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SPORT | Page 1

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Qatar slams Israeli minister's visit to Al-Aqsa compound

Qatar has condemned, in the strongest terms, the Israeli National Security Minister's raid on Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of occupation police, the expulsion of worshippers from the mosque, and the shelling of a clinic belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in Jabalia camp, in the northern Gaza Strip. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that repeated attempts to alter the religious and historical status of Al-Aqsa Mosque constitute an attack not only on Palestinians but on millions of Muslims worldwide. The Ministry warned of the consequences of such violations against the Palestinian people and their Islamic and Christian holy sites. **Page 4**

Israel strikes Hama airport, Damascus

Israeli air strikes targeted yesterday the airport in the Syrian city of Hama and the vicinity of the scientific research centre in the Barzeh neighbourhood of Damascus. Israel bombed facilities of the scientific research centre shortly after former President Bashar al-Assad was ousted. Israel spent years carrying out air strikes on Syria during Assad's rule, targeting military installations and weapons transfers from Tehran intended for the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah.

'Musk to stay until he completes mission'

The White House said yesterday that tech billionaire Elon Musk will stay on to complete his mission to slash government spending and downsize the federal workforce, dismissing media reports that he will leave the role soon. Politico and ABC reported that US President Donald Trump had told members of his Cabinet that Musk will depart before his 130-day mandate. **Page 7**

'Throwback Food Festival a resounding success'

Visit Qatar's Throwback Food Festival has concluded its second edition at Old Doha Port with resounding success. This year's festival saw a significant increase in participation, with over 100,000 attendees immersing themselves in Qatar's culinary heritage. Attendees indulged in a diverse selection of delicacies from more than 20 participating vendors while enjoying a variety of interactive activities. Hamad al-Khaja, Manager of Festivals and Events Delivery at Visit Qatar, said: "We are delighted by the incredible success of this year's Throwback Food Festival, which saw a notable rise in both attendance and vendor participation. Our aim was to create a nostalgic experience that bridges generations, celebrating Qatar's traditions in a vibrant and interactive setting. The festival's growth highlights its significance as a key cultural event during Ramadan." **Page 4**

Trump unveils global reciprocal tariffs

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday unveiled global reciprocal tariffs during an event at the White House. Following are highlights of Trump's remarks: "In many cases, the friend is worse than the foe in terms of trade." "We subsidise a lot of countries and keep them going and keep them in business," Trump said about trade partners, specifically Mexico and Canada. "Why are we doing this? I mean, at what point do we say you got to work for yourselves." "We are finally putting American first," Trump said. "Trade deficits are no longer merely an economic problem. They are a national emergency," Trump said.

Trump announced huge new tariffs of 34% on imports from China and 20% on imports from the European Union — two of the main US trade partners.

Trump said that a baseline tariff of 10% would be imposed on imports from a wide range of other countries, but that some would come under far harsher duties, also including 24% on Japan and 26% on India.

Trump held up a board showing the new rates charged on most countries. Rates ranged from 10-49% on the first board and up to 50% on later boards.

With a few exceptions, based on the charts Trump read out, the tariff rate being imposed by the US on most countries was around half of what those countries charged. There were some exceptions in



US President Donald Trump holds a chart as he delivers remarks on reciprocal tariffs during an event in the Rose Garden entitled "Make America Wealthy Again" at the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday.

Tariffs set to
begin on April 5, 9

President Donald Trump's sweeping new tariffs on US trading partners are set to begin this weekend, said White House officials yesterday, with a higher rate on "worst offenders" to take effect next week. Declaring that a "national emergency" stemmed from security concerns due to persistent trade deficits, the White House told reporters that a "baseline" 10% tariff would start on 12:01am (0401 GMT) on April 5, while higher rates on various partners would begin from 12:01am on April 9.

which the US charged the exact rates that those countries charged, according to the chart.

"This is not full reciprocal, it is kind reciprocal," Trump said.

Following is the list of new tariff rates Trump displayed. Algeria 30%, Oman 10%, Uruguay 10%, Bahamas 10%, Lesotho 50%, Ukraine 10%, Bahrain 10%, Qatar 10%, Mauritius 40%, Fiji 32%, Iceland 10%, Kenya 10%, Liechtenstein 37%, Guyana 38%, Haiti 10%, Bosnia and Herzegovina 35%, Nigeria 14%, Namibia 21%, Brunei 24%, Bolivia 10%, Panama 10%, Venezuela 15%, North Macedonia 33%, Ethiopia 10%, Ghana 10%, US reciprocal tariffs- China 34%, European Union 20%, Vietnam 46%, Taiwan 32%, Japan 24%, India 26%,

Autos tariffs to cover \$600bn in imports, including laptops

US President Donald Trump's 25% autos tariffs will cover nearly \$600bn worth of vehicles and auto parts and extend to all computer imports into the US, including laptops, according to a Reuters analysis of tariff codes included in a federal register notice.

The update of Trump's autos tariff proclamation from last week included nearly 150 auto parts categories that will face tariffs starting on May 3, a month after Thursday's midnight activation of 25%

tariffs on vehicle imports. The list includes tariff codes for engines, transmissions, lithium-ion batteries and other major components, along with less expensive parts including tyres, shock absorbers, spark plug wires and brake hoses. But a major surprise was the inclusion of the four-digit tariff code covering all computers, which are among the biggest global import categories into the US, at \$138.5bn in 2024, according to US Census Bureau data.

(Picture for illustrative purpose only)

South Korea 25%, Thailand 36%, Switzerland 31%, Indonesia 32%, Malaysia 24%, Cambodia 49%, United Kingdom 10%, South Africa 30%, Brazil 10%, Bangladesh 37%, Singapore 10%, Israel 17%, Philippines 17%, Chile 10%, Australia 10%, Pakistan 29%, Türkiye 10%, Sri Lanka 44%, Colombia 10%, Peru 10%, Nicaragua 18%, Norway 15%, Costa Rica 10%, Jordan 20%, Domini-

can Republic 10%, United Arab Emirates 10%, New Zealand 10%, Argentina 10%, Ecuador 10%, Guatemala 10%, Honduras 10%, Madagascar 47%, Myanmar (Burma) 44%, Tunisia 28%, Kazakhstan 27%, Serbia 37%, Egypt 10%, Saudi Arabia 10%, El Salvador 10%, Côte d'Ivoire 21%, Laos 48%, Botswana 37%, Trinidad and Tobago 10%, Morocco 10%. **Business Page 2**

Israel to seize parts of Gaza, expand military operation

● At least 60 Palestinians killed in strikes

Reuters
Jerusalem/Cairo

Israel announced a major expansion of military operations in Gaza yesterday, saying large areas of the enclave would be seized and added to its security zones, accompanied by large-scale evacuations of the population.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said troops were seizing an area he called the Morag Axis, a reference to a former Israeli settlement once located in an area between the cities of Rafah and Khan Younis in the south of the Gaza Strip.

"Because we are now dividing the Strip and we are increasing pressure step by step so they will give us our hostages," he said in a video message.

He said the move, which would cut off Rafah from Khan Younis, would give Israel control of a second axis in southern Gaza in addition to the so-called 'Philadelphi Corridor', running along the border with Egypt.

Separately, the Israeli military said troops had completed the encirclement of the Tel al-Sultan area near Rafah and killed dozens of militants.

Earlier yesterday, Defence Minister Israel Katz announced that troops would be expanding their operation in Gaza "and seize large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel".



Palestinians gather at a makeshift market set up in the midst of a war devastated neighbourhood in the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

The Israeli military had already issued evacuation warnings to Gazans living in some southern districts and Palestinian radio reported that the area around Rafah was almost completely empty following the evacuation orders.

Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 60 people were killed in Israeli strikes yesterday, with 19 people including children killed in a strike at a UN clinic being used to house displaced people.

Katz's statement did not make clear how much land Israel intended to seize or whether the move represented a permanent annexation of territory, which would add further pressure on a population already living in one

of the most crowded areas in the world.

Israeli leaders have said they plan to facilitate voluntary departure of Palestinians from Gaza, after US President Donald Trump called for it to be permanently evacuated and redeveloped as a coastal resort under US control.

Israel resumed airstrikes on Gaza last month and sent ground troops back in, after two months of relative calm following the conclusion of a US-backed truce to allow the exchange of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Efforts led by Qatari and Egyptian mediators to get talks aimed at ending the war back on track have so far failed to make progress.

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رق QAR

9

رق QAR

19

رق QAR

29

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رق QAR

9

برياني دجاج ٥٠٠ غرام
Chicken Biryani
500gm



رق QAR

9

زينة أجنحة / أفخاذ دجاج مجمدة
٩٠٠ غرام / حبتان
Zeina Frozen Chicken Wings/
Thighs 900gm X 2pcs



رق QAR

19

بيرلا صدور دجاج طرية
٢ كيلو
Perla Tender
Chicken Breast
IQF 2kg



رق QAR

19.75

راشيل زيادي عضوي على الطريقة
اليونانية ٤٥٠ جرام / ١ حبة
Rachel's Organic
Greek Style Yoghurt
Asstd 450gm x 1pc



رق QAR

15.00

فرانجوسول دجاج
١.٢ كيلو
Frangosul
Chicken 1.2kg



رق QAR

32.00

سنيكرز شوكولاتة صغيرة
١٨٠ غرام / حبتان
Snickers Minis
Chocolate
180gm X 2pcs



رق QAR

16.00

ليز فورنو شيبس منوع
١٦٠ غرام / حبتان
Lay's Forno Chips
Asstd 160gm X 2pcs



رق QAR

12.75

كيد دي دي معجون الطماطم
١٣٥ غرام / ٨ قطع
KDD Tomato Paste
135gm X 8pcs



رق QAR

30.00

جولدن أرز بسمتي
٥ كيلو
Golden Basmati
Rice 5kg

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2pcs Per Customer



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رق QAR

11.50

جاكفروت هندي
١ كيلو
Jackfruit
India 1kg



رق QAR

23.50

جاكفروت ماليزيا ١ كيلو
Jackfruit Malaysia
1kg



رق QAR

21.50

جاكفروت
تايلندي ١ كيلو
Jackfruit
Thailand 1kg

رق QAR

21.50



رق QAR

7.75

تفاح امبروسيا
١ كيلو
Apple Ambrosia
Canada 1kg



رق QAR

11.50

عنب أحمر قمرزي
جنوب افريقي ١ كيلو
Grapes Red Crimson
South Africa 1kg



رق QAR

8.75

أفوكادو هاس
تنزاني ١ كيلو
Avocado Hass
Tanzania 1kg



رق QAR

3.25

مندرين مصري
١ كيلو
Mandarin
Egypt 1kg



رق QAR

7.75

كيوي يوناني
١ كيلو
Kiwi Fruit
Greece 1kg



رق QAR

11.75

ديامانتينا فطائر
برجر واغيو ١٥٠ غرام
Diamantina Wagyu
Burger Patties 150gm



رق QAR

32.75

لحم خروف مقطع
استرالي ١ كيلو
Lamb Cuts
Australia 1kg



رق QAR

19.75

سمك قاروص
قطري ١ كيلو
Sea Bass
Qatar 1kg



رق QAR

35.75

شريحة لحم بقري
ستريبلوين برازيلي ١ كيلو
Beef Striploin
Steak Brazil 1kg



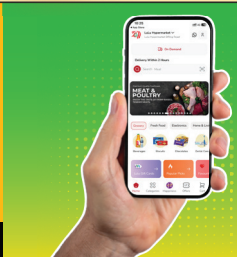
رق QAR

36.75

سلمون متوسط كامل
نرويجي ١ كيلو
Salmon Whole Medium
Norway (2-3 Size) 1kg

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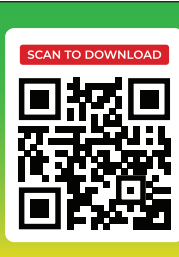


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GTA joins autism awareness drive



The General Tax Authority (GTA) joined the global observance of World Autism Awareness Day, celebrated annually on April 2, reaffirming its commitment to supporting individuals with special needs and raising community awareness. As part of the initiative, the GTA illuminated its headquarters in blue and updated its digital platform profiles to reflect the same colour as a symbol of solidarity and support for individuals with autism, a statement said. This initiative aims to highlight the importance of raising awareness, fostering social inclusion, and ensuring that individuals with autism have access to education, healthcare, and meaningful opportunities across various sectors. The GTA's participation aligns with Qatar's national efforts to promote awareness, foster a culture of social inclusion, and guarantee comprehensive and sustainable care for individuals with autism and their families. Qatar played a key role in the international recognition of World Autism Awareness Day and the designation of April 2 as its official date, having proposed the initiative to the United Nations General Assembly, which formally adopted the resolution on December 18, 2007, the statement added.

LuLu Hypermarket lit up in blue for World Autism Awareness Day 2025



In solidarity with the global movement for autism awareness, LuLu Hypermarket illuminated its D-Ring Road branch in blue yesterday (Wednesday) to mark World Autism Awareness Day 2025. The initiative reflects LuLu's ongoing commitment to fostering inclusivity and supporting individuals on the autism spectrum, a statement said. As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, LuLu has also partnered with the Qatari Autism Society and other community organisations to help spread awareness and offer support to families and individuals impacted by autism. "Raising awareness is the first step toward building a more understanding and inclusive society," said a LuLu spokesperson. "We're proud to stand with the autism community and continue supporting initiatives that make a real difference." This annual gesture of lighting up in blue not only raises visibility for autism but also reinforces LuLu Hypermarket's broader mission to drive positive change and contribute meaningfully to the communities it serves, the statement added.

MSDF marks Autism Awareness Day with community activities

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), represented by the Social Welfare Department, celebrated the World Autism Awareness Day, observed annually on April 2, with a series of activities.

On this occasion, the ministry collaborated with several

cafes to distribute posters bearing expressions that raise public awareness about autism. These initiatives aimed to educate the community, support individuals with autism and their families, and highlight efforts to improve their quality of life.

MSDF's Director of the Social Welfare Department Reem al-Ajmi emphasised that the ministry's participation aligns with its ongoing efforts to implement national strategies and plans concerning

people with disabilities. She noted that these initiatives aim to enhance awareness of the challenges faced by individuals with autism and their families, while also providing prevention measures and organising conferences and workshops to address issues faced by people with disabilities.

The Social Welfare Department continues to enhance its services and improve efficiency to support individuals with autism, enabling their active integration into soci-

ety. Through comprehensive national plans, the ministry collaborates with relevant state centres and entities to deliver awareness programs and lectures.

The ministry also underscored the importance of co-operation among all entities to raise autism awareness, address its challenges, and support families, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030, which aims to ensure a dignified life for all members of the community.

Ministry of Municipality marks World Autism Awareness Day



Ministry of Municipality buildings decorated in blue on the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day yesterday.



QNL set to hold symposium on history of manuscript production

By Staff Reporter
Doha

As part of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture and in celebration of Arabic Manuscript Day 2025, sponsored by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), Qatar National Library (QNL) is organising a symposium on April 14 and 15, from 9am-4pm.

This academic symposium will bring together a distinguished group of experts and scholars. The symposium will explore the history of (wiraqah) book-making in Morocco and the Maghreb, delving into traditions of authorship and copying, the evolution of materials used in writing, and their impact on the circulation of knowledge. The symposium will also examine

the potential of modern technologies, such as AI and digital humanities, in the study and analysis of manuscripts, while maintaining their scholarly and historical integrity.

The key topics of the symposium revolve around: Authorship, copying, editing and textual verification traditions in Morocco, and the role of scribes and book-makers (warraqon) in the transmission of learning. The history of libraries and their role in manuscript preservation. Materials used in writing: parchment, paper and inks. Maghrebi and Andalusian scripts: their varieties and historical development. The aesthetics of Moroccan manuscripts: illumination, decoration and binding. Paratexts: marginalia, ownership and documentation notes.

The symposium aims to provide a general framework for these topics alongside



case studies that highlight the distinctive characteristics of Moroccan and western Islamic manuscripts and trace parallels and distinctions with eastern Islamic traditions.

Additionally, it will discuss the role of

Moroccan publishers in transmitting ideas and scholarship across the Islamic world, the socio-economic impacts of that circulation, and the ownership of books in Morocco.

The symposium will be held in-person at QNL, with sessions conducted in Arabic. Simultaneous interpretation into English will be available on the first day. The sessions of the first day will also be streamed live via Zoom and registered participants will receive a link prior to the event.

In addition, the first day will be streamed in the original language via the Library's YouTube channel. The symposium targets researchers and the general public interested in manuscript heritage, with advance registration available on this link <https://events.qnl.qa/event/gowvd/> EN due to limited seating.



Rawabi Hypermarket Izghawa anniversary offers from today

Rawabi Hypermarket Izghawa, the largest single-floor hypermarket in Qatar, will celebrate its second anniversary from today (April 3) to April 9, with an array of ‘exciting offers and unbeatable prices’.

During the anniversary week, customers will have the chance to enjoy thrilling activities and exclusive promotions, a statement said. “One of the key attractions is the Spin the Wheel event, where customers making purchases of QR200 and above will have the opportunity to

spin the wheel and win free products. Additionally, 50 customers will receive ‘instant surprise’ by way of QR200 worth products free, adding to the excitement of the anniversary festivities. “In celebration of this milestone, Rawabi Hypermarket Izghawa is offering daily essential products at an unbeatable price of just QR2.

These special offers include egg tray (30pcs), Al Islami Chicken (1000gm), Sadia Chicken (800gm), Onion (1kg), Tomato (Mazra Doha, 1kg), Philippine Banana (1kg), Orange Valencia (Egypt,

1kg), and Al Douha Cooking Oil (750ml). “Shoppers can also take advantage of incredible deals on various products, such as Nido Milk Powder (2.25kg) for QR22, Walnut (500gm) for QR12, Kellogg’s Corn Flakes (750gm) for QR12, Comfort Dilute (2.9L) for QR12, Royal King Long Grain Basmati Rice (5kg) for QR22, and Geepas HD LED Smart TV (32-inch) for QR299.

“We are incredibly excited to celebrate two successful years at Rawabi Hypermarket Izghawa. Our customers have been an essential part of our growth, and this

anniversary is our way of expressing our gratitude. We invite all our customers to join us for a week of exceptional offers and fun-filled activities,” said Kannu Baker, group general manager of Rawabi Group of Companies.

“As the largest single-floor hypermarket in Qatar, we remain committed to providing our customers with the best products at the most competitive prices,” he added. For more information on the anniversary offers and store timings, visit www.rawabihypermarket.com

Qatar strongly condemns Israeli raid on Al-Aqsa, bombing of UNRWA clinic

QNA
Doha

Qatar has condemned, in the strongest terms, the Israeli National Security Minister’s raid on Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of occupation police, the expulsion of worshippers from the mosque, and the shelling of a clinic belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in Jabalia camp, in the northern Gaza Strip.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that repeated attempts to alter the religious and historical status of Al-Aqsa Mosque constitute an attack not only on Palestinians but on millions of Muslims worldwide.

The ministry warned of the consequences of such violations against the Palestinian people and their Islamic and Christian holy sites, emphasising that these actions risk escalating violence in the region. The ministry stressed the urgent need for the international community to uphold its responsibilities by strongly addressing Israel’s repeated attacks on civilian facilities, including hospitals, and ensuring full protection of unarmed civilians and workers in UN and humanitarian organisations.

The ministry reiterated Qatar’s unwavering stance on the just Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to practice religious rituals without restrictions and to establish an independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Qatar welcomes trilateral border agreement between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan

Qatar has welcomed the trilateral agreement between the Republic of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Uzbekistan to define the point of contact at the international borders among the three countries, as well as the signing of the Khujand Declaration on enhancing the paths of eternal friendship among the three countries. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar’s hope that the agreement would contribute to strengthening co-operation and achieving integration among the three countries, as well as enhancing security and stability in the region. The ministry also reiterated Qatar’s full support for all efforts aimed at resolving disputes and conflicts through peaceful means, in order to strengthen peace and security at both regional and international levels. (QNA)

Excessive hunting violation spotted

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change’s Wildlife Protection Department patrols have detected a violation in the Ras Laffan area, involving excessive hunting of wild rabbits. The necessary legal measures were taken, and the violators referred to the relevant authorities. The campaign was carried out based on the Environmental Protection Law and its Executive Regulations No (30) for 2002, which aim to preserve environmental diversity and protect natural resources.

Qatari delegation to perform cochlear implant in Kyrgystan



Dr Abdul Salam al-Qahtani



Engineer Abdullah al-Meer

The Cochlear Implant Support Committee, headed by a number of Qatari officials, will visit the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek tomorrow to perform several surgeries for children with hearing loss, the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has announced.

The visit will be until April 11. The committee is formed as a result of co-operation between the General Administration of Endowments at Awqaf and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Hamad Medical Corporation.

Engineer Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Meer, assistant direc-

tor general of the General Directorate of Endowments and head of the Cochlear Implant Support Delegation, said the initiative is implemented with support from donors through the Endowment Fund for Healthcare. The Qatari medical delegation performed 194 cochlear implant surgeries in Kyrgyzstan during previous visits as part of pioneering humanitarian efforts aimed at restoring hope to children with hearing loss.

Al-Meer thanked the donors for their support of the operations noting this has changed the lives of children with hearing loss. “A three-year plan was discussed



with the Kyrgyz Minister of Health including the possibility of training local doctors to perform these operations to ensure the continuity of medical services,” he said praising the logistical support provided by the Qatari embassy in Kyrgyzstan, which had a clear impact in facilitating field missions.

Dr Abdul Salam al-Qahtani, vice-chairman of the Cochlear

Implant Support Committee, said the Qatari medical delegation is fully prepared to conduct a new visit to Kyrgyzstan. This visit builds on the successes achieved during the past period, during which the medical team was able to restore hope to dozens of families by enabling their children to regain their hearing and integrate into normal life, he explained.

The visit will include cochlear

implant surgeries and the installation of hearing aids for patients who do not require surgery. It will also include a number of meetings with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health to follow up on the implementation of the medical training plan for local doctors, which will contribute to strengthening medical capabilities within the country and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project.

Qatar study provides improved guidelines for practitioners in enhancing diabetic care

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

A group of researchers from Qatar has conducted a study to provide certain guidelines and practices to support healthcare professionals in delivering improved preoperative care for diabetic patients.

The study “Preoperative management of diabetes mellitus: A comparative narrative review of the recommendations of three professional organisations with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) guidelines” aims to enhance surgical outcomes and minimise the occurrence of complications among diabetic patients.

It is a comparative review that provides a systematic comparison of the similarities and differences in the guidelines and recommendations of three professional organisations along with HMC. The organisations compared with HMC are Association of Anaesthetists formerly known as the Asso-

ciation of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, American Diabetes Association, and the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetist guidelines in collaboration with the Australian Diabetes Society.

The study, published on Qatar Medical Journal, is conducted by Fathima Fahda M Jamiu from Department of Anaesthesia, Intensive Care and Perioperative Medicine, HMC; Nudzejma Gostevic, Department of Medical Education, HMC; Yasser M Hamad, Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar and HMC; and Sohail M G Ahmed, College of Medicine, Qatar University.

According to the study, a variety of diabetic medications present unique challenges and considerations due to their different mechanisms, benefits, and potential adverse effects. In recent years, professional organisations have developed recommendations on the perioperative management of these therapies, although there remain some variations in guidelines related to medication cessation and dosage adjustments.

The study has verified the impacts of



several medications for diabetes such as insulin, dipeptidyl-peptidase-4 inhibitors, glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists, sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 inhibitors, and biguanides such as metformin.

It also points that the HbA1c levels of a diabetes patient as an indicator of diabetes control in the context of preoperative management. The updated 2024 clinical protocol at HMC - Qatar suggests that for elective surgical procedures, HbA1c levels should be \approx 8.5%.

Although there are some differences in exact numerical targets, the guidelines collectively highlight the significance of HbA1c levels during preoperative assessments. However, the recommendations from various guidelines demonstrate the intricate rela-

tionship between the management of diabetes and the problems associated with surgery.

The researchers of the study point out that standardised protocols in preoperative diabetes care remain a topic of interest to ensure consistent and safe practices across healthcare settings, and further collaborative research efforts could provide clarity and consensus in managing this diverse patient population.

As per the study the reviewed guidelines for the preoperative care of diabetes patients share some similarities. However, there are also a number of differences due to outdated data and expert opinions, and therefore differ in practices around the world. The study points out that the key elements are agreed upon, more research and global collaboration are needed to create consistent guidelines and improve patient outcomes and to promote global collaboration in developing more consistent guidelines, enhancing patient results, and establishing similar clinical protocols in different healthcare environments.

Throwback Food Festival second edition draws over 100,000 visitors



Visit Qatar’s Throwback Food Festival has concluded its second edition at Old Doha Port, witnessing a significant increase in participation with more than 100,000 visitors immersing themselves in the country’s culinary heritage throughout Ramadan. Attendees indulged in a diverse selection of delicacies from more than 20 participating vendors while enjoying a variety of interactive

activities. In a press statement, Visit Qatar’s Festivals and Events Delivery manager Hamad al-Khaja said: “Our aim was to create a nostalgic experience that bridges generations, celebrating Qatar’s traditions in a vibrant and interactive setting. The festival’s growth highlights its significance as a key cultural event during Ramadan.” The festival brought the essence of Qatar’s old souqs to life through

the ‘Dakkan’ initiative, where visitors enjoyed traditional sweets and dishes from the Tayyibin generation. It also featured interactive competitions, including the popular ‘Kahoot’ quiz and ‘Treasure Hunt,’ engaging families and individuals in heritage-themed challenges. The Hakawati storytelling sessions captivated audiences with tales of local cuisine and hospitality, while the Puppet Theatre delighted

children with engaging narratives about Qatari traditions. Adding to the festive atmosphere, live folkloric performances and traditional songs transported visitors back in time, making the event a true celebration of Qatar’s cultural identity. The highly anticipated Garangao night was a standout highlight which saw 11,000 attendees, bringing joy to families and children with colourful festivities.



Qatar residents and visitors thronged Souq Al Wakrah, Old Doha Port, Msheireb Downtown Doha, and Souq Waqif to celebrate Eid al-Fitr. These key locations have become festive hubs, offering an array of fun-filled and family-friendly activities that reflect the spirit of Eid.

PICTURES: Joey Aguilar and Shaji Kayamkulam



Vibrant Eid al-Fitr festivities draw crowds across key locations

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Eid al-Fitr celebrations continue to attract large crowds across prominent locations in Qatar, transforming into festive hubs with an array of fun-filled and family-friendly activities. Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD), Souq Al Wakrah, Old Doha Port, and Souq Waqif are among the major venues that have been receiving throngs of visitors since the start of the holidays. MDD, described as a modern architectural marvel, features interactive art installations that reflect the essence of Eid. It also hosts live entertainment shows and performances, in addition to a number of wholesome programmes, that enthrall festival-goers. Families can stroll through the pedestrian-friendly streets, explore the different galleries and museums, and dine at various restaurants and cafes. Children also enjoy the games and activations at designated areas, while others find a painting session appealing. Street performers entertain the crowds, and the air is filled with the lively conversations of people celebrating Eid together. With its picturesque waterfront, Old Doha Port has become a haven for those who like boat rides, shopping at different boutiques, and trying a variety



of cuisines, especially seafood, against the backdrop of cruise ships docked at the Grand Terminal. The port is alive with activity, with crowds enjoying the cool evening breeze and the festive atmosphere. It also brings together families who enjoy traditional music and other shows, showcasing Qatar's rich cultural heritage. Souq Al Wakrah, a historical marketplace adorned with traditional

designs and architecture, witnessed a surge in footfall since the start of the Eid break. The aroma of spices and local cuisine have provided a more traditional Eid experience, according to visitors. Souq Waqif, known as the heart of Doha's cultural scene, overwhelms the senses with its dazzling sights, lively sounds, and enticing aromas. This bustling marketplace is packed with shoppers browsing through traditional crafts, clothing, and souvenirs.





Katara concludes Eid festivities with big turnout

Katara Cultural Village concluded its Eid al-Fitr celebrations last evening, after four days of entertainment that attracted thousands of residents and visitors along the Katara Corniche and various locations within.

The celebrations featured a wide range of cultural, artistic and heritage activities, further establishing Katara's status as the premier tourist, entertainment, and cultural destination. The activities saw remarkable engagement from attendees, who praised the well-organised events and the diversity of activities that created an atmosphere of happiness, joy, and enjoyment.

On the fourth day of Katara's Eid celebrations, audiences continued to flock to the various featured artistic performances, including the play Adnan's Adventures, one of the highlights. The play captivated both children and adults with its thrilling adventure-filled story, drawing a large crowd of families.

The audience enthusiastically interacted with the play's events, which blended suspense and humour as Adnan embarked on adventures with his friends. Children actively participated by cheering and engaging with the storyline, enhancing the lively atmosphere.

The Katara Oud Center in Building 6 continued to host musical evenings as part of the Eid nights, featuring distinguished musicians, composers, and artists. The performances enriched the celebrations with authentic traditional music. Notable performers included Ahmed Abdulrahim, Evie, and Hamza al-Fadhilawi.

Traditional Qatari Ardha per-



formances and diverse folkloric shows from various African and Asian countries captivated the audience, adding vibrancy and cultural richness to the celebrations.

Throughout the four days of Eid, Katara delighted children by distributing Eidiyah (traditional festive gifts) to bring joy to their hearts. Street art performances also drew significant interaction, particularly from children.

In addition, visitors were enthralled by the melodies of rababa player Salah al-Shamaila, whose performance transported them to the authentic Bedouin atmosphere. The rababa is one of the oldest musical traditions in the Arab world, deeply connected to the Bedouin heritage, carrying in its tunes the stories of history and culture. Through this event, Katara aimed to revive this authentic musical tradition and introduce it to visitors from various cultural backgrounds, blending the past with the present.

For the fourth consecutive day,

the audience also engaged enthusiastically with the exceptional performances by the Police Music Band, whose rhythmic beats filled the atmosphere with excitement and pride.

The band's performances are among the most distinctive aspects of cultural and national celebrations, as they blend national anthems, classical pieces, and heritage music.

The musicians, dressed in their official uniforms and carrying instruments such as saxophones, drums, and trumpets, added a unique festive touch.

The Police Music Band's performances are widely popular across all age groups, as they merge musical heritage with military spirit.

Katara Beach served as the perfect spot for relaxation after a long day of festivities, as visitors enjoyed a variety of water activities. The restaurants offered an extensive selection of delicious dishes for Eid, further enhancing the celebratory atmosphere.



Musk will stay until he completes DOGE mission: White House

Reuters
Washington

The White House said yesterday that tech billionaire Elon Musk will stay on to complete his mission to slash government spending and downsize the federal workforce, dismissing media reports that he will leave the role soon.

Politico and ABC reported that US President Donald Trump had told members of his Cabinet that Musk will soon depart and return to the private sector, although the reports did not make clear if that

would mean Musk leaving before his 130-day mandate as a special government employee is set to expire around late May.

Trump has tasked the Tesla and SpaceX CEO with leading efforts through the Department of Government Efficiency to cut government funding and reshape the federal bureaucracy.

“Elon Musk and President Trump have both publicly stated that Elon will depart from public service as a special government employee when his incredible work at DOGE is complete,” White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said.

Musk and DOGE did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the reports.

On Tuesday, Musk and Trump suffered a setback as a liberal judge in Wisconsin won election to the state Supreme Court, easily defeating a conservative judge whose campaign had been heavily bankrolled by Musk and groups tied to him.

The vote had been seen as an early referendum on Trump's presidency and Musk's campaign to remake the US civil service.

Shares of some government contracting companies rose following the reports of Musk's

possible impending return to the private sector. Shares of Musk's Tesla, which had been down more than 6% in early trading after a sharper-than-expected fall in first-quarter deliveries, reversed course and were up about 5% yesterday afternoon.

Musk told Fox News' “Special Report with Bret Baier” last week that he was confident he would finish most of his stated aim of cutting \$1tn in federal spending by the end of his 130 days.

But in a March 10 interview with Fox Business Network's “Kudlow”, when he was asked by host Larry Kudlow, “You going to go another

year?” Musk replied, “Yeah, I think so”. According to the DOGE website, the only official window into its operations, DOGE estimates it has saved US taxpayers \$140bn as of April 2 through a series of actions including workforce reductions, asset sales, and contract cancellations, still far short of Musk's \$1tn goal.

But evidence for the stated savings is often missing, and the website's calculations have been riddled with errors and corrections.

DOGE's mandate as a whole is set to continue to July 4, 2026. However, many of the top fig-

ures in DOGE are tied to Musk and have not said whether they would want to stay on after the departure of the billionaire, who has been the ideological force behind the government overhaul.

There has been growing unease across the US over Musk's blunt approach to mass layoffs from the government workforce. Nearly 200,000 employees have been fired, earmarked for termination or have accepted buyouts.

Republican lawmakers have faced the wrath of angry voters at unruly town halls, while many of DOGE's efforts have become the subject of lawsuits.

Gaza mass grave underscores ‘war without limits’: UN official

AFP
United Nations

The mass grave in Rafah where the bodies of 15 medics were found after the Israeli army fired on ambulances illustrates the “war without limits” that Israel is leading in Gaza, a UN aid official said yesterday.

“It was shocking” to see medical workers “still in their uniforms, still wearing gloves, killed while trying to save lives,” said Jonathan Whittall, head of the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Palestinian territories.

“The ambulances were hit one by one,” he said in a video con-

ference after a mission to Gaza uncovered the mass grave. Of the 15 bodies, eight were members of the Palestinian Red Crescent and one was from the United Nations.

UN chief Antonio Guterres also expressed revulsion yesterday at the killings.

“The secretary-general is shocked by the attacks of the Israeli army on a medical and emergency convoy on March 23 resulting in the killings of 15 medical personnel and humanitarian workers in Gaza,” spokesman Stephane Dujarric told a briefing.

OCHA said Tuesday that the first team of first aid workers was killed by Israeli forces on March 23, and that other emergency and aid teams were hit one after

another over several hours while searching for their missing colleagues.

After several weeks of ceasefire in Gaza, Israel resumed its bombardments on March 18 and announced yesterday the extension of its military operations to seize “large areas” of the territory.

Whittall said 64% of Gaza is under displacement orders, and that 200,000 people have been uprooted since the end of the ceasefire.

He said the 25 bakeries run by the UN's World Food Programme have been closed since Tuesday. “It's an endless loop of blood, pain, death and Gaza has become a death trap,” he said. “What is happening here defies decency, it defies humanity, it defies the law.”

Protest over education dept layoffs



Demonstrators hold up signs of support outside of the Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center, following firings of individuals working in the US Department of Education, after the US President Donald Trump administration began mass layoffs of thousands of employees, in Atlanta, Georgia, US, yesterday.

Palestinian killed in Israeli raid on West Bank

AFP
Ramallah

The Palestinian health ministry said yesterday that one man was killed during a raid in the occupied West Bank by Israel's military, which did not confirm the killing. “The young man Hamza Muhammad Saeed Khammash (33 years old) was shot and killed by occupation (Israeli) forces in the Old City of Nablus,” the ministry said in a statement.

Contacted by AFP, the Israeli military said “the incident is under review”. Official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that Israeli forces arrested three people including Khammash's brother during the raid.

An AFP journalist reported that hundreds of Palestinians marched through the narrow streets of Nablus's Old City for



Friends and relatives cry during the funeral procession of Palestinian Hamza Khammash, 33, who was killed during an Israeli raid on Nablus old city in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

Khammash's funeral yesterday.

Khammash's body was covered in a Palestinian flag and his head wrapped in a keffiyeh scarf as men carried him through the streets ahead of crying relatives including his mother.

Since the start of the Gaza war

in October 2023, violence has soared in the West Bank.

Israeli troops or settler attacks have killed at least 915 Palestinians, including fighters, in the West Bank since then, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Yemen's Houthis say one killed in fresh strikes blamed on US

AFP
Sanaa

Yemen's Houthi fighters said fresh US air strikes yesterday killed one person in Hodeidah province, after overnight air raids left four people dead in the same area.

Anees Alasbahi, spokesman for the Houthis' health ministry, reported “one civilian martyr and one wounded” in the Red Sea port of Ras Issa, saying they were “victims of the US enemy's air force”.

Houthi-controlled media said strikes hit Ras Issa as well as the group's northern stronghold of Saada.

Earlier yesterday the Houthis said overnight air strikes on Hodeidah province killed four, in an attack also blamed on the US. The US, which has carried out major raids in Yemen in recent weeks, has not confirmed it was behind the latest strikes.

Houthi media said the targets of the overnight strikes included water infrastructure in Hodeidah and areas of the northwestern region of Hajjah.

US President Donald Trump has vowed that attacks on Yemen's Houthis would continue until they are no longer a threat to shipping. Early yesterday, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said the group targeted US aircraft carrier USS Harry S Truman for “the third time in 24 hours”.

Trump faces electoral setback after Wisconsin Supreme Court vote

AFP
Washington

Donald Trump's second presidency was dealt a spinning blow by voters in Wisconsin Tuesday as they elected a liberal judge to the state's Supreme Court, despite his billionaire advisor Elon Musk pouring millions into the race to sway the polls.

Liberal judge Susan Crawford soundly defeated Trump-backed Brad Schimel with more than 95% of the vote tallied, according to US media.

“Wisconsin stood up and said loudly that justice does not have a price,” Crawford said in her victory speech after the most expensive judicial contest in US history.

Republicans had pursued an all-out effort to flip the Wisconsin state Supreme Court – which rules on things like voting district boundaries – with Musk pouring \$25mn into the race and travelling to Wisconsin.

“The long con of the left is corruption of the judiciary,” Musk posted on his social media platform as results poured in.

Trump appeared to ignore the outcome on social media, highlighting a separate Wisconsin ballot initiative requiring voters to present photo identification to cast a ballot.

“Voter ID just approved in Wisconsin election... this is a big win for Republicans, maybe the biggest win of the night,” he posted on TruthSocial late Tuesday.

And he celebrated a pair of House races in Florida on the same



Democrat-backed Wisconsin Supreme Court candidate Judge Susan Crawford speaks to supporters after voters elected her to the state Supreme Court, at her election night headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin.

day, where two deeply conservative districts stayed in Republican hands, even if the margins were narrower than in 2024.

Musk, who has spearheaded Trump's attempts to gut much of the US government in a right-wing cost-cutting drive, had personally campaigned for Schimel.

The highlight of his weekend visit to the upper Midwestern state reprised a tactic seen during his efforts to help Trump defeat Democrat Kamala Harris in November – handing out money to anyone who signed a petition against so-called “activist judges”.

Progressive Senator Bernie Sanders told voters on X they had “the power to reject Musk and the oligarchy buying our elections”.

After Crawford's win, he said Wisconsin “defeated the wealthiest person on earth”.

In Florida, two seats in the US House of Representatives were

up for grabs to fill vacancies in Republican strongholds, left by Trump's National Security Advisor Mike Waltz and failed nominee for attorney-general, Matt Gaetz.

On Tuesday evening, US media called the race for Florida's sixth district in favour of Republican Randy Fine, with Trump tweeting: “Congratulations Randy, a great win against a massive cash avalanche.”

Shortly after, media outlets also called the special election in Florida's first district for Trump-backed Republican Jimmy Patronis. Democrats, adrift since losing the presidency to Trump and both chambers of Congress in November, had hoped a decent showing in Florida and a win in Wisconsin could spark a comeback.

But in Florida, they were defeated by double-digit percentage margins in both special elections.

Val Kilmer, star of *Top Gun* and *The Doors* dies at 65

Reuters
Washington

American actor Val Kilmer, who starred in films such as *Top Gun*, *The Doors*, *Tombstone* and *Batman Forever* while earning a reputation as a Hollywood bad boy for his intensity and temperament, has died at age 65.

The cause of death was pneumonia, the *New York Times* reported, citing his daughter Mercedes Kilmer. The actor had lived with poor



File photo of Val Kilmer.

health for years due to throat cancer.

The California-born, Juilliard-trained actor was, during the height of his career, one of Hollywood's most prominent leading men. He made his film debut in the 1984 spy spoof *Top Secret!* which won him legions of fans, and soared to fame as Tom Cruise's rival in the smash 1986 hit *Top Gun*, playing naval aviator Tom “Iceman” Kazansky.

Kilmer played the role again alongside Cruise in the successful 2022 sequel *Top Gun: Maverick*, though he could barely speak.

Kilmer was diagnosed with throat cancer and underwent radiation and chemotherapy treatments, as well as a tracheostomy that permanently damaged his voice. He turned to making art.

“It isn't easy to talk and be understood,” Kilmer wrote on his website in 2022.

“I am improving all the time, but am not able to be out in the world the same way I had become accustomed,” Cruise during an interview on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* in 2023 fondly recalled working again with Kilmer on the *Top Gun* sequel.

Nobel-winning ex-president of Costa Rica loses US visa

Former Costa Rican president and Nobel Peace laureate Oscar Arias said he was stripped of his US visa, prompting him to brand the country under Donald Trump an autocracy, AFP reported from San Jose. The two-time president won the Nobel in 1987 for his efforts to end civil wars in Central America. The former president said he was notified via e-mail on Tuesday morning of the cancellation of his tourist and business visa. The reason was not fully clear, but Arias has been an outspoken critic of Trump's migrant deportation policies and tariff wars.

He has also criticised the current Costa Rican president, Rodrigo Chaves, who has close ties with the Trump administration and whom Arias accuses of taking orders from Washington. The Trump administration also cancelled visas for several Costa Rican lawmakers, according to local media. Arias is not the first former Central American president to be stripped of a US visa, but most others faced legal issues related to corruption in their countries. Arias, 84, decried the decision saying: “The United States is a paradigm of democracy, or it has been. Today it has characteristics of autocracy”.

Two senior Chinese Communist Party officials swap jobs

Reuters
Beijing

Two members of China's Politburo, the Communist Party's elite decision-making body, have swapped jobs, state media reported yesterday, without giving a reason for a reshuffle that analysts called un-

precedented at this level of the Chinese hierarchy. Shi Taifeng was named head of the party's Organisation Department, responsible for all internal personnel decisions, while Li Gan-jie was named chief of the United Front Work Department, which projects party influence over religious and ethnic minorities, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan.

State media offered no explanation. Top party officials and ministers are occasionally appointed to new positions to prevent them from building up local factions or power bases, analysts say. However, the job swap among Politburo members was unprecedented in the history of

China's Communist Party, said Alfred Wu, associate professor at National University of Singapore. "It is not unusual for government ministers, but these two Politburo positions are very important heavyweights in the party." Both men were promoted to the 24-member Politburo in 2022,

but are not on the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee, the apex of power in China's political system. President Xi Jinping has spearheaded a wide-ranging anti-corruption campaign targeting party officials and the military since coming to power in 2012. But there was no suggestion the latest move was linked to corruption allega-

tions concerning the two men. "This reshuffle is a sign that Xi thinks the Central Organisation Department has not been doing a good enough job at vetting candidates for top leadership positions in light of chronic leadership purges over the last two years," said Wen-Ti Sung, fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub.

China ends two-day Taiwan drills with simulated strikes on ports, energy sites

AFP
Taipei

China's military yesterday said it had completed two days of exercises that included "live-fire" drills and simulated strikes on key ports and energy sites aimed at Taiwan, the self-ruled island it claims as its own. The surprise manoeuvres were condemned by Taiwan, while the US criticised it as "intimidation tactics". They came less than a month after Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te called China a "foreign hostile force". Named "Strait Thunder-2025A", the drills were in the middle and southern parts of the Taiwan Strait as well as the East China Sea, the military said. By yesterday evening, a People's Liberation Army spokesman Shi Yi said "the Eastern Theater Command has completed all designated tasks of the joint exercises carried out from April 1-2". Earlier, he said that yesterday's exercises were meant to "test the troops' capabilities" in areas such as "blockade and control, and precision strikes on key targets". The military also said it had held "long-range live-fire drills" and practised hitting "simulated targets of key ports and energy facilities".

Journalists saw fighter jets circling over the island Pingtan, the closest point on the mainland to Taiwan and where there is a military base. China's Shandong aircraft carrier was also carrying out drills testing the ability to "blockade" Taiwan, the Eastern Theater Command said. Beijing's foreign ministry warned yesterday the "punishment will not stop" until Taiwan's leaders stop pushing for what it says is independence from China. The democratic island of 23mn people is a potential flashpoint between China and the US, which is Taiwan's most important security partner. The US state department said Beijing's "aggressive" military activities and rhetoric towards Taiwan "only serve to exacerbate tensions and put the region's security and the world's prosperity at risk". Chinese leaders oppose Washington's support for Taiwan and detest Lai, who they call a "separatist". Yesterday's drills in the strait came a day after China sent its army, navy, air and rocket forces to surround Taiwan, prompting Taipei to dispatch its own air and maritime forces. Taiwan's defence ministry said there was no live-fire near the island yesterday. By early afternoon, 36 Chinese aircraft, 21 warships

and 10 coast guard boats had been detected around Taiwan. That compares with Tuesday's count of 21 warships, 71 aircraft and four coast guard vessels. China's Eastern Theater Command kept up its propaganda yesterday, posting a "Paralysing Strikes" poster on its Weibo account, showing Chinese forces surrounding Taiwan and firing missiles at the island. "Pursuing Taiwan independence will only endanger Taiwan and plunge Taiwan compatriots into an abyss of misery," said Chinese ministry of defence spokesman Zhang Xiaogang in a statement yesterday. Major General Meng Xiangqing, professor at the PLA National Defence University, warned more drills could follow this week's exercises. "As long as Taiwan independence separatists dare to cross the line, the PLA will definitely act," Meng told state broadcaster CCTV. Beijing has ramped up military pressure on Taiwan in recent years and held multiple large-scale exercises around the island that are often described as rehearsals for a blockade and seizure of the territory. Tensions have escalated since Lai took office in May 2024 and adopted tougher rhetoric than his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen in defending the island's sovereignty.

Nepal premier visits Thailand



Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra (centre left) and Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli (centre right) walk past a guard of honour during a welcome ceremony at Government House in Bangkok.

US approves \$5.58bn fighter jet sale to Manila

AFP
Washington

The US said it has approved the possible sale of \$5.58bn in F-16 fighter jets to the Philippines, as Washington backs its ally in rising tensions over China. The state department said it was green-lighting a sale that includes 20 F-16 jets and related equipment to the Philippines, a treaty-bound ally of the US. The sale would "improve the security of a strategic partner that continues to be an important force for political stability, peace and economic progress in

Southeast Asia," a state department statement said. It would also boost "the Philippine Air Force's ability to conduct maritime domain awareness" and "enhance its suppression of enemy air defences," the statement said. The news follows months of increasing confrontations between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety despite an international ruling that its assertion has no merit. A state department spokesperson said yesterday the deal would be final only after "a signed Letter of Offer and Ac-

ceptance" was received from the "purchasing partner". Philippine defence department spokesman Arsenio An-dolong said he had "not received any official notice of such a decision." But China warned Manila against the purchase, saying the Philippines was "threatening" regional peace. "The Philippines' defence and security co-operation with other countries should not target any third party or harm the interests of a third party. Nor should it threaten regional peace and security or exacerbate regional tensions," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

Volcano spews ash in Indonesia

A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted twice yesterday, releasing a column of smoke nearly one mile into the air, the country's volcanology agency said. Mount Dukono on the Halmahera island in North Maluku province erupted at 16.52 local time (0752GMT), sending an ash tower 1.5km above its peak. "The ash column was observed to be white to grey in colour with thick intensity towards the southwest," the volcanology agency said in a statement yesterday. It had followed an earlier eruption that occurred around 6.46am local time, which the agency said spewed an ash column one kilometre into the sky. The volcano is currently on the third-highest alert level of Indonesia's four-tiered alert system. The agency said locals and visitors should not hike, carry out activities or approach the 4km exclusion zone around Dukono's active crater.

Hot air balloon festival held



Hot air balloons, mostly made from recycled paper and tied with ropes, float in the air during the annual hot air balloon festival, held since 1950 to celebrate Eid al-Fitr in Wonosobo, central Java, Indonesia, yesterday.

11-year-old girl drugged, put on psychiatric ward in identity mix-up

An 11-year-old girl was restrained, injected with anti-psychotic drugs, and placed on a mental health ward after New Zealand police mistook her for a missing woman, a report found yesterday. Health officials and police have scrambled to explain the mix-up, which has appalled political leaders and stoked outrage across the country. The girl - who displayed "limited verbal ability" - was crossing a bridge in northern Hamilton city when a passing police car mistakenly identified her as a missing 20-year-old female hospital patient, the review said. Police drove the girl to hospital, where she was admitted to an "intensive psychiatric care unit" despite one nurse suggesting she "resembled a child". "Patient A lives with a disability that means she was not able to tell people about herself," said a review by the ministry of health, referring to the girl. After refusing to take drugs offered by staff, the girl was restrained

and injected with anti-psychotic medication that is "rarely administered to children". "Staff were working on the assumption that they were administering medication to an adult, not a child," read the damning review of the March 9 incident. The girl spent more than 12 hours in hospital until police realised their mistake and called her family to pick her up. "I just wish to start by apologising to this young person and her family for the trauma and distress that was caused," said senior health official Richard Sullivan. "This report is a frank read. But it is necessary to make sure this doesn't happen again." New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon launched an investigation when the incident came to light. "That is incredibly distressing and incredibly concerning," he said. "As a parent you identify with what is a horrific set of circumstances. I have massive amounts of empathy for her and her family."

Myanmar junta declares quake ceasefire as survivors plead for aid

AFP
Sagaing, Myanmar

Myanmar's junta announced a temporary ceasefire yesterday as the death toll from a devastating earthquake rose and desperate survivors pleaded for more help amid frantic scenes of aid distribution. The shallow 7.7-magnitude earthquake on Friday flattened buildings across Myanmar, killing nearly 3,000 people and making thousands more homeless. The military government said it would observe a ceasefire from Wednesday until April 22 to make quake relief efforts easier, after

other armed groups fighting the country's bloody four-year civil war made similar pledges. Rights groups and several foreign governments had earlier condemned the junta for continuing to carry out air strikes even as the country grappled with the quake aftermath. The junta said in a statement the ceasefire had "the aim of speeding up relief and reconstruction efforts, and maintaining peace and stability". But it warned its opponents - a complex array of pro-democracy and ethnic minority armed groups - it would still respond to attacks, acts of sabotage or "gathering, organising, and expanding territory that would undermine peace". The

junta also said Min Aung Hlaing will travel to Bangkok today for a summit of South Asian countries plus Myanmar and Thailand, where he will discuss the quake response. It is a rare foreign trip for the leader, and something of a diplomatic coup as it breaks with a regional policy of not inviting junta leaders to major events in the wake of the putsch. Journalists saw frantic scenes as hundreds of desperate people scrambled for aid distribution in Sagaing, the city closest to the epicentre of the quake, with some running through traffic to join the queues. Volunteers handed out water, rice, cooking oil and other basic

supplies to residents clamouring for assistance. "I have never queued for food like this before. I can't express how worried I am. I don't know what to say," Cho Cho Mar, 35, carrying her baby and clutching instant coffee packs and mosquito repellent, said. Destruction in the city is widespread, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) reporting that one in three houses have collapsed, and five days after the quake locals complained of a lack of help. Aye Thi Kar, 63, head of a school for young nuns razed to the ground by the tremors, said food supplies were low but shelter was a bigger priority - along with nets to ward off mosquitoes in the stifling tropi-

cal heat. Many people have been sleeping in the streets since the quake hit, unable to return to damaged buildings or fearful of aftershocks. "Right now we need roofing and walls to have proper shelter for the night," she said. "We also need nets and blankets for sleeping, as we don't want to sleep directly on the ground." Healthcare facilities, damaged by the quake and with limited capacity, are "overwhelmed by a large number of patients", while supplies of food, water and medicine are running low, WHO said in an update. Hopes of finding more survivors are fading, but there were moments

of joy yesterday as two men were pulled alive from the ruins of a hotel in the capital Naypyidaw. The junta yesterday said the death toll had risen to 2,886, with more than 4,600 injured and 373 still missing. But with patchy communication and infrastructure delaying efforts to gather information and deliver aid, the full scale of the disaster has yet to become clear, and the toll is likely to rise. Relief groups say the overall quake response has been hindered by continued fighting between the junta and the complex patchwork of armed groups opposed to its rule, which began after the military seized power in a 2021 coup.

DECISION

India government presents Waqf bill in parliament

The Indian government yesterday presented a bill in parliament that plans sweeping changes in the management of vast tracts of land set aside solely for Muslim use, potentially stoking tensions between the government and Muslims. The land and properties fall under the “Waqf” category. Government and Muslim organisations estimate that over 25 Waqf boards hold nearly 85,1535 properties and 900,000 acres of land. The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, tabled by government, proposes inclusion of non-Muslim members in the central Waqf Council and Waqf boards and will enable the government to determine ownership of disputed Waqf properties.

HEALTHCARE

UK drawing up action plan to tackle rising TB

Britain urged health experts and sufferers of tuberculosis to come forward to help draw up a new five-year action plan as it deals with record rises in the disease. In 2023, England recorded its largest annual increase (11%) in cases since enhanced surveillance began in 2000. Provisional figures for 2024 indicate a further 13% annual rise to 5,480 cases. The government is preparing its new National Action Plan (2026-2031), which aims to improve the prevention, detection and control of TB. The government has said the highest incidence of the disease in the UK, 81.5 percent, is among people born outside the country.

PEOPLE

Killer’s lawyer to present new evidence in bid to clear name

A lawyer for nurse Lucy Letby said he would present new evidence today to the commission which considers miscarriages of justice, saying it undermined the case against the British nurse convicted of murdering seven babies in her care. Letby was jailed in 2023 for the remainder of her life after being found guilty of murdering the newborns and attempting to murder eight more between June 2015 and June 2016 while working in the neonatal unit of the Countess of Chester Hospital in northern England. Letby, 35, Britain’s worst serial child killer of modern times, has maintained her innocence throughout.

EVENT

M15 delves into history of spying in exhibition

Britain’s spy agency M15 is revealing some secrets. In collaboration with host The National Archives and prepared over several years by the agency’s own archivists, “M15: Official Secrets” is giving the public the chance to see equipment and methods used by the real life James Bond and his colleagues over the agency’s 115-year history. Ken McCallum, director general of M15, said the agency wanted to be more transparent. While TV fiction showed the dramatic side to spying, real intelligence work was about “ordinary human beings together doing extraordinary things”, he said at an event launching the exhibition.

Former World Bank, IMF economist Gupta appointed RBI deputy governor

Reuters
Mumbai

India appointed former World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) economist Poonam Gupta as the new central bank deputy governor for a three-year term, the government said yesterday.

Gupta currently serves as the director general of the National Council of Applied Economic Research, India’s largest economic policy research institute, and is also a member of the Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The appointment comes at a crucial time as the country is struggling to boost economic growth lagging at four-year lows, while also facing uncertainty from global geopolitical and economic uncertainties.

India’s economy is expected to have grown at 6.5% in the fiscal year ended on March 31, marginally higher than the government’s initial estimate of 6.4%, but well below the revised growth rate of 9.2% for FY24.

Gupta will replace Michael Patra, a career central banker who joined the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in 1985 and served as a deputy since mid-January 2020 until mid-January 2025.

In his role as deputy, Patra was in charge of various key departments including monetary policy, financial markets operations, financial markets regulation

and also economic and policy research at the Reserve Bank of India.

Poonam Gupta ideally would replace deputy governor Rajeshwar Rao as a member of the six-member monetary policy committee which is due to meet next week. Rao has been temporarily handling the monetary policy portfolio at the RBI after Patra’s exit in January.

The RBI is widely expected to cut interest rates at a second straight meeting on April 9, with just one more cut expected in August, which would mark the shortest easing cycle on record, a poll of economists found.

There is no clear trade-off between growth and inflation at moderate inflation levels while the trade-off is more clearly established for very low or very high levels of inflation, Gupta had written in an article soon after the rate cut in February.

“RBI has been chasing a dated inflation number and has often missed its forecast by a large margin. Households’ inflationary expectations have remained misaligned, and transmission of monetary policy has not improved sufficiently,” she said, calling for a fresh look at the inflation targeting framework.

Gupta in a separate opinion piece in March said while avoiding excessive appreciation or volatility of the exchange rate, RBI should still let the rupee move more than has been the case in the recent past.

Kashmir snapshots



A relative takes pictures of children in a mustard field, in Kashmir’s Pampore town, yesterday.

India ‘planning EV tariff cuts’ for US trade deal, defying autos lobby

Reuters
New Delhi

India plans to lower import tariffs on electric cars, rejecting requests from local automakers to delay such cuts by four years, as New Delhi prioritises closing a trade deal with the US, government and industry sources said.

The automakers are lobbying Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to delay any cut in EV tariffs until 2029, and then phase in a reduction to 30% from as high as roughly 100%, two industry sources and one government official said.

However, New Delhi is serious about lowering EV tariffs - which have riled US President Donald Trump and his ally Tesla CEO Elon Musk - and the sector is set to be part of the first tranche of tariff reductions in a planned

bilateral trade deal, this government official - and another - said.

“We have protected the auto industry for far too long. We will have to open it up,” the second government official said, adding the plan was to lower tariffs “significantly”, including on EVs.

The officials declined to disclose the size of the planned duty cut given ongoing negotiations with Washington.

The sources, who are familiar with the talks and the auto industry’s demands, declined to be named as they are not authorised to speak to the media. India’s commerce ministry and the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, which represents carmakers in the world’s third-largest auto market, did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment.

New Delhi’s plan to cut duties on EVs and

other goods comes as it seeks to build bridges with Trump - who has referred to India as a “tariff king”.

An immediate cut would be a victory for Tesla, which has finalised showrooms in Mumbai and New Delhi to begin selling imported cars in the country this year. Trump has said it is currently “impossible” for Tesla to sell in India and it would be unfair if it had to build a factory there. But it would be a setback for domestic players like Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra, which have invested millions of dollars in local EV manufacturing, with more to come, and lobbied against duty cuts.

Automakers fear any agreement with the US would set a precedent for ongoing trade talks with the European Union and Britain, intensifying competition in India’s small but fast growing EV sector, three of the sources said.

NTPC seeks global partners to build nuclear reactors

NTPC, India’s top power producer, is seeking global partners to build large nuclear reactors with about 15 gigawatts (GW) combined capacity, according to a tender, the first major one since the country moved to open up its much-guarded sector. The state-run company, which mainly runs coal-fired plants, is looking for partners to help set up pressurised water reactor technology-based nuclear power plants and also commit to a lifetime supply of nuclear fuel, the tender said. The partner should have clearance from concerned authorities in their country of origin as well as comply with Indian policies, including having or getting a licence for the offered technology, NTPC said in the tender. India’s Atomic Energy Act of 1962 currently bars private investments in nuclear power plants, while stringent liabilities under the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010 deter foreign firms.

Bin strike in Birmingham



Residents bring their rubbish to refuse lorries in Alum Rock in Birmingham, central England, during an ongoing bin strike, yesterday. Birmingham City Council says it is declaring a major incident over the impact of the ongoing bin strike, as it estimates 17,000 tonnes of waste remains uncollected around the city.

Heathrow ‘warned of risks to power supply before fire’

Reuters
London

Heathrow airport was warned about its power supply in the days before the entire hub was shut down due to an outage that caused massive disruption, lawmakers were told yesterday.

Nigel Wicking, chief executive of Heathrow Airline Operators Committee, which represents airlines that use the airport, said he reported his concerns on two occasions.

“It was following a couple of incidents of, unfortunately, theft of wire and cable around some of the power supply that, on one of those occasions, took out the lights on the runway for a period of time,” he told a parliamentary committee on transport.

“That obviously made me concerned and, as such, I raised the point I wanted to understand better the overall resilience of the airport,” he added. Wicking

said he spoke to the Team Heathrow director on March 15 and the chief operating office and chief customer officer on March 19.

A fire late on March 20 at an electricity substation at Hayes in west London triggered the airport’s complete closure for most of the following day, affecting thousands of passengers around the world.

The closure of Europe’s busiest airport due to a single fire at a substation has raised concerns about its resilience.

The government has ordered a six-week investigation into the shutdown.

In the days after the closure the head of the UK’s national grid questioned the need to close the airport saying there had been “enough power” to keep it running.

“Losing a substation is a unique event - but there were two others available,” National Grid chief executive John Petti-grew said.

New entry permit rules for European visitors to UK begin

AFP
London

New rules came into force yesterday requiring European visitors to the UK to buy an online entry permit as the government revised longstanding regulations to boost border security.

The changes, however, caused little disruption at Paris’s Gare du Nord station as passengers began their Eurostar journey to London.

“So far we haven’t had any passengers turned away,” a member of Eurostar’s staff said.

Travellers from Europe now need

a digital Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) permit, which UK officials said they were rolling out to boost security and streamline entry processes.

There will be a buffer period which could last several months.

The permit can be bought online for £10 (12 euros), but the price is rising swiftly from April 9 to £16.

The ETA has already been introduced for American, Canadian and other visa-exempt nationals visiting the UK, which left the European Union in 2020.

The head of the UK’s border force Phil Douglas said the latest rollout was part of a wider plan to bring in the ETA for visitors from around the

world. “This scheme is essentially a border security measure,” he said, adding he did not expect the launch to cause disruption.

The permit would speed up entry times and allow officials to check information including a traveller’s immigration history or criminal record, he said.

“The quid pro quo for the individual, though, is that we are building a contactless border, so if they’re cleared for entry, they’ll be able to use our new e-Gates and they’ll be able to go through the border much more quickly,” he added.

“People will still be able to get on planes and trains while this introductory period takes place,” he

said, referring to the buffer period, adding that it was expected to last several months, until “September or October”.

The permit allows visits of up to six months. It is digitally linked to the applicant’s passport and is valid for two years.

The application, which can be made on a smartphone app or through the government website, has been open to Europeans since the start of March. It applies to nationals of some 30 European countries, including all those in the European Union except Ireland.

The applicant needs to provide a photo of their passport and their face. The process takes around 10

minutes, according to the UK’s Home Office.

In most cases, an application decision is made within minutes but the government recommends allowing up to three working days.

It will be required for babies and children, but flight passengers transiting without crossing the UK border are exempt from the scheme after pressure from Heathrow which feared a loss of passenger footfall connecting through Europe’s busiest airport.

Almost 84mn passengers passed through Heathrow in 2024 - a third from the neighbouring EU.

The scheme was first launched in 2023 for Qatar, before being ex-

tended to five regional Gulf neighbours.

In January, it was expanded to nationals of around another 50 countries and territories, including Argentina, South Korea and New Zealand.

Almost 1.1mn visitors were issued with ETAs before the end of 2024, according to the Home Office.

It is not applicable to UK residents or anyone who already has a UK immigration status.

The ETA mirrors the ETIAS scheme for visa-exempt nationals travelling to 30 European countries, including France and Germany, which has been delayed until 2026.

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GULF TIMES

Myanmar’s deadly earthquake may bring diplomatic payoff for junta chief

Myanmar’s deadliest natural disaster in years has strengthened the position of ruling general, Min Aung Hlaing, by opening diplomatic channels closed for four years after his junta ousted an elected government and sparked a civil war.

Just before last week’s earthquake of magnitude 7.7 that killed almost 2,900 people, the junta chief was readying for a rare foreign visit to a regional summit in Thailand, as aides worked the phones to arrange meetings with other leaders.

Min Aung Hlaing is expected to attend the BIMSTEC grouping’s summit in Bangkok tomorrow, Thai officials said yesterday.

The visit, timed just after an outpouring of sympathy following the quake, is a step towards potentially ending his isolation by most world leaders over a war that displaced 3.5mn people and decimated the economy.

The junta knows that regional powers jostling for influence in Myanmar, like India, China, and Russia would want to use this opportunity to strengthen their own toehold in the country, said an analyst based in Singapore. By publicly and directly engaging with regional capitals, it can demonstrate its supposed indispensability as Myanmar’s primary public authority, feels the analyst.

In the days since the earthquake, Min Aung Hlaing has spoken with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim - conversations that have led to a flurry of international aid.

Just weeks after the junta reaffirmed plans for a general election in December, one of the impoverished nation’s strongest earthquakes in a century has opened a new window for its leader to engage with regional powers.

“I would think he’s getting like everything he ever dreamt of and more right now. He’s back in the circle. He has a seat at the table”

Aung Hlaing held court with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, one of his earliest backers after the coup.

“I would think he’s getting like everything he ever dreamt of and more right now,” said a diplomatic source in the commercial capital of Yangon, referring to the Moscow visit, the telephone call with Modi and a meeting of the Asean grouping. “He’s back in the circle. He has a seat at the table.” The junta is doing what it can to benefit from the crisis and deny assistance to civilians and opposition groups, said a diplomatic source in the country. Millions of dollars in aid, relief supplies and hundreds of rescue workers from countries such as China, India, Russia and Southeast Asia, have flooded Myanmar since the quake.

The junta could exploit the crisis to strengthen its position in Myanmar’s battlefield.

Some regime hardliners believe the junta can continue with the help of a handful of allies. They see the world order as shifting, and that there is a new pole with China, Russia and India.

During Min Aung Hlaing’s expected appearance at this week’s BIMSTEC summit, he would get a further opportunity for diplomatic validation, such as more engagement with India and Thailand.

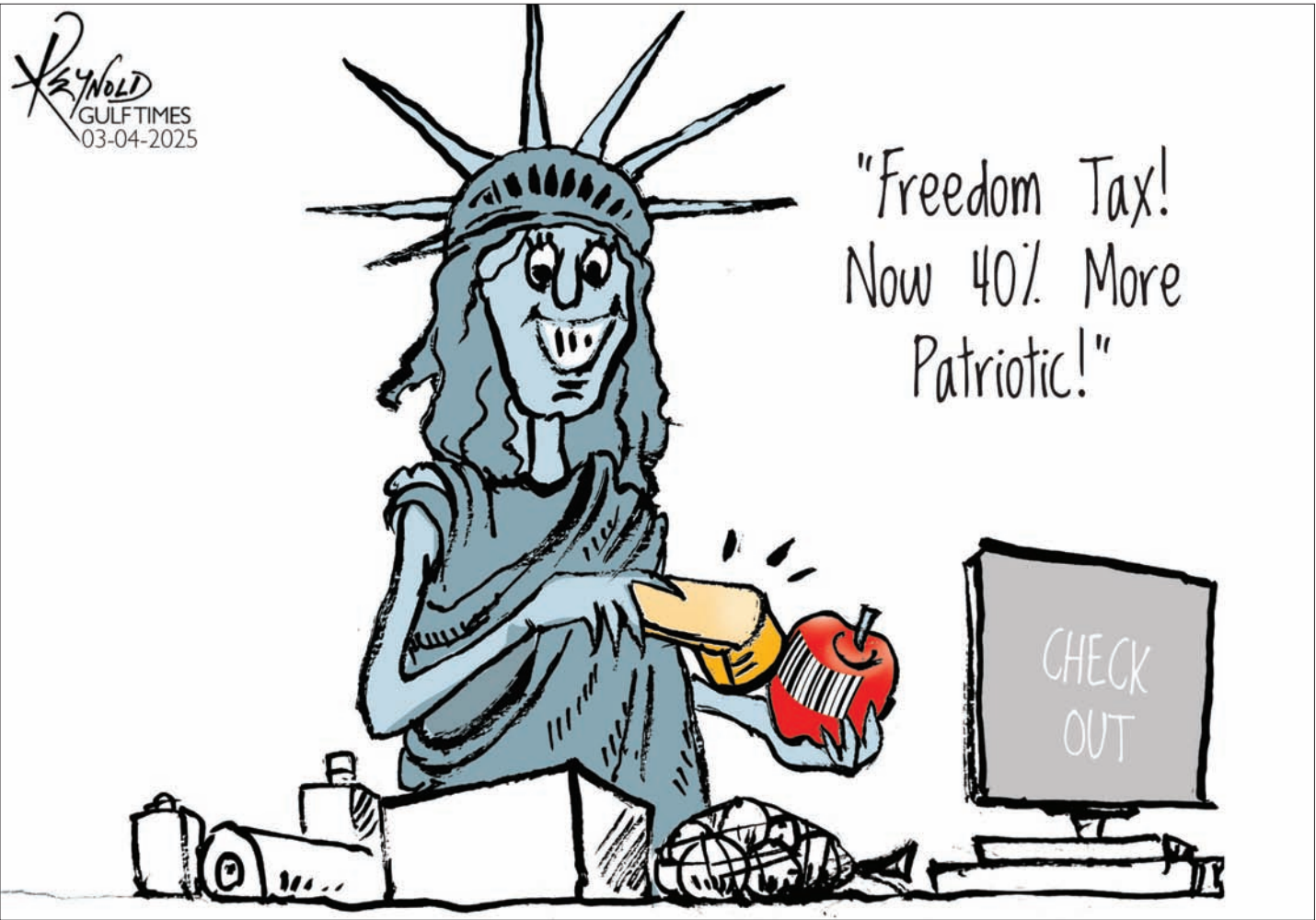
BIMSTEC, or the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation, comprises Thailand, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

In Bangkok, the junta chief could meet Modi, who has rushed aid and personnel to Myanmar since the quake, said three sources with knowledge of discussions. Modi, particularly, has already indicated that he is willing to directly engage, a source added.

The visit may also give Min Aung Hlaing a chance to meet Thaksin Shinawatra, the former Thai prime minister whom Malaysia’s Anwar appointed a personal adviser in his capacity as chairman of Asean.

Some analysts say Thailand is walking a tightrope by giving legitimacy to Min Aung Hlaing as he battles the armed resistance which has eroded his grip on Myanmar. - Reuters

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Sudan - Key policy insights for recovery and reconstruction efforts

By Mohamed Suleiman al-Shazly

Rebuilding Sudan is an extraordinarily complex endeavour, demanding a holistic, multi-pronged approach. Key policies must restore security, revitalise the economy, foster social comprehensive reconciliation, and rebuild democratic governance.

While the challenges are formidable, the right policies – supported by effective international co-operation – can provide a blueprint for long-term peace and prosperity. Reconstruction involves not only repairing physical infrastructure but also addressing the root causes of conflict, building inclusive institutions, and restoring trust between citizens and their government.

If properly designed and implemented, these policies can lay the foundations for a stable, prosperous, and peaceful future.

To begin with, one might argue that international support will be crucial to Sudan’s reconstruction, providing the financial and technical resources necessary to rebuild the country’s war-torn infrastructure. Aid and expertise from international organisations will be vital to catalysing recovery. Multilateral institutions, including the UN, the World Bank, and regional bodies, must co-ordinate efforts and provide funding for infrastructure, humanitarian relief, and economic recovery.

Beyond financial assistance, international actors should play a diplomatic role – encouraging peace agreements, promoting trade, and facilitating Sudan’s Comprehensive Reconciliation. However, international assistance must be delivered in close collaboration with the Sudanese government to ensure policies align with the needs and aspirations of the people.

Aid must also be transparent and accountable; ensuring

resources are used effectively requires robust oversight mechanisms and a commitment to good governance. Corruption, if allowed to take root, could undermine the entire reconstruction effort and sow the seeds of future conflict.

Our horrific war has left devastating scars – not just on the physical landscape, but on Sudan’s social fabric. As the conflict subsides, rebuilding must go beyond restoring infrastructure and order, extending to re-establishing the political, economic, and social foundations needed for lasting peace and stability.

Our homeland’s reconstruction is a multifaceted challenge, with government policies playing a pivotal role in shaping outcomes. These policies must address a broad range of issues, from restoring security and revitalising the economy to promoting comprehensive reconciliation and rebuilding public trust. A holistic and inclusive approach is essential for sustainable recovery.

It is important to note that restoring security and re-establishing the rule of law must be the immediate priority. The recent conflict has nearly collapsed state institutions, created power vacuums, and left citizens vulnerable to lawlessness, insurgency, and further violence.

One of the most pressing policy steps is the demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants. This involves dismantling armed groups, collecting weapons, and offering support – such as alternative livelihoods, psychological counselling, and reintegration programmes – to ex-soldiers. Effective DDR initiatives reduce the likelihood of violence returning and play a crucial role in stabilising the post-war environment.

Indeed, reforming the security sector is equally essential. This requires professionalising the police and military, ensuring they are accountable to civilian oversight, and preventing the

recurrence of human rights abuses. Likewise, restoring a functioning judicial system is critical for delivering justice for war crime victims and maintaining public trust in state institutions.

What’s more; the economic toll of this devastating war is severe. Rebuilding agriculture, industry, and services is key to creating jobs and ensuring resilience against future shocks. Policies must also address poverty and inequality, which undermine stability and hinder social cohesion. Roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals have been destroyed, while industries and local businesses face an uncertain future.

Economic recovery must focus on both short-term stabilisation and long-term development goals.

In the short term, efforts must prioritise the restoration of essential services and the rebuilding of critical infrastructure.

The international community must play a central role, providing loans or grants to support these efforts. Investment in sectors such as energy, telecommunications, and transportation is crucial to restarting economic activity and creating jobs.

Over the longer term, economic policies should focus on diversifying the economy, attracting foreign investment, and fostering sustainable growth.

Social Comprehensive Reconciliation is equally vital. The armed conflict has exacerbated divisions along ethnic and political lines, and comprehensive reconciliation must be a cornerstone of the recovery agenda. This requires measures to foster unity, healing, and coexistence between different tribes, ethnicities, and regions.

Truth and reconciliation commissions will be essential in confronting the legacy of violence, providing victims a platform to voice their suffering and ensuring accountability for atrocities. Along with this the education system must also be reformed to promote

inclusivity, peacebuilding, and respect for diversity.

For Sudan’s children and youth, access to education offers a critical path out of poverty and a chance to rebuild their lives. Furthermore, addressing the psychological scars of the conflict is equally important.

Mental health support programmes will be essential for both individual recovery and broader social stability.

Providing care for trauma victims and community-based mental health services is vital to prevent the recurrence of violence and social unrest. Tackling these issues early will help lay the foundation for a more harmonious and unified future.

Nevertheless, rebuilding political institutions will be one of the most challenging tasks of the recovery process. Instability and conflict have dismantled political systems, exacerbated corruption, eroded trust in state institutions, and created an environment of chaos. A key policy will be the restoration of legitimate, accountable governance that can represent all segments of society.

Ultimately, dialogue on a permanent constitution is essential to ensure that the political system is inclusive and responsive to citizens’ needs. Power-sharing arrangements, electoral reforms, federalism, or decentralisation may be necessary to ensure minority groups are fairly represented and have a stake in the country’s future.

International support will be invaluable during this phase. Peacekeeping missions or technical assistance from multilateral organisations can help stabilise the political environment and facilitate the transition to democratic governance. Strengthening local governance will also be critical, as empowering local authorities ensures that services are delivered efficiently and that citizens feel their voices are heard. — mohsuleiman@gmail.com



Sudanese citizens celebrate on a street in Port Sudan.

Azerbaijan presses Armenia to meet ‘demands’ for peace deal

AFP
Baku

Azerbaijan yesterday insisted that Armenia must meet Baku’s “legitimate demands” before the Caucasus neighbours can sign a peace treaty, the text of which they agreed upon last month.

The two ex-Soviet republics announced on March 14 they had wrapped up talks aimed at resolv-

ing their decades-long conflict, with both sides agreeing on the text of a possible treaty.

A deal to normalise ties would be a major breakthrough in a region where Russia, the European Union, the US and Turkiye all jostle for influence.

Baku and Yerevan fought two wars for control of Azerbaijan’s Armenian-populated region of Karabakh, at the end of the Soviet Union and again in 2020, before Azerbaijan seized the entire area

in a 24-hour offensive in September 2023.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said yesterday that Baku “is not putting forward any additional conditions” for signing the treaty.

“Our demands are well known to Armenia, they are not new. We have been voicing them for a long time, but have yet to receive any serious response from Armenia,” he told a news conference alongside visiting German President

Frank-Walter Steinmeier. “The OSCE Minsk Group must be dissolved,” he said, referring to the now defunct group of international mediators — France, Russia and the US — set up in 1991 under the aegis of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to encourage a negotiated resolution to the conflict.

He also reiterated Baku’s longstanding demand to remove from Armenia’s constitution a reference to its declaration of inde-

pendence, which asserts territorial claims over Karabakh.

Any such amendments to Armenia’s constitution would require a referendum.

“Once these two conditions are met, there will be no obstacles to signing the peace treaty,” Aliyev said.

“The ball is in Armenia’s court. If Armenia truly wants to sign the peace agreement, it must accept these two legitimate demands of Azerbaijan,” Yerevan has said it

is ready to sign the peace treaty without delay and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced a referendum to amend the constitution for 2027.

Pashinyan has recognised Baku’s sovereignty over Karabakh after three decades of Armenian separatist rule, a move seen as a crucial first step towards a normalisation of relations.

Armenia also last year returned to Azerbaijan four border villages it had seized decades earlier.



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Michelin-starred chef Massimo Bottura and Italian Agriculture Minister Francesco Lollobrigida attend the “master of the art of Italian cuisine award” ceremony at Palazzo Chigi, in Rome, yesterday.

Italy’s govt, businesses warn of heavy impact of US tariffs

Reuters
Rome

Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and its top business lobby warned yesterday that looming US tariffs would have a major impact on the country’s exports and already struggling economy.

US President Donald Trump is expected to announce sweeping new tariffs on global trading partners later, upending decades of rules-based trade, risking cost increases and likely drawing retaliation from all sides.

“It is clear that the introduction of new tariffs would have heavy repercussions for Italian producers”, Meloni said while hosting a prize-giving ceremony for Italian cuisine in Rome.

Meloni added that she did not rule out “adequate responses” to protect the exports of the euro zone’s third largest economy, though she did not elaborate.

Italy posted a trade surplus with the US of 39bn euros (\$42.14bn) in 2024, the third

largest in the 20-nation euro area, Eurostat data shows.

Earlier yesterday, business association Confindustria said Italy’s economy would grow by 0.6% this year, half the government’s official target and down from a 0.9% forecast made by the group in October. The economy expanded by a modest 0.7% in both 2024 and 2023.

It eked out 0.1% growth in the fourth quarter of 2024 from the previous three months, after stagnating in the third quarter. Most analysts expect no significant pick-up in the near term.

Confindustria said that while its forecasts incorporated already-announced US tariffs on steel and aluminium and what it called “record levels of uncertainty” on trade policy, they did not factor in the effects of an escalating trade war.

In a worst case scenario, with permanent 25% US tariffs on all imports, rising to 60% for China, and retaliatory measures against US exports, Italy’s growth would fall to around 0.2% this year, it said.

“We cannot imagine that for an exporting nation like ours the tariffs won’t be a problem, they will be yet another setback for our companies,” Confindustria’s President Emanuele Orsini said at a conference where the forecasts were presented. The group said that businesses most reliant on sales to the US, and thus most vulnerable to new tariffs, included pharmaceuticals, autos, machinery, and the fashion and food and wine industries.

Right-wing Meloni is a friend of Trump and she and her government have been more cautious than others in the 27-nation EU about how the bloc should react to the tariffs.

Italy’s EU Affairs Minister Tommaso Foti echoed Meloni’s conciliatory tone at the Confindustria event, saying Europe should avoid a tit-for-tat response to Trump.

“It must not be a gut reaction, but a reasoned one. There is a need for dialogue... The less we raise our voice the better,” he said.

Russia, Ukraine trade new accusations on breaches of energy truce

Reuters
Moscow

Russia and Ukraine accused each other yesterday of launching new attacks against each other’s energy facilities, in violation of a US-brokered moratorium.

Both sides said they were providing details of the alleged violations to the US, which persuaded Moscow and Kyiv to agree to the limited truce last month as a hoped-for stepping stone towards a full ceasefire.

Russia’s defence ministry said Ukraine had conducted drone and shelling attacks in the western Kursk region that cut off power to over 1,500 households.

In the Russian-held part of Ukraine’s Luhansk region, the state gas company said that a Ukraine drone strike on a gas distribution station had left more than 11,000 customers around the town of Svatove with limited access to gas. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said a Russian drone hit an energy substation in Sumy region and artillery fire damaged a power line in Dnipropetrovsk, cutting off electricity to nearly 4,000 consumers.

The administration of US President Donald Trump is impatient with both sides to move faster towards ending the three-year war.



In this handout photograph released by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Service yesterday, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky speaks with a wounded Ukrainian serviceman at a hospital in Dnipro, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the fact that President Vladimir Putin had agreed the energy truce was evidence he was serious about engaging in a peace process — something that Kyiv and some of its European allies dispute.

Peskov said that Moscow would keep working with the Americans despite what he called daily Ukrainian strikes on Russian energy infrastructure.

Zelensky said on Tuesday that

Russia was breaking the energy truce and called on the US to boost sanctions against Moscow, as Trump has threatened to do.

Ukraine said last month it was willing to accept a full 30-day ceasefire but Putin declined to agree to that, raising a series of questions about how it would be monitored and concerns that Ukraine would use the breathing space to mobilise more soldiers and acquire more weapons from the West.

Kazakhstan discovers ‘largest’ rare earths deposit

Kazakhstan discovered its largest deposit of rare earth metals, containing around one million tonnes of the elements that are seen as vital for the future economy, the Central Asian country said yesterday, AFP reported from Almaty. Rare earths comprise 17 raw materials that are essential for the green energy transition and highly sought by the likes of China, Russia, the US and Europe. “As of today, this is the largest rare earths deposit” in Kazakhstan, a spokesperson for the industry ministry said. The deposit — in central Kazakhstan’s Karaganda region — contains cerium, lanthanum, neodymium, and yttrium, they said. The announcement of the find comes on the eve of the first EU-Central Asia summit, kicking off in Uzbekistan. The EU, Russia, China and Turkiye are among those vying for influence in the resource-rich region. The prospective amount of resources at the new site — dubbed “New Kazakhstan” — could rise to more than 20mn tonnes, Kazakhstan’s industry ministry forecast, subject to verification and additional research. “This could put Kazakhstan among the world’s top countries with rare earth deposits in the future,” the ministry added.

Slovak govt approves shooting of 350 bears after man killed last week

Reuters
Prague

The Slovak government yesterday approved the shooting of 350 bears this year after a rising number of attacks by the brown bears, whose population has grown over the past several years, Prime Minister Robert Fico said.

The central European country is home to a bear population in its many mountain areas, numbering between 1,000 and 3,000 according to different estimates. Last week, a bear killed a 59-year-old man who was out walking near the central town of Detva, Slovak media reported, the latest in a string of attacks on people over the past several years.

“We cannot live in a country where people will be afraid to go to the forest, where people become food for bears,” Fico said at a media briefing shown live on Facebook. The Environment Ministry has said it planned to follow the example of Romania, which has used quotas and more than doubled the number of bears allowed to be killed to 481 last year.

Last year, Slovaks shot 144 bears, a rise from single-digit numbers in the previous years.

Le Pen ally denies planned rally a ‘power play’ against conviction

AFP
Strasbourg

Marine Le Pen’s party chief Jordan Bardella denied yesterday any intent to strong-arm the French judiciary with a rally in support of the veteran far-right leader, after her conviction of embezzlement and a ban from standing for office.

“It’s not a power play,” Bardella told reporters at the European Parliament, where the National Rally chief also sits as a lawmaker, when asked about the demonstration planned for Sunday to protest the court verdict.

“On the contrary it is a very clear and very deep defence of the rule of law and of French democracy,” he said.

“It is a mobilisation not against, but in support of French democracy,” Bardella said. “We felt it necessary... to speak directly to the French people, through the speeches of our party leaders on Sunday.”

On Monday, Le Pen was given a partly suspended jail term and an immediate ban from running for office for five years after being convicted over a scheme whereby assistants paid by the EU Parliament were actually working for her party.

If it stands, the conviction would eliminate Le Pen from the 2027 election, where current



French far-right party Rassemblement National President and MEP Jordan Bardella (right) leaves the hemicycle after a voting session of a plenary session at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, yesterday.

polling suggests she would easily win the first round in a vote where President Emmanuel Macron cannot run because of term limitations.

She has vowed to use all possible legal avenues to stand in what would be her fourth attempt at the presidency.

The Paris appeals court said Tuesday that it would examine Le Pen’s case within a timeframe that could potentially allow her to run if the conviction is over-

turned or the sentence changed — something Bardella welcomed as “good news”.

Much attention has focused on a so-called “Plan B” where Bardella, 29, would take Le Pen’s place in the 2027 contest. Bardella said the conviction had changed “absolutely nothing” in his relationship with his mentor, saying “if anything it has perhaps made it even stronger”.

“I am at her side, and I will remain at her side,” he said.

Greece to spend 25bn euros in ‘drastic’ defence overhaul: PM

AFP
Athens

Greece will spend 25bn euros (\$27bn) through to 2036 in the “most drastic” defence overhaul in its modern history, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said yesterday.

The drive, which includes a new anti-missile, anti-aircraft and anti-drone defensive dome called “Achilles’s Shield”, is aimed at addressing rapidly changing geopolitical challenges and fraying transatlantic ties, Mitsotakis said.

“The plan involves the most drastic transformation of the armed forces in the country’s modern history,” Mitsotakis told parliament.

“The world is changing at an unforeseeable pace.” Greece has traditionally invested at least two % of gross domestic product on its defence — Nato’s spending target — owing to decades of tension with regional rivals Turkiye.

But the new initiative is also designed to make the country of 10.5mn people “a key branch” of the European Union’s defence mechanism, contributing one of the bloc’s “most advanced” armies, Mitsotakis said.

This year, the nation’s military budget doubled to 6.13bn euros (\$6.6bn).

Alongside Poland, Estonia and Latvia, Greece is now one of the few Nato member states that allocates more than three % of output to defence.

“Historically, Greece has served and will continue to serve as an outpost for Europe, which is currently seeking to reorganise its defence in a difficult international setting,” said Maria Gavouneli, a professor of international law at the University of Athens.

Greek media reports suggest Athens is in negotiations with Israel to acquire the defensive dome, which also includes enhancing anti-drone systems.

France, Italy and Norway have been also cited as possible suppliers of the new weapons, which include unmanned vessels (USVs), drones and radars.

Greece has sought to strengthen its position on the EU’s Eastern Mediterranean border, close to the conflict zones of the Middle East.

A dutiful buyer of European military equipment, especially from France and Germany, Greece has always justified its arms spending by pointing to territorial disputes and threats from Turkiye.



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Per Customer 2 kg Only*

17.00 QR	36.50 QR	19.75 QR	9.00 QR
لحم بقري بالعظم باكستاني ١ كجم Pakistan Beef With Bone 1 kg	سلمون نرويجي ١ كجم Fresh Salmon Norway 1 kg	سمك قاروص الدوحة ١ كجم Fresh Sea Bass Doha 1 kg	سمك سيلفر مصري ١ كجم Fresh Silver Fish Egypt 1 kg
6.50 QR	1.50 QR	1.75 QR	1.75 QR
بروكلي عمان ١ كجم Broccoli Oman 1 kg	طماطم الدوحة ١ كجم Tomato Doha 1 kg	بصل هندي ١ كجم Onion India 1 kg	بطاطس مصري ١ كجم Potato Egypt 1 kg
9.75 QR	5.75 QR	4.75 QR	7.50 QR
نكتارين افريقيا ١ كجم Nectarine Africa 1 kg	بابايا هندي ١ كجم Fruit Papaya India 1 kg	موز اكودار ١ كجم Banana Ecuador 1 kg	افوكادو كينيا ١ كجم Avocado Kenya 1 kg
14.00 QR	14.00 QR	9.00 QR	22.50 QR
أرز برياني كوهينور نواب ٤ كجم Kohinoor Nawab Biryani Rice 4 kg	مشروب بنكهة كومبلان ٤٠٠ جم x ١ حبة Complan Flavored Drink 400 gm x 1 pc Asrtd.	ساديا دجاج شواية ١١٠٠ جم Sadia Chicken Griller 1100 gm	بانير حليب التر ٤ حبة Pinar UHT Milk 1 Ltr x 4 pcs

قد يكون هناك حدود للمشتريات العرض حتى نفاد الكميات. Offer valid until stocks last. Purchase limit may apply. *Per Customer 2 kg Only*

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