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ALL ITEMS UNDER WHOLESALE PRICE

SPORT | Page 1

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Qatar Airways, Philippine Airlines announce alliance

Qatar Airways and Philippine Airlines have launched a strategic partnership to expand service between Doha and Manila, enabling greater connectivity for passengers from the Philippines travelling to Qatar and onwards to other regions of the world. Starting from 16 June 2025, Philippine Airlines will offer daily nonstop flights between Manila and Doha. Qatar Airways will codeshare on the seven weekly flights operated by Philippine Airlines in the first phase of this strategic co-operation. **Business Page 2**

PLO votes to create vice-president post

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) voted yesterday to establish the position of vice-president, potentially paving the way for a successor to Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, 89. "A vote was held to create the position of vice-president," Rizq Namoura, a member of the PLO's central council, said in an interview with Palestine TV, adding the vote was "almost unanimous" in favour of establishing the post, a first for the organisation. **Page 5**

Witkoff, Iranians to meet in Oman

US globe-trotting envoy Steve Witkoff will take part in talks with Iran tomorrow in Oman, his third encounter within weeks on Tehran's nuclear programme, the State Department said. Witkoff will be present in the talks that are designed to be at the technical level, State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce told reporters.

Judges block Trump's ability to cut funds

Federal judges in Maryland and New Hampshire yesterday blocked Republican President Donald Trump's administration from following through on threats to cut off funding to public schools that engage in diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. The dual rulings came in lawsuits by teachers unions who sued to prevent the US Department of Education from cutting funding to K-12 schools and universities that did not cease what it called 'discriminatory' DEI initiatives. **Page 9**

DR Congo, M23 commit to peace after Doha talks

AFP
Goma, DR Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo's government and the M23 group yesterday issued a landmark joint statement saying they had agreed to halt fighting in the east of the country while they work towards a permanent truce.

The latest peace push by Qatar comes after the Gulf state successfully brokered a surprise meeting last month between Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Both leaders called for a ceasefire after the meeting.

The two sides said they had "agreed to work towards the conclusion of a truce" in the conflict, which has seen the M23 seize key cities in the region.

UN experts and several western governments say the M23 is supported by Rwanda. The Kigali government has denied giving military help.

However, the latest statement, read on DRC national television and released by an M23 spokesman, said: "Both parties reaffirm their commitment to an immediate cessation of hostilities, a categorical rejection of any hate speech, intimidation, and call on local communities to uphold these commitments."

Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has been riven by conflict for three decades. The crisis has surged again in recent months with M23's new advance into the cities of Goma and Bukavu.

DRC President Felix Tshisekedi had long

refused direct talks with them or their political alliance, accusing them of working for Rwanda.

Qatar caused a diplomatic surprise with its mediation effort. The negotiations started earlier this month.

The latest peace push by Qatar comes after the Gulf state successfully brokered a surprise meeting last month between Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Both leaders called for a ceasefire after the meeting

In early March, Tshisekedi and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame, held surprise meetings in Doha and later expressed their support for a ceasefire.

"Both parties are now preparing for a deeper round of discussions to... build the foundations for a comprehensive political settlement," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks.

"Both sides are expected to return to Doha for further talks in the coming weeks," Qatar has signed several economic co-operation accords with Rwanda and DRC.

The statement described their talks in Doha as "frank and constructive"

Their agreement to the text raised a glimmer of hope the latest cycle of violence in a decades-long conflict rooted in the Rwandan genocide might ease. But sources in the two delegations expressed frustration over the pace of negotiations.

Deputy PM attends Meqdam Shooting final

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani attended the final rounds of Meqdam Shooting Championship 2025 at the Lusail Shooting Club. The championship finals will run over three days. Day 1 featured the 25-metre pistol shooting competition. On day 2, the 50-metre rifle shooting competition will take place and the event will wrap up on day 3 with shotgun competition. At the end of the first day's finals, Nasser Salem Hamad al-Sunaid from

the Ministry of Defence, Class of 2017 (Batch 7) claimed the first place and Mohammed Abdullah al-Naama from the Ministry of Interior, Class of 2019 (Batch 11) finished second. Abdullah Ibrahim Taimur from Qatar Chemical Company Ltd. Class of 2016 (Batch 4) came third. The awards ceremony for the winners will take place on the final day of the championship. The event was attended by senior officers of the Qatar Armed Forces. **(QNA) Page 2**

PM, chief adviser to Bangladesh government review relations



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Chief Adviser of the Interim Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Dr Muhammad Yunus, who is currently visiting the country. During the meeting, they reviewed relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of topics of common interest. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs affirmed Qatar's full support for Bangladesh in achieving the aspirations of its people for development and prosperity. **(QNA)**

Israeli strikes kill 55 in Gaza

AFP
Gaza City/Jerusalem

Gaza rescue teams and medics said Israeli air strikes killed at least 55 people yesterday, as the military threatened an even larger offensive if hostages were not freed soon.

Israel resumed its military assault in the Gaza Strip on March 18, after the collapse of a two-month ceasefire that had brought a temporary halt to fighting in the blockaded Palestinian territory.

Israel's army chief, visiting troops in Gaza yesterday, threatened to expand the offensive in Gaza if hostages were not released.

The warning came as the army issued fresh evacuation orders for northern areas of Gaza ahead of a planned attack.

Earlier in the day, six members of one family – a couple and their four children – were killed when an air strike levelled their home in northern Gaza City, the civil defence agency said in a statement.

Nidal al-Sarafiti, a relative, said the strike happened as the family was sleeping.

Nine people were killed and several wounded in another strike on a former police station in the Jabalia area of northern Gaza, according to a statement from the Indonesian hospital, where the casualties were taken.

In another deadly attack, the bodies of 12 people were recovered after the Hajj Ali family home, also in Jabalia, was struck, the civil defence said.



A woman helps a boy lift up a container filled with water from the remaining water still left in underground pipes, in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Another 28 people were killed in strikes across the territory, medics and the civil defence agency reported.

They came as the Israeli military ordered Palestinians living in the northern areas of Beit Hanoun and Sheikh Zayed to evacuate ahead of an attack.

The United Nations has warned that Israel's expanding evacuation orders across Gaza are resulting in the "forcible transfer" of people into ever-shrinking areas.

Aid agencies estimate that the vast majority of Gaza's 2.4mn residents have been displaced at least once since the war began.

In the aftermath of a strike in Khan Younis, AFP footage showed bodies on the ground, including those of a young woman and a boy in body bags, surrounded by grieving relatives kissing and stroking their faces.

Trump tells Putin to 'STOP' after Russian attack kills 12 in Kyiv

Reuters
Kyiv

Russia pounded Kyiv with missiles and drones overnight, killing at least 12 people in the biggest attack on the Ukrainian capital this year and drawing a rare rebuke from Donald Trump, who told Vladimir Putin: "Vladimir, STOP!"

The attack, which the US president said was "not necessary" and "very bad timing" as he pushes for peace, also wounded 90 people, smashed buildings and set off fires, Ukrainian officials said. Rescuers were still recovering bodies from the rubble over 12 hours later.

The attack comes at a critical moment in Russia's war in Ukraine, which began with Moscow's full-scale invasion in 2022. Both Kyiv and Moscow are trying to show Trump they are making progress towards his goal of a rapid peace deal.

"I am not happy with the Russian strikes on KYIV. Not necessary, and very bad timing. Vladimir, STOP! 5000 soldiers a week are dying. Lets get the Peace Deal DONE!" Trump said on Truth Social, referring to the Russian president.



Police officers inspect the site of a building hit by a Russian ballistic missile strike in Kyiv yesterday.

The White House has threatened to abandon its efforts if no progress is made soon. Trump upbraided Zelensky on Wednesday over a comment in which the Ukrainian

leader repeated that Kyiv would not recognise Russia's occupation of Crimea.

Trump has used a markedly more gentle tone in his statements about Putin than



This combination of pictures shows Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and US President Donald Trump.

with Zelensky, whom he at one point referred to as a "dictator". Trump's special envoy is expected to meet Putin today for more talks, a US official has said.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio decided at the last minute to skip talks between US, Ukrainian and European officials in London on Wednesday amid American ire over Zelensky's comment about Crimea.

The talks went ahead, albeit in a downgraded format, and Zelensky said yesterday that the meeting with a US representative had not been easy but

that it had been constructive.

He said he believed that a document with proposals that emerged from the talks was now on Trump's table.

"...I believe that today, this format, this document, is on President Trump's desk," he told a press conference in South Africa.

"Anything that contradicts our values or our constitution cannot be included in any agreement."

Zelensky, who cut short his trip to South Africa after the Russian strike, said he did not see signs Washington was putting strong pressure on Russia.

Asked by a reporter if he thought Putin would listen to his appeal to stop missile strikes, Trump said "I do."

He also said that he had his "own deadline" for reaching a peace settlement between Russia and Ukraine, without saying what it was.

Rescue teams were operating at 13 sites in Kyiv with climbing specialists and sniffer dogs, the emergency services said. Forty fires had broken out.

"Mobile telephones are heard ringing beneath rubble. The search will continue until it becomes clear that they have got everyone," it said.



Deputy PM at Meqdam Shooting finals



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani attended the final rounds of Meqdam Shooting Championship 2025 at the Lusail Shooting Club. The championship finals will run over three days. The awards ceremony for the winners will take place on the final day of the championship. The event was attended by senior officers of the Qatar Armed Forces. **(QNA)**

PM meets Chinese special envoy



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East Issue Zhai Jun, who is visiting the country. The two sides discussed relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them. They also discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to other topics of mutual interest. HE the Prime Minister affirmed Qatar's continued efforts, as part of its joint mediation, to end the war on the Gaza Strip, emphasising the need for concerted regional and international efforts to ensure unhindered and sustainable access to humanitarian aid to address the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. **(QNA)**

Official

Advisory for Qatari citizens planning to visit Thailand

An official source at the Department of Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called on Qatari citizens planning to visit the Kingdom of Thailand, starting from May 1, to fill the Thailand Digital Arrival Card (TDAC) at least 72 hours before travel, through the official website: <https://tdac.immigration.go.th>

Al-Khulaifi meets deputy secretary of US Treasury



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met in Washington with Deputy Secretary of the US Treasury Michael Faulkender. During the meeting, they discussed ways to enhance co-operation in partnership areas to address global challenges related to sustainability and development. **(QNA)**

Minister meets Morocco's FM



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday in Rabat with Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Co-operation and Moroccan Expatriates of the Kingdom of Morocco Nasser Bourita. During the meeting, both sides discussed bilateral relations and explored ways to support and enhance co-operation. **(QNA)**

Unesco observes day of multilateralism in Doha

QNA
Doha

The Regional Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) for the Gulf States and Yemen in Doha marked the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace with a special event held at the United Nations House in Doha.

The event was organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, and the Green Zone Foundation, bringing together officials, ambassadors from non-Arabic-speaking African nations accredited to Qatar, and other distinguished guests. A Letter of Intent was signed between Unesco and the Green Zone Foundation during the event.

The celebration featured presentations on various initiatives and projects promoting Arabic language in some African nations, emphasising its role as a tool for mutual understanding in building inclusive communities through education, preserving shared cultural heritage, and fostering peace,



regional integration, and diplomatic dialogue.

The gathering brought together approximately 35 diplomats, academics, cultural experts, and media professionals to highlight the richness of Arabic culture in Africa and its key role in strengthening peace, unity, and mutual understanding across the continent. Discussions explored Arabic literature, calligraphy, music, and culinary traditions, underscoring the deep-rooted presence of Arabic culture in the daily lives of millions across Africa, making it a powerful force for identity and

social cohesion. The event served as a platform to examine Arabic as a principal tool for cultural diplomacy, promoting peace, stability, and unity through diversity, with a particular focus on Africa. It also showcased recent efforts by African nations to integrate Arabic-speaking diaspora communities into their societies.

The discussions emphasised the importance of multilateralism and diplomacy in addressing global challenges, aligning with United Nations principles, particularly in enhancing cultural exchange and building lasting partnerships for a

more peaceful and inclusive future in Africa.

Director of the Department of International Organisations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hanouf bint Abdulrahman al-Thani highlighted in her speech that this celebration reflects the global commitment to peace and underscores the importance of international co-operation and constructive dialogue in building a safer, more stable, and just world.

Sheikh Hanouf stressed Qatar's unique approach to fostering multilateral diplomacy, through active



engagement in regional and international organisations, supporting UN initiatives, and participating in mediation efforts to resolve conflicts.

She added that Qatar has hosted numerous rounds of negotiations between opposing parties, leading to significant agreements that have advanced peace and stability.

The nation has also reinforced its commitment to the UN by hosting several UN offices and collaborating with humanitarian and development organisations under its umbrella, Sheikh Hanouf also praised Qatar's sustained efforts in preserving and promoting the Arabic language, particularly within the African context, noting Qatar's establishment of several institutions and initiatives dedicated to elevating the status of Arabic, including the Qatar Arabic Language Center, which develops Arabic curricula and teaching methods abroad, particularly in Africa.

She highlighted Qatar's support for national institutions such as Qatar Charity and Education Above All, which have backed a range of educational projects across African nations, including building schools, providing Arabic curricula, and training teachers.

These initiatives have expanded educational access and strengthened Arabic as a tool for cultural dialogue.

She added that Qatar has supported Arabic-language media in Africa, through cultural channels and initiatives that highlight Arabic identity within the African context, encouraging intercultural dialogue. She concluded that relations between nations are built on mutual understanding, and language is the most vital tool in achieving this.

Arabic, with its humanitarian, intellectual, and spiritual legacy, serves as a bridge connecting African and Arab societies.

Director of the Department of International Organisations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to multilateral diplomacy, emphasising that celebrating the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace presents an opportunity to renew the commitment to the values that unite peoples.

Through its policies, she stated, Qatar affirms that multilateralism is not an option but a necessity for building a more stable and prosperous world.

Qatar hosts 2nd Mena e-government workshop

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), and in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Undesa), organised the second edition of the E-Government Workshop for the Mena region.

The two-day event which concluded yesterday drew wide participation from representatives of the United Nations, Arab countries, GCC member states, regional countries, along with official delegations, experts, and representatives of international organisations.

The aim was to support the development of the evaluation methodology for the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI), reflecting the unique regional context and keeping pace with rapid technological advancements. It also sought to strengthen regional co-operation among par-

ticipating countries, enabling them to share experiences and successful digital transformation initiatives that help enhance the performance of their digital governments and achieve comprehensive and sustainable digital transformation.

The sessions focused on analysing the three main components of the EGDI: online services, telecommunication infrastructure, and human capital development. They also explored opportunities for improvement in each area and discussed ways to advance national performance in these indicators.

The workshop served as a vital platform for exchanging knowledge on best global practices and experiences, highlighting the common challenges faced by countries in their digital transformation journey, and exploring inclusive and innovative policy solutions.

Mashael Ali al-Hammadi, assistant undersecretary for Digital Gov-



ernment Affairs at MCIT, stated: "The launch of the second edition of the E-Government Workshop for the Mena region in 2025 reflects Qatar's commitment to advancing digital governance standards at both the regional and international levels. It also strengthens international co-operation frameworks to amplify the impact of digital transformation in achieving sustainable development goals and enhancing digital inclusion.

This workshop is one of the key initiatives supporting the implementation of the Digital Agenda 2030, Qatar's national roadmap to build a connected digital government that relies on modern infrastructure and supports a digital economy and society capable

of innovation and leadership amid rapid global changes". During the workshop, al-Hammadi also announced the translation and design of the Arabic and French editions of the 2024 United Nations EGDI Report, prepared by Qatar, represented by the MCIT, in co-operation with Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU). She also noted Qatar's contribution to the Spanish edition of the report, produced by Uruguay.

Vincenzo Aquaro, chief, Digital Government Branch, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, Undesa, commented: "The 2024 United Nations E-Government Survey reflects Qatar's digital transformation, which was accelerated with the hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

It stands as a model for how smart infrastructure and visionary leadership can fast-track the development of a resilient and inclusive digital economy". He added: "The notable progress made by GCC countries, including Qatar, highlights the power of regional co-operation and strategic investments in digital technologies in reshaping public governance and enhancing citizen engagement."

Dr Ibrahim Zain, acting dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at HBKU, stated: "Guided by its vision to propel Qatar's economy forward and develop globally impactful solutions, HBKU continues to support national initiatives across sectors, fostering a knowledge economy and ad-

ressing global challenges." The workshop concluded with a set of recommendations that focused on supporting the development of the EGDI methodology in a way that suits the region's specific needs and development context. They also emphasised the importance of enhancing co-operation among countries in the fields of digital capacity building, improving national data collection mechanisms, and adopting a participatory approach in digital policy development.

The recommendations stressed the need to invest in digital infrastructure and build the capacities of governments to deliver inclusive smart services, with a strong focus on citizen engagement in designing and evaluating these services.

HMC's Hospital at Home programme delivers specialist care to patients in the community

Hamad Medical Corp (HMC) is redefining how healthcare is delivered through its Hospital at Home model, led by the Home Healthcare Service (HHCS). This innovative programme brings advanced, hospital-level care into the homes of patients across Qatar, ensuring that individuals with complex medical needs receive high-quality, specialist treatment while remaining in a familiar and supportive environment.

HHCS is both Joint Commission International (JCI) Accredited under Home Care Standards and Planetree Gold Certified for Person-Centered Care, reflecting its commitment to safety, quality, and compassion. The service provides round-the-clock, interdisciplinary care to patients of all ages – ranging from paediatric cases to elderly individuals – who are temporarily or permanently housebound.

“The Hospital at Home model is more than just an alternative to inpatient care – it is a transformative approach that brings medical expertise to the very heart of our communities,” said Dr Hanadi al-Hamad, Deputy Chief for Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatrics at HMC.

“Caring for patients in their own homes allows them to remain in a familiar, comfortable setting, surrounded by their loved ones. This significantly contributes to emotional well-being, reduces the stress and anxiety often associated with hospital stays, and encourages a more active role for family members in the care journey. Importantly, this programme provides specialist care typi-



cally offered in hospitals – such as ventilation support, complex wound care, and palliative services – delivered by expert multidisciplinary teams.”

HHCS is uniquely positioned to manage complex and specialised clinical cases outside the hospital. Currently, 79 patients dependent on mechanical ventilators are being cared for at home. The service also provides critical treatments such as tracheostomy care, enzyme replacement therapy, long-term oxygen therapy, advanced wound management, and Point of Care Testing – with future plans to include feeding tube replacements and portable tele-imaging capabilities.

“We are proud to lead a model of care that brings specialist services directly to those who need them most,” said Dr Essa al-Sulaiti, Medical Director of HHCS.

“What we’re doing with Hospital at Home is empowering our multidisciplinary teams – physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals – to deliver complex interventions in a way that prioritises patient comfort, safety, and dignity. We are breaking down barriers between hospital and home, and ensuring that care

is timely, accessible, and centred on each patient’s individual needs.”

The HHCS model also supports early discharge for patients requiring short-term medical care at home. Through its Early Supported Discharge (ESD) programme, patients who are stable enough to leave the hospital can continue treatments – such as IV antibiotics and wound care – at home. In 2024, this programme has saved more than 5,000 adult and 1,400 paediatric bed-days, directly contributing to improved hospital flow and reduced congestion in emergency departments.

The HHCS Call Centre operates 24/7, responding to over 52,000 calls in 2024 alone. It plays a crucial role in providing real-time guidance and reassurance to patients and their families, helping to avoid unnecessary hospital visits and ensuring continuity of care.

As demand for healthcare services continues to grow, HMC’s Hospital at Home model stands as a forward-thinking solution – demonstrating that world-class specialist care can be delivered effectively, safely, and compassionately in the community.



Hendrik Wust and HE Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed at the event.



HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji interacting with Hendrik Wust.

QT hosts German delegation

Qatar Tourism chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji hosted an official dinner in honour of the visiting delegation from the city of Dusseldorf, Germany. Minister-President of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Hendrik Wust, was the guest of honour, in addition to several high-ranking officials, as well as Qatari officials and representatives from Qatar Chamber and the Qatari Businessmen

Association. HE al-Kharji highlighted the dynamic partnership between Qatar and Germany, characterised by mutual respect, shared values, and a collaborative spirit that spans decades and continues to grow.

Wust, Qatar’s Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry HE Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed, and German Mittelstand GCC Office managing director

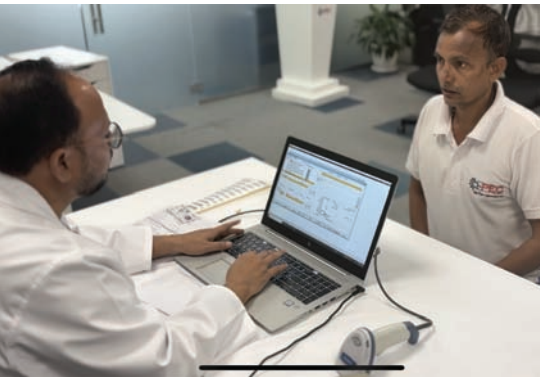
Christian Tarik Schwippert also spoke. The evening concluded with a networking reception, providing an opportunity for dialogue and the exchange of ideas between Qatari and German stakeholders. The event served as a testament to the enduring ties between the two nations and reaffirmed a shared commitment to deepening collaboration across tourism, business, and cultural exchange, a statement added.

Ministry discusses environmental co-operation with Tanzania group

HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) Eng Abdulaziz bin Ahmad al-Mahmoud met with a delegation from the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) of the United Republic of Tanzania. During the meeting, both sides discussed existing areas of co-operation and explored ways to enhance joint environmental efforts, in addition to exchanging expertise and experiences in the fields of environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and achieving environmental sustainability. **(QNA)**



QPEC Organizes Successful Blood Donation Program



QPEC proudly hosted a Blood Donation Program recently at its premises, witnessing an overwhelming response with around 140 volunteers stepping forward to donate blood. The event was a testament to the spirit of compassion and responsibility shared by the QPEC family.

Speaking on the occasion, CEO Irshad Ahmad Mir expressed heartfelt gratitude and shared, “Every six months, we organize these programs as part of our ongoing commitment to social responsibility. We feel proud to contribute to the community, and our employees are the real heroes behind this initiative.”

Speaking to one of the donors, Aslam, he said, “Donating blood is a small effort for an individual but can mean the world to someone in need. I feel honored to be a part of this initiative, and I’m proud of what QPEC is doing for society.”

QPEC Management extended sincere thanks to the HMC team, whose dedication and professionalism made this program a great success. The HMC authorities ensured the event was conducted in the most sophisticated and well-organized manner.

QPEC remains dedicated to continuing such noble initiatives, reinforcing its role as a responsible and community-focused organization.

Qatari-French security committee meeting



The Joint Security Committee between Qatar and France held a virtual meeting yesterday as part of the third edition of the Qatari-French Strategic Dialogue, with the aim of strengthening bilateral co-operation and exchanging expertise in the security field. The Qatari side was headed by Head of the Organisations and International Relations Section at the International Co-operation Department of the Ministry of Interior Brigadier Khalid Ali al-Kaabi, while the French side was led by Director of European and International Affairs at the French Ministry of Interior Pierre Reynaud de Lamotte. The meeting discussed a number of items on its agenda aimed at supporting the course of co-operation between the two sides in the coming period. **(QNA)**

Police Academy organises seminar on ways to combat cyber, economic crimes

The Police Academy, represented by the Security Research and Studies Center, in collaboration with the Economic and Cyber Crimes Department of the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation, organised a seminar on cyber and economic crimes and ways to combat them. The seminar was attended by Major General Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Suwaidi, who serves as Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Technical and Specialised Affairs, along with several directors of departments at the Ministry of Interior and representatives of relevant authorities. The seminar, which featured a group of specialists and experts, aimed to shed light on the challenges of digital crimes, review legal and legislative frameworks, prevention and response mechanisms, strengthen institutional partnerships between relevant authorities, and propose recommendations and innovative solutions. The seminar is part of the Police Academy’s efforts to enhance cybersecurity and raise institutional and societal awareness to combat cyber and economic crimes. **(QNA)**





Nigaam Jewels, founded by the Nigam family in Jaipur, India, during the 1980s, epitomises global exotic luxury. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam



Nigaam Jewels in spotlight at Alfardan Jewellery

Alfardan Jewellery is hosting an exclusive Nigaam Jewellery boutique activation at Villaggio Mall in Doha, until Sunday (April 27). The event showcases the brand's unique blend of global inspiration and exquisite craftsmanship.

Nigaam Jewels, founded by the Nigam family in Jaipur, India, during the 1980s, epitomises global exotic luxury, a statement said. The brand's legacy stems from its mastery of coloured gemstone cutting and design, coupled with worldwide distribution, fostering an appreciation

for diverse world cultures. Driven by extensive travels and collaborations with renowned jewellery designers and artisans, Nigaam Jewels creates one-of-a-kind pieces. Their designs transcend time, using gemstones, settings, and details to evoke emotions and tell captivating

stories. Nigaam considers each piece a carefully curated masterpiece, blending cultural influences with the finest diamonds and rare gemstones. Visitors are invited to explore a world where jewellery becomes art, and every piece tells a unique story, the statement added.

New appointments at Miramax TV

Miramax, the award-winning global film and television studio, beIN Media Group (beIN) and Paramount company, have appointed Lucy Dertavitian as head of content, Mena, and Carissa Hope Lynch as creative director, UK, a statement said.

"We're thrilled to announce the team leading Miramax Television's international expansion, with Carissa helming the UK and Lucy guiding our efforts across Mena," said Alix Jaffe, president, Miramax Television.

"This team will be instrumental in building our global footprint, demonstrating our commitment to reimagining our iconic IP and creating original stories for new audiences around the world. We're excited for the opportunity ahead." In her new role, Dertavitian will oversee Mena, signifying the growing importance of the region for Miramax's expanding slate of content. Her responsibilities include collaborating with local producers, writers, and directors to adapt Miramax Library IP into Arabic-language series as well as developing original projects with local talent to sell to buyers throughout the region.

Her expertise in navigating the region will be crucial as Miramax continues to strengthen its presence in the region through the Miramax Doha Office. She will report to Mirsada Abdool Raman, senior vice-president, Television, and be based in the Miramax office in Doha. In her new position, Lynch's focus



Carissa Hope Lynch

will extend beyond development and expand Miramax's producing infrastructure in the UK, a key part of the company's ambition to strengthen its presence in the market. Lynch will report directly to Jaffe and work alongside Rosie Collins, creative executive, UK, based out of London, to adapt Miramax's renowned film library into compelling television.

In addition to her creative leadership, Lynch is dedicated to development of emerging talent, particularly through her "Duly Noted" script editor training programme in partnership with BBC and Sony.

Qatar, Togo hold political consultations

The first round of political consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and the Republic of Togo was held in Lome, the capital of Togo. The Qatari side was chaired by HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi, while the Togolese side was chaired by Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and Togolese Abroad Ousmane Afo Salifou. During the round, both parties discussed bilateral co-operation relations and a number of regional and international issues of mutual interest. Qatar and Togo signed an MoU for co-operation in the fields of youth and sports. **(QNA)**



HBKU symposium highlights effects of social media on family and society

QNA
Doha

Minaretein Center, part of the College of Islamic Studies at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), in collaboration with the Doha International Family Institute, organised a symposium that highlighted the multiple impacts of social media on the contemporary family. The symposium brought together a group of experts and specialists in the fields of family, community, and social studies.

The symposium, moderated by Dr Mohamed El-Gammal, addressed various aspects of the impact of technology and digital communication on family life, including marital and parental relationships, the potential positive impact of these tools in achieving work-family balance, and their role in enhancing communication between family members separated by geographical distances. The symposium also presents challenges and new values that impact the social structure of the family.

At the beginning of the symposium, preacher at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Sheikh Mowafi Azab spoke about the complex social impacts of social media, emphasising that societies were not adequately prepared to deal with this sudden openness to the digital world. He explained that these virtual media, despite the opportunities they offer, have profound negative effects that threaten values and morals, especially in the absence of proper educational guidance.

He pointed out that true education, based on religion and societal awareness, is the most effective way to protect families from moral collapse, calling for realism in dealing with these phenomena and not being satisfied with theoretical warnings, but rather the necessity of developing practical mechanisms to confront them, such as strengthening self-control and fortifying children with



knowledge and religion, indicating that one of the greatest challenges facing families today is the dominance of materialism over the value system, which weakens human bonds and increases family conflicts.

He believes that social media sites contribute to widening the gap between spouses and work to support emotional and moral separation between family members, describing these sites as having become a "greater devil" due to the threat they pose to the system of morality and religion.

For his part, Director of Family Research and Policy at the Doha International Family Institute Dr Ahmed Aref reviewed a number of studies conducted by the institute on the relationship between social media use and the stability of family relationships. He explained that 63% of the world's population uses these platforms, and that more than 60% of university students are addicted to their daily use, which impacts their real-life communication and family relationships. He stressed that this type of excessive use has become a form of digital addiction that requires specialised

intervention for treatment. Meanwhile, lecturer at Qatar University Dr Chedli Baya Chatti emphasised the importance of changing the perception of these platforms, calling for them to be treated as "social media" rather than simply "media." He noted that these platforms have become an integrated societal phenomenon that requires conscious interaction from various educational, media, and religious sectors.

He added that these media can be used positively through qualitative projects, reviewing his experience in two national projects that aimed to establish a value framework that is consistent with the identity of Qatari society and promotes the responsible and balanced use of these media, achieving a balance between modernity and religious and cultural authenticity.

At the end of the symposium, participants recommended the careful use of technology and digital communication in family life, at specific times and in a thoughtful manner, to strengthen family bonds. If misused, it can disrupt the family and its children, alienating them from the social environment.

Crushers operating without permits spotted



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Wildlife Protection Department patrols has carried out an extensive campaign across various sites throughout the country. The campaign resulted in the seizure of five crushers operating without permits and six unlicensed screening plants that were exploiting natural resources. Legal measures were accordingly taken against the violators.



Tender Invitation

Mesaimeer City Real Estate Company announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Subject	Bid Submission	Tender Fees	Tender Bond	Closing Date
GRSIA/MES/GTC/037/2025	Internal Audit Service in Mesaimeer City for 3 years	Two Envelopes (Technical – Commercial)	1,000 Qatari Riyals	50,000 Qatari Riyals	May 14, 2025, 12:00 PM

Terms and Conditions:

- Tender documents can be obtained via email at aebrahimi@grsia.gov.qa after receiving receipt for the tender fees.
- Fees are non-refundable and must be paid through a bank deposit to Mesaimeer City Real Estate Company's account as detailed below:

Bank	Masraf Al Rayan
Account Name	Mesaimeer City Real Estate
Account Number	0003-108240-005
IBAN	QA61 MAFR 0000 0000 0003 1082 4000 5
- Both the technical and commercial bids must be submitted to Mesaimeer City Real Estate Company's office. Bids must be enclosed in two sealed envelopes (technical and commercial), clearly indicating the tender number and subject. The last time for submission is 12:00 PM, and no bids will be accepted after this time.
- Any inquiries related to the tender documents should be submitted in writing via the email mentioned above, no later than **May 4, 2025**. Inquiries received after this date will be ignored.

The companies applying to participate in the Tender must have:

- Experience in similar services with the similar Real Estate project in Qatar during the last 10 years.
- Staffs should have relevant professional certifications such as CIA (Certified Internal Auditor) or equivalent.
- Firm Should have financial stability.
- Should have Ability to issue Tender Bond & Performance Bond.
- Should have enough in-house resources and manpower in the same field to handle the type of project.

Mesaimeer City Real Estate Company
Street 1129 /Zone 56/ Unit 15



Tanzania police detain opposition officials on way to court, party says

Reuters/AFP

Dar Es Salaam

Police in Tanzania detained two senior opposition figures yesterday as the men were headed to a court hearing for their party leader Tundu Lissu, who has been charged with treason, their party said.

Chadema party deputy chairperson John Heche and secretary-general John Mnyika were detained as they headed to Kisutu Magistrate Court in Dar es Salaam, party spokesperson Brenda Rupia said.

“Some of our party officials have been arrested,” she told AFP.

Nine of the 13 arrested were later abandoned in a wood, a party official said.

Chadema said one man was killed after being beaten by police as hundreds gathered outside the court in the business capital Dar es Salaam, where Lissu’s hearing was due to take place.

AFP was unable to verify the claim of a death.

Police were yet to comment.

“We are continuing to witness grave violations of human rights, civic freedom and rule of law in our country,” Rupia said on X. “We won’t allow our nation to return to the darkness of fear, threats and oppression.”

A police spokesperson did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan says the government is committed to respecting human rights and ordered an investigation into a series of abductions last year, when several government critics were kidnapped and injured or killed.

Lissu refused to participate in the court hearing after authorities decided to conduct a virtual trial, with him appearing via video link from prison, Rupia later posted on X.

The refusal to bring Lissu physically to the court “infringes upon the right of the accused person”, she said.

The hearing was adjourned to May 6, Je-

bra Kambole, Lissu’s lawyer, told Reuters.

Lissu, who was runner-up in a presidential election in 2020, was charged with treason this month over what prosecutors said was a speech calling on the public to rebel and disrupt presidential and parliamentary elections that are expected to take place in October.

He was not allowed to enter a plea on the treason charge, but pleaded not guilty to a separate charge of publishing false information.

Days later, the country’s election commission disqualified Chadema from taking part in the elections, on the grounds it had failed to sign an election code of conduct on time.

The party, which called that move unconstitutional, had previously threatened to boycott the elections unless significant reforms were made to an electoral process which it says favours the ruling party.

A lawyer by training, Lissu entered parliament in 2010 and ran for president in 2020.

He was shot 16 times in a 2017 attack that he says was ordered by his political opponents.

After losing the 2020 election to Magufuli, he fled the country.

He returned in 2023 on a wave of optimism as Hassan moved to relax some of her predecessor’s restrictions on the opposition and the media.

PLO votes to create VP post: council member

Reuters/AFP

Ramallah

The Palestinian leadership has approved the creation of the position of vice-president of Mahmoud Abbas, and possibly his successor, a step widely seen as needed to assuage international doubts over Palestinian leadership.

A statement published by state news agency Wafa said that 170 members of the Palestinian Central Council, the Palestinians’ highest decision-making body, voted in favour of the decision, while one member voted against it and another abstained.

They have not immediately appointed someone to the role.

According to the statement, Abbas has the right to assign tasks to the deputy, relieve him of his post, or accept his resignation.

Abbas, 89, has headed the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) since the death of veteran leader Yasser Arafat in 2004 but has for years resisted internal reforms, including the naming of a successor.

“A vote was held to create the position of vice-president,” Rizq Namoura, a member of the PLO’s central council, said on Palestine TV, adding the vote was “almost unanimous” in favour of establishing the post, a first for the organisation.

Palestinian analyst Aref Jaffal said the new role was created to pave the way for someone to succeed Abbas, 89.

“This position was created precisely to arrange for Abbas’s successor, as there are many things the Palestinian situation requires,” Jaffal, the director of the Al-Marsad Election Monitoring Centre, told AFP. “The Palestinian political system is already miserable, so I believe that all these arrangements are a prelude to creating a successor to Abbas.”

The Western-backed Palestinian Authority exercises limited rule in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and has not governed Gaza since fighting a civil war with Hamas in 2007.

Lebanon summons Iranian envoy over ‘disarmament’ comments

AFP/Reuters

Beirut

Lebanon’s foreign ministry summoned the Iranian ambassador yesterday over comments on “disarmament” as the issue of disarming Hezbollah gains momentum following a war between the Tehran-backed group and Israel.

In a post on social network X last week, Iranian ambassador Mojtaba Amani said that the “disarmament plan is a clear conspiracy against states”, without saying which or naming Hezbollah.

“We in the Islamic Republic of Iran are aware of the danger of this

conspiracy ... we warn others not to fall into the trap of enemies,” he wrote.

Lebanon’s President Joseph Aoun has pledged to implement a state monopoly on arms.

However, it is a “delicate” matter that must be approached through dialogue and carried out when “the circumstances” allow, he said on Sunday.

The US has pressed Lebanon’s government to disarm Hezbollah.

Lebanon’s foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday that Amani attended the ministry “upon his summons over his recent public positions”.

He was informed of the need to adhere to principles of “state sov-

ereignty and non-interference in their domestic affairs”, the statement said, pointing to the Vienna Convention.

Hezbollah, long a dominant force in Lebanon, was weakened in the latest war with Israel.

The war included an Israeli ground incursion and two months of heavy bombardment that decimated the group’s leadership.

A November truce accord was based on a UN Security Council resolution that says Lebanese troops and United Nations peacekeepers should be the only forces in south Lebanon.

It calls for the disarmament of all non-state groups.

The Iranian embassy said Am-

ani provided “clarifications” to Lebanese officials, noting that his statements on X were “general ... and applied to all countries without exception, including Iran”.

The visit to the ministry sought to avoid any possible “misunderstanding between the two countries” over the post’s content, the embassy said.

Last Friday Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said the group “will not let anyone disarm” it, adding it was ready for dialogue on a “defence strategy”, “but not under the pressure of occupation” by Israel.

In subsequent comments on Wednesday to Lebanese television channel Al Jadeed, Amani said

disarming Hezbollah was “a Lebanese domestic matter” and Iran would “not interfere” in it.

“We will comply with what the Lebanese institutions decide,” he said, adding that “in Lebanon there is occupation, there are attacks, there is the Israeli danger, there is a group ... that wants to defend itself”, he added, referring to Hezbollah.

Under the truce, Hezbollah was to pull its fighters north of Lebanon’s Litani River and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure in the south.

Israel was to withdraw all its forces from south Lebanon, but troops remain in five positions that it deems “strategic”.

Temporary homes



Migrants stand near burnt tents yesterday after the authorities dismantled makeshift camps housing sub-Saharan African migrants, in Amra, Sfax, Tunisia. - Reuters

Al Shebaab battles Somalia’s army for control of key base

Reuters

Mogadishu

Al Shebaab fighters battled Somali troops and allied forces for control of a strategic army base in central Somalia yesterday, the government and a military official said, as the Al Qaeda-linked militants tried to extend recent gains in the region.

Capturing the base in Wargaa-dhi town in the Middle Shabelle region, which houses soldiers, special forces and clan fighters, would enable Al Shebaab to sever an important trunk road between the capital Mogadishu, 200km (124 miles) to the southwest, and Galmudug State.

Al Shebaab, which has waged an insurgency in Somalia since 2007 to seize power, said in a statement that its fighters had captured the base and Wargaa-dhi town, something the government denied was the case.

The information ministry said in a statement that government forces had killed more than 40 religious militants after they attempted to attack the base yesterday morning.

However, army officer Hussein Ali told Reuters that the militants had taken the town of Wargaadhi after “fierce fighting”.

“Our forces lost 12 men, mostly (clan fighters). Around 20 Al Shebaab fighters were also killed,” Ali said. “But finally Al Shebaab got more reinforce-

ments and managed to capture the town.”

He said Somalia’s military was struggling to send reinforcements because they would need to use routes passing through areas held by Al Shebaab.

Two soldiers said the government forces, backed by air strikes, had managed to recapture part of the town by mid-morning.

Reuters could not independently verify any of the claims made by either side about the fighting.

Last week Al Shebaab attacked the town of Adan Yabal, about 245km (150 miles) north of Mogadishu which the military had been using as an operating base for raids on the group.

The attacks are part of an offensive by the group launched last month.

Al Shebaab briefly captured villages within 50km (30 miles) of Mogadishu, raising fears among residents of the capital that the city could be targeted.

Somali forces have since recaptured those villages but Al Shebaab has continued to advance in the countryside, as the future of international security support to Somalia appears increasingly precarious.

A new African Union peace-keeping mission replaced a larger force at the start of the year, but its funding is uncertain, with the United States opposed to a plan to transition to a UN financing model.

Ivory Coast opposition struggles to rally protesters

AFP

Abidjan

Call by Ivory Coast’s main opposition party for protests outside courts yesterday over the barring of its candidate from this year’s presidential election drew only a few hundred supporters, an AFP journalist saw.

The government warned that it would not permit any unrest and police blocked off access to the courts in Abidjan, the economic capital, and Bouake, the second largest city.

On Tuesday, the Abidjan court struck Tidjane Thiam off the electoral list – a decision that cannot be appealed and rules him out of standing in the October 25 vote.

The court said Thiam had lost Ivorian nationality when he acquired French citizenship in 1987.

His Democratic Party of Ivory Coast (PDCI) called for nationwide protests.

In Abidjan, a march was planned in the morning from the party’s headquarters to the courthouse.

However, only around 200 supporters gathered at the offices before dispersing, an AFP journalist saw.

Maria Blanc, a 39-year-old who works in sales, said she was “very disappointed” the march had not taken place.

“Every time the party postpones actions, it delays the process of making Thiam the presidential candidate,” she said, speaking at the party’s offices.

No marches were reported in other parts of the country.

Six months before Ivory Coast goes to the polls to elect a new head of state, the call to rally marked a key test for Thiam, a 62-year-old international banker, who is currently in France.

“This weak mobilisation is the result of doubt and uncertainty within the PDCI,” Ousmane Zina, a political science professor at Bouake University, told AFP.

“There is still a long way to go. This is the beginning of a long political march” for him, Zina added.

Election periods are often tense in Ivory Coast, where post-election violence in 2010-2011 left around 3,000 dead.

However, the last decade has seen the richest French-speaking country in sub-Saharan Africa and the world’s top cocoa producer revert to being a haven of stability in a region marked by coups and religious militant attacks.

As well as the court, police blocked off several streets around the PDCI’s offices in Abidjan, a city of 6mn people.

“There is no peace in Ivory Coast. There is a situation of tension. There is an anti-democratic situation. There is a denial of democracy,” Simon Doho, leader of the PDCI parliamentary party, said on Wednesday.

Demonstrations in Ivory Coast require authorisation from the police but this is often refused.

“Disorder will not be tolerated,” government spokesman Amadou Coulibaly said after a cabinet meeting.

“This is not a threat,” he added. “We can consider it a recommendation.”

Tensions began rising a few weeks ago when other political opposition figures were excluded

from the presidential race.

They include former president Laurent Gbagbo, who was barred because of a criminal conviction.

However, tension further mounted after the court’s decision closed the door on Thiam running for president.

Thiam told AFP in a telephone interview on Wednesday that his party would not put up another candidate for the election.

“It’s me or no-one,” he said, adding he intended to take his case to the court of the west African regional bloc, ECOWAS.

“We are going to continue to fight on the ground and to show those in power that this is a decision that is bad for Ivory Coast,” he said.

The Abidjan court based its ruling on article 48 of the nationality code, dating from the 1960s, which states that acquiring another nationality means foregoing Ivorian citizenship.

Born in Ivory Coast, Thiam acquired French nationality in 1987 but gave it up in March to stand in the election.

His supporters have condemned the ruling as “political” and aimed at barring him from the election but the ruling party says it was not involved in the decision.

His legal woes may not be over, however. A court is due to rule on May 8 on another case linked to his nationality.

A party supporter has contested his legitimacy as PDCI leader.

The ruling party has yet to announce its presidential candidate.

President Alassane Ouattara, 83, in power since 2011, has said he is eager to “continue serving my country”.

Strike by weather forecasters grounds flights in Nigeria

Work stoppage by workers at Nigeria’s weather forecasting agency yesterday grounded dozens of flights, leaving travellers stranded in Africa’s most populous country.

Nigerian Meteorological Agency workers went on an “indefinite strike” earlier in the week demanding better working conditions.

The strike action forced at least two domestic airlines, including the country’s largest, Air Peace, to cancel all domestic flights scheduled yesterday.

“We regret to inform you that due to the unresolved industrial action by the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET), all our domestic flight operations have been officially cancelled until further notice,” Air Peace said in a post on X yesterday, responding to a customer query.

Air Peace operates more than 20 domestic routes, 10 regional routes and flies to several international routes including to Europe, according to its website.

An official at the NG Eagle airline told AFP that there was no guarantee of operations resuming today.

However, other local airlines were flying yesterday morning. A source who works at the Murtala Muhammed International airport in Lagos told AFP that international airlines were operating on Wednesday night.

Commercial law expert Ifeanyi Ejiofor blamed the government for “negligence and complacency” which he said led to the forecasters’ industrial action.

“This is not just irresponsible – it is a dangerous dereliction of duty,” he said in a social media post. “The cascading effect has been immediate and devastating: flight disruptions, stranded passengers, halted business engagements, and enormous financial losses.” - AFP



QF holds Aquathlon with a difference

Qatar Foundation's (QF) Ability Friendly Programme organised its first Aquathlon competition for persons with disabilities, the first event of its kind in Qatar, combining swimming and running, at the Recreation Center of Awsaj Academy in Education City.

The competition provided an opportunity for nearly 76 participants with disabilities to showcase their swimming and running skills.

The event strengthened family support and reinforced the principles of inclusion and community integration. It reflected QF's vision of empowering individuals of all abilities and enhancing their active participation in society.

Abdullah Shaheen al-Kaabi, head of Sports Affairs at QF's Pre-University Education (PUE), emphasised that sports are among the most important tools for supporting the mental and behavioural well-being of persons with disabilities. He noted that sports provide a safe space for self-expression, build self-confidence, and foster a strong sense of belonging.

"Through the Ability Friendly Programme, QF places great importance on providing an inclusive and diverse sports environment that caters to all abilities. Qatar Foundation has ensured that its sports facilities are fully accessible, with priority access given to persons with disabilities, reflecting its genuine commitment to the principle of inclusivity."

Al-Kaabi explained that the tournaments and sports events organised by QF are not merely for entertainment but serve as a real source of motivation for students to continue training and developing their skills.

"Sports by nature require effort and discipline. Having a clear goal – such as participating in a competition or achieving a sporting milestone, gives that effort greater meaning and significantly boosts the motivation of persons with disabilities."

He also noted that QF's current programmes go beyond physical activity, aiming to gradually prepare persons with disabilities to take part in larger sports competitions, whether within the programme itself or through strategic partnerships with sports federations, paving the way for them to reach higher levels of competition in the future.

Al-Kaabi concluded with a message to parents, encouraging them to support and motivate their children to join such programmes: "The continued engagement of persons with disabilities in sports requires a supportive and encour-



Abdullah Shaheen al-Kaabi



Sila Yildirim and her son Mousa

aging family environment. Their participation in competitions serves as a starting point for building long-term athletic ambition."

Sila Yildirim, mother of Mousa Yildirim, one of the children with autism who participated in the competition, shared her thoughts:

"Having sports events dedicated to our children with disabilities has a profound impact on their integration into society and helps build their self-confidence."

"Each child with a disability has unique needs and abilities. When we provide them with the space to participate, we're not just offering an activity we're giving them a true sense of belonging and active inclusion."

"The efforts made by QF truly make a difference, not only in our children's lives but also in our own emotional well-being as parents. These events send a clear message that our children are welcomed, that they are not on the margins of society, but an essential part of it, seen, understood, and supported."

Yildirim, who comes from a different cultural background, expressed how the experience in Qatar shifted her perspective. "I fully understand how difficult it

“Through the Ability Friendly Programme, QF places great importance on providing an inclusive and diverse sports environment that caters to all abilities. Qatar Foundation has ensured that its sports facilities are fully accessible, with priority access given to persons with disabilities, reflecting its genuine commitment to the principle of inclusivity.”



can be for a child with a disability to find their place in society. But what I found in Qatar, through the support and appreciation for diverse abilities, completely changed my perspective and gave me a genuine sense of hope.

"I'm grateful to all the entities contributing to this positive change and turning acceptance and inclusion into a tangible reality. Organising competitions and events dedicated to our children is both inspiring and impactful. It's a meaningful step toward a more inclusive and equitable future."



'Palestine Taught Me' art event

Awsaj Academy, part of Qatar Foundation's (QF) Pre-University Education (PUE), held the second edition of 'Palestine Taught Me,' an art exhibition and competition that gave students across Qatar a platform to express their solidarity with Palestine and reflect its cultural identity and human values through art.

The event was part of QF's broader efforts to raise awareness of humanitarian issues and to instil empathy, compassion, and collaboration among students. It served as a space where artistic creativity was merged with meaningful community engagement. Held at the PUE Theatre in Education City, the exhibition saw strong participation from students representing over 112 QF schools, as well as several schools from across the country. Nearly 1,300 student artworks were showcased.

Hessa Hamad al-Thani, art teacher at Awsaj Academy, said: "Art should not be limited to entertainment; it is a universal language capable of conveying powerful messages and inspiring meaningful change within communities and the world at large."

"Through this exhibition, we were committed to offering students a safe and open environment to freely express their emotions and perspectives on the Palestinian cause, while also deepening their understanding of core human values such as justice, freedom, and compassion."

"By engaging in art exhibitions, community events, and volunteer initiatives, our students grow intellectually and emotionally. They learn that even the smallest action can make a difference, and that building a community based on empathy and respect starts from within each individual."

"This initiative reflects QF's vision of embedding human values at the heart of the educational experience. We work to instil respect for others, compassion for those in need, and a sense of responsibility to be ambassadors of peace and kindness both within their

communities and beyond." The exhibition concluded with an award ceremony honouring the most outstanding student artworks.

First place was awarded to Awab Sinan Raouf al-Akhras (Ali Bin Jassim Bin Hamad Al Thani Secondary School for Boys), for his powerful piece titled 'Palestine Will Not Die', a compelling visual representation of resilience, identity, and the right of return.

Abdullah Bin Al-Zubair School earned second place, while third place went to Layan Bakr from Kaaban Primary, Preparatory, and Secondary School for Girls. El-Sharnoubi Mohamed, visual arts teacher at Ali Bin Jassim Bin Mohamed Al Thani Secondary School for Boys, said: "This event offered an exceptional opportunity to engage students across all age groups with the Palestinian cause in a deeply human and artistic way."

"Art plays a vital role in communicating the suffering of the Palestinian people. It transforms that pain into a visual narrative that reflects each student's personal response and presents it to the community with honesty and impact." Mohamed mentioned that the experience not only deepened the students' understanding of the issue, but also provided them with a meaningful outlet to express true solidarity through creativity.

"Participating in a project like this allows students to emotionally connect with the reality of the situation. They put themselves in the shoes of Palestinian children who have lost their homes and basic rights, and through that emotional lens, they gain a deeper understanding of the human side of the cause." Speaking on his student's first-place win, Mohamed said: "We're proud that our school earned first place. The student's artwork delivered a powerful message: Palestine will never die. His portrayal of destroyed homes in Palestine was not just about loss, it symbolised hope and renewal. It affirmed that such destruction will not end the cause, but rather mark the beginning of Palestine's return."



El-Sharnoubi Mohamed



191 students feted at DPS Modern Indian School

DPS Modern Indian School felicitated 191 junior and middle school students (grades V to VII) for exceptional academic achievements, as part of the institution's silver jubilee celebrations.

President Yasir Nainar, the chief guest, announced that the school is strengthening its

inclusive approach by partnering with a company to support students with special needs. Principal Asna Nafees applauded the students' achievements and appreciated the dedication of teachers and parents. The achievers were honoured with trophies, badges, certificates, and blue blazers.

MES athletes shine



Four students of MES Indian School performed well at the athletics competition organised by NextGen Sports Academy. In the boys' events, Muhamed Hamdan won gold in shot put and Kevin Joseph two gold medals – in 800m and 1,500m races. In the girls' category, Meeval Mathews and Milani Mathews, won gold medals in shot put. Mariam Farid, a renowned international athlete of Qatar honoured the medal winners. School principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, congratulated the winners and their coach Steeson Mathew.

290th meeting held

Galfar Toastmasters Club conducted its 290th meeting recently. Themed 'Small Steps, Big Changes', the meeting highlighted the power of incremental progress in personal and professional development. Galfar Al Mishad Engineering & Contracting executive director Sathish G Pillai and other senior officials Toastmasters District 116 director Sabeena M K, programme quality director Alar Mel Mangai and Arabic Club member Eman Salameh were among the notable attendees. John Henry, Muhammad Hashir, Nerieza Dimalao, Mohamed Samad Imran Mohsin, Aparna Krishna, and club president Subamanya Hebbagelu and executive committee members spoke.



PEOPLE

South Korea’s ex-president Moon Jae-in indicted for bribery

South Korean prosecutors yesterday indicted former president Moon Jae-in for alleged bribery, making him the latest former leader of the country to face legal troubles in a case linked to the appointment of his then son-in-law at a Thai airline. Moon, 72, was indicted for bribery, while in the same case former lawmaker Lee Sang-jik was indicted for bribery and breach of trust. Prosecutors had been investigating whether Lee’s appointment as the head of the SMEs and Startups Agency was in exchange for Moon’s former son-in-law getting a job and receiving a salary plus living expenses at the Thai-based corporation that Lee controlled in 2018-2020, the statement said.

CRIME

Two US marines accused of sexual assault in Okinawa

Two US marines in Japan’s Okinawa are under investigation for alleged rapes, police said yesterday, the latest in a string of assault cases that have angered residents. The US has around 54,000 military personnel stationed in Japan – mostly on the subtropical southern island of Okinawa, to the east of Taiwan. “A US marine in his 20s is suspected of raping a Japanese woman at an American military base in March, and is also suspected of injuring another woman,” a local police official said. The second marine, also in his 20s, is suspected of raping a Japanese woman at a US base in January, the official said.

DEFENCE

China military monitors US warship in Taiwan Strait

China’s military said it had dispatched naval and air forces to monitor and warn a US guided missile destroyer that sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait. The US Navy, occasionally accompanied by ships from allied countries, transits the strait about once a month. China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, says the strategic waterway belongs to it. China held its latest round of war games around Taiwan earlier this month. The Eastern Theatre Command of China’s People’s Liberation Army named the ship as the guided-missile destroyer USS William P Lawrence, and said it passed through the strait on Wednesday in an act of “public hying”.

ASSISTANCE

China repatriates 900 from Myanmar scam centres

China has repatriated more than 900 citizens it suspects of working in Internet scam centres in Myanmar’s borderlands, a Beijing ministry said. Myanmar’s many-sided civil war – sparked by a 2021 coup – has enabled the rapid growth of lucrative Internet fraud factories established in its loosely governed borderlands. Many people have said they were trafficked into often heavily fortified scam compounds to target victims with romance or business scams on social media, luring them into making untraceable cryptocurrency payments. Analysts say some are willing participants in the industry worth billions of dollars annually.

Philippine security agency says signs of China poll interference

AFP
Manila

The Philippines’ National Security Council (NSC) yesterday said there are indications China is conducting a “state-sponsored” campaign to interfere in next month’s mid-term elections. The accusation emerged at a senate hearing where a senior lawmaker claimed Beijing’s embassy in Manila was “paying Filipinos to work in troll farms” to undermine President Ferdinand Marcos’s government. The May 12 nationwide poll will decide hundreds of seats in the House of Representatives and senate as well as thousands of hotly contested local positions. Senator Francis Tolentino, who is running for re-election on the Marcos slate, said the government’s policy in the disputed South China Sea was among the troll farms’ frequent targets. The Philippines has been engaged in months of confrontations with Beijing over the crucial waterway and has steadily deepened defence co-operation with the US under Marcos. NSC assistant director general Jonathan Malaya told the senate hearing yesterday his agency believed China was likely behind on-line attacks aimed at influencing the polls. “There are indications... that information operations are being conducted that are Chinese state-sponsored in the Philippines that

are actually interfering in the forthcoming elections,” Malaya said. He said the NSC had identified a list of local proxies known to be amplifying Beijing’s messaging. Tolentino said local companies were being paid to create hundreds of fake social media accounts with the intention of swaying the outcome of the election. “It’s clear that the Chinese government, through the Chinese embassy, is paying Filipinos to work in troll farms to criticise and destroy our administration, our Congress and our government,” Tolentino said. Calls to the Chinese embassy were not returned immediately. Asked to comment on the allegations, Philippine Commission on Elections (Comelec) chairman George Garcia called them “dangerous and worrisome”. “We were likewise briefed about attacks directed against Comelec using bots and troll farms” aimed at undermining faith in the coming election, he told journalists in a messaging chat group. Marcos’ popularity has plunged precipitously in the past three months, with a recent poll showing his approval rating effectively halved to just 25% since a survey in late 2024. The drop follows the arrest and transfer of former president Rodrigo Duterte to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to face charges tied to his deadly drug war, and the impeachment of his daughter, Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte.

China launches Shenzhou-20 mission



China yesterday sent three astronauts to its permanently inhabited space station, in its 15th crewed spaceflight and the 20th overall in the Shenzhou programme that started over three decades ago. The spacecraft Shenzhou-20 and the crew lifted off atop a Long March-2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China at 5.17pm (0917GMT), according to state broadcaster CCTV. State news agency Xinhua reported soon afterwards that the launch was successful. The launch comes as China’s advances in lunar and space exploration are drawing in more countries.

Claims of ongoing US-China trade talks ‘groundless’: Beijing

AFP
Beijing

Beijing yesterday said any claims of ongoing trade talks with Washington were “groundless” after US President Donald Trump played up the prospects of a deal to lower hefty tariffs he imposed on China. The world’s two leading economies are locked in an escalating tit-for-tat trade battle triggered by Trump’s new levies on Chinese goods, which have reached 145% on many products. Beijing has responded with new 125% duties on imports from the US. The tariff blitz – which Trump says is retaliation

for unfair trade practices, as well as a bid to restore US manufacturing prowess – has rattled markets and raised fears of a global recession. Beijing denied Trump’s claim that negotiations were being conducted daily. “As the competent department for foreign economic and trade relations, I would like to emphasise that there are currently no economic and trade negotiations between China and the US,” Chinese commerce ministry spokesman He Yadong told a news conference. “Any claims about the progress of China-US economic and trade negotiations are groundless and have no factual basis,” He said. “China urges the US to correct its wrong practices, show the sincerity needed for talks

(and) return to the correct track of equal dialogue and consultation.” Trump told reporters on Wednesday that his country would have a “fair deal with China”, adding when asked if Washington was talking to Beijing that “everything’s active”. Asked if there is direct US contact with China on trade, Trump said: “Every day.” China’s foreign ministry also responded to the claims yesterday, calling reports of ongoing negotiations “false”. “As far as I know, China and the US have not conducted any consultations or negotiations on the issue of tariffs, let alone reached any agreement,” foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a daily news conference.

Philippines, US begin joint maritime drills

The Philippine navy said a Chinese aircraft carrier battle group had passed near its northern maritime boundaries in the run-up to a six-day maritime exercise with the US that began yesterday as part of their annual Balikatan military drills. The co-ordinated naval drills would be carried out within Philippine waters, spanning from the vicinity of Subic Bay up to the Northern Luzon, the Philippine military said. Japan and other regional partners are increasingly taking part in Balikatan, which means “shoulder-to-shoulder,” amid tensions with China over its activities in the South China Sea and around Taiwan. Rear admiral Roy Vincent Trinidad, Philippine Navy spokesperson for the South China Sea, confirmed the sighting of the Chinese naval formation early Tuesday about 100 nautical miles off Burgos, Ilocos Norte.

Denmark king visits Japan



Denmark’s King Frederik X visits the Grand Ring as he attends the official opening of the Danish National Day at Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, yesterday.

Dhaka, World Bank sign deal to boost trade, jobs

Reuters
Dhaka

Bangladesh and the World Bank have signed two financing agreements worth \$850mn to strengthen the country’s trade capacity, create jobs, and modernise its social protection system, the Washington-based global lender said. The bulk of the funding, \$650mn, will support the Bay Terminal Marine Infrastructure Development Project, an initiative to expand and modernise port facilities in the southeast-ern district of Chittagong. The project will include constructing a 6km climate-resilient breakwater and access channels, allowing the port to accommodate larger vessels. This is expected to sharply reduce turnaround times, lower

transportation costs, and boost Bangladesh’s export competitiveness. Officials estimate the improvements could save the economy around \$1mn per day. The Bay Terminal is projected to handle 36% of the nation’s container traffic, benefiting more than 1mn people by improving access to transport and regional markets. The project will also promote women’s participation in port operations and support women-led businesses in exploring trade opportunities. “To remain on a sustainable growth path, Bangladesh must create quality jobs for its population, particularly for the nearly 2mn youth who enter the labour market every year,” Gayle Martin, the World Bank’s interim country director for Bangladesh, said in a statement.

Indonesia food plan risks ‘world’s largest’ deforestation

AFP
Jakarta

An Indonesian soldier gives a thumbs up as he crosses a rice field on a combine harvester in remote Papua, where a government food security mega-project has raised fears of mass deforestation. Keen to end its reliance on rice imports, Indonesia wants to plant vast tracts of the crop, along with sugar cane for biofuel, in the restive eastern region. But environmentalists warn it could become the world’s largest deforestation project, threatening

endangered species and Jakarta’s climate commitments. And activists fear the scheme will fuel rights violations in a region long plagued by alleged military abuses as a separatist insurgency rumbles on. The project’s true scale is hard to ascertain; even government statements vary. At a minimum, however, it aims to plant several million hectares of rice and sugar cane across South Papua province’s Merauke. One million hectares is around the size of Lebanon. Deforestation linked to the plan is already under way. By late last year, more than 11,000 hectares had been cleared – an area

larger than Paris – according to Franky Samperante of environmental and Indigenous rights NGO Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat. That figure has only increased, according to analysis by campaign group Mighty Earth and conservation start-up The TreeMap. Their work shows areas cleared include primary and secondary natural dryland and swamp forest, as well as secondary mangrove forest, savanna and bush. “Usually, deforestation is a product of government not doing its job,” said Mighty Earth chief executive Glenn Hurowitz. “But in this case, it’s actually the state saying we want to clear some of

our last remaining forests, carbon-rich peatlands, habitat for rare animals,” he said. Indonesia’s government says the land targeted is degraded, already cultivated or in need of “optimisation”, dismissing some areas as little more than swamps. Environmentalists argue that misunderstands the local ecosystem. “In South Papua, the landscape and the ecosystem is lowland forest,” said Samperante. “There are often misconceptions or even belittling” of these ecosystems, he added. Mapping done by Mighty Earth shows the project threatens a broader ecosystem range – including peatlands and forests the group says

should be protected by a government moratorium on clearing. “The tragedy in this project,” said Hurowitz, “is that Indonesia has made so much progress in breaking the link between agricultural expansion and deforestation.” “Unfortunately, this single project threatens to undermine all progress.” Indonesia has some of the world’s highest deforestation rates and Papua retains some of the largest remaining untouched tracts. Indonesian think-tank CELIOS says cutting down so much forest could derail Jakarta’s plan to reach net-zero by 2050. For President Prabowo Subianto’s government, criticism of the project ignores

Indonesia’s agricultural and economic realities. He has made the scheme a priority, visiting soon after taking office. In January, he said the country was on track to end rice imports by late 2025, and reiterated its energy independence needs. In Papua, planting is in full swing. In the region’s Kaliki district, farmers supported by soldiers were tending rice paddies in recently-cleared land. “This location used to be like the one on the right here. Non-productive and neglected land,” said Ahmad Rizal Ramdhani, a soldier serving as the agriculture ministry’s food resilience taskforce chief, at an event lauding the project.



OPINION

UK finance minister confident of trade deal with US

British Finance Minister Rachel Reeves said she was confident that Britain and the US could reach a trade deal to reduce the hit from President Donald Trump's import tariffs, a day before she was due to meet her US counterpart. "We don't always agree with the policy prescriptions and we're seeking a deal that reduces the trade barriers between our countries," Reeves said. "But I am confident that a deal can be done, that our strong relationship – when it comes to defence, when it comes to security and when it comes to the economy and prosperity – means that we can strike a deal," she said.

DECISION

UK blocks video game controller exports to Russia

Britain yesterday said it was banning the export to Russia of video game controllers which can be used to pilot drones, part of its latest package of trade measures following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. "We're ... banning outright video game controllers going to Russia, preventing them from being used to pilot drones on the frontline, meaning gaming consoles will no longer be repurposed to kill in Ukraine," sanctions minister Stephen Doughty said in a statement. The announcement comes after Ukraine's air force said Russia had launched 215 drones and missiles in an overnight attack.

ANNOUNCEMENT

UK fraud office encourages firms to self-report wrongdoing

Firms that self-report suspected wrongdoing to Britain's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and co-operate with investigators will get a chance to avoid prosecution, the SFO said. The SFO, which has a remit covering complex financial crimes, fraud and corruption, said companies that flag potential breaches would be offered the chance to negotiate a Deferred Prosecution Agreement. Such agreements typically allow the accused to avoid prosecution unless they reoffend or violate other terms. "If you have knowledge of wrongdoing, the gamble of keeping this to yourself has never been riskier," said SFO director Nick Ephgrave.

POLICY

UK firm to avoid solar panels linked to forced labour

Britain will ensure its new state-owned energy company, Great British Energy, avoids the use of solar panels linked to suspected forced labour in China, the energy department said. China produces over 80% of the world's solar panels. Research from the UK's Sheffield Hallam University says forced labour from among the country's Uyghurs is used to produce polysilicon, one of the panels' core components. China denies any abuses and a foreign ministry spokesperson said in February that allegations of forced labour were among the "lies of the century". Britain has a target to largely decarbonise its electricity sector by 2030.

Three more Russian insurers seek India approval to provide cover for oil tankers

Reuters
New Delhi/Moscow

Three more Russian insurers, including a subsidiary of top lender Sberbank, have asked India for approval to provide marine insurance for oil shipments sent to Indian ports, two sources with knowledge of the matter said, as Moscow looks to maintain deliveries despite Western sanctions.

India has already approved five insurers from Russia, which has no insurance firms in the International Group of P&I Clubs, which provides liability cover for personal injury or environmental clean-up claims for the majority of the world's tankers.

The move comes as growing scrutiny of Russia's oil supply chain by Washington and the European Union, including compliance with a price cap set by G7 for the use of Western ships and insurance, makes it increasingly difficult for Moscow to export its oil.

Russia is the top oil supplier to India for a third straight year in 2024-25 as New Delhi benefited on cheap supply after Western nations imposed sanctions on Moscow and curtailed their energy purchases in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

India's shipping ministry is evaluating the plea from Sberbank Insurance, Ugoria Insurance Group and ASTK Insurance Company to offer protection and indemnity (P&I) coverage for ships, the sources said.

The three entities meet India's

criteria for getting the authorisation and the ministry has to give the final clearance for the firms to be accredited, one of the sources said.

State-controlled Sberbank that owns Sberbank Insurance declined to comment. Sberbank Insurance, ASTK, Ugoria, India's shipping ministry and the directorate general of shipping did not respond to requests seeking comments.

India is considering US-sanctioned Sberbank Insurance as the nation follows only UN sanctions and not unilateral sanctions by any countries, said the source.

Insurance is essential for maritime transport, particularly oil cargoes that require the highest safety standards due to the risk of spills.

Indian refiners buy Russian oil on delivered basis with sellers providing vessels and insurance.

The addition of these three firms will increase the number of Russian insurance providers approved by India to eight, after it granted a permit to Soglasie Insurance in January.

However, Alfastrakhovanie, Sogaz Insurance and Ingosstrakh are under sanctions by Washington while VSK Insurance is under UK government sanctions.

India's oil secretary said in February that it wants to buy Russian oil only if it is supplied by companies and ships that have not been subject to sanctions by the US.

Last month, Indian port authorities denied entry to an ageing tanker loaded with Russian crude due to inadequate documentation, sources familiar with the matter had said.



Tourists wait near check-in desks at the airport in Budgam district, India, yesterday, as they try to leave following the Pahalgam attack.

India will identify, track and punish Kashmir attackers: PM

AFP
New Delhi

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday vowed to pursue and punish the gunmen responsible for killing 26 civilians in the tourist hotspot of Pahalgam on Tuesday. "We will pursue the gunmen to the ends of the earth," Modi said in his first speech since the attack.

The attack at Pahalgam was the deadliest for a quarter of a century and marked a dramatic shift with the targeting of civilians, rather than Indian security forces.

Indian police have offered a Rs2mn (\$23,500) bounty for information leading to the arrest of the gunmen.

Modi led two minutes of silence in memory

of those killed, all but one of whom was Indian.

"I say this unequivocally: whoever has carried out this attack, and the ones who devised it, will be made to pay beyond their imagination", Modi said, speaking in Hindi during a visit in Bihar state.

Indian security forces have launched a vast manhunt for the attackers, with large numbers of people detained in the operation.

A soldier was killed yesterday in clashes with gunmen at Basantgarh in Kashmir, the Indian army said.

Kashmir's main city of Srinagar appeared calm yesterday, with residents expressing shock at the attack, which has hit the region's key tourist industry hard, and fear of what is to come.

"Everyone I have spoken to is heartbroken

and shocked," said Siddhi Wahid, a Kashmiri historian and political commentator.

Tuesday's assault occurred as tourists enjoyed tranquil mountain views at the popular site at Pahalgam, when gunmen burst out of forests and raked crowds with automatic weapons.

The attack has enraged Hindu nationalist groups, and students from Kashmir at institutions across India have reported experiencing harassment and intimidation.

"It is a deliberate and targeted campaign of hate and vilification against students from a particular region and identity," Jammu and Kashmir Students Association convenor Nasir Khuehami said.

Modi called an all-party meeting with opposition parties yesterday to brief them on the government's response to the attack.

India 'expects steel imports to slow from China, S Korea, Japan'

India is expecting steel imports from China, South Korea and Japan to slow after imposition of temporary tariffs this week, a government source directly aware of the situation said yesterday. On Monday, India, the world's second-biggest producer of crude steel, imposed a 12% temporary tariff, or provisional safeguard duty, on some steel imports for 200 days. India's imports of finished steel products rose for a second straight year in fiscal year 2025 – with shipments reaching a nine-year high – a trend that has continued with rising shipments from China, South Korea and Japan. "South Korea, China and Japan are the main exporters of steel and imports from there should come down," the government source said. Korean companies are opposing the safeguard duty on steel imports, the source said, adding that South Korea's Posco and Hyundai are two major suppliers of steel to India from that country.

William visits community centre



Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales, plays a computer game during a visit to the Mentivity community centre and youth hub in Southwark, London, yesterday, which helps young people by ensuring they have access to high-quality youth services and safe spaces.

India's 100% car tariffs make customers anxious: Tesla

Reuters
New Delhi

Tesla sees India's 100% import tariffs on cars making customers anxious, and the carmaker is still assessing when to enter the "very hot" market even as those concerns linger, its chief financial officer said.

Tesla has long wanted to sell in the world's third-largest car market, but high tariffs, which its chief Elon Musk has said are among the steepest in the world, have been a deterrent.

Even so, Tesla has in recent weeks finalised some showroom space in India and posted more than two dozen jobs, signalling it is getting closer to a launch.

Commercially available custom records show that in March, Tesla imported a Model Y car to India from Germany at a shipment value of \$46,000.

"The same car which we're sending is 100% more expensive than what it is. So that creates a lot of anxiety. People feel OK, they're paying too much for the car ... That's why we've been very careful trying to figure out when is the right time (to enter India)," Vaibhav Taneja said in an earnings call.

"India is a very hot market," he added.

Tesla posted dismal first quarter earnings on Tuesday, with net profit plunging by 71%.

Tesla has been lobbying India to lower import tariffs on cars, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's officials are in talks with US President Donald Trump's administration to lower the 100% levies under a bilateral trade deal.

The US has asked for elimination of tariffs on cars, but New Delhi is unlikely to bring down taxes to zero immediately even as it considers further cuts.

Delhi mulls cap on car ownership, bikes' ban to shed polluter tag

Reuters
New Delhi

India's capital New Delhi plans to limit gasoline and diesel-powered cars a family can buy as well as ban sales of fuel-guzzling motorbikes and scooters, according to a draft policy aimed at cleaning up one of the world's most polluted cities.

The measures represent one of the most drastic steps the city has lined up to tackle pollution, which often forces local authorities to ban some construction, shut schools and disrupt flights in the city of more than 30mn

people during the winter season.

Under Delhi's new electric vehicle policy, the city government will also waive some local taxes on the purchase of hybrids, putting them on par with concessions given to EVs, while imposing a new levy of Rs0.5 (\$0.0059) on every litre of petrol sales, according to the 74-page draft.

The primary objective "is to unlock the next phase of EV adoption, reduce air pollution and contribute to India's energy independence and net-zero targets," the draft stated.

Every year ahead of the onset of winter in Delhi, calm winds and low temperatures trap pollutants from sources including vehicles,

industries and crop residue burning in nearby fields, raising the level of harmful toxins in the air.

Delhi launched the first phase of its EV policy in 2020 which helped boost the share of electric models to 12% of all new vehicle sales, including motorbikes and cars, in 2024.

Under the second phase, the policy document says, no new sales of gasoline, diesel and gas-based two-wheelers will be allowed from April 1, 2027. It is also providing a cash incentive of up to \$350 on the purchase of electric bikes and scooters.

Officials at Delhi's transport ministry and the chief minister's

office did not immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment.

Two-wheelers are a lifeline for millions of Delhi residents, and the move could significantly impact Delhi's lower- and middle-income groups who depend on them, and not cars, to navigate the city's often congested roads.

In 2024, nearly 450,000 new two-wheeler scooters and motorbikes were sold in Delhi. There were 8mn vehicles on Delhi's roads in 2022-23, of which 67% were two-wheelers, according to central government figures.

A ban on the sale of fossil fuel two-wheelers from 2027 will hurt manufacturers such as Bajaj Mo-

tors, TVS, and Hero MotoCorp, although some of the negative impact may be offset by increased sales of their electric two-wheelers.

And in a move aimed at the more affluent population, the policy is also set to limit the number of fossil fuel cars each household can purchase to two, as it aims for a 30% EV penetration by 2030, from around 2.7% last year.

"All private car owners in Delhi will be required to purchase only electric cars if they intend to own (a) third or subsequent car registered to the same residential address," the document stated.

The policy, which is expected to cost the Delhi government

Rs28.6bn, is subject to change based on feedback from car makers and other stakeholders. It was not immediately clear when the policy will be finalised or how it will be funded.

The city government is also planning some tax waivers for hybrid vehicles to match the concessions to those given for EVs, potentially lowering their cost by up to 15%.

The move is in line with a similar move made by neighbouring state Uttar Pradesh. They are considered a win for the likes of Toyota Motor and Maruti Suzuki, but a setback for homegrown Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra, who focus on EVs.

80,000 litres of oil spilled into Danube in Serbia

Around 82,000 litres of oil were spilled during a transfer to a barge on the Danube about 20km (12 miles) downstream from Serbia's capital Belgrade, officials analysing water samples confirmed yesterday.

The oil ended up in a containment barrier and officials are checking whether it has leaked into the river, said the Secretariat for Environmental Protection of Vojvodina, the province in which the spill occurred.

The incident happened on April 21 at the Pancevo Oil Refinery, when oil was being transferred from the refinery to a barge owned by Naftachem, a petroleum products company based in Novi Sad.

Local authorities have indicated that, based on initial findings, the spill was most likely to have been the result of negligence by the barge crew.

"It has been established that 82 cubic metres of Euro diesel were spilled and that the fuel was contained within a protective barrier surrounding the barge," the environmental protection institute said.

The Public Prosecutor's Office has launched an investigation into the extent of pollution to the Danube and who may be held responsible.

"Technicians collected samples from seven locations identified by the inspector. The analysis is ongoing and we'll see what the results show," Ljiljana Lazic, director of the Institute of Public Health in Pancevo, said. - **AFP**

Canada's Hudson's Bay to close last six stores

Hudson's Bay - Canada's oldest company - will close its last six stores that were spared in an initial cull, with merchandise sold off starting today, according to a court filing.

The department store chain had received court approval to close all but six of its 80 stores after filing for protection from creditors owed more than C\$1bn (\$700mn).

Adam Zalev, managing director of Hudson's Bay's financial adviser Reflect Advisors, said in an affidavit that it was unlikely a buyer would be found for the remaining department stores in the Toronto and Montreal areas.

"Given the low probability of receiving a viable bid," he said in the court filing, the company and a court-appointed monitor "decided to include these six stores in the liquidation sale".

Founded in 1670 by fur traders given a royal charter by the British monarch King Charles II, the company once owned a swath of western and northern Canada.

From the fur trade, it shifted into retailing in the early 20th century, building large department stores in cities across Canada.

Online shopping and changing consumer habits contributed to its decline, one of a string of North American retail closures. - **AFP**

ANZAC Day Dawn service



Members of the armed forces stand during the annual ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day dawn service at Coogee Beach in Sydney today. Dawn services were held across the two countries on the anniversary of the ill-fated 1915 campaign of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps that left 11,500 of them dead during World War I. (AFP)

Student kills one, wounds three in school stabbing

AFP/Reuters
Nantes

A student killed a girl and wounded three other pupils in a stabbing spree yesterday at a private high school in France, prompting the prime minister to urge better security in and around schools to combat "endemic youth violence".

The pupil - whose name and age were not specified but whose classmates said had written a manifesto against "globalised ecocide" - was arrested after finally being overpowered by school staff.

France has in recent years been shaken by a series of school incidents involving attacks on teachers as well as schoolchildren by their peers.

In the latest case of teenage violence, the assailant attacked fellow students with a knife at the Notre-Dame de Toutes-Aides secondary school in the western city of Nantes around 12.30pm (1030 GMT), a police source said.

Police did not name the suspect or give any motives for the attack.

Local newspaper *Ouest France* said the attacker was dressed all in black, and wore a helmet and balaclava. Two knives were found lying next to his belongings, it said.

President Emmanuel Macron, writing on X, saluted the bravery of the teachers who intervened, saying that they prevented an even higher toll.

"Through their intervention, teachers likely prevented other tragedies. Their courage demands respect," he said.

Prime Minister Francois Bayrou urged "an intensification of controls in and around schools" following the attack.

He called for a "collective awakening" in the face of "endemic violence" among "a segment of our youth" and demanded proposals within four weeks to prevent further "violence committed by minors" with knives.

AFP spoke with one student who gave an account of what happened.

"I was in the cafeteria with my friends and we were told that a high school pupil had



French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, French Minister of Education, Higher Education and Research Elisabeth Borne, and Mayor of Nantes Johanna Rolland talk to journalists in front of the Notre-Dame-de-Toutes-Aides school after one high school student was killed and other students injured in a school stabbing, in Nantes. - **Reuters**

stabbed students in several classrooms," she said, without giving her name. "We were told not to leave the cafeteria for about 20 minutes and then we were confined to a gym."

She added the assailant "was known to be depressed, he said he loved Hitler".

Another school pupil sent AFP the suspected attacker's manifesto in which he said "globalisation has transformed our system into a machine to decompose humanity", advocating for a "biological revolt" to facilitate a return to "the natural order of things, even if cruel" instead of "globalised ecocide".

The school administration sent a message to the families of the some 2,000 students who attend the school, informing them of the incident.

Students had been immediately confined inside the school, the statement added.

"In co-ordination with the authorities

present, we are organising the gradual release of students from 3.30pm onwards in accordance with a strict protocol," the message said.

Concerned parents gathered outside of the school, which had already been cordoned off by police who, with French soldiers, were guarding the site.

Ludvine, 48, said she had learned that the attack had happened in her daughter's class.

"As an anxious mother who doesn't let her out alone, I never thought anything would happen to her at her school," she said.

French Education Minister Elisabeth Borne and Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau arrived on site in the afternoon.

Borne in February said police would start random searches for knives and other weapons concealed in bags at and around schools in a bid to deal with an increase in violent attacks.

Pakistan closes airspace to India, warns against violating water treaty

QNA
Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday closed its airspace to Indian airlines and rejected New Delhi's suspension of a water-sharing treaty. This was in response to actions taken by New Delhi following an armed attack two days earlier on a group of tourists in the Indian-administered part of the disputed Kashmir region. Islamabad announced a series of countermeasures against India, downgrading diplomatic relations, suspending trade, and closing a major land border crossing. The office of Pakistani Prime Minister issued a statement declaring Indian naval and air defense advisors in Islamabad persona non grata and ordered them to leave Pakistan immediately. The statement

also said that visas granted to Indian citizens will be revoked, with few exceptions, adding that all borders will be closed, trade will be halted, and airspace will be closed to Indian-owned or operated airlines. These escalating measures by Islamabad come after the Indian government announced the suspension of a water-sharing treaty with its neighbour, the closure of the main land border crossing, and telling all Pakistanis present in its territory to leave within 48 hours. It also reduced the number of Pakistani High Commission staff in the country from 55 to 30. At least 24 people were killed in an armed attack targeting a group of tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir, with New Delhi authorities accusing its neighbor of involvement in the incident. AFP adds: Pakistan said it will also ex-

ercise the right to hold all bilateral accords with India, including the 1972 Simla Agreement. The Simla Agreement was signed after the third war between the two countries and lays down principles meant to govern bilateral relations, including respect for a ceasefire line in Kashmir. The water treaty, mediated by the World Bank, split the Indus River and its tributaries between the neighbours and regulated the sharing of water. It had so far withstood even wars between the neighbours.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were weak even before the latest measures were announced as Pakistan had expelled India's envoy and not posted its own ambassador in New Delhi after India revoked the semi-autonomous status of Kashmir in 2019.

Bolsonaro's health deteriorates

Brazilian ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, recovering from intestinal surgery, has had a health setback a day after he was served a court summons in his hospital bed, his medical team said yesterday.

The 70-year-old has "shown a clinical worsening, an increase in blood pressure and worsening of liver laboratory tests", said the DF Star hospital in Brasilia, where the far-right former leader has been convalescing since mid-April.

On Wednesday, a court official visited Bolsonaro in hospital and delivered a summons giving him five days to submit his initial defence against coup charges, in preparation for trial.

A video of the exchange showed Bolsonaro reacting furiously, exclaiming: "I have five days to present my defence? Five days?" while pointing out he was still in intensive care.

Nurses urged him to relax as his blood pressure rose.

Bolsonaro, who lost elections in 2022, has been ordered to stand trial on charges he directed an alleged coup plot to hold on to power.

Earlier this month, he underwent intestinal surgery, necessitated by ongoing health problems from a 2018 stabbing attack.

A day before the summons was delivered, Bolsonaro had appeared for nearly an hour in a live YouTube broadcast - sitting upright with a nasal tube - alongside three of his sons and Brazilian Formula 1 champion, Nelson Piquet.

This was despite doctors' recommendations that he not receive visitors.

The live broadcast "demonstrated that he was able to be summoned and notified", the Brazilian Supreme Court said in a message sent to AFP on Wednesday.

The five-day deadline is for a filing outlining Bolsonaro's defence, specifying the evidence he will be submitting, and the witnesses he will call. - **AFP**

2022 parade gunman jailed for life

An Illinois judge has sentenced a man to life in prison without the possibility of parole for a 2022 mass shooting at an Independence Day parade in a Chicago suburb that killed seven people, local media reported.

Robert Crimo III, 24, pleaded guilty to seven counts of first-degree murder and 48 counts of aggravated battery in March, shortly before his trial was set to begin for the shooting in Highland Park that also injured more than 40 people.

Crimo was sentenced to seven consecutive life sentences by Circuit Court Judge Victoria Rossetti, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

"This court hopes this sentence brings a sense of justice and an end to the continued horror," the judge said.

Crimo is accused of climbing out the roof of a building in downtown Highland Park, a suburb 25 miles (40km) north of Chicago, and opening fire on spectators and participants at a Fourth of July parade in 2022.

Crimo confessed to the shooting, according to prosecutors. - **Reuters**

US judge blocks Trump from defunding 'sanctuary cities'

Reuters/AFP
Los Angeles

A federal judge has blocked Donald Trump's administration from withholding federal funding from more than a dozen so-called sanctuary jurisdictions that have declined to co-operate with the Republican president's hardline immigration crackdown.

Trump has vowed to deport "millions" of undocumented migrants in his second term, after running an election campaign that focused on illegal immigration.

US District Judge William Orrick in San Francisco issued the injunction at the request of 16 cities and counties nationally.

San Francisco, which led the lawsuit, in its complaint filed in February argued that the Trump administration was unlawfully trying to force local officials to co-operate with federal immigration arrests.

The jurisdictions include the cities of Minneapolis; New Haven, Connecticut; Portland, Oregon; St. Paul, Minnesota; Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Seattle, which have laws and policies that limit or prevent local law enforcement from assisting federal officers with civil immigration arrests.

Supporters of such laws have said that co-operation with federal immigration enforcement would discourage immigrants who are living in the US illegally from coming forward as victims or witnesses to crimes.

The lawsuit challenges an executive order Trump signed that threatens to cut off federal funding to sanctuary jurisdictions that limit or refuse to co-operate with federal immigration law enforcement.

Trump announces interview with reporter in Signal chat scandal

President Donald Trump has announced that he will sit for an interview with the reporter who uncovered a major security lapse after being inadvertently added to a group chat in which top US officials shared secret military strike plans.

Atlantic magazine editor Jeffrey Goldberg was propelled to global fame - and roundly attacked by Trump and other cabinet officials - after publishing details of the sensitive exchanges on the Signal app in the run up to US strikes on rebel Houthis in Yemen. Trump referenced the so-called "Signalgate" scandal when he announced the interview in a social media post that accused Goldberg of being "the person responsible for many fictional stories about me".

"I am doing this interview out of curiosity, and as a competition with myself, just to see if it's possible for the *Atlantic* to be 'truthful'," Trump said.

Goldberg's stunning inclusion in the Yemen strikes chat sent shockwaves through the national security establishment and around the world, leading to calls for the resignation of Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, a former Fox News host.

Goldberg - who will conduct the interview with two *Atlantic* colleagues, according to Trump's post - also drew the president's ire in 2020 for an article in which he reported senior US military officers hearing the president call soldiers killed in World War I "suckers" and "losers".

Trump has angrily denied the claim on multiple occasions but John Kelly, his chief of staff at the time of the purported remark, confirmed Goldberg's reporting. - **AFP**

"The threat to withhold funding causes them irreparable injury in the form of budgetary uncertainty, deprivation of constitutional rights, and undermining trust between the Cities and Counties and the communities they serve," Orrick said.

During his first term as president, Trump in 2017 signed a similar executive order targeting sanctuary jurisdictions.

San Francisco sued then, too, leading Orrick to block the policy in a ruling that was upheld by the San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals.

"Here we are again," Orrick, an appointee of Democratic president Barack Obama, wrote yesterday.

He said a preliminary injunction blocking

enforcement of Trump's latest executive order was likewise warranted as the local jurisdictions had established that Trump's order likely unconstitutionally imposed conditions on federal funding without congressional authorisation and ran afoul of the localities' due process rights.

A spokesperson for the US Department of Justice, which is defending Trump's policy, in a statement said that it "will continue to fight in court to defend President Trump's agenda to crack down against policies that benefit criminal illegal aliens".

The 16 localities brought their lawsuit a day after the Department of Justice sued the state of Illinois and the city of Chicago, seeking a court order blocking sanctuary

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GULF TIMES

Sudan journos risk all to report the war

On a mountain near Sudan's border, journalists climb rugged slopes, phones held high, hoping to catch a faint signal from neighbouring Chad to send stories amid the war's two-year communications blackout.

Journalists say efforts like these are their only way to tell the world about the horrors unfolding in Darfur, where accounts of sexual violence, ethnic massacres and mass displacement continue to emerge. Since fighting erupted between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, at least 28 reporters have been killed, according to Sudan's journalist union.

Dozens more have been detained and tortured, while many have been displaced and cut off from electricity, water and Internet.

Noon, a 35-year-old freelance journalist who requested a pseudonym for her safety, said she was forced to flee the West Darfur capital of El-Geneina after reporting on ethnically motivated mass killings committed by the RSF and its allied militias in 2023.

Her stories on the massacres, where UN experts say up to 15,000 mostly Massalit people were killed — leading to genocide accusations against the RSF — made her a target.

"They raided my family's house. They took all my equipment, my cameras, everything," she said.

By the third raid, she knew she had to go, and fled with her family to the eastern state of Gedaref, nearly 1,800km away.

But even there, she was not safe.

While reporting in a displacement shelter, she said she was arrested by the army, accused of collaborating with the RSF and forced to sign a pledge to obtain government approval on every story.

According to Reporters Without Borders, since the start of the war

more than 400 journalists have fled the country, which last year was second only to Gaza in the Committee to Protect Journalists' tally of reporters killed.

Yet some remain on the ground, working in secret with nothing to their name.

In the North Darfur town of Tawila, where the UN says 180,000 survivors of nearby RSF attacks are sheltering,

30-year-old photojournalist Ibrahim works undercover to report on those trapped between famine and brutal violence.

"No-one can know what I do," Ibrahim, who asked to use a pseudonym to protect his identity, told AFP.

"If they find out, they'll arrest me or take my phone," he said.

Last July, RSF fighters detained him in El-Fasher and accused him of being an army spy. He said they tortured him for five days and confiscated his equipment, documents and money.

Since then, he has sent his family out of Darfur and relocated to Tawila, leaving his cameras behind. His mobile phone is all he has left. Even before the war, Sudan was a hostile environment for journalists, consistently ranking near the bottom of the Reporters Without Borders's Press Freedom Index.

Since the fighting began, conditions have only worsened. Many journalists have been forced to flee, while others remain trapped across the country, struggling to survive. In the central state of Al-Jazira, the country's breadbasket prior to the war, veteran reporter Youssef, 62, now raises goats and grows sorghum to support himself.

"The last salary I received was at the beginning of 2024," he told AFP by phone from state capital Wad Madani.

"My newspaper moved operations to Cairo, but I still send them reports — when I can get a signal."

Youssef, whose name has also been changed, lost all contact with his editors and the outside world for months while the RSF controlled the city. In February 2024, fighters stormed his home.

"They tied my hands, blindfolded me, shackled my feet," he recalled. "No food. No toilets. I was detained for three days."

He said when he told those interrogating him he was a journalist, a fighter said: "That is the biggest crime."

He was freed only after a local community leader signed a guarantee pledging that Youssef would remain under house arrest. He did not leave until the army recaptured Wad Madani in January.

Both Youssef and Ibrahim say they have received no protection from local or international media organisations.

Still, Ibrahim continues, turning a coffee shop in Tawila — powered by a single public solar panel — into a makeshift newsroom.

"Who else will tell the world what's happening in Darfur if we leave?" he told AFP, crouching to reach his phone, plugged into an overloaded extension cord.

"No-one else will tell these stories. No one can imagine the atrocities happening here." - AFP

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Tariffs may mean more US steel jobs. Will there be workers to fill them?

By Timothy Aeppele
Blytheville (Arkansas)

Thomas Reisinger commutes almost an hour-and-a-half each way for a job in a cavernous steel processing plant here.

"I don't speed," he said dryly.

Some of his coworkers come from much farther, including one who spends workweeks living in a camper and returns home only at weekends. This corner of eastern Arkansas is dotted with RV parks that cater to such workers.

America will need many more like them to achieve President Donald Trump's vision for a hugely expanded US factory sector. The steel industry — hit with 25% tariffs as one of the first salvos of Trump's trade war — is a prime example of his quest to use taxes on imports to rebuild manufacturing in the American heartland.

But foreign competition — while a drag on steel prices — isn't the biggest challenge for steel companies around here. It's finding workers.

Mississippi County's slogan is "The Land of Steel" and that's no exaggeration. Nearly a quarter of the 20,000 jobs in the county are in sprawling mills owned by Nucor and US Steel and ancillary businesses like pipe makers and other metals processors that have flocked here to be close to them, according to Chmura Economics & Analytics, an economics analysis firm.

Clif Chitwood, president of the Mississippi County Economic Development Foundation, estimates 9% of direct jobs in the steel mills are filled by workers who come from such great distances that they live in RVs or cheap apartments during the workweek.

"Many of these guys work four-day, 12-hour shifts — then have four days off — which make it possible for some to live five or six hours away," he said. Some even share temporary accommodation with workers on opposite shifts, he added.

The tight labour market here reflects local and national trends. The US stopped training hordes of factory workers decades ago; retirements and immigration crackdowns are draining the pool of labour available. Many Americans have come to see these jobs as precarious, as globalisation has forced the closure of swathes of domestic manufacturing.

Just over 20% of manufacturing plants across the US that said they failed to produce at full capacity cited a shortage of labour or specific skills as the key reason, according recent data from the Census Bureau.



An employee works inside a Nucor steel factory in Blytheville, Arkansas, US. (Reuters)

Asked about a skills shortage in manufacturing, White House spokesman Kush Desai said that more than one in ten young adults in America were not employed, in higher education, or pursuing some sort of vocational training.

"There is no shortage of untapped potential within the labour force we already have to grow our manufacturing sector," he said.

Mississippi County — even as the steel industry blossomed — has gone through decades of economic decline, which has eroded the quality of life.

At this point, less than half of steel workers in "the land of steel" live in the county. Good wages help cover the cost of commuting or setting up a temporary home. The paychecks are indeed good. Workers in the county's metals-related businesses earn an average of just over \$116,000 a year, far above the \$69,000 average for all industries in the county, according to Chmura. Workers in the big mills can earn much more, thanks to bonuses tied to output. But driving around the county reveals few signs of this prosperity. Mississippi County, a mostly flat expanse hugging the banks of the Mississippi River that was once dominated by cotton farms, has been losing people for decades. Its population peaked in 1940 at about 88,000 and has fallen to less than half that. Blytheville — which shares the role of county seat with the only other town in the county of any size, Osceola — was hit especially hard in the 1990s by the closure of an air force base on the outskirts of town that once housed strategic bombers. Six thousand people departed in just two years after it closed.

Other manufacturers haven't fared as well as steel. A looming reminder of that is a brick building on the outskirts of town, its windows boarded and its lawn overgrown, which was

Zekelman Industries.

He's 55 and grew up in Blytheville, moving to different cities during his career.

"I always said I'd never drive this far for a job," he said. But when he returned to the area in 2016, he met his now-wife, who wanted to live close to where she grew up. Then there's the money. He earns over \$30 an hour, which allows them to live well with him as primary breadwinner.

Greg Galbraith, a coworker at Atlas who commutes from his home an hour away in Tennessee, points to another problem. "This isn't a great area," he said. "There isn't much to do and the crime rate is high."

The steel industry here is non-union, which means less protection from layoffs. That's increasingly the norm. Less than 10% of American workers are union members, according to the Labour Department, down from just over 20% in 1983.

"All manufacturers are struggling with talent. That's not unique to us," said Katherine Miller, a spokeswoman for Nucor, the nation's largest steelmaker, which operates three sprawling mills in the county.

Jerald Gaines, general manager of Nucor's flat-rolled mill, said they're able to attract workers, but it's not quite as easy as in the past.

Leading the way through the mill, where steel is progressively rolled into thinner sheets, Gaines made his way up a series of metal stairs to one of the air-conditioned control booths high above the production floor, called a pulpit. Inside, workers keep watch through windows and on a bank of computer screens that line the walls.

One of the lures of these jobs is that entry-level workers only need a high school diploma or an equivalency diploma. Specialised jobs, like metallurgists, require degrees or other qualifications.

One place creating more home-grown factory talent is Arkansas Northeastern College, which has a leafy campus on the outskirts of town. A quarter of the students, about 300, study fields such as welding and aircraft repair. Administrators say nearly all those students end up going into the steel plants though.

Alyssa Summerville is one of them. The 19-year-old graduates next month from a two-year programme in which she worked part-time at one of US Steel's big mills nearby.

"I always wanted to get out of Mississippi County," she said, until she heard about the programme.

She'll be working with a team that maintains the giant cranes that move steel inside the plant. "This is something I didn't even know I wanted to do." - Reuters

Who are these people?

By Dr Umar Sulaymaan al-Ashqar

Those who will enter the Hellfire and then come out of it are the people of tawheed. They are the ones who do not associate anything with Allah. However, they have accumulated many sins. Their evil deeds have exceeded the limit and their good deeds have become light on the scale. These individuals will enter the Hellfire because of their sins. Afterwards, they will come out of it due to the intercession of the interceders. By the mercy of Allah, groups of people who never produced any good deeds will be extracted from the Hellfire.

I will mention here some of the sins, for which there is evidence, informing us that those who commit them will be punished by means of the Hellfire.

Lying Upon The Messenger of Allah

Ibn al-Atheer has compiled a chapter in his book Jaami' al-Usool in which he lists many *Ahadith* which warn against lying upon the Messenger of Allah (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*). Among them, is that which has been recorded by Imams al-Bukhari, Muslim and at-Tirmitheeh, on the authority of 'Ali who said that the Messenger of Allah said:

“Do not lie upon me. For indeed, the one who lies upon me will be tormented by the Hellfire.”

In another hadith the Prophet said: “Whoever attributes a statement to me of which I did not say, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.”

Also, the Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever lies upon me intentionally, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.”

Among the other hadiths is the one where Allah's Messenger said: “Indeed a lie upon me is not like a lie upon anyone else. So whoever lies upon me intentionally, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.!”

PRIDE:



Among the major sins is pride. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah said: “Allah said: ‘Pride is my cloak and greatness is my lower garment. Whoever disputes with me regarding any of these will be cast into the Fire.’”

And he (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) also said: “The one who has a speck of pride in his heart will not enter Paradise.”

So a man said to him: “Indeed a man likes to have nice clothes and nice sandals.” He (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said: “Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty. Pride is disregarding the truth and belittling the people.”

KILLING AN INDIVIDUAL WITHOUT DUE RIGHT:

Allah says (which means): “And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein, and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and the great punishment is prepared for him.”

The killing of an individual Muslim is not permissible in Islam except for one of three cases as has been stated in the following hadith, in which the Messenger of Allah said: “The blood of an indi-

vidual who testifies that there is nothing worthy of worship besides Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah, is not lawful, except for one of three cases. They are: A life for a life, a married person who commits adultery, and the one who abandons his religion and breaks away from the *Jamaa'ah*.”

The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) also said: “The believer will remain within the margins of his religion, as long as he does not spill blood illegally.”

Ibn 'Umar said: “Of those dilemmas which there is no way out for the one who fails, is the shedding of blood without a due reason.”

The Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) has warned the Muslims from killing one another. And he has informed us that the killer and the one killed are both in the Fire.

Abu Bakr reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “When two Muslims face each other with their swords, then the killer and the one killed are (both) in the Fire.”

I said: “I understand the killer, but what of the one who is killed?”

He said: “Indeed, he was intent upon killing his companion.” Due to this, the righteous

servant refrains from killing his brother, fearing that he might be of the dwellers of the Fire. And so the killer will attain his sin and the sin of the one he is killing.

Allah says (which means): “And recite to them (the Jews) the story of the two sons of Aadam in truth; when each offered a sacrifice to Allah. It was accepted from one but not from the other. The latter said to the former: ‘I will surely kill you.’ The former said: ‘Allah accepts only from those who give Him due reverence. If you stretch your hand against me to kill me, I shall never stretch my hand against you to kill you: for I fear Allah the Lord of the worlds. I intend to let you draw my sin on yourself as well as yours, then you will be one of the dwellers of the Fire. And that is the recompense of the wrong doers.’”

CONSUMING (RIBAA) INTEREST OR USURY:

Among the sins that destroy the individual performing it, is usury. Concerning those who take interest after knowledge has reached them of its prohibition, Allah says (which means), “But whoever returns to ribaa, such are the dwellers of the Fire – they will abide therein.”

And He says, (which means): “O you who believe! Do not consume ribaa, doubled and multiplied, but fear Allah that you may be successful. And fear the Fire which is prepared for the disbelievers.”

The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) has counted ribaa as one of the seven sins that destroy the one performing it. It is recorded in the Two Saheeh collections that the Messenger of Allah said: “Avoid the seven destructive sins.”

They said: “And what are they, O Messenger of Allah?” So he (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said: “To associate partners with Allah (shirk), magic, killing an individual which Allah has forbidden except with due right, consuming interest, taking the wealth of the orphan, running away from the battlefield, and slandering chaste believing women.”

TAKING THE WEALTH OF THE PEOPLE UNJUSTLY:

Among the greatest forms of oppression bringing a guarantee of the Hellfire is the consumption of people's wealth unjustly. This is as Allah says (which means): “O you who believe! Do not consume property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade among you by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you. And whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into the Fire, and that is easy for Allah.”

One who unjustly consumes the wealth of people also takes the wealth of the orphan unjustly. Allah has specifically mentioned their wealth, due to their frailty, the ease at which their wealth can be consumed, and the detestableness of such a crime.

“Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, they eat only fire into their bellies, and they will be burnt in the Blazing Fire!”

THE PICTURE-MAKERS:

The people who will receive the worst punishment on the Day of Judgment are the picture-makers. [Note: There are a number of crimes in addition to this one, for which the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) mentioned they would warrant the worst punishment.] They are the ones who compete with Allah's ability to create. Ibn Mas'ood reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah say:

“The people with the worst punishment according to Allah are the picture-makers.”

Ibn 'Abbas said that he heard the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) say: “Every picture-maker is in the Hellfire. A soul will be placed for him into every picture that he fabricated, and Allah will punish him (by it) in the Hellfire.”

'A'ishah reported that the Messenger of Allah said concerning a cushion that had pictures on it, “Indeed the makers of these pictures will be tormented on the Day of Judgment. It will be said to them: Bring life to that

which you have created.”

He (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) also said: “The people who will receive the worst torment are those who try to imitate the creation of Allah.”

Abu Hurairah reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah say: “Allah says: And who is worse than he who tries to create the likes of My creation. Then let them create a seed, or let them create a kernel or grain.”

THOSE WHO TORTURE ANIMALS:

The Messenger of Allah said: “The Hellfire was presented to me and I saw in it a woman from the Tribe of Israa'eel who was being punished for a cat she had. She tied it up and did not feed it, nor did she let it go so that it may eat the rodents of the earth, until it died of starvation.”

If this is the condition of the one who tortures a cat, then how is it for the one who is tested by torturing the servants of Allah? And how much more is it, if the torture is for the righteous ones among them because of their eemaan and their Islam?

THE LACK OF SINCERITY IN SEEKING KNOWLEDGE:

Al-Haafiz al-Munththree cited many hadiths which warn against seeking knowledge for other than Allah's sake. I have chosen only some of them. The Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever acquires knowledge, by which the Face of Allah is sought, and he does not learn it except to attain honour by it in this world, he will not perceive the odour of Paradise on the Day of Judgment.”

Jaabir reported that the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said: “Do not acquire knowledge in order to compete with the scholars, nor to argue with the ignorant, nor to gain mastery over the gatherings. So whoever does that, then: The Fire, the Fire!”

Ibn 'Abbaas reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever acquires a knowledge for other than Allah's sake, or desiring other than that, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire.”

How excellent lawful wealth is in the hands of a righteous person!

Some of the *Ahadith* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), are quite terse yet convey a multitude of meanings, and this is no surprise since they were produced by the one who was given the keys of eloquent speech and wise sayings. Some of his statements serve as fundamental principles, general rules, and just standards. On every given topic, there are *Ahadith* that are considered all-inclusive fundamental principles under the heading of which all the respective subtopics fall. Some of these terse *Ahadith* address the topic of wealth, establishing the correct Islamic viewpoint on wealth and setting fixed criteria for dealing with it and ways to dispose it of.

One of these is the following Hadith, which was narrated on the authority of 'Amr ibn Al-'Aas, may Allah be pleased with him: “The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, sent for me, commanding me to pack my clothes and arms and go to him. I did what he asked and came to him while he was performing ablution. He looked at me from head to toe then said: ‘O 'Amr, I want to send you in charge of an army so that Allah will bless you with spoils, and I will give you your lawful share of the spoils.’ I said: ‘I did not become Muslim in pursuit of wealth; I became Muslim out of the desire for embracing Islam so that I would be with the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*!’ He said: ‘O 'Amr! How excellent lawful wealth is in the hands of a righteous person!’” [Ahmad and Al-Bukhari. Abu 'Awaanah, Ibn Hibbaan, Al-Haakim, Al-Albaani: authentic]

According to its very wording, the Hadith clearly states that wealth is praiseworthy if it is lawfully gained and in the hands of a righteous person. The lawfulness of wealth means that it is pure and earned through lawful means, and the righteousness of the owner means that he uses his lawful wealth in what benefits him and his community. He fulfils the Rights of Allah with regard to his wealth by paying the obligatory *Zakaah* on it and may spend it in charity voluntarily. This is a praiseworthy attitude towards wealth, as evidenced by his saying “How excellent lawful wealth is..”

In the same vein, another *Hadith* lauded wealth when it is lawfully earned and rightfully spent. It was narrated on the authority of Abu Sa'eed, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: “This wealth is sweet (alluring); whoever earns it lawfully and spends it

rightfully, then what excellent help it is!” [Al-Bukhari] In this case, wealth is an excellent means for a Muslim to fulfil the due rights over him, uphold the ties of kinship, relieve the distressed, and spares himself from the humiliation of begging for money, as well as all the other benefits of wealth. The *Shari'ah* texts that laud wealth and commend richness should be interpreted in this light.

By the same token, the *Hadith* indicates the gravity of the affliction when wealth is in the hands of a wicked, corrupt person; he withholds the Rights of Allah with regard to his wealth, and therefore, it becomes a destructive tool incurring his own destruction and a means of causing mischief on earth. Such a person may also combine the sin of acquiring wealth unlawfully with that of wastefulness.

This meaning was stated by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, in the second part of the previously-cited Hadith narrated on the authority of Abu Sa'eed, may Allah be pleased with him: “...and he who obtains it wrongfully is like one who eats but is never satisfied.” [Al-Bukhari] This is in addition to having a gluttonous soul and a heart overcome by the *Fitnah* (temptation) of wealth. The *Shari'ah* texts that dispraise wealth, warn against extravagance, and encourage asceticism and renouncing greediness for the worldly pleasures should be interpreted in this light.

This *Hadith* and the other supporting ones about the enjoined attitude towards wealth – like the one narrated by Abu Sa'eed, may Allah be pleased with him, in its two parts: “This wealth is sweet (alluring); whoever earns it lawfully and spends it rightfully, then what excellent help it is! He who obtains it wrongfully is like one who eats but is never satisfied,” – they are considered a Prophetic standard and an Islamic methodology of moderation in pursuing wealth, with neither excessive asceticism nor the dispraised accumulation of wealth and exceeding the proper limits in its acquisition and spending.

These *Ahadith*, therefore, direct the Muslims towards the correct viewpoint on the true nature of wealth and underline that Islam does not dispraise wealth in an absolute sense, as some Sufis claim, nor does it praise it in an absolute sense. The subject matter of the praise and dispraise here is not the wealth itself but rather the states of people in acquiring, spending, or disposing of it. Whoever seeks (lawful) wealth with the intention of providing

for himself and his dependants and reforming the universe with such wealth by investing and spending it on what is good and beneficial to the individual and community, then how excellent such wealth is!

Some of the Companions were wealthy and successful traders. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was a trader, and his wealth was well spent in support of Islam and the Muslims. It was narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: “No wealth has benefited me as much as the wealth of Abu Bakr.” Thereupon, Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, wept and said: “O Messenger of Allah! I and my wealth are only for you, O Messenger of Allah!” [Ibn Maajah, Al-Albaani: authentic] There were many other rich Companions whose wealth was a source of mercy and help for people and which was spent in support of the Islamic causes, like that of the third caliph, 'Uthmaan, may Allah be pleased with him, who equipped the Muslim army for the Battle of Tabook with 950 camels and rounded them up to 1,000 with fifty horses.

As for those who seek after wealth to accumulate it and boast about it, turning it into a means to cause mischief on earth and corrupt the economy through engaging in forbidden transactions such as Riba and gambling, they contribute to the poverty and unemployment in their societies by concentrating wealth in the hands of one social class. Accordingly, wealth, in their hands, becomes a means of destruction and evil, just like Qaroon, whose story was related in the Qur'aan. He wronged his people by dealing with Riba with their wealth and claiming that he had earned and obtained such wealth exclusively by means of his knowledge and efforts! This corrupt viewpoint on wealth and the economic injustice were enough sin for him to deserve the immediate destruction that befell him. Contrary to his aspirations to dominate the earth, Allah, The Exalted, destroyed him by causing the earth to swallow him, and he will continue to sink until the Day of Resurrection. Allah, The Exalted, Says (what means): {And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.} [Qur'an 28:81]

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Rejoice! Your bad deeds can be replaced with good ones

Suppose a master tells his fugitive slave, after he commits many mistakes, to count them so he can be rewarded for them – provided he shows sincere regret, stops making these mistakes, and does not return to them again – would this slave not have good cause to rejoice?

Such an act is beyond the capacity of any human being, because there is no way a person can determine the real nature of the regret felt by someone who makes a mistake. There is no fool proof way to know whether the sinner has given up the sin because of regret and repentance or he has left it only outwardly, and continues to commit it secretly. Even if we assume that he is certain of his slave's repentance, what is even more certain is that the human soul cannot patiently endure someone committing the same mistake repeatedly. Even if a person excuses the one who makes a mistake against him once, he will certainly not endure the mistake to be repeated against him many more times.

Indeed, Allah The Almighty is beyond comparison. See how He accepts the repentance of the one who repents and turns to Him, removes sins from him, and replaces them with good deeds. He is Allah, the Most Merciful, the ever Merciful, the One who accepts repentance, the Forgiving of sins, as He describes Himself Saying (what means): {The forgiver of sin, acceptor of repentance, severe in punishment, owner of abundance. There is no deity except Him; to Him is the destination.} [Qur'an 40:3]

Is it not He who Says (what means): {Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts repentance from His servants and receives charities and that it is Allah who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful?} [Qur'an 9:104]

Is it not He who addressed His servants Saying (what means): {And it is He who accepts repentance from his servants and pardons misdeeds, and He knows what you do.} [Qur'an 42:25]

According to Ibn Katheer, may Allah have mercy upon him: “Allah The Almighty reminds His servants of the favour of His accepting the repentance of him who repents and turns to Him, telling them that it is out of His generosity and forbearance that He forgives, pardons and conceals (the sins and mistakes). In confirmation of that, He The Almighty Says (what means): {And whoever does a wrong or wrongs himself but then seeks forgiveness of Allah will find Al-

lah Forgiving and Merciful.} [Qur'an 4:110] His Saying {and pardons misdeeds} means He accepts the repentance in the future, and forgives the misdeeds of the past. {and He knows what you do} means that He is well-acquainted with all your deeds, words and acts, but still He accepts the repentance of him who repents to Him.”

Glad tidings to the one who turns to Allah The Almighty in sincere repentance, by which He removes his sins from him, and multiplies his good deeds. Glad tidings are for him, especially in a month where the way of repentance and the return to Allah The Almighty are made easy, given the great number of those who repent, the abundance of forgiveness from Allah The Almighty, and the multitude of those to be released from the Hellfire in this month. Ramadan makes matters that were difficult easy for the repentant, and makes available to him what he aspired to obtain.

This repentance is a great gain and a blessed gift from the One who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful. It is attained only by the one whom Allah The Almighty guides. Has He not said, in connection with those left behind in the Battle of Tabook (what means): {And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.} [Qur'an 9:118]

Imam As-Sa'di, may Allah have mercy upon him, said that the verse {Then He turned to them} means that He permitted them to repent, and guided them to repentance, so that He would accept their repentance. [Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of repentance] i.e. He turns in repentance, pardons more and more, and forgives slips and acts of disobedience, {the Merciful} i.e. His great mercy continues to descend upon the servants at all times, to help them perform their religious and worldly obligations. These Qur'anic verses indicate that the acceptance of one's repentance by Allah The Almighty is the most glorious and the highest rank. [Tafseer As-Sa'di]

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QF, JPL host second Warriors World Cup

Qatar Foundation (QF) and the Junior Premier League (JPL) hosted the second annual JPL Warriors World Cup at Education City Stadium, highlighting the growing importance of women's and girls' sport in Qatar as part of the legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The three-day competition featured 50 teams from across the GCC countries.

"We have been delighted to be working with JPL again to bring this tournament back for a second year at Education City Stadium," said QF engagement and activation specialist Buthayna al-Khater.

"Providing opportunities for women and girls to participate in, and enjoy sports in settings tailored specifically for their needs is central to the QF's work, and to its contribution to Qatar's newly launched Sports and Youth Excellence Strategy," she said.

Following the success of the inaugural event in 2024, the tournament returned to build on its growing reputation as a celebration of the best girls' football in Qatar, the GCC, and beyond, and as an event where young women are empowered to unleash their talent and given a chance to unlock their potential.

"It has been wonderful to bring the JPL Warriors World Cup back to Doha and to continue our partnership with Qatar Foundation," said JPL chief executive Martin Brock. "This tournament represents a shared commitment to promote young female talent and to provide them with the opportunity to compete on an international stage."

"We are here in Qatar for the long-term and because we deeply believe in the opportunities and pathways we can create for women and girls to fulfil their sporting dreams, unlock their potential and inspire a generation of new players," he said.



Snapshots from the summit.



Ministry participates in Earthna 2025 Summit

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) participated in the second edition of the "Earthna 2025 Summit", organised by Qatar Foundation under the theme *Building Our Legacy: Sustainability, Innovation, and Traditional Knowledge*.

Representing the ministry in various summit sessions were Assistant Undersecretary for Climate Change Affairs engineer Ahmed Mohammed al-Sada, Assistant Undersecretary for Natural Reserves Affairs Dr Ibrahim al-Maslamani, and Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs Abdulhadi Nasser al-Marri.

During a session on *Dry Cities Network*, al-Sada reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to integrating climate objectives into its development strategies.

He emphasised that environmental sustainability is a core pillar of the country's national plans, including the National Climate Action Plan and the Third National Development Strategy (2024-

2030), both aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Al-Sada also highlighted the importance of incorporating traditional knowledge in designing urban solutions to help cities adapt to climate change.

Dr al-Maslamani took part in a session on *Coral Reefs in Qatar*, where he presented the ministry's efforts to protect these vital marine ecosystems as part of the National Biodiversity Strategy.

He noted the use of advanced scientific tools and regional partnerships to ensure the sustainability of coral reefs.

In a roundtable discussion on *Co-ordinating GCC Efforts on Air Quality*, al-Marri gave an overview of Qatar's National Air Quality Monitoring Programme, which encompasses more than 45 stations across all eight municipalities.

He explained that the ministry employs mobile monitoring units to precisely measure pollution levels and that the Air Quality Platform has significantly increased

public awareness about the risks of relying on unreliable tools to assess air quality.

The director of the MoECC's Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, Hassan al-Qassimi, noted that Qatar's Air Quality Index is based on national standards as well as the US Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA) system.

The index monitors five key pollutants: fine particulate matter; nitrogen dioxide; sulphur dioxide; ground-level ozone; and carbon monoxide.

The director of the MoECC's Wildlife Development, Youssef al-Hamar, presented the first phase of the National Coral Reef Protection Initiative.

He highlighted the ministry's use of cutting-edge technologies to enhance coral reproduction and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

The ministry also took part in two additional sessions on mangrove trees and their role in preserving coastal ecosystems.

A documentary film about Qatar's mangrove forests was screened, and participants discussed leading regional practices in mangrove restoration.

The ministry shared that it had conducted scientific studies to identify optimal environments for mangrove planting and successfully launched three specialised nurseries, producing more than 15,000 seedlings over two years.

The MoECC also installed an educational booth at the "Earthna Village" in Barahat Msheireb.

The booth featured interactive environmental exhibits, including a whale tracking device, coral reef samples, a dugong skull, and a live mangrove tree with informative signage.

The "Earthna 2025 Summit" serves as a key platform for dialogue among policymakers, experts, and researchers in the fields of environment and sustainability.

It supports national efforts to address environmental challenges at both regional and global levels.

- QNA

'Dialogue of Letters between Qatar and China' opens in Katara

Katara Cultural Village inaugurated yesterday the "Dialogue of Letters Between Qatar and China" exhibition at Building 19 in Katara.

The opening ceremony was attended by Katara general manager Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti and China's ambassador to Qatar Cao Xiaolin, with officials from Katara and the Chinese embassy as well as a number of Qatari and Chinese calligraphers.

The exhibition, held in collaboration with the Chinese Calligraphers Association, runs until April 27.

It showcases the beauty of Arabic and Chinese calligraphy through the artistic creations of both Qatari and Chinese calligraphers.

The exhibition features dozens of artworks by 37 calligraphers from Qatar and China, including nine Qatari artists: Rashid Mubarak al-Muhammadi, Sheikh al-Mahmoud, Saleh al-Obaidly, Nasser al-Kholaqi, Moza al-Kuwari, Fatima al-Sharshani, Fadel al-Haddad, Issa al-Fakhro, and Abdullah al-Fakhro.

In his opening remarks, Dr al-Sulaiti said that the exhibition is an artistic event that brings together elite Qatari calligraphers and members of the Chinese Calligraphers Association.

He praised this creative convergence that celebrates the aesthetics of both Arabic and Chinese script, noting that the exhibition highlights the deep artistic and cultural values embedded in the languages and identities.

Dr al-Sulaiti added that while letters may differ in form, they remain vessels of the soul, bridges of communication, and messages that transcend spoken language.

He emphasised that the exhibi-



tion is not merely a display of artwork but a platform for cultural understanding and an opportunity to strengthen co-operation between the artists of both countries.

It invites exploration of the similarities and differences between two time-honoured artistic schools in terms of technique, symbolism, and expression.

Dr al-Sulaiti expressed his hope that this artistic event would contribute to deepening mutual understanding and opening new horizons for co-operation in the fields of art and heritage between Qatar and China.

Chinese envoy Cao affirmed that the exhibition reflects the depth of cultural exchange and the growing mutual understanding between the two nations, describing it as a modern example of mutual learning between Chinese and Arab civilisations.

He added that Arabic calligraphy and Chinese script are both rich civilisational heritages, carrying the wisdom and human spirit of both peoples.

Cao emphasised China's commitment to promoting dialogue between civilisations.

He added that strategic relations

between China and Qatar have witnessed rapid growth in recent years, particularly in the areas of culture, education, tourism, and technology.

The envoy noted that the exhibition represents an additional step toward strengthening these ties and provides an interactive platform that unites Chinese and Arabic calligraphy, highlighting the creativity of artists in both countries.

The event also featured speeches by representatives of the participating calligraphers from both Qatar and China.

- QNA

Spotlight on Thai eco-tourism and sustainability

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Thailand highlighted its commitment to sustainable development by showcasing its globally recognised eco-tourism models and community-driven initiatives at a seminar as part of the Earthna Summit 2025, which concluded on Wednesday.

Titled *From Local to Global: Thailand's Sustainability and Eco-Tourism Journeys*, the seminar was organised by the Thai embassy in partnership with the Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), and the Environmental Science Centre (ESC) at Qatar University (QU).

In his speech, Thai ambassador Sira Swangsilpa highlighted the importance of sustainable development and environmental conservation as key areas for potential collaboration between Qatar and Thailand, aligning with both na-

tions' development strategies.

Earthna director of research and policy Dr Radhouane Ben-Hamadou underscored the need for international co-operation and partnerships while Chacharan Lertkiattiwong, the director of International Co-operation Division at the Thailand International Co-operation Agency (TICA), stressed the TICA's role in facilitating knowledge exchange between Thailand and the Middle East, particularly Qatar, in areas of mutual interest.

The seminar showcased Thailand's sustainability frameworks, focusing on its well-regarded eco-tourism approaches, environmental protection efforts, and community-led development projects.

The embassy noted that the discussions align with the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the 3rd National Development Strategy 2024-2030, prioritising sustainable economic growth and a knowledge-based economy.

The first talk on *Empowering Lo-*



Thai ambassador Sira Swangsilpa with other participants at the seminar.

cal Communities - An Enterprise for a Better World, saw Visit-orn Rajatanarvin, the director of the Knowledge and Learning Centre at the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, presenting the Doi Tung Development Project.

The second session on *Promoting Responsible Eco-Tourism and Environmental Education*, featured Alex Rendell, the chief executive director and co-founder of Environmental Education Centre Thailand, who emphasised that re-

sponsible eco-tourism begins with education, fostering a connection between people and nature.

Thai and Qatari experts also shared their insights on current mangrove conservation efforts and educational awareness campaigns at a panel discussion on advancing environmental conservation.

Associate assistant professor Dr Pasinee Worachananant from Kasetsart University shared observations and policy recommendations, while Dr Aspa D Chatziefthimiou, chief scientific

officer of the Mangrove Restoration Project at Earthna, discussed conservation projects and educational strategies.

Prof Dr Jassim al-Khayat, principal investigator at the ESC of Qatar University, spoke about ongoing research and the importance of engaging younger generations in environmental stewardship.

The seminar brought together more than 60 participants, including representatives from various Qatari sectors.

The Thai embassy also hosted an



Thai embassy featured an exhibition at the Earthna Village 2025.

exhibition at the Earthna Village 2025, showcasing Thailand's journey towards sustainable development through upcycled products from the Doi Tung Development Project and community products from Thai mangrove forests.