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SCAN TO SHOP

## PM leads Qatar at GCC-US Joint Ministerial Meeting

**H**E the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated yesterday in Manama in the joint ministerial meeting of Their Highnesses and Excellencies GCC foreign ministers, with the participation of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The meeting addressed a number of regional developments and their implications for the security of GCC states and the region, particularly diplomatic efforts aimed at enhancing security and stability following the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran.

**PM meets Saudi FM → Page 2**

It also stressed that any future understandings or arrangements must include the requirements of GCC states in a manner that safeguards their interests and ensures their security and stability, and should be based on the principles of international law, respect for state sovereignty, good neighbourliness, and non-interference in internal affairs, contributing to regional security and stability.



The meeting welcomed all diplomatic efforts that contribute to de-escalation, enhance security and stability in the region, and ensure the security of maritime routes, including the Strait of Hormuz, freedom of navigation, and respect for international law, in a way that promotes security and prosperity for the peoples of the region and the world. **To Page 11**



## Amir expresses solidarity, assures support to Venezuela after quake

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held yesterday a telephone conversation with Venezuelan Acting President Delcy Rodriguez. His Highness the Amir expressed Qatar's solidarity with Venezuela and its friendly people following the earthquakes that struck several regions of the country, affirming Qatar's support and readiness to provide assistance for relief and rescue efforts and to mitigate the impact of the disaster.

The Venezuelan Acting President expressed her deep appreciation to His Highness the Amir for his sincere sentiments and Qatar's supportive stance, highlighting the strong ties of friendship and co-operation between the two countries.

The call also addressed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen

them, in addition to a number of topics of mutual interest. At least 188 people were killed when two powerful earthquakes struck northern Venezuela within a minute of each other yesterday, and desperate survivors fought through the day to pull loved ones from the rubble of collapsed buildings.

The quakes — measured by the US Geological Survey at magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 — cracked and brought down buildings and sent residents fleeing into the streets. Rodriguez said more than 1,520 were also injured. The state of La Guaira, north of Caracas, bore the brunt. There, residents picked their way through the debris, calling out the names of the missing or struggling in vain to reach the injured. **(QNA) Page 7**

## PM condoles with interim leader

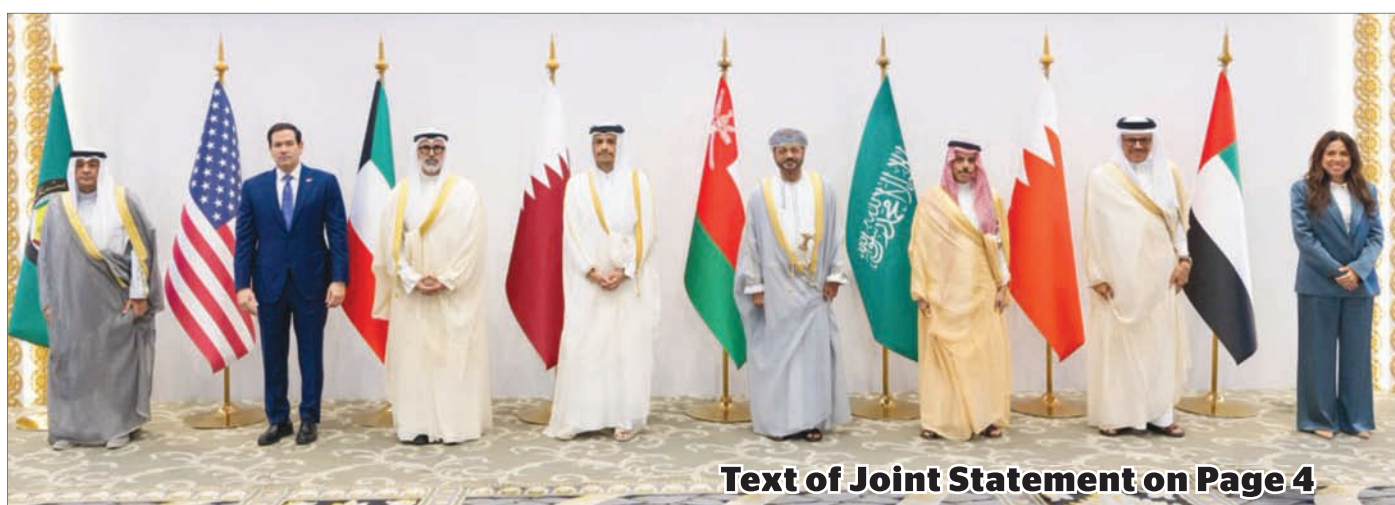
HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also held a telephone conversation with Venezuelan interim leader Delcy Rodriguez. The prime minister expressed

Qatar's solidarity with Venezuela and offered his sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the families of the victims, the government of Venezuela, and its friendly people, wishing a speedy recovery to the injured.



A view shows a heavily damaged apartment building following an earthquake in Catia La Mar, La Guaira state, yesterday. **(AFP)**

## US allays Gulf concerns over Iran 'deal'



Text of Joint Statement on Page 4

Reuters  
Manama

**U**S Secretary of State Marco Rubio told Gulf allies yesterday that any deal with Iran would take their interests into account, as he wrapped up a Middle East trip aimed at winning over regional partners with deep reservations about the preliminary accord.

Speaking at a meeting of Gulf Arab foreign ministers in Bahrain — home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet — Rubio said Wash-

ington was seeking an enduring peace with long-time foe Iran that would not come at the expense of the security of allies in the oil-rich region, many of whom see the deal as too soft after coming under Iranian attack during the conflict. During the conflict, Iran took effective control of the vital Strait of Hormuz, heavily disrupting oil flows and rattling global energy markets and the wider economy.

He told reporters that Gulf allies shared some very serious concerns and that they wanted to be informed of every step of the peace accord, which includes

provisions on Hormuz. In a joint statement later yesterday, the US and the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) said a lasting peace would mean addressing Iran's ballistic missiles, drones and support for proxy groups. They also backed "free, unconditional, and unrestricted navigation" in the Strait of Hormuz without "any tolls, fees, or attempts to assert control." If Iran threatens or blocks ships in the strait, "then we're going to have a problem," Rubio said, having earlier told ministers that "no country on Earth has the right

to charge for the use of international waterways" and that fees for shipping would never be part of any deal.

Rubio's three-day tour of the Gulf was the first high-level diplomatic mission since the US-Iran framework agreement last week to end the conflict, which started on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Iran. At his previous stops in the UAE and Kuwait, Rubio sought to assure officials that the proposed deal was not overly favourable to Iran, which struck several Gulf states during the war. **To Page 11**

## Oman affirms no transit fees on Hormuz

Oman has ruled out any transit fees in future arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz, stressing instead the need to restore freedom of navigation and guarantee safe passage through the waterway. Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi made the point at the joint ministerial meeting between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the United States in Manama yesterday. As a littoral state of the strait, Oman bears a special responsibility in supporting international efforts to secure maritime navigation, he said, in line with its obligations under international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. He affirmed the Sultanate's commitment to full and constructive engagement with all parties to advance the process — and reiterated that the future arrangements would carry no transit fees. **(QNA)**

## School-voucher scheme to benefit more families

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

Qatar has thrown open its educational-voucher scheme to a wider band of families, raising the monthly family-income ceiling from QR25,000 to QR35,000 as it reopened applications through the "Maarif" public services portal. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) announced the reopening today, alongside the higher income threshold — calculated as actual family income after all financial obligations are deducted — in a move designed to broaden the number of beneficiaries. The vouchers fall under the ministry's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project, run in partnership with private

schools and kindergartens, which currently offers more than 9,000 seats across four categories: fully free, discounted, places for students with disabilities, and seats subsidised by educational vouchers. Of these, roughly 2,400 are funded by the vouchers themselves. Each voucher is worth QR28,000. Crucially, parents enrolling a child at a participating school pay no additional tuition even where annual fees exceed that figure — school owners cover the shortfall as part of their CSR contribution. Director of the Private Schools and Kindergartens Department and Acting Director of the Private Schools Licensing Department, Dr Rania Mohammed, said the project continues to expand its support for eligible families.

## '95% of CMU-Q grads stay behind to build Qatar's knowledge economy'

By Peter Alagos  
Business Editor

**T**he country's push towards a knowledge-based economy is gaining measurable ground, with nearly 95% of the university's recent graduates choosing to remain and work in Qatar, according to Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) dean Michael Trick.

Trick told *Gulf Times* that building such an economy requires a full ecosystem rather than isolated components, and that Education City, Qatar's universities, and CMU-Q itself collectively function as a talent pipeline for that transition.

"We now have two decades of graduates from CMU-Q, most of whom stay in Qatar and contrib-



Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar dean Michael Trick.

ute to the knowledge economy. When we attend conferences, summits, and industry events within Qatar, we are proud to see so many of our alumni attending, presenting, networking, and leading the conversations," Trick said.

He said the primary remaining gap is not structural but time-related, noting that a transfor-

mation of this scale cannot happen overnight.

Asked about the sectors most ripe for disruption in the next five years, Trick said any discussion on disruption must start with artificial intelligence (AI), which he described as capable of fundamentally transforming industries through the optimisation of core business processes.

He said Qatar is already seeing innovation-led disruption across education, energy, food security, and sports. "In the area of sports and large-scale sporting events, Qatar has the potential to lead globally through technological innovation," Trick noted.

On whether Qatar is producing enough homegrown entrepreneurial talent, Trick distinguished two models for meeting workforce demand. **To Page 11**

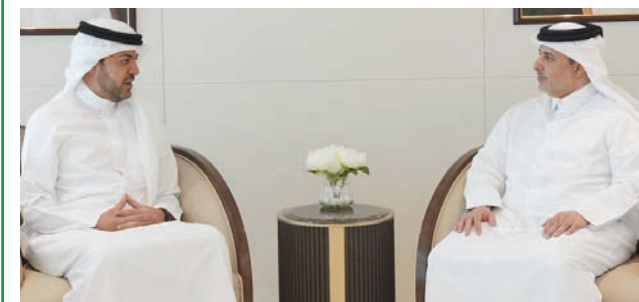
## PM meets Saudi foreign minister

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met in Manama yesterday with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, on the margin of the joint meeting of the GCC foreign ministers with the US.



They discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and strengthen them, in addition to the latest regional developments, particularly the diplomatic efforts to enhance security and stability in the region following the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the US and Iran. HE Sheikh Mohammed affirmed Qatar's full support for the ongoing negotiations between US and Iran to reach sustainable solutions to outstanding issues through dialogue and peaceful means, thereby strengthening regional security and contributing to opening new horizons for co-operation, development, and prosperity, and achieving the common interests of the peoples of the region and the world. - QNA

## Minister meets Kuwait's envoy



HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met yesterday with Kuwait's ambassador to Qatar Ahmed Abdulrahman al-Shuraim. They discussed aspects of co-operation in the fields of environment and climate and exchanged viewpoints on topics of mutual interest. - QNA

## Justice Ministry, Diplomatic Institute sign agreement

The Ministry of Justice and the Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening co-operation in training, professional development, and scientific research, as part of efforts to develop national expertise and promote knowledge exchange.

The agreement was signed by Assistant Undersecretary (Agreements and International Co-operation) at the Ministry of Justice Khalid Mohammed Ahmed al-Obaidli and Diplomatic Institute director Dr Abdulaziz Mohammed al-Horr,

in the presence of HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohammadi.

The MoU seeks to leverage the capabilities and expertise of both institutions through specialised training programmes, the exchange of trainers, researchers and experts, and collaboration on studies and research projects of mutual interest.

It also provides for the organisation of conferences, seminars and workshops, as well as initiatives aimed at building national capacity in legal and diplomatic fields. - QNA



# Qatar voices concern over violations against children in war zones

Qatar expressed deep concern over the findings of the United Nations Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict, which indicated that violations committed against children in conflict zones have reached unprecedented levels, including killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access.

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 UN Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict on "Reasserting international legal protections for children in armed conflict: strengthening the protection of education and the prevention of grave violations", held at United Nations headquarters in New York.

She stressed that Qatar strongly condemns the grave violations committed against children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the Israeli occupation, including the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the ongoing violations in the Gaza Strip, which have resulted in high numbers of children killed and maimed, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals documented in the UN Secretary-General's report.

HE Sheikhha Alya also expressed Qatar's deep concern regarding the report's findings on the significant increase in attacks carried out by Israeli settlers and the resulting grave violations against Palestinian children.

She praised the pivotal role played by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General



for Children and Armed Conflict in protecting children in conflict areas, reaffirming Qatar's commitment to continuing its support and strengthening its fruitful strategic partnership with the office.

HE Sheikhha Alya noted that Qatar hosts the Analysis and Outreach Hub of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, which continues to play a vital role in supporting international efforts aimed at protecting children affected by armed

conflicts, and affirmed that Qatar places the promotion and protection of children's right to education, particularly in conflict-affected countries, among its key priorities.

She noted that this is clearly reflected in the leading role played by Her Highness the Chairperson of Education Above All Foundation Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, pointing out that Her Highness is among the most influential and prominent figures supporting and protecting quality education at the international level, while the foundation's initiatives have made a tangible and significant difference in the lives of millions of children around the world.

HE Sheikhha Alya also noted Qatar's anticipation of marking this year the seventh anniversary of the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, which was established through a resolution submitted by Qatar to the United Nations General Assembly.

She added that Doha will host an international event on September 9 on "Can Education Survive Attack The Resilience of Human Communities", aimed at strengthening international efforts to protect education from attacks in conflict areas. - QNA

## Amir congratulates Mozambique's leader

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Mozambique's President Daniel Francisco Chapo on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of

congratulations to Francisco Chapo. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Mozambique's Prime Minister Maria Benvinda Levi on the occasion. - QNA

## Amir condoles with Timor-Leste's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has sent a cable of condolences to Timor-Leste's President Jose Ramos Horta on the death of former president Francisco Guterres. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of condolences

to the Timor-Leste president on Guterres's death. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of condolences to Timor-Leste's Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao on the occasion. - QNA

## Deputy Amir congratulates Slovenia's Musar

His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Slovenia's President Natasa Pirc Musar on the anniversary yesterday of the country's Statehood Day.

Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Jansa on the occasion. - QNA



## Shura Council, Azerbaijan parliament hold talks

The Shura Council and Azerbaijan's parliament held official talks in Baku yesterday, focusing on ways to deepen bilateral relations and enhance parliamentary co-operation. The talks were co-chaired by HE the Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim and

Azerbaijan's Milli Majlis (parliament) Speaker Sahiba Gafarova. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 20th Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), currently being hosted by Azerbaijan. - QNA

## Al-Ansari takes part in Gulf-Mediterranean summit



HE the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed Mohammed al-Ansari participated in the Mediterranean and Gulf Summit organised by the Italian Institute for International Affairs in Rome.

He spoke during two main sessions, on "Mediation Paths After the Iran-Israel-Gulf Crisis" and "Regional Hotspots Post-Iran: Palestine and Lebanon".

Discussions addressing current regional developments and their impact on the region's security and stability, as well as the role of dialogue and mediation in containing crises and strengthening regional co-operation.

During his remarks, HE Dr al-Ansari emphasised that recent developments in the region, including the agreement between the US and Iran, necessitate the development of a more comprehensive and co-operative regional security architecture based on dialogue, diplomacy, and confidence-building among the region's countries.

He also stressed the importance of maintaining the security and stability of waterways, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, as a cornerstone of global energy security and trade.

HE Dr al-Ansari pointed out that achieving sustainable stability in the region requires strengthening diplomatic channels and dialogue, and developing frameworks for regional and international co-operation that serve the common interests of the region's countries and their partners. - QNA

## QFFD director-general leads Qatar team at Ukraine Recovery Conference

Qatar participated in the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2026, held in Gdańsk, with high-level participation from a number of governments, international financial institutions, development partners, and private sector representatives. The conference focused on exploring ways to support recovery and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine and strengthening international co-ordination in addressing the humanitarian and development impacts of the crisis. Qatar's delegation was represented by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) director-general Fahad bin Hamad al-Sulaiti. - QNA



## US experts credit Qatar's mediation with helping secure US-Iran ceasefire

American experts have praised Qatar's diplomatic efforts in helping to secure a ceasefire between the US and Iran, saying that the Gulf state's mediation played a significant role in reducing tensions and bringing the two sides closer to an agreement.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), analysts said Qatar, working alongside regional and international partners, helped facilitate a memorandum of understanding that led to an end to hostilities and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to international shipping.

The experts said that the agreement has created new opportunities for a more durable political settlement and could contribute to broader regional stability.

David Des Roches, an associate professor at the Near East South Asia Centre for

Strategic Studies at the Middle East Institute in Washington, said Qatar had a long track record of mediating complex conflicts and approached its diplomatic role with "seriousness and responsibility".

He said Qatar's involvement became particularly important when direct channels of communication faced difficulties, helping to shift the situation from confrontation towards dialogue and peace.

Des Roches described the latest mediation effort as part of a broader pattern of Qatari diplomacy, citing previous initiatives in conflicts involving Ethiopia

and Eritrea, South Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Darfur, as well as its role in facilitating negotiations between the US and the Taliban.

He added that Qatar's mediation efforts were widely respected in Washington, saying the country had demonstrated both diplomatic capability and political vision.

Bob Reid, an American journalist and Middle East analyst, said Qatar had maintained a measured approach since the start of the crisis before becoming more actively involved in de-escalation efforts.

He said Qatari diplomacy helped overcome obstacles to the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MoU), which he described as a political framework for containing tensions and creating space for negotiations on unresolved issues.

Reid cautioned, however, that the region's future security arrangements remained uncertain and that reshaping the regional security environment would take time.

Heba Abdel Wahab, a researcher specialising in Middle East affairs, said Qa-

tar's role as a mediator was consistent with its longstanding policy of maintaining open channels of communication with a wide range of regional actors.

She said Doha had emerged as a trusted interlocutor for both Washington and Tehran and argued that the mediation highlighted the growing role of Gulf states in managing regional crises rather than merely reacting to them.

Abdel Wahab added that the success of the mediation could further strengthen Qatar's reputation as a regional diplomatic actor.

However, she noted that any lasting understanding between the US and Iran would ultimately depend on the two countries' ability to resolve their underlying disagreements rather than simply contain military escalation. - QNA

# GU-Q, QBWA partner to advance women's leadership and talent

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) and the Qatari Businesswomen Association (QBWA) have signed a three-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) to advance women's leadership, executive development and talent growth in Qatar.

Signed on June 11 at the QBWA headquarters, the agreement establishes a framework for collaboration through June 2029.

The MoU was signed by QBWA vice-chair Aisha Hussein Alfardan and GU-Q associate dean (Executive Education) Rodolph Boughaba.

The partnership will explore the development and delivery of executive education programmes in areas including board stewardship, executive leadership, strategic

communication, artificial intelligence (AI) for executives, strategic foresight, and value creation through governance.

"Our collaboration with Georgetown University in Qatar is a natural alignment of our shared vision to elevate the contributions of women to Qatar's economic development," said Alfardan. "We are excited to provide our members with access to world-class expertise, global perspectives, and executive learning experiences that will strengthen their strategic perspective and amplify their impact as leaders."

Through this partnership, programmes may draw on Georgetown's global faculty, subject matter experts and industry leaders, combining international expertise with regional relevance.

The collaboration also strengthens GU-Q alumni's access to the QBWA's extensive professional network, creating new pathways for mentorship, growth, and leadership advancement.

"This partnership represents a significant milestone in our commitment to fostering leadership excellence," said Boughaba. "By combining Georgetown's global expertise with the QBWA's mission to empower women in business, we are creating a powerful pipeline of talent that will drive organisational and national success in the years to come."

The GU-Q's commitment to educating women is deeply embedded in its institutional fabric.

Qatari women represent the largest single nationality group at the university, reflecting its



Aisha Hussein Alfardan, Rodolph Boughaba and others at the signing ceremony.

longstanding role in empowering women across all sectors of society.

This commitment is supported by initiatives such as the Women's Centre, the Georgetown Women's Alliance-Qatar and experiential programmes like the annual Women as Changemakers trip to engage with leaders in the US.

Over its 20-year history in Qatar, the GU-Q has hosted high-level conferences on gender and leadership across the Arab world, while educating generations of alumnae who now hold influential roles across sectors including business, finance, energy, education and culture.



Notable alumnae include senior diplomat for Qatar Al-Daana al-Mulla (GU-Q'12), QatarEnergy LNG commercial analyst Noor al-Kobaisi (GU-Q'13), Strategy Hub founder and chief executive Anna al-Thani (GU-Q'11), Web Summit Qatar country manager Dima Wahbeh (GU-Q'15), and Al Jazi al-Thani (GU-Q'12), co-founder of Al Faisal Holding's Al Rayyan Investment in Education and Sport.



## Ehsan launches Council of Elders' summer programme

The Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan) - under the Qatar Foundation for Social Work - has announced the launch of the summer programme of the Council of Elders in co-operation with youth centres.

The summer programme encompasses a range of cultural, social, recreational, and awareness-raising activities targeting various age groups, aimed at strengthening communication and interaction among community members and reflecting the importance of partnerships with youth centres.

The Council of Elders explained that the programme is

an extension of its mission to support purposeful community initiatives and enhance the role of elders in passing on their experiences and authentic values to younger generations.

The council commended the fruitful co-operation with youth centres and the resources they provide, which contribute to the success of the various events and activities.

The programme is scheduled to run throughout the summer, featuring a variety of events, workshops, and meetings designed to enrich the participants' intellectual and social experiences and reinforce values of belonging and intergenerational communication. - QNA

## New UDST programmes launched in Animal Health and Veterinary Science

The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has announced the launch of its Bachelor's and Diploma programmes in Animal Health and Veterinary Science.

The new programmes have been designed to strengthen national capabilities in animal health through a comprehensive applied learning approach that combines theoretical knowledge with hands-on training in animal care, disease prevention, diagnostics, and livestock management.

The launch comes in response to national priorities identified by the Ministry of Municipality and reflects the growing demand for qualified professionals to support veterinary services and strengthen public health systems in Qatar.

Students enrolled in the programmes will develop specialised technical and practical skills in animal care, animal disease prevention, diagnostic techniques, livestock management, and veterinary support services in line with industry best practices.

"The launch of the Bachelor's and Diploma programmes in Animal Health and Veterinary Science responds to the growing need for qualified professionals with the knowledge and skills required to support animal health and veterinary services in Qatar," said Dr Shahrokh Esfandiari, the dean of the UDST's College of Health Sciences.

"The programmes emphasise applied learning that bridges academic knowledge with practical training, ensuring graduates are prepared to contribute meaningfully to public health and strengthen national readiness to address future health challenges," he said.

"These programmes align with Qatar's 'One Health' approach, which recognises the close connection between human, animal, and environmental health," Dr Esfandiari continued. "They reflect the university's commitment to developing academic programmes that address national priorities and labour market needs ... and contributing to the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030."

Applications are now open through the university's website: [udst.edu.qa](http://udst.edu.qa)



## Qatar takes part in meeting of GCC drug control directors

Qatar participated in the 38th meeting of the Committee of Directors of Drug Control Agencies of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, which was held yesterday at the GCC General Secretariat headquarters in Riyadh, on the sidelines of the Gulf Anti-Drug Week. The Ministry of Interior delegation at the meeting was headed by the assistant director-general of Drug Enforcement, Colonel Tareq Ali al-Faraid al-Maliki. The meeting discussed ways to enhance co-operation and joint co-ordination in combating drug-related crimes, exchanging expertise, and developing preventative and security efforts across GCC member states. - QNA

## MoCI, QFIU strengthen electronic reporting of suspicious transactions

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) and the Qatar Financial Information Unit (QFIU) have signed a mechanism to regulate the registration of entities subject to the ministry's supervision on the "Ekhtar" platform, as part of efforts to enhance co-operation and improve the efficiency of electronic reporting of suspicious transactions.

The mechanism was signed by the MoCI's Assistant Undersecretary for Commerce Affairs Saleh Abdullah al-Mannai and QFIU head Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad bin Mubarak al-Thani.

The ministry said in a statement that the mechanism aims to organise the responsibilities of both parties regarding the registration of reporting entities supervised by the ministry on the "Ekhtar" platform, which receives electronic suspicious transaction reports, while enhancing co-ordination and data exchange.

Under the mechanism, the ministry will pro-

vide the QFIU with details of approved reporting officers and their deputies, along with any updates, while the QFIU will create user accounts on the platform and notify them electronically to complete registration procedures.

The mechanism requires supervised entities to complete registration and activate their accounts within three working days of receiving the activation link.

Reminder notifications will be sent if procedures are not completed within the specified period, while administrative and financial penalties will apply in cases of non-compliance.

It also regulates procedures for updating the information of reporting officers and their deputies, requiring entities to promptly update their data through the ministry's survey platform whenever changes occur.

The statement added that the mechanism provides for enhanced co-ordination and follow-up through regular exchange of registra-



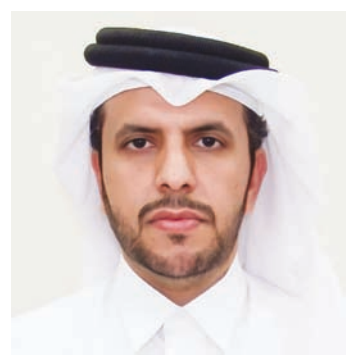
tion and activation data, as well as semi-annual reviews to verify and continuously update information related to registered entities.

The ministry affirmed its continued co-operation and full support for the QFIU to improve the quality and level of reporting among entities under its supervision, contributing to the development of electronic suspicious transaction reporting and supporting Qatar's preparations for the upcoming mutual evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). - QNA

## Drug threat 'no longer limited to traditional smuggling methods'

The director of the GCC-Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs (GCC-CICCD), Colonel Mohammed Abdullah al-Khater (pictured), said that the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, marked annually on June 26, is an important occasion to renew commitment to protecting societies from drugs and assessing efforts to strengthen community security and safeguard youth.

He said that Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states are observing the day amid rapid security and health changes, relying on integrated regional and national efforts under the GCC Anti-Drug



Strategy (2025-28), which provides a comprehensive framework to unify member states' efforts in confronting the drug threat.

Al-Khater said the strategy fo-

cus on reducing drug supply and demand, cutting off sources, promoting alternative development, strengthening legislation, combating money laundering from drug trafficking, and enhancing training and capacity-building to improve preventive, security, and treatment responses.

He noted that this year's global theme *World Drug Problem: Persisting Issues, New Challenges, Innovative Responses*, reflects current challenges, stressing that the drug threat is no longer limited to traditional smuggling methods but has extended into the digital space and social media platforms used to target youth and promote drugs.

Al-Khater added that the GCC-

CICCD has developed advanced electronic monitoring tools to curb online promotion, track and block suspicious accounts, and conduct joint security operations and controlled deliveries to target transnational criminal networks.

He also said that the centre supports GCC security work through studies and research to unify procedures among member states.

The official added that the GCC-CICCD regularly organises training programmes for anti-drug and customs personnel in GCC states, in co-operation with regional and international partners, universities, and research centres, to enhance expertise in combating evolving criminal methods. - QNA

## Qatar takes part in GCC anti-drug strategy meeting in Riyadh

Qatar participated in the third meeting of the Permanent Committee for Follow-up on the Implementation of the GCC Anti-Drug Strategy (2025-28), which was held yesterday at the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) General Secretariat headquarters in Riyadh.

The Ministry of Interior delegation was headed by the assistant director of the Strategic Planning Department, Colonel Faisal Jassim al-Sulaiti.

The meeting discussed items on its agenda and adopted the appropriate recommendations regarding them. - QNA

## Public Prosecution holds seminar on drug fight

The Public Prosecution, represented by the Institute of Criminal Studies, organised yesterday a scientific and awareness seminar to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

The seminar was attended by a number of prosecutors along with specialists from various bodies in the country.

The seminar addressed key themes related to combating drugs, including a presentation on "The Role of the Public Prosecution within the National Efforts of the State of Qatar in Combating Drugs", delivered by the head of the Narcotics Prosecution

at the Public Prosecution, Ahmed Ali al-Sulaiti. Adviser at Kuwait's Court of Appeal, Mohammed Rashid al-Duaji, outlined Kuwait's legislative experience in light of the new anti-drug law.

The seminar featured a presentation on "Behavioural and Community-Based Treatment of Drug Abuse", delivered by Dr Khalid Hamad al-Muhammadi, a psychology consultant at the National Service Academy.

The seminar also featured interactive discussions and showcased important information and successful national experiences in enhancing professional awareness to combat the scourge of drugs. - QNA



## MoI exhibition on awareness of drugs scourge

The Ministry of Interior (MoI), represented by the General Directorate of Drug Enforcement, launched yesterday an awareness exhibition marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse, held this year under the theme *An Aware Community... A Safe Nation*. The event coincides with the Arab and Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Weeks for Drug Prevention and features the participation of several ministry departments and relevant entities.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the MoI's Assistant Director-General of Drug Enforcement Colonel Tariq Ali al-Malki, in the presence of directors, officers, officials, and representatives of participating entities.

Featuring educational and awareness booths highlighting the dangers of drugs, methods of prevention, and their harmful effects on individuals, families, and society, the exhibition aims to promote preventative awareness, highlight the State's anti-drug efforts, and strengthen community partnership in combating drug abuse. It will run until June 28. - QNA





HE Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani with the winner of the 'Best Actor' award, Nasser Habib.



HE Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani with the winner of the 'Best Actress' award, Amina al-Wakily.

A scene from *The Dividing City*.

# The Dividing City claims the top prize at Doha Theatre Festival

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

**T**he *Dividing City* emerged as the biggest winner at the 38th Doha Theatre Festival, earning the festival's top honour for "Best Play" along with several major awards that underscored its artistic and technical excellence.

At the closing ceremony, HE the

Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani honoured the winners in the presence of theatre practitioners, artists and cultural figures, marking the conclusion of another edition of Qatar's premier theatrical event.

The festival's judging panel, comprising veteran artist Ghazi Hussein, Dr Nizar Shaqroun and artist Khalid Abdulkarim al-Hammadi, placed particular emphasis

on directorial maturity, innovative scenography and the dramatic depth of the competing productions.

They singled out *The Dividing City* for its sophisticated visual language, cohesive artistic vision and compelling stagecraft.

The panel lauded the production's expressive scenography, noting its ability to transform complex human and social issues

into powerful symbolic imagery.

Critics and judges described the play as a mature collaborative achievement, with director Mohammed Yousef al-Mulla successfully integrating performance, design and dramatic structure into a compelling theatrical experience.

Produced by the Qatar Theatre Group, *The Dividing City* swept several of the festival's top honours, winning "Best Play", "Best

Director" for Mohammed al-Mulla, "Best Script" for writer Talib al-Duwai, "Best Set Design" and "Best Actor" for Nasser Habib.

The play tells the story of a city's ruler who is assassinated by his wife's brothers after they fear that her unborn child will one day challenge their authority.

Blending tragedy with dark comedy, it explores themes of power, fear and the struggle for the future. Its characters serve as allegorical figures: the brothers represent different expressions of authority and self-interest, while the mother, midwife and peasant embody truth, conscience, and the

ordinary citizen caught in forces beyond his control.

Meanwhile, Amina al-Wakily received the "Best Actress" award for her performance in *Under the Rubble*, produced by the Doha Theatre Company.

The production was one of three works competing in the festival, alongside *The Black Pearl Bank* by Al-Watan Theatre Company.

The festival's accompanying intellectual seminars also highlighted the diversity of theatrical approaches showcased this year, recognising notable achievements in acting, music, scenography and dramatic interpretation.

## GCC-US ministerial meeting reaffirms strategic partnership

**F**oreign ministers from the US and Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states have reaffirmed their strategic partnership and welcomed mediation efforts by Qatar and Pakistan that contributed to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Washington and Tehran.

In a joint statement issued after a ministerial meeting in Manama, chaired by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, ministers praised the signing of the US-Iran agreement on June 17 and called for sustained momentum in negotiations aimed at securing a lasting end to hostilities.

The ministers reiterated their shared objective of preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and stressed that lasting regional peace requires addressing broader security concerns, including Iran's ballistic missile programme, drone capabilities and support for regional proxies.

They also underlined the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open to international shipping, rejecting any attempts to impose restrictions, fees or control over the strategic waterway.

The statement further noted that future trade and investment with Iran would depend on its compliance with the agreement and its commitment to reducing destabilising activities in the region.

The ministers pledged continued support for Syria's government and people, backing efforts to combat terrorism, restore essential services, improve investment conditions and facilitate the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced people.

The ministers likewise expressed support for Lebanon's sovereignty and welcomed US-sponsored talks between Israel and Lebanon aimed at securing a lasting peace and resolving border issues.

They stressed the importance of maintaining the negotiation process and called for all non-state armed groups in Lebanon to be disarmed, while strengthening the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

On Gaza, the ministers reaffirmed support for a US-backed plan to end the conflict and advance reconstruction efforts.

They called for the disarmament of non-state armed groups and the transfer of administrative responsibility to an independent Palestinian technocratic committee.

The statement also reiterated support for Palestinian self-determination and the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state.

The ministers condemned attacks by Iran-aligned groups in Iraq against GCC states and voiced support for efforts by Iraq's government to bring all weapons under state control.

They also reaffirmed support for Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity and urged Iraq to uphold its international commitments and ensure the protection of diplomatic missions operating in the country. - **QNA**



## Transport Ministry marks Day of the Seafarer 2026

**T**he Ministry of Transport (MoT) joined the international community in celebrating the Day of the Seafarer 2026 through an event recognising and appreciating the seafarers and those working in the maritime industry.

On this occasion, the MoT honoured a number of national talents and professionals working in the maritime sector, in recognition of their dedicated efforts, valuable contributions, and services.

The MoT's Assistant Undersecretary for Maritime Transport Affairs Abdulaziz Abdullah al-Sulaiti said that the day is an important occasion that the ministry observes annually to celebrate the seafarers alongside international maritime authorities and organisations, out of its care for the wellbeing and safety of seafar-

ers and mariners, and its appreciation for their dedicated efforts in serving the maritime navigation.

"It is an expression of how grateful we are for their contributions, efforts, and sacrifices, and an occasion to bring to everyone's attention the challenges and risks they encounter while performing their professional duties to ensure a smooth flow and safety of global trade," the official said.

The MoT, al-Sulaiti added, continues to develop the maritime industry to the highest international standards and practices to further enhance Qatar's profile as a leading maritime hub.

The ministry is also committed to developing and upskilling more human resources in the maritime and logistics industries and empow-

ering more national talents, he noted, working closely with all relevant entities on training and scholarship programmes to qualify the next generation of national talent for high-quality positions in the industry.

The MoT also marked the day by launching "Recognition Endorsement for Electro-Technical Officers" - as a brand-new maritime service.

The ETO service is available online for companies, the private sector, and government entities where they can have the recognition endorsement issued for those working on Qatari ships.

The Day of the Seafarer (observed on June 25) was established in a resolution adopted by the 2010 Diplomatic Conference in Manila to adopt the revised STCW Convention.



## Qatar takes part in 56th OAS General Assembly

Qatar participated in the 56th General Assembly of the Organisation of American States (OAS), held in Panama City. Qatar's delegation was headed by Qatar's ambassador to Panama Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Dehaimi. - **QNA**

## S Africa vows firm response to anti-migrant violence

**S**outh Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa has vowed to crush any attempts to destabilise the nation during planned anti-immigrant marches next week, amid a wave of xenophobia.

Citizen-led groups have set Tuesday (June 30) as a deadline for undocumented foreigners to leave and called for nationwide marches against illegal immigration, marking a crescendo in months of protests that have at times turned violent.

The unofficial ultimatum has stoked fears of a resurgence of xenophobic violence that has claimed several lives in the past.

"We will not tolerate any attempts to destabilise the country by anyone, whether marching or otherwise," said Ramaphosa.

"Our security forces are ready and those who transgress the measures that we are putting in place will definitely meet the might of the law," he told the upper house of parliament.

The police have announced tightened security across the nation for June 30 while government officials have stepped up efforts to ensure calm, including meeting the influential Zulu Royal House.

The country has been on edge following weeks of sometimes

violent xenophobic unrest that has left at least three people dead, according to official sources.

Mozambican authorities put the toll among their nationals at five.

The anti-migrant campaign has already spurred voluntary repatriations of thousands of foreigners from elsewhere in Africa, including Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique and Nigeria.

Makeshift camps have mushroomed in the eastern port city of Durban and financial capital Johannesburg as thousands await transport to their home countries, prompting warnings from aid groups of a deepening humanitarian crisis.

Among Africa's largest and most industrialised economies, South Africa has long been a prime destination for people seeking work even though its own unemployment rate hovers around 32%.

Past flare-ups of violence targeting undocumented foreign nationals have been deadly, with 62 people killed in riots in 2008.

Violence in 2019 saw armed mobs descend on foreign-owned businesses around Johannesburg, leaving at least 12 people dead - 10 of them South African citizens. - **AFP**

## Funding needs for Ebola response now \$1.4bn

Reuters  
Dakar/Johannesburg

**A**frica's top public health agency said yesterday that funding needed to tackle the continent's Ebola outbreak was three times higher than an earlier estimate, and now stands at \$1.4bn.

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) director-general Jean Kaseya said the new estimate was based on discussions with experts from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo)'s government and United Nations agencies.

The outbreak of the rare Bundibugyo strain of Ebola has infected more than 1,100 people in the DR Congo and 20 in neighbouring Uganda, reaching the highest first-month total of any episode of the disease.

### Congo tightens travel rules after Ebola reaches France

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has imposed a 21-day quarantine for anyone returning from Ebola-affected areas before they can travel abroad, tightening controls after France confirmed its first imported case. A June 24 decree signed by Health Minister Samuel-Roger Kamba requires anyone identified as a contact of a confirmed or suspected Ebola case to undergo 21 days of active health monitoring from their last exposure. During that period, all travel, domestic or international, is banned unless expressly authorised by health authorities.

The same monitoring rules apply to health workers, laboratory staff and response teams returning from affected areas, who must also obtain prior approval before travelling internationally.

More broadly, anyone who has stayed in an Ebola-affected province may only travel abroad after spending at least 21 days outside the area. On Wednesday, France confirmed an Ebola case in a humanitarian doctor who boarded a commercial flight from Kinshasa without symptoms but fell ill mid-flight, raising concerns about cross-border transmission. - **Reuters**

Unlike the earlier funding needs estimate of \$518mn, given on June 5 as part of a joint plan with the World Health Organisation

(WHO), the new figure includes money needed for humanitarian relief measures.

Kaseya said that so far there had

been about \$910mn in funding pledges, but that only 13% of that had been released.

"If we don't have this \$1.4bn and if we don't resolve the humanitarian issue, we will not stop this outbreak," he told an online press conference.

Humanitarian conditions are worsening in the DR Congo's Ituri province, the epicentre of the outbreak, Kaseya said.

Another worry is that it is difficult for health workers to access displacement camps where there are Ebola cases, complicating contact-tracing, he added.

On Wednesday, WHO officials said the DR Congo's Ebola outbreak was still outpacing response efforts.

They flagged the risks to health workers operating in a region scarred by decades of war where local people are often deeply distrustful of officials and outsiders.

## Israel says troops will remain in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza

**I**srael said yesterday that it had set no timetable for withdrawing its forces from Lebanon, Gaza and Syria, as Israeli and Lebanese officials engaged in US-brokered talks in Washington.

The Israeli military has launched widespread airstrikes in Lebanon and sent troops into the country's south after Iran-backed Hezbollah entered the Middle East war on the side of its patron in March.

"We must remain in the security zone in Lebanon, in Syria, and in Gaza, and not for a limited time, in order to defend our residents and communities from there against (religious militant) elements," Defence Minister Israel Katz said at a graduation ceremony at a military academy. "We oppose the withdrawal of IDF forces from

the security zone in Lebanon, despite all the pressures that exist and those still to come."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the same function that troops would remain in south Lebanon "as long as necessary".

"I have made it clear to the IDF: you have full freedom of action."

Earlier, government spokesman David Mencer told journalists that "we will not withdraw our forces from southern Lebanon as long as Hezbollah remains a threat, are not disarmed and are not demilitarised".

Under US pressure, Lebanese officials began direct talks in April with Israel in Washington.

The latest three-day round of talks is due to wrap up.

Commenting on the negotiations, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the two neighbours were close to making a "commitment of intent".

Asked about the talks, Mencer said: "We are making extremely clear that our responsibility is to our northern citizens and to the whole of Israel, and we will not allow any terrorist force anywhere near our border - which means that any redeployment of IDF forces comes after, not before, but after the demilitarisation of southern Lebanon and the disarming of Hezbollah."

"We've already been in this situation in 2024," he added. "Hezbollah were supposed to be disarmed. They weren't." - **AFP**

## Reporter for Al Arabiya TV dies in bombing in Yemen

**A** correspondent for Saudi Arabia's Al Arabiya television in Yemen was killed when a bomb planted on his car exploded, the network said yesterday.

It said Mohammed Aydah, a Yemeni who reported for Al Arabiya and its sister channel Al Hadath, was killed late on Wednesday in the city of Mukalla, in Yemen's eastern Hadramout governorate.

Al Arabiya said Mukalla's security authorities had warned Aydah approximately a month ago that his life was under threat, without elaborating. No group has claimed responsibility.

Yemen has been mired in conflict since 2014, when Iran-backed Houthi forces captured Sanaa, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene. - **Reuters**



# 'Summer Smashaya' draws 194 players

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

Pinoy Shuttle Smashers Qatar (PSSQ) brought together 194 players for its Special Match Series 8: Summer Smashaya, showcasing competitive badminton action and strong community spirit at Hamilton International School in May.

The tournament featured men's and women's doubles competitions across multiple divisions, attracting players from across Qatar's badminton community. Organisers said the event's success was made possible through the collective efforts of players, volunteer umpires, spectators, sponsors, and a dedicated team of organisers working behind the scenes.

According to a PSSQ representative, the tournament delivered exciting matches across various categories. In the Men's C/D Doubles division, Clinton and Betsy emerged as champions, while Mudz and Tere finished as runners-up. Yasir and Fahad claimed the Men's E+ Doubles title, defeating runners-up Hamdaan and JK.

The Men's E- Doubles crown went to Anjo and James Cruz, with Rain and Nigel taking second place. In the Men's F Doubles category, Mark and Noy secured the championship, while Yandre and Homer settled for runner-up honours.

Among the women's divisions, Jessa and Dana captured the Women's D Doubles title, ahead of runners-up Lily and Visna. Cee and Maribeth emerged victorious in the Women's E+ Doubles category, while Steff and Mars finished second.

Hazel and Krazy claimed the Women's E- Doubles championship, with Malyn and Irish taking the runner-up spot. In the Women's F Doubles division, Fayanne and Jea topped the field,



while Jackie and Mitch finished as runners-up.

Beyond the competition, the event highlighted the camaraderie and sportsmanship that continue to strengthen Qatar's badminton community. Organisers thanked all participants for their support and enthusiasm, noting that the tournament's success reflected the shared passion for the sport among players and supporters alike.

PSSQ also expressed its appreciation to volunteer umpires, spectators, and sponsors whose contributions helped make Summer Smashaya one of the group's most successful events to date. It also extended special recognition to its committee members and coordina-

tors for their hard work and commitment in ensuring the smooth conduct of the tournament.

PSSQ is a Qatar-based badminton community made up primarily of Filipinos, along with members from various nationalities who share a passion for the sport. Beyond the game itself, the group provides a platform for friendly competition, camaraderie, and meaningful connections, fostering a sense of community and belonging among members living away from home.

Throughout the year, the PSSQ representative noted that they organise a range of tournaments and sporting events, including team-based competitions such as Team Clash, the

PSSQ Queuing Special, the annual Kuys Ed Cup held as part of its anniversary celebrations, and the highly anticipated Anniversary Tournament every August. It is now gearing up for its anniversary tournament scheduled for August.

In addition to its major events, PSSQ holds weekly badminton queuing sessions every Thursday, giving members regular opportunities to play, stay fit, and strengthen friendships within the community. This year, PSSQ proudly celebrates its third anniversary, marking another milestone in its mission to unite badminton enthusiasts in Qatar while promoting friendship, teamwork, and community engagement through sport.



## MES Junior honours academic excellence at PHL ceremony

Glorying the academic excellence and consistent effort of young learners, the Junior Section of MES Indian School recently organised the PHL ceremony for the 2025-26 academic year.

The event was honoured by the presence of dignitaries, including Dr Najeeb K P, general secretary, and the MES Governing Board directors: Ashraf Sharafudheen P T and Shaheed Alungath. They jointly awarded the students, making the occasion prestigious and memorable.

In her speech, Dr Hameeda Kadar lauded the students for their dedication, resilience, and pursuit of excellence, emphasising that sustained effort and discipline are key to true success.

A total of 795 students from Classes I to IV were recognised for their exemplary performance. Special recognition was given to grade toppers and eight students who achieved 100% attendance, highlighting their discipline and consistency.

Among them, two academic toppers were specially honoured for their outstanding scholastic achievements, along with eight students who maintained perfect attendance throughout the 2025-26 academic year.

The programme was hosted by Meghna Pashine and Shalima Shameer. The welcome addresses were delivered by Master Shahaan



Mohammed and Master Jayden John Alexander on the first and

second days, respectively. The vote of thanks was given by Haw-

wa Amani on the first day and Jannah Faisal on the second day.

## MES creates academic history clinching Qatar Topper title

MES Indian School has once again reaffirmed its reputation for academic excellence with the outstanding achievement of Athulya Anil Kumar, who emerged as the Qatar Topper in the Science Stream of the CBSE Class XII Examinations 2026, securing an exceptional 99.4%.

Her remarkable accomplishment came after a successful re-evaluation, which elevated her score from 99% to 99.4%, making her the highest scorer in the Science Stream in Qatar.

Kumar's exceptional accomplishment, including securing centum scores in Biology, Computer Science, and Design, reflects her remarkable dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to excellence. Her outstanding success serves as a

shining example for young learners, inspiring them to pursue their goals with determination, confidence, and perseverance.

Adding further glory to the institution's stellar performance, students of the Commerce and Humanities streams also recorded outstanding results. In the Commerce Stream, Aafreen Fathima Mohamed Anwardeen and Muhammad Sufiyan Patel secured an impressive 99.8%, while Alvina Sakeer and Lubna Abdul Latheef topped the Humanities Stream with 99.6%.

These exceptional results reflect the strong academic culture nurtured at MES Indian School and highlight the collective efforts of its students, teachers, and parents.

Athulya Anil Kumar



COMMUNITY



## Bunts Qatar celebrates World Environment Day

Bunts Qatar celebrated World Environment Day 2026 on June 19 at the M/s Jas Bro Corporation Office premises, Doha, reaffirming its commitment to environmental sustainability and supporting the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The programme commenced with an inspiring introduction by Naveen Shetty, general secretary, followed by the welcome address delivered by Sukaram Shetty, president of Bunts Qatar, who highlighted the importance of collective efforts in preserving the environment.

The event was graced by Su-

rekha Narayan Hegde, wife of Narayan Hegde, managing director of Intermodel Service Co WLL, Doha, as the guest of honour. She was felicitated with a token of appreciation in recognition of her presence and generous sponsorship of the event.

Rajagopal Shetty, environment coordinator, addressed the gathering and emphasised the importance of environmental awareness and collective responsibility in combating climate change.

Children added colour to the celebration with delightful dance performances, beautifully coordinated and arranged by Vijetha

Rai and Pooja Shenava. Gifts were distributed to members and families in appreciation of their active participation.

The Best Out of Waste Competition was evaluated by senior member Ravi Kumar Rai and family, along with Surekha Narayan Hegde. Winners were honoured with prizes presented by Naveen Shetty Iruvail, advisory chairman.

A symbolic sapling plantation drive was carried out by the dignitaries and Management Committee members, reflecting a shared commitment towards a greener and more sustainable future.

A special audio message from



founder president Dr Ravi Shetty inspired members with his vision and commitment towards community service and environmental protection. Best wishes from advisory members Navaneeth

Shetty, Deepak Shetty (ICBF president), and Dr Padma Shree Shetty further strengthened the spirit of unity and environmental consciousness. The programme concluded with

a vote of thanks by Shiny Shetty, sports secretary, who thanked the guests, sponsors, participants and members for making the celebration a grand success and invited everyone for refreshments.

## DPS-Modern Indian School hosts Rendezvous 2026-27



DPS-Modern Indian School hosted the on-stage events of its flagship programme, Rendezvous 2026-27, for senior school students (Grades IX to XII) on June 23. Held under the theme "Route to Roots", the event celebrated heritage, tradition, and identity.

Asna Nafees, Group Academic Adviser of the DPS Group of Schools, highlighted the importance of integrity and fair competition. She also applauded the enthusiasm and determination displayed by all participating houses and fondly reflected on the memories and legacy left behind by the school's alumni.

The week-long programme



featured competitions across performing arts, visual arts, literary, and STEM disciplines. Events included Battle of Bands, Echoes of Elegance, EcoRunway, Canvas Choreography, Henna Harmony, Scripted Elegance, Panel Pulse, Clash of Convictions, Junior Journalist, Ink & Echoes, Advantage Point, Innovision Expo,

Flameless Flames, League of Lens, Reel Rumble, Quiz Royale, Codebreak Carnival, and Logo Luminary, providing students with diverse platforms to showcase their talents and skills.

All four houses – Rose, Lily, Tulip, and Lotus – brought exceptional energy, creativity, and competitive spirit to the event,

transforming each competition into a vibrant display of talent and teamwork.

Rendezvous 2026-27 reaffirmed DPS-Modern Indian School's commitment to academic excellence while fostering culture, creativity, leadership, and character development among its students.

## NIARC Qatar Chapter holds General Body Meeting and Membership Campaign

NIARC Qatar Chapter successfully organised its General Body Meeting and Membership Campaign at Doha Mess Cafe on June 19, with the active participation of members, community leaders, and well-wishers.

NIARC is a non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting children with special needs and promoting community welfare initiatives. The NIARC Qatar Chapter is affiliated with the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF) under the aegis of the Embassy of India, Qatar. In India, the NIARC Pediatric Rehabilitation Centre currently provides education, therapy, rehabilitation, and treatment services to more than 300 children with special needs.

The event was inaugurated by NIARC Global vice chairman Hameed MT, who emphasised the importance of unity, service, and active member participation in advancing the organisation's humanitarian mission. He highlighted NIARC's commitment to supporting vulnerable sections of society and strengthening com-

munity engagement. Welcoming the gathering, Jaffer Munafar, general secretary of NIARC Qatar Chapter, outlined the objectives of the meeting and membership campaign.

In his presidential address, Shanahas Edodi, chairman of the NIARC Qatar Chapter, presented the chapter's achievements and future plans to expand community service activities and strengthen organisational growth.

A special motivational session titled "Shine Beyond Boundaries" was conducted by renowned motivational speaker Muneer MK, who inspired participants with his insights on leadership, personal development, and social responsibility.

Felicitations were offered by committee members and senior representatives, including Faisal Moosa, KKV, Mohamed Ali, Mansoor 121, C K M Koya, Ismail NK, Thaha Bhargaiva, Rasheed, Farhas, Jamshi, Vasil, and Siraj Abdul Khader, who lauded the chapter's efforts in community service and organisational development.

The programme concluded with



a vote of thanks delivered by Rasik KV, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, members, volunteers, and supporters for their contribu-

tions to the event's success. The gathering reaffirmed the NIARC Qatar Chapter's commitment to humanitarian service, community

welfare, and its mission to support children with special needs through sustained social and rehabilitation initiatives.



## Rajagiri Public School organises Talent Hunt Competitions 2026-27



Rajagiri Public School, renowned for its commitment to nurturing and celebrating young talents, organised the Talent Hunt 2026-2027 on June 17-18 at the Abu Hamour campus; and on June 21-22 at the Old Airport campus.

The event was formally inaugurated by the distinguished actor, producer, and business man, Chandramohan Pillai. Addressing the gathering, he encouraged students to pursue their passions and confidently express their talents.

The school auditorium and various venues were brimming with excitement as students unveiled their hidden talents.

The participants captivated the audience with their exceptional dancing skills and melodious vocal performances in events like classical dance, western dance, western music and eastern music, Thiruvathira, Group song, etc. The young talents also took centre stage in entertaining acts like Mime, Skit, Fancy dress and Mono act.

The budding artists of Rajagiri displayed their impeccable skills in instrumental music and keyboard,

painting, rangoli, collage, best out of waste, etc., leaving the audience awestruck. The performances in various literary events like recitation, declamation, elocution, extempore etc. captivated judges and audiences, reflecting the immense talent and dedication of the participants.

The winners of the various events were felicitated during the award ceremony held on the same day, recognising their outstanding achievements and contributions to the event.

The competitions were conducted under the banners of the school's four houses – Apollo, Atlas, Hercules, and Pegasus. The spirit of healthy competition, teamwork, and camaraderie was evident throughout the event as students enthusiastically supported and cheered for their respective houses.

Hercules house emerged as the overall champions in the inter house competitions held at the Abu Hamour campus, while Apollo house emerged as the best house at the Old Airport branch of Talent Hunt 2026-2027, earning accolades for their exceptional performances across multiple events.

# Venezuelans trapped alive after twin quakes kill at least 188

AFP  
La Guaira, Venezuela

Desperate Venezuelans battled yesterday to rescue loved ones trapped alive beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings after two major earthquakes that killed at least 188 people.

Buildings cracked and crumbled and residents fled into the streets after the quakes, which the United States Geological Survey measured at magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, hit northern Venezuela within a minute of each other on Wednesday night.

Offers of rescue support and aid flooded in as National Assembly chief Jorge Rodríguez said the death toll had risen to 188, with 1,520 injured.

Powerful aftershocks could still be felt yesterday.

The state of La Guaira north of Caracas was hit particularly hard, and residents stumbled through debris calling out the names of loved ones or tried in vain to rescue the injured.

"There's a spot where a young woman named Jennifer, from the 11th floor, answers me. However, we don't have any tools; we have no way to help," said Antonio Bermudez, whose building collapsed in La Guaira.

Elsewhere in the rubble, a father and his son were using a pickaxe and a crowbar to pry away massive slabs to get to two of his other

sons, said Bermudez. "They're still alive... there's nothing more we can do. We're telling them not to strain their voices, to take short breaths, in the hope that at least the three of them who are there will be rescued."

AFP reporters witnessed residents looting a local supermarket in La Guaira.

The coastal city was without electricity, and many residents spent the night in the streets or searching for their relatives.

"We thank God that... we are alive, but there are people suffering right now with family members trapped under the rubble or pinned down, unable to get them out," resident Yilmaris Blanco told AFP.

Interim president Delcy Rodríguez visited La Guaira yesterday after the area was declared a "disaster zone."

UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply saddened" by the disaster as the global body vowed to assist Venezuela.

The strongest quake to hit Venezuela in 126 years will require "massive collective efforts," UN aid chief Tom Fletcher said in a statement.

Threatening to complicate relief efforts, the international airport in La Guaira and has been closed after suffering serious damage.

Offers of support poured in from around the world, with Switzerland, Spain, France, Portugal and Mexico among those sending specialists and rescue

teams to Venezuela.

China, India, Brazil and even war-battered Iran have also offered help, while Pope Leo XIV has sent an initial 100,000 euros in aid to the country.

"We have a whole-of-government response. It'll be big, it'll be fast, and it'll be effective," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters during a visit to Bahrain, saying his country's military would play a "big logistical role."

Washington is closely involved in oil-rich Venezuela after US forces ousted and arrested president Nicolas Maduro in January.

Venezuela's northern coast sits on a boundary between the Caribbean and South American tectonic plates, but has not suffered a significant quake since 1997, when 73 people died.

Another quake in 1967 killed 236 people.

Wednesday's 7.5-magnitude earthquake was the most powerful since October 29, 1900, when a 7.7-magnitude tremor struck offshore.

The quake was felt across Colombia, where residents in Bogota evacuated buildings as a precaution.

Tremors were also reported in several cities in northern Brazil, according to the country's seismic monitoring network.

Scenes of panic and destruction played out in the capital Caracas after the quakes.

In the affluent Altamira neigh-



Emergency services work at the site of a collapsed building after earthquakes hit the country, in Caracas, Venezuela, on Wednesday. (Reuters)

bourhood, residents called out in the early morning for relatives after the collapse of a 22-story building.

"Oh God, why is this happening? Oh Father!" wept a woman as a man tried to comfort her, in another neighbourhood.

A doctor at the Domingo Luciani Hospital in the city, speaking on condition of anonymity, said children and adults were arriving in ambulances unaccompanied by family, after being pulled out of the rubble, as facilities in La Guaira were overwhelmed.

"Their injuries include facial, thoracic, or abdominal trauma, as well as fractures of the upper and lower limbs."



People receive treatment in a field hospital in the aftermath of earthquakes, in La Guaira, Venezuela, on Wednesday. (Reuters)

## World sends rescuers, aid as Venezuela reels from quakes

AFP  
La Guaira, Venezuela

Offers of rescue support, aid and condolences poured into Venezuela yesterday after two powerful earthquakes left at least 188 dead and hundreds injured.

United Nations-certified rescuers will help search for quake survivors, interim president Delcy Rodríguez said in a televised message.

Spain and France were sending dozens of specialists, and Germany promised six military transport planes.

Switzerland mobilised 80 personnel, eight rescue dogs and 18 tonnes of equipment to be sent to Venezuela "as soon as possible."

Dutch Foreign Trade Minister Sjoerd Sjoerdsma announced a two-million-euro aid package to deploy a search-and-rescue team, while the Czech Republic said its team was preparing to fly in.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said it had released \$2.5 million to support recovery efforts.

Pope Leo XIV sent "initial" emergency aid of 100,000 euros (\$114,000) to Venezuela, the Vatican announced.

US President Donald Trump said his country "stands ready, willing, and able to help." He "instructed all agencies of our government to get ready to move quickly. We will be there

for our new and great friends."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio promised a "whole-of-government response" that would be "big... fast and... effective."

China said it was "willing to provide what help it can in an appropriate manner according to the needs of the Venezuelan side," according to foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei voiced "Iran's readiness to provide any assistance required in relief and rescue operations."

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said her country was dispatching a military team of rescuers and medical personnel to Venezuela and would send further assistance if necessary.

"Mexico always stands in solidarity and always will," she earlier posted on X.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said he had listened to news about the quake "with great concern" and would support recovery efforts.

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele said he had readied 300 rescuers and paramedics and 50 tons of equipment, medicines and basic supplies.

Cuban health workers were already "fully mobilised and providing medical services to the affected population," said Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez.

Chilean President Jose Antonio Kast said he was dispatching hu-

manitarian aid and rescue teams to Venezuela.

Colombia, which also felt the quakes, will send more than 60 rescuers and 12 tons of humanitarian aid to its neighbour, its disaster management agency said.

Argentina, Costa Rica and Uruguay also expressed solidarity, while Ecuador and the Dominican Republic both said they had readied aid to send.

Japan offered "sincere condolences to those affected" in Venezuela. The east Asian nation was rocked by a 7.2-magnitude quake itself on Thursday, escaping with no major damage.

Spain was the first of several European countries to react to the quakes.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez offered "full support" to the Venezuelan people, adding: "Our thoughts are with the victims and their families."

Italian leader Giorgia Meloni and Germany's Friedrich Merz echoed these sentiments.

The French government said it stood "in solidarity" with the Venezuelan people before confirming that its embassy in Caracas had been damaged in the disaster.

Two warring nations, Ukraine and Russia, also sent their condolences without specific aid offers.

The European Union said it had activated its satellite surveillance system, with aid commissioner Hadja Lahbib writing online: "We stand ready to step up assistance."

### Quake response requires 'massive collective effort'

The United Nations is "fully mobilised" to provide assistance in quake-hit Venezuela, the UN's aid chief said yesterday, stressing the response would require "massive collective efforts". UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher said in a statement. He said he had spoken yesterday morning with interim President Delcy Rodríguez, and "we are assessing urgently what is needed". (AFP)

## US Supreme Court paves way for mass deportation of Haitians, Syrians

AFP  
Washington

The US Supreme Court yesterday backed a Trump administration move to strip deportation protections from some 350,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians living in the US.

The conservative-dominated court, in a 6-3 ruling, said the Department of Homeland Security's decision to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian and Syrian immigrants was not subject to judicial review.

TPS protects its holders from deportation and is granted to people deemed to be in danger if they return home because of war, natural disaster or other extraordinary circumstances.

Lawyers for Haitian and Syrian TPS holders contended during oral arguments before the court in April that conditions in their home countries remained unsafe and the administration's move was motivated at least in part by racial hostility.

Justice Samuel Alito, who wrote

the majority opinion in which he was joined by the five other conservative justices on the top court, rejected claims that race was a "motivating factor" in President Donald Trump's decision to strip Haitians of TPS status.

"None of the cited statements by either the President or the (Homeland Security) Secretary was overtly racial, and in substance all expressed policy views that could rest on race-neutral justifications," Alito wrote.

Trump campaigned for the White House on a pledge to expel millions of migrants and has pushed to dismantle the TPS programme as part of his broader immigration crackdown. At the height of the 2024 election campaign, Trump stoked fears about Haitian immigrants by falsely claiming they were eating Americans' pets.

The Supreme Court ruling in the TPS case could have implications for more than one million beneficiaries of TPS status from more than a dozen countries.

TPS status has been revoked for nationals of Afghanistan,

Cameroon, Ethiopia, Honduras, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Venezuela, Yemen, and others in addition to Haitians and Syrians since Trump took office.

Haitians became eligible for TPS in 2010 following a devastating earthquake, and the country continues to suffer from severe poverty, rampant violence from heavily armed gangs and chronic political instability.

The State Department advises Americans not to travel to the Caribbean nation "due to kidnapping, crime, civil unrest and limited health care."

TPS was extended to war-torn Syria in 2012.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, a liberal, questioned during oral arguments whether a "discriminatory purpose may have played a part" in the Trump administration's decision to strip TPS status from Haitians and referred to statements by the Republican president.

"We have a president saying at one point that Haiti is a quote filthy, dirty and disgusting s-hole country - I'm quoting him - and where he complained that the US takes people from such countries instead of people from Norway, Sweden or Denmark," Sotomayor said.

Solicitor General John Sauer replied that the president's comments were being taken out of context and he was referring to "problems of crime, poverty and welfare dependency."

Sauer said court review of TPS decisions was barred to prevent "judicial micromangement" of foreign policy determinations.



A view of the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC, yesterday. (AFP)

## Americans impacted by climate change demand answers from lawmakers

AFP  
Washington

Some vote Republican, others Democrat. They are retirees, barely adults, or accompanied by young children.

And all are scarred by natural disasters that are becoming all too frequent as the world heats up.

Dozens of Americans hailing from across the country including states like Hawaii, Louisiana and Vermont descended on Washington this week as part of the organisation "Extreme Weather Survivors", a group noteworthy not least for its diverse makeup.

Among them is Gayle Nichols-Ali, who lost her home more than a year ago in the fires that

devastated Los Angeles. But she and her husband Rashed remain mired in red tape, unable to begin rebuilding.

"It's just been one disappointment after another," the 69-year-old told AFP, having ventured with some 70 others to the nation's capitol to meet with congressional representatives.

"We thought they would protect us," she said. "Not at all."

The group gathered in Washington to meet with lawmakers and express concern over the government's lack of preparations against the immediate and future threats of climate change.

Kylie Nidever, 36, saw her neighbourhood ravaged by catastrophic floods in central Texas that killed 135 people, including

many children. "You wouldn't necessarily think that a flood survivor and a fire survivor have things in common," she told AFP.

"But we absolutely do."

— Feeling of abandonment —

The group's discussions see the same patterns keep cropping up. People share accounts of overwhelmed emergency services, and a feeling that public authorities have abandoned them.

They speak of a lack of aid, which often means reconstruction in the wake of disasters proves impossible.

And there is simmering anger. "How do you respond to people who say, 'This is just the weather?'" asked a participant during one such discussion.

"I just want to slap their face." And a fire survivor sitting nearby, his voice raspy, says he finds it all "terrifying" because "every story is the same."

There is a persistent fear among members of the group that these scenarios will play out again and again.

They agree that climate change is making these weather extremes more frequent and more intense.

About a decade ago such events causing more than \$1bn in damages happened approximately once every 2.7 months in the US, according to the organisation Climate Central.

Now they're happening about every two weeks.

"If recovery takes years and these events happen more and

more and more... what does that mean for our country?" asked Sierra Lindsey Kos, the co-founder of Extreme Weather Survivors.

— "We can be resilient!" —

The situation is all the more concerning given that the US president, Donald Trump, is an avowed sceptic of climate change.

Since returning to the White House, he has cut funding for climate research and natural disaster response and prevention.

"We have to continue to do more, because at this point we're all at risk," Jessica Calix, 41, told AFP.

She lost her San Diego home in a flood in January 2024, and ever since has lived with her son in a trailer.

The group draws inspiration from organisations whose mem-

bers have suffered the impacts of gun violence.

They hope to drive change by raising public awareness and pressuring policymakers.

"We can't change bad things that have already happened. I don't think we can stop climate change from happening at this point, which is deeply unfortunate, but we can be resilient and not bury our heads in the sand," said Amy Dishion, 41.

Her husband died at just 32 years old of heart stroke during a period of extreme temperatures.

"We can help each other as communities and at the policy level, and we can actually still create policies to combat climate change," she told AFP, "so that the worst of what could happen will not happen".



## Britain suffers as new hottest June day record swiftly set

AFP  
London

The UK recorded its hottest ever June day yesterday, with temperatures reaching 36.4C in southwestern Somerset, breaking the previous day's record as the extreme heat stretched London's ambulance services.

The Met Office weather service said the record-breaking June temperature had been clocked in the Somerset village of Yeovilton, after Wednesday's high of 36.1C was registered further east in Gosport, Hampshire.

Records have tumbled as an increasingly deadly heatwave leaves western Europe sweltering with weather hotter than parts of Africa, throwing up numerous challenges from transport to emergency response.

Prior to Wednesday's UK record June temperature, the high for the month had dated back to the infamously hot summer of 1976, although UK temperature records for other months have been repeatedly broken in recent years.

Earlier yesterday, the Met Office extended a red warning for extreme heat until tonight for London and the surrounding area.

The red warning of "highly likely" risks to health and infrastructure had previously been in place



A man carries bottles of water near Tower Bridge, amid a heatwave, as Britain experiences record temperatures disrupting schools and transport networks, in London, yesterday. (Reuters)

until midnight yesterday, but now runs to 9:00pm (2000 GMT) today in London and other cities in southeast England including Dover and Oxford.

The London Ambulance Service said yesterday it had seen its highest-ever number of "life-threatening emergencies" the previous day, which its chief executive Jason Killens said was "driven by the extreme heat".

"Our crews are working very hard in challenging conditions to care for patients," he said in a statement.

"Please help them to help you by taking care of yourself and others — stay out of the sun and keep hydrated."

As temperatures soared in recent days across the British capital — home to around 9mn people —

the service said ambulance crews responded to a record 642 Category 1 calls on Wednesday.

Category 1 incidents include the most serious, life-threatening injuries and illnesses, such as cardiac arrests and patients who are not breathing.

In total, it received 7,900 calls and ambulance crews responded to nearly 3,600 patients, according to the service.

More than 400 additional ambulance crews were on the road this week to assist with the situation, it added.

"The rise in calls is linked to the hot weather, with crews responding to more people who are fainting, struggling to breathe or experiencing heart problems," London Ambulance Service said in its statement.

## UK's Reeves backs Burnham for PM

Reuters  
London

British finance minister Rachel Reeves said yesterday she was backing Andy Burnham to be the next prime minister, brushing off reports she could lose her role and be moved to a more junior post if he took over the Labour Party.

"I'm supporting Andy to be prime minister," she told the BBC, after Burnham emerged as the only declared candidate to replace Keir Starmer, who announced his resignation on Monday.

Starmer said he would oversee an orderly transition after bowing to pressure over weak poll ratings and poor local election results, triggering a leadership contest set to begin on July 9.

Reeves, a close ally of Starmer, said no one could doubt her commitment to the outgoing prime minister, adding that she had worked alongside him for six years.

Burnham, who is the only candidate to have put his name forward, is widely expected to be installed without a challenge, meaning he could become prime



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves. (AFP)

minister by mid-July. If appointed, he would be Britain's seventh leader in a decade.

Asked about reports she could be demoted, Reeves said cabinet decisions would be a matter for Burnham.

"I'm not going to pre-empt the decisions that the new prime minister will make. I'm backing Andy. I think he'd be a great prime minister, but those are his decisions, not mine," she said.

She said she stood ready to provide targeted, temporary support

on energy bills later this year.

Reeves said the next leader should stick to her fiscal rules, including balancing day-to-day spending with tax revenues and reducing debt as a share of output.

Burnham has previously signalled he would keep current borrowing rules in place.

"I know that whoever is prime minister and chancellor in the future will inherit a stronger economy than the one I inherited two years ago," she said.

## Australia's security environment degrading, spy chief warns

Reuters  
Sydney

Australia faces multi-faceted threats from autocratic regimes, hackers and antisemitic extremists that present a systemic challenge to national security and are degrading the security environment, the country's spy chief said.

While Australia's terrorism threat level remains at "probable", Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) Director-General Mike Burgess said the designation does not accurately capture the "concurrent, cascading and compounding threats."

ASIO's annual assessment followed a year in which Australia confronted threats on multiple fronts, from online radicalisation, state-sponsored cyberattacks to arson against Jewish businesses and a mass shooting in Sydney.

"Probable' does not tell the full story. The next level on the scale is 'expected', which applies when we have intelligence about a specific attack. We do not," Burgess said in the annual threat assessment speech on Wednesday night.

"But we do know the environment is degrading and acts of po-



Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Mike Burgess prepares to speak at the ASIO headquarters in Canberra. (AFP)

litically motivated violence are becoming more likely than 'probable' suggests."

Despite the challenges, Australia is well-placed to meet security threats, Burgess said. ASIO has foiled 31 major terror plots since 2014 and resolved more than a dozen major terror-related cases since the Bondi Beach mass shooting in December at a Jewish Hanukkah celebration that killed 15 people.

Police said the two alleged gunmen appeared to be inspired by the Islamic State militant group.

Burgess defended ASIO's resource allocation leading up to the Bondi attack, saying the agency was countering multiple threats simultaneously and it was extremely difficult to "simplistically

pivot" from one threat to another. "We cannot stop every terrorist, just as we cannot catch every spy. But we continue to work around the clock to keep Australians safe," Burgess said.

Encrypted chat platforms are radicalising people, including minors, within weeks, while social media is amplifying grievance narratives, eroding trust in institutions, promoting discord and inflammatory rhetoric, and exacerbating polarisation, he said.

Foreign spies are targeting classified information on Australia's AUKUS nuclear submarine partnership with the United States and Britain. An official with security clearance was contacted by someone pretending to be from a consulting firm, Burgess said.

## New Myanmar leadership 'more open' to suggestions: Malaysian FM

Reuters  
Kuala Lumpur

Myanmar's newly appointed government appeared "more open" to suggestions compared to the previous regime, Malaysia's foreign minister Mohamad Hasan said yesterday, as countries in Southeast Asia continued efforts to engage with the war-torn nation's military-backed administration.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing took office as president and appointed a new cabinet in April, after a pro-military party swept to victory in an election that was designed to show Myanmar was returning to civilian rule but was

widely dismissed as a sham by critics and Western governments.

Mohamad told Malaysia's parliament he had met with Myanmar's Foreign Affairs Minister Tin Maung Swe in Naypyitaw last month, where they had discussed progress on the "five-point consensus", a peace plan Myanmar's former military rulers had agreed with the Asean bloc after protests against a 2021 coup sparked a nationwide rebellion against army rule.

Mohamad said he also raised other critical matters such as the release of political prisoners as well as efforts to address the large number of ethnic Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in Malaysia.

"I see that the Myanmar side

this time seemed more open to the suggestions that were expressed compared to our previous interaction, when Malaysia was the chair of Asean last year," he said.

The peace plan has largely been seen as a failure, with the military regime unwilling to engage in dialogue with opponents it views as "terrorists".

Mohamad said Asean's leaders had instructed the bloc's foreign ministers to find ways to work together with Myanmar on implementing the peace plan, including potential modifications to its terms.

"If we need to adjust, we will adjust but it will need to be approved by all the Asean leaders before any changes," he said.

## Japan denies 'harassment' of China aircraft carrier

AFP  
Tokyo

Tokyo has rejected Beijing's accusations the Japanese military harassed a Chinese aircraft carrier strike group during 40 days of exercises in "distant waters" of the Pacific.

The Chinese navy said earlier this week that Japanese ships and aircraft "repeatedly engaged in close-range tracking, surveillance, harassment, and provocation."

China said a formation led by its aircraft carrier Liaoning had operated in areas including the South China Sea and the Western Pacific for "multiple rounds of day-and-night of offensive and defensive exercise."

The training involved ships and aircraft and tested "system-based operational capabilities in distant waters", the Chinese navy said on its WeChat account.

It added the Liaoning formation "maintained a high state of alert throughout, launching carrier-based aircraft for combat sorties... and steadily responding to the dangerous actions of the Japanese side."

Japan's Joint Staff said late Wednesday on X that the claims were "not factual".

"The Ministry of Defence and Self-Defence Forces will continue to conduct professional and steady vigilance and surveillance in the surround-

ing sea and airspace of our country," it said.

In a June 1 statement, the Joint Staff said that the Chinese flotilla conducted exercises east of the Philippines in late May and that the Japanese military conducted "surveillance and information gathering."

Long-frosty China-Japan ties have worsened after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, seen as an arch-conservative and security hawk, suggested in November that Japan might intervene militarily in any Chinese attempt to take Taiwan.

China, which regards the democratic island as part of its territory and has not ruled out force to annex it, has advised its citizens to avoid US ally Japan and imposed trade restrictions.

Under Takaichi, Japan has also accelerated its pivot towards a more proactive defence policy, further shaking off — with US encouragement — its pacifist outlook in place since the end of World War II.

Tokyo said on Wednesday that China had detained two Japanese citizens for allegedly "smuggling goods subject to a national export and import ban".

Japanese media reports said that the two Fuji Electric employees may have been detained over attempts to take rare earth minerals out of the country.

## Thailand seeks to arrest fugitive Chinese businessman over illegal crypto mining

Reuters  
Bangkok

Thailand has issued an arrest warrant for a Chinese businessman featured in a Reuters investigation into transnational crypto-investment fraud, alleging he was part of a network that laundered money from scams and online gambling through illegal cryptocurrency mining. Wang Yicheng was the subject of the 2023 Reuters report that detailed how an account in his name received millions of dollars from a crypto wallet that a US blockchain analysis firm said was linked to scam operations, even as he cultivated ties to Thai political and law enforcement elites.

Police Major Woranan Srilam, a spokesman for Thailand's Department of Special Investigation, said on Tuesday that Wang had been charged in November with theft as well as under the Computer Crimes Act, which covers interfering with systems. "The suspect is believed to have fled the country," he told Reuters in a text message, adding that Thai authorities were working with international counterparts to locate him.

Wang did not respond to a request for comment. China's Foreign Ministry said it was not aware of the situation. The DSI said in a statement last week it had issued arrest warrants for four unnamed Chinese and four Myanmar nationals.



An image of Wang Yicheng is seen on the website of the Thai-Asia Economic Exchange Trade Association, in this illustration picture. (Reuters/File Photo)

The statement described Wang, a former leader of a Thai-Chinese trade association, as a key figure in a group of Chinese investors allegedly using illegal crypto mining to launder proceeds from scams and online gambling. Thailand and other Southeast Asian nations have in recent months intensified crackdowns on largely Chinese-run scam syndicates. These operations are often run from industrial compounds staffed partly by trafficking victims and generate billions of dollars annually, according to the UN.

The DSI said it uncovered the network while investigating illegal crypto mining operations that illicitly used some \$28mn worth of electricity, among the largest such cases in recent years.

Transnational organised crime groups use illegal crypto mining to

this will further strengthen people-to-people ties between our two sovereign nations," Trivedi said. Relations between the neighbours have been strained since the August 2024 uprising. Hasina has been in hiding in India ever since she fled the revolt, and Bangladesh has repeatedly requested her extradition. She

has been sentenced to death in absentia in Dhaka.

Ties improved after PM Tarique Rahman won a landslide election victory, taking over from the interim administration that had led the country of 170 million people since Hasina was ousted. India later resumed issuing visas for medical purposes. (AFP)

whether Wang was behind the account or whether someone else had used his identity to open it. Some of the scams described in the Reuters investigation were tied to KK Park, an industrial park on the Myanmar-Thailand border, according to one of the firms.

One scam victim, a 71-year-old California man, lost his \$2.7mn life savings after being approached by someone posing as a young woman online.

At the time the wallet in Wang's name received the scam-linked funds, he was vice-president of the Thai-Asia Economic Exchange Trade Association, which promotes Thai-Chinese business ties and whose leaders cultivated links with officials in both countries including senior Thai police. Major bitcoin mining firm Bitmain told Reuters in 2023 that Wang was a close partner and customer, adding that it supplied its equipment legally. Bitmain and the Bangkok-based trade group did not respond to requests for comment from Reuters on the Thai warrant for Wang. After the 2023 report, the trade group told Reuters that Wang had left its board, adding that background checks had found no criminal record and that his personal affairs were unrelated to the organisation. It said some Thai officials were "advisers and friends" of the group but there were no further "business or financial interests" between advisers and the trade group or its members.

"generate income, launder money, and drive technology-crime networks," the agency said. The statement said US law enforcement had also identified Wang as a suspect in a digital-asset fraud case. In June 2023, the US seized about \$500,000 in cryptocurrency from an account in his name, saying funds stolen from a Massachusetts victim were traced there.

The US Department of Justice declined to comment on the arrest warrant.

The Reuters investigation found that a crypto wallet in Wang's name received at least \$9.1mn between 2021 and 2022 from an account that TRM Labs and other blockchain firms linked to "pig-butcher" scams, in which victims are deceived into fraudulent crypto investments. The investigation could not determine



# The virtues and rewards of prayer in Islam

The obligatory five daily prayers were prescribed during the night the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), ascended to the heavens, while the commands for the remaining acts of worship were revealed to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, on earth. This indicates the special status and importance of prayer as an act of worship.

- It is the only pillar of Islam that is repeated five times each day, and is never waived except for the woman during her menstrual period and post-partum bleeding.

- It is the one of the most virtuous deeds, and most beloved to Allah as the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Know that the best of your deeds are your prayers, and only a true believer maintains the state of ablu-tion." [Ahmad]

- It is the backbone of one's religion, and the coolness of the eyes of the righteous. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "The most important of all matters is Islam, its spinal cord is prayer and the highest rank is Jihad for the sake of Allah." [Ahmad]

- It is an indication of Islam and belief, and preserves a person's blood from being shed, Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {"But if they repent [by

rejecting Shirk (polytheism) and accept Islamic Monotheism], perform Salah and give Zakat, then they are your brethren in religion"} [Qur'an, 9: 11].

- It is a sign of honesty and frees a person from hypocrisy. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Whosoever prays 40 days with the congregation, attending the initial (Allahu Akbar) of the prayer, will be free of two things: Hell Fire and hypocrisy." [Ahmad]

- It is the best issue to be occupied with, the most profitable dealing, and the most likely amongst all acts of worship to cause the person to become humble and submissive. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Prayer is the best thing to be occupied with, so perform as much of it as you can." [Ahmad]

- It is a command from Allah The Almighty, Who Says (what means): {"Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawaat (the prayers) especially the middle Salaat (i.e. the best prayer - 'Asr). And stand before Allah with obedience [and do not speak to others during the Salaat (prayers)]"} [Qur'an, 2: 238].

- It elevates a person's ranks and expiates sins, as the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Tell me, if there is an overflow-



ing river in front of the house of one of you in which he bathes five times a day, will there remain any dirt on him? They said, 'No dirt will remain on him'. He then said: "That is the example of the five daily obligatory prayers by which Allah erases sins." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

- It rescues from Hell, protects against danger, and enables a person to win Paradise. The Prophet,

sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "The one who prays before sunrise (Fajr prayer) and before sunset ('Asr prayer) will not enter Hell Fire." [Muslim]

- It is a sign of success and victory, and an indication of being accepted. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {"Successful indeed are the believers. Those who offer their Salah (prayers) with all solemnity and full sub-

missiveness."} [Qur'an, 23: 1-2] and also {"And those who strictly guard their (five compulsory congregational) prayers (at their fixed stated hours). These are indeed the inheritors. Who shall inherit the Firdaws (Paradise). They shall dwell therein forever."} [Qur'an, 23: 9-11]

- It is the first thing for which the slave will be held accountable. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "The first thing for which the slave will be held accountable on the day of Resurrection is his prayer; if it is good (by performing it properly and on time), then all his affairs will be good, and if it is ruined (by neglecting it), then all his affairs will be ruined." [At-Tabaraani]

- It is the provision on the way, relaxation for the soul, light for the heart, purification for the soul and a sign for salvation. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "O Bilal! Call the Iqaamah in order for our hearts to relax." [Ahmad and Abu Daawood].

- It frustrates Satan and disbelievers. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "When the son of Aadam recites a verse which recommends him to prostrate and he does, Satan starts crying, and says, woe to me, the son of Aadam was commanded and he did, and he will get Para-

dis as a reward, while I was commanded to prostrate and refused and will enter Hell." [Muslim]

- It is a form of expressing appreciation and gratitude, as well as being a treasure full of the exaltation of Allah The Almighty and glorification and praise to Him. When the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, was asked about the reason behind his excessive prayer, he said: "Should I not be a thankful slave?" [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

- It protects against following desires, evil sins and cures from sicknesses, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {"Verily, Salah prevents from Al-Fahshaa' (i.e. great sins of every kind, unlawful sexual intercourse) and Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism, and every kind of evil wicked deed)" } [Qur'an, 29: 45].

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Pray the optional night prayer, because it is the way of righteous people before you, it brings you close to your Lord, prevents you from committing sins, expiates your sins and cures you from sicknesses." [At-Tirmithi]

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



## Reminders benefit the believers

When afflicted with fear or harm, a believer should compare between his fears and the favours and blessings of Allah The Almighty upon him -- whether religious or worldly.

When a person does such a comparison, he will certainly realise the blessings that he has and will see that the disadvantages seem negligible in comparison. As for one's fears and apprehensions, he should weigh the possibility of future mishaps not even occurring, and if this seems more likely, then he should not let the smaller possibility overtake the larger one in his mind. By doing this, one's fear and anxiety will disappear. If it seems like the evil that one fears has more of a possibility of occurring than not, then one should prepare himself for it and strive to prevent it from occurring, or reduce its effects when it does.

A believer should realise verbal attacks will not hurt him, unless he allows himself to be affected by them. As the saying goes, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Indeed, the people who attack others in this manner are only harming themselves. Unless one pays attention to such people and allows them to hurt his feelings mere words will not harm anyone except the one who uses them to attack others; the best recourse in such cases is to ignore them.

Life is an extension of one's thoughts, so if a believer's thoughts and ideas are those that bring benefit to him in this life and the Hereafter, then he will prosper and rejoice; otherwise, the opposite will be the case.

One of the most beneficial ways to get rid of grief is to train oneself not to seek appreciation from anyone except from Allah The Almighty.

Thus, when one is kind and generous to another person -- regardless of whether that person is owed a favour or not -- one should realise that he is in fact doing that particular action for the sake of Allah The Almighty (i.e., expecting reward from Him only), so one should be indifferent to receiving any appreciation in return for the favor. Allah The Almighty Says regarding His close and special slaves (what means): {(Saying): We feed you seeking Allah's Countenance only. We wish for no reward, nor thanks from you.} [Qur'an 76:9] This applies even more when one is dealing with one's children, wife, or anyone else with whom one has a close relationship.

Remember that performing virtuous deeds brings comfort and joy, provided one performs that which he is capable of doing without overburdening himself to the extent that he cannot fulfil the deed.

Look at the bright side of any troubling issue and seek the silver lining instead of dwelling on the gloomy clouds.

Always have beneficial matters on your list of things to do, direct your attention to them and strive to fulfil them. Stay away from harmful matters; by doing so one will keep himself from thinking about matters which will bring grief and sorrow.

Rest properly and concentrate on gathering your energies and thoughts before performing important tasks.

Finish your tasks on time and do not procrastinate or leave things to the last minute, because if tasks are not finished on time then they will keep getting added to those which need to be done in the future and accumulate to the point where they become a great burden.

However, if tasks are finished on time, one will have time to plan carefully for the future and perform all his tasks efficiently.

Choose the most beneficial deeds and list them in terms of priority; distinguish between what one is strongly inclined to do from among them and order this list in terms of this preference, otherwise, one will become bored of performing deeds that he is not inclined towards.

Consult others and then make a detailed study of what you think you ought to be doing in terms of beneficial deeds; after this if one sees that there is benefit in performing these deeds then he should rely on Allah The Almighty and make a start, because Allah The Almighty loves those who rely on Him.

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

## The beginning of a new Islamic year

We have just ushered in a new Hijri year. The Islamic new year was initiated after the Hijrah, or emigration, of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and which marked the formation of the first Muslim nation within an independent Islamic territory under the rule of Muslims.

The Muslims had no formal annual calendar until the caliphate of 'Umar bin al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. In the third or fourth year of his caliphate, 'Umar received a message from Abu Moosaa al-Ash'ari, may Allah be pleased with him, who suggested that their future correspondence be confirmed with the appropriate date.

Therefore, 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, gathered some of the surviving companions of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and consulted them on this matter. Some of them suggested adopting the Persian Calendar; others proposed adopting the Roman Calendar; others still proposed that the Muslims should form their own calendar and that it should start from the birth of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam; another group agreed but thought that the new Islamic Calendar should start from the day on which the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, embarked upon his mission; another group believed that this new Islamic Calendar should begin from the emigration of the Prophet while a final group believed that should start from his death.

After a discussion they agreed unanimously to adopt the position of those who held that the Islamic Calendar should start from when the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, emigrated from Makkah to Madinah and that the first month of this new calendar be that of Al-Muharram. This is because Al-Muharram is a sacred month and because it follows Dhu'l-Hijjah which is the month in which the Muslims perform the Haj, or the pilgrimage.

Al-Muharram also follows the month in which the Ansaar (the Madinan supporters of the Prophet) pledged allegiance to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, which was prior to his migration to Madinah. This pledge of allegiance was one of the introductory acts of the emigration itself and therefore Al-Muharram was deemed the most suitable month to start the Islamic Calendar by the companions of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam.

Allah said that which translates as: "Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve [lunar] months in the register of Allah [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred. That is the correct religion [i.e. way], so do not wrong yourselves during them..." (At-Tawbah: 36)

These are the months that Allah has appointed for the whole of mankind. He has said that which translates as: "They ask you [O Muhammad], about the new moons. Say 'They are measurements of time for the people and for Haj (pilgrimage)'" (Al-Baqarah: 189).

Therefore, we know that these months, based on the lunar calendar, were appointed for all of mankind and not just for the Arabs. This is due to the fact that the lu-



nar months can very easily be detected and calculated by the sighting of the crescent-moon, which marks the end of the month and the beginning of a new one.

This is not the case with the Gregorian Calendar, which does not rely on any logical or visible signs as regards its calculation of months; rather, each month in this calendar ranges between 28 and 31 days.

O Muslims! We are in the new Hijri year. It is not from the Sunnah to celebrate it or to congratulate one another on its advent. For the Muslims, the passage of years does not constitute a real cause of happiness; rather, what counts is the amount of time spent in obedience to Allah during these years. The years that have passed will be considered as successful if they were spent in obedience to Allah and miserable if they were spent in disobedience of Allah. Therefore, the most evil person is he who has lived a long life and has committed evil deeds throughout. It is a must that we receive our days, months and years while in obedience to Allah. We must bring ourselves to account, redeem ourselves from our bad deeds and duly perform our responsibilities towards our wives, children and relatives.

Servants of Allah! Fear Him and perform the responsibilities about which you will be questioned on the Day of Resurrection. Allah the Almighty says that which translates as: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are (appointed) angels, harsh and severe, they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded." (At-Tahreem: 6).

Discharge responsibilities properly and know that your limbs will testify against you on the Day of Resurrection. Allah says that which translates as: "Until, when they reach it, their hearing and their eyes and their skins will testify against them of what they used to do. And they will say to their skins, 'Why have you testified against us?' They will say, 'We were made to speak by Allah, who has made everything speak; and He created you the first time, and to Him you are returned. And you were not covering [i.e. protecting] yourselves [By fearing Allah] lest your hearing testify against you or your sight or your skins, but you

assumed that Allah does not know much of what you do. And that was your assumption which you assumed about your Lord. It has brought you to ruin, and you have become among the losers.'" (Fussilat: 20-23).

Therefore, we must invest our time in obedience to Allah and make sure that our spiritual condition is improving from year to year; for the more time runs away from us, the closer we are drawing to our graves.

Improvements in our worldly lives do us absolutely no good if our spiritual lives are not improving at the same time. None can attain honour and dignity without submitting to the Lord of the Worlds. Safety, tranquillity and welfare cannot be attained except by adopting the methodology of the messengers of Allah. Be very clear that if any of you see welfare and pleasure accompanied with sins and deviation, then this is definitely a mere respite that has been given by Allah ahead of a total ruin. Thus, we must all stand firm in the obedience of Allah in order to protect ourselves from His punishment. Allah the Almighty says that which translates as: "...And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed." (An-Noor: 31).

O people! Be aware also of the fact that Allah favours certain times and places over others. He favoured Makkah over all other places and chose Madinah, the abode of the Prophet's migration, next to Makkah in preference, after this, the next most virtuous place in the sight of Allah is Bayt Al-Maqdis, or Jerusalem, which was the abode of the majority of His prophets. Allah has also favoured certain months, days and nights more than others.

The number of months is twelve, as decreed by Allah when He created the heavens and the earth. Among these twelve are four sacred months, Dhu'l-Qi'dah, Dhul-Hijjah, and Al-Muharram, which are successive and the month of Rajab that comes between Jumada Al-Aakhirah and Sha'baan. The best day which the sun rises on is Friday and the night of Al-Qadr is more virtuous than a thousand months. Therefore, we must all esteem that which Allah has magnified.

The scholars of Islam maintain that the rewards for good deeds

are multiplied in times and places which are favoured by Allah and vice versa for bad deeds.

O people! Do not wrong yourselves during the Sacred Months. Stay well within the limits defined by Allah, fulfil all His obligations, shun all His prohibitions and fulfil the rights of the people.

Be aware that Satan has taken it upon himself to use all necessary means to seduce all of Allah's servants, except those who are sincerely devout to Allah. Satan is keen to distract people from righteousness and divert their attention away from Allah's religion and towards vice and evil. If Satan notices that a person is inclined to righteousness, he will use all available means to discourage and hinder that person from doing any good deed, if he fails in this, he will soon devise another plot against this person and so forth. Satan starts with attempting to seduce a person into committing the most destructive of sins. If he fails in this, he will try with less dangerous sins and so on. Once he succeeds in seducing a person into sin, he will delude them into delaying their repentance and belittling the magnitude of their sins. Satan will also fool people into believing that someday, they will give up the sins that they are currently indulging in, while knowing very well that such a day may never come. After underestimating the magnitude and grievousness of sins, one is easily led by Satan to more destructive ones, until such a person may eventually leave the religion altogether.

Servants of Allah! Beware of the tricks and evil plans of Satan. Know that he takes many different approaches to seduce people; either through sowing doubts in their souls concerning the unity of Allah; diverting them from performing the prayer and belittling its importance; inducing people to withhold Zakat, or obligatory charity, or spend it in ways other than that demanded by Allah; tempting people into indulging in acts and sayings that render their fasting null and void; hindering them from performing Haj by giving plentiful reasons for its delay; trapping them in ungratefulness and maltreatment of their parents and severing family ties; luring them into deceit and dishonesty by committing betrayal and fraud; enticing them to blind materialism through unlawful earnings such as interest-based transactions, extortion, bribery etc.; and a countless number of other avenues that will lead to a person's utter ruin.

After Satan has led a person astray, he abandons them, at the very time when they are most in need of a supporter!

Servants of Allah! What you are feeling in terms of reluctance to perform good deeds and carelessness towards your bad deeds is only a result of the trickery of Satan. When you feel like this, you must seek the protection of Allah from Satan, as this is the only way to achieve salvation.

Allah the Almighty says that which translates as: "And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing. Indeed those who fear Allah -- when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight." (Al-A'raaf: 200-201).



## Poland and Ukraine's difficult history creates political minefield for Tusk

As policymakers discuss Ukraine's reconstruction in Poland, the government in Warsaw is struggling to defuse tensions over history that could hamper collaboration as Kyiv eyes a path to peace and European Union membership. President Karol Nawrocki's decision to strip Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Poland's top honour due to a dispute over the naming of an army unit after insurgents who massacred Poles in World War II unleashed the biggest diplomatic crisis between the neighbours since Russia's 2022 invasion. Zelenskiy opted not to attend Thursday's Ukraine Reconstruction Conference in the Baltic port city of Gdansk, as he sought to insulate the gathering from the row. Nawrocki's move

also marked a challenge to the pro-European coalition government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk, which will have to balance its more conciliatory approach to Kyiv with rising negativity about Ukraine among voters. "It's plain to see that Nawrocki truly has it in his mind that he must make life difficult for the government at all costs, even at the expense of Poland's position, and he's certainly succeeding," said a source close to the government. Nawrocki has rejected any suggestion that domestic politics played a part in his decision to strip President Zelenskiy of the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest honour. While Poles remain strong supporters of Kyiv's war effort, public sentiment

towards Ukraine has grown increasingly negative in recent years due to weariness with refugees, disputes over grain imports and the legacy of the World War II killings. According to an SW Research poll for Rzeczpospolita daily, 51.9% of Poles said Zelenskiy's decision to name an army unit after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) had harmed their attitude towards Ukraine. Some Ukrainians regard the UPA as heroes for the resistance they mounted against the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and as symbols of Kyiv's struggle for independence from Moscow. But the UPA was also involved in the Volhynia massacres, a series of killings from 1943 to 1945 in which Poland says around 100,000 Poles were killed by

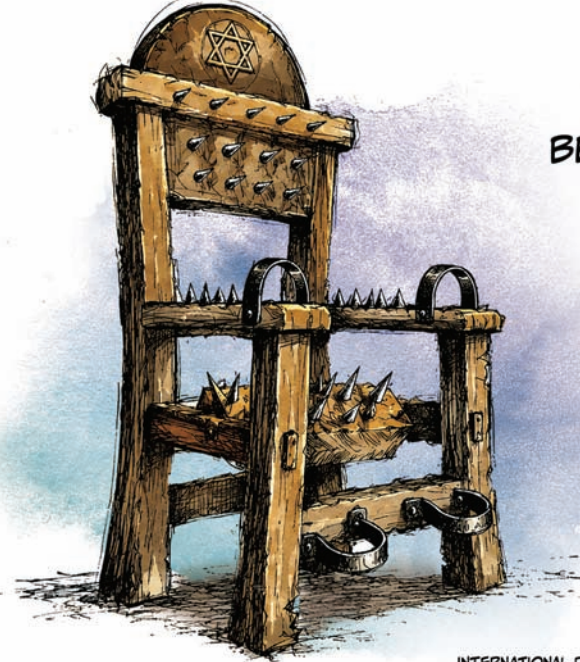
Ukrainian nationalists. Thousands of Ukrainians also died in reprisal killings. Tusk and Zelenskiy met in Brussels just a day before Nawrocki decided to strip the Ukrainian president of the Order of the White Eagle. Two sources close to the Polish government said they had discussed how to de-escalate the situation. "The next thing was the escalation by Nawrocki... and we have a massive problem," the source said. Nawrocki first raised the issue in May and his allies say he gave Zelenskiy ample time to reverse his decision, accusing the Ukrainian president of deliberately offending Poland to distract from corruption scandals closer to home. "The world is increasingly talking

about how much money was stolen by Ukrainians associated with Zelenskiy's team, making it even more obvious that he's trying to divert attention, also by stirring up historical disputes and insulting Poles," Marcin Przydacz, Nawrocki's foreign policy adviser, said on Monday. For his part, Zelenskiy said Nawrocki was trying to score political points ahead of a 2027 parliamentary election in which his allies from the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party hope to return to government. Despite the tensions, most Poles see Ukraine's security as vital to their own, and believe that Poland should be involved in any negotiations aimed at bringing the conflict to an end. — Reuters

### Franco-Italian summit



French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni wave as they leave after a visit at the Picasso Museum as part of a Franco-Italian summit in Antibes, south of France, yesterday. (Reuters)



PLEASE BE SEATED

INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE.

## Qatar Radio turns 58: The shining voice of the nation

QNA  
Doha

Qatar Radio celebrated its 58th anniversary yesterday. Since its establishment in 1968, broadcasting from the heart of Doha, the long-established Qatar Radio has become a leading media and cultural beacon in the region. Qatar Radio has been a companion to generations, not only in transmitting news and programs, but as a witness to the development and progress made by Qatar, and a mirror reflecting its identity and aspirations. Over the past decades, Qatar Radio has been the voice of Qatar to the world and a media platform that has contributed to consolidating national identity, strengthening belonging, and highlighting the authentic values of Qatari society. From the beginning, through its various programs, it has played a pivotal role in serving the nation, keeping pace with all political, economic, cultural, and sporting events in the country, contributing to enhancing community awareness and solidifying national identity. Qatar Radio kept pace with all the nation's achievements, events, activities and initiatives in all fields and sectors, both internally and externally, contributing actively to consolidating the civilised image of the State of Qatar in forums regionally and internationally. It was present at every pivotal stage in the history of the state and accompanied the people of Qatar in moments of construction and prosperity, faithful to the message of conscious and committed media.

#### First steps

Since its first broadcast, Qatar Radio remained a beacon illuminating the Gulf and Arab media landscape, carrying the pulse and voice of the nation to every listener. The first broadcast began on June 25, 1968, representing the birth of a new Arab voice, starting from limited hours of transmission and expanding to a 24-hour station

over the years. Throughout its rich and fruitful journey, the radio station continues to engage with its listeners and fans, relentlessly pursuing continuous modernisation across all departments and personnel with boundless ambition and unparalleled determination. Qatar Radio, since its launch, has provided diverse content that meets all tastes, from news, cultural and sports programs to entertainment and religious content. It uses classical Arabic, while taking into account the use of the Qatari dialect. Qatar Radio contributed to strengthening belonging among different segments of society, and has played an active role in conveying many messages to citizens, and in raising awareness among members of society by providing awareness programs in the fields of health, education and the environment.

Qatar Radio is not limited to Arabic. In 1971, it launched the English program, in 1980 the Urdu program, in 1985 the French program, in addition to the Holy Qur'an Radio in 1992. This diversity represents contemporary Qatar, and addresses different segments of society inside and outside the country, including citizens, residents, and an Arab and international audience.

Qatar Radio presented programs targeting the Arab audience, and contributed to strengthening cultural and intellectual exchange between Arab countries. It also expanded its news content to include various fields, such as politics, economics, sports and culture. Many diverse news programs, such as news bulletins, talk shows and news analysis were also launched.

It also collaborated with many Arab and international radio stations to exchange news and programs, participated in many Arab and international media conferences and events, organized many international conferences, and sought to hold joint Arab meetings with the radio stations of fraternal Gulf countries and the Arab world as a

- For 58 years, Radio Qatar has continued to fulfill its media mission, scrupulously consolidating its position as one of the country's leading media institutions
- Its achievement journey of achievements has been a continuous process of building awareness and reinforcing national identity
- Radio Qatar was entered the digital space early by launching its website and developing its media platforms
- Qatar Radio continues to present a wide range of content combining culture, religion, society, entertainment, and news
- The station has opened opportunities for new generations of Qatari media professionals to continue the legacy established by the pioneers
- It covers national events, conferences, and community activities, most notably the country's National Day celebrations
- Radio Qatar is moving ahead according to a strategic vision aimed at enhancing its programming output across all platforms, strengthening its regional and international presence

whole to discuss many issues.

In the field of drama, Qatar Radio presented numerous radio series and plays that were well-received by the public. It also contributed to preserving and reviving folk heritage by recording and broadcasting songs, chants, and folk tales, and played a vital role in supporting Qatari artists and musicians by broadcasting their work and introducing them to the public.

#### Digital space

With the advent of the internet and the development of technology, Qatar Radio recognized the importance of having a presence in the digital space. A website was launched, providing listeners with stream services, program archives and content. The most significant step was the launch of Qatar Radio's mobile applications for smartphones and tablets, which enabled Qatar Radio to reach a wider audience, allowing anyone, anywhere in the world, to listen to its programs online or through these apps.

Regarding his vision for Qatar Radio among other Arab radio

stations, Director of Qatar Radio Jaber Mohammed al-Sorour told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that Qatar Radio is one of the leading radio stations in the Arab world in terms of its output and technological development. He pointed out that through their programs, which target both Qatari and Arab audiences, they are committed to fostering cultural and intellectual exchange among Arab countries.

Qatar Radio has expanded its content to achieve a distinguished international dimension, setting a model for other Arab radio stations. This has been realised through effective partnerships with the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), where Qatar Radio enjoys a prominent presence.

The radio achieved numerous accomplishments and awards in Arab and international competitions for its content and production across diverse fields, including politics, economics, sports, and culture. It has also been entrusted with overseeing several projects, reflecting the trust it enjoys and its distinguished position among Arab radio stations. On this

occasion, the Director of Qatar Radio extended his heartfelt greetings and appreciation to the station's long-standing listeners, and also expressed his gratitude to the new listeners who have accessed Qatar Radio through digital platforms.

He stated that Qatar Radio has been and remains a daily companion to Qatari society, conveying the pulse of the nation and preserving its identity and values, while simultaneously keeping pace with rapid technological advancements and digital transformations.

He emphasized that media is not confined to a single medium, but rather evolves alongside its audience wherever they may be, affirming his commitment to ensuring that Qatar Radio maintains a strong presence on the airwaves, just as it does on digital platforms and modern communication channels.

#### Technological tools

Al-Sorour called on the youth of Qatar to play a role in creating national media content, and to take advantage of the technological tools to express, create and convey the bright image of their country. Technologies develop and platforms are updated, but the honest and professional media message remains the same.

He also stressed that Qatar Radio will remain a radio station that brings generations together, as it understands the needs of the previous and current generations and anticipates the aspirations of future generations. Regarding the latest developments in Qatar Radio's plans and upcoming programming cycles, al-Sorour pointed out the continuous support they receive from the Qatar Media Corporation, which has contributed to enriching the content with quality additions and developing radio outputs.

As usual, the radio maintains the status of live programs within its programming map, as the *My Beloved Country... Good Morning* program will continue in a new cycle, keeping pace with the pulse of the nation and the

citizen. Family, youth, sports, cultural, and documentary programs will also continue to be present within the programming plan. The program *Doha Evening* will retain its position in the daily programming schedule, to keep pace with various local events. The weekly live programs will also continue at their usual times. The director pointed out that the station has expanded its provision of local news content, and has presented many Qatari radio dramas, folk songs, and dialogues with figures who lived through important stages of the country's history.

This has contributed to preserving and documenting an important aspect of popular heritage for future generations.

Regarding the spread of social media and digital platforms, and the extent to which Qatar Radio has succeeded in maintaining its traditional audience and attracting younger generations through applications and its website, al-Sorour explained that Qatar Radio views AI as an important opportunity to develop media work and enhance the capabilities of its employees, given the tools it provides that contribute to raising the efficiency of media production and developing work methods in various radio specialties.

He explained that at the same time, rapid technological development compels media institutions to keep pace with developments and benefit from modern technologies in a way that serves their media mission and maintains their presence and influence.

#### AI and social media

Al-Sorour added that Qatar Radio considers AI and social media platforms to be important tools for disseminating radio content and reaching wider segments of the audience. Qatar Radio worked on developing and supporting the social media department, in accordance with the directives of the Qatar Media Corporation, in order to ensure optimal benefit from these digital transformations.

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## Qatar welcomes GCC unified voluntary law as step toward regional coordination

**H**E the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi has described the issuance of the unified system for voluntary work law across Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states as an important milestone in strengthening coordination and integration among member states in the volunteering sector.

In remarks marking the issuance of Law No 6 of 2026, establishing the GCC-wide framework for voluntary work, HE the Minister said the legislation represents a significant step towards harmonizing regulations governing volunteering activities across the Gulf.

She noted that the law will help improve the efficiency of voluntary work, standardise procedures and criteria, and enhance joint responses in humanitarian and development initiatives, particularly during crises and regional events. She added that it reflects a shared Gulf vision to develop volunteering as a key

tool for sustainable development and to reinforce values of cooperation and solidarity among GCC societies.

According to the minister, the unified law aims to regulate and develop voluntary work by encouraging participation from individuals and institutions, while establishing a common legal framework for volunteering activities across member states. The legislation includes provisions for regulating volunteer organizations and teams, creating official registries for volunteers and voluntary programs, and defining the responsibilities of host entities, including training volunteers, ensuring their safety, and issuing official certificates documenting completed volunteer work.

It also outlines obligations for volunteers, including compliance with regulations and safeguarding confidential information. The law prohibits the direct or indirect financial gain from voluntary work and bans unauthorised fundraising or related advertising. **(QNA)**

## PM leads Qatar at GCC-US Joint Ministerial Meeting

From Page 1

Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdul Latif bin Rashid al-Zayani, current chair of the Ministerial Council, said the region was passing through a pivotal stage. The attacks on the region's countries, peoples and institutions had presented an unwanted test, he said, but had also revealed the resilience of GCC societies and the efficiency of their

institutions and defence forces. He saw hope in the diplomatic efforts that ended hostilities through the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran — backed by Pakistani and Qatari mediation — and restored freedom and security of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran, however, must fully honour all its commitments, including those under the memorandum. **(QNA)**

## Qatar labour law reforms to boost market efficiency

QNA

Doha

Qatar's Ministry of Labour has said that amendments to Labour Law No 9 of 2026, issued by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, represent a significant step in the development of the country's labour legislation, aimed at enhancing economic competitiveness and improving the efficiency and stability of the labour market.

In a statement, the ministry said the reforms are designed to create a more attractive and stable business environment, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. It added that the changes respond to ongoing developments in the labour market and focus on improving regulatory flexibility, strengthening service efficiency, and balancing the interests of employers and workers. The amendments introduce provisions allowing part-time work and freelance employment under forthcoming regulatory frameworks, offering greater

flexibility for businesses to access talent and adapt to emerging economic models, including platform-based work. The revised law also strengthens oversight of recruitment practices by regulating licensing procedures, operational requirements and penalties for recruitment offices, with the aim of improving service quality and ensuring compliance with legal standards. In addition, the ministry said the reforms provide clearer rules governing non-compete clauses, seeking to balance workers' professional mobility with the protection of employers' legitimate interests, trade secrets and client relationships.

To improve dispute resolution, the amendments introduce faster and more efficient mechanisms for settling labour disputes, including enhanced mediation procedures and the use of digital platforms by labour dispute committees, whose decisions will carry enforceable legal authority.

The reforms also require companies employing 100 or more workers to

establish joint committees comprising representatives of both employers and employees, aimed at strengthening workplace dialogue and addressing operational challenges.

Further provisions introduce professional certification and testing requirements for certain occupations to raise workforce qualifications, improve service quality and enhance productivity and safety standards across sectors.

The ministry also highlighted strengthened wage protection measures to ensure timely and regulated salary payments, as well as expanded enforcement tools, including the suspension of services for violating entities, publication of violators' names in specified cases, and stricter penalties to ensure compliance.

According to the ministry, the reforms mark a qualitative shift in Qatar's labour regulatory framework, supporting business development, improving government services, attracting skilled professionals, and promoting long-term stability in employment relations.

## Qatar attends committee meeting on DRC-Rwanda peace agreement

Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda have reaffirmed their commitment to implementing a landmark peace agreement following talks in London attended by Qatar, the United States of America, Togo and the African Union Commission. The sixth meeting of the Joint Oversight Committee, established to monitor implementation of the peace accord between the two neighbouring countries, reviewed developments since its previous session and assessed progress towards reducing tensions in eastern DRC, a region that has experienced years of instability and armed conflict.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the committee expressed deep concern over escalating violence in eastern Congo, warning that continued fighting, including drone attacks affecting civilians, posed a serious threat to both the peace process and the humanitarian situation.

Participants also highlighted concerns over the continued spread of Ebola in affected areas. The committee stressed the urgent need for practical measures to ensure the effective implementation of the ceasefire and prevent further deterioration of security conditions.

During the meeting, the Democratic Republic of the Congo briefed participants

on its efforts to neutralise the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an armed group operating in eastern Congo. Rwanda, meanwhile, provided an update on steps related to the disengagement of its forces and the reduction of defensive measures linked to the conflict.

Both governments reiterated their commitment to fully implementing the peace agreement signed on June 27, 2025. The two sides pledged to support immediate de-escalation efforts, particularly in the Minembwa area, and to use their influence with actors on the ground to help maintain stability. **(QNA)**

# Ukraine expects to sign over €10bn in deals at Poland forum

Reuters

Gdansk

**U**kraine expects to sign deals worth more than €10bn euros over the next two days at a reconstruction conference in Poland, its prime minister said yesterday, as the European Union transferred the first tranche of a big loan to Kyiv. The announcement at the start of the Ukraine Recovery Conference in the Baltic port city of Gdansk struck a positive tone for an event that had looked likely to be overshadowed by a row between Warsaw and Kyiv over World War Two-era massacres. Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said Kyiv expected to sign more than 160 agreements at the conference, taking place after more than four years of war following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The challenges facing our continent are existential... We're forced to innovate to survive, and this has become our superpower," she said. "So Ukraine empowers European defence. Ukraine empowers energy resilience."

She also said on social media platform X that on the sidelines of the URC, Ukraine signed a \$3.39bn agreement with the World Bank under the First Growth and Jobs Development Policy Operation (DPO).

Svyrydenko said the first



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk welcomes Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko to the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Gdansk, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

€3.2-billion-euro (\$3.63bn) tranche of a €90-billion EU loan would be announced. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the cash was being transferred to Kyiv yesterday.

Ukraine has said it will use the loan for defence and security, energy resilience and covering its budget deficit.

Von der Leyen said a promised investment fund for the reconstruction of Ukraine, backed by the EU, France, Germany and Poland, was also "ready to go" and could mobilise around €500mn this year.

"The message is simple that

we are sending to investors," she said. "When you invest in Ukraine, you're not only investing in Ukraine's future, but you are investing in Europe's future."

The recovery forum is the main annual international event dedicated to Ukraine's reconstruction following the devastation caused by Russian attacks, including on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Rebuilding Ukraine's economy will cost an estimated \$588bn over the next decade, the World Bank, UN, European Commission and the Ukrainian government said in February.

"Recovery is not waiting for the guns to stop. Recovery is happening now," UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Alexander De Croo told Reuters in an interview.

"I think more funding always helps, but the major impediment today is making it into bankable projects... This is hard work. This is making legislation," he added.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk has been trying to calm tensions between Kyiv and Warsaw after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky named an army unit after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

Some Ukrainians regard the UPA as heroes for the resistance they mounted against the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and as symbols of Kyiv's struggle for independence from Moscow.

But the UPA was also involved in the Volhynia massacres, a series of killings from 1943 to 1945 in which Poland says around 100,000 Poles were killed by Ukrainian nationalists. Thousands of Ukrainians also died in reprisal killings. Polish President Karol Nawrocki, a political opponent of Tusk, stripped Zelensky of a top honour over the dispute.

"Ukraine rightly wants to be part of a United Europe," Tusk said. "The condition for true, full unification has always been an understanding of one's own history and a genuine capacity and willingness for reconciliation."

## '95% of CMU-Q grads stay behind to build Qatar's knowledge economy'

From Page 1

The first, he explained, involves paying foreign firms a premium to set up a temporary presence — a model that was essential when Qatar's educational system could not yet keep up with demand. The second model, which he described as more organic, is education-led.

"Through significant investments in higher education, Qatar attracts exceptional minds, both Qatari and international. Our students are exceptionally gifted, and often the top students in their schools and

home countries," he said.

Trick said international students who come to study in Qatar often choose to stay after graduating, drawn by four years of growing attachment to the country. "They want to stay, and they hope to make a lasting economic impact," he said. He added: "This second model takes longer, but it is a more organic approach: introduce brilliant young people to a country that values the development of human capital, foster their connection to Qatar, encourage their entrepreneurial aspirations, and allow them to build their futures here."

## US allays Gulf concerns over Iran 'deal'

From Page 1

"We're not going to do anything that undermines the security of our allies, our longstanding allies in the region," he told reporters in Kuwait. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said Iran had agreed to nuclear inspections into "infinity," while Tehran said it had made no such concession. The two countries, which ended a first round of negotiations in Switzerland on Monday, have also offered conflicting accounts about financial incentives for Iran, control of the Strait of Hormuz, and Israel's parallel war in Lebanon.

All six GCC nations — Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait — are strategic US allies. Iran directed drone and missile attacks at these countries during the war, saying American bases or

interests were "legitimate" targets. The GCC make up the backbone of America's security architecture in the Middle East, and any countries rethinking their security relationship with the US could have a significant impact on US military strategy in the region.

The draft US-Iran agreement includes no limits on Iran's ballistic missiles, a proposed \$300bn reconstruction fund and provisions that could expand Tehran's regional influence and control over critical oil shipping lanes.

Some US Gulf allies are privately concerned that the interim deal could open the door to US normalisation with Iran. The US and Gulf nations, in their statement, also stressed the need for continued talks on Lebanon that are "not conditional on the outcomes of other conflicts" and for non-state groups to disarm.

## France, Italy agree on new coalition to succeed Unifil

AFP

Antibes

France and Italy want to set up a multinational coalition to succeed the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, Unifil, French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday.

"We want to launch a coalition for the post-Unifil arrangement, obviously in coordination with the European Union and the UN, to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty and that of its armed forces," Macron said after talks with Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in the town of Antibes on the French Riviera.

The new force would help prevent Lebanon's territory from becoming "a foothold for regional escalation," Macron said.

"Italy and France can absolutely make a difference," the Italian prime minister said. "From our point of view, it is necessary to ensure an international presence that avoids an extremely dangerous security vacuum."

# 101mn Europeans endure over 35C heatwave

AFP

Paris

**A**t least 101mn Europeans were forecast to swelter in temperatures of over 35C yesterday, as scores of people were thought to have been killed by the heatwave.

France and Spain, among the countries worst hit, began counting the toll from the extreme temperatures, including a three-year-old boy who got trapped in his family's car.

AFP calculations based on forecasts from the German weather service and 2025 population projections from the European Joint Research Centre indicated that more than 380mn people would face temperatures of over 30C.

The UN's climate chief Simon Stiell said the heatwave — made worse by buildings and infrastructure unsuited to such temperatures — "has the fingerprints of the climate crisis all over it".

"Until humanity stops burning colossal amounts of coal, oil and gas, extreme heat will keep getting worse," he added.

The deputy director of the EU's



Children jump over water hoses spilling water to provide relief from the summer heat as part of Cologne's climate adaptation measures in Cologne, western Germany yesterday during a heatwave in Europe. **(AFP)**

Copernicus Climate Change Service, Samantha Burgess, said the hot weather was due to a "heat dome" of trapped air from north Africa in a low-lying high-pressure system, preventing cooler air from moving in.

"While heat domes are a natural weather phenomenon, anthropogenic climate change is making heatwaves more severe and more likely to reach record-breaking temperatures," she added.

In Spain, where new tempera-

ture records have been set for June, the MoMo monitoring system of mortality rates said 212 deaths between Sunday and Wednesday could be linked to the heat.

Three deaths in northern France's Pas-de-Calais region were "likely" caused by the heat while a prosecutor said a three-year-old boy was found dead in a car in the suburbs of Paris, where temperatures topped 40C on Wednesday.

Two other children died in simi-



A pharmacy sign displays a temperature of 46.5 degrees Celsius on a street with the Eiffel Tower in the background as temperatures rise in Paris, during a heatwave affecting a majority of the country, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

lar circumstances in France this week.

In Paris, 25 cardiac arrests were recorded over 24 hours on Wednesday, compared with fewer than 10 usually, Health Minister Stephanie Rist's office said.

At the national level, she said a fourfold increase in emergency room visits for heat-related reasons had been recorded.

In Italy, courts in Palermo, Sicily, said they were suspending all non-urgent hearings until June 29

due to "malfunctioning air conditioning" while teaching unions in France called for strike action over "unacceptable working conditions".

Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* reported five deaths from the heatwave including two farmworkers and a builder.

Dozens of people, from couples to families with babies, slept in hammocks and on camping mats at the Buttes-Chaumont park in Paris to beat the heat.

# Museums rethink preservation as heritage goes beyond artefacts

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

As museums increasingly preserve memory, storytelling, sound and digital culture alongside physical artefacts, Qatar Museums (QM) experts say the challenge is to keep intangible heritage relevant while balancing tradition and innovation for future generations.

For Bouthayna M Baltaji, director of Museography and Heritage Museums Development at QM, preserving heritage is not about freezing the past in time but ensuring it continues to evolve and remain meaningful to people's lives.

"I often find myself wondering why it matters to preserve a moment in history that no longer belongs to our time. It makes me think of how we grow; each of us

becomes a version of ourselves shaped by countless interactions, absorbed in small and big ways into who we are," Baltaji told *Gulf Times*.

She said heritage follows a similar path, constantly shaped by the people and communities who inherit it.

"Heritage isn't meant to stay static; if it does, it holds no relevance to the country it exists within today. And yet it remains essential. So the work is never to keep a practice exactly as it was, but to balance tradition with innovation, so it still means something to people's lives now, in a history that could only be Qatar's," Baltaji said.

She will be among the speakers at *Beyond the Object: How Museums Preserve Cultural Heritage*, a public talk to be held at the Fire Station Auditorium on June 29 from 6pm-7:30pm.

Her remarks come as museums



Bouthayna M Baltaji

worldwide expand their role beyond collecting and conserving physical objects to safeguarding intangible heritage, including oral traditions, storytelling, sound, memory and digital culture.

According to QM, the discussion will explore how museums are redefining preservation as culture extends beyond the material world. Memory, storytelling,

sound and digital practices play a vital role in how heritage is created, shared and passed on, often in ways that challenge traditional methods of collection and display.

Joining Baltaji on the panel are Carmen Blanco, head of the Conservation Section at the Lusail Museum, and Hadeer Omar, a new media artist and associate professor at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar. The discussion will be moderated by Nicoletta Fazio, curator of Iran and Central Asia at the Museum of Islamic Art.

Held in collaboration with the Fire Station: Artists in Residence and Qatar Creates, the free event aims to foster dialogue on how museums can preserve intangible heritage while ensuring cultural knowledge and identity are passed on to future generations in ways that remain relevant to contemporary society.



# Winners capture Qatar's spirit through the lens

By Shaima Sheriff  
Staff Reporter

Winners of Visit Qatar's inaugural Qatar Through Your Lens competition say the contest has inspired them to continue capturing the country's beauty, culture and everyday life through photography, film and creativity.

The award ceremony, held at Qatar Tourism headquarters in Msheireb, honoured winners of the first edition of the photography and videography competition, which highlighted Qatar as a destination for visual storytelling and creative expression.

For many of the winners, the recognition was more than an award. It was a personal milestone and a motivation to continue sharing Qatar's story with wider audiences.

Amir Hamid El-Mubarak, first-place winner in the photography category, said he was proud to be recognised in a competition that celebrated creativity and Qatar's visual identity.

"I was born in Sudan but raised in Qatar my whole life. I feel very glad for this opportunity with Visit Qatar. It was a very nice challenge for me," he said.

El-Mubarak, a civil engineer by profession, said photography began as a hobby in 2020 and later became a more serious creative pursuit.

"My background does not have anything related to art. I'm a civil engineer, so I started doing it just in terms of free time," he said.

He added that competitions helped him gain confidence in his talent. After winning first place in another photography competition organised by the Ministry of Culture, he decided to enter more contests.



Amir Hamid El-Mubarak



Hady Abi Warde



Khalid Yousif Saqer



Paula Valencia

"I was like, okay, let's hunt this. Maybe it will be a good way to validate your talent," he said, adding that the Visit Qatar award would not be his last milestone.

Second-place winner Paula Blanche Valencia said her success came as a surprise, as photography had been only a hobby during her visit to Qatar in December.

"I did not expect to win this competition," she said. "It was actually the best day of my life, to be honest."

Her winning image showed a boy casting a net at sunset. Valencia encouraged others to take part in future editions, saying: "Go out of your house, take a photo, take a video everywhere, because Qatar is very amazing and a very beautiful place."

Hady Abi Warde, who won 10th place in the video category, said the competition encouraged him to explore Qatar through film.

"I'm so happy that I won this competition, 10th place for a video," he said. "I feel very excited to continue and to see more about Visit Qatar."

A director and photog-

rapher, Abi Warde, said his winning video came from a simple family moment.

"While I was walking around with my daughter, I decided to make a video about Qatar," he said. "It was not easy because you need to go to many places and take many pictures and videos with a small girl, but all was good."

Khalid Yousif Saqer, who placed fifth, described the award as an honour, especially as part of the competition's first edition.

"I am super happy that I won this competition," he said. "It is an honour for me to win the first edition of Qatar Through Your Lens."

He said receiving recognition from Visit Qatar added personal and professional value, and he hopes to participate again next year.

The competition, which drew more than 1,300 participants, brought together photographers, filmmakers, residents and visitors who captured Qatar from different angles – from cultural scenes and daily life to landscapes, family moments and tourist attractions.



Souq Waqif remained one of Qatar's busiest weekend destinations as large crowds gathered last evening. Residents and visitors flocked to the historic marketplace to shop, dine, and enjoy family-friendly attractions in the lively atmosphere. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

# QTF returns bigger than ever with new immersive zones, experiences

Qatar Toy Festival (QTF) returns this year bigger than ever, with the introduction of new zones and experiences. The festival, organised by Qatar Calendar in collaboration with Spacetoon Group under the theme "More to Imagine, A Whole World of Fun", will take place at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) from July 1-31.

This year's edition focuses on delivering innovative, family-friendly activities, as part of Visit Qatar's "Hala Summer" campaign. The festival spans more than 22,000sq m across four halls, featuring a diverse range of zones and activities designed to offer a comprehensive experience for all family members.

Among the festival's major new attractions is the Studio Zone, featuring immersive experiences inspired by globally beloved franchises, including Zootopia, Toy Story, Winnie the Pooh, and SpongeBob SquarePants. Another new addition is the Inflatables Zone, offering a variety of large-scale inflatable attractions designed to encourage active play and family participation.

Following its success in 2025, the Young Adult Zone returns with an expanded footprint and enhanced lineup of experiences tailored to older children and teenagers. Highlights include the Football Activation and Teen Titans Obstacle Course, alongside interactive experiences inspired by Poppy Playtime and PUBG Mobile.

The Girls Zone will immerse visitors



in a world of Disney magic, featuring the Mickey Mouse and Friends experience alongside the returning Lilo & Stitch attraction, enhanced this year with advanced visual effects.

The Boys Zone will feature action-packed adventures inspired by globally recognised brands, including Tetris, Pac-Man, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Naruto, Hot Wheels, and Spider-Man, complemented by a dedicated gaming area.

Younger visitors can enjoy the Preschool Zone, a safe and engaging environment designed specifically for early learners, featuring an interactive Paw Patrol adventure that takes children on fun-filled rescue

missions and imaginative journeys.

The main stage in Hall O4 will serve as the festival's central entertainment destination, designed as a fully immersive space that combines light, sound, and motion. The stage will host a wide range of events, including concerts, licensed character performances, and competitions, creating memorable moments for visitors throughout the festival.

Adding to the excitement, the festival is launching an exclusive new line of merchandise and collectibles inspired by the festival's characters. This includes mystery blind boxes containing rare editions and limited designs, offering visitors the chance to take home unique souvenirs.

In addition to the festival's wide range of attractions, the Qatar Toy Festival Summer Camp returns this year with a specially designed programme for children aged 4 to 12, taking place at DECC from July 5-31.

Operating daily from 8am-1pm throughout the festival, the camp offers a dynamic and structured mix of educational and recreational activities, including art and design workshops, science experiments led by Science Street, interactive play sessions with beloved characters, obstacle courses, and movement-based games. The camp accommodates up to 150 children across different age groups and is priced at QR750 per week or QR2,000 for the full month.

# Ashghal achieves 98% of Hamad Port Food Security Facilities and Warehouses Project

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) said that the construction progress of the Food Security Facilities and Warehouses Project at Hamad Port reached 98% completion, saying that it is one of Qatar's most significant essential food security projects.

The project is one of the key national initiatives overseen by Ashghal in support of the Qatar National Food Security Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030. It provides integrated infrastructure for the storage and processing of essential food commodities while enhancing the management of the State's reserves.

In a site visit to the Food Security Facilities and Warehouses Project at Hamad Port to review construction progress, President of the Ashghal Engineer Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Meer emphasised the project's importance in supporting Qatar's food security system and strengthening the country's logistics and storage infrastructure, contributing to more efficient supply chains and ensur-

ing the sustainable availability of food commodities.

For his part, Project Executive Nabil al-Khaldi said that the Food Security Facilities and Warehouses Project covers an area exceeding 530,000sq m (53 hectares) and provides a total storage capacity of 300,000 metric tonnes, noting that the project includes the construction of 51 storage silos, along with specialised facilities for the processing, manufacturing, and storage of three key food commodities: rice, sugar, and edible oils. It also incorporates advanced facilities for oil refining and rice processing, designed in accordance with the highest operational standards.

The project functions as a fully integrated standalone operational terminal within Hamad Port. It includes a dedicated berth measuring 575m in length and 12.5m in depth to receive specialised food cargo vessels. In addition, approximately 500m of the port's quay wall will be utilised to support unloading and cargo-handling operations, enhancing food supply chain efficiency and accelerating



the movement of essential commodities.

Its location within Hamad Port provides an essential advantage through the direct integration of import, storage, processing, and distribution operations, improving logistics efficiency and ensuring the rapid delivery of food products to storage facilities and local markets, al-Khaldi added.

He noted that the project comprises a comprehensive range of operational facilities, including a rice mill, oil refinery, storage and packaging warehouses, oil storage tanks, and advanced handling, transportation, packaging, and

reloading systems. It also includes administration and marine control buildings, electrical substations, central cooling facilities, maintenance and fuelling facilities, as well as supporting infrastructure and services required to ensure efficient and sustainable operations.

In line with sustainability objectives, the project also includes a specialised facility for recycling by-products generated from food commodity processing and converting them into animal feed and other products that comply with applicable standards and regulations.

The project reflects Qatar's on-



going commitment to strengthening food security and enhancing the efficiency of its national reserves. It further reinforces the country's position as a regional

leader in stock management and sustainable food supply systems, while supporting future development requirements and national resilience. (QNA)