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ALL ITEMS UNDER WHOLESALE PRICE

SPORT | Page 1

Sadd aim for AFC Champions League Elite glory after league triumph



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The top ten winning teams in the 11th edition of the Senyar Festival were crowned yesterday at Katara Cultural Village by general manager Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti. In Group A, Team Suhail (pictured) claimed first place for the second consecutive year with a total of 410 points. The team's captain, Mohamed Shaheen al-Dosari, received a prize of QR150,000. **Page 12**

Qatar hails signing of DRC-Rwanda deal

Qatar has welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda in Washington, DC. The agreement, which emphasises mutual respect for the sovereignty of both nations and a firm commitment to resolving disputes through peaceful and negotiated means, is seen by Qatar as a positive and important step toward fostering stability and peace in the region. Qatar commends the constructive engagement and the commitment to dialogue and diplomacy, which reflect a genuine desire to de-escalate tensions and advance the interests of the peoples of both countries and the wider region. **Pages 2, 6**

Huge crowds pay respects to Pope

Some 250,000 people paid their respects to Pope Francis during a three-day lying in state at St Peter's Basilica, the Vatican said yesterday, as public viewing ended and world leaders began gathering for his funeral. French President Emmanuel Macron was among the last to pay his respects, with the overall crowds exceeding the estimated 195,000 who came to see Francis's predecessor Benedict XVI after his death in 2022. Throughout the day, vast crowds of people had packed Via della Conciliazione, the wide avenue leading to the basilica, pilgrims and tourists mingling with Italians enjoying the April 25 public holiday. **(AFP) Page 11**

Zelensky rejects giving up Crimea to Russia

President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday rejected suggestions Ukraine give up Crimea to Russia, as US President Donald Trump's envoy met Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Moscow, where the Kremlin said they discussed the "possibility" of direct ceasefire talks. The three-hour meeting went ahead just after a Russian general was killed in a Moscow car bomb attack that Russia blamed on Ukraine. Ukraine is in turn outraged by a Russian strike on Kyiv that left 12 dead. With Ukraine fearful Trump could force it to cede Crimea — a strategic Black Sea peninsula seized by Russia in 2014 — Zelensky insisted the territory is "the property of the Ukrainian people". **(AFP) Page 11**

WFP runs out of Gaza food stocks as Israel blocks aid

● **WFP says crossings into Gaza have been shut for seven weeks** ● **Israeli air strikes kill 78 Palestinians, ceasefire talks stall**

Reuters
Geneva/Cairo

The World Food Programme (WFP) said yesterday it had run out of food stocks in Gaza due to the sustained closure of crossings into the enclave, while Gaza authorities said Israeli air strikes had killed at least 78 people in the past 24 hours. "The WFP has depleted all its food stocks for families in Gaza," a WFP statement said, adding the UN agency yesterday delivered its last remaining food stocks to hot meals kitchens in Gaza. "These kitchens are expected to fully run out of food in the coming days," it added. The agency said no humanitarian or commercial supplies had entered Gaza for more than seven weeks as all main border crossing points remained closed, resulting in the longest closure the Gaza Strip had ever faced. Since March 2, Israel completely cut off all supplies to the 2.3mn residents of the Gaza Strip, and food stockpiled during a ceasefire at the start of the year has all but run out. WFP warned that if the aid blockage was not lifted it might be forced to end its critical assistance. On March 31, all 25 WFP-sup-

ported bakeries closed after wheat flour and cooking fuel ran out, while parcels giving families two weeks of food rations were depleted. The Hamas-run Gaza government media office yesterday said that famine is no longer a looming threat and is becoming a reality. "Thousands of Palestinian families are now facing starvation after becoming unable to provide even a single meal for their children," it said in a statement. Fifty-two people have died due to hunger and malnutrition, including 50 children, while more than 1mn children are experiencing hunger daily, it added. Food prices have risen 1,400% compared to during the ceasefire, WFP said, adding that more than 116,000 metric tonnes of food assistance which could feed 1mn people for up to four months is currently stuck at the border crossing. Yesterday, the Gaza health ministry said Israeli air strikes killed at least 78 people in different areas of the enclave in the past 24 hours. Residents said Israeli forces operating in Shejaia and Rafah in northern and southern Gaza blew up clusters of homes overnight. The Israeli military ordered residents of Beit Hanoun and the Beit Lahiya towns to leave their homes in a post published on X. **Page 6**



A girl puts a pot to her head as Palestinians wait to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip, on Thursday.

Minister: Biodiversity, wildlife protection Qatar's top priorities

HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, said that biodiversity and wildlife conservation are top priorities within Qatar's environmental policy and form an integral part of the country's efforts to achieve balanced sustainable development in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030. Speaking at the opening of the 71st General Assembly of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), held in Doha, HE Dr al-Subaie highlighted that Qatar's hosting of this major international environmental event reflects its renewed commitment to supporting global efforts aimed at protecting wildlife, preserving ecosystems, and achieving environmental balance. He emphasised that accelerating environmental challenges, chief among them biodiversity loss, necessitate intensified global co-operation and unified efforts to ensure the planet's sustainability for future generations. He noted that the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has launched several initiatives to strengthen wildlife protection, expand the network of nature reserves, and rehabilitate natural habitats. In addition,



HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie speaking at the opening of the 71st General Assembly of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation in Doha yesterday.

the ministry has enacted strict legislation to protect endangered species as part of the National Environment and Climate Change Strategy (2024-2030), which is grounded in principles of environmental leadership, diversity, and sustainability. He further said that convening the CIC General Assembly in Doha provides a valuable platform for knowledge exchange, scientific discussion, and the sharing of best practices in environmental conservation. The participation of representatives from more than 80 countries, he said, underscores growing global

recognition of biodiversity as a central element in climate action and environmental security. HE Dr al-Subaie also underscored Qatar's close collaboration with international partners and environmental organisations to enhance frameworks for co-operation and contribute meaningfully to global wildlife conservation projects. He stressed that today's challenges, particularly the rapid degradation of natural habitats and rising extinction rates, place a collective responsibility on the international community to safeguard the planet's resources. He called on participants to actively engage in the assembly's sessions and accompanying workshops to develop practical recommendations and action plans that advance global wildlife conservation efforts and promote integration between environmental and developmental policies. HE Dr al-Subaie reiterated Qatar's steadfast commitment to its regional and international role in environmental protection. He emphasised that investing in biodiversity is, ultimately, an investment in the future of humanity and called for fostering a culture of environmental responsibility while empowering local communities to protect and preserve nature's balance. **(QNA) Page 2**

Qatar-UK strategic dialogue to take place in Doha tomorrow

Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs HE Dr Majid bin Mohammed al-Ansari confirmed that preparations have been completed for the launch of the Second Qatar-UK Strategic Dialogue, set to take place in Doha tomorrow, under the chairmanship of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David Lammy under the theme of partners for the future. In a statement to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE Dr al-Ansari noted that the second strategic dialogue follows the state visit made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to London last December, during which His Highness held talks with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, where both sides agreed on pathways to enhance the partnership in the fields of commerce, investment, co-operation on global challenges, mutual growth progress, technological innovation, transitioning to a sustainable green economy, life sciences, creative industries, cultural collaboration, and continued co-operation in conflict resolution and knowledge exchange. HE Dr al-Ansari emphasised that the second strategic dialogue represents another mile-



HE Dr Majid bin Mohammed al-Ansari

stone in advancing the Qatar-UK partnership, reaffirming both countries' continued commitment to strengthening co-operation across various fields. He added that the dialogue will focus on four main pillars: future prosperity, a secure future, a fairer future, and future ties between the two peoples, with eight working groups operating under these pillars. These groups will address areas including: defence, security and counterterrorism, commerce and investment, science, technology and innovation, development, mediation, culture and education, heritage, and health. HE Dr al-Ansari explained that the dialogue will work to deepen the Qatar-UK partnership in areas such as economy, commerce, investment, de-

The second strategic dialogue represents another milestone in advancing the Qatar-UK partnership

fence, and security, as well as co-operation in counterterrorism. He added that the dialogue will also witness the launch of a working group focused on technology, innovation, and science, as well as a health working group, and will explore new opportunities for co-operation in advanced technologies and artificial intelligence, including their role in supporting health-care applications and health data systems. He also said that the strategic dialogue will enhance coordination and co-operation to address global challenges, and will include the first meeting of a working group on development and the formation of a mediation task force. He noted that both countries are working together, following a joint funding commitment of \$100mn for humanitarian and development programmes, to explore joint initiatives in priority regions, including Gaza, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and Bangladesh, as well as to build capacity in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in support of international peace efforts. **(QNA)**



CIC conference turns spotlight on mediation, green diplomacy

The 71st General Assembly of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) began yesterday in Qatar, where it is being hosted over two days under the theme “Mediation”.

The assembly was inaugurated by HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, in the presence of the Chairman of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim bin Mohammed al-Thani.

Supported by the Qatar Chamber, the meeting includes rich discussions on the relationship

between mediation, hunting, and green diplomacy as pillars of sustainable environmental conservation.

In his remarks, HE Dr al-Subaie said this gathering served as a global platform to reaffirm our shared commitment to striking a balance between sustainable hunting practices and the protection of biodiversity. He noted that hunting has long been an integral part of Qatar's cultural heritage, stressing the significant responsibility to preserve this rich heritage while protecting the ecosystems. He noted that this was a responsibility that reflects the country's

comprehensive national vision, which seamlessly blends authenticity with modernity.

HE Dr al-Subaie emphasised the ministry's commitment to playing a pioneering role in regulating hunting activities, guided by scientific principles and sound environmental policies. He further emphasised Qatar's strong commitment to global environmental protection efforts and its active engagement in international partnerships. He highlighted the country's adherence to international agreements such as CITES, as well as its ongoing collaboration with regional and global stakeholders to

address transboundary challenges that pose a threat to biodiversity.

For his part, CIC Director-General Sebastian Winkler expressed his gratitude to Qatar for hosting the council's General Assembly Meeting. He noted that the discussions at the event underscored the crucial role of mediation and green diplomacy in environmental preservation. He emphasised that mediation serves as a key tool in resolving conflicts related to the environment, sustainable falconry, and wildlife protection.

Meanwhile, Managing Director and Chairman of Qetaifan Projects Sheikh Nasser bin Abdulrahman

al-Thani, expressed his pleasure at collaborating with the Qatar Chamber to sponsor this important event, saying: “We look forward to continuing this partnership through future initiatives that serve the community and enhance Qatar's position on the international stage.”

The CIC General Assembly meeting featured a series of in-depth discussions covering a range of critical topics, including mediation and the political challenges to hunting, the future of hunting through mediation, hunting as a diplomatic platform, falconry in the Arab world, and the

role of falconry in wildlife conservation. The agenda also included the review of various reports and key sessions.

The two-day event will explore mediation as a powerful tool for addressing conservation-related conflicts across borders and shared interests. Through sessions led by distinguished speakers and experts, the meeting will examine how mediation can align the perspectives of diverse stakeholders in terms of balancing the needs of local communities, wildlife managers, and policymakers to foster sustainable and inclusive conservation solutions. (QNA)



Qatar partakes in Kuwait forum on combatting trafficking in ME

QNA
Kuwait

Qatar participated in the 6th session of the Government Forum to Combat Trafficking in Persons in the Middle East (ME), held in Kuwait. HE the Minister of Labour and Chairman of Qatar's National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri led Qatar's delegation at the forum.

The forum, held under the theme ‘Protecting Rights and Promoting Justice in Combating Human Trafficking’, brought together ministers and heads of specialised agencies from the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the United States of America, the League of Arab States, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In his opening address, Dr al-Marri reaffirmed Qatar's steadfast commitment to safeguarding human rights and dignity, highlighting the nation's comprehensive

approach to combating human trafficking. He emphasised ongoing efforts to enhance legislative frameworks, strengthen preventive mechanisms, and provide support and care for victims, aligning with international best practices and standards.

Dr al-Marri noted that 2024 marked the launch of Qatar's National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2024-2026), a strategic roadmap centred on four key pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, and international co-operation.

He stressed that the plan aims to bolster co-ordination among national stakeholders, raise public awareness, ensure a safe environment for victims, and enhance institutional capacities to effectively address this transnational crime.

He further elaborated on the Ministry of Labour's initiatives. In close co-ordination with the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking and relevant entities, the ministry is implementing targeted programmes designed to protect workers' rights, prevent all forms of ex-

ploitation and abuse, and foster a fair working environment that upholds human dignity and fundamental rights.

Dr al-Marri reiterated Qatar's commitment to strengthening collaboration with international organisations, notably the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. He underscored the importance of multilateral co-operation and co-ordinated action in addressing human trafficking, recognising it as a global challenge that necessitates a unified and effective response.

He concluded by affirming that combating human trafficking extends beyond legal and security measures; it is a shared moral and humanitarian responsibility. He called for sustained regional and international co-operation to comprehensively address this grave violation of human dignity.

The forum also addressed topics related to forms of human trafficking in the workplace, reviewed experiences from the Middle East in combating human trafficking and explored strategies to mitigate such issues.

CGB hosts municipality minister in first enrichment meeting of '25

The Civil Service and Government Development Bureau (CGB) hosted HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah for a dialogue session as the first enrichment meeting of 2025. HE CGB President and National Planning Council Secretary-General Dr Abdulaziz bin Nasser al-Khalifa moderated the session.

HE al-Attiyah presented his key professional career milestones and the lessons learned from his leadership experiences.

He addressed his vision for developing urban planning and promoting sustainability, as well as the ministry's role in support-



ing digital transformation and innovation in municipal services in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030. The CGB's periodic enrichment meetings aim

to transfer national experts' expertise and knowledge to state employees to achieve the highest levels of efficiency in the government sector. (QNA)

Qatar welcomes signing of Declaration of Principles between DRC, Rwanda

Qatar welcomes the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda in Washington, DC.

The agreement, which emphasises mutual respect for the sovereignty of both nations and a firm commitment to resolving disputes through peaceful and negotiated means, is seen by Qatar as a positive and important step toward fostering stability and peace in the region.

Qatar commends the constructive engagement and the commitment to dialogue and diplomacy,

which reflect a genuine desire to de-escalate tensions and advance the interests of the peoples of both countries and the wider region.

Qatar values the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the US, which are part of the broader international community's initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict and promoting security and stability in the Great Lakes region.

These efforts are in line with the progress achieved at the joint summit of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in Dar es Salaam,

Tanzania, on February 8, 2025, as well as the trilateral meeting between the leaders of the DRC, Rwanda, and Qatar, held in Doha on March 18, 2025. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirms Qatar's support for all joint efforts and initiatives aimed at promoting peace. It also reiterates the State's consistent position advocating for the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and peaceful means, and its commitment to upholding the principles of international law; foundations that are essential to strengthening stability and reinforcing international peace and security. (QNA)

Press Cafe reviews Fahad Badar's most dangerous adventures

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Center (QPC) organised the 9th session of its Press Cafe, titled ‘Adventure: Between Article Writing and Mountain Climbing’. Fahad Badar, a Qatari adventurer, banker, and economics writer, shared moving details of his adventures and his fateful journey to the summit of Broad Peak in Pakistan. He sustained a severe injury during the climb, but despite the harsh experience, he continued his dream of climbing K2.

Saad al-Rumaihi welcomed the audience, praising the strong will that has become the hallmark of Qatari adventurer Fahad Badar. Moderator Amal Abdulmalik said: “In July 2021, Qatari adventurer Fahad Badar suffered a severe injury

known as frostbite while climbing Broad Peak, one of Pakistan's rugged peaks. He ran out of oxygen at an altitude of 8,000m, causing significant damage to the fingers of his left hand, which were subsequently amputated.”

This ordeal didn't deter him from continuing; rather, it served as a new impetus for his challenge. He later succeeded in climbing K2, the second-highest peak in the world, proudly raising the Qatari flag. This achievement is credited to him, demonstrating that determination can overcome even the harshest of circumstances.

Badar emphasised that since the age of 22, he tried to travel for several months, practising hiking and mountaineering in countries like Nepal. His first exploration trip was in 2002.

Fahad Badar emphasised that what he does is not for show-off,



From left: Amal Abdulmalik, Saad al-Rumaihi, Fahad Badar and Abdullah bin Hayyi al-Sulaiti.

but rather to feed his passion for this hobby, especially since he is an athlete and holds a black belt in combat sports. Adventurer Fahad Badar said: “Mountaineering

is a physically demanding sport, so it requires an advanced level of fitness, which keeps me in a state of daily exercise, especially in the time leading up to the expedition.

He continued: “During our travels, many people died while practising this sport. One of the preparations is to provide sufficient food. We usually carry dry, light foods with us so they don't weigh us down during the climb, such as dates and chocolate to provide us with energy. We often lose a lot of weight due to the nature of the food we eat.”

Badar confirmed that one of the most prominent publications in the series is *Afnatus* (a small jerboa) on the Summit of Kilimanjaro, published in 2022. This book represents a step toward simplifying the concept of adventure for children and connecting them with local success stories that exude a spirit of challenge.

He said: “I am working on a book project that documents my personal experience with climbing, injury, and recovery. It encompasses feelings of fear, deter-

mination, and success. It will be published in English before being translated into Arabic, to serve as a source of inspiration for young people.”

He added: “There is an intention to produce a film in co-operation with the Doha Film Institute, where the book will serve as the basis for the film.” Regarding writing articles in the economic field, adventurer Fahad Badar noted that he has been a lover of reading since childhood. This strengthened his relationship with writing, but he has also adapted it to his work, as he writes articles for the Qatari newspapers *Al-Sharq* and *Gulf Times*.

Saad al-Rumaihi concluded the session with a message to the youth, urging them to take the adventurer Fahad Badar as a role model and not give up no matter how hard the winds of change confront them.



MoEHE honours students in closing ceremony of Arab Reading Challenge

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) concluded the 6th edition of the Reading Olympiad and the 9th season of the Arab Reading Challenge during an educational celebration attended by HE Undersecretary of the MoEHE Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, representatives from the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI), a number of ministry officials, school principals, and a large audience of students.

The ceremony also honoured student Ghala Abdullah al-Hajri from Al Khwarizmi Elementary School for Girls, who achieved first place in both the Reading Olympiad and the Arab Reading Challenge. This double achievement reflects her excellence and distinction in the fields of reading and self-learning, and serves as a role

model for school students in the State of Qatar.

Director of the Curriculum and Learning Resources Department at the MoEHE Sarah al-Sharim emphasised that the Reading Olympiad has witnessed a qualitative development represented by its integration with the Arab Reading Challenge initiative, making it one of the qualifying tracks for the final rounds at the Arab world level. She praised the increasing participation from schools and students year after year, reflecting a growing awareness of the importance of reading as a gateway to self-learning and academic excellence.

She pointed out that school libraries and learning resource centres are supportive and stimulating educational environments that contribute to enhancing critical thinking skills and independent learning, and constitute a fundamental pillar for achieving academic achievement and developing students' integrated per-



sonalities in light of rapid changes. The event has witnessed remarkable development since its launch, with the participation of 1,103 male and female students from 207 schools during the first session (2019/2020), reaching 177,197 male and female students from 382 schools in the current session (2024/2025), a clear indication of

the efforts made to consolidate the culture of reading in the school community.

The ceremony included honouring the top five students in each educational category in the Reading Olympiad, the top 10 students in the Arab Reading Challenge, and people of determination, in a festive atmosphere that reflected



pride and appreciation for the students' achievements. This closing ceremony is the culmination of a journey of continuous work to spread the culture of reading and enhance linguistic and cognitive awareness, in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and contributing to the achievement of Qatar National Vision 2030. The

Arab Reading Challenge initiative, launched by the MBRGI, aims to instil a culture of reading in Arabic and develop mechanisms for comprehension and self-expression in fluent Arabic. The Reading Olympiad is a prominent national initiative that contributes to the development of students' intellectual and educational skills.

Qatar, Ghana hold political consultations



The second round of political consultations between the ministries of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and the Republic of Ghana was held in the Ghanaian capital, Accra. The Qatari delegation was led by HE Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi, while the Ghanaian delegation was led by Chief Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, ambassador Ramses Joseph Cleland. During the consultations, both sides discussed bilateral co-operation relations and ways to support and strengthen them, in addition to addressing a number of topics of mutual interest. The session was attended by ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Republic of Ghana Khalid bin Jabr al-Musallam, HE Assistant Director of the Department of African Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mubarak bin Mohammed al-Khalifa, along with the accompanying delegation. (QNA)

NCSA president meets Swiss ambassador

HE the President of the National Cyber Security Agency (NSCA) engineer Abdulrahman bin Ali al-Farahid al-Malki met with Swiss ambassador Florence Tinguely Mattli. During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral co-operation relations in the field of cybersecurity, as well as ways to develop and enhance the partnership in this field. (QNA)



QLA exhorts benefits of reading in interactive session with author

As part of its ongoing commitment to instilling cultural values and nurturing a generation of readers and creators, Qatar Leadership Academy (QLA) organised activities to celebrate International Book Day through a rich program filled with meaningful educational content and inspiring activities, under the theme "An Hour for Reading ... So Life Awakens Within You".

The first event was an inspirational encounter with Qatari author Dr Ahmed Abdulmalik, in a literary session brimming with knowledge and experience. The academy's students had a special meeting with the renowned Qatari writer and media figure, who honoured us with his distinguished presence and his rich journey. The author led an interactive session, during which he shared



Dr Ahmed Abdulmalik (left) with a QLA official.

his extensive experience in journalism and novel writing. He emphasised the power of words in shaping awareness and the importance of writing in addressing the challenges of reality. He engaged actively with students' questions and opened new intellectual windows for them

through real stories and experiences that marked turning points in his career.

It was more than just a talk – it was a lesson in inspiration, and in how personal experience can be transformed into a literary voice that resonates with people and society.

Mol officers attend aviation security course

The Basic Aviation Security Course, organised by the Airport Security Department, concluded at the Al Wajba Hall of the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) building. The course ran during the period of April 20-24. Fifteen officers from the Ministries of Interior of the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the State of Kuwait participated in the course, which aimed to enhance Gulf co-operation, exchange expertise, and develop skills in the field of aviation security. The course covered the basics of aviation security, reviewing the Airport Security Department's experience in major sporting events, among other topics. The course also included a field visit to Hamad International Airport to view the latest equipment and technologies used in airport security. The Director of the Airport Security Department, Colonel Khamis Mohammed al-Muraikhi attended the closing ceremony. (QNA)



Education ministry, Unicef conclude training initiative on child rights

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), concluded a training programme on child rights awareness, which was held over four days at the ministry's training and development centre, with the participation of 217 assistant administrative principals from public schools.

The programme was organised as part of the ministry's efforts to promote awareness of children's rights within the school environment and to empower school leadership in supporting these rights, in alignment with Qatar's international commitments in this field.

The programme, implemented under the supervision of experts from the training and development centre, included interactive workshops, awareness lectures, and practical activities, based on the Unicef-issued Child Rights Awareness Activities Toolkit (CRAAT), which serves as a comprehensive educational reference specifically designed to support



teachers and students across different age groups.

The toolkit's content was adapted to reflect the school context in Qatar, helping to enhance the effectiveness of its implementation within schools. The programme is part of a series of targeted initiatives carried out by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in co-operation

with its international partners, aimed at developing the capacities of educational staff and embedding a culture of child rights into daily educational practices. The effort is a true embodiment of the partnership between the ministry and Unicef to enhance education quality and uphold the fundamental rights of children in Qatar. (QNA)

Art empowers QF students for a life beyond school

Art offers young learners a unique tool that enables them to construct and interpret the world around them. Whether through painting, music, theatre, or dance, students are encouraged to stretch their thinking, develop emotional intelligence, and grow as individuals. To support this, Qatar Foundation (QF) schools make art a core part of learning, recognising the vital role creativity plays in shaping well-rounded young learners who are prepared to contribute meaningfully to society.

This vision is reflected in the experiences of students like Saeed al-Humaidi, a Grade 5 student at Awsaj Academy, a member of QF's Pre-University Education (PUE). He participated in 'Palestine Taught Me', an art exhibition hosted by Awsaj Academy that invited students from across Qatar to show solidarity with Palestinians through creative expression.

"My story is inspired by a group of Palestinian farmers in Gaza who had to stay away from their farms for a while because of the war. When they returned to check on their land, they found everything intact – nothing had happened to their plants."

Art supports students to become global citizens. It inspires them to ask meaningful questions: What is happening in the world? What role can I play in making a difference? This was clearly expressed by Saeed who said: "I chose this story because I was amazed by the resilience of those people."

"I want to share that feeling with the world and let readers see the picture I am drawing in their minds. Art allows me to express myself better and understand the real-world challenges."

For Grade 4 student Sara al-Fadala from Qatar Academy Doha, a member of QF's PUE, art is more than just a creative outlet – it's been a powerful journey of self-discovery and courage.

Her journey into arts began with a role in a school play at QF's Al Ghorrah for Literature and Arts, where she played a brave lioness – a performance that would mark a turning point in her personality. After her performance, several classmates approached her to share how much she had inspired them. That moment, she explains, gave her a lasting sense of confidence: "In real life, it made me brave, and that's what makes me



Sara al-Fadala



Lulwa al-Ali



Saeed al-Humaidi

Today, the violin has become a part of al-Ali's daily life. "I play it every night before I go to bed. It helps me relax and fall asleep."

But music has offered her more than just relaxation. Through her dedication to the instrument, Lulwa has learned discipline, resilience, and the value of persistence. "Playing music helped me become more committed – to my friends, to school, and to myself," she explained. "I also learned not to give up, and that's something I want to share with other students."

The stories of Saeed, Sara, and Lulwa are just a few among many across QF schools, where students are encouraged to explore art as a powerful avenue for self-expression and personal development. These experiences are a testament to how the arts can inspire young learners to dream big, stay committed, and become global citizens through creativity.



Academyti, also under QF's PUE - participated with its Education City Honey initiative, highlighting the vital role of bees in the ecosystem.

QF schools display recycled creations at Earthna Village

Students from Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education showcased innovative projects focused on sustainability and recycling at the second edition of QF's Earthna Summit under the theme 'Building Our Legacy: Sustainability, Innovation, and Traditional Knowledge'.

The Earthna Village at Barahat Msheireb hosted a community exhibition where students from Tariq Bin Ziad School, Qatar Academy Sidra, and Qatar Academy Al Wakra - all part of QF's PUE - presented creative projects using recycled materials to promote environmental awareness. Academyti, also under QF's PUE - participated with its Education City Honey initiative, highlighting the vital role of bees in the ecosystem.

Saleh Khalid al-Mansouri, an 8-year-old student at Academyti, expressed his excitement about participating in Earthna Village, saying: "At school, we visited bee farms, wore beekeeper suits, and learned how to extract honey. I was scared at first, but then I really enjoyed it. I'm happy that my school taught me this way, and today I'm proud to share what I learned about bees with others."

Yousef al-Khater, a 9-year-old student at Tariq Bin Ziad School, developed his passion for sustainability by creating simple solutions, including designing a plastic container to encourage people to adopt sustainable methods for watering plants, a step that reflects his awareness of the importance of reusing resources and re-



Hadeel al-Sayed



Saleh Khalid al-Mansouri

ducing waste. "I learned at school that sustainability means taking care of things and reusing them because it helps protect our environment and planet. I also realised that simple ideas can make a big difference. I feel very happy when I design projects using recycled materials because it allows me to apply what I learn in school in a fun and useful way."

Yousef's mother, Lulwa al-Buainain, said: "Since I noticed my son's interest in topics like sustainability and innovation, I've been keen to encourage him to participate in exhibitions and initiatives that nurture this passion."

"In a short period, I witnessed a transformation in his personality. He became more conscious of his responsibility towards the environment and society, developed stronger communication and teamwork skills, and grew more confident when presenting his ideas to others."

"I realised that learning doesn't only happen in the classroom, these practical experiences truly

shape a child's character. That's why I encourage every mother to give her children the opportunity to participate in such initiatives, as they open new horizons and instil values that will stay with them for life."

Hadeel al-Sayed, National Programmes Teacher in the Primary Years Programme at Qatar Academy Sidra, said: "At QF schools, we are committed to instilling the concept of sustainability in our students and highlighting its importance in their daily lives by raising awareness of simple practices such as recycling paper and clothing, and reducing food and water waste. Embedding this awareness from an early age helps make sustainability a natural part of their lifestyle."

"We always strive to encourage students to participate in environmental initiatives and activities, motivating them to explore innovative solutions for reusing resources and protecting the environment. Our goal is not only to develop their skills in the classroom but also to prepare them to adopt a sustainable lifestyle that will stay with them in the future."

Hadeel explained that these values are reinforced from both environmental and social perspectives, noting that participation in major events allows students to express their ideas and develop leadership and communication skills, enabling them to make their voices heard and contribute to building a more conscious and responsible future.

QF's Awsaj Academy concludes first MUN

Awsaj Academy, part of Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education (PUE), concluded its first Model United Nations (MUN) conference, held over two days at the academy's campus under the theme: 'Building Inclusive and Sustainable Communities: Empowering Education for All'.



Tayba Fathi



Sida Osama

The conference reflected QF's commitment to empowering youth through dialogue-based platforms that foster leadership and critical thinking skills. A total of 180 students participated, including 30 from Awsaj Academy and 150 from 14 schools within and beyond QF. The event offered a valuable opportunity to explore and engage with global issues.

It aimed to enhance students' leadership, public speaking, and problem-solving abilities through discussions on major global challenges. The experience promoted dialogue, diplomacy, and global awareness, preparing students to help shape more inclusive and sustainable communities.

Mark David Hughes, executive director of Special Schools and Inclusive Education at QF, said: "This conference is a powerful platform that engages students in key global issues, especially those linked to the UN's goals. It gives them a voice in shaping the dialogue around the future of our communities. Bringing together students and schools in one space reflects QF's strong commitment to supporting youth and fostering meaningful dia-



logue. It helps raise their awareness and empowers them to take on future leadership roles."

Hughes also noted that Education City is an ideal venue for such conferences, combining academic, research, and community elements, and said: "It is not only a hub for advanced learning, but also a space for intercultural dialogue and knowledge exchange."

"The conference focused on developing teamwork skills among youth and instilling in them a sense of their role as future changemakers. I hope the students left the conference feeling inspired and motivated to continue engaging in this kind of collaboration and dialogue."

Over six weeks, students built real communication skills and formed friendships across cultures, broadening their perspectives and enhancing their ability to engage with others."

"At the heart of this experience are connection, dialogue, shared thinking, and the exchange of ideas, key pillars in preparing a conscious generation capable of leading and making a difference."

Sabah al-Humaidi, a 15-year-old student at Qatar Academy Al Khor, part of QF's PUE, said: "I joined this conference to improve my public speaking skills and share my views in meaningful discussions with students from diverse backgrounds. It was a valuable opportunity to voice my thoughts on issues I care about, and I believe events like this help prepare us to be active agents of change in the future."

Tayba Fathi, a 17-year-old student from Al-Risala Secondary School for Girls, said: "Through this experience, I became more aware of global issues and learned to express my views confidently while respecting others' perspectives. Conferences like this not only build our dialogue skills but also shape our character and open us up to new ideas and cultures."

Another student from Al-Risala Secondary School for Girls, Sida Osama, a 18-year-old, said: "The conference gave me the chance to discuss important issues with students from different schools. We exchanged ideas and perspectives, which helped me see things from new angles."

TAC-G annual conference held



Toastmasters Division G (District 116, Region 8) hosted the TAC-G 2025 Annual Conference, under the theme 'Power of Persistence'. Led by director Shoba Raj, the event was supported by Ngina Ket, Hasim, Rifky, Suchitra, Ruby Paul, Jaffer, Hammed, Feroz, Ayesha, Poornima Raj, Pooja, Swetha, Dharini, Venugopal, Zaaky, Ritu, Rizna, Ashokan and Krishnamoorthy.

Toastmasters club holds 200th meeting



Aurora Toastmasters Club celebrated its 200th meeting and eighth anniversary with a talent showcase titled #AuroraGotTalent4.0. The event featured performances ranging from singing and dancing, to poetry recitation and storytelling. Led by project manager Vinita Nangalia, the morning was a blend of fun, creativity and a celebration of the club's growth and spirit.



MES, Mesis students take part in VolMUN Conference

A team of 37 senior students from MES Indian School and Mesis attended a two-day VolMUN Conference at Lusail University, organised by Lycee Franco-Qatarien Voltaire in Doha.

The MES student delegation comprised Jovitta Mariam Jackson, Nithyasri S Manohar, Raya Shibily, Huda Zainab, Zainab Shajeeb, Vaignavi Kunjan, Faizan Irfan Ahmed, Sayed Zakariya, Ahmed Haris, Sancia Kurien,

Karen Jojin, Krishna Manojkumar, Filza Mehresh, Meha Mehresh, Javesh R B, Afifa Aajas, Mohammed Hilal, Anjelina Aju John and Muhammed Rehaan.

Mesis was represented by Michelle Joanne Martin, Anshala Mayur Sawant, Adiba Mumtaz, Gokul Krishna Sajeev, Sharika Mallikppam Balaji, Ravi Aryan Kumar, Hameed Salahuddin, Ananya Singh, Prathika Sen-thilkumar, Naseel Niyas, Amina Shirin Arippettamannil, Iman

Mustafa Sange, Mohammed Na-deem Shaikh, Amal Hadi Pulath, Hridul Sreenivasan, Mohammed Sinan, Padmavarshan Vijayakumar, and Sinan Khan.

Hridul Srinivasan, a delegate of Tunisia in HRC was awarded with a honourable mention. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar appreciated the overwhelming interest among students in MUN activities. Manmmadhan Mam-bally and Vishnu Jayaprakash accompanied the students.

Doha Academy Al Waab celebrates Qatar's national identity

Doha Academy Al Waab hosted a student-led event, celebrating Qatar's national identity, cultural heritage, and the nation's ongoing journey of innovation and sustainability.

Organised by Marie Tabet, head of French, the event brought together Secondary Girls students from Years 7-9, who showcased their creativity and understanding through engaging visual and digital projects aligned with Qatar's development goals and Vision 2030.

The guests included Al Faleh Educational Holding CEO Sheikhha Anwar bint Nawaf al-Thani and the French Institute in Qatar representatives Imen Djemel and Morgane Hofstetter. Doha Academy principal Edward Cooper, head of Secondary Girls Emma Christine Elegbe, and head of Sec-



Sheikha Anwar bint Nawaf al-Thani

ondary James Benjamin McAleese were present.

The showcase featured bilingual presentations in French and English. The topics explored ranged from innovation, food and agriculture, and education, to economic development, culture, and sustainability – all supported by PowerPoint visuals that

sparked student-led discussions. Tabet said: "It was inspiring to see our students embrace the French language and connect it so meaningfully with Qatar's identity. Their confidence and creativity show the true power of bilingual education."

Sheikha Anwar bint Nawaf al-Thani said: "Integrating Qatar's National Identity into school life is essential in raising proud, well-rounded citizens. This event is a shining example of our students learning with purpose, creativity, and cultural awareness."

McAleese said: "This event perfectly reflects the values we strive to instil at Doha Academy – confidence, cultural awareness, and excellence. I was incredibly impressed by the quality of the presentations and the depth of understanding shown by our students."

MES students shine in Tarteel Qur'an essay contest



Three students of MES Indian School won prizes in the 8th edition of the Tarteel Qur'an essay writing competition organised by Risala Study Circle - Qatar. Anam Azeez (VI) won the second prize in junior category, while Afifa Ajaz (XII) and Ishan bin Thasneef (XI) secured third prize in senior category.

MES duo qualifies for IISF



MES Indian School's Grade 7 students Devananda Pradeep and Hrithika Prahalad have advanced to the India International Science Festival (IISF) in December, after winning the first runner-up position in the junior category at the Qatar Children's Science Congress (QCSC 2025). The duo's project was displayed among the top 20 selected science projects at the QCSC 2025, organised by Science India Forum Qatar under the patronage of the embassy of India. They were guided by science teacher Divya Vijayan. Indian ambassador Vipul was the chief guest. Dr S Chandrasekhar, former director of the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology delivered a keynote address. The school principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, congratulated the team and wished them success as they prepare to represent Qatar on the national stage in India.

DPS-MIS duo excels in contest



Two DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) students have excelled in the Toyota Dream Car Contest 2025, organised by Al Abdulghani Motors. Nithya Poojary (Grade V) won third position in Category 2, while Palak Akhilesh (Grade VIII) qualified as a finalist for the International Toyota Competition.

MES marks World Heritage Day showcasing diversity

MES Indian School celebrated World Heritage Day with an observance titled 'Ethnic Costume Day', showcasing the diversity and richness of cultural heritage.

Students wore traditional Qatari and Indian ethnic attire, which highlighted the beauty of both traditions and reinforced the importance of cultural pride.

The event served as an opportunity for students to connect with their cultural roots, appreciate preserving of heritage, and build a sense of mutual understanding and appreciation among peers

Students wore traditional Qatari and Indian ethnic attire, which highlighted the beauty of both traditions and reinforced the importance of cultural pride

from different backgrounds.

Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar urged the students to have a broader appreciation for diversity and shared heritage.

The school will promote an environment where inclusivity and

academic excellence go hand in hand, she said. The event was coordinated by Mubeeb Rahman (Department of Social Science), Jency George (Campus Care Force), Rajesh K S (Scouts) and Namita Pradeep (event manager).

DPS-MIS team shines at AMUN in New York

A team of 11 students from DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS), Doha, excelled at the 4th International AMUN Conference in New York, held from April 7-13. Competing with delegates from 16 countries, they showcased outstanding diplomatic skills, with Vidhi Jadav and Saisha Varma receiving the Best Improvement Award, and Diya Varghese and Zaynab Salim Kutty winning the Best Diplomacy Award. The students also explored key landmarks and institutions in New York, making the trip a rewarding blend of academic excellence and cultural enrichment.





Palestinian solidarity rally in Yemen



Yemenis raise clenched fists as they shout slogans during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and in condemnation of US strikes, in the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa, yesterday.

Palestinian family killed in new Israeli air strike

QNA
Gaza

Five Palestinians from the same family were martyred early this morning after an Israeli air strike targeted their tent in southern Gaza.

According to the Palestinian news agency (WAFA), the strike hit a tent belonging to a family in Al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis, killing a man, his pregnant wife, and their three children.

In a separate incident, a three-year-old child died from severe burns after a fire broke out in their tent in the same area.

Meanwhile, Israeli artillery shelled Qīzan Rashwan neighbourhood in southwestern Khan Younis.

Since the beginning of the Israeli assault on Gaza in October 2023, the death toll has climbed to 51,355, with 117,248 people injured, amid mounting UN and international warnings over the worsening humanitarian crisis.

The Israeli occupation resumed its offensive on Gaza on March 18, following a two-month pause under a ceasefire agreement that took effect on January 19. However, Israel repeatedly violated the terms of the ceasefire during that time, continuing air strikes across the Strip, causing further casualties, refusing to implement humanitarian protocols, and tightening its suffocating blockade on the territory, which is now facing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. (QNA)

HALF MILLION DISPLACED

Meanwhile, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) reported yesterday that approximately half a million people have been newly displaced in Gaza over the



Women react near the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes, at Nasser Hospital, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.



Children gather at the site of an Israeli strike on a tent sheltering displaced people, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

past month, following multiple evacuation orders issued by Israeli forces. In a statement posted on its official platforms, UNRWA said the latest wave of displacement has pushed Palestinians into less than a third of Gaza's original territory. These remaining areas, the agency warned, are "fragmented, unsafe, and barely liveable."

The agency described conditions in overcrowded shelters as

catastrophic, with aid providers struggling to operate amid near-total depletion of available resources.

UNRWA already warned on Thursday of dire consequences as essential humanitarian supplies in Gaza dwindle due to a blockade imposed by Israeli occupation forces for more than 50 days. The humanitarian situation, the agency stressed, is rapidly deteriorating.

Iran FM Araghchi in Oman ahead of nuclear talks with US

AFP
Muscat

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi prepared for fresh nuclear talks with the US in Oman yesterday after apparent progress in previous rounds.

Araghchi flew into Muscat ahead of today's meeting with US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, their third encounter in as many weeks.

Araghchi will lead Iran's delegation of diplomats and technical experts in indirect discussions with the US side, foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei posted on X.

Iran's top diplomat was a negotiator of the landmark nuclear accord abandoned by Trump during his first term in 2018.

Araghchi refused to discuss the talks as he signed copies of an Arabic translation of his book, *The Power of Negotiation* at a book fair in Muscat yesterday.

The latest round will include expert-level talks on Iran's nuclear programme, with Michael Anton, who serves as the State Department's head of policy planning, leading the technical discussions on the US side, the department said.

Iran's Tasnim news agency reported that deputy foreign ministers Kazem Gharibabadi and Majid Takht-Ravanchi will head the Iranian technical team.

Baqaei posted that Iran's delegation is "resolved to secure our nation's legitimate and lawful right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes while taking reasonable steps to demonstrate



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (right) at the signing ceremony of his book *The Power of Negotiation*, in the presence of Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi (second left), at the Muscat International Book fair, yesterday.

that our programme is entirely peaceful."

"Termination of unlawful and inhumane sanctions in an objective and speedy manner is a priority that we seek to achieve," he added.

According to Baqaei, the dialogue will again be mediated by Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi — who appeared with Araghchi at the book signing — yesterday morning.

The meeting follows two earlier rounds of Omani-mediated negotiations in Muscat and Rome starting on April 12.

Since his return to office in January, Trump has reimposed sweeping sanctions under his policy of "maximum pressure" against Tehran.

In March, he sent a letter to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calling for talks but warning of possible military

action if they failed to produce a deal.

Western countries including the US have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons — an allegation Tehran has consistently denied, insisting that its programme is for peaceful civilian purposes.

Baqaei earlier yesterday said "progress in the negotiations requires the demonstration of goodwill, seriousness, and realism by the other side."

Iran will treat today's talks seriously, Araghchi said in a recent interview, "and if the other party also enters seriously, there is potential for progress."

In 2018, Trump withdrew the US from the nuclear deal signed three years earlier between Tehran and major world powers. The agreement eased sanctions on Iran in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

More than 480 killed in Sudan's North Darfur since April 10: UN

AFP
Geneva

Nearly 500 civilians have been confirmed killed in Sudan's North Darfur in the past two weeks, the United Nations said yesterday, condemning "horrifying" numbers of deaths and widespread physical abuse.

The UN human rights office said it had listed at least 481 civilians killed in North Darfur since April 10 and that the "the actual number is likely much higher".

The state has become a key battleground in the war that erupted on April 15, 2023 between the regular army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), headed by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The UN said its toll includes "at least 210 civilians, including nine medical professionals" killed

in the Zamzam displacement camp between April 11-13. It also included "at least 129 civilians" killed between Sunday and Thursday this week in El Fasher city, Um Kedada district and the Abu Shouk displacement camp, the rights office said in a statement.

In addition, it said, "dozens of people were reported to have died due to lack of food, water and medical care" in detention facilities run by the RSF or "while walking for days in harsh conditions in an attempt to flee violence". The war has left tens of thousands dead and triggered what aid agencies describe as the world's largest displacement and hunger crises. The rights office said the North Darfur fighting had displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians, many of whom had already been fled their homes during the conflict.

The displaced "face dire conditions amid continued restrictions on access to lifesaving humanitarian assistance", it said.

Syrian foreign minister raises new flag at UN headquarters

Syria's foreign minister yesterday raised his country's new flag at UN headquarters in New York, hailing the move as a "proclamation of a new existence" after the fall of Bashar al-Assad, AFP reported from UN. Asaad al-Shaibani raised the three-starred flag, officially adopted after Assad's December ouster, and later spoke to the Security Council, where he urged a lifting of international sanctions and for Israel to be pressured to leave Syrian territory. "This flag is not a mere symbol, but rather a proclamation of a new existence," he said in his first UN speech. Since Assad's fall to fighters-led forces, Israel has deployed troops in

a UN-controlled buffer zone that has separated Israeli and Syrian forces on the strategic Golan Heights since 1974. "We would like to ask the Council to make pressure on Israel to withdraw from Syria," al-Shaibani said in his first UN speech. Israel has also launched air strikes in Syria, which al-Shaibani slammed yesterday as "not only a flagrant violation of international law and Syrian sovereignty, but also a direct threat to regional stability." "We have repeatedly announced our commitment that Syria will not constitute any threat to any of the neighbouring countries or any country around the world, including to Israel," he said.

CRIME

Gunmen kill at least 19 at Nigerian gold mine

Gunmen have raided an artisanal gold mining site in Nigeria's northwestern state of Zamfara and killed at least 19 people, a mining union official and Amnesty International told AFP yesterday. Yahaya Adamu Gobirawa, the union official, said that on Thursday "bandits attacked the mining site at noon and killed 19 people, including five vigilantes providing security to the miners", while Nigeria's country director at Amnesty International, Isa Sanusi, gave a toll of 20 based on multiple sources, AFP reported from Kano. "The bandits went directly to the goldmine and killed instantly 14 miners, but more bodies were later discovered, including those who died later as a result of bleeding," said Sanusi. Police did not confirm the attack, saying they were still checking for information on the assault, which occurred in Gobirawar Chali village in Zamfara state's Maru local government area. Zamfara is one of several states in northwestern and central Nigeria terrorised by criminal gangs - called bandits by locals. They raid villages and kill and abduct residents across the country's rural hinterlands.

ELECTION

Junta chief wins 94.85% in Gabon vote

Gabon's Brice Oligui Nguema won 94.85% of the vote, according to final results released yesterday, confirming the junta chief's landslide election as the central African country's president, AFP reported from Libreville. That result marks a five-percent increase on his score in the provisional results given the day after the April 12 ballot, the country's first since Oligui ended more than five decades of Bongo dynasty rule in his August 2023 coup. Oligui, who temporarily hung up his general's uniform to stand for office, was elected president in a single round with 588,074 ballots, according to the electoral commission's final results. His main rival Alain-Claude Bilie By Nze, the last prime minister under ousted leader Ali Bongo Ondimba, likewise saw an increase in his vote share, coming second with 3.11 percent compared to his provisional 3.02% score. None of the six other candidates broke the one-percent barrier. Turnout stood at 70.11% in an election marking Gabon's return to constitutional normality and civilian rule after 19 months under Oligui's military leadership.

Rwanda, DR Congo set May 2 goal for deal draft

AFP
Washington

Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo set a goal yesterday of reaching a draft peace agreement by May 2 and vowed to respect each other's sovereignty, but mutual suspicion lay deep at a signing in Washington.

Two days after a surprise truce, the United States brought the two countries' foreign ministers together and voiced an interest in investment in the Democratic Republic of Congo's turbulent but mineral-rich east.

M23 rebels, who UN experts and the United States say have received military support from Rwanda, have made rapid advances in the eastern DRC since January, seizing key cities in fighting that has killed thousands.

A joint declaration signed in the presence of Secretary of State Marco Rubio committed the two countries to come up with an "initial draft peace agreement"



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stands alongside Democratic Republic of the Congo Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner (left) and Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe (right) during a Declaration of Principles signing ceremony at the State Department in Washington, DC, yesterday.

by May 2. The two countries "mutually acknowledge each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and commit to a pathway to resolve their disputes by peaceful means grounded in diplomacy and negotiation rather than hostile force or rhetoric," the declaration said.

Without naming the M23 rebels explicitly, it said that each

country acknowledged concerns of the other and would "refrain from providing state military support to non-state armed groups."

Congolese Foreign Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner said that the declaration should be considered a commitment for a Rwandan withdrawal from her country, as laid out in a UN Security

Council resolution in February.

"The good news is there is hope for peace. The real news -- peace must be earned, and it will require seriousness, transparency and sincerity," she said.

"To our countrymen and women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in the east: we know you are watching this moment with concern, with hope and, yes, with doubt, and you're right to do so."

Kayikwamba and Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe signed the agreement separately with Rubio watching and did not shake hands with each other for the cameras.

Nduhungirehe said that President Donald Trump had made a "real change in the conversation" on DR Congo, including by drawing a link to efforts to expand US private-sector investment.

"Today we are talking about the real issues, the root causes that must be addressed to achieve a lasting peace in our region," he said, calling for a region "free of violent ethnic extremism."

US State Dept nixes climate office, revamps energy bureau

The Trump administration has terminated federal employees in charge of US global climate policy and climate aid as part of its reorganisation of the country's diplomatic focus, the State Department said yesterday.

The career employees in the Office of Global Change, which came under the State Department's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, played a lead role in US negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Officials from the office also represented the US at the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and their respective shipping and commercial aviation sectors.

The dismissals come after Donald Trump said he would withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement, as well as from IMO negotiations over decarbonisation measures to enable the global shipping industry to reach net-zero emissions by "around 2050".

The United States belongs to the ICAO and had agreed to participate in the UN agency's Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA) and a goal to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Trump administration has been aggressively rolling back existing US climate policy and dismantled the US Agency for International Development.

A State Department spokesperson said the office had supported efforts to "hobble" the US through climate agreements.

There are also changes afoot at the State's Bureau of Energy Resources.

Internal documents reviewed by Reuters said the Bureau of Energy Resources would be absorbed into the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs "to ensure a laser-like focus on expanding and exporting American energy". - **Reuters**

Ex-CISA boss says Trump actions risk 'dangerously degrading' US cyber defences

US President Donald Trump's purges and apparent acts of retribution aimed at top cyber officials put the nation's digital defences at risk, the former head of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) said in a post yesterday.

Trump's recent moves to fire the two top National Security Agency (NSA) officials and order an investigation into the former head of the CISA, Christopher Krebs, were part of a larger movement "that risks hollowing out – and worse, politicising – the US federal cyber ecosystem when we can least afford it", said Jen Easterly, who succeeded Krebs at the CISA.

In a post on LinkedIn, Easterly said that the entire cybersecurity community, including America's foreign partners, were being affected by the turmoil.

"As experienced leaders exit and key roles remain vacant, our nation's cyber defences are at risk of being dangerously degraded," she said.

The CISA and NSA did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

Trump's abrupt firing of General Timothy Haugh, who led the NSA and Cyber Command, and his deputy Wendy Noble, combined with his announcement of an investigation into Krebs and restrictions on Krebs' then-employer, SentinelOne, have shocked the industry.

Neither move was fully explained, but they appear to fit within a larger pattern of Trump using the machinery of state power to punish anyone perceived as disloyal to him personally.

Cybersecurity companies have gone quiet on the matter.

None of the 33 major cyber firms approached by Reuters offered comment when asked about Krebs or SentinelOne.

Easterly wrote that the silence from industry leadership needed to end.

"If we allow the quiet dismissal of dedicated public servants in our community to pass without comment – we're not defending national security; we're compromising it." - **Reuters**

FBI charges Wisconsin judge for shielding undocumented migrant

Reuters/AFP
Washington

US officials arrested a Wisconsin judge yesterday and charged her with helping a man in her court evade immigration authorities in an escalating dispute between President Donald Trump's administration and local officials over immigration enforcement.

In a criminal complaint, the US Justice Department said Hannah Dugan, a Milwaukee County circuit judge, refused to turn over the man after immigration agents showed up to arrest him in her courtroom on April 18, and that she tried to help him evade arrest by allowing him to exit through a jury door.

Dugan appeared briefly at a federal court in Milwaukee to face charges of obstructing a proceeding and concealing an individual to prevent arrest, records show.

She was released and is scheduled to enter a plea on May 15.

A crowd formed outside the courthouse, chanting "free the judge now".

Dugan left the courthouse through a side door following the hearing and was driven away in a black SUV, without comment.

"Judge Dugan will defend herself vigorously, and looks forward to being exonerated," a publicity firm said on her behalf.

Trump launched a sweeping immigration crackdown after taking office in January, and the Justice Department has directed federal prosecutors to pursue criminal cases against local officials who interfere with the effort.

Such resistance was widespread during Trump's first 2017-2021 term in office.

"No one is above the law," Attorney-General Pam Bondi wrote on social media.

The Trump administration has been locked in an escalating confrontation with

federal judges, as several have issued rulings that limit its aggressive use of presidential power in immigration and other matters.

State courts have played a less significant role in that dispute.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Kash Patel said on social media that agents had arrested Dugan for interfering with the attempted arrest of Eduardo Flores-Ruiz, whom he described as an "illegal alien" now in custody.

"Thankfully our agents chased down the perp on foot and he's been in custody since, but the judge's obstruction created increased danger to the public," Patel wrote.

He later deleted that post, which he made before the case against Dugan was unsealed in federal court in a possible violation of secrecy rules.

"Director Patel's statement shows that Trump's FBI is more concerned about weaponising federal law enforcement, punishing people without due process, and intimidating anyone who opposes those policies, than they are with seeking justice," Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley said in a statement.

According to the complaint, Dugan became "visibly angry" and said it was "absurd" when immigration officials arrived on April 18 to arrest Flores-Ruiz at her court, where he faced misdemeanour battery charges related to domestic abuse.

Immigration advocates and some local officials have voiced alarm about courthouse arrests, saying that they could discourage witnesses from testifying about crimes.

Dugan ordered the immigration officials to speak with the chief judge and then escorted Flores-Ruiz and his attorney through a door which led to a non-public area of the courthouse, the complaint said.

The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, citing sources it did not identify, said Dugan



This picture from April 4 and taken from social media shows Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Hannah Dugan. - **Reuters**

steered Flores-Ruiz and his attorney to a private hallway and into a public area.

Carl Ashley, chief judge of the Milwaukee court, declined to comment.

The complaint said Flores-Ruiz had previously been deported to Mexico.

Dugan was first elected as a county judge in 2016 and before that served as head of the local branch of Catholic Charities, which provides refugee resettlement programmes among other services.

She spent much of her early career as a lawyer at the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, which serves poor people.

Federal authorities this week also arrested a former New Mexico judge and charged him with evidence tampering, court records show, after a man who authorities allege was linked to a Venezuelan street gang was found living on his property.

A criminal complaint has not yet been filed against the former judge, Joel Cano, who was barred by the state supreme court

Accused killer of insurance CEO pleads not guilty to federal charges

Luigi Mangione pleaded not guilty yesterday to federal charges of gunning down health insurance executive Brian Thompson, a day after prosecutors formally stated their intent to seek the death penalty.

Mangione, 26, wore a tan jail-issued t-shirt as he was led into the packed lower Manhattan courtroom.

He previously pleaded not guilty to a separate set of New York state charges over the December 4 killing of Thompson, the former chief executive of UnitedHealth Group's insurance unit UnitedHealthcare.

He entered the plea at an arraignment before US District Judge Margaret Garnett.

The brazen shooting of Thompson outside a midtown Manhattan hotel, where the company had gathered for an investor conference, and the ensuing five-day manhunt, captivated Americans.

Authorities say the words "deny", "delay" and "depote" – a phrase that echoes tactics some accuse health insurers of using to avoid paying out claims – were found written on shell casings at the crime scene.

While public officials condemned the killing, some Americans have cheered Mangione, saying

that he drew attention to steep US healthcare costs and the power of health insurers to refuse payment for some treatments.

In justifying their decision to seek the death penalty, prosecutors wrote in a Thursday night court filing that Mangione "presents a future danger because he expressed an intent to target an entire industry, and rally political and social opposition to that industry, by engaging in an act of lethal violence".

US Attorney-General Pam Bondi earlier this month announced that the Justice Department would seek the death penalty for Mangione.

Thursday's court filing by the Manhattan US Attorney's office formalised prosecutors' intent.

Mangione's lawyers have said Bondi's April 1 announcement was "unapologetically political" and breached government protocols for death penalty decisions.

If Mangione is convicted in the federal case, the jury would determine in a separate phase of the trial whether to recommend the death penalty.

Any such recommendation must be unanimous, and the judge would be required to impose it.

Mangione is currently being held in federal lockup in Brooklyn. - **Reuters**



Protesters hold signs outside Manhattan Federal Court in New York as Luigi Mangione is set to be arraigned on a four-count indictment for the murder of United Healthcare chief executive Brian Thompson. - **AFP**



A damaged wall is seen after the earthquake that struck the city of Esmeraldas, Ecuador. - **AFP**

Dozens of buildings destroyed, 20 injured in Ecuador earthquake

AFP
Quito

A shallow 6.3-magnitude earthquake left at least 20 people injured, dozens of buildings damaged and knocked out power in the Ecuadorian port city of Esmeraldas yesterday.

According to Ecuador's emergency response services, the 20 injured people suffered head and other wounds in the shake, which was felt as far away as the capital Quito.

"It was very strong," former presidential candidate Yaku Perez told AFP from the scene. "It felt like an eternity, but I guess it was less than a minute."

An AFP reporter in Esmeraldas witnessed tumbled-down walls, facades that had collapsed onto a road in a pile of debris and several cracked buildings.

Families stood around surveying the damage.

The authorities said 60 homes and a health centre had been damaged, while the facade of a military building partially collapsed. Two roads and a bridge were also damaged.

National oil company Petroecuador said it had "suspended operations" at the Esmeraldas refinery and a nearby pipeline.

The refinery produces 111,000 barrels a day and the Transecuadorian Pipeline System transports 360,000 barrels a day.

Daniel Noboa, the South American nation's newly re-elected president, said he was rushing ministers to the scene to help coordinate the building of shelters and delivery of humanitarian aid.

"The government is with you, and that's how it will be going forward," he said on social media.

The US Geological Survey and local monitors said the quake struck just off the coast at a depth of about 35km (22 miles) shortly

before 7am local time (1200 GMT). Ecuadoran authorities said there was no tsunami risk from the quake.

Ecuador sits on one of the most geologically active zones on Earth, and the fault between the Nazca and South American plates runs along its coast.

The Geophysical Institute said that "the convergence of the Nazca and South American plates, which have a movement speed of 5.6cm (2.2") per year, is the process that generates the largest earthquakes in the country".

The tremor was felt in 10 of the country's 24 provinces.

There were no reports of injuries across the border in neighbouring Colombia.

Last week, Ecuador marked the anniversary of the 2016 earthquake that struck the coasts of Manabi and Esmeraldas. With a magnitude of 7.8, it left 673 dead and about 6,300 injured.

Former president De Mello arrested

Brazil's former president Fernando Collor de Mello was arrested yesterday, a federal police source told AFP, after a top court upheld his nearly nine-year sentence on corruption and money laundering charges.

Collor de Mello, Brazil's first democratically elected president, was forced to resign in 1992, halfway through his term, after congress launched impeachment proceedings against him for allegedly taking bribes.

The 75-year-old was arrested in the northeast of the country, according to a police source speaking on condition of anonymity. - **AFP**



China vows to support firms, workers affected by US tariffs

Reuters
Beijing

China's top policymakers pledged to support firms and workers most affected by the impact of triple-digit US tariffs and urged the country to prepare for worst-case scenarios, state media reported yesterday.

The ruling Communist Party's Politburo reiterated plans to accelerate debt issuance, ease monetary policy and vowed to support employers to safeguard jobs as China hunkers down for a trade war with the US. No announcement of additional deficit spending beyond what was approved in March came out from the readout. "It

seems Beijing is not in a rush to launch a large stimulus at this stage. It takes time to monitor and evaluate the timing and the size of the trade shock," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management. The state media Xinhua report on the Politburo's meeting yesterday said the policy toolkit

must be continuously refined to stabilise employment and the economy, with new measures introduced in a timely manner as circumstances evolve. The meeting also called for comprehensive planning for "worst-case scenarios" and concrete steps to bolster the economy, Xinhua said. The country will increase the proportion of

unemployment insurance funds that can be returned to companies greatly affected by tariffs, in a bid to stabilise jobs, according to the readout. "Multiple measures should be taken to help enterprises in difficulty. (We should) strengthen financing support and accelerate the integration of domestic sales and foreign

trade," Xinhua reported. "The Politburo meeting emphasised 'bottom line' thinking and adequate policy plans, showing a new round of stimulus may be smaller than expected... the significance given to stabilising jobs is higher than economic stabilisation," said Xing Zhao-peng, senior China strategist at ANZ.

Myanmar junta defies quake ceasefire to continue attacks: data

Reuters
Bangkok

Myanmar's junta has kept up a deadly military campaign, including air strikes and artillery assaults, despite announcing a ceasefire after a major earthquake killed thousands in March, according to the United Nations and data from a crisis monitor. The March 28 quake, the worst natural disaster to hit the impoverished nation in decades, triggered a multi-national relief effort to support hundreds of thousands already ravaged by conflict and repeated international calls to halt the fighting.

On April 2, following similar moves by opposition armed groups, Myanmar's military announced a 20-day ceasefire to support humanitarian relief. On Tuesday it said the temporary cessation had been extended until April 30 after rare high-level talks led by Malaysia's premier.

But unreported figures from the United Nations show that the fighting has continued unabated and a analysis of data provided by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project found the frequency of junta aerial attacks has increased since the ceasefire announcement, compared to the six months prior.

A junta spokesman did not respond to multiple calls seeking comment.

Between March 28 and April 24, the military launched at least 207 attacks, including 140 airstrikes

and 24 artillery barrages, according to data from the UN Human Rights Office, based on reports it had received. More than 172 attacks have occurred since the ceasefire, 73 of them in areas devastated by the earthquake. "It's business as usual," said James Rodehaver, Myanmar head for the United Nations Office on Human Rights. "The ceasefire... should have involved stopping all military activity and repurposing our military to support the humanitarian response and that has not happened."

Myanmar has been in crisis since the military seized power in February 2021, toppling the elected government of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. A brutal junta crackdown on the opposition ignited a spiralling civil war, including in the previously peaceful central heartlands where protesters took up arms.

Two weeks into the ceasefire, junta aircraft swooped over South Kan Ma Yaik village in southeastern Karen state on April 16, during Burmese new year celebrations, and dropped bombs that killed a pregnant woman and her unborn baby to the north of the settlement, an eyewitness said.

"The first bomb exploded near her house. Then she braced her children for a second bomb and shrapnel hit her body," said the witness, who asked not to be named for fear of retribution.

"All the children were bleeding all over."

Reuters could not independently

verify the witnesses' account but the ACLED data contains an entry for a junta attack on the village on April 16, including one fatality.

In the six months before April 2, the junta every day conducted an average of 7.6 attacks using aircraft or drones that killed more than five people daily, including civilians, according to data provided by ACLED.

Between April 2 and April 18, the military carried out an average of 9.7 aircraft or drone attacks every day, leaving more than six people dead each day, since the ceasefire was announced, ACLED data shows.

In all, 105 people were killed by junta aerial attacks during this period.

The data showed opposition groups only conducted three aerial attacks during the ceasefire, between April 2-18. Anti-junta groups in the country lack any conventional air force and rely on drones.

In contrast, the Myanmar junta's air force includes Chinese and Russian-made fighter and ground attack aircraft, Russian attack helicopters and some heavy unmanned aerial vehicles, according to an International Institute for Strategic Studies report last year.

The junta's aerial attacks since the quake have been in the Sagaing region and northern Shan state, where it is attempting to regain strategic positions, as well as in Kachin and Rakhine states, said ACLED senior analyst Su Mon.

"The military is still conducting aerial strikes that target civilian populations," she said.

Manila anti-pollution protest



Philippine actor Soliman Cruz wearing a business suit stands inside an 8-foot transparent bubble while other activists wearing masks touch the bubble during an anti-pollution protest near a park in Manila yesterday. The protest is part of a climate advocates 350 campaign on Manila's air pollution crisis, due to traffic emissions, fossil fuel and unchecked industrial activity.

Marcos orders probe into alleged foreign interference in elections

Reuters
Manila

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos has ordered an investigation into alleged foreign interference in next month's elections after a top security official's warning that Chinese state-sponsored groups may be attempting to influence the outcome of the vote.

"This is truly alarming," presidential communications undersecretary Claire Castro told a media briefing. "We will conduct a thorough investigation so we can

uncover the truth behind this."

The order came after a top National Security Council official told a senate hearing on Thursday that signs of Chinese information operations had been detected.

His comments coincided with senator Francis Tolentino presenting what he said was evidence linking the Chinese embassy in Manila to the proliferation of "troll farm" operations in the Philippines.

Tolentino said the embassy had paid a local marketing firm to run online operations, and presented what he said was a copy of cheque issued by the mission as proof.

"These troll farms were engaged not only to openly provide information and convey the policies of the Chinese government but also to act as a covert disinformation and influence operation against the Philippine government and the Filipino people," Tolentino said in a statement.

China's foreign ministry and its embassy in Manila rejected the accusations. "China follows the principle of non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs," Guo Jiakun, a spokesperson for the ministry said. "We have no interest in interfering in Philippine elections."

No phone calls at the ATM, Osaka tells over-65s

The Japanese city of Osaka will ban elderly people from using ATMs while on a phone call under a new rule to tackle a growing scourge of targeted scams. Nationwide, damage from organised fraud schemes - orchestrated by criminal gangs including the yakuza - reached a record 72.2bn yen (\$500mn) last year. Older people are often prime targets for cold calls, with scammers posing as relatives, police or lawyers to coax them into withdrawing or transferring cash. So authorities in Osaka have brought in an ordinance that takes effect from August prohibiting those aged 65 and older from holding phone calls while using an ATM. The law, reportedly a first for Japan, requires ATM operators to notify their patrons of the ban, for example by putting up posters or distributing fliers.

Shanghai automobile industry exhibition



People visit the 21st Shanghai International Automobile Industry Exhibition at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai yesterday.

Graft indictment is 'political', says S Korea's ex-president

Reuters
Seoul

South Korea's former president Moon Jae-in said prosecutors were becoming political and abusing their power and that his indictment on bribery charges was a good example. South Korean prosecutors indicted Moon for alleged bribery on Thursday, in a case linked to the employment of his then son-in-law at a Thai airline between 2018 and 2020.

Moon said the indictment against him was unfair and accused the prosecutors of pursuing the case in a predetermined direction. "Beyond revealing my personal innocence, I plan to focus on properly uncovering and informing the public about the abuse and politicisation of the prosecution's power," he said during a meeting with National

Assembly Speaker Woo Won-sik.

Prosecutors had been investigating whether former lawmaker Lee Sang-jik'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, Jeonju District Prosecutors' Office said in a statement.

Lee was indicted for bribery and breach of trust in the case, according to the statement.

Moon's lawyers denied the accusations and said what his ex-son-in-law received were salaries for his work. They also accused prosecutors of politically targeting Moon ahead of a snap presidential election officially set for June 3 following the impeachment and removal from office of president Yoon Suk-yeol over his short-lived martial law declaration.

Nepal's long road to quake resilience

AFP
Kathmandu

A decade has passed since a massive earthquake ripped through Nepal, but in Ram Bahadur Nakarmi's home the damage is still visible - and so is the fear another might strike.

Ten years ago, on April 25, 2015, the ground beneath Nepal shuddered with a magnitude 7.8 earthquake, killing nearly 9,000 people, injuring over 22,000, and leaving millions homeless.

The disaster also reduced monuments to ruins, including centuries-old temples and royal palaces

in the Kathmandu valley that attracted visitors from around the world.

Nakarmi's four-storey home in historic Bhaktapur city was damaged, but financial constraints made it impossible for him to rebuild. The 61-year-old continues to live in his house despite the cracks. "Even now, it is still scary," Nakarmi said. "We are still feeling the tremors and they terrify us - we run outside the house."

The aftermath of the quake exposed deep cracks in Nepal's disaster response system and the rebuilding efforts were initially hit by political infighting, bureaucracy and confusion. Yet over the last

decade, significant progress have been made. According to official figures, nearly 90% of the homes destroyed have been rebuilt, alongside thousands of schools, health institutions, and public buildings.

Temples and cultural landmarks are also slowly rising again.

A joint assessment of affected districts by Nepal's National Society for Earthquake Technology, and the international Global Quake Model showed marked improvements for resilience in the face of another quake.

They estimated there had been a 44% reduction in the number of buildings at risk of complete col-

lapse, after Nepal's rebuilding and retrofitting drive.

"Our initial years were focused on rebuilding. Now our focus should be in areas which were not affected in 2015 but are at risk of a quake," Dinesh Prasad Bhatt chief of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), said.

"We have to extend the reach of lessons learnt from the earthquake to all parts of the country."

The disaster was a wake up call for a country that is situated on a dangerous geological faultline, where the Indian tectonic plate collides with the Eurasian plate to form the Himalayas.

According to the UN, Nepal ranks 11th in terms of earthquake risk.

Experts question if the country is prepared for the next one.

In the decade since the quake, the country has taken important steps.

The NDRRMA disaster reduction and management authority was established, and building codes were updated to reflect seismic safety standards.

Unlike 2015, there are elected members at local levels responsible for mobilising rescue teams, volunteers and stockpiles of emergency resources in case of a disaster.

"If you really look into a holistic picture, compared to what we had back in 2015 and right now, we've made massive progress," said Anil Pokharel, a former NDRRMA chief. "But still, it is inadequate given the kind of growing risks."

Experts say that while Kathmandu's skyline now includes more reinforced buildings, rural areas - where infrastructure is weaker and access to resources limited - remain exposed.

Only 9.4% of structures were revealed to be safe in a 2023 integrity assessment of nearly 29,000 buildings of schools, health centres and government offices across the country by the NDRRMA.

India mulls allowing 49% foreign stakes in nuke power plants

Reuters
New Delhi

India could allow foreign companies to take a stake of up to 49% in its nuclear power plants, three government sources said, as New Delhi draws up plans to open up its most guarded sector to help achieve

goals to cut carbon emissions. The government has considered changing its nuclear foreign investment framework since 2023. The need to increase nuclear capacity, however, has become pressing as India seeks to replace carbon-intensive coal with cleaner sources of energy. Investment in the sector has the potential to spur tariff ne-

gotiations with the US, although the officials could not say whether the issue would be linked to any trade deal. In 2008, a civil nuclear agreement with the US provided for deals worth many billions of dollars with US companies. The companies, however, have been deterred by the risk of unlimited exposure in the event of any ac-

cident and no foreign investment has been allowed in India's nuclear plants. If the latest proposals go through, together with plans to ease nuclear liability laws and allow domestic private players into the sector, they could remove the impediments to government aims to expand nuclear power capacity by 12 times to 100 gigawatts by 2047.

The sources said any foreign nuclear investments would still require prior government approval rather than be allowed automatically. India's finance ministry, department of atomic energy and the prime minister's office did not respond to queries. All three sources asked not to be named because the propos-

als are still under consideration. They said the necessary legal changes were likely to be placed before the federal cabinet soon and that the government aims to get the amendments to the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act of 2010 and the Atomic Energy Act of 1960 passed in the monsoon session of Parliament in July.

India searches for militants linked to killings in Kashmir

Reuters
Srinagar

Armed police and soldiers searched homes and forests for militants in Kashmir yesterday and India's army chief visited the area to review security, after the killing of 26 men earlier this week - the worst attack on civilians in nearly two decades. The militant attack triggered outrage and grief in India.

India's army chief visited Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, and authorities scoured Pahalgam, the scenic town where the militant attack took place on Tuesday. General Upendra Dwivedi visited Kashmir yesterday to review security arrangements a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to chase the perpetrators to "the ends of the earth".

India's chief opposition leader Rahul Gandhi also visited Srinagar yesterday, meeting the injured and local government heads. Those killed in the attack came from all over India, Modi has said. Television channels showed funerals of victims taking place in several states and newspapers carried photos of women grieving and people praying in front of funeral pyres. Early yesterday, authorities in Kashmir demolished the houses of two suspected militants, one of whom is a suspect in Tuesday's attack, an official said.

In an unrelated incident, troops from India and Pakistan exchanged fire overnight across the Line of Control in Kashmir, officials said yesterday, after the United Nations urged the two countries to show "maximum restraint". India's army confirmed there had been limited firing of small arms.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York that issues between the countries "can be and should be resolved peacefully through meaningful mutual engagement".

"We very much appeal to both the governments... to exercise maximum restraint, and to ensure that the situation and the developments we've seen do not deteriorate any further," he said. India's air force and navy both carried out military exercises on Thursday.

Indian airlines Air India and IndiGo are bracing for higher fuel costs and longer journey times as they reroute international flights after Pakistan shut its airspace to them.

Late Thursday, Air India and IndiGo began to reroute flights to New York, Azerbaijan and Dubai - all of which typically use Pakistan airspace, according to data from tracking website Flightradar24.

The worst-hit airport will be New Delhi, one of the world's busiest, from where flights cross Pakistani airspace to fly to destinations in the West and the Middle East.

Starmer visits British aircraft carrier



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer walks on the take off ramp of the British aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales with Captain Colin McGannity, Commander of the Carrier Air Group; Defence Secretary John Healey; Commodore James Blackmore, Commander of the Carrier Strike Group; Vice Admiral Andy Burns, Fleet commander; and Captain Will Blackett, Captain of HMS Prince of Wales.

Apple 'moving to make iPhones for US in India'

Reuters
Bengaluru

Apple aims to make most of its iPhones sold in the US at factories in India by the end of 2026, and is speeding up those plans to navigate potentially higher tariffs in China, its main manufacturing base, a source said.

The US tech giant is holding urgent talks with contract manufacturers Foxconn and Tata to achieve that goal, the person, who declined to be named as the planning process is confidential, said yesterday.

Apple and Foxconn did not immediately respond to requests for comment, while Tata declined to comment. Apple sells over 60mn iPhones in the US

annually with roughly 80% of them made in China currently. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has in recent years promoted India as a smartphone manufacturing hub, but higher duties on importing mobile phone parts compared to many other countries means it is still expensive for companies to produce in India. For iPhones, manufacturing costs in India are 5-8% higher than in China, with the difference rising to as much as 10% in some cases, the source said. Apple has already stepped up production in India to beat US President Donald Trump's tariffs, shipping some 600 tonnes of iPhones worth \$2bn to the US in March. The shipments from India marked a record for both its contractors Tata and Foxconn, with the latter alone accounting for smart-

phones worth \$1.3bn, Reuters reported last week. In April, the US administration imposed 26% duties on imports from India, much lower than the more than 100% China was facing at the time. Washington has since paused most duties for three months, except for China. Trump's administration has since signalled openness to de-escalating the trade war between the world's two largest economies that has raised fears of recession. The *Financial Times* first reported about Apple's plan yesterday. As Apple diversifies its manufacturing beyond China, it has positioned India for a critical role. Foxconn and Tata, its two main suppliers there, have three factories in all, with two more being built.

Samsung to invest \$117mn in Chennai facility

South Korea's Samsung Electronics will invest Rs10bn (\$117.09mn) in its facility in southern India, a minister said yesterday, months after the plant faced worker protests following employee suspensions. The plant near Chennai has been in the spotlight in recent months after workers staged a sit-in over employee suspensions in February - the second major labour dispute there in under six months. In September last year, hundreds of workers went on a five-week strike at the plant, seeking higher wages and union recognition before the electronics manufacturer agreed to address workers' demands. The company's additional investment "reinforces their faith in the labour force of Tamil Nadu state," T R B Rajaa, the state's minister for industries, investment promotion and commerce, said on social media platform X, adding that Samsung would add 100 more jobs to the facility.

Duchess Sophie attends Anzac Day service



Britain's Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, attends a service to commemorate ANZAC day and the centenary of the Battle of Gallipoli at the Cenotaph war memorial in central London yesterday. Anzac Day commemorates Australian and New Zealand casualties and veterans of conflicts and marks the anniversary of the landings in the Dardanelles on April 25, 1915 that would signal the start of the Gallipoli Campaign during World War I.

Air India looks to buy 10 planes rejected by Chinese

Reuters
New Delhi

Air India is in talks with US planemaker Boeing to acquire around 10 737 MAX jets after Chinese customers started rejecting deliveries amid a trade war with the US, two people familiar with the discussions said.

Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg said on Wednesday that "due to the tariffs, many of our customers in China have indicated that they will not take delivery", and the company could redirect jets to other customers in need.

The US and China, the globe's two largest economies, have each imposed duties exceeding 100% on the other.

Two sources, who declined to be named as the discussions are private, said Air India was seeking around 10 narrowbody planes from Boeing for its budget car-

rier Air India Express, which has a fleet of more than 100 aircraft. Air India, Air India Express and Boeing did not immediately respond to requests for comment. "Air India is very interested... if the deal goes through, the planes are expected to be added to the fleet by end of the year," the first person said, adding the talks were in early stages. Air India Express has previously taken white tail aircraft - or jets manufactured for one customer but acquired by another. A third source familiar with talks between Air India and Boeing said any difference in jet configuration between its fleet and the incoming planes meant for Chinese customers may be factored into price negotiations. The move could be a boost to Air India's expansion plans as the group's growth has been constrained by a lack of new aircraft.

UK-US share balanced trade as London seeks deal

AFP
London

Trade in goods between Britain and the US remained balanced in 2024, official data showed yesterday ahead of top level meetings in Washington aimed at avoiding Donald Trump's tariffs. The UK imported £57.1bn (\$76bn) worth of US goods last year and exported £59.3bn, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. The balanced situation has allowed Britain to remain relatively

unaffected by "reciprocal" tariffs announced earlier this month by the US president. Britain has been subject to tariffs of 10% across most sectors, the lowest level imposed by Trump. However, it remains subject to a 25% levy on steel, aluminium and automotive sector. This is a concern for British manufacturers, with the US representing their largest export market last year, at more than one quarter of all goods and worth a total of £9bn. "Manufacturers face considerable uncertainty... as US demand

likely weakens with knock-on effects on other markets and the supply chains," Britain's automotive trade body, SMMT, said in a statement yesterday. The ONS also released data showing that the trade balance regarding services largely favoured the UK last year. It exported services worth a total £137bn, which compared to £61.2bn in US service imports. For the time being, the services sector remains on the sidelines of the international trade dispute initiated by Trump. Britain and the US have engaged

in trade negotiations for several weeks, with the former hoping to eliminate, or at least mitigate, tariffs in exchange for concessions under discussion. Finance Minister Rachel Reeves is scheduled to meet her US counterpart Scott Bessent in Washington, on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) spring meetings. Reeves told the BBC yesterday that the UK's trading relationship with the European Union is "arguably even more important" than with the US. The EU, which Britain departed

at the start of the decade under Brexit, remains the latter's biggest trading partner. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has sought to bring the UK and EU closer together since his Labour party won re-election last July. A landmark EU-UK summit is due next month, but Starmer has ruled out Britain rejoining the neighbouring bloc. "When the divorcees the EU and UK are dating again, I know we are in a great place," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told Reeves and German Finance Min-

ister Joerg Kukies at a panel discussion Thursday. In recent days, Reeves has stated that she does not intend to "rush into a deal" with the US and has outlined some red lines, opposing any discussion on automotive and food standards, as well as online security. The Labour party has, however, yet to deny that its tax on digital companies, which earns the UK government £800mn per year, is on the negotiating table. Such a concession would delight the major American tech bosses, who have become close allies of Trump.

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

Production Editor

Amjad Khan

✉ P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
✉ editor@gulf-times.com
☎ 44350478 (News),
☎ 44466404 (Sport),
☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
☎ 44350474
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GULF TIMES

Japan is a test case for Trump's tariff deals

When Tokyo's top trade negotiator met US President Donald Trump for tariff talks at the White House earlier this month, he presented him with a gold-coloured plastic money bank.

One detail, seemingly unnoticed by those in the room, is that the gift was made in China, the focal point for Trump's sweeping trade war that has engulfed Japan and dozens of other countries, roiled financial markets and stoked recession fears.

As Trump seeks to leverage his tariff threats to strike scores of bilateral deals in a matter of months, the well-travelled present was an unintended reminder of the complexity of the global supply chains he is seeking to redraw.

Negotiating a speedy deal with Japan, a close US ally that counts rival China as its biggest trading partner, has been billed as a "test case" for Trump's chances of success.

There are already signs, however, that negotiations with Tokyo may prove tortuous, especially as its embattled ruling party worries about signing up to a bad deal ahead of a dicey election.

"Trump needs to get some concessions from Japan so that he can show he is a 'tough president'" said Daisuke Kawai, an economic security specialist at The University of Tokyo.

"Trump needs to get some concessions from Japan so that he can show he is a 'tough president'"

"He needs to create a kind of example as soon as possible." While some analysts expect Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Trump to announce an agreement when they meet at the G7 summit in Canada in June, others say it will be risky for the Japanese government to cede ground on thornier issues before upper house elections expected in July.

Polls show the ruling coalition is poised to lose its majority in that ballot, a result that could force Ishiba's ouster after he suffered the same fate in elections for the more-powerful lower house last year.

Trump has hit Japan with 24% tariffs on its exports to the US, although, like most of his levies, they have been paused until early July to allow room for negotiations. A 10% universal rate remains in place, as does a 25% duty on cars, a mainstay of Japan's export-heavy economy.

Japan's trade negotiator Ryosei Akazawa is set to depart for Washington for a second round of negotiations next week. A spokesperson for the US trade representative declined to comment on negotiations. The White House and Japan's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Asked about the gift to Trump – modelled on the otherworldly mascot Japan chose for the World Expo it is hosting in the city of Osaka – Akazawa said yesterday it had no meaning other than to encourage Trump to visit the event. He declined to comment on the item's origins, adding only that "Trump loves gold".

The item is listed on the Expo's website as being 'Made in China' and Reuters confirmed this with the producer, Osaka-based Heso Production.

While Tokyo is still sizing up what Washington will prioritise in the negotiations, it anticipates demands to lower barriers to US agricultural and automotive imports, a government official close to Ishiba said.

One of Trump's big gripes, Tokyo's tariffs on foreign rice, should be relatively easy to adjust as Japan faces a shortage of the staple and has seen prices rocket in recent months.

Trump's seeming unwillingness to offer exceptions for the 25% tariffs he has slapped on global auto imports, which make up nearly a third of all Japan's exports to the US, its biggest market, has also made Tokyo hesitant to offer concessions in other areas like rice, the officials said.

The US and Japan are working to reach an interim agreement, but many of the biggest issues are being put off. – Reuters

Europe and China must unite against Trump's trade assault

By Marcel Fratzscher
Berlin

US President Donald Trump's misguided trade war against the rest of the world could mark the beginning of the end for both his political dominance and his "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement – but only if Germany and Europe can co-ordinate a powerful international response.

The European Commission and the outgoing German government's biggest mistake was to signal a willingness to concede to Trump's demands, potentially turning his economic blunder into a political victory. It should be clear by now that appeasing Trump will only hasten the collapse of the multilateral trading system and further undermine democratic governance worldwide.

The European Union (EU)'s response will be pivotal in determining whether the Trump administration (which is intent on dismantling the multilateral trading order) or China (which seeks to preserve it) will prevail. European leaders face a clear choice: stand for multilateralism and align with China or side with Trump's MAGA-fied US. There is no third option.

Germany and Europe cannot remain neutral in this conflict. Giving in to Trump's demands by pursuing a bilateral trade agreement would be tantamount to endorsing the end of multilateralism.

The EU's ongoing failure to push back against Trump's policies reflects shocking shortsightedness and political naivete. While the direct economic impact of Trump's tariffs on Europe will likely be limited, the long-term consequences – especially for Germany's export-driven economic model – could be dire. Yielding to Trump would threaten the very foundation of German prosperity, which depends more than that of any other European country on open global trade grounded in non-discrimination, fairness, and competition.

So, how should Germany and the EU respond to Trump's tariffs? The incoming German government – together with France, the United Kingdom, and other European partners – must defend



Containers are loaded onto a cargo vessel in the Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. (Reuters)

multilateralism by aligning with China and imposing reciprocal tariffs on American goods.

In future negotiations with the US, European leaders must also insist on two key conditions. First, they should call for a renewed commitment to multilateralism as the foundation of the global trade system. That includes not only rolling back tariffs and other trade barriers to pre-crisis levels, but also revitalising multilateral institutions like the World Trade Organisation, which the US has systematically undermined by blocking the appointment of new judges to its appellate body.

Importantly, the focus should not be limited to the WTO. Other multilateral institutions such as the UN, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank must also be empowered to play a more active role, particularly in representing and protecting the interests of the weakest economies in the Global South.

Second, Europe should push for fair competition and common rules, especially when it comes to regulating US-based tech giants. These companies pay little to no tax and routinely violate EU laws

and regulations concerning data protection, ethical standards, and market competition.

The recent US court ruling that Google has indeed built an illegal monopoly in search underscores the urgency of the issue. As German Finance Minister Jorg Kukies recently observed, European countries are increasingly reliant on services provided by US tech giants. If the EU fails to act now, this harmful dependence will continue to deepen, making Europe even more vulnerable to Trump-style political and commercial blackmail.

Reviving multilateralism will also require meaningful concessions and reforms from China, the EU, and Germany to help correct global imbalances. Through massive subsidies and other forms of support for domestic firms, China has repeatedly undermined multilateral rules to gain unfair advantages. But Germany also must reduce its own gigantic current-account surpluses, which are largely driven by domestic regulations and other structural barriers that make it harder for foreign companies to enter its market.

Given that addressing these

distortions could offer considerable benefits to American companies, there is good reason to believe that such a balanced trade agreement might appeal to Trump and encourage him to change course.

Despite its economic costs, Trump's global tariff war offers Europe a chance to establish itself as a mediator and defender of multilateralism in an increasingly multipolar world. It is high time that Europe stood up for its values and co-ordinated a unified response with partners like China, Canada, Mexico, the UK, and Japan.

By provoking a confrontation with all the world's major economies at once, Trump has made a serious strategic miscalculation. Pushing back may cost Europe in the short term, but allowing Trump to prevail and dismantle the multilateral trading system would be far more damaging – both to the EU economy and to democracy itself. – Project Syndicate

• Marcel Fratzscher, a former senior manager at the European Central Bank, is President of the think-tank DIW Berlin and Professor of Macroeconomics and Finance at Humboldt University of Berlin.

Developing countries can lead in medical innovation

By Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan
Kuala Lumpur

The successful collaboration between the health ministries of Malaysia and Thailand, industry partners in Egypt and Malaysia, and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) to bring a new hepatitis C antiviral drug – ravidasvir – to market in 2022 was an important milestone. For years, a 12-week course of treatment using sofosbuvir cost between \$70,000 and \$80,000, putting it out of reach for many in the Global South. But ravidasvir – a safe and effective alternative when combined with sofosbuvir – costs far less, averaging less than \$500 per course.

This type of South-South co-operation could serve as a model for developing countries with endemic disease, highlighting how collective action can help them address health challenges and promote medical innovation. As this year's chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Malaysia plans to advance the agenda of collaborative, need-driven research, and foster the development of therapeutics and diagnostics in the Global South.

Ravidasvir's success depended on several factors. First, DNDi worked with an Egyptian drug manufacturer to develop the molecule, which was originally produced in the US but overlooked by large pharmaceutical companies. Second, once it became clear that this R&D initiative would produce an independent, affordable treatment for hepatitis C, the Malaysian Ministry of Health (where I am Director-General of Health), together with DNDi leadership in Southeast Asia, designed an aggressive access strategy based on market competition, driving down the prices of three treatment options. Throughout the process, Global South partners were in the driver's seat.

This sense of ownership prompted a flurry of activity in Malaysia, ultimately lowering the barriers between siloed government departments and dispelling conventional thinking. For example, our regulatory authority was the first to register the combination of ravidasvir and sofosbuvir without approval by a stringent regulatory authority. Pharmaniaga, a Malaysian generic-drugs manufacturer, supported these efforts by taking on the challenge of preparing a registration dossier for a new chemical entity.

The Malaysian health ministry has continued to advance this treatment option. In February, the ministry unveiled results from a clinical trial showing that a shorter regimen (eight as opposed to 12 weeks) of sofosbuvir-ravidasvir treatment was not inferior in non-cirrhotic hepatitis C patients. This represents a big win for those living with the disease in the Global South, as it lowers the therapeutic cost even further and improves patient compliance.



(Representative photo: pixabay.com)

Hepatitis C treatment is no longer prohibitively expensive in the Global South because Malaysia, Thailand, Egypt, and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative developed ravidasvir

While making treatment affordable and accessible is an important step toward eliminating hepatitis C, the same needs to be done for diagnostic tools. Traditional lab-based testing is expensive and logistically challenging for mass screening programmes across Southeast Asia. But instead of waiting for high-income countries to develop solutions, the Global South should take the lead in innovating point-of-care diagnostics that are inexpensive and scalable.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of global medical-supply chains and the limits of solidarity among countries in the face of a public-health crisis. The Global North's reluctance to share vaccines, tests, personal protective equipment, and therapeutics fuelled an "every country for itself" mentality. As a result, a credibility crisis has consumed the global health system, now exacerbated by a widening funding gap, largely owing to America's recent withdrawal from the World Health Organisation. The need for new models has never been clearer.

Recognising the need for greater regional resilience, Southeast Asian countries have shown an increasing willingness to support clinical trials and boost local manufacturing of medical devices and pharmaceuticals. Malaysia has played a central role in these efforts. In July 2024, the Malaysian government hosted a workshop with the United Kingdom's Academy of Medical Sciences to explore strategies for improving diagnostic and therapeutic access in the region. Workshop attendees recommended establishing a product-development partnership to foster collaboration among

governments, academia, and industry.

In May, Clinical Research Malaysia, a research management organisation under the health ministry that has focused on building clinical-trial capacity across the country – including for first-in-human phase 1 studies – will host CRM Trial Connect. Focused on accelerating clinical trials in Asia, the conference will bring together more than 1,000 academics, clinical researchers, industry leaders, and policymakers from across the region.

As the current chair of Asean, Malaysia is also well positioned to engage in dialogue with regional and international partners on how to address the Global South's health challenges. The Asean-Gulf Co-operation Council-China Summit scheduled for May will provide a venue for exploring ways to strengthen South-South collaboration, particularly regarding knowledge and technology transfers and access to medical innovation.

The development of ravidasvir offers insights into how regional collaboration and targeted investment can lead to affordable medical innovations, adding to a growing playbook of strategies for improving access to therapeutics and diagnostics in the Global South. If these countries agree to act collectively, they can likely repeat this success for a wide range of neglected and non-communicable diseases – and take ownership of a process long dominated by the Global North. – Project Syndicate

• Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan is Malaysia's Director-General of Health.

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Detained Pakistan activist launches hunger strike

Detained activist Mahrang Baloch, one of the leading campaigners for Pakistan's Baloch minority, has launched a hunger strike along with other detainees, her sister told AFP yesterday.

Mahrang Baloch, 32, was arrested last month on charges of terrorism, sedition and murder.

In her native Balochistan, an impoverished province that borders Afghanistan and Iran, security forces are battling a growing insurgency.

Rights groups say the violence has been countered with a severe crackdown that has swept up innocent people.

Mahrang's hunger strike "is aimed at denouncing the misconduct of the police and the failure of the justice system to protect... prisoners", her younger sister, Nadia Baloch, said.

Nadia said the hunger strike was launched on Thursday after the attempted "abduction" of one of the Baloch detainees.

Mahrang's organisation, the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), said the inmate was beaten by security officials and taken from the prison to an unknown location.

A security official said the detainee was moved to another prison and denied any mistreatment.

The BYC said four other detained Baloch activists have joined the hunger strike.

"All of them are peaceful political workers, imprisoned for raising their voices... their only 'crime' is organising peacefully in an environment saturated with state terror and violence," the group said.

Activists say in the crackdown against militancy in the region authorities have harassed and carried out extrajudicial killings of Baloch civilians.

Pakistani authorities reject the "baseless allegations".

A dozen UN experts called on Pakistan in March to immediately release Baloch rights defenders, including Mahrang, and to end the repression of their peaceful protests.

UN special rapporteur for human rights defenders Mary Lawlor said she was "disturbed by reports of further mistreatment in prison".

The judiciary has declined to rule on Mahrang's detention, effectively halting any appeal and placing the matter solely in the hands of the provincial government. - **AFP**

Zelensky insists Crimea 'belongs' to Ukraine, 'position unchanged'

AFP/Reuters
Kyiv/Moscow

President Volodymyr Zelensky insisted yesterday that Crimea belongs to Ukraine and that his position had not changed after statements by US President Donald Trump questioning the future status of the peninsula, annexed by Russia in 2014.

Trump has criticised Zelensky for not agreeing to cede the Black Sea peninsula - seized by Russia and internationally recognised as Ukraine - as part of a potential deal to end the war.

"Our position is unchanged: only the Ukrainian people have the right to decide which territories are Ukrainian. The constitution of Ukraine says that all the temporarily occupied territories... belong to Ukraine, to the Ukrainian people," Zelensky told reporters in Kyiv. "Ukraine will not legally recognise any temporarily occupied territories."

"This is not our property, not my property. This is the property of the Ukrainian people who exist today, who will be born for generations to come, who will contribute to the development of our country," he said, referring to territory, including Crimea, seized by Moscow.

Trump has said that Ukraine "lost" Crimea "years ago" and that Kyiv did not fight for Crimea in 2014.

"I agree with President Trump that Ukraine does not have enough weapons to regain control of the Crimean peninsula with weapons," Zelensky said.

Russia annexed Crimea after a pro-EU revolution in Kyiv and backed pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin has blamed Ukraine for a car bomb that killed a senior Russian military officer near Moscow yesterday, hours before Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff was due to meet President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

There was no official comment from Kyiv on the death of 59-year-old Yaroslav Moskalik, the latest in a series of Russian



Zelensky speaks to the press yesterday near a destroyed residential building following a Russian missile attack in Kyiv. - **AFP**

military officers and pro-war figures to be assassinated since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Witkoff met Putin to discuss US proposals for ending the war, now well into its fourth year.

"The Kyiv regime once again simply shows its true nature. The Kyiv regime continues to be involved in terrorist activity on the territory of our country," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a state TV reporter. "It shows once again that, despite the peace talks, we must be on guard and understand the nature of this regime."

Ukraine's SBU intelligence service did not respond to a request for comment on the killing of Moskalik, who was deputy head of the Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces.

That position would have given him an important role in planning Russian military operations, including in Ukraine.

State media said he held the rank of lieutenant-general.

The body of a man lay on the pavement outside the entrance to an apartment building in the town of Balashikha, east of Moscow, near a burnt-out car.

"The explosion occurred as a result of the

detonation of a homemade explosive device filled with destructive elements," investigators said in a statement.

Ukraine's SBU killed Lieutenant-General Igor Kirillov in a similar manner last December.

Trump's Ukraine envoy, General Keith Kellogg, said that attack violated the rules of warfare.

Russian war bloggers described Moskalik as a rising star.

He had participated in several high-level Russian delegations that have met Western officials to try to negotiate a settlement to the conflict in Ukraine.

He also dealt with Syria, presenting a report on military-technical co-operation in Africa and the Middle East at a security forum in Moscow in 2021.

Rybar, a Russian war blogger with more than 1.2mn subscribers on Telegram, said that Moskalik was viewed as "one of the most intelligent and demanding officers" in his directorate.

The blogger said Moskalik was being considered to serve as head of the National Defence Management Centre, the supreme command and control centre of the Russian Armed Forces, due to his "systematic approach and thoughtfulness".

UN agency trims support for Ukrainians fleeing frontline

The United Nations' refugee agency has had to reduce support for newly displaced people in Ukraine as frontline attacks intensify, it said yesterday, blaming the suspension of US aid and broader donor cuts.

Across the world, humanitarian agencies are grappling with the impact of US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw foreign aid.

"Some of the programmes that we previously used to implement with the generous support of US funding are on hold," Karolina Lindholm Billing, UNHCR Representative in Ukraine told reporters via a videolink. They include psycho-social support, which is needed on a huge scale, emergency shelter material and cash assistance, the agency said.

The loss of US aid, which last year accounted for 40% of UNHCR funding, has had the most impact, but other Western donors have also retreated as they prioritise defence spending. As a result, the agency said its appeal for \$3.32bn to support 8.2mn people in Ukraine was only 25% funded.

"We had to reduce the number of people we are prioritising," Billing said, urging donors to provide funding.

Since January, almost 9,000 people fleeing heavy shelling in Ukraine have passed through UNHCR's transit centres in Pavlohrad and Sumy, where it is providing clothes, hygiene kits, and legal and psycho-social support.

"They have arrived with little or no belongings and deeply traumatised," Billing added. More than 200,000 people have been evacuated or displaced from frontline areas between August last year and March, according to the agency.

Several regions, including the Kyiv area, and cities of Kharkiv and Pavlohrad have come under attack in recent days, at a critical moment in Russia's war in Ukraine, as Trump strives to achieve his pledge of a rapid peace deal. - **Reuters**

Four Pakistani troops killed in blast

Four paramilitary troops were killed in a blast in western Pakistan yesterday, the interior minister said, as security forces battle a surge in separatist violence.

Two police officers who asked not to be named told AFP that security vehicles hit a roadside improvised bomb early in Margat Chowki, around 30km (19 miles) from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province.

"The sacrifices of FC (border) soldiers for peace in Balochistan will always be remembered," Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said, adding that four people were killed.

Violence has surged in Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, in recent years as separatist militant groups step up their fight against the state that

they accuse of exploiting the region's natural resources.

Three civilians were killed in a separate roadside blast on a highway in Kalat on Thursday evening.

Jamil Baloch, a senior district government official, said that "authorities believe the terrorists had a different target, but the vehicle inadvertently came in the way". - **AFP**

More than 100,000 pay respects to Pope Francis

Reuters/AFP
Vatican City

More than 100,000 mourners filed into St Peter's Basilica yesterday to pay their respects to Pope Francis, viewing his open coffin in the final visiting hours ahead of his funeral today.

Soon after 7pm (1700 GMT) the Vatican ended a TV broadcast of the visits that had been running nearly continuously, ahead of a private ceremony to seal his casket.

As Italian and Vatican police prepared to close the long queue through the central nave of the church, the last visitors shuffled in.

The 88-year-old Pope, who had led the Church since 2013, died on Monday in his rooms at the Vatican's Santa Marta guesthouse after suffering a stroke as he was recuperating from weeks of pneumonia.

About 250,000 people from all over the world have lined up to say farewell since his body was brought to St Peter's on Wednesday to lie in state, the Vatican said.

Among the last visitors were French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte, who stood together at the side of the casket for a few moments.

Long queues snaked around St Peter's Square and the surrounding roads all day yesterday.

Some waited hours for the chance to spend a few minutes inside the basilica and pay their respects.

"It's a very strong feeling (to be here)," said Patricio Castriota, a visitor from Argentina, the Pope's homeland. "This farewell was very sad, but I thank God that I was able to see him."

"He's the only Pope we've had who came from South America, a Pope who had many good intentions for the Catholic Church," said Castriota. "He cleaned up (a lot) of the bad, maybe not all of it, but he tried."

Pope Francis was the first Pontiff from the Americas and was known for an unusually charming, and even humorous, demeanour.

However, his 12-year papacy was sometimes turbulent, with Pope Francis seeking to overhaul a divided institution but battling with tra-



St Peter's Basilica of the Vatican is seen at dusk yesterday. - **AFP**

ditionalists who opposed his many changes.

"He humanised the church, without desacralising it," said Cardinal Francois-Xavier Bussillo, who leads the church on the French island of Corsica.

A conclave to choose a new pontiff is unlikely to start before May 6.

In the meantime, the world's Catholic cardinals have assumed temporary control of the 1.4bn-member Roman Catholic Church.

Cardinals present in Rome are convening almost daily, primarily to discuss logistical matters, in what is called a "general congregation".

A total of 149 of the world's 252 cardinals were present for the meeting yesterday morning, the Vatican said, with dozens more expected to arrive through the rest of the day.

The private ceremony to seal Pope Francis's coffin will be led by eight Catholic cardinals, including a US prelate who has faced criticism over his handling of sexual abuse cases.

Among those also present will be the late Pope's secretaries.

The Vatican revealed yesterday that it is expecting some 160 foreign delegations to attend the funeral today, among them dozens of world

leaders including US President Donald Trump and 10 reigning monarchs.

There had been speculation that foreign leaders might have diplomatic meetings on the sidelines of the funeral to discuss the war in Ukraine, but the Elysee Palace said yesterday that Macron would not host any such meetings.

Trump was due to spend only about 15 hours in Rome, leaving directly after the funeral.

Authorities began ramping up security ahead of the ceremony, with snipers on rooftops, drones watching from the sky and an army device readied to neutralise hostile flying objects.

The heart of Rome is expected to be closed to traffic to allow a funeral motorcade carrying the Pope's remains to make its way slowly to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (St Mary Major), where Pope Francis, in a break from tradition, asked to be buried instead of St Peter's Basilica.

Crowds are expected along the route, which will pass by many of Rome's famed monuments, including the Colosseum.

The Pope's tomb will be in a niche in a sidfre aisle of the basilica, with just the word "Franciscus", his name in Latin, engraved on the marble.

Clashes at far-right protest mar Portugal's Revolution Day

Portuguese riot police detained several ultra-right protesters yesterday after clashes in downtown Lisbon marred celebrations of the 51st anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, which ended a fascist dictatorship.

Extreme-right groups such as Ergue-Te (Rise Up), Habeas Corpus and Grupo 1143 had called a rally, which city authorities banned, to protest ahead of next month's parliamentary election against growing numbers of immigrants in the country.

A few dozen protesters showed up at the Square of Tolerance, which is popular with immigrants from Africa and Asia, just off the Avenida da Liberdade thoroughfare where hundreds of thousands traditionally gather for the Carnation Revolution.

They soon became embroiled in pushing and shoving with antifascist activists, leading police to intervene and use batons, and arresting a number of people.

Around 1.5mn migrants live in Portugal, about triple the number a decade ago. - **Reuters**

Bid by parliament in Kosovo to elect Speaker fails for the sixth time

AFP/Reuters
Pristina

The election of the new parliamentary Speaker in Kosovo was blocked yesterday for the sixth time by the opposition, with parties failing to agree on a candidate - delaying the formation of the government stemming from the February 9 elections.

Kosovo has been in political deadlock for two and a half months, as the former ruling Vetevendosje ("Self-Determination") party (VV) of outgoing Prime Minister Albin Kurti - which won 48 out of 120 seats - has failed to secure a majority to form a government.

VV's candidate for parliamentary Speaker, Albulena Haxhiu, received 57 of the minimum 61 votes needed in favour.

"Based on the voting results, the candidate for Speaker does not pass," announced Avni Dzhari, who is presiding over the session because he is the eldest MP.

Following the vote, the opposition accused VV of deliberately blocking the formation of institutions by not proposing moderate party representatives but the most loyal Kurti's associates. They also reaffirmed their re-

fusal to support Haxhiu in the next session.

VV, on the other hand, shifted the blame to the opposition, accusing them of discriminatory treatment towards Haxhiu and promotion of gender inequality.

The Assembly has been in session since April 15.

The Constitution does not set any deadline for its conclusion but instead states that the session cannot end without the election of the president, three vice-presidents and parliamentary bodies.

Theoretically, this means that the process could last indefinitely.

The next session is scheduled for tomorrow.

In the February 9 parliamentary election, during an acrimonious campaign, Prime Minister Kurti called the opposition "animals" and "thieves".

Opposition parties, who have said they will not enter a coalition with Vetevendosje, partly blame Kurti for escalating the tensions in the country's Serb-majority north that have hobbled Kosovo's chances of joining the EU and triggered sanctions from the bloc.

The fractured political scene could result in a snap election later this year if no government can be formed.

Denmark slams Greenland misinformation campaign

The Danish intelligence agency has accused Russia of being behind a disinformation campaign which falsely claimed that a Danish lawmaker was seeking Russian aid to prevent the United States from annexing Greenland.

Social media posts circulated in January claimed that the Danish member of parliament Karsten Hønge wanted to prevent Denmark's autonomous territory of Greenland from breaking free from Denmark and said his country should ask Russia for help.

The posts included a doctored image showing a Facebook post by Hønge, which the politician quickly denounced as "fake news" in a post to X.

The Danish Defence Intelligence Service (FE) said yesterday that in their assessment Russia was behind the campaign.

"The fake post originally came from an influencer who has previously promoted Russia's agenda in Ukraine," FE said.

It added that it had received information from the French anti-disinformation authority, Viginum, that the influencer "is part of an influence network acting on behalf of the Russian state".

FE said the campaign "should be viewed as part of the ongoing influence operation in which Russia is trying to create a rift in the transatlantic relationship and undermine Western support for Ukraine".

It added that it was less likely that the campaign was intended to affect the outcome of the Greenlandic election held in March.

US President Donald Trump has expressed his ambitions to control Greenland, insisting Washington needs control of it for security reasons. - **AFP**



Snapshots from the Senyar festival yesterday.



Winning teams of 11th Senyar Festival crowned at Katara

The top 10 winning teams in the 11th edition of the Senyar Festival were crowned yesterday at Katara Cultural Village by general manager Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti along with the winners of the “Biggest Fish” competition.

The closing ceremony was attended by 54 teams from Group A and Group B who participated in the Hadag and Laffah championships, alongside a large audience of Qataris and maritime heritage enthusiasts.

The southern seafront of Katara was alive with the arrival of the competing teams, accompanied by traditional sea chants, folk songs, the Qatari Arda dance, and enthusiastic public participation.

Locals welcomed the captains and sailors with flower petals, while young girls in traditional attire added to the celebratory atmosphere with the fragrance of musk.

In Group A, Team Suhail claimed first place for the second consecutive year with a total of 410 points, with team captain Mohamed Shaheen al-Dosari receiving a prize of QR150,000.

Team Al-Hadid secured second place with 405 points, earning captain Hamad Youssef al-Obaidly a prize of QR100,000.

In third place was Team Al-Midan with 401 points, whose captain Issa Abdulrahman Saleh received QR80,000.

In the “Biggest Fish” competition, due to a tie in fish weight, the first and second place winners were determined by a draw.

Team Al-Midan won first place with a 10.45kg Hamour fish, and captain Issa Abdulrahman Saleh received QR30,000.

Al-Mufair took the second place with a 10.45kg kingfish, and Captain Saif Mohamed



al-Fadala received QR20,000.

The third place went to Shatt al-Arab with a 10kg Hamour, and captain Hassan Abdulrazzaq al-Sayyid received QR10,000.

Prof Dr al-Sulaiti expressed his delight at the vibrant atmosphere of Senyar Festival 2025, which celebrated the authenticity of Qatar’s maritime heritage.

He noted that since its inception, the festival has become a significant annual event on the country’s cultural calendar, honouring the legacy of the forefathers whose lives were intertwined with the sea.

Jihad al-Jaidah, chairman of the Senyar Festival’s Judging Committee, also expressed his satisfaction with the level of competition and the strong sportsmanship demonstrated by all teams.

He stressed that both group competitions concluded successfully, with no notable incidents, and announced that 21 teams in total, including the top 10 from each group and the winner of the “Biggest Fish” contest, qualified for the elite Balmasan Championship, set to begin on Tuesday on Halul Island, located 90km east of Doha, and continue over Wednesday and Thursday, concluding with the grand final event on Katara’s southern beach on Friday.



The ‘LatinoAmericano’ exhibition at the NMoQ offers a rich and wide-ranging survey of Latin American art from 1900 to the present day. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

NMoQ showcases Latin American art through the lens of nature, identity, and resistance

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

From depictions of lush landscapes to stark commentary on environmental degradation, the “LatinoAmericano” exhibition at the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) offers a powerful look at Latin American artists’ engagement with nature and their visions for the planet’s future.

The “LatinoAmericano: Modern and Contemporary Art from Malba and Eduardo Costantini Collections” is a collaboration between Qatar Museums (QM) and the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (Malba).

Featuring around 170 works by more than 100 pioneering and contemporary artists from across Latin America, the exhibition will be on view until July 19.

According to the QM, one prominent theme of this exhibition is the interconnectedness of all living things, reflecting indigenous ecological beliefs.

Modern Latin American artists, breaking free from the “colonial gaze” that shaped earlier representations of the Americas, sought to capture the exuberance and diversity of their environments.

Cuban artist Wifredo Lam, for example, incorporates imagery from sug-

arcane, palm leaves, and the Caribbean light, merging plant, animal, and human qualities to celebrate his Afro-Cuban heritage.

“Everything is interconnected; a living organism” is the overarching theme portrayed by many artists.

Sheroanawe Hakhihiwe stresses this “communal ecological belief system”, while Hakhihiwe and Mogaje Guihu (Abel Rodriguez) create touching records of their environments, combining botanical knowledge with ancestral practices.

The exhibition, the QM noted, also confronts the pressing issue of environmental degradation.

Nicolas Garcia Urriburu’s colourised interventions on water in the mid-1960s drew attention to global water pollution, while Monica Giron focuses on the transformations of the environment and the “fluid relationship between the planet and the self”.

The QM pointed out that “LatinoAmericano” highlights the evolution of Latin American art, including the radical shifts in visual language that occurred in the second half of the 20th century.

Artists like Martin Blaszkowski, Juan Mele, and Diyi Laan challenged traditional artistic disciplines.

Lygia Clark’s interactive *Bichos* series and the kinetic art of Gregorio Vardanega,

Julio Le Parc, and Martha Boto further expanded viewer engagement, offering participatory experiences.

The exhibition also digs into the role of art as a tool for revolution and social change.

The Mexican Revolution inspired artists like David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera to create large-scale murals focused on revolutionary struggles and indigenous cultures.

Similarly, artists during the dictatorships of the 1960s and 70s, like Cildo Meireles and Eugenio Dittborn, used their art to protest oppression and injustice.

According to the QM, “LatinoAmericano” offers a rich and multifaceted exploration of Latin American art, highlighting its engagement with pressing social and environmental issues, its innovative artistic practices, and its powerful voice in shaping identity and driving change.

This is the first major exhibition in the West Asia and North Africa region dedicated to Latin America’s modern and contemporary art.

The QM said that “LatinoAmericano” is organised into six thematic sections, and underlines a unique cultural exchange between Qatar and Latin America.

It serves as a centrepiece of this year’s Qatar-Argentina and Chile 2025 Year of Culture.

