleh, French ambassador Arnaud Pescheux and a number of senior officials.

Representing Qatar in the exercise was the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group of

the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya).

France was represented by the France 3 and France 2 search and rescue teams while Syrian participated through its Civil Defence Directorate.

The exercise included simulations of realistic urban search and rescue scenarios, enabling the participating teams to test their capabilities in dealing with complex situations, enhance operational co-ordination, and exchange expertise in carrying out international missions.

The exercise comes within the framework of strengthening international co-operation and developing the field capabilities

ties of teams working in search and rescue, contributing to enhanced readiness and effective response to natural and humanitarian disasters.

It also reflects Qatar's commitment to consolidating its position as a regional centre for training and expertise exchange in search and rescue, and demonstrates Lekhwiya's dedication to developing an integrated system for rapid and effective emergency and disaster response, thereby strengthening the preparedness of search and rescue teams to address various challenges and humanitarian missions at both the regional and international levels. **(QNA)**

80,000 throng electrifying World Cup 2026 opener

Artist perform during the opening ceremony at the Mexico City Stadium yesterday. **(AFP)**

The 2026 FIFA World Cup opened yesterday at Mexico City's iconic Azteca Stadium in a vibrant ceremony attended by around 80,000 spectators.

The 20-minute opening show featured large-scale folkloric performances showcasing Mexico's history and Aztec heritage, a central element of the host nation's cultural identity.

The ceremony also included performances by international music stars, including Colombian singer Shakira alongside Nigerian artist Burna Boy.

Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli also took part, performing the official World Cup anthem titled DNA, which blended opera with electronic music.

A parade of flags representing the 48 participating nations was also held, including Qatar,

which is competing in its second consecutive World Cup following its debut as host nation in 2022.

The tournament is the largest in World Cup history, featuring 48 teams and 104 matches over 40 days. The top two teams from each of the 12 groups, along with the eight best third-placed sides, will advance to the round of 32.

The final is scheduled for July 19, 2026 in New Jersey, United States. **Sport Page 1**

RESULT		
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Mexico		South Africa



Amir sends condolences to Philippines's Marcos

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of condolences yesterday to the Philippines's President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on the victims of the earthquake that struck the southern Philippines, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani also sent cables of condolences to Marcos Jr. - **QNA**

PM congratulates Malta's Abela on start of new term

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Malta's Dr Robert Abela, on the occasion of his swearing-in as prime minister for a new term. - **QNA**

PM congratulates Slovenia's Jansa on start of new term

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Slovenia's Janez Jansa on the occasion of his swearing-in for a new term as prime minister. - **QNA**

PM congratulates Armenia's Pashinyan on election win

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the occasion of his victory in the parliamentary elections. - **QNA**

Qatar condemns renewed attacks on Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait

Qatar has strongly condemned the renewed Iranian attacks against Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait, considering them a blatant violation of the sovereignty of these countries and a flagrant breach of international law.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) stressed the need to spare the region the repercussions of these unjustified attacks and to work towards de-escalation in order to restore regional and international security and stability. - **QNA**

Qatar reaffirms readiness to advance lasting Mideast peace with UN, partners

Qatar has reaffirmed its readiness to work closely with the UN Security Council (UNSC) and all international partners to strengthen dialogue and mediation efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace in the Middle East, while continuing to expand its bilateral and international humanitarian and development partnerships to help break the cycle of conflict.

This came in a statement delivered by HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikhha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, during the UNSC High-Level Open Debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Advancing Political Solutions in the Middle East, Mediation and Dialogue for Lasting Peace" in New York.

She stressed that mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes remain a cornerstone to Qatar's foreign policy, firmly rooted in its Permanent Constitution and unwavering commitment to the UN Charter.

HE Sheikhha Alya highlighted Qatar's sustained contribution to peaceful conflict resolution efforts across the Middle East and beyond, reflected in its successful mediation initiatives, including facilitating ceasefire agreements, prisoner exchanges, and peace accords in various regions of the world.

Regarding developments in the Gulf region, she noted that Qatar continues intensive diplomatic engagement with regional and international partners to ensure the continuation of the ceasefire between the US and Iran, achieved through the mediation efforts of Pakistan.

HE Sheikhha Alya emphasised the importance of preventing renewed escalation and safeguarding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz to shield the region from the consequences of further tensions.

She added that Qatar has underscored the necessity for all parties to respond positively to ongoing mediation efforts, paving the way for resolving the crisis through peaceful means and constructive dialogue that prevents a return to escalation.

HE Sheikhha Alya reiterated Qatar's call for full compliance with UNSC Resolutions 552 and 2817, stressing the Council's responsibility to uphold and enforce its mandates.

She stated that Qatar strongly condemns the Iranian attacks targeting Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait, considering them a violations of sovereignty and breaches of international law.

HE Sheikhha Alya said that any bid to close the Strait of Hormuz or impose legal restrictions on



freedom of navigation through it constitutes a violation of international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Qatar, she said, reiterates the imperative of preserving freedom of navigation and the right of safe passage through the Strait as a vital international waterway.

She noted that the UNSC is pivotal in advancing peaceful political solutions, pointing to the Council's unity in adopting Resolution 2803 on Gaza as a significant example that can be built upon to strengthen implementation of Council resolutions and advance political solutions across the Middle East and beyond.

In this regard, HE Sheikhha Alya highlighted the joint mediation efforts undertaken by Qatar alongside Egypt, the US and Turkiye, which led to the Gaza ceasefire agreement signed last October.

Qatar, she stressed, calls on all parties to honour their commitments, fully implement the agreement, and ensure the opening of crossings to facilitate the sustained and uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance into the Gaza Strip.

HE Sheikhha Alya also reaffirmed Qatar's steadfast commitment to peace efforts and its support for initiatives aimed at achieving a comprehensive resolution.

She noted that Qatar will continue co-ordinating its humanitarian and development efforts with partners to ensure effective responses to urgent needs, support recovery and reconstruction, and strengthen prospects for sustainable peace.

HE Sheikhha Alya reaffirmed Qatar's unwavering position in support of a just, comprehensive, and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue based on the two-state solution, in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions, ensuring the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. - **QNA**

Speaker stresses joint Arab action for security, stability

HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim has stressed the importance of strengthening Arab joint action and enhancing co-ordination and integration among Arab states, particularly in areas related to collective security, protection of national resources, and safeguarding development achievements, affirming that sustainable development cannot be separated from security and stability.

In a speech at the 39th session of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union held via videoconference under the theme *An Arab Parliamentary Vision for a More Stable and Sustainable Future*, he referred to recent Iranian attacks and serious violations against Qatar and several Arab countries, stressing that such actions contradict principles of good neighborliness and constitute a violation of international law, the UN Charter, and respect for state sovereignty.

HE al-Ghanim condemned the Iranian aggression against countries in the region, warning of its impact on regional security and stability and its undermining of trust among states and peoples.

He also welcomed efforts aimed at ceasefires and de-escalation, noting that continued hostilities weaken chances for calm and undermine efforts to establish regional stability.

HE the Shura Council Speaker stressed the rejection of any threat to international waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz, or their use as leverage in political disputes, highlighting their direct impact on global navigation, energy markets, and supply chains.

He also noted that attacks on energy facilities and vital infrastructure affect not only individ-



ual states but also global economic stability, making energy security a core element of collective security.

HE al-Ghanim affirmed that Qatar and other regional countries seek peace and believe in dialogue as the best means of resolving conflicts, noting that Qatar has faced direct aggression that required it to exercise its legitimate right to defend its sovereignty and security, while remaining committed to diplomatic solutions.

He added that recent developments highlight the need to reassess and further develop concepts of regional and international security to address current challenges, stressing that Gulf security is an integral part of Arab security.

He also pointed to continued Israeli violations in the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon, calling for support for the legitimate rights of the peoples and an end to these violations.

HE al-Ghanim further emphasised that Arab parliamentary co-ordination is essential to strengthening Arab presence in regional and international forums, noting the success of the emergency item submitted by Qatar and

other states at the recent Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Istanbul.

He opened his speech by extending thanks and appreciation to Algeria for its efforts and contributions in developing the work of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and enhancing its presence and effectiveness in regional and international parliamentary forums during its previous presidency of the Union.

HE al-Ghanim also expressed confidence in the continued support of Saudi Arabia, during its current presidency, for the advancement of joint Arab parliamentary work and the strengthening of its influential role in various regional and international forums.

The conference discussed items on its agenda, including reports from the presidency and the General Secretariat of the Union regarding its activities over the past period, recommendations of the Executive Committee on organisational, administrative, and financial matters, the draft work programme and budget, as well as other items aimed at developing Arab parliamentary mechanisms

and enhancing co-ordination and co-operation among Arab parliaments.

The conference issued a final statement praising the success of the emergency item submitted by Qatar, represented by the Shura Council, at the recent General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Istanbul.

The item addressed the urgent need to intensify parliamentary efforts to preserve ceasefire agreements and support peace in the Middle East and other regions, calling for mobilising international parliamentary efforts to support ceasefires, strengthen peaceful solutions, protect civilians, ensure freedom of navigation and the opening of international waterways, and promote sustainable political solutions to ongoing conflicts and crises.

The final statement reaffirmed the central importance of the Palestinian cause, noting that it represents the core of joint Arab parliamentary action, while condemning the ongoing attacks by the occupation forces on Gaza and all occupied Palestinian territories - **QNA**

Interior minister holds meeting with Syria's al-Saleh



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani conferred yesterday with Syria's Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management Raed al-Saleh on the sidelines of the Joint Trilateral Exercise in Urban Search and Rescue. They discussed the close fraternal relations and existing partnership between the two countries, along with ways to enhance co-operation and co-ordination in the fields of emergency and disaster management, capacity building, and training, in a way that supports efforts to develop response and preparedness systems, enhances the utilisation of Qatar's expertise in this field, serves the common interests of both countries, and meets the aspirations of their leaderships. - **QNA**

Qatar participates in Oslo Peace Forum session

HE the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari participated as a speaker in the first high-level session of the annual Oslo Peace Forum, held in Norway, to discuss mediation efforts in the Middle East.

In his remarks during the session, HE Dr al-Ansari emphasised the significance of building international alliances and partnerships for peace by unifying the efforts of countries and co-ordinating their various tools and capabilities, in order to enhance the effectiveness of mediation and prevent it from being limited to individual initiatives.

He pointed out that mediation is witnessing a worrying shift from focusing on ending wars and achieving sustainable peace to merely reaching ceasefire agreements.

HE Dr al-Ansari indicated that this shift reflects the decline in international aspirations for peace as a result of the current situation.



He further noted that the efforts of mediators are now focused on moving from high-intensity conflicts to low-intensity conflicts, instead of addressing the causes of conflicts and reaching sustainable settlements.

HE Dr al-Ansari added that the increasing

number of crises and conflicts around the world makes it difficult to focus international efforts on mediation and peacemaking, which requires the development of more effective mechanisms capable of responding to growing challenges.

He stressed that crises do not arise in a vacuum, but rather are formed within complex regional and international contexts, which necessitates that the countries of the region play a positive and responsible role in supporting settlement efforts and promoting stability.

In this regard, HE Dr al-Ansari cited the ongoing developments in the Gaza Strip and the current tensions in the region as examples of the importance of the regional role in containing crises.

He highlighted the importance of mediating powers in the international system, stressing that co-operation and co-ordination among them can contribute to a tangible global impact and enhance security, stability, and peace at both regionally and internationally. - **QNA**



Al-Ansari meets European Commission official

HE the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari met Olof Skoog, the deputy secretary-general (Political Affairs) at the European External Action Service of the European Commission, on the sidelines of the annual Oslo Peace Forum in the Norwegian capital. They discussed bilateral relations between Qatar and the European Union along with the latest developments in the region. Particular attention was given to ongoing mediation efforts between the US and Iran. - **QNA**



Warif Academy marks end of 2025-26 academic year

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Warif Academy celebrated the end of the 2025-26 academic year with a ceremony showcasing its most prominent educational and developmental achievements.

The academy also honoured partner organisations and institutions that contributed to its success throughout the year.

The event was attended by officials and representatives of supporting organisations, including Qatar Foundation's Pre-University Education (PUE) president Abeer al-Khalifa, PUE vice-president (Strategic Educational Initiatives and Partnerships) Sheikha Nouf Ahmed Bin Saif al-Thani, and Mark David Hughes, the executive director of Qatar Foundation's Private Schools and Special Education Services, along with the academy's partners, parents, and students.

Warif Academy general manager Matthew Campion said that since its opening

in January 2025, the academy has successfully translated its vision of providing a safe and nurturing environment for students with complex educational needs.

He noted that the achievements of the past period reflect the academy's commitment to fostering student independence, developing their abilities, and improving their quality of life through specialised educational and rehabilitation programmes.

"When the academy first opened in January 2025, we did so with a noble mission and a clear vision," Campion said. "The word 'warif' signifies a lush, tranquil, and flourishing shade, and our vision was to establish a safe and nurturing environment for our students with complex and multiple educational needs, a place where they can find security, dignity, and the opportunity to grow and develop."

"Today, as we look back on what has been achieved during this period, I can proudly say that this vision has yielded wonderful and positive results," he said.

Campion noted that at Warif Acad-



The event was attended by a number of officials and representatives of supporting organisations.

emy, success is not measured by traditional standards, but rather by achievements that hold significant meaning for us, such as the development of a student's independence and self-reliance, their response to new sensory stimuli, and the first time a student is able to express their choice using assistive technology.

He emphasised that the academy's

members have demonstrated the true meaning of patience, perseverance, and facing challenges with an inspiring spirit that has left a profound impact on everyone who has worked with them.

Campion commended the academy's team of educational, therapeutic, medical, administrative, and support staff, who are more than just employees; they

are pioneers in the field of inclusive and specialised education in Qatar.

He also thanked the parents for their trust in the academy: "At Warif Academy, we believe in the importance of a genuine partnership with the family. We don't just educate the children; we walk alongside the family every step of the way on this journey."

QU signs MoU with QatarEnergy LNG

Qatar University (QU) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with QatarEnergy LNG to strengthen collaboration in the fields of education, research, development, and innovation.

The MoU was signed by QU executive vice-president (Academic Affairs) Prof Ibrahim al-Kaabi and QatarEnergy LNG chief engineering and projects officer Rashid Sultan al-Kuwari in the presence of officials from both entities.

The agreement aims to promote co-operation through the exchange of experiences and information, including newsletters, journals, statistics, and data.

It encompasses collaboration in organising studies, conferences, meetings, and training for students and faculty members, in addition to supporting QU students' graduation projects and advancing joint efforts in research, development, and innovation.

The agreement further enables co-operation in other areas of mutual interest between the two parties.

Prof al-Kaabi stated that the signing of the MoU reflects the university's commitment to strengthening partnerships with leading national institutions in support of Qatar's priorities in education, research, development, and innovation.

He noted that the collaboration will provide valuable opportunities for students, researchers, and faculty members through joint training initiatives, knowledge exchange, and support for research projects, contributing to the development of national capabilities and supporting sustainable development in Qatar.

Al-Kuwari said this MoU reflects the continuing and historical collaboration between QatarEnergy LNG and the QU for the last two and a half decades in the areas of education, research, knowledge sharing, and community development.

He added that it also supports the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030 and recognises the vital role that academia and local companies play in serving the country and society.



Snoonu, Mall of Qatar launch fan zone for FIFA World Cup

Snoonu and Mall of Qatar have launched the Snoonu Arena, a vibrant and immersive fan zone experience for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

The celebration of football, community and entertainment will take place across multiple areas of Mall of Qatar throughout the entire tournament, positioning Mall of Qatar as the country's home of World Cup fan experiences.

Open daily and completely free of charge, the Snoonu Arena invites fans of all nationalities to gather, cheer, play, eat, shop, and create unforgettable memories, all in one venue.

Spread across the ground floor and first floor of Mall of Qatar, the Snoonu Arena is designed to deliver an unparalleled World Cup atmosphere.

Key features include two dedicated activation areas across both floors, packed with games, challenges, and football-themed competitions for all ages.

The arena boasts two interactive Walls of Wishes, where fans write and display their messages of support for Qatar's national team, creating a picture-worthy installation that grows throughout the tournament.

Live match screenings on the

Oasis Stage mega screens broadcasting all FIFA World Cup 2026 matches officially via BeIn Sports in crystal-clear quality are also among the highlights of the arena, as well as comfortable seating areas that bring the stadium atmosphere right into the heart of the mall.

The arena also has a full programme of stage entertainment, trivia nights, interactive games, and live performances throughout the tournament.

The Snoonu Arena is designed to be more than a viewing experience, it is a full-day destination.

Visitors can expect generous distributions of Snoonu vouchers, wallet credits, and exclusive giveaways from Mall of Qatar merchants throughout every event day; play-and-win activations and skill challenges with real prizes up for grabs; World Cup Trivia Nights hosted live on stage, with teams competing for exciting rewards; and access to all of Mall of Qatar's dining, retail, and leisure offerings, making each visit a complete day out for the whole family.

Snoonu has assembled an exciting roster of Qatar's most prominent ambassadors and influencers who will join the fan zone experience throughout the tournament.



The Snoonu Arena at Mall of Qatar is designed to be more than a viewing experience; it is a full-day destination.

Expect weekly content creators, sports personalities, and lifestyle icons to bring the excitement to life, both inside the arena and across social media, making the mall and Snoonu Arena the most talked-about destination of the World Cup season.

While the Mall of Qatar and Snoonu Arena are ideal for cheering on the Qatar national team, it is equally a celebration of the beautiful game in all its global diversity.

Fans from every participating nation are welcome to bring their flags, colours, and passion, joining a shared community of football lovers in the heart of Doha.

Entry to the Mall of Qatar and Snoonu Arena is completely free.

All visitors are required to register in advance through Snoonu City, Snoonu's event and ticketing platform, to secure their spot.

Registration takes just seconds and ensures every fan gets the best possible experience.

12 new companies join GCC's AEO programme: GAC

The General Authority of Customs (GAC) has announced that 12 companies have joined the GCC Authorised Economic Operator (GCC AEO) programme after completing the approved customs requirements.

The GAC said in a statement yesterday that assistant chairman (Customs Affairs) Talal Abdullah al-Shaibi presented certificates of enrolment in the GCC AEO to 12 private companies that demonstrated their commitment to international standards relating to the security and safety of the supply chain in international trade, and their compliance with the approved customs requirements.

The statement added that this recognition comes as part of the GAC's efforts to strengthen its effective partnership with the private sector and expand

the scope of the AEO programme, which is one of the leading GCC customs initiatives aimed at facilitating the smooth flow of trade and encouraging companies to adhere to the highest standards of compliance and safety.

Membership in the programme provides enrolled companies with a package of customs facilitation measures, including simplified customs clearance procedures, expedited release of shipments under carefully defined controls, and dedicated streamlined channels for customs operations all without compromising customs control requirements, thereby enhancing logistics efficiency and strengthening a competitive business environment.

The GAC reaffirmed its commitment to continuing to develop the programme and expand the base

of companies benefiting from the advantages of membership, which currently stands at 99 companies, in support of efforts to empower the private sector and enhance the competitiveness of the national economy at both the regional and international levels.

Applications to the programme are open to any party participating in the international trade supply chain, following the fulfilment of the initial conditions and completion of the programme's self-assessment questionnaire.

Upon acceptance of the application subject to meeting the conditions relating to supply chain security and safety – the application is submitted electronically through the GAC's electronic customs clearance system, Al Nadeeb. – QNA

Qatar Shell marks International Women's Day

Qatar Shell marked International Women's Day 2026 with an event at Qatar Shell Research and Technology Centre, bringing together colleagues and external speakers under the theme *Powerful Together* to explore how inclusion is strengthened through collective action across genders, organisations and communities.

The event was organised by Qatar Shell Women's Association and Network, led by Maryam Rowhani, and featured opening remarks, a panel discussion and a series of interactive activities designed to encourage reflection, connection and shared learning.

The panel discussion focused on inclusive leadership in engineering and technical industries, with speakers sharing perspectives from innovation, people leadership and industrial operations.

Discussions highlighted how inclusive leadership is reflected in everyday choices and behaviours, how it can help people thrive at different life and career stages, and why diverse teams and supportive workplace cultures are essential to stronger performance and innovation.

The event also created space for broader engagement through in-person activities including a women entrepreneurs showcase, an interac-



tive quiz celebrating inspiring women from the wider community, and a "Powerful Together" commitment wall where attendees were invited to share one action they could take to advance inclusion.

"International Women's Day is an opportunity to recognise the contribution women make across our business and our broader community, and to reflect on the role all of us play in creating inclusive workplaces," said

Rob Maxwell, executive vice-president and Country Chair for Qatar. "Progress happens when inclusion moves beyond intention and becomes part of how we lead, collaborate and make decisions every day."

Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra presenting 'Sibelius & Tchaikovsky'

The Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) has announced its upcoming concert, "Classic Hits: Sibelius & Tchaikovsky", taking place at the Katara Opera House on June 13 at 7.30pm.

An unforgettable evening of passion, virtuosity, and symphonic grandeur awaits under the baton of acclaimed conductor Elias Grandy.

The compelling programme brings together two monumental works of the orchestral repertoire, featuring internationally celebrated violinist Luka Faulisi.

Blending technical brilliance with emotional depth, the concert showcases the full expressive power of the orchestra, offering audiences a journey from icy introspection to triumphant exhilaration through the music of two of classical music's most iconic composers.

German conductor Grandy is widely recognised for his dynamic presence on the podium and his insightful interpretations.

Having collaborated with leading orchestras across Europe and beyond, he has earned a reputation for combining clarity, precision, and expressive intensity.

His approach to programming often revitalises core repertoire, bringing fresh perspective to beloved works while maintaining their emotional integrity.

With a strong ability to connect with musicians and audiences alike, Grandy leads performances that are both technically refined and deeply engaging.

Italian-French violinist Faulisi is one of the most exciting rising stars on today's international concert stage.

Renowned for his expressive depth, charismatic presence, and exceptional technical command, Faulisi has performed in major venues and with distinguished ensembles worldwide.

A laureate of several prestigious competitions, he is particularly admired for his interpretations of Romantic repertoire, where his playing blends virtuosity with a compelling narrative voice.

In Sibelius's *Violin Concerto*, Faulisi brings both intensity and sensitivity to a work that demands complete artistic commitment.



Luka Faulisi.



HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie during the tour of the laboratory.

Israel releases Hamas co-founder after two years of detention

The son of a Hamas co-founder said that Israeli authorities released his father in the occupied West Bank yesterday after holding him without trial over than two years. Hassan Yousef, 71, was “freed near the southern West Bank city of Hebron” and taken to a hospital in Ramallah where he resides, his son Owais Yousef said.

Yousef is a senior leader of Hamas in the West Bank, having co-founded the group in the 1980s along with Sheikh Ahmad Yassine and other Palestinian members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Israeli police did not immediately respond to an AFP request for confirmation. Yousef had been held in Israeli administrative detention since the events of October 7, 2023, that sparked the war in Gaza. Israel has increased its use of administrative detention against Palestinians since the war. The system allows it to detain individuals for renewable six-month periods without charge. Israel says the procedure allows authorities to hold suspects and prevent attacks while continuing to gather evidence, but critics and rights groups say the system is abused.

Israel has arrested Yousef several times over the years. He was last released in July 2020 from 16 months of administrative detention. A member of the now-defunct Palestinian parliament, Yousef is estranged from his eldest son Mosab Hassan Yousef, who for 10 years spied against his father’s movement. From 1997 to 2007, Mosab Hassan Yousef worked for Israel’s internal security agency Shin Bet, before relocating to the United States, where he lives under a new identity and wrote the book *Son of Hamas*. – **AFP**

Israeli fire kills three in Gaza amid push for new ceasefire

Reuters
Cairo

Israeli strikes killed three people in the Gaza Strip yesterday, health officials said, as mediators struggled to make progress in renewed efforts to reinforce a fragile US-brokered truce, sources close to the talks reported. Medics said an Israeli strike on a house in Moghrabi Street in Gaza City killed one person. The Israeli military told Reuters that it struck a militant.

Two other Palestinians were killed in separate airstrikes in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. The Israeli military did not immediately comment.

The violence came as mediators Egypt, Qatar and Turkiye held week-long talks with Hamas and other Palestinian factions on implementing the second phase of President Donald Trump’s Gaza plan, which would involve Hamas disarming and Israel withdrawing its forces.

In a statement yesterday senior Hamas official Hussam Badran said the talks had achieved “real progress” and called on mediators



Palestinian children sit in the wreckage of a car in the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. – **AFP**

to compel Israel to stop truce violations. Badran did not elaborate on the nature of the progress. Hamas blames the absence of a full agreement to end the Gaza conflict on Israel’s refusal to fulfill first-phase obligations agreed in October, which halted major fighting but did not end Israeli attacks. Israel says its strikes are intended to thwart imminent attacks by Hamas and other militants. Two Egyptian sources said the current round of talks between the

armament to launching a political track toward a Palestinian state, two of the four sources said. Israeli strikes have killed more than 950 people since the truce, health officials say, while Israel says four soldiers have been killed by militants in that period. Lack of progress delayed a planned meeting yesterday between Hamas and Nickolay Mladenov, Trump’s Board of Peace envoy for Gaza, the sources said. In a written response to Reuters, a Board of Peace official said Mladenov remained in regular contact with the mediators and all relevant parties. “Discussions are ongoing, and considerable work remains to be done. It is therefore too early to draw conclusions about the internal dialogue between the Palestinian factions in Cairo,” the official said, declining to elaborate. “All weapons in Gaza need to be decommissioned; the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza should assume its responsibilities as a transitional authority; and Israel should withdraw to the perimeter in order to allow for the full reconstruction of Gaza,” the official added.

More than 260 Nigerians fleeing attacks in South Africa return home

AFP
Lagos

The first group of Nigerians repatriated from South Africa following escalating anti-immigrant attacks landed in Lagos yesterday, AFP journalists saw. Anti-foreigner violence has convulsed South Africa for weeks as gangs armed with sticks, whips and shields have marched through parts of the “rainbow nation”, demanding that people with no residency papers leave by June 30. Foreign nationals have reported being intimidated and beaten by mobs going door to door, families have been forced from their homes, and many have left in the face of the threats. Ghana, Mozambique and Malawi have already repatriated hundreds of their citizens in recent weeks. South Africa is one of Africa’s largest economies and hosts more than 3mn foreigners, just over 5% of its population, according to the country’s statistics agency. However, unemployment exceeds 30%, fuelling anger toward migrant workers. A chartered plane carrying 262 Nigeria nationals landed at Lagos’s Murtala Mohammed International Airport mid-morning yesterday. Nigeria’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sola Enikanolaiye welcomed the first batch. A second group will be flown out on June 15. There are around 1,000 in to-

tal who have said they want to leave South Africa, the ministry has said. South African authorities said they had so far processed 586 Nigerian nationals for repatriation, all who were in South Africa “illegally” with police on Wednesday night having cited expired passports and visas. “All affected individuals have been declared undesirable persons and are consequently prohibited from re-entering South Africa for a period of five years,” the South African government said in a statement yesterday. A Nigerian foreign ministry statement said the evacuation exercise underscored the government’s “proactive and decisive response to protect Nigerian lives and dignity in the face of violence and intolerance.” “No Nigerian should live in fear simply because of their nationality. The evacuation does not signal defeat,” the statement added. “South Africa is a wicked country,” said returnee Emilia Godwin as she arrived in Lagos. “Even when you apply to have your residence permit, they will use the opportunity to arrest you and put you inside.” South Africa has long been a destination for both legal and undocumented African workers. It has faced waves of xenophobic violence since 2008, when dozens of migrants were killed and thousands forced to flee their homes. The latest unrest comes as political parties gear up for local government elections in November.



Nigerians disembark from an aircraft at Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, as the authorities repatriate citizens fleeing xenophobic attacks in South Africa. – **Reuters**

Ashghal wins Sustainability Excellence 2026 award for urban development

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has won the Sustainability Excellence Awards 2026 in the sustainable urban development category, presented by the Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (GOR), at the conclusion of Project Qatar 2026, where it participated as a strategic partner. Ashghal said in a statement that the award recognises its contributions to promoting sustainability and environmental protection through the adoption of best practices and innovative solutions in infrastructure and public building projects, supporting Qatar’s sustainable development goals. Eng. Saoud al-Ansari, the director of the Buildings Projects Department, said that the award reflects Ashghal’s commitment to implementing sustainable practices and delivering high-quality projects that contribute to the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. – **QNA**



Syria probes cyberattack on ministry

Syria has said that it is investigating a cyberattack that leaked sensitive information from the foreign ministry, with internal documents appearing on messaging app Telegram. In a statement carried by Syria’s official Sana news agency, the ministry said it had begun “taking the necessary measures to verify and investigate the leaked documents.” It will carry out “a comprehensive investigation to determine the source, mechanism, and scope of the leak”, it added, and “contain its repercussions, and hold accountable all those found to be involved.” The documents, most of which date from after the fall of longtime Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad in 2024, include official correspondence between embassies and information on Syrian expats as well as employee salaries. They were posted online on a Telegram channel called “Syrian foreign ministry leaks”. – **AFP**



talabat launches ‘Predict & Feast’ in-app game

talabat has launched “Predict & Feast”, an in-app prediction game running throughout the 2026 FIFA World Cup matches, giving customers a new way to engage with the tournament while earning meaningful rewards on the platform they use every day. Available to talabat users, Predict & Feast lets fans predict the outcome of every match (Win, Loss, or Draw) directly inside the talabat app. Correct predictions earn goals, and once a user hits the goals’ milestone, a talabat voucher, redeemable across talabat’s 84,000 active partners, is automatically added to their account with no claims process and no delays. The experience is built on a progress bar that keeps fans tracking their journey from match to match, across the full tournament. The World Cup represents a unique opportunity to bring billions of fans together through sport. Predict & Feast is talabat’s way of meeting that moment, turning every match into an occasion to engage, order, and earn, without ever leaving the app. The experience is accessible through a dedicated entry point in the talabat app’s bottom navigation bar, with no additional downloads required. Users can track their predictions, monitor their points progress, and check past results through a built-in results tab. “This occasion is an opportunity to bring people together, and food is always at the heart of those moments,” said senior talabat director (Regional Marketing & Growth) Alvaro Martinez. “Predict & Feast is our way of making every match day a little more exciting and a little more rewarding for our customers. This is talabat using its platform to connect people through food and sport.” Getting started takes seconds. Users open the talabat app, navigate to Predict & Feast, and submit their prediction for any available match before the window closes 15 minutes before kick-off. Correct predictions earn goals, and reaching a milestone automatically triggers a voucher delivered straight to the account. Predict & Feast is available to all talabat users with at least one lifetime order on the platform. New users will be guided to place a first order before joining the game.

ICC marks World Environment Day 2026

The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), in collaboration with the ICC Youth Wing, marked World Environment Day on June 5 with a programme at the ICC Ashoka Hall in Doha, highlighting the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainable living.

Indian ambassador Vipul attended the event as chief guest and underscored the significance of World Environment Day in his address. He encouraged individuals and communities to contribute to environmental protection through responsible and sustainable practices.

The programme began with a welcome address by ICC general secretary Abraham K Joseph, followed by opening remarks from ICC vice president Shantanu



Deshpande. ICC president A P Manikantan delivered the presidential address, emphasising the need for collective action to safeguard the environment for future generations.

As part of the celebration, Vipul led a sapling plantation ceremony, symbolising the commitment to a greener and more sustainable

future. He also visited a model exhibition featuring projects by students from Indian schools in Qatar, commending their creativity, innovation, and dedication to environmental sustainability.

Adding to the programme, Aswin Madhusoodanan delivered a talk on the theme, "Resilient Earth, Responsible Living," shar-

ing insights on environmental responsibility and practical approaches to sustainable living.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by the ICC Youth Wing General Secretary.

Among those in attendance were ISC president E P Abdurahman, ICBF president Shanavas Bava, IBPC vice president Abdul



Sathar, ICC vice president Shantanu Deshpande, ICC general secretary Abraham K Joseph, presi-

dents of affiliated organisations, and senior members of the Indian community in Qatar.

PISQ hosts two-day spelling bee, celebrating academic excellence



Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) organised the Junior & Senior Spelling Bee Competitions 2026 on May 20-21 at the Arbab Hall, bringing together talented young spellers from KG, Primary, Girls, Boys, and Cambridge Wings.

The two-day academic event aimed to strengthen students' vocabulary, pronunciation, phonetic awareness, public-speaking confidence, and healthy academic competition. Participants demonstrated remarkable preparation, stage confidence, listening skills, and linguistic excellence throughout the competition.

The event was graced by the presence of the principal of PISQ as the chief guest, along with the vice principals and faculty members, who commended the participants for their enthusiasm,



preparation, and outstanding performances.

In the KG 1 category, Aleeza Irfan of Kirthar House emerged as the winner, while Fatima Noman of Gasherbrum House secured the runner-up position. In KG 2, Zainab Fatima of K2 House claimed first place, with Abdul Hadi, also from K2 House, finishing as runner-up.

Among students in Levels 1-2, Muhammad Almir Khan of Gasherbrum House took the top honor, followed by Muhammad Ali of K2 House. In the Levels 3-4 category, Arissa Munir of Kirthar House won first place, while Haniya Asif, also representing Kirthar House, was named runner-up.

For Levels 5-6, M Haris of Kirthar House secured the winner's title, with Fatima Muhammad Abdullah, also from Kirthar House, finishing second. In the Levels 7-8 category, Insharah Imran of Kirthar House emerged as the winner, while M. Saad, likewise from Kirthar House, earned the runner-up position.

Ahmed Pathirippatta's Dohayil Nadannutheertha Vazhikal released in Doha

Dohayil Nadannutheertha Vazhikal, a book chronicling the expatriate life experiences of veteran journalist and founding president of the Indian Media Forum (IMF), Ahmed Pathirippatta, was released in Doha.

The book was launched at a function organised by the Indian Media Forum at the ICC Mumbai Hall. The release was performed by Bindu N Nair, Second Secretary at the Embassy of India in Qatar.

Al Jazeera English Channel Programme editor Joseph John received the first copy and spoke about the book. IMF Qatar president Omanakuttan Parumala presided over the event.

ICC president A P Manikantan and Indian Authors Forum president Dr K C Sabu delivered felicitations. Ahmed Pathirippatta responded with a thank-you address.

Manikantan presented mementos from the IMF to Bindu N Nair and Joseph John. Ahmed Pathirippatta also handed over copies of *Dohayil Nadannutheertha Vazhikal* to A P Manikantan and ICBF president Shanavas Bava for inclusion in the libraries of ICC and ICBF.

IMF general secretary Shafeeq Araykkal delivered the welcome address, while Treasurer R J Ratheesh proposed the vote of thanks. IMF Executive Committee member R Jenisa compared the event.

Several media and cultural personalities attended the function.



Ahmed Pathirippatta's book *Dohayil Nadannutheertha Vazhikal* was released by Bindu N Nair, Second Secretary at the Embassy of India in Qatar, by presenting the first copy to Joseph John, Programme editor of Al Jazeera English Channel.

ICBF organises blood platelets donation camp at HMC Blood Donation Centre



The Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), continuing its commitment to serving the expatriate Indian community in Qatar, organised a Blood Platelet Donation Camp in association with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) at the Qatar National Blood Donation Centre.

The campaign aims to raise awareness about the critical importance of blood platelet donation and to encourage greater community participation in this life-saving initiative. Platelets are essential for patients undergoing cancer treatment, organ transplants, and major surgeries and for those suffering from blood disorders and trauma.

Since platelets have a very short shelf life, maintaining an adequate supply requires continuous support from voluntary donors. The campaign highlighted the vital role donors play in saving lives and supporting Qatar's healthcare system.

Eish Singhal, ICBF coordinating officer and First Secretary at the Embassy of India in Qatar, inaugurated the camp as the chief guest. He appreciated the



efforts of the ICBF team, HMC, community volunteers, and donors for coming forward in support of this noble cause.

He noted that blood platelet donation is among the most valuable life-saving contributions one can make.

He further emphasised that the ICBF initiative reflects the solidarity of the Indian community with Qatar, our second home, and strengthens the fraternal and bilateral relationship between the two countries. Certificates of appreciation were distributed by

Singhal and the ICBF office-bearers to the donors. More than 50 volunteers from different states of India participated in the camp and donated blood and platelets.

ICBF president Shanavas Bava delivered the presidential address during the official function and highlighted the new and unique initiative of the ICBF Blood Platelets Donation camp.

General secretary Deepak Shetty welcomed the guests, while Health Wing in-charge Mini Siby proposed the vote of thanks.

The event was coordinated by

vice president Rasheed Ahamed, secretary Jafer Thayyil, managing committee members Mani Bharathi, Neelambari S, Amar Veer Singh, Khaja Nizamudeen, Shankar Goud, and Irfan Ansari.

ICBF Advisory Council chairman Prasad K S, Programme Committee chairman KV Boban, former ICBF president Abdul Khader, managing committee members, representatives of ICBF-associated organisations, and various community leaders also attended the camp and extended their support to the initiative.

DTAC 2026 concludes with grand success in Doha

The District 116 Toastmasters Annual Conference (DTAC 2026), held on May 21-22 at the Pullman Hotel, Doha, concluded with resounding success. The two-day convention welcomed more than 500 attendees and featured inspiring keynote addresses, educational workshops, and the highly anticipated district speech contests.

The event, themed Echoes of Excellence, celebrated communication and leadership excellence across the district. Participants lauded the vibrant atmosphere and

seamless organisation, which reflected the spirit of Toastmasters.

The District 116 Speech Contests were a major highlight of DTAC 2026.

The winners, in the order of first, second and third places, were:

Evaluation - Roshan Sukheja, Abhishhek Chattopadhyay, Fawad Kasu

Humorous - Sheeja Anis, Swetha Raghuraman, Sheik Kader

Table Topics - Roshan Sukheja, Pratiksha Diwakar, Ram Mohan Nair

International - Nisha Shivram,



Roshan Sukheja, Fawad Kasu

The winners were honoured for their outstanding performances,

which captivated audiences and showcased the transformative power of Toastmasters.

DTAC 2026 reaffirmed its place as a premier event in the Toastmasters calendar, leaving partici-

pants inspired and motivated to continue their journey of personal and professional growth.



ICC, TGS celebrate Telangana State Formation Day in Doha

The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), in association with Telangana Gulf Samithi (TGS) Qatar, organised recently the Fiesta – Telangana State Formation Day celebrations at ICC Ashoka Hall, Doha.

The event showcased the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and achievements of Telangana through an impressive lineup of cultural performances, drawing a large gathering from the Indian community in Qatar.

Nandini Abbagouni, head of Cultural Activities, ICC, welcomed the guests and dignitaries. The chief guest was Eish Singhal, First Secretary – Labour & Community Welfare, Visa & OCI, Embassy of India, Qatar. The guest of honour was Khalid Abdul Rehman Fakhroo, Labour Relations Specialist, Ministry of Labour, Qatar.

In his address, A P Manikantan, president of ICC, appreciated the efforts of Telangana Gulf Samithi in promoting cultural values and community welfare while strengthening the bond among the Indian diaspora in Qatar.

The cultural presentations highlighted Telangana's vibrant traditions, folk arts, music, and dance, receiving tremendous appreciation from the audience. The packed Ashoka Hall and enthusiastic participation reflected the unity and cultural



pride of the Telugu community. Telangana Gulf Samithi has been actively serving the Telugu community in Qatar through various welfare initiatives, providing support to workers and community members in need, and working closely with community welfare organizations and institutions.

The event was attended by distinguished guests, including Shanavas Bava, president of the

Indian Community Benevolent Forum; E P Abdurahman, president of the Indian Sports Centre; PrasadRao Kodurii, CBF Advisor; Krishnakumar, TGS Advisor; Shantanu Deshpande, vice president of ICC; and Abraham K Joseph, general secretary of ICC.

The celebration was organised under the leadership of Maida Madhu, president of Telangana Gulf Samithi, and Sandhya Vinay, general secretary. The organising team included executive members Bhavani, SagarDurgam, Rajeshwar, Gaddi Raju, Shankar Goud, Yellaiah Tallapalli, and Prasad Nimmala.



The Youth Wing members Mukundam, Rajesh, Praveen, Arun, Prasad, Sudhakar, Bolle Raja, Gangaram, Deepak, and Madhu, along with all TGS members and volunteers, worked tirelessly to make the event a grand success.

The evening concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Maida Madhu, who expressed gratitude to the Embassy of India, ICC, Ministry of Labour officials, sponsors, artists, volunteers, media representatives, and community members for their unwavering support and participation.

MES Indian School observes World Environment Day with eco-conscious initiatives

MES Indian School observed World Environment Day on June 4 across all Sections of the school with a series of activities aimed at promoting environmental awareness among students.

Members of the teaching faculty and administrative staff commemorated the occasion in green attire to underscore their support for environmental sustainability.

Speaking on the occasion, the school principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, urged students to become responsible stewards of nature by adopting sustainable habits in their daily lives and actively contributing to protecting and preserving the environment for future generations.

The Kindergarten Section marked the day with a special assembly led by Jesna Siju, CCF In-charge (Kindergarten), fol-



lowed by a role play titled "Tree Today, Breathe Tomorrow." KG1 students participated in a role play on the topic 'Save Earth', while KG2 students created



thumbprint tree artwork. The Junior Section conducted "The Green Squad – Environment Champions" assembly, featuring speeches, skits, dance, and an environmental news bulletin.

The programme was coordinated by Reshma V R, CCF in-charge (Junior Section). Students also participated in awareness activi-

ties, a video presentation and an Eco-Awareness Campaign. The Boys' and Girls' Section had a PowerPoint presentation on environmental awareness. A cleanli-



China joins Macron-led video call in rare economic talks

Reuters
Beijing/Paris

Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Guoqing attended a video conference hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron on global economic imbalances yesterday, days before G7 countries meet in France to discuss how to deal with waves of low-priced Chinese exports entering their markets.

Macron, who is hosting the Group of Seven summit in Evian-les-Bains next week, has sought to engage with Beijing in a last-ditch attempt at a co-operative approach before the European Union decides whether to toughen its trade policy towards China, French officials say.

“Our common goal should be clear. It is to put the global economy back on a stronger growth path. I think we all share this objective. In order to deliver, we need obviously some domestic policies and effective international co-operation,” Macron said at the start of the video conference.

“Co-ordination is key, and if they (global imbalances) are not addressed through a co-ordinated approach among the world’s major



France’s President Emmanuel Macron chairs a videoconference meeting dubbed “Global Convergence for Growth Summit” with officials and heads of state from China and G7 member states, at the Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris, France, yesterday. (Reuters)

economies, these imbalances risk unwinding in a disorderly manner, leading to abrupt economic and financial adjustments,” he added.

EU leaders meet immediately after the June 15 to 17 G7 gathering, with China set to feature prominently on the agenda.

Zhang’s inclusion in the so-called “Global Convergence for Growth” video conference, which was announced by a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, is an unusual instance of China engag-

ing with the G7 which comprises France, Britain, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States, alongside the EU.

Beijing has long criticised the grouping as illegitimate for discussing world affairs and for being unrepresentative of the world order.

There’s growing alarm in Europe at China’s record trade surplus and move up the value chain, with its exports of electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and other

high-tech products threatening European manufacturers, in what analysts describe as a “second China shock” following its dominance of low-value industries in the 2000s.

China has defended its industrial policy and rejected allegations of Chinese exporters unfairly benefiting from state subsidies. It says other countries are undermining global trade rules instead by imposing unilateral tariffs.

Since December, the Chinese capital has received leaders from five G7 nations in a flurry of high-level meetings. Macron met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing that month, telling him China should help rebalance economic relations co-operatively, or Europe would have little choice but to adopt more protectionist measures.

However, EU nations remain divided on how to approach China. Germany, Europe’s largest trading economy, has long been reluctant to impose tariffs on one of its main export markets. But as Chinese carmakers compete more directly with German manufacturers, some German lawmakers have begun calling for a tougher stance towards Beijing.

China sanctions Philippine defence chief for remarks

Reuters
Beijing

China’s foreign ministry announced sanctions yesterday against Philippine Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and his close relatives, saying he had “repeatedly made erroneous remarks concerning China” which had undermined China’s “legitimate interests” and bilateral ties.

The sanctions mean Teodoro and his wife and child are prohibited from entering mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, the ministry said in a statement, and that entities in China “are prohibited from engaging in any transactions, co-operation, or other activities with Teodoro and his spouse and child.”

The measures were imposed to “safeguard China’s national sovereignty, security, and development interests,” the ministry added, without specifying what remarks by Teodoro it particularly objected to.

Teodoro’s office did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Last week Beijing accused the Philippine defence chief of having no gratitude for China’s supply of important commodities and of using issues about people’s well-

being for political showmanship, after Teodoro’s remarks about China being a threat.

“For countries like the Philippines... which is under severe threat territory-wise and politically too by China, we have no choice but really to be resilient and to stand up against Chinese aggression,” he had told Reuters on the sidelines of Singapore’s Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia’s premier defence forum.

After unconfirmed reports had surfaced last week about a China entry ban, he said: “I have no assets in China and I have no plans to go there,” according to local media ABS-CBN.

“Even if I wanted to visit because the food is good and the people are kind, that is overshadowed by the kind of government they have,” he was quoted saying.

China and the Philippines have engaged in repeated maritime standoffs in the South China Sea in recent years, as Beijing continues to press expansive claims over waters that overlap with rival claimants that also include Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, despite a 2016 arbitration ruling.

Earlier this week, Manila took diplomatic action against Beijing for what it called the “illegal presence” of a floating structure in a disputed atoll.

Solomon Islands says China security pact to remain secret

AFP
Sydney

The contents of a secretive security pact between China and the Solomon Islands will remain undisclosed due to legal restrictions, the Pacific nation’s new government told AFP yesterday.

The controversial deal struck in 2022 rattled Washington and Canberra because of concern it opened the door to a permanent Chinese military presence in the South Pacific.

Speaking last week in Australia, the Solomons’ new Prime Minister Matthew Wale said his cabinet would review the deal, which he admitted he had not seen until just before his visit.

On Wednesday, Wale said his

government cannot publicly disclose the details of the deal because of legal restrictions.

“It is legally binding and was entered into by the previous government. We are unable to disclose its contents”

“Unfortunately, the China Security Agreement includes a non-disclosure provision,” Wale told reporters in the Solomons capital Honiara after returning from Australia and New Zealand, in comments carried by local media.

“It is legally binding and was entered into by the previous government.”

“We are unable to disclose its contents,” he said.

His office confirmed to AFP

yesterday that the deal would have to remain secret.

The agreement was signed under one of Wale’s predecessors, Manasseh Sogavare, who was seen as Beijing’s staunchest ally in the South Pacific.

Elected prime minister last month pledging change, Wale as opposition leader had called for the agreement to be made public.

At the press briefing in Honiara, he said any future international treaties should have parliamentary oversight.

He said previously strained relations with Australia and New Zealand had been improved on his visit.

“The Solomon Islands will not be the source of uncertainty and instability for the region when it comes to security,” he said.

US, Korea hold nuclear deterrence talks as N Korea expands arms push

Reuters
Seoul

US and Republic of Korea officials discussed strengthening nuclear deterrence and readiness against North Korea’s growing weapons programme yesterday, Republic of Korea’s defence ministry said, at talks in Seoul under their Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG). The meeting follows growing concern that North Korea is expanding its capacity to produce weapons-grade nuclear material, after state media showed leader Kim Jong-un inspecting a newly operating nuclear-material production plant and calling for an “exponential” expansion of the country’s nuclear forces.

The sixth meeting of the group was co-chaired by Kim Hong-cheol, Seoul’s defence policy chief, and Robert Soofer, a senior US defence

official handling nuclear deterrence and weapons of mass destruction policy. Officials from defence, foreign ministry and intelligence agencies also attended.

The ministry said the two sides reviewed progress across the consultative group’s work, from information sharing and crisis procedures to joint drills and messaging, and explored ways to further bolster allied nuclear deterrence and readiness. Last week, North Korea released images of Kim visiting a newly launched nuclear-material production facility and said he had reviewed plans to expand the country’s nuclear forces, in what analysts saw as a sign of Pyongyang’s intent to increase fissile-material output.

Hong Min, a senior researcher at the Korea Institute for National Unification, said North Korea’s output of weapons-grade nuclear material and its ability to mass-produce warheads could be higher than

previously thought. That would be possible if several enrichment sites become fully operational, including Kangson, a new facility at Yongbyon, and a possible site in Kusong, he said.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that North Korea’s uranium-enrichment capacity could rise by about 75% once the new Yongbyon facility reaches full production, citing analysis by VERTIC, a London-based arms-control verification nonprofit.

The facility was estimated to contain more than 9,000 centrifuges capable of producing about 160kg (353lb) of highly enriched uranium a year, on top of an estimated previous annual capacity of about 215kg, the report said.

The talks come as Seoul is pursuing a transfer of wartime operational control from Washington, a process that has raised questions over how the allies would co-ordinate nuclear planning and conventional forces.

Indonesia nabs Australian fugitive hiding in private jet lavatory

AFP
Denpasar

Indonesian authorities arrested an Australian fugitive hiding in the lavatory of a private jet as it was about to take off from the resort island of Bali, officials said yesterday.

Officers rushed onboard the plane after the pilot was ordered to return from the runway to the VIP Terminal at Bali’s Denpasar airport on Saturday.

Immigration officials had become suspicious of a man travelling on a Brazilian passport with no record of entry to Indonesia

or a valid residence permit for the country.

The man and three other foreign passengers and three crew members were ready to depart from Bali’s capital for Maputo in Mozambique when the pilot received the call to stay on the tarmac.

Officials found three passengers in the cabin and their suspect hiding in the lavatory, Bali immigration authorities said in a statement.

Australian media identified the man as Angelo Pandeli, a prominent member of a motorbike gang linked to drug trafficking and wanted by Interpol.

He was apparently using

someone else’s Brazilian passport to evade arrest.

According to the Australian Federal Police, the 55-year-old was suspected in a series of large-scale drug smuggling operations.

He was deported to Australia from Indonesia late Wednesday.

Indonesian authorities have vowed not to let the popular holiday island of Bali become a hideout for international criminals.

In April, a Scottish fugitive wanted in Spain for drug charges and money laundering was arrested at the island’s airport upon arrival and sent back to Europe.

Korea president in Rome



Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung shake hands as they meet at Quirinale Palace in Rome, Italy, yesterday. (Reuters)

Thai court awards death penalty to Chinese Uyghurs in 2015 bombing

AFP
Bangkok

Two Chinese Uyghur men were sentenced to death yesterday for carrying out a 2015 attack on a Bangkok shrine that killed 20 people, a long-awaited verdict in Thailand’s deadliest bombing case.

A Bangkok court convicted Yusuf Mieraili and Bilal Mohammed of premeditated and attempted murder for their role in planting a bomb at the popular Erawan Shrine in the capital’s commercial heart.

The blast tore apart the site where worshippers and tourists had gathered, wounding more than 100 people and leaving the shrine to the Thai representation of Brahma littered with motorbike fragments and singed debris.

Seven Chinese tourists were among the fatalities when explo-

sives — apparently left in a backpack — detonated.

“The defendants committed a single act that violated multiple laws. The court therefore imposed the harshest penalty available under the law, the death sentence,” one member of the four-judge panel said yesterday as the lengthy verdict was read out.

The defendants — both Chinese nationals who arrived in court in prison garb — were acquitted of charges stemming from a separate bombing at a Bangkok pier.

Following the verdict, Mieraili said: “RIP Thailand’s justice system. I don’t accept any of this. I didn’t do anything wrong.”

Choochat Kanpai, the defendants’ lawyer, told reporters they “will appeal the ruling because there are many aspects of the case that the court has not fully considered, including the treat-



A prison vehicle that the police officers say is carrying Yusuf Mieraili and Bilal Mohammed, also known as Adem Karadag, arrives at the South Bangkok Criminal Court ahead of a Thai criminal court’s verdict, in Bangkok, yesterday. (Reuters)

ment of the defendants during the proceedings.”

The decade-long trial was beset by delays due to coronavirus

disruptions and problems securing translators.

The blast came weeks after Thailand’s then-ruling junta for-

cibly repatriated 109 Uyghurs to China, prompting speculation that it was part of a revenge plot.

Beijing welcomed the death sentences. “The attackers were totally inhumane and extremely heinous,” foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told reporters. “China supports Thailand in conducting the trial in accordance with the law and severely punishing the murderers.”

Shortly after the bombing, police named 17 suspects, but only Mieraili and Mohammed were initially apprehended.

Thailand’s junta authorities were criticised for a murky investigation that appeared to wind down shortly after the arrest of the two men.

They went on trial in 2016, accused of planting the explosives.

But the proceedings — which have involved hundreds of witness testimonies — have been delayed multiple times, once be-

cause the translator for the accused was hit with drugs charges.

In 2017 a Thai woman called Wanna Suansan was detained on arrival in Bangkok on a warrant linked to the shrine blast — making her the third named suspect arrested by police.

She was charged with attempted murder, associated murder and possession of bombs and weapons, but was acquitted in 2024.

The Uyghurs, a Turkic minority, primarily hail from China’s westernmost region, Xinjiang.

Beijing has been accused of detaining more than a mn Uyghurs and other Muslims since 2017, part of a campaign that the UN previously said could constitute crimes against humanity.

China vehemently denies these allegations, saying its policies have rooted out extremism in Xinjiang and boosted economic development.



UK defence minister quits with stinging rebuke of PM Starmer

AFP
London

British Defence Secretary John Healey sensation-ally quit yesterday, accusing beleaguered Prime Minister Keir Starmer and the finance ministry of failing to commit enough money to protect the country.

His shock resignation weakens Starmer's authority further at a precarious moment for the embattled Labour leader, a week before a by-election which could prompt a bid to replace him.

In stinging criticism, Healey warned that Starmer's long-awaited Defence Investment Plan (DIP) for funding over the next decade – which the premier has yet to publish – risked making Britain “less safe”.

“You have been unable, and the Treasury has been unwilling, to commit the resources that the nation needs to defend the country at this time of rising threats,” Healey wrote in a resignation letter to Starmer posted on his X account.

“After explaining to you that I would not be able to accept a DIP settlement that does not give our Forces the resources they need, I am now left with no other option than to submit my resignation.”

Healey's sudden departure comes after months of delays to the defence plan, which Starmer has insisted he will publish before a Nato summit in Turkiye beginning on July 7.

Starmer's centre-left government, elected in July 2024 follow-



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Defence Secretary John Healey meet with BAE system apprentices during a joint visit in Barrow-in-Furness. (Reuters/File Photo)

ing 14 years of Conservative rule, has pledged to ramp up defence spending, with priority given to Nato commitments.

The rise comes amid threats from Russia and as US President Donald Trump repeatedly urges Nato allies to spend more and become less reliant on Washington for security.

Starmer has vowed to raise defence spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product from next year, increasing to three % if Labour wins the next general election, expected in 2029, before reaching 3.5% in 2035.

British media has for weeks been reporting on behind-the-scenes battles within the government over the DIP settlement.

In his resignation letter, Healey said he was first given full sight of DIP on Monday and it sees defence spending rise to only 2.68% of

GDP in 2030.

A source close to the former defence secretary told AFP the deal offered by the Treasury did not put a date on the three % commitment.

The plan “falls well short of what is required for defence and the country at this dangerous time”, Healey wrote.

“Without a DIP that meets the moment in this way, I am being forced to make decisions that would reduce the readiness of our forces and increase the risk to personnel on operations, and could make the country less safe.”

Tan Dhesi, chair of parliament's defence committee, said the government must take Healey's warning “with the utmost seriousness”.

“That a defence secretary of his integrity and commitment has felt compelled to resign in response to the inadequacy of the proposed defence settlement is a grave mo-

ment,” the Labour MP said in a statement.

Starmer faces political peril in next Thursday's contest when Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham stands for the Makerfield parliamentary seat. Both men have said they would participate in any Labour leadership race, although none has yet been triggered.

Wes Streeting quit as health secretary last month following disastrous local and regional election results for Labour and has also said he would run in any future contest.

Healey, 66, has been previously talked about as another potential contender, but there was no immediate suggestion that his resignation is linked to the leadership speculation.

It “underlines that Starmer has become a lame duck prime minister who cannot get decisions through his own government”, Patrick Diamond, a politics professor at Queen Mary University of London, told AFP.

The investment plan, originally due to be published in late 2025, has repeatedly been pushed back, to the frustration of industry and others.

Healey's resignation “creates a sequence of political headaches in terms of a replacement, and trying to get the defence investment plan published,” said Ed Arnold, senior associate fellow at the RUSI think-tank.

A government source insisted that Starmer had made Britain “safer”, adding the defence spending proposals “will deliver the capability our armed forces need”.



Britain's Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper (centre), poses for a photograph with Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Penny Wong (right), and Canadian Foreign Minister, Anita Anand, in the garden of Chevening House in Sevenoaks, yesterday. (Reuters)

UK, Australia, Canada launch fund for peace efforts in Palestine

Reuters
London

Britain, Australia and Canada yesterday launched a peace fund to complement broader efforts towards a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with each country contributing £1mn (\$1.34mn) to the initiative.

Below are key details about the fund as set out by the British government:

The fund will focus on new and existing grassroots projects – particularly those that include youth groups, civil society organisations and women.

The £3mn fund will seek to scale up and attract additional donors once operational.

Fund announced ahead of meeting in Britain between UK foreign minister Yvette Cooper and her Australian and Canadian counterparts, Penny Wong and Anita Anand.

‘Racist thuggery’ slammed after second night of N Ireland unrest

AFP
Belfast

Police arrested 16 people during a second night of disorder in Northern Ireland sparked by a brutal Belfast stabbing, a senior minister said yesterday, condemning rioters for “racist thuggery”.

The clashes with police late Wednesday came hours after a Sudanese man appeared in court charged with attempted murder over Monday night's shocking knife attack.

Video of the incident – which showed a man straddling another lying in the street, slashing him with a knife – went viral across social media platforms, triggering condemnation and anger that has spilled onto the streets of Northern Ireland.

The condition of the stabbing victim, Stephen Ogilvie, was “improving” yesterday, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) Gavin Robinson said after meeting his family.

Ogilvie's relatives have appealed for calm in the wake of the “terrible tragedy”, saying violence was “not welcome”.

But 12 officers were injured in the latest unrest, the UK government's Northern Ireland minister Hilary Benn confirmed.

Dozens of masked agitators clashed with riot police late into the night, setting fire to a car and boarded-up property, AFP journalists saw.

Projectiles, including petrol bombs and bricks, were hurled as riot police used water cannon to push back dozens of rioters trying



Fires burn around police vehicles as protesters (behind) stand off with police in Glengormley, north of Belfast. (AFP)

to reach a hotel that had been used to house asylum seekers northwest of Belfast.

Benn said the scale of that unrest was “a lot less than the terrible events that we witnessed on Tuesday night”.

Then, masked rioters had torched vehicles and buildings and forced families to flee their homes in Belfast.

Benn condemned “the sense of fear that has been created”.

“Above all for those who were intimidated”, burned out of their houses by masked thugs on the basis of the colour of their skin,” he said.

A nurse was “chased and intimidated” as she travelled to work at Ulster Hospital near Belfast on Wednesday, the body that runs the hospital said.

The biggest and main mosque in Northern Ireland also had to be shut for the first time in its history on Tuesday, said chairman Mo-

ammed Arshed.

Two more people were charged in connection with the unrest and will appear in court later yesterday, following several being charged Wednesday, the Police Service of Northern Ireland said.

Most of the disturbances have occurred in Protestant pro-UK unionist areas of Belfast, with Catholic pro-Irish unity districts largely quiet.

But Ryan Henderson, the force's assistant chief constable, told reporters there was “no evidence” it had been co-ordinated by loyalist paramilitaries.

Authorities have instead blamed far-right activists for stoking anger on social media.

Sudanese national Hadi Alo-did, 30, was remanded in custody by Belfast magistrates in the case Wednesday, charged with attempted murder.

The case was adjourned to July 8.

Three Indian sailors confirmed dead in US strike off Oman, another incident reported

Reuters
New Delhi

Three Indian sailors have died in a US military operation to halt a tanker off Oman as part of Washington's efforts to blockade Iran-linked shipping, Indian authorities said yesterday.

The deaths are the first reported since the blockade began on April 13, operations which have seen the US disable eight ships and turn back more than 100 others.

Separately, the Indian embassy in Oman yesterday reported an incident involving another tanker off Oman.

Indian Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal confirmed the three sailors had died.

“Sadly, three Indian seafarers initially reported missing are now confirmed dead after bodies have been located and identified,” Sonowal said.

The US military's Central Command (Centcom) said a US aircraft had carried out a precision strike on the Palau-flagged oil products tanker Settebello in the Gulf of Oman.

It “fired precision munitions

into the ship's engine room after the crew repeatedly failed to comply with directions from American forces”, Centcom said.

India's foreign ministry on Wednesday condemned the attack and said 21 Indian sailors had been rescued.

The Omani Navy responded to the Settebello's distress call after it reported an engine fire following the US strike, British maritime risk management group Vanguard said.

India summoned the US deputy chief of mission to the country after lodging a “strong protest” over the incident, two Indian sources told Reuters on Wednesday.

Family members of Shivanand Chaurasia, one of the sailors who died, told reporters he had gone to sea about nine months ago and had told his father earlier this week that everything was fine.

The US attacks on vessels carrying Indian seafarers come ahead of next week's Group of Seven summit where Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to hold bilateral talks with US President Donald Trump.

Centcom said the Settebello “violated the ongoing blockade by attempting to transport oil from Iran”.

Pilots demand answers ahead of Air India crash anniversary

AFP
Mumbai

India's aviation accident probe agency is facing renewed criticism from pilot groups ahead of the anniversary of the 2025 Air India Boeing-787 crash in Ahmedabad, which killed 260 people.

Families of the victims had expected a final report by Friday to explain the cause of the disaster – exactly a year after the Boeing 787-8 crashed in a fireball shortly after takeoff and smashed into a medical college.

But with investigations continuing, local media suggest India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) will only issue an interim report – frustrating those awaiting clear answers about why their relatives died.

“I don't have much trust,” said Charanvir Randhawa, president of the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP), which has more than 5,000 members. “I will be very honest; they are not transparent at all,” Randhawa told AFP.

His organisation has criticised the composition of the initial investigation team, and its decision to question the family of one of the deceased pilots.

Today, relatives of the vic-



People stand near the damaged residential buildings at a site where Air India flight 171 crashed last year, in Ahmedabad yesterday. (AFP)

tims will meet in Ahmedabad at a conference organised by lawyers, along with aviation and air safety experts, to “discuss the path toward answers and safer skies”.

It also plans to hold a candlelight vigil in memory of those who died – 241 of the 242 people on board, and 19 on the ground.

Among the dead were 200 Indians, 52 British citizens, seven Portuguese and one Canadian.

Only one passenger survived, Briton Vishwash Kumar Ramesh, who told the Press Association news agency that he continued to “live with the significant psychological scars” following the crash,

in which his brother died, and “the constant unanswered questions” about why it took place.

“Those questions are not just on my mind – they are on the minds of every affected family,” he said. “Nothing will ever change what happened, but families deserve clarity.”

As required by international law, the AAIB published a preliminary report on July 12, 2025, a month after the disaster.

That 15-page document said the fuel supply to the jet's engines was cut off moments before impact, raising questions about possible pilot error.

Myanmar court remands Thai woman over US diplomat death

AFP
Yangon

Thai woman who police said was arrested over the death of a US diplomat in Myanmar was remanded in custody by a court yesterday, a legal official told AFP.

The diplomat was discovered at the Sakura Residence hotel and serviced apartment complex in Yangon on May 11, according to a police source, speaking anonymously because he was not authorised to discuss the case.

The 43-year-old man was pronounced dead on arrival at hospital with head and neck lacerations, he added, while a Thai woman in his room was arrested.

The case was being treated as a potential homicide, the po-

lice source said. A legal official at Kamayut Township Court in Yangon confirmed the woman appeared for a hearing yesterday.

“She was remanded at court today,” the official said, also speaking anonymously because they were not authorised to discuss the case.

Details of the charges against the woman were not immediately available.

Myanmar's court system has been largely opaque to the press and public since a 2021 military coup deposed the elected government and sparked a civil war.

A recorded US embassy memorial service shared online described the deceased diplomat as a “regional security officer” from New York state with extensive previous foreign postings.

Located in the upmarket Golden

Valley, the mid-rise Sakura Residence is a short distance from the US embassy and popular with diplomats, United Nations staffers, aid workers and foreign business people.

A US State Department spokesman confirmed the death of a “US government employee” assigned to the Yangon embassy. “Out of respect for the privacy of the family and loved ones, we have no further information to provide at this time,” the spokesman said.

A Thai foreign ministry spokesman said the case was “a matter of consular assistance and an ongoing police investigation being handled through the relevant official channels”.

A receptionist at the Sakura Residence said they were “not authorised to comment” and declined to share contact details of a manager.

Dominance of the Qur'an over previous Scriptures

Allah, The Almighty, revealed the Qur'an to be His last, all-embracing Scripture containing the final manifestation of the Divine Law. This necessitates that it has to be safeguarded from the mischievous hands of men and from all corruption. This protection has been a reality from the time the Qur'an was revealed until today and will remain so forever. It contains no additions or deletions. It has reached us by so many chains of transmission that it is impossible for them to have conspired on a lie. It has been recorded and memorised innumerable times.

There has been no change in its text over time, not even in a single letter. Some of those who have committed it to memory cannot speak Arabic; nevertheless, they recite it exactly as it was revealed.

Allah has guaranteed the preservation of the Qur'anic text, as He, the Most Exalted, Says (what means): "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian." [Qur'an 15:9]

Allah also Says (what means): "And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can alter His words, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." [Qur'an 6: 115]

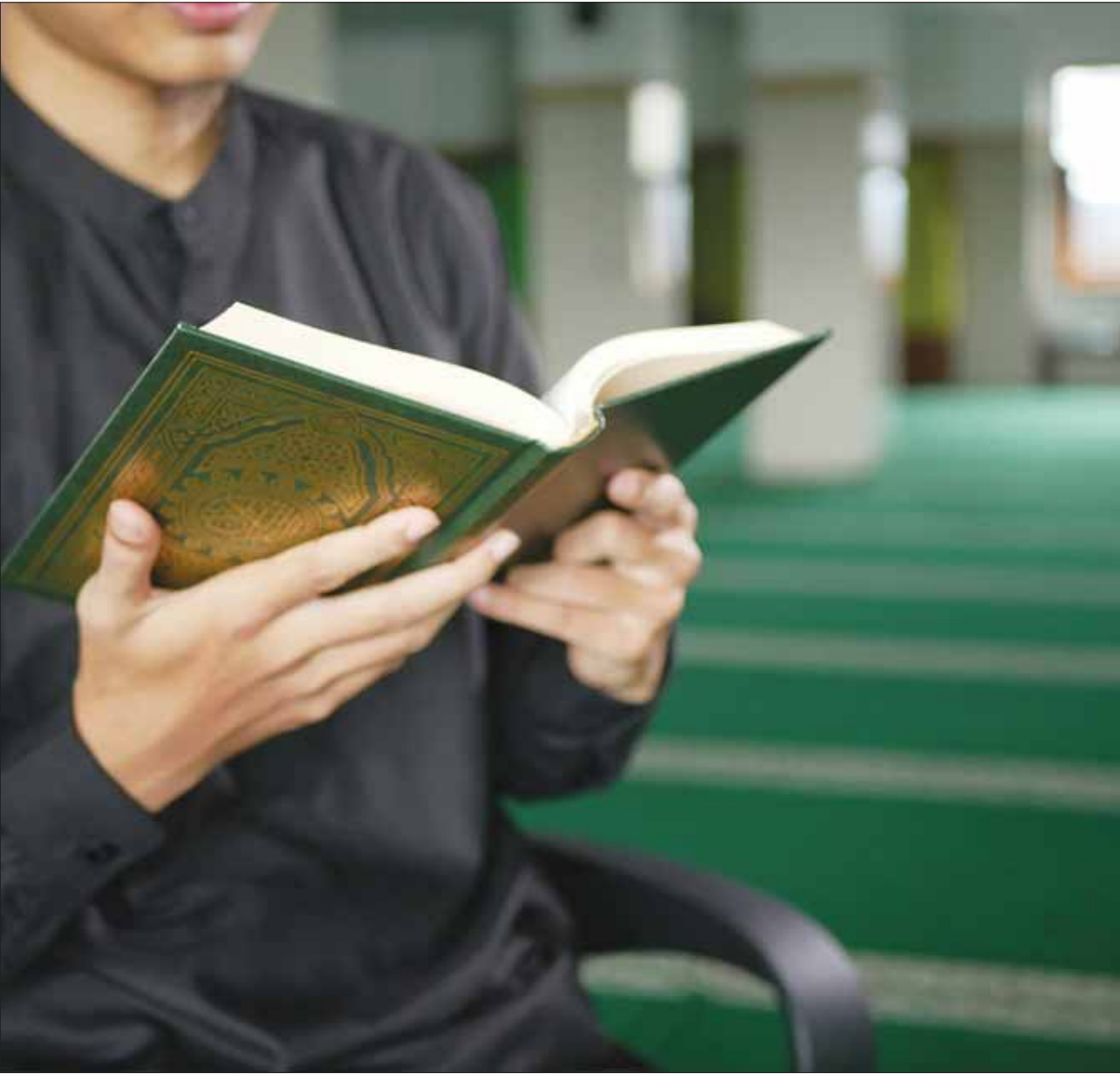
As for the previous Scriptures, they were for a limited duration of time. Allah gave human beings the responsibility of preserving them, and they lost them through corruption, alteration, and concealment. Allah Says (what means):

"Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah, and they were witnesses thereto." [Qur'an 5:44]

In the Qur'an, Allah Almighty informs us that the Torah was changed; He Says (what means):

"So woe to those who write the "scripture" with their own hands, then say, "This is from Allah," in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn." [Qur'an 2:79]

Being the final, all-encompassing and preserved against any change, the Islamic Law abrogated all the previous Scriptures which sustained human interpolations. Abrogation generally takes place with regards to secondary matters of law. As for fundamental principles, like the Oneness of Allah, The Most Exalted, the prohibi-



tion of idolatry, and the fundamentals of worship – matters that form the basic call of all the Messengers, may Allah exalt their mention, they are not subject to abrogation.

The Law that came with Prophet 'Eesa (Jesus), may Allah exalt his mention, abrogated part of the Law that came with Moosa (Moses), may Allah exalt his men-

tion. Relating the words of Prophet 'Eesa to the Children of Israel, Almighty Allah Says (what means): "And I have come confirming that which was before me of the Torah and to make lawful to you part of what was forbidden to you..." [Qur'an 3:50]

The Islamic Law is lasting, remaining suitable for every place and time, and

embracing the goodness of the previous manifestations of the Law. Allah Says (what means): "And We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a criterion over it." [Qur'an 5:48]

The Qur'an is different from the previous Scriptures in the following respects:

(1) The Qur'an is miraculous and inimitable. Nothing similar to it can be produced by human beings. Allah challenged both humans and jinn to produce the like of the Qur'an, as in the verse (which means): "Say, "If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it, even if they were to each other assistants." [Qur'an 17:88]

He, The Almighty, further challenged the disbelievers among the Arabs to produce even one chapter similar to the Qur'anic chapters, Saying (what means): "And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a chapter the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful." [Qur'an 2:23]

(2) After the Qur'an, no more Scriptures will be revealed by Allah. Just as the Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention) is the last Prophet, the Qur'an is the last Scripture.

(3) Allah has taken it upon Himself to protect the Qur'an from alteration, to safeguard it from corruption, and to preserve it from distortion (as stated in the meaning of [Qur'an 15:9] previously quoted. On the other hand, the previous Scriptures suffered alteration and distortion and did not remain in their originally revealed form (as mentioned above in [Qur'an 4:46]).

(4) The Qur'an, for one, confirms early Scriptures and, for another, is a trustworthy witness over them [Qur'an 5:48].

(5) The Qur'an abrogates them, meaning it cancels the rulings of the previous Scriptures and renders them inapplicable. The Law of the old Scriptures is no longer applicable; the previous rulings have been abrogated with the new Law of Islam.

Accordingly, Allah does not accept any religion except Islam as a way to His Pleasure, as He Says (what means):

"And whoever desires other than Islam as religion never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers." [Qur'an 3:85]

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



Gems from the Treasure of the Qur'an

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), said: "The best amongst you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it." [Al-Bukhari]

What is the Qur'an?

The Qur'an is the Book of Allah, which He chose to be the Final of the Heavenly Books. He, the Merciful and Most High, revealed it to Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, as the source for the Last Religion and a guidance for mankind. Its revelation was a turning point for humanity; it was the power that changed the world, shifted the flow of history, saved and reformed humanity, so much so that the entire existence appeared as if it had been recreated anew.

The Qur'an is the strongest evidence in support of Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and his greatest sign. It is the proof of his prophethood and trustworthiness. Allah, the Most Exalted, Says in the Qur'an (what means): "They (unbelievers) want to extinguish Allah's light with their mouths. But Allah will perfect His light, even though the unbelievers may detest it. It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth, so that he may exalt it over all religions, much as the pagans may dislike it." [Qur'an 61:8-9]

The Qur'an is the guidance that mankind needs to achieve freedom, happiness and success, in this life and the next.

The Qur'an is a complete and comprehensive Book. It deals with the issues man needs, not only for salvation in the Hereafter, but also to achieve peace, justice and prosperity in this world. These issues are discussed in the Qur'an in three main categories: Theology, Fables and Wisdom, Islamic Law (or Shari'ah). Thus, it provides the basic principles, vision and knowledge necessary for planning and leading a good life. All this is packaged in a very comprehensive approach to living that combines the pursuit of worldly affairs as well as those of the Hereafter. Allah Almighty Says in the Qur'an (what means): "And seek by the wealth provided for you by Allah the eternal abode (the Hereafter) but do not forget and (and forsake) your share of this world. Be kind and good (to others) just as Allah was kind and good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters." [Qur'an 28:77]

The Qur'an has an inimitable style and format that has never been seen or experienced in any other book or methodology. The richness of its text and the discourse it offers are unprecedented and unmatched in their eloquence, proficiency, fluency, conformance and harmony. Not only is the Qur'an a linguistic masterpiece and magnum opus par excellence, it is indeed a miracle in the fullest



sense of the word. Those reciting it never become weary of it and those who ponder upon its meanings do not doubt it; rather, they always discover fresh insights and knowledge. It guides those seeking guidance and increases those who believe in it in faith. Its first parts resemble its latter parts and it can only be likened to itself in its unparalleled beauty.

The Qur'an is free from contradictions and those who understand the Arabic language and contemplate upon its chapters and verses will find harmony between its various parts. Allah, the Most High, Says (what means): "Why do not they contemplate the Qur'an? And if it were from other than Allah, they would have found in it numerous discrepancies." [Qur'an 4:82] Indeed, every time the disbelievers tried to raise issues of contradictions in the Qur'an, Muslim scholars proved beyond doubt that no part of the Qur'an belies or contradicts another. The reason is that what may appear as a 'contradiction' in the Qur'an is actually what the Qur'an calls Muhkam (clear) and Mutashabih (unclear) verse. This is actually a part of the Qur'an's textual strength and miraculous composition.

The Qur'an restores soul calmness The Islamic Medical Sciences Organisation declared the striking results of a study conducted by Dr Ahmad al-Qadhi over a group of volunteers from America who were subject to a

recitation of the Holy Qur'an. A trace of a tranquilising effect was recorded at a whole rate of 97%. Although many of these volunteers do not know Arabic, yet involuntary physiological changes that led notably to alleviate the acuity of tension they had before were observed in their nervous systems.

Furthermore, an experiment of EEG (electroencephalogram) during Qur'an rehearsal revealed that while listening to Qur'an, the encephalic waves moved from the fast pattern of vigilance (12-13) wave/ second to the slow pattern (8-18) wave/ second; indicating the state of deep calmness. Non-Arabic speaking persons felt reassured, quiet, and complacent during the process of listening to Qur'anic verses, in spite of their inability to understand the meanings. This is one of the miracles of the Holy Qur'an.

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, revealed that miracle when saying;

"No people assembled in one of the houses of Allah (mosques), and recite and study the Book of Allah (among themselves), except that tranquility would prevail over them, mercy would surround them, and Allah would make a mention of them in the presence of those near Him (angels)." [Muslim]

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

The light of the truth

What is Life?

Man's existence in this world and the creation of this entire universe are not mere accidents or products of a fortuitous nature. This universe, every single atom of it, manifests and leads us to the realisation of a Loving, Merciful and All-powerful Creator. Without a Creator, nothing can exist. Every single human being is aware that their existence is dependent upon a Creator. He knows for sure that he cannot create himself. Therefore, it is his duty to know his Master, the Creator.

Humankind

Man is a unique creature. Allah, the Most Exalted, established man as His representative or deputy, to govern over all other creatures in this world. He is endowed with the faculty of reason, which sets him apart from all other animals. Together with this faculty to discriminate and discern, man has been given the freedom to choose for himself a way of life worthy of his position as Allah's representative, or to fall lower than the lowest of all animals or creations. Almighty Allah Says in the Noble Qur'an (what means):

"And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]." [Qur'an 91:7-10]

Man is born pure and sinless and has been given the choice to do righteous deeds or indulge in sins. Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), said in an authentic Hadith (narration): "No babe is born but upon Fitrah (innate nature, which is Islam). It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian." [Muslim]

Divine Guidance

The Creator, out of His abundant Love and Mercy for mankind has not left us in darkness to discover the right path by trial and error alone. Coupled with our intellectual capability to reason, our Creator bestowed upon us Divine Guidance that outlines the Criterion for Truth, knowledge, as well as the reality of our existence in this world and the Hereafter.

Revelations

From the beginning of mankind, our Creator sent Prophets, may Allah exalt their mention, to convey His Revelation and to invite human beings to the Path of true peace and obedience to the one true God. This is Islam. This message has been conveyed to man in successive generations through the different prophets, may Allah exalt their mention, who invited mankind to the same Path. However, all the earlier messages or revelations from Allah Almighty were distorted by people of later generations.

As a result, the pure Revelation from

our Creator was corrupted with myths, superstitions, idol worship and irrational philosophical ideologies. The religion of Allah, the Exalted, in a sense was lost in a plethora of religions. Human history is a testament of man's drift between light and darkness, but Allah, out of His Abundant Love for mankind, has not forsaken us.

Final Revelation

When mankind was in the depths of the Dark Ages, our Creator sent His final Messenger, Prophet Mohammed, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, to redeem humanity with the final Revelation, which represents the ultimate and permanent source of guidance for the whole world.

Criteria for Truth

The following criteria can best serve as a gauge to find out the authenticity of the last Revelation (the Qur'an), the Word of Allah:

1. Rational teachings

Since our Creator bestowed reason and intellect upon us, it is our duty to use it to distinguish the truth from falsehood. True, undistorted Revelation from Almighty Allah must be rational and can be reasoned out by all unbiased minds.

2. Perfection

Since our Creator is All-Perfect, His Revelation must also be perfect and accurate, free from mistakes, omissions, interpolations and multiplicity of versions. It should be free from contradictions in its narration.

3. No myths or superstitions

True Revelation is free from myths or superstitions that degrade the dignity of our Creator or man himself.

4. Scientific

Since our Creator is the Creator of all knowledge, True Revelation is scientific and can withstand the challenge of Science at all times.

5. Factual prophecy

Our Creator is the Knower of the past, present and future. Thus, His prophecies in His Revelation will be fulfilled as prophesied.

6. Inimitable by man

True Revelation is infallible and cannot be imitated by man. Allah's true Revelation is a Living Miracle, an open book challenging all mankind to see and prove for themselves its authenticity or veracity. Almighty Allah Says in the Noble Qur'an (what means):

"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction." [Qur'an 4:82]

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

China learns to live on less fuel, to the relief of oil markets

Three months into the Iran war, the oil market is coming to grips with an unexpected new reality: China, the world's largest importer, needs much less fuel than previously thought. Gasoline sales at Sinopec, which runs China's biggest network of petrol stations and is the world's largest refiner, dropped 8% on-year in April while diesel fell 6%, according to industry sources briefed on internal data.

Fuel use in China had already been falling in recent years due to slowing economic growth and the rise of electric cars and trucks, but the recent decline is especially steep and has caught industry players by surprise. Goldman Sachs estimates the drop in the use of gasoline and related products was about 20% in April, while China-based GL Consulting put the decline at around 15%.

Unlike during the pandemic, it is not that Chinese are moving around less. Instead, they are changing the way they travel: rail journeys grew around 10% in March and April annually, compared to around 5% last year, according to Ministry of Transport data.

Travel by subway or taxis, which are electrified in many cities, is also growing rapidly, the data shows. China's EV fleet, by far the world's largest, also got more use in April. Charging rose 69% from a year earlier to an all-time high, according to the state-backed China Charging Alliance.

The figures indicate that China can operate on less fuel than previously thought, which means less need for imported oil. About half of China's crude oil consumption is refined into diesel or gasoline. "It looks like consumers have made a quiet economic choice. Faced with higher gasoline, diesel and airfare, many seem to have shifted away from oil-based transportation," JP Morgan analysts wrote in late May.

China has cut crude imports drastically since the start of the war, in part by dipping into stockpiles built while prices were cheap, easing the crunch from the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz and putting a lid on prices. May oil imports slumped 29% to their lowest in eight years at 7.8mn bpd, following a 20% tumble in April. While those levels are unsustainable without China further tapping reserves, say analysts, the possibility that behavioural changes will persist and hasten the decline in fuel use has significant implications for global oil demand and a Chinese refining sector already facing overcapacity.

Gasoline and diesel demand is now much more elastic in China thanks to EVs and the electrification and prevalence of mass transit, said S&P Global analyst Minmin Hu. "The drop in fuel consumption during the Covid period was due to mobility constraints," she said. "The difference now is that demand is declining spontaneously."

Rising prices add to the decline in consumption for diesel caused by China's five-year property sector crisis.

An independent fuel trader surnamed Zhang in Guangdong province said some local government-funded construction projects are struggling to fund diesel purchases for land-leveling as prices rise and budgets tighten. His company's diesel and gasoline sales have halved in the past few months, he told Reuters. Another fuel trader in China's southwest, surnamed Song, said demand from logistics, mining and industry had dropped considerably while many construction clients had "disappeared entirely," having already swapped their diesel trucks for electrics.

Sinopec expects national demand for gasoline, diesel and jet fuel to fall around 10% on-year in the second and third quarters, according to an industry source briefed by Sinopec. They declined to be named as they were not authorised to speak to media. S&P told Reuters it expects a similar drop in the second quarter. — Reuters

Nato diplomacy



Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (second right) delivers a speech flanked by Germany's Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (left), Netherlands' Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Dilan Yesilgoz-Zegerius (second left) and German Commander General Ingo Gerhartz during his visit to the Allied Joint Force Command at the Nato Command headquarters in Brunssum yesterday as part of his three-day visit to the Netherlands. — AFP



Qatar Post: The vital link in supply chain

The company has been providing innovative solutions and alternative methods to enhance speed and accuracy of shipping operations in light of the current circumstances, says Qatar Post COO Hamad Mohammed al-Fahida

QNA
Doha

In light of the current circumstances that have affected supply chains in various parts of the world, Qatar Postal Services Company (Qatar Post) has been able to find practical solutions that ensure business continuity and maintain the efficiency of services, and to innovate alternative and flexible methods that enhance the communication of postal shipping operations with speed, accuracy and high reliability.

Qatar Post has taken a number of operational and logistical measures to maintain the efficiency of services, benefiting from its operational flexibility and ability to adapt quickly to changes. The company operates with high smoothness and extreme accuracy, supported by years of experience and modern technology that has significantly and directly helped to fill an important part of the shortage in supply chains, making postal shipments a reliable haven for transporting goods of all shapes and sizes, whether personal, industrial, or those related to heavy equipment.

Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Qatar Post Hamad Mohammed al-Fahida said in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that at the beginning of the current crisis, and given that the nature of Qatar Post's work is not related to seaports or navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, but rather depends mainly on aviation, action was taken quickly to activate alternative solutions that ensure the continuity of service across a number of Gulf countries and capitals, the most prominent of these are Muscat, Riyadh and Dubai, as soon as air traffic resumes there after the beginning of the crisis.

Al-Fahida added that the capabilities of Qatar Airways and

Turkish Airlines were utilized, as customer shipments were transported via alternative routes such as from Muscat to Dubai, Turkiye to Kuwait, and the United States to the Gulf states.

He explained that Qatar Post's role was not limited to serving the local market in Qatar, but rather it has become a regional logistics centre capable of handling transit shipments between different countries, whether through receiving, delivery or redirection.

The COO confirmed that Qatar Post is now able to transport any shipment from any country to another destination with high efficiency, including personal shipments, industrial shipments, heavy equipment, oil and gas equipment, drilling equipment, as well as high-value shipments such as the collections and artifacts of the Royal Opera House Muscat coming from China to Muscat via land freight.

He added that the current situation has contributed to accelerating Qatar Post's plans in the field of land transport within GCC countries, as a large part of the operations has been transferred to land transport, which has increased the number of land trips to Kuwait from 3 trips per week to 3 trips per day, with great facilities in customs clearance procedures, whether through land or air ports.

e-commerce movement

Land transport played an important role in supporting the e-commerce movement, al-Fahida pointed out, adding that shipments from companies such as Temu and Shein are transported to Dubai, then cleared in Qatar and distributed through various delivery companies, in addition to Qatar Post providing last mile and home delivery services.

There are future plans for Qatar Post to be the main carrier of shipments coming from the UAE to Qatar until air

operations return to full capacity, al-Fahida added. He noted that, as part of strengthening regional connectivity, Qatar Post continued to operate its routes with various GCC countries, particularly in the Connected service, where some US shipments were diverted via Saudi Arabia, with 3 flights currently operating and plans to increase them to become daily flights.

He pointed out that land freight has proven to be highly cost-effective compared to air freight, in addition to Qatar Post's ability to handle more than 6,000 shipments per month destined for other countries, including home delivery services and customs clearance for companies and individuals (B2C, B2B).

Al-Fahida stressed that these solutions contributed to supporting the local market and the continuity of companies' businesses, in addition to creating new opportunities to attract shipments from other countries or re-export them to different markets.

Qatar Post continues to enhance its modern logistical role and change the traditional image associated with postal services globally as being limited to letters only by expanding integrated logistical services and activating land routes between the GCC countries in order to ensure the continuity of receiving, sending and delivery operations with high efficiency, he added.

Regarding the disruption to maritime traffic and the impact on air travel due to rising fuel prices, the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that Qatar Post services were not directly affected by fuel prices, but the significant increase in air freight costs and airfares posed challenges to logistical operations.

Concluding his statement to QNA, al-Fahida added that despite this, the company continued to provide its services with high efficiency by enhancing the flexibility of operational processes and activating diverse logistical alternatives to ensure the continuity of shipping

services and meet customer needs without interruption.

For his part, Chief Information and Digital Officer at Qatar Postal Services Company (Qatar Post), Hamid Sadiq, affirmed the company's continuation to adopt best practices and digital solutions that contribute to developing operational processes and improving customer experience by speeding up procedures and increasing the efficiency of delivery and sorting services.

In exclusive statements, Sadiq told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that Qatar Post is currently using robots in sorting operations, which has greatly contributed to reducing procedures, speeding up daily operations, and facilitating delivery services. He noted that the company is constantly working on studying new ideas and projects aimed at developing services and improving the user experience.

Future projects

He also revealed the most prominent future projects, including the live tracking of parcels via the Qatar Post application, where customers will be able to track their shipment directly and know its location during the process of delivery, expressing his expectation that this service will be launched during the fourth quarter of 2026, which will allow customers to know when the shipment will arrive and follow the delivery process in real time.

He pointed out a project underway, indicating that it is a smart mailbox installed in the customer's home and allows the parcel to be securely received without the need for the recipient to be at home. The box enables various delivery companies to deposit shipments inside it through specific permissions or access codes, after which the customer would receive a

notification as soon as the parcel is deposited, Sadiq further explained, indicating that the project is scheduled to begin operating next year.

In regard to dealing with the continuous increase in shipment volume, Chief Information and Digital Officer at Qatar Post noted that Qatar Post's reliance on modern technology has helped the company adapt to various changes in both land and air freight, especially since the company is linked to information systems with most of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which allows for direct access to shipment data and its entry into sorting and delivery systems with high efficiency.

As for artificial intelligence, Sadiq said that, the company formed an internal team in 2024 to study ways to employ AI in various operations, and meetings were held with all sectors to study opportunities to benefit from these technologies and propose practical projects, a number of which have already been started.

In regard to tracking services, he confirmed that all shipments whose data reaches Qatar Post become available for tracking via the website or smart application, and the shipment status is continuously updated from the time the information arrives until it is released for delivery.

Regarding the most prominent challenges facing the postal and shipping sector, Chief Information and Digital Officer at Qatar Post concluded his statements to QNA by saying that these challenges include information security, business continuity and dealing with unforeseen changes, pointing out that Qatar Post adopts a proactive approach in managing these challenges through advance planning and continuous coordination with various stakeholders.



World chess body suspends Russia

Reuters
Lausanne

The governing body of world chess has suspended Russia, which was for decades the dominant force in the game, after a ruling by the world's top sports tribunal in favour of Ukraine.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in March upheld a complaint by Ukraine that Russia's chess federation had usurped control of the game in areas of Ukraine captured by the Russian military.

It gave Russia 90 days to hand back control of chess bodies in five regions and stop holding tournaments there.

On Wednesday the International Chess Federation (FIDE) – which is headed by Russia's former deputy prime minister Arkady Dvorkovich – said that Russia had not met the deadline and its FIDE membership was therefore suspended with immediate effect.

The Ukrainian chess federation hailed the decision as a “historic victory”, but some critics of Dvorkovich accused him of merely appearing to enforce the CAS ruling while actually creating a new loophole to benefit Russian players.

FIDE said that Russian adult players will be able, as now, to participate in FIDE tournaments under

FIDE's flag, not their own.

Only juniors can play under the Russian flag.

However, in a key paragraph of its statement, it also said that in team events, Russians “may be eligible” to take part under a neutral flag, subject to further FIDE decisions.

That could pave the way for Russian players to compete as a team in the next chess Olympiad in Uzbekistan in September.

Russians were barred from the last two Olympiads – the chess equivalent of soccer's World Cup – following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Malcolm Pein, an English delegate to FIDE who is preparing a possible challenge to Dvorkovich in the next election for president of the organisation, told Reuters that there were a significant number of countries that vehemently disagreed with the FIDE decision.

“It's designed to make it appear that the organisation is complying with the (CAS) judgment when they palpably are not,” he said in a telephone interview, adding that this could lead to further legal action in the court.

Russian state news agency Tass quoted Andrei Filatov, head of the Russian Chess Federation, as saying that its lawyers were reviewing the FIDE suspension and may challenge it.

Russian has a deep and proud chess tradition, and amateurs can be seen hunched over boards on pavements and in parks at virtually all times of the year. The FIDE suspension “isn't just about chess, it's about a global trend of excluding Russian athletes, of cancelling them,” said 38-year-old Yaroslava, who was playing a game opposite Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre in a summer chess area provided by the city authorities. Nearby, chess teacher Alexei Lyslov shrugged off FIDE's move. “Russians love chess. It's a national sport... I think that this incorrect decision will not affect us very much,” he said. Grandmasters from Russia and other Soviet republics occupied the chess summit from 1927 to 2007 in a procession of world champions that was interrupted only briefly by Dutchman Max Euwe in the 1930s and American Bobby Fischer in the 1970s.

But the era of Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov is now long gone, and the 21st century has been dominated by Norway's Magnus Carlsen and a clutch of new stars from India and China. Only one Russian player is currently in the world's top 20. In April, Russia's Andrei Esipenko finished eighth and last in the Candidates Tournament to decide who will challenge India's Gukesh Dommaraju for the world championship title later this year.

Opening delayed for US-Canada bridge threatened by Trump

Reuters
Washington

The US and Canada have decided to delay the opening of a new \$4.7bn bridge connecting Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, that was set to open in the coming days after US President Donald Trump earlier this year threatened to block the crossing. A formal ribbon-cutting had been planned for today for the Gordie Howe International Bridge, according to invitations seen by Reuters.

“Canada and the US have agreed to delay the opening of the bridge, taking the necessary time to resolve any outstanding issues,” the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority said. Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens said on X yesterday that while officials want to see the bridge open, “Canada need not fall on bent knee to make it happen.” Pete Hoekstra, the US ambassador to Canada, told

The Detroit News that he and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick are leading discussions with Canada about opening the bridge. Lutnick's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said the new bridge will benefit Canadians, Americans, business, tourists and residents for decades.

“Everyone's working hard to make sure the bridge is open as soon as possible. There's no big drama. If it takes a little longer, it'll take a little longer,” Carney said. The White House has not commented. Trump in February cited Canada's refusal to stock some US alcoholic beverages on Canadian store shelves, Canada's tariffs on dairy products and its trade talks with China as grounds for why he might not allow the bridge to open. Matthew Moroun, owner of the rival Ambassador Bridge that connects Detroit and Windsor, in February met with Lutnick and weeks earlier had donated \$1mn

to a Trump-aligned political action committee. House Democrats have suggested that Moroun used his influence to “jeopardise American commerce” to protect his company's bottom line. Construction of the bridge, which began in 2018, was financed by Canada because the US refused to pay for it. The costs will be covered by tolls over 30 years.

The new bridge will help ease truck traffic on the privately owned Ambassador Bridge into Detroit, the largest freight port on the US-Canada border, which handled \$126bn of value traded by commercial trucks as of 2023.

It will cut 20 minutes off the crossing time, saving truckers \$2.3bn over 30 years, according to a University of Windsor study. Trump has made a number of threats against Canada in his second term and drastically hiked tariffs on the US northern neighbour. This week Trump said he might not renew a free trade deal with Mexico and Canada.

Bolivia weighs military response as La Paz clashes intensify

AFP
La Paz

Bolivians demanding the resignation of President Rodrigo Paz set fire to barricades of burning trash on Wednesday as Paz weighed deploying the military to end five weeks of crippling protests.

“What do we want? Resignation!” shouted thousands of farmers, miners, teachers, and transport workers, who marched on the heavily-guarded centre of the political capital La Paz.

Riot police fired tear gas to disperse the protesters, who overturned garbage containers and set fire to piles of trash near government buildings, throwing stones and dynamite cartridges used in mining.

The protesters are calling for an end to Paz's economic reforms, designed to sweep away 20 years of socialist government.

“Some people want to sell off the country and destroy it. As true Bolivians, we're not going to let them,” said 44-year-old miner Omar Hanco.



Demonstrators march during a protest calling for the resignation of Bolivia's President Rodrigo Paz, in La Paz. (Reuters)

At least five people were arrested during the clashes, AFP journalists observed.

The US-backed Paz, in power for seven months, claimed on Monday that the protests calling for his resignation are being driven by “narcoterrorists” and took steps to declare a state of emergency.

That would curb freedom of assem-

bly, and the armed forces could support the police in dismantling dozens of roadblocks choking the country's main cities.

In La Paz and neighbouring El Alto, shortages of food, fuel, and medicine are growing more severe.

Meat and vegetable prices have doubled in the markets, long lines of vehicles are forming at gas stations,

and hospitals are running short of oxygen for surgeries.

According to the government, the economic damage caused by the blockades exceeds \$1.2bn.

The main unions leading the protests have rejected the government's calls for dialogue.

“Our hands are extended for dialogue... But we also have the protection of the constitution,” Paz said Monday.

His administration alleges the protests are an attempt to “undermine the democratic order” and are led by fugitive former leftist president Evo Morales.

The country's first Indigenous president is in hiding from charges of alleged trafficking of a minor, which he denies.

During a speech Wednesday in his central coca-growing stronghold of Chapare, Morales threw down the gauntlet with Paz.

“If he's so tough, let him come and talk about social issues. Let him come! We'll show him how to govern,” said Morales, who was flanked by members of his Indigenous guard.

Private school fees linked to performance

From Page 1

Dr Rania Mohammed, Director of the Private Schools and Kindergartens Department and Acting Director of the Private Licensing Department, explained that the policy was based on best practices and legislation governing private education. It included significant updates such as reorganising the deadlines for submitting fee increase requests, establishing a clear ceiling for increases, and linking the percentage increase to academic performance and the quality of education.

She added that the policy grants parents a grace period of up to 18 months before any approved increase is implemented. It also includes new regulations for submitting fee increase requests, pathways for schools to recover financially and academically, and procedures to ensure transparency and fairness in reviewing applications.

The ministry revealed that



Dr Rania Mohammed



Omar Abdulaziz al-Naama



Dignitaries and officials attending the event.

the results of the policy's pilot phase showed that 99 schools and kindergartens submitted requests to increase tuition, operating, or

service fees, while it approved increases for 54 schools and kindergartens that met the established conditions and standards.

British, French, German envoys urge direct Russia-Ukraine talks

AFP
Moscow

British, French and German ambassadors to Russia urged direct talks between Moscow and Kyiv in a rare meeting at Russia's foreign ministry yesterday, several days after a summit with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky.

The UK hosted Zelensky and the leaders of France and Germany earlier this week, supporting Kyiv's call for direct talks with Russia to end more than four years of war.

The envoys met with Russia's deputy foreign minister Mikhail Galuzin. Moscow earlier said the meeting would be held at the request of the ambassadors.

In a joint statement after the meeting, the three countries said they conveyed to the Russians the key conclusions of the UK summit, including “the support for President Zelensky's urge to hold direct talks between Russia and Ukraine”.

Moscow said the ambassadors had been told of their countries' “destructive” policy on Ukraine, accusing them of wanting to “continue the war against Russia on behalf of and at the expense of” European countries.

Russian President Vladimir Putin this month rejected Zel-



Foreign ambassadors to Russia Nicolas de Riviere of France, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff of Germany and Nigel Casey of Britain leave after visiting the Russian Foreign Ministry headquarters in Moscow, yesterday. (Reuters)

ensky's offer for a face-to-face meeting to end the fighting.

In London, the UK's Keir Starmer, France's Emmanuel Macron and Germany's Friedrich Merz said they supported Zelensky's proposal and that the current frontline should be a “starting point for negotiations”.

European ambassadors have rarely held talks with the Russian authorities during Moscow's four-year war against Ukraine and have been frequently summoned by the foreign ministry.

Several western European

countries – including France – have floated the idea of restarting a dialogue with Moscow to end the Ukraine conflict, Europe's worst since World War II.

US-led talks to end it have led nowhere and have been sidelined by the Iran war.

Russia has preferred to talk to US President Donald Trump's administration on the conflict, with the Kremlin not wanting European countries involved.

The UK, France and Germany have been some of Kyiv's staunchest allies during Moscow's full-scale offensive.

Trump expects deal ‘as soon as this weekend’

From Page 1

Critics within Trump's Republican Party have said any agreement must close Tehran's path to developing a nuclear weapon. Opposition from Iran hawks helped derail a previous effort to secure a deal to open the strait.

Analysts have said Trump is concerned that any deal will be compared with a 2015 agreement that he criticised as overly lenient. Trump pulled the US out of that accord in 2018 during his first term in office.

Trump said on social media the agreement had been approved by “the highest level” of Iranian leadership, as well as other countries in the region including Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE.

Trump and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke yesterday.

Israel is “not a party to the memorandum of understanding”, and Netanyahu expressed his appreciation for Trump's commitment to securing a final deal that includes resolving the issue of enriched nuclear material, according to a readout from Netanyahu's office.

Trump also told reporters that he would soon talk to Turkiye's President Tayyip Erdogan.

US stocks rose and oil prices fell on the news.

White House defends Cuba sanctions as UN warns of harm

Reuters
Washington

The Trump administration defended its sanctions on Cuba on Wednesday after the United Nations' human rights chief warned US actions were causing “widespread harm to the population and endangering lives.”

“These sanctions target the leaders and entities who sustain the regime's malicious campaign to subvert and destabilise US national security,” a White House official told Reuters in response

to a request for comment.

Washington has imposed sanctions on an array of Cuban entities and people, including the island nation's president, as it seeks to intensify pressure on Cuba's communist leaders. The sanctions follow the United States' declaration of a national emergency this year that would impose tariffs on any country that supplies oil to the island, a move that has resulted in frequent power outages.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said on Monday that the measures were affecting the Cuban popu-



Empty tables at a restaurant in Old Havana are seen amid a lack of tourists. (AFP)

lation's human rights, especially their access to essential supplies

and services, including water, food and healthcare.

“Such severe sanctions packages that target entire sectors of an economy and produce broad, indiscriminate and harsh effects on populations are incompatible with basic principles of international human rights law,” Turk said. The White House official pointed to previous comments made by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, reiterating that Washington is prepared to start a new chapter with Havana.

The only thing standing in the way, the official said, is the current leadership of Cuba, adding the country's “leaders should make a deal with the US before

it is too late.”

The Cuban foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez posted on social media earlier in the day that the US energy blockade has harmed the Cuban population and hindered international agencies.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly talked about the US taking action against Cuba. The island's top officials have blasted US hints of a possible military action, with Rodriguez describing the threats as possible international crimes.



(From left) Canadian ambassador Karim Morcos, Mexican ambassador Guillermo Ordorica, and chargé d'affaires Mo Barghouty of the US Embassy Doha with the official FIFA soccer ball, symbolising the trilateral spirit of the tournament.

Aspetar provides medical support to Arab teams at World Cup 2026

QNA
Doha

Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, a FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence, continues to play a central role in supporting Arab national teams competing at the FIFA World Cup 2026.

As part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing the readiness of Arab teams on the global stage, Aspetar delivers a comprehensive range of specialised medical services, including fitness assessments, thorough medical examinations, injury prevention and rehabilitation programmes, as well as evidence-based scientific consultancy grounded in the latest advances in sports medicine.

Among the teams benefiting from Aspetar's support is the Iraq national team, which was accompanied by specialised medical staff from the hospital throughout its qualification campaign, ultimately securing its place at the tournament with a decisive victory over Bolivia in the final play-off.

Aspetar's multidisciplinary team, comprising sports medicine

physicians and physiotherapy specialists, played a vital role in maintaining player fitness and optimising physical performance.

Seven experts from Aspetar form part of Iraq's medical staff, including doctors, physiotherapists and massage therapists, and are accompanying the "Lions of Mesopotamia" as part of the official delegation in the United States.

Aspetar also continues its longstanding partnership with the Algerian Football Federation, now in its 16th consecutive year, providing comprehensive medical support to the Algeria national team. Under Aspetar's medical supervision, Algeria previously competed at the FIFA World Cups South Africa 2010 and Brazil 2014 and is now preparing for its third appearance at the 2026 tournament.

Several prominent "Desert Warriors" players, including Amine Gouiri, Houssein Aouar and Ismael Bennacer, have benefited from Aspetar's services, both in injury treatment and performance development. Meanwhile, the Jordan national team, one of the emerging Arab sides to reach the World Cup, is receiving dedicated medical support from Aspetar through tailored

fitness assessment and rehabilitation programmes. The hospital has monitored several players during injury periods in domestic competitions and pre-qualification training camps and has conducted comprehensive medical screenings in coordination with the Jordan Football Association to ensure full readiness ahead of the team's historic first appearance at the FIFA World Cup.

In the lead-up to the tournament, several Jordanian players have undergone treatment at Aspetar, including Yazan al-Naimat, Adham al-Quraishi and Ali Olwan, among others. Aspetar's expertise also extends to players from the national teams of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco through its collaborations with professional clubs in the field of sports medicine. In recent years, the hospital has contributed to the rehabilitation of several high-profile players, including Egyptian goalkeeper Mostafa Shobeir, who regained full fitness following a successful treatment and rehabilitation programme in Doha, Tunisian defender Montassar Talbi and Saudi goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Owais. At the national level,

US Embassy Doha celebrates World Cup opening day

The US Embassy Doha hosted a FIFA World Cup Opening Day reception at the 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum yesterday. The reception gathered together Qatari government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, journalists, civil society leaders, and exchange alumni to mark the opening of the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup – the largest sporting event in human history.

The reception, part of the embassy's 'Freedom 250' programming, underscored the US's commitment to sports diplomacy as a strategic tool for cultural exchange, youth empowerment, and economic partnership.

The event also celebrated the historic co-hosting partnership between the US, Canada, and

Mexico, and honoured Qatar's role as a partner in international sports. In welcome remarks, chargé d'affaires Mo Barghouty highlighted the transformative power of sport and the significance of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, a landmark moment showcasing American leadership and hospitality to a global audience.

Following his speech, Barghouty invited representatives from the Mexican and Canadian embassies for a group photo with the official FIFA soccer ball, symbolising the trilateral spirit of the tournament. "Sport is a universal language. It reminds us, whatever our differences are, that we share something fundamental: the desire to compete and excel. Today, we gather not just to celebrate the opening of a soccer tournament – we gather to celebrate the power of sport to bring the world together and the privilege of welcoming the world to the US," said Barghouty.

The reception highlighted the deep and multifaceted US-Qatar sports diplomacy partnership, which extends beyond the soccer field to include youth development and sports technology innovation. Barghouty expressed the embassy's commitment to expanding 'Sports Envoy Programmes' and deepening bilateral co-operation in the years ahead.

The 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup is co-hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico. This year also marks the US's 250th anniversary – a milestone the nation celebrates by welcoming the world to North America.



Aspetar provides comprehensive and continuous medical support to the Qatar national team through its National Teams Unit. A dedicated team of leading sports medicine experts oversees medical care before and during the competition. The medical staff includes specialists in sports medicine, physiotherapy, rehabilitation, massage therapy and nutrition, with ongoing access to expert consultation from Aspetar in Doha when required, including second medical opinions and the review of diagnostic results or medical procedures.

Aspetar's pivotal role during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 also remains notable, having delivered integrated medical services to several teams based in Qatar, in addition to treating a number of the world's leading footballers who selected the hospital as their preferred destination for recovery and rehabilitation, thanks to its advanced facilities and multidisciplinary expertise. As the FIFA World



Cup 2026 gets underway, Arab teams face significant challenges competing against the world's elite across three host nations with varying climatic conditions. This further underscores the importance of the medical and physical support provided by Aspetar in maintaining peak performance

and minimising the risk of injuries. Through its scientific leadership and global standing in sports medicine, Aspetar once again reaffirms its vital role in advancing sport both regionally and internationally, demonstrating that it is not merely a hospital, but a strategic partner in sporting success.

Explore Qatar's leading waterparks, aquatic attractions this summer

With school holidays underway and the summer season in full swing, it is the perfect time for families to enjoy refreshing days out together. As part of this year's Hala Summer 2026 programme, Visit Qatar is showcasing some of the country's best aquatic experiences.

Located just a short drive from central Doha on Qetaifan Island North in Lusail, Meryal Waterpark is Qatar's largest waterpark and a popular destination for families. The park features 53 slides and 69 attractions, including the 85-m Icon Tower, the world's tallest waterpark tower and home to a collection of record-breaking water slides and attractions.

For younger visitors, the park provides dedicated splash zones,



lazy rivers, and wave pools, ensuring safe and enjoyable experiences for all ages. Throughout June, families can also enjoy the Summer Splash activation at Meryal Beach. Running from June 1 to 30, the programme features live entertainment, interactive activities,

and appearances by popular Nickelodeon characters, including PAW Patrol and SpongeBob SquarePants. These beachside experiences extend into the cooler evening hours, making it an ideal option for family outings after sunset.



For those seeking a short escape from the city, Desert Falls Water & Adventure Park offers a popular road-trip destination along Qatar's western coastline.

Located within Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas, the park spans over 57,000sq m, and features

more than 30 rides, slides, and attractions, making it one of the largest waterparks in the Middle East.

Beyond the water attractions, Desert Falls also offers a wide range of dry activities, such as go-karting, laser tag, and canyoning,

allowing visitors to enjoy a full day of entertainment in one location. Combined with the resort's accommodation, private beach, and dining options, it delivers a complete staycation experience.

From Meryal in Lusail to Desert Falls on the west coast, families can enjoy world-class leisure experiences close to home throughout the summer in Qatar.

Combined with Kids Go Free offers and the wider Hala Summer campaign, residents have ample opportunities to explore the country's diverse attractions.

To plan your next family day out or weekend staycation, explore the full schedule of events and ticketing offers at <https://visitqatar.com/intl-en/events-calendar/summer-in-qatar>.

QT launches hospitality training initiative with Forbes Guide

Qatar Tourism has delivered the inaugural edition of a new hospitality leadership training programme in partnership with Forbes Travel Guide.

The event brought together hotel leaders and hospitality professionals from across Qatar as part of ongoing efforts to further enhance service excellence and strengthen the destination's hospitality offering.

Held recently at Qatar Tourism's headquarters in Doha, participants engaged in immersive workshops based on Forbes Travel Guide's globally recognised methodology, which encourages hospitality professionals to view every interaction through the eyes of the guest.

The programme explored the principles that define exceptional luxury hospitality, with a focus on emotional connection, personalisation, consistency, and attention to detail.

Participants also examined the defining characteristics of effective luxury leadership and the critical role leaders play in shaping team performance, organisational cul-

ture, and service delivery standards. Through practical tools, real-world applications, and international best practices, attendees gained valuable insights into fostering accountability, developing high-performing teams, and creating environments where exceptional service can be consistently delivered and sustained.

The programme forms part of a broader series of quarterly training sessions that will continue throughout 2026, supporting the ongoing development of hospitality talent across Qatar and reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement throughout the sector.

Omar al-Jaber, chief of the Tourism Development Sector at Qatar Tourism, said: "At Qatar Tourism, we remain committed to advancing service excellence through strategic international collaborations that support long-term sector development and contribute to enhancing visitor experiences.

"Our continued partnership with Forbes Travel Guide reflects our focus on equipping hospitality professionals across Qatar with globally

recognised expertise and operational standards that further strengthen Qatar's position as a leading luxury tourism destination."

Megan Torrance, senior vice president, Learning & Development, said: "Our partnership with Qatar Tourism reflects a shared commitment to elevating service excellence through globally recognised standards and practical, performance-driven training.

"By equipping hospitality leaders with the tools to lead with intention, consistency, and emotional intelligence, we are helping to shape a culture where exceptional guest experiences can thrive across Qatar's hospitality sector."

The expanded programme builds on the strategic partnership signed between Qatar Tourism and Forbes Travel Guide at the World Travel Market London 2025, which covers hotel assessments, standards alignment, international marketing collaboration, and long-term hospitality development initiatives designed to further strengthen Qatar's evolving tourism ecosystem.

Alaraby 2 to broadcast Walid Daqqa documentary

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Alaraby 2 will exclusively broadcast *Abu Milad*, a documentary that traces the life and legacy of the late Palestinian prisoner Walid Daqqa. The film revisits pivotal moments from his life and reflects on his 38 years in Israeli prisons, before his death in April 2024 following a prolonged period of medical neglect.

More than a chronicle of Daqqa's personal and political journey, the documentary delves into the body of thought he developed during his years in captivity.

It explores his philosophy of time, articulated in his book *Parallel Time*, which examines imprisonment as a distinct temporal reality governed by its own conditions and shaped by its impact on prisoners, their families, and the communities around them. Drawing on testimonies, archival footage, and documentary accounts, *Abu Milad* offers an intimate and thought-provoking portrait of Walid Daqqa's experience, exploring his relationship with writing, creativity, and his enduring resistance to isolation.

Commenting on the screening, Elias Khoury, CEO of Alaraby 2, said: "The presentation of this film reflects the channel's commitment to showc-



Screen shot from *Abu Milad* documentary.

ing documentaries that engage with pressing human and intellectual questions.

"It also invites audiences to discover the many dimensions of inspiring figures whose influence extends beyond their personal stories to broader ideas of freedom, justice, and collective memory."

The documentary consolidates the Arab world solidarity with the Palestinian peoples' steadfastness and the international solidarity with the people of Gaza in their struggle against the unjust occupation of their motherland.

Abu Milad will air exclusively on Alaraby 2 on Saturday, 13 June, at 9pm Doha time. The documentary is produced by Metafora Production, one of the companies under the Fadaat Media Group.