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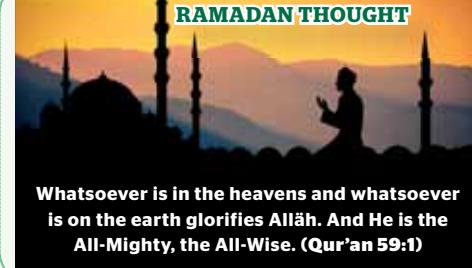


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Prayer times

Fajr...4.17; Zuhr...11.40; Asr...3.07;
Maghrib...5.50; Isha...7.20

Fasting times

Iftar today 5.50pm
Imsak tomorrow 4.06am



PM participates in the meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Gaza with the High Representative of the European Union in Cairo yesterday.

Arab-Islamic meet with EU stresses need for Gaza ceasefire, aid resumption

One dead as Israel strikes Lebanon

Lebanon's health ministry said one person was killed yesterday in an Israeli drone strike, a day after the most intense escalation since a November ceasefire in the war with Hezbollah. "The Israeli enemy raid with a drone on a car in Aita al-Shaab led to the death of one citizen," the health ministry said.

Canadian PM calls snap election

New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney yesterday called a snap election for April 28, saying he needed a strong mandate to deal with the threat posed by US President Donald Trump, who "wants to break us so America can own us." The comments showed the extent to which relations between the US and Canada have deteriorated.

Wife of US VP to visit Greenland

Usha Vance, the wife of US Vice-President JD Vance, will travel to Greenland on Thursday as President Donald Trump clings to the idea of a US annexation of the strategic, semi-autonomous Danish territory. She will visit Greenland with a US delegation to tour historical sites, learn about the territory's heritage and attend the national dog sled race.

QNA
Cairo

He Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani took part in the meeting of the ministerial committee assigned by the joint Arab-Islamic extraordinary summit on developments in the Gaza Strip, alongside High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Kaja Kallas, which convened in Cairo yesterday.

Participating in the meeting were also Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Dr Mohammed Mustafa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, Dr Ayman al-Safadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs of Egypt, Dr Badr Abdel Aati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Hakan Fidan, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the UAE, Khalifa bin Shaheen al-Marar, Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation

(OIC) Hussein Brahim Taha, and the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria.

The meeting discussed the avenues for returning to the ceasefire deal after the Israeli occupation forces resumed their aggression on the Gaza Strip,



Palestinians take shelter during an Israeli air strike, in Gaza City yesterday.

At least 30 Palestinians had been killed in Israeli strikes on Rafah and Khan Younis so far yesterday, health authorities said. Bardaweej was a member of the Hamas decision-making body, the political office. "His blood, that of his wife and martyrs, will remain fuelling the battle of liberation and independence," the group said.

ensuring the unhindered and sustainable flow of aid to address the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Strip, especially amid the Israeli occupation forces' decision that prevented its entry following the end of the first phase of this deal. **To Page 8**

Israeli strike kills Hamas official; Gaza death toll passes 50,000



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Visit Qatar announces Lusail Sky Festival

Visit Qatar in collaboration with Qatari Diar has announced the Lusail Sky Festival, the largest event of its kind in the region.

To be held from April 3-5, 4pm-10pm the festival will be coinciding with Eid al-Fitr celebrations.

Taking place at Lusail's iconic Al Saad Plaza, visitors can enjoy a unique visual experience in an open-air setting, with free activities available to all.

The Lusail Sky Festival will showcase an array of aerial performances, including international aerobatics, skydiving, skywriting demonstrations, and high-speed jet displays. Audiences will witness planes creating intricate formations with coloured smoke, laser displays, and aerial pyrotechnics, alongside spectacular drone shows.

Adding to the spectacle, the festival will include skydiving demonstrations, night sky laser and fireworks displays synchronised with music and light effects, and an extraordinary drone show featuring over 3,000 illuminated drones and 150 aircraft equipped with pyrotechnics, creating mesmerising imagery in the night sky.

Beyond the aerial performances, visitors can enjoy a diverse entertainment programme on the ground, including a food zone with 14 food trucks and carts offering a variety of culinary options, as well as an entertainment theatre featuring live performances and family-friendly activities.

A variety of music and entertainment events are in store during Eid al-Fitr, featuring both established and emerging talents. U Finio will host a concert on 4 April, featuring Abdulaziz al-Dweihli and Hisham Mahrouse, while Doha Golf Club will present performances by rising star Too Late, and renowned artist Nick Carter, offering a rich and diverse musical experience.

Additionally, the Disney-inspired musical theatre production, The Magic Box, will run from



April 3-12 at the Qatar National Convention Centre, bringing another dimension of entertainment to the Eid celebrations.

Other attractions are: The Pearl-Qatar, a key destination with marina views, luxury retail, and fine dining. Nearby, Gwani Island features Qatar's longest air-conditioned pedestrian walkway and holds two Guinness World Records for the largest outdoor air-conditioned shopping mall and the largest outdoor interactive lighting canopy.

In Al Waab, West Walk integrates retail, dining, and year-round events, with a pedestrian promenade featuring innovative cooling technology.

For cultural experiences, the Minia District offers waterfront cafés and pastel-coloured buildings in a picturesque setting. Katara Cultural Village remains a key attraction, featuring artistic exhibitions, open-air performances, and scenic beachfront areas.

Qatar's beaches provide a mix of relaxation and adventure. Seaside Beach in Mesaieed offers swimming, camel rides, and desert safaris.

QF's zero-waste community Iftar highlights sustainable message



Throughout Ramadan, worshippers are breaking their daily fast while also learning about and embracing sustainability at Qatar Foundation's Education City - through joining its zero-waste community Iftar. Taking place for the third year running at Minaretin (Education City Mosque), the volunteer-

supported Iftar minimises waste through smaller portion sizes to reduce leftover food, eco-friendly multi-compartment food boxes, whole rather than packaged fruit, reusable table covers, and using water dispensers rather than plastic bottles. Any food waste produced is composted for use within Education City.

As well as reflecting the essence of the Holy Month, the ever-popular community event has an educational aspect, encouraging worshippers to recognise and demonstrate the Islamic values of moderation, conservation, and responsibility to their community and the planet.

Ukraine, US teams hold talks in Saudi

Reuters
Kuwait/Riyadh

Ukrainian and US delegations discussed yesterday proposals to protect energy facilities and critical infrastructure, Ukraine's defence minister said, part of a diplomatic push by US President Donald Trump to end three years of war.

The meeting in Saudi Arabia, which precedes talks on Monday between the US and Russian delegations, came as US special envoy Steve Witkoff expressed optimism about the chances for ending Europe's deadliest conflict since World War Two.

"I feel that (Russian President Vladimir Putin) wants peace," Witkoff told Fox News.

"I think that you're going to see in Saudi Arabia on Monday some real progress, particularly as it affects a Black Sea ceasefire on ships between both countries. And from that, you'll naturally gravitate into a full-on shooting ceasefire."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country's delegation to talks was working in a "completely constructive manner", adding: "The conversation is quite useful, the work of the delegations is continuing."



A firefighter works at an apartment building hit by a Russian drone strike, in Kyiv, Ukraine yesterday.

"But no matter what we say to our partners today, we need to get Putin to give a real order to stop the strikes," Zelensky said in a televised statement.

Ukraine's delegation was headed by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, who said the aim of such contacts was helping to "bring a just peace closer and to strengthen security", though Zelensky also said the talks were essentially "technical".

Putin agreed last week to Trump's proposal for Russia and Ukraine to stop attacks on each other's energy infrastructure for 30 days.

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Writing Palestine

SPEAKERSAhmed AlNaouq
Author of *We Are Not Numbers*Ibtisam Azem
Author of *The Book of Disappearance*Mohammed el-Kurd
Author of *Perfect Victims* and *Rifqa***MODERATOR**Kamila Shamsie
Inaugural Writer-in-Residence
Georgetown University in Qatar

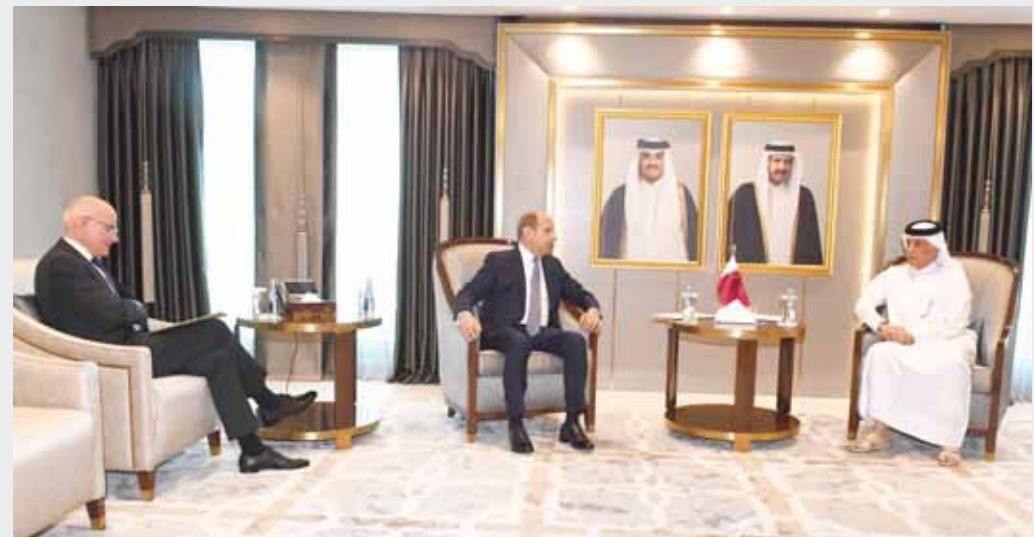
Writing Palestine, an evening of conversation with leading Palestinian writers and journalists. Organized in collaboration with the Palestine Festival of Literature (Palfest)—the cultural initiative that since 2008 has staged an international literary festival across historic Palestine—this discussion brings together three powerful voices who write against forgetting.

**March 26, 2025****7:00 pm****Auditorium**

Georgetown University Qatar

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Al-Muraikhi meets Jordan and German ambassadors



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met separately yesterday with Jordan ambassador Zaid Mufleh al-Lozi, and Germany's ambassador Lothar Freischlader. The meeting dealt with discussing Qatar's co-operation with Jordan and Germany. The participation of Qatar in the Third Global Disability Summit was also discussed during the meeting. It is scheduled to be held in Berlin next April, under the presidency of Jordan, Germany, and the Global Disability Summit's Secretariat. (QNA)

Shura Council deputy Speaker meets Canadian envoy



HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti met yesterday with Canada's ambassador to Qatar Isabelle Martin. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral relations between the countries, particularly in the parliamentary field, and the means to enhance and develop them. (QNA)

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Indian embassy hosts Suhoor



The Embassy of India in collaboration with the Indian Business & Professionals' Council and Indian Cultural Centre hosted a Ramadan Suhoor gathering at Al Messila Resort, Doha.

A photo exhibition titled 'Investment Opportunities in India' was also put up at the event attended by over 250 guests including prominent Qatari business leaders, ambassadors, diplomats and members of the Indian community, a statement said.

Indian ambassador Vipul extended greetings for the holy month of Ramadan and highlighted the close people-to-people ties between India and Qatar. He recalled the landmark visit of His Highness the Amir to India on February 17-18 during which both countries elevated their relationship to strategic partnership.

Both sides also reaffirmed



commitment for future growth of the partnership in different areas including trade, investment, energy, technology, innovation and sustainability.

The exhibition on investment opportunities in India showcased the success of the 'Make in India' programme of India over the past decade and presented

an overview of the opportunities available to the investors, especially in the emerging and high-growth sectors including automobiles, aviation, chemicals, education, electronics, food processing, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, and semiconductors, the statement added.



Katara unveils Qatar-Cuba friendship mural in new location

Katara inaugurated the mural Friends of Cuba and Qatar in the presence of Cuba's ambassador in Doha Jose Enrique Rodriguez.

Repaired in its new location behind the Qatari Al Gannas Society building, the mural promotes cultural and artistic exchange between Qatar and the Latin nation. It also continues the creative journey embraced by Katara as a forum for arts and cultures from around the world.

Katara General Manager Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti

emphasised the importance of the mural in highlighting cultural dialogue between people, noting that Katara continues to support arts and initiatives that contribute to promoting the values of understanding and rapprochement among cultures.

Rodriguez expressed his thanks and appreciation to Katara for hosting the distinguished artwork, which reflects mutual co-operation in the cultural and artistic fields.

The mural, painted by Cuban artist Michel Lopez, depicts a Qatari child and another Cuban with a football between them. It was first created to celebrate Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, reflecting the depth of bilateral relations and the spirit of friendship that unites the Qatari and Cuban people.

This initiative comes as part of Katara Cultural Village Foundation's ongoing efforts to promote visual arts in the public space and provide rich cultural experiences for visitors from around the world. (QNA)

Amir sends congratulations to Pakistan president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, on the occasion of his country's National Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the occasion. (QNA)

Military Secondary School merges with QF's Qatar Leadership Academy

The Military Secondary School, affiliated with the Ministry of Defence, has merged with Qatar Leadership Academy, part of Qatar Foundation's (QF) Pre-University Education.

Together, they will form a unified institutional entity under the name Qatar Leadership Academy (QLA).

This integration reflects the commitment of QF and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to enhancing the quality of education and training by offering a comprehensive learning experience that combines academic excellence with advanced military training. It also embodies a shared strategic vision to prepare a generation of competent and well-equipped leaders ready to tackle future challenges, by providing a holistic educational and training environment that empowers students to excel across various fields.

This will introduce new subjects, such as Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity, in the coming phase. This will align with technological advancements and meet the evolving demands of the job market. In addition, the merger establishes two independent academies - one for the preparatory level and one for the secondary level - which will each specialise in their respective stage while working together to enhance education, leadership, and military training. This innovative model exemplifies the strategic collaboration between QF and the MoD, contributing to the development of exceptional leaders according to the highest academic, leadership, and military standards.

In the coming years, QLA aims to expand its capacity to accommodate more students while



Qatar Leadership Academy

maintaining excellence in educational outcomes. It also seeks to enhance graduates' opportunities for admission to top global universities and leading military institutions, ensuring the development of distinguished leaders capable of shaping a sustainable future for Qatar.

QLA is committed to the highest international educational standards, holds academic accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and maintains membership in the Council of International Schools. It also implements AERO and NGSS standards, which ensure a globally competitive learning environment.

Jameel Katem al-Shammary,

general director QLA, said: "This integration marks a pivotal step in the academy's journey as we strive to provide a comprehensive learning environment that empowers our students to achieve the highest levels of academic excellence, leadership, and military discipline.

"QLA is moving towards a promising future, striving to establish itself as a leading educational and training institution in leadership development, adhering to the highest academic and military standards. This approach aims to achieve strategic integration that enhances the quality of education and training, equipping students with the confidence and competence to tackle future challenges," he added.

Awqaf inaugurates real estate project in Fereej Bin Omran

The General Directorate of Endowments at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf) has inaugurated an integrated real estate project in Fereej Bin Omran, which is considered a significant addition to supporting endowment projects and achieving sustainable development.

It added that the project comes as part of its efforts to enhance endowment investment and achieve the utmost utilisation of endowment assets to serve the community.

Director-General of the General Directorate of Endowments Eng Hassan Abdullah al-Marzouqi affirmed that the inauguration of this project comes within the framework of bolstering the endowments' role in economic and social development. He added that the General Directorate is committed to investing in endowment assets for the maximum interest of the community, as the project is a model for this approach.

Al-Marzouqi indicated that the project is set to provide trade and residential opportunities that meet the needs of citizens and residents while maintaining the invertebrate architectural nature, noting that commercial and residential buildings boast the endowment sector, in addition to utilising its resources in supporting charitable and societal programmes.

The General Directorate is set to launch new projects that cope with the developments in the market and meet the increasing needs, thereby contributing to achieving sustainable development and beefing up the endowment's role in building an interdependent community, he highlighted.

He noted that the endowment



covers an area of 900sq m and includes a commercial and residential building with a total built-up area of 1,377sq m. It also consists of a ground floor with commercial spaces housing five retail shops, with areas ranging between 48 and 55sq m, and the first and second floors featuring eight fully equipped residential apartments, offering diverse options for both residents and businesses.

In addition, the project showcases integrated amenities for users, along with 15 parking lots for vehicles on the ground floor to ensure easy visitor access to shopping markets, featuring an architectural design that reflects conventional Qatari style, with pointed arches that embody local heritage, alongside serene colours and Islamic motifs that enhance its cultural character.

The Al-Atrijah Endowment for the Qur'an is one of the largest Qur'anic endowments. It consists of two residential buildings that house 112 apartments and include sports facilities. More than 26,000 male and female students benefit from the Qur'anic education centres affiliated with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs across the country. (QNA)



Ministry of Municipality marks 'Earth Hour'



The Ministry of Municipality participated on Saturday in the global event 'Earth Hour' by switching off the lights in its main buildings from 8.30pm to 9.30pm. The ministry's participation in this global event reflects its engagement with community initiatives, its support for efforts to reduce carbon emissions, and its commitment to environmental safety and combating climate change. It also aligns with the objectives of the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030, as part of Qatar National Vision 2030. (QNA)

Qatar Charity's projects benefit kids in Somalia

Qatar's generous donations funded two humanitarian projects in Somalia, easing the suffering of children with heart conditions and supporting persons with special needs, Qatar Charity (QC) said yesterday.

The projects were launched by a QC delegation, led by Abdulaziz Jassim Hejji, director of the Development Operations Department, with Somali ministers and officials in attendance.

Through its 'Compassionate Hearts' initiative, QC facilitated critical surgeries for 30 children with heart defects at the Somali Sudanese Hospital in Mogadishu, thanks to the dedication of local and international volunteer doctors.

The Somali Minister of Health, Dr Ali Haji, lauded the initiative as a model of humanitarian solidarity. "Such precise surgeries were once considered impossible within Somalia, forcing patients to travel abroad or live with pain due to a lack of resources. We are grateful to Qatar Charity and all those who contributed to this project,



which saved children's lives and restored hope to their families."

Dr Mohamed Ahmed Nairobi, spokesperson for the surgical team, said: "The surgeries performed were not just medical interventions, but a message of new life for the children and their families. Every child's smile we saw after the surgery was a new motivation for us to do more."

The surgeries had a profound impact, greatly improving the health of the children, and their families expressed deep gratitude for the positive outcomes.

Samira's mother described the moment: "It was a true miracle. I never imagined my daughter would return to her normal life so quickly."

QC also launched the first phase of a project to distribute 700 wheelchairs in Somalia, providing 70 electric and manual wheelchairs to support individuals with special needs.

Present were Mohamed Osman, State Minister for Family Affairs and Human Rights; Hejji, and Mohamed Abdali Jama, chairman of Somalia's National Disability Agency.

Ramadan meet champions tolerance, interfaith harmony

The 12th edition of the Doha Ramadan Meet concluded at Qatar Sports Club, recently drawing nearly 3,000 attendees.

The event, which focused on fostering fraternity, mutual respect, and co-operation, emphasised the significance of tolerance, humanity, and unity in countering division and hatred.

Organised by the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (Digid) in collaboration with Youth Forum Qatar, the gathering brought together religious scholars, community leaders, and social activists. The event was inaugurated by Prof Ibrahim Saleh al-Naimi, chairman of Digid, who underscored the importance of interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

"This gathering reflects our ongoing collaboration with the various communities residing in Qatar, including the Indian community, which plays a vital role in promoting understanding, peace, and mutual respect. Such events serve as a reminder of the importance of dialogue and unity in building a harmonious society," he said.

Prof al-Naimi further highlighted the spiritual and societal importance of Ramadan, stating, "The holy month of Ramadan offers us a profound opportunity for self-reflection and personal growth. It is a time to renew our commitment to becoming better individuals and to contribute to positive societal transformation.

As in Islam and many other faiths, Ramadan teaches us the values of compassion, charity, and social justice – principles that are essential in fostering peace and coexistence within our communities."

The event featured several prominent speakers, including Asangananda Giri Swamiji, secretary of the Dharma Propagation Council at Sivagiri Mutt, India.



In his address, he stressed the urgent need for unity in a world grappling with rising intolerance and inequality. "Sri Narayana Guru's teachings of equality are more relevant than ever. It is imperative to strengthen interfaith dialogue to build a just and inclusive society," he remarked.

Sheikh Thoufeekh K P, president of the Solidarity Youth Movement, India, reiterated the role of youth in fostering solidarity. He emphasised the universal message of Ramadan – unity, coexistence, and compassion – urging continued efforts to build bridges between different religious and cultural groups.

"At a time when divisions are growing, gatherings like this remind us that we are all human beings before anything else.

Our shared values should bring us together rather than divide us," he stated.

Mohammad Ali al-Ghamdi, executive director, Governance and External Affairs at Qatar Charity, also addressed the gathering. He emphasised the significance of

collaboration during the blessed month of Ramadan and reaffirmed Qatar Charity's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote peace and understanding.

Prof al-Naimi presented a special shield to Asangananda Giri Swamiji in recognition of his contributions to promoting interfaith harmony. The event concluded with a shared Iftar meal, symbolising unity and togetherness among Qatar's diverse communities.

**Qatar founder's poems
celebrated by National Archives**

The National Archives of Qatar celebrated World Poetry Day through its digital platforms by highlighting the poetry of the Founder, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani. His poetry constitutes an integral part of the literary and national heritage of Qatar.

This event came as part of the commitment of the National Archives of Qatar to highlight the cultural and poetic legacy left behind by the Founder.

It reflects national values, sense of belonging, and Qatari identity.

The celebration included a display of a collection of poems written by Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani. The poems addressed various issues, most notably patriotism, protecting the land, and promoting the values of unity and solidarity. The event demonstrated how the Founder's poetry was not merely a literary masterpiece, but rather a national discourse expressing his vision for building the state and consolidating its position among nations.

The National Archives of Qatar also reviewed the original manuscripts of some of the Founder's poems, in addition to historical documents shedding light on the era in which he lived and the role poetry played in documenting major events in Qatar's history.

HMC underlines quality of services on World TB Day

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) joins the global community in observing World Tuberculosis (TB) Day today (March 24), under the World Health Organisation's theme, "Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver."

The Communicable Disease Center (CDC) at HMC is the region's first dedicated centre for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of infectious diseases and offers a range of world class services including a dedicated TB Outpatient clinic and contact screening for the condition.

Dr Muna al-Maslamani, chief executive officer and medical director of CDC said HMC is at the forefront of preventing, diagnosing, and treating TB, ensuring access to high-quality care for all in Qatar.

"The CDC is staffed by highly specialised clinical team of nurses, physicians and allied health



Dr Muna al-Maslamani

professionals that provide consultations, treatment and support for patients who either have TB or may have been exposed to the disease," Dr al-Maslamani said.

"Our TB services are provided free of charge to all. As treatment compliance is of paramount importance to combat TB, we have dedicated personnel to support our patients in adhering to their treatment regimen."

In 2024, there were more than 850 admissions to the CDC's TB wards and more than 19,500 patients referred to specialised TB clinics for treatment and follow-

up appointments. Tuberculosis, commonly referred to as TB, is a contagious infectious disease that usually attacks the lungs. It can also spread to other parts of the body, including the brain and spine. A type of bacteria called mycobacterium tuberculosis causes the disease.

The disease is classified as latent TB or active TB, with signs and symptoms of active TB including a cough that lasts three or more weeks, coughing up blood, chest pain, unintentional weight loss, fatigue and night sweats.

In addition to HMC's advanced diagnostic and treatment services, the CDC also undertakes extensive community engagement and awareness surrounding TB.

Dr al-Maslamani said globally TB remains one of the deadliest infectious killers, with 1.25mn people dying from tuberculosis in 2023.



QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY INVITATION TO TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-600002772	Repair, Servicing and Calibration of Miscellaneous type of Welding Machines Frame Call off Contract for 5 years	500/- (Non-refundable)	-	24.03.2025 25.03.2025 26.03.2025 27.03.2025	14.04.2025

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period that tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)
 - Account Number : 0013-025828-058
 - IBAN : QA51QNBA00000000013025828058
 - Bank Name : QATAR NATIONAL BANK
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (non-refundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date, you may contact at purchase@qafco.com.qa or on 4422779.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Tender Office, between 09:30 – 11:00 hours during the Holy month of Ramadan and 09:30 – 11:30 hours and 12:30 – 14:00 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".

AUCTION SALE OF VARIOUS NEW AND USED MATERIALS (As-Is Where-Is)

Black Cat Engineering and Construction W.L.L. announces the sale of various new and used materials, the details of which are listed below:

Serial No.	Description
1	Porta Cabins & Scrap Toilets
2	Containers
3	Cable Trays (Electrical & Instrument)
4	Piping Materials (Pipe, Fittings, Flanges, Bolt)
5	Consumables (Civil, Electrical & Mechanical)
6	Tools (Civil, Electrical & Mechanical)
7	Lifting Gears (Belt, Sling, Shackles, Chain Block)
8	Light Equipment (Cooler, Fan, BA Apparatus, Trolley)
9	Racks

Clarifications:

- Materials can be inspected at the company's site in Zekreet / Dukhan starting from Monday 24/3/2025 until Thursday 10/04/2025 from 6 am to 12 pm.
- The entry of any person into the auction confirms that he has fully inspected the materials being auctioned and that he accepted it in that condition.
- Price offers must be submitted in sealed envelope at the company's main office in Tornado Tower 9th Floor by latest Tuesday 15/04/2025.
- Applicants to bid must submit a temporary cash margin amounting to QAR 15,000 and the Company has the right to confiscate this amount if the winner of the bid withdraws.
- The bid envelopes will be opened on Thursday 17/04/2025, and then the concerned parties to whom the auction will be awarded will be addressed.
- When the auction is concluded, 20% of the sale value will be paid as a non-refundable deposit and the full sale price will be paid on the next day.
- If the buyer does not pay the full sale price within two working days of closing the auction, the Auction Committee may re-offer the materials for auction again or sell it to another buyer. It is not permissible to claim the advance sale price paid.
- The handover of materials will take place only after paying the full sale price.
- The ID card or company commercial registration must be presented when the auction is awarded to complete the sale procedures.
- For further inquiries and inspection purposes, please call 55376744 / 51014871.

Open Invitation

Black Cat Engineering and Construction W.L.L.

LOT - The Value Shop expands in Qatar with 2nd branch

LOT - The Value Shop has expanded its presence in Qatar with the grand opening of its second branch at Abu Sidra Mall. The new outlet was inaugurated by Dr Mohamed Althaf, LuLu Group director of Global Operation and chief sustainability officer, alongside guests. The launch featured exclusive previews of the store's offerings, interactive shopping experiences, and promotions, marking a significant milestone in LOT - The Value Shop's journey in Qatar. As a special Eid gift to the residents of Qatar, the new store offers a wider selection of high-quality products at unbeatable prices, delivering a seamless and budget-friendly shopping experience, a statement said. Following the success of its first outlet, the expansion underscores the brand's commitment to providing exceptional value, variety, and convenience.

LOT - The Value Shop offers a thoughtfully curated range of products, including trendy fashion for men, women, and children, stylish footwear, elegant jewellery, and ladies' handbags. The store also features an extensive array of stationery, home décor, furnishings, household essentials, toys, and much more, making it a preferred shopping destination for individuals and families. The Abu Sidra branch also offers the convenience of parking for up to 3,000 cars.

Staying true to its promise of affordability, most items at LOT - The Value Shop are priced between QR1 and QR19, allowing customers to find incredible deals across various categories. Household essentials are priced between QR1 and QR4, making everyday shopping budget-friendly, while the dedicated toys section ensures that every item is available for QR19 or less.



Dr Mohamed Althaf, LuLu Group director of Global Operation and chief sustainability officer, leading the grand opening of LOT - The Value Shop, alongside distinguished guests and social media influencers.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam



Staying true to its promise of affordability, most items at LOT - The Value Shop are priced between QR1 and QR19, allowing customers to find incredible deals across various categories (supplied picture)

Mall, the new outlet is designed to provide a comfortable and convenient shopping experience. The well-planned store layout

ensures easy navigation, enabling customers to explore diverse sections effortlessly, the statement added.

HMC Ambulance Service to cover key areas in Eid holidays

Hamad Medical Corporation's (HMC) Ambulance Service plan for covering Eid al-Fitr events is based on an assessment of the situation during Ramadan as the demand for the service has remained stable since the beginning of the holy month, a senior official said.

Ali Darwish, assistant Executive Director of Ambulance Service, told local Arabic daily *Arrayah* that the Eid al-Fitr ambulance plan will focus on covering the camping areas and the beaches across the country, in addition to fulfilling requests for patient transfers between hospitals during the Eid holiday.

The plan also prioritises covering vital areas and public gatherings, such as the Corniche, Aspire Park, Katara, Souq Waqif, and Old Al Wakrah Market, various beaches, and specific events and celebrations based on requests received.

Ambulance coverage will also be provided at the Eid prayer grounds at Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Mosque, the Abu Samra border crossing and Hamad International Airport, as Qatar attracts a large number of tourists and visitors from the region during Eid al-Fitr holidays.

The official explained that the Ambulance Service currently receives around 750 calls per day and operates from 65 station points, with a total of 177 ambulances of various types, including



Ali Darwish

those designated for ambulance supervisors, critical cases, and patient transfers.

The response time remains at the standard level of 10 minutes within Doha and 15 minutes outside the city and the outskirts of the country.

The station points are strategically distributed across the country based on accident reports and analytics that identify high-incident areas, ensuring ambulances are positioned near these locations.

These points are dynamically adjusted throughout the year based on the changing call patterns across Qatar.

Four-wheel-drive ambulances are used to respond to medical cases in the desert dune areas and rough terrains, while air ambulances are deployed for critical cases in remote locations, particularly in the Seaside and Khor Al Adaid. During Ramadan, the air ambulance transported an average of two cases per day.

The Ambulance Service is divided into two sections: the first

handles daily emergency calls received through 999, while the second is dedicated to scheduled patient transfers, such as for cancer patients and those undergoing dialysis, with requests received via 16060.

Darwish stressed the importance of this service in ensuring the safe transfer of patients between healthcare facilities, noting that around 500 patients are transported daily, reflecting the significant efforts of the ambulance service in supporting them.

The official urged the public to use ambulance services strictly for emergencies, highlighting that about 20% of current calls involve minor cases that could be treated at the primary healthcare centres. This would help ensure that ambulance resources remain available for more serious cases and prevent unnecessary strain on the system.

He also mentioned that the ambulances are equipped with advanced technologies, including automated traffic light systems, which open signals automatically when the emergency siren is activated. In addition, the ambulances are equipped with mapping systems to determine call locations and are linked to the hospitals to facilitate communication and preparation for incoming patients.

Darwish called on all motorists to co-operate with the Ambulance Service by clearing the way for emergency vehicles, as this significantly helps in reaching incident sites quickly. He stressed that traffic authorities handle cases of drivers crossing red lights to allow ambulances to pass with flexibility, ensuring that such violations are dismissed.

In cases where a traffic fine is issued for yielding to an ambulance, the Ambulance Service can be contacted to verify the incident and facilitate the removal of the violation after confirming the circumstances.



QCS hosts 'Hope Ghabqa' for 500 cancer survivors

Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) organised its annual event, 'Hope Ghabqa' for over 500 cancer survivors and their families. The event featured various entertainment activities and competitions for children living with cancer, and gifts distribution.

Mona Ashkanani, general manager, QCS, said: "The organisation of this annual event reflects the mission of QCS to offer comprehensive support to individuals living with cancer, including psychological, social, and material support, in addition to continuous awareness programmes. We are dedicated to providing all forms of support to this group, and the Society has launched many programmes specifically focusing on these aspects."



Ashkanani continued: "Through the organisation of 'Hope Ghabqa' we aim to highlight the inspiring stories

of individuals who have conquered the disease, demonstrating the human ability to stay hopeful and return to life

in a better way. This event represents a new ray of hope for cancer survivors and their families as they journey toward healing and recovery."

Dana Mansour, head of Psychological and Community Support Department at QCS, confirmed that the organisation offers a range of sustainable programmes aimed at improving the quality of life for cancer patients, survivors, and their families.

She said, "We are always seeking to identify the specific needs of cancer patients and their families and assist them in managing the side effects of cancer treatment. We provide psychological and social support, in addition to guiding patients to available services in Qatar that help them navigate the treatment phase smoothly."

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Pakistan National Day celebrated in Qatar

Pakistan National Day was celebrated in Qatar yesterday with national zeal and enthusiasm.

A large number of members of the Pakistani community from all walks of life attended the flag-hoisting ceremony held at the Pakistan embassy in Doha, a statement said.

Ambassador Muhammad Aamer hoisted the national flag.

A smartly turned out military contingent from Pakistan gave salute to the national flag.

Messages of Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on the occasion of Pakistan National Day were read out.

Addressing the community on the occasion, Aamer recalled the sacrifices rendered by the forefathers in the struggle to achieve Pakistan.

He paid tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Muhammad Iqbal and other

leaders of the independence movement.

Pakistan and Qatar, the envoy said, share a long history of close and friendly relations, based on mutual respect, trust and understanding.

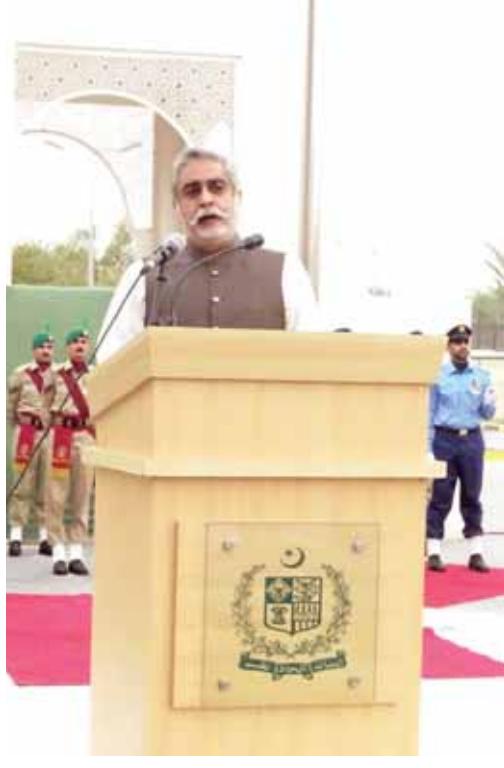
Aamer highlighted that bilateral relations between Pakistan and Qatar are based on historical bonds of a shared faith, heritage and culture.

He also expressed the hope that these ties would further strengthen in the years ahead.

The envoy thanked and appreciated the people and government of Qatar, especially His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani for his continued support and hospitality extended to the Pakistani community, year after year.

He also expressed pride in the contribution of the Pakistani community in the remarkable progress and prosperity of Qatar.

The ceremony concluded with prayers for progress, prosperity and solidarity of Pakistan, the statement added.



Awqaf provides 1,200 Iftar meals daily at Al Khor

The Iftar tent by the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs at Al Khor is witnessing a large turnout of people during Ramadan.

Approximately 1,200 persons are provided with Iftar meals, bringing the total number of beneficiaries throughout the holy month to 36,000, an Awqaf statement said.

This meal is provided as of the "Iftar Saem" project, one of the most important endowment initiatives aimed at providing food to fasting persons while fostering the spirit of social solidarity.

Awqaf is providing 300,000 Iftar meals at various locations during Ramadan.

The committee overseeing the project is committed to ensuring the provision of comprehensive meals according to the highest quality standards while also providing comfortable and air-conditioned spaces for those breaking their fast.

Awqaf, through its Iftar Saem Commit-

tee, works to provide an ideal environment that facilitates the smooth distribution of meals while ensuring the comfort and safety of those fasting.

This project reflects the Islamic values of helping those in need and alleviating the burden of providing and preparing Iftar meals during Ramadan embodying the spirit of giving and compassion in society.

The project also features faith-based and awareness programmes aimed at familiarising the beneficiaries with their religion and promoting true Islamic values.

Lectures are delivered by preachers from Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre (Fanar) in Urdi.

These lectures educate workers about the rules of fasting, the virtues of Ramadan, the importance of reading the Holy Qur'an, contemplating its verses and understanding its meanings as well as the

importance of the obligatory prayer and its great value in Islam and the values of social solidarity.

Awqaf expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the benefactors and supporters who are keen to contribute to this charitable project, stressing that their continued support contributes to providing Iftar meals to thousands of fasting persons every day.

The project represents a model of integrated charitable work as it goes beyond providing food; it extends to spreading the correct Islamic culture among workers and instilling the values of compassion and social solidarity.

The project also provides a great opportunity to guide those fasting toward an understanding of moderate Islam and to build a cohesive community characterised by co-operation and love in a faith-based atmosphere brimming with the spirit of the holy month.

The National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ), in co-operation with the Qatar Calendar House, has launched the "Phases of the Moon".

This event celebrates the holy month and promotes scientific and cultural awareness through interactive visual displays that highlight the different phases of the moon and their astronomical and religious significance.

The event offers an immersive experience for the public, allowing them to follow the daily lunar cycle through the outer walls of the NMoQ, along with simplified scientific explanations of the mechanism of the moon's changing shape during the lunar month.

This collaboration between the NMoQ and the Qatar Calendar House stems from a shared vision aimed at spreading astronomical culture and raising awareness of the importance of the moon in the lives of Muslims, both from a religious and scientific perspective.

The moon is linked to the timing of Islamic rituals, such as fasting and Hajj, and is also a symbol of time in the Hijri calendar.

The moon has long been an integral part of the cultural heritage of Qatar and the Arab world, where ancestors used it to determine the seasons.

The moon is also present in ancient poetry and mythology.

Comfort, culture and adventure trips top choices for Eid holiday travellers

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Moscow, Turkey, and the Maldives, as well as GCC countries, are topping the list of preferred Eid al-Fitr destinations for Qataris and expatriates, driven by factors like favourable weather, visa-free entry options, and family-friendly luxury, an industry expert said.

"Shorter flight duration and mostly direct, since these are short holidays for Qataris as well as expatriates making it a dynamic and diverse travel period," Tawfeeq Travel Group chief executive Rehan Ali Syed (pictured) told *Gulf Times*, noting that "good weather is one of the key factors to decide on the selection of a destination".

He stressed that factors influencing travel decisions this Eid holidays include cultural preferences and family ties, where travellers from Qatar often choose

Recent global events have also impacted travel preferences: expert

places based on comfort and convenience, especially given the relatively short holiday period.

Syed noted that these popular spots for Qatar travellers, including Thailand, offer a blend of cultural experiences, shopping opportunities, and diverse attractions.

The Maldives, meanwhile, with its luxury resorts and pristine beaches, remains a favourite choice for Qataris seeking relaxation and family-friendly activities.

He cited a rise in "staycations" within Qatar, reflecting a desire for relaxation and rejuvenation closer to home.

"Qatar is now home to several luxury resorts that offer a special break for all kinds of traveller segments," he said.

Syed added that GCC countries also retain their appeal due to proximity, cultural familiarity, and ease of travel (visa on arrival or e-visa, readily available tourist facilities for all age groups,



and short, direct flight durations).

Regional travel and short-haul destinations, he said, are also gaining traction, especially for expatriates who visit countries offering visa-on-arrival facilities.

"Destinations such as Georgia, Az-

erbaijan, Kazakhstan, Egypt, and Jordan are increasingly popular, alongside religious trips," Syed said, noting a growing interest in health and wellness tourism, particularly among Qataris.

According to the expert, recent global events have also significantly impacted travel preferences.

Economic factors are playing a crucial role, with travellers actively seeking destinations where good exchange rates allow for better value for money.

He said safety and security are also crucial, particularly in regions facing security challenges related to geopolitical tensions.

Syed said that Gen Z travellers are focused on exploring new places and prioritising getaways with quality and sustainable offerings: "Adventure tourism, wildlife safaris are also picking up."

Gen Z are those born between 1995 and 2012.

For Eid al-Fitr, he added that travel agencies in Qatar are offering a curated packages catering to diverse preferences.

Family-friendly resorts in the Maldives and Seychelles remain consistently attractive with Qatari families.

"The two most important aspects are competitive pricing and extending their concierge services to assist clients throughout their journey," Syed said. "Educating the passengers on safety and security is also a priority to ensure a wonderful holiday."

For those seeking truly memorable Eid holidays, he recommends exploring and venturing into Oman's Empty Quarter (Rub' Al Khali) for a unique desert experience, or immersing in the stunning landscapes of Georgia's Caucasus Mountains.

He noted that Sri Lanka, Azerbaijan's Baku, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan provide a blend of culture and natural beauty, while wildlife safaris in Kenya and Tanzania offer unparalleled adventure.

Mazda 2025 Ramadan offers live up to the theme - Soul of Motion, Heart of Ramadan



National Car Company, the sole agent for Mazda in Qatar for more than five decades, has launched the 'most exciting Ramadan campaign' assuring multiple rewards for car buyers on their purchase of a premium Mazda. The entire range of Mazda SUVs and sedans are on display and for sale at the state-of-the-art Mazda showroom located at Al Nasr, Doha, a statement said.

Mazda's Ramadan campaign offers value added benefits such as extended warranty, free comprehensive insurance, free service, and registration on select models over and above the most attractive and competitive prices on 2025 model year vehicles.

Besides the hassle-free ownership benefits, every Mazda buyer gets rewarded with a premium gift (Apple Watch / Air Pod) based on the value of their purchase.

For the flagship model Mazda CX-90 (6/8 Seat Large Family SUV), the offer includes free comprehensive insurance for one year, free service for three years/50,000km (whichever comes first) and free registration besides five-year unlimited kilometre warranty along with five years roadside assistance.

For Mazda CX-60 (5 Seat Large SUV), CX-5 (5 Seat Mid-size SUV) and Mazda CX-30 (Compact SUV), the offer includes free comprehensive insurance for one year, free service for two years/30,000km (whichever comes first) and free registration besides five-year unlimited kilometre warranty along with five years roadside assistance.

Customers purchasing Mazda 3, Mazda 6, Mazda CX3 and Mazda CX-30 models can take advantage of the free comprehensive insurance and registration for one year besides five years unlimited kilometre warranty along with five years roadside assistance.

Besides the regular modes of payment, customers can also opt for flexible in-house finance schemes (short term) and long-term finance with zero down payment in association with Tamweel by Al Jazeera Finance. Finance schemes are subject to credit approval. Announcing the details for the campaign, Sathish Nair - general manager, marketing & sales for Mazda Qatar said, "We have launched a classic yet traditional Ramadan campaign with the theme - Soul of Motion, Heart of Ramadan with an unbeatable value-added package to make the ownership of a premium Mazda a cherished one. Mazda vehicles are epitomised by their unique design, innovative technology, Japanese quality, and workmanship. Our team at National Car Company always strive to deliver exceptional customer experience while delivering the 'Joy of Effortless Driving' derived by our loyal customers from their favourite Mazda in an enduring and long-term association."

Mazda remains the only brand with its entire model line-up (apart from Mazda2) available in Qatar being made in Japan with exceptional quality and workmanship and all Mazda sedans and SUVs have been awarded with "2025 IIHS Safety Pick Plus" ratings, a clear indication of Mazda's human centric approach in building cars.

Mazda CX-30: Human centric

In line with Mazda's human-centric approach to building cars, the CX-30 has a feeling of oneness that extends beyond the drive. It is a five-seat crossover made for a wide range of fans, especially young people who are approaching significant life transitions. Mazda created the CX-30 to be able to help these fans enjoy those milestones to the fullest and become an essential partner in their daily lives. The human-centric cockpit helps the driver feel connected with the vehicle but not isolating from the other occupants. A focus on interior comfort and everyday user-friendliness makes this all-new compact crossover a car for everyone. The proportions of the CX-30 give the

compact crossover the freedom to go just about anywhere. Its strong presence, class-leading standard horsepower and available i-Activ all-wheel drive facilitates the ability to be driven effortlessly.

CX-30 is equipped with a four-cylinder Skyactiv-G 2.0 paired with a quick-shifting Skyactiv-Drive 6 speed automatic transmission. This engine provides class leading power output of 155 PS at 6,000 rpm and 200 Nm of torque at 4,000 rpm. The compact crossover equipped with Mazda's new off-road traction assist feature can potentially help the driver when adventuring on uneven terrain. G-Vectoring Control Plus and front-wheel drive are standard, while Mazda's predictive i-Activ all-wheel drive is available on higher trim levels. For the most refined experience, the top-trim CX-30 Premium includes a windshield-projected Active Driving Display, leather seats, power liftgate, power moonroof, Adaptive Front Lighting system, paddle shifters, and LED Signature illumination headlights and taillights.

Mazda CX-5: Elevated dimensions of driving pleasure

The 2025 model year next generation Mazda CX-5 is now available in Qatar re-emphasising Mazda's dream of delivering an SUV which breaks through the traditional trade-off between driving pleasure and passenger comfort. Mazda is the unique Japanese brand which thrives to create an emotional connection with customers and become an essential part of their lives. To achieve this, Mazda has worked to strengthen the feeling of connection between cars and driver, creating human-centred cars that operate in harmony with human sensibilities.

The All New CX-5 comes with a Skyactiv-G 2.5 direct-injection gasoline engine, paired with the six-speed Skyactiv-Drive automatic-manual transmission. These powertrains provide powerful acceleration delivering power output of 187hp@ 5,700rpm and torque of 250Nm@ 5000rpm (AWD).

Mazda CX-90 MHEV - Winner of the Arab Car of the Year award 2024 for Best Family SUV

The first-ever Mazda CX-90, introduced in GCC during January 2024 with the "For the Voyage of Your Life" concept, this wide-body three-row SUV offers greater comfort, functionality, and safety performance, making driving more enjoyable and travel more pleasant together for friends and family. Built on Mazda's all-new large platform, the three-row crossover represents Mazda's new flagship vehicle with wider, longer, and more aggressive proportions that perfectly blend its high-performance appearance with world-class refinement. The Mazda CX-90 riding on all-new performance-oriented platform, offers new electrified powertrains.

The all-new Mazda CX-90 with 3.3 litre inline 6-cylinder MHEV is made available in Qatar through the sales and service network channels of National Car Company (NCC), the sole agent for Mazda vehicles in Qatar celebrating 50 years of their partnership in excellence with Mazda Corporation-Japan. The all-new Mazda CX-90 variants are on display and for sale at the state-of-the-art Mazda showroom located at Al Nasr, Doha.

Mazda CX-90: Feel the vitality

The CX-90 design expresses a feeling of vitality rooted in Mazda's KODO or "Soul of Motion" design theme. The aesthetic of subtraction or "less is more" produces a simple shape and realises dynamic and majestic proportions. The interior is an expression of Japanese aesthetic



throughout, incorporating the dynamism of light and natural materials in an orderly elegant space.

For the powertrain, Mazda will offer a new turbocharged 3.3-litre inline six-cylinder gasoline engine augmented by a 48-volt mild hybrid system for the GCC market including Qatar. In combination with the new rear-biased AWD architecture, the CX-90 offers superior environmental performance while honouring the driver's intentions. The Mazda CX-90 comes with the all-new powerful and responsive e-Skyactiv G 3.3L Inline six turbo engine. The available 3.3-litre inline six turbo will have the highest horsepower and torque from a mass production gasoline engine developed by Mazda with 340hp and 369lb-ft of torque when using the recommended premium fuel. This engine gives the CX-90 an engaging drive and a satisfying exhaust sound. This engine also is equipped with M-Hybrid Boost (a mild-hybrid system) to provide efficiency without compromising on its remarkable performance. The electric motor is placed between the engine and transmission, creating a smooth acceleration from a standstill, and allowing the motor to directly power CX-90 at low speed. This engaging powertrain provides the CX-90 with an upscale feeling, a smooth-driving experience, engaging sound, and efficiency.

The CX-90 is built on an all-new large platform that features a front-engine, rear-wheel-bias longitudinal layout to elevate Mazda's signature driving performance. The CX-90 is equipped with Kinematic Posture Control, which first debuted on the MX-5 Miata, a software feature that suppresses body roll on tight corners to enhance the grip and allows all occupants to maintain a natural posture. Focus was put toward optimising rigidity across the entire vehicle body, while meticulously designing the seats and suspension to provide better balance, control, and confidence in a range of driving situations. With these thoughtful

developments, along with standard i-Activ all-wheel drive, drivers can enjoy the full potential of the available high-output powertrains.

All CX-90 powertrains are paired with an all-new eight-speed automatic transmission, specifically designed for the electrified longitudinal powertrains and large platform vehicles. The multi-speed automatic gearbox, without a torque converter, achieves smooth and direct acceleration while improving drivetrain efficiency.

Premium models of CX-90 3.3 Turbo

are equipped with the unique Driver Personalisation System, a first for Mazda.

The Mazda Driver Personalisation System

is a driver-enabled feature that restores

various driver settings. If driver-enabled,

the internal camera located on the upper

left corner of the Mazda Connect screen

scans facial features and stores them in-

vehicle to recognise the driver on future

drives. Driver facial data stored for this

feature is encrypted, stored in-vehicle,

and not subject to remote access.

CX-90 3.3 Turbo Premium Plus - Signature Edition

At the top of the CX-90 model lineup, the CX-90 3.3 Turbo Premium Plus completes the experience by blending first-class craftsmanship and design with Mazda's world-class performance. This six-passenger configuration offers second row captain's chairs with a centre console, while also adding heated seats. Additionally, ventilated seats are provided for both the front and second row. Elevating the interior cabin, Nappa leather seats are equipped in new tan quilting or white Japanese Premium options. The interior trim is wrapped with a suede-like fabric with unique hanging stitches, which is specifically inspired by hand-bookbinding and an intricate Japanese weaving technique known as Kakenui, on the dash. Lastly, new two-tone leather wrapped steering wheel, maple wood trim, and upgraded front and rear foot lighting balance the dignified interior to give the driver and

all occupants an elevated experience in the CX-90.

The CX-90 3.3 Turbo Premium Plus features an all-new 12.3-inch full centre display with touchscreen capabilities exclusively for Apple CarPlay or Android Auto. The fully digital 12.3-inch TFT LCD instrument panel display is a first for Mazda vehicles and will help intuitively provide the driver with necessary driving information. Other features include Adaptive Front-lighting System, Climate control front seats and second row seats, eight-way power adjustable passenger seat, power-folding-frameless auto-dimming rearview mirror, 150-volt power outlet in the cargo area, windshield wiper de-fogger etc.

Exterior features include 21-inch Machine Cut Finish alloy wheels, panoramic power sunroof, hands-free power liftgate, bright chrome accents and body-colour wheel arch moulding.

The i-Activsense safety features added are Emergency Lane Keeping, Secondary Collision Reduction System, Blind Spot Assist, Smart Brake Support Reverse, Traffic Sign Recognition, and front and rear parking sensors.

This package introduces Front Crossing and Turn-Across Traffic Braking, which is an enhancement to Smart Brake Support and helps detect and mitigate collisions with objects approaching and crossing the vehicle's forward path, as well as the detection and mitigation of collisions with vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians in the vehicle's intended path when turning at an intersection.

The 360° View Monitor gets enhanced with a new See-Through View feature that projects a large image of the area ahead of and besides the CX-90 on the centre display. This helps the driver's ability to safely view all angles when manoeuvring CX-90 in various situations, such as narrow spaces or crowded parking spaces, or surrounding objects, such as bicycles or toys left on the driveway.

For more information, visit the Mazda showroom at Al Nasr Street, call 44435965/44417859, WhatsApp on 66446675 or log on to www.mazda-qatar.com



Paramilitary shelling kills 3 in Omdurman

AFP
Khartoum

Three civilians, including two children, were killed yesterday in an artillery attack by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on Omdurman, part of Greater Khartoum, a medical source told AFP.

Eyewitnesses in the area said the strikes were some of the heaviest in recent months, coming two days after the army recaptured the capital's presidential palace in a major symbolic victory.

Since April 2023, the RSF has been fighting Sudan's regular army in a war that has killed tens of thousands, uprooted more than 12mn and created the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.

Analysts have warned that the army's gains, while significant, are unlikely to end a war marked by mass atrocities against civilians, including bombs and artillery routinely hitting homes and markets.

"Before, there used to be four or five rounds of shelling, and there was time between one strike and the next," one resident told AFP, requesting anonymity for fear of retaliation. "This morning there were seven, one right after the other."



This picture taken last week shows children walking near bullet-riddled buildings in Khartoum's twin-city Omdurman. - AFP

The medical source, who is at Al Nao hospital, one of the city's last functioning health facilities, said that "two children and a woman were killed and eight others injured in the shelling".

In recent days, the army and allied armed groups have regained most of Khartoum proper's government district, just across the Nile from Omdurman.

RSF fighters remain stationed in parts of the city centre including the airport, as well as the capital's south and west.

From their positions in western Omdurman, they have regularly launched strikes on civilian areas.

In February, more than 50 were killed in a single RSF artillery attack on a busy Omdurman market.

After a year and a half of humiliating army defeats, the tide seemed to turn late last year, when a military counteroffensive through central Sudan dislodged the RSF from key bases.

Since January this year, the army has retaken much of the capital Khartoum, pushing the paramilitary into holdout pockets and the outskirts of the city.

On Friday, the army and allied armed groups seized the country's presidential palace, which the RSF had used since the start of the war to house elite forces and stockpile ammunition.

The paramilitary force responded with what it called a "lightning operation" including a drone strike that killed three journalists and a number of army personnel.

The military has since launched a clearing operation to push the RSF out of the city centre, retaking several strategic state institutions on Saturday, including the central bank, state intelligence headquarters and the national museum.

An RSF source told AFP on Saturday that the paramilitary had "withdrawn from some locations" but that forces were waging "a fierce battle" near the airport.

The army has also seized key infrastructure, pushing on Saturday through Tuti Bridge to reclaim Tuti Island, which sits at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles in the centre of Greater Khartoum and has been under paramilitary control for nearly two years.

Despite the army's advances in the capital, Africa's third largest country remains effectively split in two, with the army holding the east and north while the RSF controls nearly all of the western region of Darfur and parts of the south.

Yesterday the paramilitary claimed control of Lagawa, a town in Sudan's southern West Darfur state, some 600km (370 miles) southwest of the capital.

Eyewitnesses in the town told AFP that RSF fighters had set up checkpoints on the streets.

Control over Sudan's southern Kordofan region is split between the army, the RSF and an armed group known as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, which last month signed a charter with the RSF.

More than 500km (320 miles) northwest, the paramilitary has also claimed control of the North Darfur town of Al Malha, killing at least 45 civilians, according to local activists.

Al Malha is one of the northernmost towns in the vast desert region between Sudan and Libya, where the RSF's critical supply lines have come under increasing attack in recent months by army-allied armed groups.

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UK finance minister to stick to fiscal rules despite global turmoil

Reuters
London

Britain's government will stick to its fiscal rules despite global upheaval, Finance Minister Rachel Reeves said yesterday, raising the prospect of belt-tightening measures to meet

her targets for the public finances in a budget update this week.

In her first full budget last October, Reeves sought to win the trust of investors by pledging to bring day-to-day spending into balance with tax revenue by the end of the decade.

But she is believed to have been knocked off course by slow eco-

nomic growth and higher borrowing costs. A potential global trade war triggered by US President Donald Trump's import tariffs has led to downgrades to the international outlook.

"The world has changed. We can all see that before our eyes and governments are not inactive in that," Reeves told Sky News. "We'll

respond to the change and continue to meet our fiscal rules."

On Friday, British debt costs jumped after higher-than-expected borrowing figures, showing nervousness among investors about the ability of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government to fix the public finances with the economy stuck in a slow gear.

Last week, the government announced cuts to welfare spending to save around £5bn (\$6.5bn) a year, angering some lawmakers in Starmer's centre-left Labour Party.

Reeves is expected to announce further measures in her Spring Statement on Wednesday to restore her £10bn of room for ma-

neuvre to meet her fiscal targets. Asked by Sky News about possible spending cuts, Reeves said public spending was still expected to outpace inflation in each year of the current parliament.

"But as a government, we have to decide where that money is spent, and we want to spend it on our priorities," she said.

India ad industry raids 'followed tip-offs under leniency scheme'

Reuters
New Delhi

India's antitrust raids last week on media buying agencies followed tip-offs under a leniency scheme that reduces penalties for companies providing evidence, three people familiar with the matter said.

Japan's Dentsu was at least one firm that has applied for the scheme, one of the people said. Dentsu declined to comment.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the Competition Commission of India raided the local offices of WPP-owned GroupM, Interpublic, Publicis and Dentsu, as well as high-profile Indian broadcasters' body IBDF, over suspected collusion on ad prices and discounts.

The three sources said the CCI investigation was linked to the watchdog's leniency programme, which allows a 100% penalty waiver for the first company coming forward with evidence of wrongdoing, and lower waivers for subsequent ones, once the case concludes.

One of the sources with direct knowledge of the matter said Dentsu made a leniency submission around February last year and disclosed evidence related to pricing arrangements between industry body the Advertising Agencies Association of India and the IBDF, which dictated terms on discounting to win ad clients.

"If media agencies wanted to do

business, they had to follow these guidelines," the person added, referring to what they viewed as a potential anti-competitive arrangement.

The CCI did not respond to queries. The AAAI and IBDF, both of which were raided in the enforcement action last week, also did not respond.

Ad giant GroupM, US-based Interpublic's IPG Mediabrands unit and France's Publicis Groupe did not reply to requests for comment.

It's not clear if any other company has made similar leniency submissions.

The IBDF represents top domestic broadcasters, including billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance-Disney joint venture, Sony and Zee Entertainment.

The CCI does not make public details of any price-fixing investigations, and conducts such raids to seize potential evidence. In the latest case, raids ran through Tuesday night for over 24 hours.

India is the world's eighth-biggest ad market where revenues of \$18.5bn last year are set to grow 9.4% in 2025, GroupM estimates.

The investigation, which will drag on for months, comes amid major shifts in India's ad landscape following a \$8.5bn merger between Walt Disney and Reliance's Indian media assets, with the combined business estimated to have a 40% share of the ad market in TV and streaming segments.

Protest by pro-Palestinian group in London



People hold up placards and wave Palestinian flags during an annual protest held by pro-Palestinian group Al Quds in central London, yesterday.

Quashing Volkswagen's \$1.4bn tax bill would be 'catastrophic': India

Reuters
New Delhi

India's government has told a court in Mumbai that agreeing to Volkswagen's demand to quash a \$1.4bn tax bill would have "catastrophic consequences" and encourage companies to withhold information and delay inquiries, court documents show.

India's highest-ever demand for back taxes related to import duties came after scrutiny of 12 years of Volkswagen shipments and has rekindled foreign investors' fears over lengthy investigations. The automaker has described the case as a "matter of life and death" for its India business, and is fighting the tax authority in the high court in Mumbai.

Volkswagen unit, Skoda Auto Volkswagen

India, faces allegations that it misclassified component imports of some Audi, VW and Skoda cars to evade higher tariffs. Its key argument to quash the tax demand is the "inaction and tardiness" of tax officials in delaying shipment reviews. The Indian tax authority told the high court in a 78-page rebuttal that Volkswagen caused the delays by withholding crucial information and data about its imports.

Accepting the carmaker's reasoning would allow importers to suppress vital information and then claim that the time-limit for the tax authority to conduct a probe had passed, the authority said in its March 10 filing, which was not public and is being reported for the first time.

This would have "catastrophic consequences," they said in the filing.

The case will be heard today. Volkswagen and

the Indian government did not respond to requests for comment. Volkswagen is a tiny player in India's car market, which is third-biggest in the world, and its Audi brand lags luxury peers such as Mercedes and BMW. If found guilty it could face a tax bill of \$2.8bn, including penalty and delayed interest.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been courting foreign investors with promises of simpler regulations and lower bureaucratic hurdles, but lengthy tax investigations that can trigger lawsuits stretching over years remain a sore point. Had New Delhi wrapped up its reviews earlier, Volkswagen has said, it could have challenged the findings or re-evaluated its import strategy.

The tax notice sent in September 2024 puts "at peril the very foundation of faith and trust" foreign investors desire, it said.

Star attends TB awareness cricket match



Bollywood actor Salman Khan (left) and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde attend a cricket match event 'TB Mukt Bharat Awareness' initiative at MCA Cricket Ground in Mumbai.

Amazon, Flipkart flout quality control rules

Reuters
New Delhi

Retail giants Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart violated Indian quality control rules by stocking products that did not have the required standards certificate, India's top government-run product certification agency said.

Raids on warehouses operated by both firms by the Bureau of Indian Standards in the Tiruvallur district of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, found that the firms had violated rules by storing, selling and exhibiting products that did not carry the BIS standard mark, a government statement said.

A spokesperson for Amazon India said the company was engaged closely with various stakeholders including regulators,

while a Flipkart spokesperson said it worked with sellers to drive awareness and to comply with all applicable laws. "The platform has several processes to review the listings sellers make on the marketplace, and also conducts regular audits to ensure compliance," a spokesperson for Flipkart said in response.

The raids are the latest headache for the two firms, leading players in India's e-commerce market which consultancy firm Bain estimated was worth \$57bn-\$60bn in 2023 and set to top \$160bn in value by 2028.

At the Amazon warehouse, 3,376 products without the standard mark, including flasks, insulated food containers, toys and ceiling fans were seized, according to the statement, while officials seized diapers, casseroles and stainless steel water bottles from the Flipkart warehouse.

Eli Lilly launches weight-loss drug Mounjaro in India

Reuters
Hyderabad

Eli Lilly has launched its blockbuster diabetes and weight-loss drug Mounjaro in India, beating rival Novo Nordisk for a much-awaited entry into the world's most populous country grappling with increasing rates of obesity and diabetes.

US-based Lilly and Danish Novo Nordisk have seen skyrocketing global demand for their innovative weight-loss drugs, with investor interest also boosting the drugmakers' valuations.

Mounjaro, a once-weekly inject-

tion approved by India's drug regulator, is priced at Rs4,375 (\$50.67) for a 5mg vial and Rs3,500 (\$40.54) for a 2.5mg vial, its lowest doses, the company said. Its highest dose is 15mg.

A patient in India may have to spend about \$200 a month when taking a weekly dose of 5mg, subject to doctor's prescription.

Mounjaro carries a list price of \$1,086.37 for each monthly fill in the US, but the amount patients pay largely depends on their insurance plan. Lilly also offers 5mg, 7.5mg and 10mg vials of Zepbound, with prices around \$499 for a month's supply if customers pay directly in cash without any third-party entities.

Chemically known as tirzepatide, Mounjaro is currently sold in the UK and Europe under the same brand name for both diabetes and weight loss. It is sold as Zepbound for obesity in the US.

Lilly, however, said that the pricing in different geographies cannot be compared given significant variation in healthcare systems, economies and reimbursement policies in each country.

"(Mounjaro) launch is ahead of Novo Nordisk and the first mover advantage should help ... but pricing seems high (for the Indian market). At the highest dose, a patient will have to spend close to Rs700,000 (around \$8,100) per an-

num," Vishal Manchanda, analyst at Systematix Institutional Equities said.

Novo's weight-loss drug, Wegovy, can cost non-insured US patients more than \$1,000 a month.

Novo's India team has been pushing the global leadership to launch Wegovy as early as 2025 in the country as opposed to the company's target of a 2026 launch.

The drugmaker said Wegovy has already been approved in India, but said it did not have a confirmed date for the medicine's launch there.

Novo is not the only competitor. Lilly will have to confront in India. Local drugmakers such as Sun Pharma, Cipla, Dr Reddy's and

Lupin have been racing to make generic versions of these drugs to grab a share of the global market estimated to be worth \$150bn in the next decade.

The active ingredient in Wegovy is semaglutide, which is likely to go off-patent in 2026 in India.

"The dual burden of obesity and type 2 diabetes is rapidly emerging as a major public health challenge in India," said president and general manager Winslow Tucker at Lilly India.

Obesity and diabetes rates in India, a country of more than 1.4bn people, have been steadily climbing. The number of adults with diabetes is set to increase to over

124mn by 2045 from 74.2mn in 2021, according to International Diabetes Federation.

Meanwhile, a government survey conducted between 2019 and 2021 showed that 24% of women and nearly 23% of men between the ages of 15 and 49 were either overweight or obese, up from 20.6% of women and 19% of men in 2015-2016.

Wegovy and Novo's diabetes drug, Ozempic – which has the same main ingredient – and Mounjaro, belong to a class of therapies known as GLP-1 receptor agonists that help control blood sugar and slow digestion, making people feel fuller for longer.

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GULF TIMES

Global TB fight at risk amid funding crisis

With tuberculosis (TB) remaining the world's deadliest infectious disease, responsible for over 1mn deaths annually bringing devastating impacts on families and communities, the World Health Organisation's (WHO) calls for urgent action could not have come at a more appropriate time. On the occasion on World TB Day, marked today (March 24), the WHO has called for an urgent investment of resources to protect and maintain TB care and support services for people in need across regions and countries.

Global efforts to combat TB have saved an estimated 79mn lives since 2000. However, the drastic and abrupt cuts in global health funding happening now are threatening to reverse these gains. Rising drug resistance especially across Europe and the ongoing conflicts across the Middle-East, Africa and Eastern Europe, are further exacerbating the situation for the most vulnerable.

Under the theme Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver, World Tuberculosis Day 2025 campaign highlights a rallying cry for urgency, and accountability and hope. "The huge gains the world has made against TB over the past 20 years are now at risk as cuts to funding start to disrupt access to services for prevention, screening, and treatment for people with TB," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "

Early reports to WHO reveal that severe disruptions in the TB response are seen across several of the highest-burden countries following the funding cuts. Countries in the WHO African Region are experiencing the greatest impact, followed by countries in the WHO South-East Asian and Western Pacific Regions. In all, 27 countries are facing crippling breakdowns in their TB response, with devastating consequences, such as: Human resource shortages undermining service

delivery; diagnostic services severely disrupted, delaying detection and treatment; data and surveillance systems collapsing, compromising disease tracking and management; community engagement efforts, including active case finding, screening, and contact tracing, deteriorating, leading to delayed diagnoses and increased transmission risks.

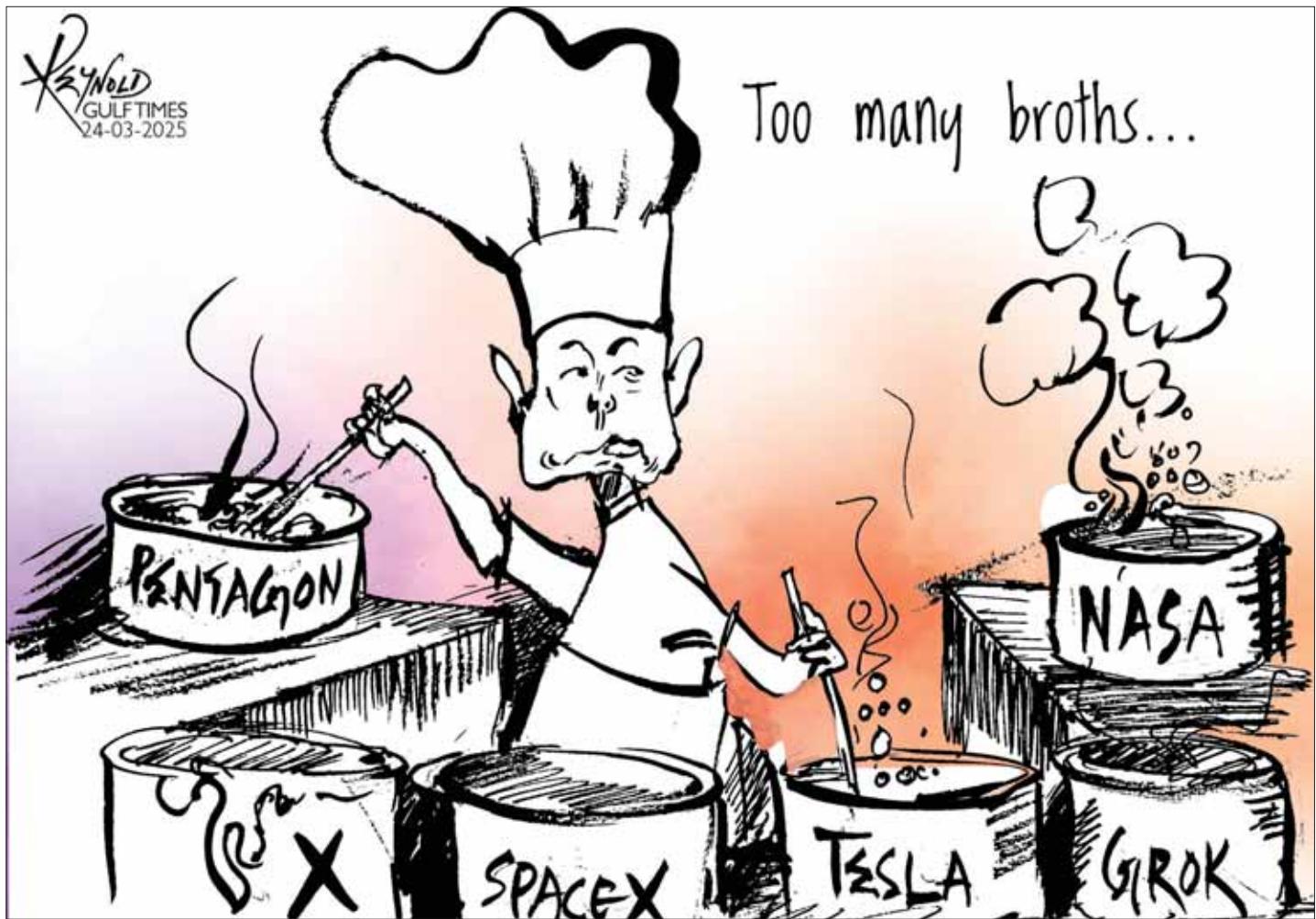
Nine countries report failing TB drug procurement and supply chains, jeopardising treatment continuity and patient outcomes. The 2025 funding cuts further exacerbate an already existing underfunding for global TB response. In 2023, only 26% of the \$22bn annually needed for TB prevention and care

Severe funding cuts are disrupting TB prevention, screening and treatment in 27 high-burden countries, threatening decades of progress and risking millions of lives

was available, leaving a massive shortfall. TB research is in crisis, receiving just one-fifth of the \$5bn annual target in 2022 – severely delaying advancements in diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines. WHO is leading efforts to accelerate TB vaccine development through the TB Vaccine Accelerator Council, but progress remains at risk without urgent financial commitments.

In response to the urgent challenges threatening TB services worldwide, WHO's Director-General and Civil Society Task Force on Tuberculosis issued a joint statement last week, demanding immediate, co-ordinated efforts from governments, global health leaders, donors, and policymakers to prevent further disruptions. The statement outlines five critical priorities: Addressing TB service disruptions urgently, ensuring responses match the crisis's scale; securing sustainable domestic funding, guaranteeing uninterrupted and equitable access to TB prevention and care; safeguarding essential TB services, including access to life-saving drugs, diagnostics, treatment and social protections, alongside cross-sector collaboration; establishing or revitalising national collaboration platforms, fostering alliances among civil society, NGOs, donors, and professional societies to tackle challenges; enhancing monitoring and early warning systems to assess real-time impact and detect disruptions early.

"This urgent call is timely and underscores the necessity of swift, decisive action to sustain global TB progress and prevent setbacks that could cost lives," said Dr Tereza Kasaeva, Director of WHO's Global Programme on TB and Lung Health. "Investing in ending TB is not only a moral imperative but also an economic necessity – every dollar spent on prevention and treatment yields an estimated \$43 in economic returns."



Big Tech's data centre boom poses new risk to US grid operators

By Tim McLaughlin
Boston

Data Centre Alley, a 30-square-mile stretch outside Washington DC and home to more than 200 data centres, consumes roughly the same electricity as Boston. So power company officials were alarmed when a big chunk of those centres – 60 of them – suddenly dropped off the grid one day last summer and switched to on-site generators.

The mass reaction was triggered by a standard safety mechanism across the data centre industry, intended to protect computer chips and electronic equipment from damage caused by voltage fluctuations. But it caused a huge surge in excess electricity, according to federal regulators and utility executives.

The magnitude of the imbalance forced grid operator PJM and local utility Dominion Energy to scale back output from power plants to protect grid infrastructure and avoid a worst-case scenario of cascading power outages across the region.

The near-miss – reported here in detail for the first time – forced federal regulators to recognise a new vulnerability of America's electrical grid: unannounced disconnections by data centres.

"As these data centres get bigger and consume more energy, the grid is not designed to withstand the loss of 1,500-megawatt data centres," John Moura, Director of Reliability Assessment and System Analysis for NERC, told Reuters in an interview.

"At some level it becomes too large to withstand unless more grid resources are added."

Historically, grid operators have planned for large power plants tripping offline. But the rapid expansion of data centres processing the vast amounts of information used for AI and crypto mining is forcing grid operators to plan for new contingencies and complicating the already difficult task of balancing the country's supply and demand of electricity.

"What it tells us is that the behaviour of data centres has the potential to cause cascading power outages for an entire region," said Alison Silverstein, a former senior adviser to the chairman of the US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The event last July 10 occurred near the DC suburb of Fairfax, Virginia, an area known as Data Centre Alley for its concentration of facilities serving Microsoft, Google and Amazon. About 70% of the world's Internet traffic flows through the area. A month after the incident, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the federal regulator for grid reliability, founded a taskforce to study en masse disconnections by data centres and crypto miners.

For this story, Reuters examined thousands of pages of regulatory documents and interviewed about a dozen industry executives to determine the origins of the fault – a failed surge protector on Dominion's Ox-Possum 230-kilovolt line near Fairfax, Virginia – and its spread across the area. NERC reviewed the incident in a report in January but did not disclose the exact location of the fault, the number of data centres involved, or how PJM and Dominion worked to rebalance the grid's supply and demand of electricity.

The number of near-miss events like the one in Data Centre Alley has grown rapidly over the last five years as more data centres come online.

The amount of power used by data centres has tripled over the past decade and could triple again by 2028, according to a report produced by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory for the Department of Energy in December. A Reuters review of disclosure filings by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), the state's main grid operator, identified more than 30 near-miss incidents since 2020, triggered by big energy users like data centres and crypto miners switching offline.

In December 2022, a failed transformer at a substation in west Texas caused nearly 400 crypto miners, data centres and oil and gas production facilities to unplug without warning.

The mass exodus produced an oversupply of nearly 1,700 megawatts of electricity – equivalent to about 5% of the grid's total demand – and forced 112 megawatts of power generation to shut down, according to ERCOT.

The risk of power outages will only grow as new data centres come online, the NERC forecast in a December report. Nearly all of the United States will face higher risks of energy shortfalls over the next 5 to 10 years, the report said.

The regulator urged utilities to consider updating federal reliability standards for data centres and crypto miners.

Many data centres are engineered by their operators to switch to local generators at the smallest hint of a problem on the grid to minimise the risk of an interruption to services like Google search or crypto mining, according to NERC.

Some grid operators have

proposed requiring data centres to "ride through" routine voltage dips without disconnecting. But data centre operators are opposed because of the risk of damaging electronic equipment and cooling systems.

ERCOT last year withdrew a proposal that would have imposed ride-through restrictions on data centres and crypto miners after facing pushback from an industry group, the Data Centre Coalition.

The group, whose members include Amazon, Google, and Meta, cited costs and the risk of damaging computer chips and cooling systems exposed to fluctuating voltage levels.

"Data centre hardware and power supplies, similar to other electronics, are very sensitive to power supply stability," the coalition said in January 2024 comments filed with ERCOT.

"Deviating from this range will deteriorate the optimal performance, reduce longevity, or damage the components beyond repair."

The coalition said in a statement to Reuters that it intended to be a helpful partner to grid operators.

"We fully recognise grid planning and management is the responsibility of utilities and grid operators, but DCC is committed to leaning in as an active and engaged partner to be helpful and engaged to meet this moment," said Aaron Tinjum, the coalition's Vice-President of Energy.

Amazon, Google and Meta did not return messages seeking comment. ERCOT did not return messages seeking comment. There is "high potential" for the magnitude of these disconnection events to grow as larger operations plug into the Texas grid, ERCOT operations engineer Patrick Gravois said in a December presentation to NERC's Large Load Task Force.

Gravois said the grid operator is still working to determine exactly what prompts big users of electricity to unplug from the grid, so that it can avoid surprises.

Ari Peskoe, director of the Electricity Law Initiative at Harvard Law School, said regulators could require data centres to ride through voltage dips – but that could risk Big Tech decamping for states with more relaxed rules.

Jim Simonelli, chief technology officer for Schneider Electric's secure power division, said utilities and the data centre industry have a lot of lessons to be learned from what happened outside Washington DC this past July.

"One thing that doesn't exist yet for the data centre industry is how to be grid-friendly," Simonelli said. - Reuters



The mass disconnection of 60 data centres in Data Centre Alley triggered a huge power surge, forcing grid operators to scale back power plant output to prevent cascading blackouts across the region.

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In Trump shadow, Canada calls snap polls for April 28

AFP
Ottawa

Canada's new Prime Minister Mark Carney yesterday called early elections for April 28, pledging to defeat Donald Trump's drive to annex the United States's huge northern neighbour.

Carney, a former central banker, was chosen by Canada's centrist Liberal Party to replace Justin Trudeau as prime minister, but he has never faced the country's broader electorate.

That will now change as Carney brought parliamentary elections forward several months from October, and he made it clear that the barrage of trade and sovereignty threats coming from the US president will be the focus of his campaign.

"I've just requested that the governor general dissolve parliament and call an election for April 28. She has agreed," Carney said in a speech to the nation, referring to King Charles III's representative in Canada, a member of the British Commonwealth.

In power for a decade, the Liberal government had slid into deep unpopularity, but Carney will be hoping to ride a wave of Canadian patriotism to a new majority.

"I'm asking Canadians for a strong, positive mandate to deal with President

Trump," Carney said, adding that the Republican "wants to break us, so America can own us. We will not let that happen."

"We are facing the most significant crisis of our lifetimes because of President Trump's unjustified trade actions and his threats to our sovereignty," Carney said.

"Our response must be to build a strong economy and a more secure Canada," he added, pledging not to meet Trump until the US leader recognises Canadian sovereignty.

Trump has riled his northern neighbour by repeatedly dismissing its borders as artificial, and urging it to join the United States as the 51st state.

The ominous remarks have been accompanied by Trump's swirling trade war, with the imposition of tariffs on imports from Canada, which could severely damage its economy.

Domestic issues such as the cost of living and immigration usually dominate Canadian elections, but this time around, one key topic tops the list in this country of 41m people: who can best handle Trump. The president's open hostility toward his northern neighbour – a Nato ally and historically one of his country's closest partners – has upended the Canadian political landscape.

Trudeau, who had been in power since 2015, was deeply unpopular when he an-



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney speaking to the media after meeting with Governor General of Canada Mary Simon yesterday in Ottawa. (AFP)

nounced he was stepping down, with Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives seen as election favourites just weeks ago.

But the polls have narrowed spectacularly in Carney's favour since he took over the Liberals, who only hold a minority in parliament, and analysts are now calling the race too close to call.

"Many consider this to be an existential election, unprecedented," Felix Mathieu, a political scientist at the University of Winnipeg, told AFP.

"It is impossible at this stage to make predictions, but this will be a closely watched election with a voter turnout that should be on the rise."

Poilievre, 45, is a career politician, first elected when he was only 25. A veteran tough-talking campaigner, he has sometimes been tagged as a libertarian and a populist.

Yesterday, Poilievre – seen by some as too similar to Trump in style and substance – set the tone.

"I want the opposite of what Donald Trump wants," the Conservative leader said, promising to base his campaign on bread-and-butter economic issues and the worries of "regular people."

Carney, 60, has spent his career outside of electoral politics. He spent more than a decade at Goldman Sachs and went on to lead Canada's central bank, and then the Bank of England.

Smaller opposition parties could suffer if Canadians seek to give a large mandate to one of the big two, to strengthen their hand against Trump.

As for the US leader, he professes not to care, while pushing ahead with plans to further strengthen tariffs against Canada and other major trading partners on April 2.

"I don't care who wins up there," Trump said this week.

"But just a little while ago, before I got involved and totally changed the election, which I don't care about [...] the Conservative was leading by 35 points."

Pakistan National Day celebrations



Pakistan Air Force Karakoram-8 (K-8) aircraft team performs aerobatic manoeuvres during the National Day parade as they fly over the President's House in Islamabad yesterday. (AFP)

Baloch activist charged with 'terrorism'

AFP
Quetta

Pakistan yesterday charged a Baloch rights activist with terrorism, sedition and murder after she led a demonstration which ended in the death of three protesters, according to police documents.

Mahrang Baloch (pictured), one of Pakistan's most prominent human rights advocates, has long campaigned for the Baloch ethnic group, which claims it has been targeted by Islamabad with harassment and extrajudicial killings.

Pakistan has been battling a separatist insurgency in Balochistan for decades, where militants target state forces and foreign nationals in the mineral-rich southwestern province bordering Afghanistan and Iran.

On Friday, she and other activists took part in a sit-in protest outside the University of Balochistan in the provincial capital of Quetta.

They demanded the release of



members of their support group, whom they allege had been detained by security agencies.

Police launched a pre-dawn raid on Saturday, arresting Baloch and other activists, during which at least three protesters died. Both sides blamed each other for the deaths.

Mary Lawlor, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights defenders, said she was "very concerned" at Baloch's arrest.

Baloch and other protesters have been charged with terror-

ism, sedition and murder, according to the police charge sheet seen by AFP.

Hamza Shafqat, a senior administrative official in Quetta, said that Baloch and other activists were held under public order laws.

Her lawyer, Imran Baloch, confirmed she was detained in a jail in Quetta.

Baloch was barred from travelling to the United States last year to attend a TIME magazine awards gala of "rising leaders".

Protests among the Baloch are often led by women. Baloch, now in her 30s, began her activist career aged 16 when her father went missing in what his supporters said was an alleged "enforced disappearance". His body was found two years later.

Earlier in March, the separatist Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) – which accuses outsiders of plundering the province's natural resources – launched a dramatic train siege that officials said ended in around 60 deaths, half of whom were separatists behind the assault.

Mary Lawlor, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights defenders, said she was "very concerned" at Baloch's arrest.

Baloch and other protesters have been charged with terror-

France arrests young man for suspected rabbi attack

French police this weekend arrested a young man suspected of attacking a rabbi in a city south of Paris, a prosecutor said yesterday, as the president described anti-Semitism as a "poison".

The man on Saturday afternoon allegedly hit the rabbi of Orleans in the head, bit him on the shoulder and insulted him as he was walking back from synagogue with his nine-year-old son, a source following the case told AFP.

Several sources said rabbi Arie Engelberg was hit on the cheek and shoulder blade. Police were checking the identity of the person in custody since he did not have documents on him when he was detained. Orleans prosecutor Emmanuelle Bochenek-Puren said.

Another source with knowledge of the case said the suspect arrested on Saturday night was known under at least three identities, one Moroccan and two Palestinian.

France is home to the largest Jewish population outside Israel and the United States, as well as the largest Muslim community in the European Union.

Several EU nations have reported a spike in "anti-Muslim hatred" and "anti-Semitism" since the Gaza war started on October 7, 2023, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Andre Druon, a Jewish community leader in Orleans, said there had not been any incident in Orleans since October 7, 2023 "apart from some graffiti" before the "very violent" attack on the rabbi.

He said the rabbi was profoundly shaken when he recounted his ordeal to the community yesterday.

"An individual started filming" the rabbi then attacked the religious leader when he asked him to stop recording, Druon said.

"We were a bit scared about the situation, but we didn't change our plans," said Lopez.

The Lagardere family, who came from France, said it hadn't impacted their plans either. The Americans "elected this president. It's democracy. If they're not happy, they'll change it in four years," said Laurent Lagardere, 54.

"He is who he is" and avoiding the United States "won't change anything," Lagardere added. Some 77.7m foreign tourists were expected in 2024, up 17% year-on-year, according to the National Travel and Tourism Office, which does not yet have final figures for last year.

Their spending is expected to slide 10.9%.

Since the report's publication, "the situation has deteriorated further," and the outcome will likely be even worse, Tourism Economics president Adam Sacks said, citing "the effects of antipathy towards the US."

In recent weeks, the Trump administration has slapped tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China – and threatened to impose them on the European Union. A sweeping plan to curb immigration has intensified.

Government bodies like the US Agency for International Development have been decimated, thousands of civil servants from lawyers to park rangers have been laid off, and Trump has drawn up controversial plans for the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

"A situation with polarising Trump Administration policies and rhetoric... will discourage travel to the US," said Tourism Economics, a subsidiary of Oxford Economics.

"Some organisations will feel pressure to avoid hosting events in the US, or sending employees to the US, cutting into business travel," it added.

The World Tourism Forum Institute said a mix of stringent immigration policies, a strong dollar and global political tensions "could significantly affect" international arrivals, "potentially reshaping the nation's tourism sector for years to come."

Among residents of 16 European and Asian countries surveyed by YouGov in December, 35% of respondents said they were less likely to come to the United States under Trump, while 22% were more likely.

For tourists from France, Uzbekistan, and Argentina interviewed by AFP in New York's Times Square, Trump's stance has not upended their plans.

Marielena Lopez and Ailen Hadjikovakis, both 33, nevertheless used their European passports rather than their Argentine ones to avoid any problems at the border.

Americans now appear frozen by the economic outlook, and terms like recession and inflation also scare tourists, along with the risk of a stronger greenback, experts point out.

"This will make the US more expensive for inbound travellers, dampening both visitor volume and average length of stay," noted Tourism Economics.

Tired Pope returns to Vatican from hospital

Pope Francis returned home to the Vatican yesterday after more than five weeks in hospital with pneumonia, taking time before leaving to thank well-wishers for their support. Looking tired and worn, the 88-year-old Catholic leader waved to a crowd outside Rome's Gemelli hospital from a balcony, the first time he has been seen in public since he was admitted on February 14. "Thank you, everyone," a weak-sounding Francis said into a microphone, seated in a wheelchair, as hundreds of pilgrims chanted his name. He waved his hands from his lap, doing an occasional thumbs-up sign, and drew laughter when he noted, smiling: "I can see that woman with yellow flowers, well done." Francis, who had bags under his eyes, was on the balcony for two minutes before being discharged from the hospital immediately afterwards. The

Argentine pontiff left by car wearing a cannula – a plastic tube tucked into his nostrils which delivers oxygen – an indication of the continued fragility of his health. His doctor said Saturday that he will need "at least two months" of convalescence at his home in the Santa Martha guesthouse in the Vatican. Pilgrims gathered yesterday outside the Gemelli, where he was treated in a special suite on the 10th floor, expressed their delight at seeing him in person. His appearance "just filled me and I think many of the people who are here with a great sense of joy," Larry James Kulick, a bishop from the US state of Pennsylvania told AFP. "It was just a wonderful opportunity to see him and I think he responded so much to the people's prayers and to all of the chanting," he said. "I hope it lifted his spirits, I think it did."

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