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Amir, Nigerian President discuss boosting ties

تميم بن حمد
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I am pleased to visit Nigeria and we in Qatar look forward to strengthening our relations of cooperation and friendship with this important African country and one of the most important economic forces in the continent. I thank H E President Muhammadu Buhari for his hospitality.

QNA/ABUJA

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who arrived on a state visit to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, held official talks session with the President, Muhammadu Buhari, at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa in Abuja.

They discussed bilateral relations and the prospects for developing them in all fields especially in the economic, investment, energy, agriculture and infrastructure fields. During the session they also exchanged views and stances of both countries on all regional and international developments.

The session was attended by Their Excellencies members of the official delegation accompanying H H the Amir. From the Nigerian side, the session was attended by a number of Their Excellencies the ministers and senior officials.

H H the Amir was accorded an official reception ceremony upon his arrival to the presidential Villa. Earlier, upon arrival at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, H H the Amir and the accompanying delegation were received by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Geoffrey Oyeamea; Minister of the



Federal Capital Territory Abuja Muhammad Bello; Ambassador of Qatar to Nigeria, Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Mohannadi and members of the Qatari Embassy.

During the reception, H H the Amir received an honorary key of the capital Abuja from the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory as a welcome gift, followed by a welcome performance for

His Highness done by a folkloric Nigerian group. H H the Amir attended a luncheon banquet hosted by the President of Nigeria in honour of His Highness and the accompanying

delegation at Aso Rock Presidential Villa. The banquet was attended by a number of Their Excellencies distinguished ministers and senior Nigerian officials. ➔P2



LEFT: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is received by the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa in Abuja, yesterday. ABOVE: H H the Amir is being presented with an honorary key of the capital Abuja by the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

Crown and QIA acquire iconic retail properties in New York

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Crown Acquisitions (Crown) and Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) announced a co-investment deal to acquire prime retail properties in Fifth Avenue and Times Square in New York City.

Crown Acquisitions and QIA have co-invested to acquire a 24 percent stake each in a Vornado Realty Trust portfolio of prime retail properties, estimated at \$5.6bn and more than 910,000 sq ft, containing many of New York City's high end shopping and most iconic leisure

destinations. Vornado Realty Trust is one of the largest owners and managers of street retail properties in Manhattan. On Times Square, the portfolio of assets include one of New York's most recognizable retail blocks and home to brands including MAC, Polo, Forever 21, and Disney, at 1540 Broadway, and the retail space at one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, the Marriott Marquis at 1535 Broadway.

The world famous Fifth Avenue, New York City, has been synonymous with luxury retailing and home to many of the world's leading brands for

more than a century. The portfolio of assets acquired includes flagship brands and famous stores such as Victoria's Secret, Salvatore Ferragamo, Massimo Dutti, Harry Winston, and the St. Regis Hotel on Fifth Avenue, respectively.

Commenting on the announcement of the deal, Haim Chera, Principal of Crown Acquisitions, stated: "Crown Acquisitions looks forward to this long-term and successful partnership with QIA, and we are delighted that they share our vision for this exclusive and high-class portfolio." ➔P3

Vodafone makes 5G available in Qatar homes

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Vodafone Qatar continues its leadership in driving digital innovation with it making 5G technology commercially available with the launch of its latest innovation- Vodafone GigaHome- the new home Internet solution.

Vodafone GigaHome covers every size house with guaranteed Wi-Fi in every room using a state of the art Giga-Wi-Fi Hub powered by Vodafone's GigaNet network including Fibre and 5G. Alongside this, customers can enjoy free lifestyle offers including Entertainer and WAVO by OSN which provides live channels from across the globe, TV shows and on-



demand movies.

With Vodafone GigaHome there are no installation fees, no charges for moving to a new house and seamless installation. This latest offering follows Vodafone's announcement last month that it doubled the speed

of all its existing customers' home fibre internet for free.

Commenting on their latest launch, Vodafone Qatar's Chief Operating Officer, Diego Camberos, said: "We're delighted to make 5G available in homes of Qatar to meet our customers' needs and lifestyle requirements. GigaHome Wi-Fi solves the fact that many families are experiencing inconsistent internet due to poor Wi-Fi coverage in their homes." The launch of Vodafone GigaHome is another important milestone in our clear strategy to lead digital innovation in Qatar. For more than mobile, we have been rolling out a full spectrum of digital solutions for personal and business use, all supported by our world-class network - GigaNet," added Camberos.

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Amir, Nigerian President discuss boosting ties



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, held a bilateral meeting during which they discussed aspects of promoting bilateral relations and developing areas of cooperation in various fields. During the meeting, which was held at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa, H H the Amir and the President discussed a number of issues of common concern. Earlier, upon arrival at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja for a state visit to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H H the Amir and the accompanying delegation were received by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Geoffrey Onyeama, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Muhammad Bello, the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Nigeria, Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Mohannadi, and members of the Qatari Embassy.



FROM PAGE 1 H H the Amir sent a cable to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in which H H the Amir expressed sincere thanks and appreciation to the President and the friendly people of Nigeria for the warm welcome, hospitality and honour accorded to His Highness and the accompanying delegation during the visit.

H H the Amir left the capital Abuja yesterday evening, concluding a state visit to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. H H the Amir and the accompanying delegation were seen off upon departure at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Geoffrey Onyeama; the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Nigeria, Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Mohannadi, and members of the Qatari Embassy.

H H the Amir sent a cable to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in which H H the Amir expressed sincere

thanks and appreciation to the President and the friendly people of Nigeria for the warm welcome, hospitality and honour accorded to His Highness and the accompanying delegation during the visit which provided an opportunity to meet with the President and exchange views on issues of mutual concern and

means of promoting the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries in various fields for the good and interest of the two people.

H H the Amir wished the President of Nigeria good health and happiness and the Nigerian people further development and prosperity.

Inspection campaign on outlets ahead of Ramadan

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME) represented by the municipal health monitoring sections has intensified inspection campaigns on food outlets to ensure they are complying to the health rules ahead of the holy month of Ramadan.

The inspectors check food items, storage facility, transportation process and food preparation to ensure the health and safety of the consumers.

The Health Monitoring Department Al Daayen Municipal Municipality carried out an inspection campaign on a number of eateries offering traditional foods (Al Maibak Al Shabi) in preparation of Ramadan.

Samples of cooked foods were taken and sent to the laboratory to check whether they were fit for human consumption. The department also

inspected a number of new eateries for traditional foods which are expected to start business by the beginning of Ramadan.

Meanwhile, for the second day in a row, the Health Monitoring Department of Doha Municipality carried out inspection campaign on food outlets ahead of Ramadan.

On Monday, the inspectors visited food outlets in Al Saad and Al Nasr areas.

They caught three eateries for violating law for regulating foodstuffs

The Doha Municipality explained that inspection campaigns will continue during the coming period to cover all areas in Doha until the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

The Municipality stressed that necessary legal actions will be taken against the erring outlets urging the consumers to inform the Ministry on hotline No 184 if they come across any violation.

Ehsan honours winners of Quran recitation competition

QNA
DOHA

The Center for Empowerment and Elderly Care (Ehsan), one of the centres of Qatar Foundation for Social Work, honoured the winners of its annual competition for Holy Quran recitation.

The sixth season of the competition titled 'Recite the Verses to Reach Your Goals' is aimed at elderly males and females who are over the age of 60 years old. It is held in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

The Executive Director of Ehsan centre, Mubarak bin Abdulaziz Al Khalifa, highlighted the role of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work in promoting social work and supporting all programs that serve community groups in Qatar in general and the elderly in particular.

Al Khalifa added that the continuation of this competition reflects its success and is a

The sixth season of the competition titled 'Recite the Verses to Reach Your Goals' is aimed at elderly males and females who are over the age of 60 years old. It is held in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

motivation for its development in aim to help the elderly improve skills and capabilities to learn, read and recite the Holy Quran.

Al Khalifa said there was a high rate of participation with 327 senior citizens in Qatar from both genders registered in the sixth edition. He expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs for its support and all those who contributed to the

success of the competition.

The adviser to the Islamic network "Islam Web" at the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs, Sheikh Dr Ahmed Al Farjani, expressed thanks to Ehsan centre for its interest in the elderly and its care for them, including organising this competition.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the Executive Director of Ehsan, Mubarak bin Abdulaziz Al Khalifa, said that the idea of the contest is in the service of older parents especially at this age, where the best they can do is investing their time in the Holy Quran and remembering many things, especially religious ones.

Al Khalifa reviewed the various stages of the contest from the registration, submission and arbitration until the announcement of its results and the honouring of the winners and participants, noting that the

contest includes three rounds.

Al Khalifa also talked about the centre's specialties, its functions and the services it provides for the elderly, like the daycare, the psychological and social care, the nursing, the physical therapy and other programs and activities and competitions targeting also young people. He noted in a related context that the centre will organise next week the seventh edition of the competition for scientific research for secondary school students in about 23 schools, in which participants will present researches related to the elderly.

The organisation of this contest comes from the importance of intellectual care of the elderly, especially since many of them need targeted programmes to occupy their time, and as memorising the Holy Quran is of great importance in the life of Muslim, and because it organises life and makes it valuable.

OFFICIAL NEWS

Amir congratulates President-elect of Ukraine

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to Volodymyr Zelensky on the occasion of winning the presidential elections in Ukraine. QNA

PM congratulates Mali counterpart

DOHA: Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani yesterday sent a cable of congratulations to Dr Boubou Cisse, on the occasion of his appointment as Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, wishing him every success in his duties. QNA

Minister of Justice meets President of Morocco's NCIIH

DOHA: Minister of Justice and Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs H E Dr Issa bin Saad Al Jafali Al Nuaimi met yesterday with the President of the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law (NCIIH), at the Kingdom of Morocco, Dr Farida El Khamlich, and her accompanying delegation. During the meeting they reviewed cooperation fields between the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law of the Ministry of Justice and its Moroccan counterpart. They also discussed the means to boost and develop cooperation in various areas of international humanitarian law especially in exchanging expertise between both national committees. The meeting was attended by President of the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law Sultan bin Abdullah Al Suwaidi. QNA

Ministry of Defence announces air training in Ras Matbakh

DOHA: The Directorate of Moral Guidance of the Ministry of Defence announced that the Armed Forces will carry out air training in Ras Matbakh area from 6am to 12 noon on April 28. The Directorate called on those who frequent that area to exercise caution for their own safety. QNA

Symposium on natural disasters today

DOHA: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of International Cooperation will organise today a symposium on "responding to natural disasters", especially human-made ones. The symposium will focus on disasters caused by wars in general and in the Arab world in particular. The event, to be moderated by Director of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry, Ambassador Tariq bin Ali Al Ansari, will be attended by a number of distinguished officials from the Ministry. The symposium, to be held in the Dr Hassan Al Mohannadi Hall at the Ministry, will be attended by relevant institutions and a number of people interested in the field of disaster response. QNA

MME launches service on veterinary certificate

DOHA: The Ministry of Municipality and Environment has launched a new service to issue veterinary certificate online through its website, www.mme.gov.qa. The Ministry stressed that the deadline for obtaining veterinary certificates through paper transactions will be on April 30, 2019, and this service will be available only on Ministry's website after this date.

Qatar tops region in coverage of quality vaccines

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Director of the Public Health Department at the Ministry of Public Health (MPH), Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Hamad Al Thani (pictured), said that Qatar tops the countries of the region in providing the highest coverage of safe and high quality vaccines, exceeding 95 percent.

Speaking at a press briefing on the sidelines of a workshop organized by the Ministry yesterday to review the activities of the World Immunization Day, the Director of the Public Health Department said that the celebration of World Immunization Week aims to encourage the people of Qatar to get the necessary vaccinations at the specified times to ensure protection against infectious diseases, stressing that the State of Qatar is keen to deliver vaccinations to all citizens and residents to give them immunity for a long healthy life and wellness of the Qatari community.

The MPH is marking the World Immunization Week from 24 to 30 April under the theme 'Protected Together: Vaccines Work', chosen by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the theme for this year's celebration. During the week, emphasis is placed on the need for further work in immunization field around the world, and on highlighting the role that can be played by all in the achievement of this work.

The MPH will organise several events and activities in

cooperation with governmental, semi-governmental and private health institutions in Qatar on the occasion of the World Immunization Week, including a workshop that was held today during which specialists from the MPH and Hamad Medical Corporation highlighted the latest development in the national vaccination program which is considered one of the best national immunization programs in the Eastern Mediterranean region as it provides a wide range of vaccines against many diseases. During the workshop, the participants in the immunization activities and events were also honoured.

The Head of the MPH's Immunization Department, Dr Soha Al Bayat, said that the Ministry, in cooperation with Hamad Medical Corporation, Primary Health Care Corporation, National Advisory Committee and all health authorities in the country, aims to emphasize the quality and safety of vaccination available in Qatar that are adopted by the World Health Organization, in addition to cooperating with Ministry partners to achieve vaccination targets.

She explained that the access to vaccinations is not limited to those in the approved schedule, but also includes vaccines for travel, study or treatment abroad, noting the need to ignore rumors about vaccinations and to receive information from official sources.



Prime Minister meets Ethiopian Minister



Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani met yesterday with the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr Ergo Tefaye, and her accompanying delegation, who are visiting the country. During the meeting, they reviewed the relations of cooperation between the two countries and means of supporting them in various fields, in addition to a number of issues of common concern.

Qatar, Gambia review joint cooperation



Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs H E Yousef bin Mohammed Al Othman Fakhro met yesterday with the Gambian Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, Badara Joof, and the accompanying delegation, who are visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed aspects of joint cooperation between the two sides and means of advancing them. The Gambian Minister also visited the Institute of Public Administration at the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs and was briefed on the training systems and programs that it provides.

High demand for dates ahead of Ramadan

SIDI MOHAMED
THE PENINSULA

As holy month of Ramadan is approaching, many commercial complexes have started preparations and to attract the faithful are offering grocery items especially dates on discounted prices.

The edible items with slashed prices include dates, sugar, cooking oil, and milk among others and the offers are attracting many consumers who prefer to buy their needs before Ramadan.

"We have witnessed many big supermarkets announcing such offers which is a very good sign. For example, the price of 5kg of sugar is now QR14 and four litre milk is being sold for QR15 and I hope to see more discount in coming days," said a resident, Assel Mohamed.

At Omani Market near the central market, the demand for Ramadan related edibles was particularly high especially for dates. A number of traders expressed satisfaction with the current demand for Ramadan items.

"For a week, there is good

demand especially from the citizens and they prefer Sagal dates. The price of this variety of dates is between QR40 to QR55 per kg. The customers also prefer Mabroom dates that is being sold for QR65 per kg," said Sreekanth, a vendor at the Omani Market.

He also added that daily his shop was selling about 20kg of dates. "We expecting more customers immediately before start of the month of Ramadan."

Other traders affirmed the same market trends adding that not only individuals but also some institution which used to host Iftar parties or tents were among the customers particularly of dates.

Qatar's date production has reached 29,000 tonnes in a year which covers 86 percent need of local market.

The Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME) is set to organise today first-of-its-kind international dates exhibition ahead of the holy month where about 150 local and international exhibitors will showcase different varieties of dates. The exhibition will continue until May 4.

Many customer appreciated



The vendors arranging dates at Omani Market in Abu Hamour, Doha yesterday. PIC: SALIM MATRAMKOT/THE PENINSULA

the abundance of local products in the markets. "Ramadan has not yet started and the market is already full of all products specially local products. We have to support these products to increase their production. The local companies are working hard to produce more fruit, vegetables

and meat and some of them produce annually more than 700 tonnes of all varieties of vegetables," said a resident Abdul Raheem.

The farms have increased their production more after the siege, and there are about 1,400 agricultural farms in Qatar; most

of them located in the northern areas. Qatar used to import nearly 98 percent of its dairy products before June 2017, and just 20 months after the blockade, Baladna Food Industries, Qatar's largest producer of fresh dairy, announced its first export of dairy products to Afghanistan.

Crown, QIA acquire iconic retail properties in New York

FROM PAGE 1

The CEO of QIA, Mansoor Al Mahmoud, said: "We are pleased to have partnered with Crown Acquisitions to acquire this portfolio of exclusive properties in one of the world's most iconic retail space."

He added: "This investment underlines QIA's ambition to substantially increase our US Investments over the coming years, and our belief in the exciting long-term possibilities offered by New York City."

QIA's investment in the portfolio is part of its broad and long-term partnership with Crown Acquisitions, and fundamental to QIA's aim of increasing its US Investments to \$45bn in the upcoming years.



Crown Acquisitions and QIA have co-invested to acquire a 24 percent stake each in a Vornado Realty Trust portfolio of prime retail properties, estimated at \$5.6bn

Shura Council's Services & Public Utilities Committee meets

QNA
DOHA

The Shura Council's Services and Public Utilities Committee held a meeting yesterday under the chairmanship of its Rapporteur Mohammed bin Mahdi Al Ahbabi.

The Committee continued to examine the request for general discussion on the terrestrial and marine environment. It also discussed a draft law amending certain provisions of Law No. 15 of

2010 on the prohibition of housing workers within family residential areas, and decided to complete its study at its next meeting. The meeting was attended by the Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs, Eng. Ahmed Mohammed Al Sada, Director of Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Municipality and Environment, Nasser bin Jassim Al Fahani, and the Legal Advisor at the Minister's Office, Dr Ahmed Abu-Mustafa.

Al Muraikhi meets member of US Congress



Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi, met yesterday with US Congress Republican Representative, Neal Dunn, who is visiting Qatar. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and means of boosting them along with enhancing cooperation and other issues of mutual interest.

Attorney-General meets Moroccan counterpart

The Attorney-General, H E Dr Ali bin Fetais Al Marri, who is currently visiting Rabat, met with the President of the Prosecutor General Office in the Kingdom of Morocco, Mohamed Abdennabaoui. During the meeting, they exchanged views on issues of mutual concern, and ways of enhancing the legal and judicial cooperation and the exchange of experiences between the two countries.



Chief of Staff meets Commander of US Air Forces Central Command



QNA DOHA
The Chief of Staff of the Qatari Armed Forces, H E Lieutenant General (Pilot) Ghanem bin

Shaheen Al Ghanem met yesterday with Commander of US Air Forces Central Command, Joseph Guastella. The meeting discussed military relations between the two sides

and ways of strengthening and developing them. It was attended by President of the International Military Cooperation Authority Brigadier General Abdulaziz Saleh Al Sulaiti.

Ahlibank sponsors Thyroid Cancer Conference

THE PENINSULA DOHA
Ahlibank, a leading Qatari-owned financial institution, has sponsored the Thyroid Cancer Conference, which was organised by the Qatar Cancer Society on April 19 and 20, 2019. The conference covered the latest developments in the treatment of thyroid cancer and increasing public awareness of cancer and ways to combat the disease. Medical professionals from the region, Europe and the USA participated in the two-day event. Ahlibank's Head of Marketing and Communication, Khaled Al Zoubi, said: "We are proud to sponsor the Thyroid Cancer Conference, a Qatar Cancer Society event. Being an



Ahlibank's Head of Marketing and Communication, Khaled Al Zoubi, receiving an appreciation award.

Integral component of the Qatari society, the Bank is cognisant of its corporate social responsibility towards the Qatari community. The conference was able to raise awareness towards the disease

and its causes and methods of treatment." Al Zoubi received an appreciation award from the organisers on behalf of Ahlibank during a gala dinner held on the sidelines of the conference.

Oud Makers Exhibition a major attraction at Katara Oud Festival

RAYNALD C RIVERA THE PENINSULA

The Oud Makers Exhibition featuring renowned luthiers is one of the main attractions at the third edition of Katara Oud Festival which witnessed a spectacular launch yesterday. Located in Building 19, the exhibition also highlights finely crafted historical Oud pieces such as the oud of legendary oud player Yorgo Bacanos, who was also a prominent composer of improvisational Ottoman classical music during his time. Manufactured in 1909 by Ilija Kanakis, this oud belongs to the collection of Mehmet Bitez, who is regarded as one of the world's leading oud performers. Eight oud makers are taking part in this year's festival including Ibrahim Skkr from Syria, Baris Karatekeli and Mustafa Farouk Turunz from Turkey, Yagoub Jassim from Kuwait, Yahya Oud, Fatemeh Tahounch Mousavi, Dimitrios Rapakousios from Greece and Yasir Salih Alawad from Iraq. A large variety of Oud instruments, with unique style and

design are displayed and offered for sale at the kiosks which have attracted Oud enthusiasts and performers who had a rare opportunity to meet and interact with makers of the instruments that they have been playing. Lectures and forums on Oud making are also being held in the venue as an important element of the festival. Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti, General Manager of Katara, officially opened the festival in a ceremony featuring a musical show attended by several dignitaries and VIP guests, in addition a large number of Oud lovers from different communities. In his speech, Al Sulaiti stressed Katara's commitment to host and support arts and culture all over the world. "The great success the previous two editions of the Oud festival witnessed obliged us to launch the third edition under the theme of 'Al Kindi', the famous Arab philosopher," he said. He added, "Al Kindi sought to establish this kind of music and here we are now in Katara trying through this four-day festival to open more doors to it as we have gathered here some



Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti, General Manager of Katara, looks at an Oud on display at the Oud Makers Exhibition. RIGHT: Leading Oud musicians perform at the opening ceremony of the third Katara Oud Festival at Katara Drama Theatre yesterday.

of the most famous Oud musicians and manufacturers in the world from 13 different countries across the globe, as our commitment to preserve and enhance this authentic cultural heritage." Mohammed Al Marzouqi, Festival Director, said the festival would feature several concerts with 12 musicians performing daily a variety of Oud melodies. He added that since Al Kindi was

born in Iraq, the festival's theme was inspired by the rich Iraqi culture and heritage. The opening ceremony also featured the screening of a documentary film on the famous Arab scholar and philosopher Yacoub bin Ishaq Al Kindi who - besides his important contributions in mathematics, chemistry and physics - played a big role in enriching traditional music.



Through the festival, Katara shows it attaches great importance to Oud, considered the most important instrument in Arabic classical music. Oud is believed to have originated in Central Asia. Some Turkish tribes had been using an instrument called Kopuz which later travelled to the Middle East and gradually transformed into the Oud, as it is known today.

From the Middle East, it later travelled to Spain through Ziryab, the legendary musician of the Arab and Islamic world. Oud is considered the "father of guitar" which originated in Spain. Oud first transformed itself to lute and later to guitar. There are different styles in playing Oud and the Gulf region has a specific and original style of its own.

Awqaf Ministry honours educational programme participants

THE PENINSULA DOHA
The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs honoured the schools and educational institutions participating in an educational programme during a ceremony held yesterday at the Sheraton Hotel Doha under the patronage of Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs H E Dr Ghalith bin Mubarak Al Kuwari. The programme 'Pursan Al Tarbiawi' aims at inculcating values in young children. Over 23,000 students participated in the programme from 388 schools and educational institutions, and over 265,000 gifts

have been distributed over the last six years. In his speech, the Director of the Department of Religious Call and Guidance at the Ministry, Malallah Al Jaber said that the programme enjoyed the patronage and attention of Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, H E Dr Ghalith bin Mubarak Al Kuwari, and it aimed at correcting behaviour, promoting good morals and developing scientific aspects. It encourages creativity and upgrades participants' skills. The Director of School Affairs Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Khalifa bin Saad Al Derham, said the Ministry supported these

activities, adding the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs was one of the most important bodies that offer valuable and interactive programmes for students. Al Derham revealed a plan for student programmes and activities for the next academic year with the Department of Religious Call and Guidance, noting that there was coordination between the Department and the Programmes and Activities section of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The Head of Programmes and Activities at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Fatima Al Obaidli, said that during past six years the programme

targeted children in kindergartens, primary schools for boys and girls, and Quran Centres, pointing out that the number of educational institutions targeted by the programme reached 388 over the past six years, including 167 for boys and the rest for girls. The honouring ceremony was attended by the Director of the Department of Religious Call and Guidance at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Malallah Al Jaber, the Director of School Affairs Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Khalifa bin Saad Al Derham, and a number of supervisors and students in schools participating in the programme.

QFFD to launch development projects worth \$20m in Guinea

THE PENINSULA/DOHA
Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) signed an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Ministry of Energy and Hydraulics of the Republic of Guinea-Conakry to finance several development projects in the rural areas of the country at an estimated total cost of \$20m. The agreement includes road infrastructure rehabilitation projects, construction of bridges and reservoirs, and digging wells. The project aims to benefit rural communities by rehabilitating several road sections with

a total of 866km of roads in 17 Provinces. In addition, a total of three bridges of 395 metres have already been constructed under this project, providing better accessibility to the local communities. This project will facilitate mobility of the population, promote economic growth and create new jobs. It will also contribute to improving the mobility of goods. In addition, the project includes the digging of 5,000 water wells and the installation of solar water pumps and water tanks in seven rural provinces.

Al Hammadi meets outgoing envoys



The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H E Dr Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi, held yesterday a farewell ceremony in honour of the Ambassadors of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the State of Qatar and the Republic of Liberia to the State of Qatar, Faizullah Kakar and John Akel Ballout Jr, respectively, on the occasion of ending their tenure in the country. A line-up of Their Excellencies, heads of diplomatic missions and bureaus accredited to the country attended the ceremony, along with the directors of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Department.

Qatar's envoy meets French official

The Ambassador of the State of Qatar to France, Sheikh Ali bin Jassim Al Thani, met with the Secretary-General of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maurice Gourdault-Montagne. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them, in addition to issues of common concern.



Travellers to sub-Saharan Africa urged to take meningitis vaccination

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Babies and young children, students, and those who travel to sub-Saharan Africa are at increased risk for bacterial meningitis, underscoring the importance of both vaccination against the disease and raising awareness of the risk factors and signs and symptoms of meningococcal meningitis, said Dr Muna Al Maslamani (pictured), Medical Director of the Communicable Disease Center.

"Bacterial meningitis can happen at any age, but infants and young children are more susceptible due to their developing immune systems. Those who spend time in community settings, like schools or college campuses, are also at increased risk because infectious diseases tend to spread where large groups of people gather. Sub-Saharan Africa is known as the meningitis belt, so travel to this region also increases an individual's risk," said Dr Al Maslamani.

Meningitis is an umbrella term for five types of the disease (serogroups of *Neisseria meningitidis* include A, B, C, W, and Y). It is an inflammation of the protective membranes covering the



brain and spinal cord and is normally caused by a bacterial or viral infection.

"Bacterial meningitis is the most serious type of meningitis and usually occurs when bacteria gets into the bloodstream and travels to the brain and spinal cord. It can lead to death or permanent disability. It is a medical emergency," said Dr Al Maslamani.

"The good news is that there is a lot we can do to protect against bacterial meningitis. Vaccination and measures like washing your hands often with soap and water and limiting contact with those infected by the disease can help protect against meningitis," she added.

Last year HMC's Communicable Disease Center administered around

200 bacterial meningitis vaccines. Dr. Al Maslamani said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a meningococcal vaccine for all children aged 2 to 18, anyone who has been exposed to meningitis during an outbreak, anyone travelling to or living where meningitis is common, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, military recruits, and individuals with certain immune system disorders or a damaged or missing spleen. Dr. Al Maslamani says for those who have not been vaccinated, it is important they speak with their healthcare provider about whether vaccination is right for them. At the very least she says it is important to understand the risk factors for the disease and common signs and symptoms.

"With prompt treatment, those with the infection can recover but there can be serious complications, such as brain damage, hearing loss, or learning disabilities. The most effective way to protect against certain types of bacterial meningitis is to complete the recommended vaccine schedule, to be aware of risk factors, and to know the signs and symptoms. Prompt diagnosis and treatment are essential," said Dr. Al Maslamani.

Ooredoo sponsors Quality Conference for information security

THE PENINSULA/DOHA

Ooredoo, the region's leading enabler of digital business innovation, announced yesterday that it will serve as the Official Telecommunications Sponsor of the 10th Quality Conference, supporting Qatar's information security to ensure secure digital transformation of organisations.

Hundreds of industry leaders are expected to attend the 10th Quality Conference, which will be held under the theme of "Quality and Protection of Information Systems." The Gulf Consultant and Quality Centre is organising the Quality Conference, which will be held today at the Sheraton Grand

Doha Resort and Convention Hotel.

In the face of a rapidly increasing number and complexity of cyber-threats, Qatar's CIOs are rapidly enhancing their information management and security systems and processes. The Quality Conference is an ideal platform for industry leaders to exchange best practices.

Security of physical and digital systems is also a major aspect of Qatar National Vision 2030, and in protecting critical national infrastructure the interconnected Internet of Things era.

Manar Khalifa Al Muradhi, Director PR and Corporate Communications at Ooredoo – said of the sponsorship: "Ooredoo returns to sponsor the Quality

Conference as a prime platform to contribute to a security-mature culture with our customers and partners incorporating information security into their digital transformation. Our business customers can rest assured that Ooredoo's Qatar Data Centre and our industry-leading security solutions can prevent, manage, and resolve cyber-threats."

During the Quality Conference, Ooredoo will present in keynotes and panel discussions on the latest trends in information security, working with the government and public sector to enhance information security regulations, and training partners on the security skills of the future.

HIA spreads 'Wings' in celebration of World Art Day

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Hamad International Airport (HIA) in celebration of the World Art Day revealed yesterday a new art piece named "Wings" by International Artists Doha (IAD) and it is sponsored by Qatar Airways.

"Wings" is installed in concourse B at the airport and is on temporary display. The inspiration behind "Wings" comes from the basic structure of an airplane wing. Standing 7 metres wide, and 2.80 metres high, the piece is filled with the diverse artistic works of 17 IAD Artists.

The main abstract outlay of Wings embraces several pieces of frames that represent each Artist's unique style. The artwork is stretched across a 20 square metres grey coloured wall made of wooden partition carrying the weight of the piece, which resembles the serene neutral colour of a safe flight.

At the backside of the "Wings" artwork, IAD Artists have provided a space for travelling passengers to interact with the public art and to express their thoughts about "travelling". Colour markers and pencils are provided next to the art piece to establish dialogue with travellers.

Abdulaziz Al Mass, Vice-President – Marketing and Corporate Communications at HIA, commented: "We are delighted to host the creative artwork of International Artists of Doha in HIA. We trust that this art piece will inspire our passengers and better define their experiences at the airport. HIA brings in a number of very dynamic and seasoned artists that contribute continuously and significantly to the development of HIA's art space and culture. We would like to thank IAD for their creative display and efforts in



Art enthusiasts enjoy "Wings", a new art piece, which was unveiled at HIA yesterday.

IAD Artists have provided a space for travelling passengers to interact with the public art and to express their thoughts about "travelling".

contributing to make the airport a unique location for arts and culture."

Willy Kempel, Austrian Ambassador to Qatar and IAD Chairman, said: "We are proud to have the opportunity to showcase our creativity in such a vibrant art space. We would like to thank HIA for recognising IAD work and celebrating World Art Day through our new public art piece, "Wings".

We hope that travellers at Hamad International Airport will find joy in our diverse artistic approaches used in the piece. We also thank Qatar Airways and in particular Akbar Al Baker, CEO of Qatar Airways, for the generous support in sponsoring this installation."

IAD have been established in 2011 by two Dutch expat artists. From the very beginning, IAD was conceptualised as a non-profit organisation open to national as well as international

artists living and working in Doha. IAD artists are engaged in expressing their vision of contemporary art contributing to the artistic scene in Qatar as well as engaging in social activities. Moreover, the group provides its members with a platform for sharing experiences in learning from one another and in interacting with other artists from around the globe. Currently the annual show-case exhibition of the group can be visited from April 5 until May 5, at the 29 Floor Gallery at the W Hotel Doha.

Hamad International Airport features a fascinating selection of art, curated in partnership with Qatar Museums.

The airport's continuous investments and effort towards arts stems from their focused vision for culture to be a central and enriching part of the passenger's travel experience and environment.

HIA has been recently ranked as the fourth 'Best Airport in the World' by SKYTRAX World Airport Awards 2019. HIA has also retained its five-star Airport status and was honoured with the title of 'Best Airport in the Middle East' for the fifth year in a row and 'Best Staff Service in the Middle East' for the fourth year in a row.

MoCI recalls Volkswagen Touareg 2019 model

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in collaboration with Q Auto, dealer of Volkswagen vehicles in Qatar, has announced the recall of

Volkswagen Touareg model of 2019 over a Malfunction in the right front shock absorber fork.

The Ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that

car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs. The Ministry will coordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out.

MCDERMOTT

قطر للبترول
Qatar Petroleum

Public Announcement

To all Ships, Fishermen and Mariners

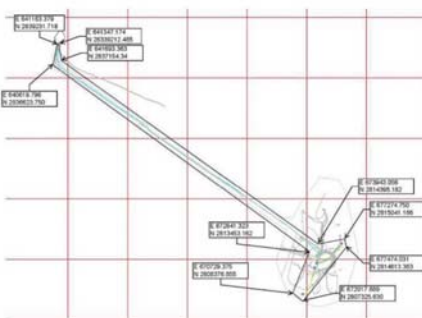
Offshore activities of "DB27 Spread" for Pipelay & structural installation activities @ BUL HANINE FIELD

From 23rd of April 2019 till 15th of November 2019

Pursuant to and under directives of the Department of Marine Regulations, Ministry of Transport and Communications, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariner and Fishermen that Qatar Petroleum (QP) intends to mobilize Derrick Barge DB 27 spread in the area bound by the coordinates shown in the chart below.

All Vessel, Mariners and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the installation locations during the whole period of operations.

Qatar Petroleum (QP) takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation, following publication of this notice.



مخطط

Qatar and Italy discuss bilateral relations



The Secretary-General of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Elisabetta Belloni, met with Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Italian Republic, Abdulaziz bin Ahmed Al Malki, in Rome yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations, ways of boosting them, and issues of common concern.

Ooredoo announces sponsorship of 2019 Education Conference

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Ooredoo will be the Official Telecommunications Sponsor for the 2019 edition of the Education Conference, set to be held on April 24-25, at Qatar National Convention Centre.

The event – organised by Qatar’s Ministry of Education – aims to bring together local, regional and international education experts to share and discuss knowledge, information, experience and research. This year’s conference will include a number of workshops held by experts from all over the world, as well as showcasing new innovations in the education sector.

For the first time this year, an exhibition will run alongside the main conference featuring several foundations and companies from Qatar and further

afeld, including Ooredoo and Qatar’s Ministry of Education. Ooredoo will have a booth at the exhibition to present relevant Ooredoo Business products and services, including: Cisco Webex Teams, which enables real-time interaction and communication to happen anywhere and anytime with a simple, secure and complete communication service including sharing of screens, whiteboards, meetings, files and conversations. Business Collaboration Solutions offering immersive video conferencing, instant messaging, intelligent voicemail, and much more. Remote Back-up as a service, which provides highly scalable data backup and storage with data protection in Qatar Data Centre for enterprises and organisations needing to store multiple applications and various workloads with minimal

investment. Safe To Net, an upcoming Ooredoo partner specialising in online safety and security and offering peace of mind to parents through its cyber safety products for mobile devices.

Speaking about the sponsorship, Manar Khalifa Al Muraikhi – Director PR and Corporate Communications at Ooredoo – said: “We’re delighted to be working with the Ministry of Education to bring this valuable event to life. Supporting education is a key focus for us as part of our corporate responsibility strategy, and we’re pleased to have this opportunity to show practical support for education in Qatar as well as showcasing the many Ooredoo Business products and services that can support education and related businesses in Qatar and further afield.”

HMC highlights importance of proactive healthcare

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Representatives from Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) recently provided basic medical screenings, health tips, and information on disease prevention to employees at Qatar Foundation and Ooredoo as part of a community engagement activity held to mark World Health Day 2019.

During separate events held at Qatar Foundation’s Penrose House and Ooredoo Tower, staff from HMC’s Communicable Disease Center, Blood Donor Center, Nutrition and Dietetics Department, Ambulance Service, National Diabetes Centers, and Tobacco Control Center, offered basic health checks to employees of both organizations and provided health awareness tips and information about nutrition, tobacco cessation, and diabetes control and prevention.

World Health Day, observed

World Health Day, observed globally every April 7, is a chance to celebrate health and remind world leaders that everyone should be able to access the healthcare they need, when and where they need it.

globally every April 7, is a chance to celebrate health and remind world leaders that everyone should be able to access the healthcare they need, when and where they need it.

“As the main provider of specialist healthcare services in Qatar, we have a crucial role to play in educating residents on how to take care of their health and advise them about how to access care at our facilities. We believe that universal health coverage means that all people have access to the high-quality health services they need,



Representatives from HMC provided basic medical screenings, health tips, and information on disease prevention to employees at Qatar Foundation and Ooredoo as part of World Health Day events.

when and where they need them, without financial hardship,” said Eymann Faran, Project Manager of Community Engagement, Corporate Communications, HMC.

“We are always keen to collaborate with other local organizations that have prioritized the

health of their employees and to engage local community members in taking charge of their health. Our participation in these community engagement activities with Qatar Foundation and Ooredoo is in line with the World Health Organization’s focus on universal

health coverage and highlights HMC’s leading role in the provision of advanced healthcare services for all residents in Qatar,” added Faran.

Commenting on the collaboration, Rashid Al Marri, Events Coordinator, Academic Bridge

Program, Qatar Foundation, said, “By collaborating with Hamad Medical Corporation on this community engagement initiative for World Health Day, we are demonstrating this core value of showing compassion to our entire community at QF. We are demonstrating that we care about their health and well-being.”

Ooredoo’s Director of Public Relations and Corporate Communications, Manar Khalifa Al Muraikhi, said that the World Health Day activities delivered by HMC were highly beneficial to staff who were able to learn about how to quit smoking and the importance of blood donation.

“As a community-focused company, Ooredoo is proud to have partnered with Hamad Medical Corporation’s Tobacco Control Center and Blood Donation Unit to highlight World Health Day, which was held to promote universal health coverage for everyone, whenever and wherever they need it,” said Al Muraikhi.



Birla Gaveliers continue to scintillate

Birla Gaveliers Saanvi Sudesh and Arshia Arora triumph as Birla Gavel Club continues domination in the Division-A, Annual Inter Gavel Club Contest 2018-19 organised at Birla Public School, Doha on April 19, 2019. Gavelier Saanvi Sudesh won two first prizes in the International and evaluation categories and Gavelier Arshia Arora grabbed two second prizes in the evaluation and humorous categories before clinching a third prize in the table topics category.

Khayr Qatarna showcased at Agro-Food Oman exhibition

QNA
MUSCAT

Khayr Qatarna initiative, which is launched by Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar, is participating in the Agro-Food Oman exhibition in Muscat.

Sahtak Awalan - Your Health First has showcased its Khayr Qatarna initiative, which teaches secondary school students about food security, agriculture and commerce. Sahtak Awalan initiative brought a booth to Agro-Food Oman to share the success of Khayr Qatarna with the international community and demonstrate the potential for engaging

the younger generation with the agriculture sector, which many countries in the region have identified as a key area for economic growth and diversification.

Chief Communications Officer at WCM-Q Nesreen Al-Rifai said that Khayr Qatarna has been greeted with great enthusiasm by students in Qatar and is raising awareness of the crucial importance of environmental issues, sustainability and food security.

Agro-Food Oman gives us the perfect platform for showcasing the success of Khayr Qatarna to the international community, so that others can learn how they too

can inspire their young people to embrace environmental sustainability, food security and healthy eating.

Launched in 2018, the innovative Khayr Qatarna initiative has installed large-scale climate-controlled greenhouses at ten secondary schools across Qatar, giving students the chance to learn how to cultivate a wide range of crops.

The three-day exhibition held under the patronage of the Sultanate of Oman’s Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth and brings together more than 150 companies and organizations from all over the world.

Heavenly Spa by Westin introduces new offerings

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Heavenly Spa by Westin has announced the launch of a new range of services and offerings. Guests will be able to explore more revitalising health and beauty treatments, active and fun sports activities, while experiencing a genuine wellness retreat.

FloatFit, a new and trendy outdoor and indoor water activity, has been implemented for the first time in Qatar. It is a high intensity and low-impact workout put in practice in swimming pools on floating boards and can be incorporated with fitness classes trained by the certified instructors of Heavenly Spa.

Also, it focuses on the core to work out and intensify muscle toning due to balancing

FloatFit, a new and trendy outdoor and indoor water activity, has been implemented for the first time in Qatar. It is a high intensity and low-impact workout put in practice in swimming pools on floating boards and can be incorporated with fitness classes trained by the certified instructors of Heavenly Spa.

oneself against water resistance. It is practiced at The Westin Pool and can accommodate up to 10 persons per session.

In addition, Oxygen Facial by Intracuticals which is considered as the latest and one of the most effective treatments throughout the world, has been introduced.

It is a gentle, non-invasive and relaxing skincare that enhances the complexion. Guests looking for a deep cleansing and result-oriented

facial will be able to experience this new addition at Heavenly Spa.

Suite Nails, a one-of-a-kind salon for manicure and pedicure, offering luxurious nail care in a private and cozy ambience. Services range from regular manicure and pedicure to nail art. Guests can enjoy having personalised treatments in a private, comfortable and nicely decorated setting.

Also, various classes have been introduced within WestinWORKOUT such as Zumba,

Heavenly Stretch, Moonlight Yoga and Aqua Gym. Sessions are thoughtfully designed and planned to create more interaction to uplift the body and mind.

Sibille Buchholzer-Juen, Director of Spa & Recreation said: “As Heavenly Spa, we are thrilled to bring these new concepts that really match with the current trends in the market. It is a great achievement for us to integrate such offerings to keep up the pace of new trends and respond to our guests’ demand.

We strongly believe that our members will be able to find everything they look for in terms of health and beauty and experience wellness with each aspect at its best in an exceptional ambience.”

She added: “Our team have been trained and certified and



Westin Doha spa room.

are ready to provide the most active and engaging classes and restorative treatments, making sure that guests are happy and revived after the service they receive.”

Heavenly Spa is located on the Mezzanine Floor at The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa and it is operational from 6am till

10pm every day.

Different sports activities take place within WestinWORKOUT classes such as HIIT, Circuit Training, Heavenly Stretch, Zumba and Aqua Gym.

For more details, please contact at +974 4492 1682 / <https://www.heavenlyspadoha.com/>

New protests in Sudan to pressure military

AP
 KHARTOUM, SUDAN

Sudanese activists were holding nationwide protests yesterday to press the military to hand over power to a civilian authority after the removal of President Omar Al Bashir earlier this month.

Railway workers and other protesters travelled by train from Atbara, the northern transport hub where the uprising began in December, to the capital, Khartoum, where they were welcomed by cheering crowds.

They joined thousands of people gathered outside the military headquarters, where the protesters have held a sit-in since April 6.

Thousands of people poured into the streets to join marches and sit-ins in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman and in the provinces of Kassala and South Kordofan.

Al Bashir ruled Sudan for 30 years. The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), a group of private unions, now demands a full and immediate transfer of power to a civilian council. The SPA said security

Railway workers and other protesters travelled by train from Atbara, the northern transport hub where the uprising began in December, to the capital, Khartoum, where they were welcomed by cheering crowds.

forces attempted to break up their gathering outside the military complex and that protesters saw bulldozers moving toward the sit-in. They called for fortifying the barricades around the sit-in.

The SPA suspended talks with the military over the weekend after the military council said it was consulting all of Sudan's political forces on a path forward. The protesters accuse the council of failing to make a clean break with Al Bashir's regime and of trying to marginalise the SPA by depicting it as one of many political factions.

The SPA says the head of

the military council's political committee and its chief negotiator, Lt. Gen. Omar Zain Al Abidin, was the head of Al Bashir's party within the military and "is trying to bring back the deposed regime."

The protesters also say the military council has yet to recognise the Forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change – a coalition led by the SPA and including other groups – as their representative.

The military council has said it is in talks with all political parties to name a prime minister and civilian government to run the country for two years.

The SPA has instead called for the formation of a legislative council – in which at least 40 percent of the membership would be women – to draft laws and oversee a Cabinet of technocrats until a new constitution is written. The SPA plans to announce its own civilian transitional council during mass rallies tomorrow.

Sudan's protesters have explicitly rejected what they call the "Egypt scenario," referring to that country's 2011 uprising and its aftermath.



A train carrying protesters from Atbara approaches to a station as part of a symbolic gesture of support for demonstrators camped at a sit-in outside the Defence Ministry compound in Khartoum yesterday.

Military given three months for reforms

REUTERS
 CAIRO

African leaders meeting in Cairo yesterday agreed to give Sudan's ruling Military Council three months to implement democratic reforms amid pressure for a quick handover of power to civilians.

The decision extends a 15-day deadline set by the African Union last week for Sudan's Transitional Military Council (TMC) to hand

over power to civilians or to be suspended from the grouping.

Any suspension of Sudan's AU membership could affect the TMC's efforts to win international recognition as the country's legitimate rulers during an interim period of up to two years, and thus delay any aid to the country that has been trying to cope with a dire economic crisis.

The TMC has been under pressure from demonstrators to

hand power rapidly to civilians since the military ousted Bashir following months of protests against his 30 years in office.

At the summit, attended by several African heads of state, it was said that the meeting agreed on the need to deal with the situation in Sudan by working to "quickly restore the constitutional system through a political democratic process led and managed by the Sudanese themselves".

Israel to name Golan settlement after Trump

AFP
 JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that he plans to name a new settlement in the occupied Golan Heights after US President Donald Trump in appreciation of his recognition of Israel's claim of sovereignty there.

Netanyahu, who has been on a trip to the region with his

family for the week-long Passover holiday, said in a video message that he would present a resolution to the government calling for a new settlement named after the US president. "All Israelis were deeply moved when President Trump made his historic decision to recognise Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights," he said.

Trump again broke with long-standing international

consensus on March 25 when he recognised Israel's claim of sovereignty over the part of the strategic plateau it seized from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The decision came only two weeks ahead of a tightly contested Israeli election, which saw Netanyahu win a fifth term in office.

Trump has shifted US policy sharply in Israel's favour since taking office, most notably by

recognising the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Israel annexed 1,200 square km of the Golan it seized in 1981, a move never recognised by the international community.

Around 18,000 Syrians from the Druze sect – most of whom refuse to take Israeli citizenship – remain in the occupied Golan.

Some 20,000 Israeli settlers have moved there, spread over 33 settlements.

Iran's Parliament puts US CENTCOM on terror list

ANATOLIA
 TEHRAN

The Iranian Parliament yesterday approved a bill placing the US Central Command (CENTCOM) on the country's terror list, according to the official IRNA news agency. The decision came in response to Washington's blacklisting of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation.

IRNA said the decision came to "counter the US move to weaken peace and security of the region and the entire world by labelling IRGC... as a terrorist group." It also qualifies the Iranian government and armed forces to "take the necessary actions so as the US forces will

not be able to use their power and facilities against the interests of Iran".

Yesterday's decision also stipulates that any cooperation with the CENTCOM is considered as a "terrorist act." Last week, the Iranian parliament approved a bill that considers all US forces operating in the Middle East as terrorist in retaliation for labelling IRGC a terrorist organisation.

The move also came a day after the US administration announced that it would end sanctions waivers on eight countries – Turkey, China, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – importing oil from Iran. The US re-imposed sanctions on Iranian oil exports in November.

Ugandan pop star MP under house arrest

AFP
 KAMPALA

Ugandan police said yesterday it had placed pop star MP Bobi Wine under "preventive arrest" as the fiery government critic warned his opposition movement would not be cowed into silence.

Wine's confinement under house arrest in Kampala came as the United States rebuked the government for its heavy-handed crackdown on the political opposition and urged it respect democratic rights.

In recent days, police cancelled one of Wine's concerts and fired tear gas at fans who rallied behind the colourful singer-turned-MP, who has emerged a potential challenger to veteran President Yoweri Museveni.

Israel arrests 16 Palestinians in West Bank raids

ANATOLIA/ RAMALLAH

Israeli forces rounded up 16 Palestinians in overnight raids carried out across the occupied West Bank, according to the military yesterday.

In a statement, the army said that the individuals had been detained for "suspected involvement in popular hostile activities".

It did not elaborate on the nature of these alleged "activities". The Israeli army carries out frequent arrest campaigns across the West Bank – including occupied East Jerusalem – on the pretext of searching for "wanted" Palestinians.

264 dead in battle for Libya capital: WHO

AFP
 TRIPOLI

At least 264 people have been killed and 1,266 wounded, including civilians, in an offensive by military strongman Khalifa Haftar to seize Libya's capital Tripoli, the World Health Organisation said yesterday.

The UN agency called on Twitter for "a temporary cessation of hostilities" between Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) and forces loyal to the internationally-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA). It urged "all parties to respect international humanitarian law". Fighting

since April 4 in the southern suburbs of Tripoli has displaced 35,000. UN humanitarian coordinator for Libya Maria do Valle Ribeiro said. "Displacement is continuing at an increasing rate every day", she added. She warned that the numbers were "a minimal estimate of the impact" of the clashes.



A health surveillance assistant gives a dose of the malaria vaccine to the first recipient at Mitundu Community Hospital at Lilongwe in Malawi, yesterday.

Malawi becomes first nation to immunise kids against malaria

AP
 LONDON

The World Health Organisation says Malawi has become the first country to begin immunising children against malaria, using the only licensed vaccine to protect against the mosquito-spread disease.

Although the vaccine only protects about one-third of children who are immunised, those who get the shots are likely to have less severe cases of malaria. The parasitic disease kills about 435,000 people every year, the majority of them children under 5 in Africa. "It's an imperfect vaccine but it still has the potential to save tens of thousands of lives," said Alister Craig, Dean of biological sciences at the

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, who is not linked to WHO or vaccine.

Craig said immunising the most vulnerable children during peak malaria seasons could spare many thousands from falling ill or even dying.

The vaccine, known as Mosquirix, was developed by GlaxoSmithKline and was approved by the European Medicines Agency in 2015. A previous trial showed the vaccine was about 30% effective in children who got four doses, but that protection waned over time. Reported side effects include pain, fever and convulsions. Pedro Alonso, Director of WHO's malaria programme, said similar vaccination programmes would begin in the coming weeks in Kenya and Ghana, with the aim of reaching 360,000 kids across the countries.

Qatar Foundation

INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender S/N No.	Tender Ref. No.	Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing
1.	QF/2019/PD -SS/27155	Maintenance Support Contract for QF Building Management System (BMS) on Call-off basis for 4 Years	QAR 1,000	QAR 350,000	30th May 2019 at 10AM
2.	QF/2019/PD -SC/78486	Rectification of Cracks and Rainwater Leakages at GU-Q	QAR 1,000	QAR 250,000	27th May 2019 at 10AM

- The Tender Document can be obtained against cash payment of non-refundable tender fees along with Company Authorization letter, copy of valid Commercial Registration (CR) and copy QID of the nominated person collecting the Tender Document. A cash receipt voucher can be obtained from the "Finance Directorate, located at Qatar Foundation HQ Building, First Floor, Room No. 1.106 prior to the collection of the Tender Document.
- Should a Company Commercial Registration include name(s) of particular company instead of individuals as owner or as part shareholder; kindly provide copy of Commercial Registration of this mentioned company (ies).
- The Tender Document can be obtained from the Limited Tender Committee, located at Qatar Foundation, Office No. 6, SB1, Ground Floor, QF Education City (Opposite to LAS Building).
- Collection dates: From Wednesday, April 24, 2019 to Tuesday, April 30, 2019 except Friday & Saturday
- Collection time: From 9:30AM until 2:30PM
- An offer must be valid for 120 days from bid closing date.
- An offer must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for 120 days from the bid closing date.
- The successful Tenderer shall submit a performance bond equivalent to 10% of the Bid Value, valid until Ninety (90) days after the Contract Completion Date as per the specimen provided in the tender document.
- (***)The successful Tenderer shall submit a performance bond equivalent to 10% of the Bid Value, valid for ninety (90) days + four hundred (400) days of maintenance period after the Contract Completion Date as per the specimen provided in the tender document.
- Bids must be submitted to: LIMITED TENDER COMMITTEE, located at Qatar Foundation, Office No. 6, SB1, Ground Floor, QF Education City (Opposite to LAS Building), by the date and time stated above.

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EDITORIAL

Qatar's world-class infrastructure

Qatar is hosting the mega go-to event of the year, Project Qatar, next week. The most anticipated and the nation's largest and most prominent construction exhibition, which is in its successful 16th edition, would be the broadest and the most inclusive to date, according to its organisers International Fairs and Promotions (IFP) Qatar.

Held under the patronage of Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, the three-day trade exhibition and conference will showcase the mighty construction sector and its all related industries. This year's edition is expected to welcome the arrival of the world's leading companies, as businesses across the world take aim on winning new contracts amid increase in spending for projects in the country as part of the FIFA World Cup 2022.

The event is set to be the most diverse and comprehensive as well that will see the participation of more than 500 of the most recognised international and local brands and companies from 34 different countries. The participation with more than 20,000 expected visitors, 25,000 square metres of exclusive showrooms featuring the latest and finest products and services, as well as accompanying events to cover the wider needs of the sector, and other features are elements that will make Project Qatar 2019 the premier business event in Qatar and the region, the organisers say.

This year's edition is expected to welcome the arrival of the world's leading companies, as businesses across the world take aim on winning new contracts amid increase in spending for projects in the country as part of the FIFA World Cup 2022.

matched at global exhibitions. China leads Asian countries with 90 participating firms while Italy comes first among European countries with 20 companies. Turkey hosts the second largest pavilion at the exhibition after China.

One of the highlights of this year's edition is the future focus on innovation in the construction sector is Smart District, dedicated to Qatar's Smart Nation Program. The Smart District is a platform for smart technology providers, urban planners, innovators and other industry specialists to explore the requirements for Qatar's digitised cities and connect with local stakeholders while showing the cutting-edge innovations implemented in building, energy, and transportation.

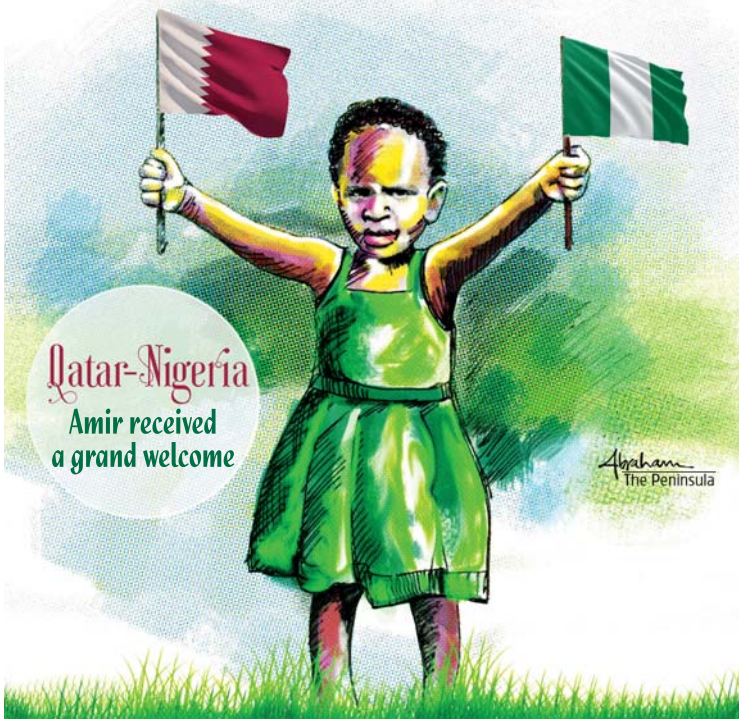
The success is part of the Project Qatar since its launch in 2004. In 2017 alone, it successfully hosted a total of 1,017 companies from 33 countries and 14,208 visitors. It's sure that this year's event will also be a stand-out one where the quality of deals and networking opportunities and their successful outcomes would be the testament to the effectiveness of bringing together global industry leaders under one roof.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Germany will actively support Ukraine on its path of reform and in its right to sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Angela Merkel
German Chancellor



Qatari-African strategic partnerships:
Promising strides forward

QNA
DOHA

On the second leg of the Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's current visit to Africa, H H arrives yesterday in the Federal Republic of Nigeria on a state visit at the end of a successful state visit to the Republic of Rwanda.

H H the Amir is scheduled to hold talks with the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria H E Muhammadu Buhari and senior officials on the bilateral relations between and ways of enhancing them in various fields, in addition to a number of issues of common concern.

The visit will also witnessed the signing on a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding in a number of areas of cooperation.

HH's tour in the African continent enhances the wise leadership's directions to build stronger relations and partnerships with the various countries and peoples of the continent and to gain exposure to its economic, agricultural and mineral potentials and areas of cooperation and investment, as well as means of political coordination between the two sides on international and regional issues of common concern.

The Qatari-Nigerian relations are developing on the basis of strong ties between the two countries for years, which have resulted in rapid development in many political, economic, commercial, cultural and investment fields. Over the past years, these relations have grown with common desire and keenness to expand and develop them in various fields.

The two countries adopt common positions on various Arab, African, international and humanitarian issues. They also belong to human communities, geographical areas that are cooperative and

convergent politically, socially, historically and culturally.

The two countries also have memberships in many international organizations and are characterized by their production of energy, oil and natural gas. It is therefore important to coordinate positions and strengthen ties between Doha and Abuja in order to serve their common aspirations and interests in all fields.

In the framework of the exchange of visits between the two countries, President Muhammadu Buhari paid an official visit to the State in February 2016. During the visit, HH the Amir and President Buhari held a session of official talks on bilateral relations and ways of supporting and developing them, in addition to regional and international issues of common concern, especially the latest developments in the region. HH the Amir and HH the Nigerian President also witnessed the signing of an agreement between the governments of the two countries on the avoidance of double taxation, the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and an agreement in the field of air transport.

Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry also met during the visit with a trade delegation from the Republic of Nigeria headed by H E President Buhari, and discussed the development of economic relations between the two countries, especially as there are many Qatari institutions and companies operating in the Nigerian market.

Qatari businessmen are looking to know about the good investment opportunities available in Nigeria to build stronger and deeper economic relations between the two countries, and increase the volume of economic cooperation between them. Nigeria's air transport market is among the largest travel markets in sub-Saharan Africa. In this regard, cooperation between the two countries will enhance Qatar Airways' flights to Nigeria. Qatar Airways has been ranked among the top 10 companies active in the Nigerian travel market by transferring more than 170,000 passengers from Nigeria in 2017.

Nigeria is located at a crossroads in the western part of the African continent. It has borders with Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, Niger in the north and the Gulf of Guinea in the south. Lagos was the capital of Nigeria until 1991 when the capital was moved to Abuja. Nigeria is the largest country in Africa in terms of population of up to 193 million people, with an area of more than 923,000 square kilometers. It is the United States' largest trading

partner in sub-Saharan Africa, where it imports eight percent of its oil imports, which account for half of Nigeria's oil production.

Although Nigeria is the first economy in Africa, it has not yet eliminated its full dependence on oil. It is one of the most important African countries that produce oil, and ranks eighth in the list of the most important oil exporters in the world. It has oil reserves between 27 and 31.5 billion barrels, while the reserves of natural gas reach to 4.5 trillion cubic feet. In addition to oil, Nigeria exports 7.83 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas to the world in the form of liquefied gas.

Nigeria also exports cocoa, bauxite, aluminum, tobacco, rubber, bananas and peanuts, while imports cereals such as wheat and rice, automobiles, petroleum products and machinery.

Nigeria is betting on wide partnerships with its surroundings and around the world in order to overcome the economic difficulties. It has established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) alliance and its capital Abuja is the headquarters of the economic organization concerned with developing the economy in the West African region.

The Nigerian economy has been growing rapidly since 2010 thanks to continued expansion in the industrial and service sectors. According to economic reports, the country's real GDP rose to 6.54 in the first quarter of 2014. In the future, it is expected to continue growing at rates ranging from 6% to 7%, making it one of the fastest growing economies on the African continent.

There are many non-independent resources in Nigeria, as it has great agricultural potential thanks to the vastness of its lands, its geographical nature and the nature of its climate. It also has a fish wealth, along with non-independent mineral wealth, such as tin, iron, lead and zinc.

The tourism sector in Nigeria provides many promising investment opportunities, especially as it is characterized by a wide variety of tourist attractions such as wide beaches along the Atlantic Ocean and rivers suitable for swimming and sports. It is famous for the richness of the wildlife, where there are vast areas of pristine nature that range from tropical forests to magnificent waterfalls.

Nigeria is the continent's largest foreign investment destination. Advancement of the economy to a broader perspective is the most important aspiration of Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, who won a new term in February.

Why far-right populists are at war with history



FEDERICO FINCHELSTEIN
THE WASHINGTON POST



Why do populist leaders want to forgive or displace the actual history of Nazism? Because as these leaders draw from the well of fascist ideology, rhetoric and tactics, they have to neuter the history of fascism to normalize their politics.

It's no longer just American conservatives like Dinesh D'Souza and Jonah Goldberg who are promoting the false idea that the Nazi Party was a left-wing movement. Now, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is getting in on the act. Along with arguing that Nazis were actually leftists he also claimed that people can forgive them for what they did. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin immediately condemned the remark, then added: "Political leaders are responsible for shaping the future. Historians describe the past and research what happened. Neither one should stray into the territory of the other."

Yet for decades, populist leaders have been eagerly decimating the historical record, and playing with the memory and experiences of the victims, for political purposes. In fact, the distortion of Nazi history in particular has been a key feature of the populist brand. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, now allied to racist and xenophobic parties in Israel and abroad, had also distorted Holocaust history to fit his political interests, by presenting a pro-Nazi Palestinian leader from the interwar period as a key actor in the extermination of European Jews.

According to Netanyahu, Adolf Hitler asked the mufti's advice in 1941: "What should I do with them?" and the mufti replied, "Burn them." There is no evidence that this sort of dia-

logue ever took place.

Why do populist leaders want to forgive or displace the actual history of Nazism? Because as these leaders draw from the well of fascist ideology, rhetoric and tactics, they have to neuter the history of fascism to normalize their politics. Rewriting history is central to the populist project. Bolsonaro is doing it not just with the Nazi past, but with his own country's history as well. He wants to officially celebrate the 1964 coup that led to the most murderous military dictatorship in his history. Moreover, he falsely presents this dictatorship as the one that established democracy in Brazil, and even argues that it was no dictatorship at all. For those worried about Bolsonaro's defense of political violence and desire to accrue more and more power, his push to whitewash the country's dictatorial past is troubling.

Last year, Bolsonaro talked with Viktor Orbán, the increasingly autocratic and racist populist leader of Hungary, and said that the Brazilian people do not know what a dictatorship is, suggesting that the military junta that ran the country from 1964 to 1985 was not one. But all historians of Brazil who have studied the authoritarian regime have shown the

opposite. And according to the Brazilian Truth Commission, the Brazilian dictatorship that Bolsonaro wants to commemorate was responsible for 434 deaths and disappearances of its opponents, as well as the massacre of more than 8,000 native people.

Normalizing, even celebrating, such deadly regimes is not just limited to his take on Brazilian history. Bolsonaro has heaped praise on a number of dictators, including the Chilean president Augusto Pinochet, who was ultimately arrested for numerous human rights violations, and the Paraguayan president Alfredo Stroessner, who kept the nation under martial law for almost all of his 35 years in power.

By presenting these dictators as saviors of their countries, Bolsonaro is replacing history with myth. The past has become a key part of what Hannah Arendt called "organized lying." In this context, politicians use "deliberate falsehood as a weapon against the truth." In this revisionist world the most irrational, messianic and paranoid views are falsely presented as history.

Bolsonaro's style and substance, steeped in political violence, national chauvinism and personal glorification present key hallmarks of fascism. But it is his manipulation of history that truly reveals how the Bolsonaro regime might be turning from populism to fascism. His decision to celebrate the 1964 coup, which ended democracy in Brazil, is an action reminiscent of classic fascists like Hitler and Benito Mussolini who, after being elected and appointed to lead coalition governments, destroyed democracy from within.

As rulers, Hitler and Mussolini invented a mythical past that identified emperors and heroic warriors as mere predecessors of their rule. Perhaps with less grandiosity than the Duce and the Führer, Bolsonaro aims to link his rule with that of the Latin American dictators of the past. If the fascist leaders created a myth of fascism that established them as living incarnations of an invented golden past, Bolsonaro invents and personifies a mythical age of Latin American dictatorships.

What's more is that Bolsonaro's followers understand this, calling him "myth." He has unabashedly used history as a mere tool of propaganda.

It is yet unclear how far down this path from populism to

fascism Bolsonaro will go. Beyond celebrating the memories of fascism and dictatorships, right-wing populists like Bolsonaro do not automatically translate their radical rhetoric into fascist or dictatorial practice. Of course, populists like Bolsonaro, Orbán, Donald Trump and Italy's Matteo Salvini execute policies of discrimination, violence and increasing inequality. But they have done it, so far, without breaking democracy as a whole.

Their most anti-democratic moves are symbolic. Attacks on political enemies do not generally move beyond words. And herein lies a difference between fascism and populism. Unlike fascist leaders, the populist leader favor violent rhetoric without backing them up with violent action. As General Juan Domingo Perón, the first populist to come to power after the fall of fascism in 1945, stated, he was an "herbivorous lion."

Is Bolsonaro also this kind of peaceful lion, willing to roar but not to devour? Bolsonaro stands on the border between fascism (a dictatorship) and the democratic form of populism. When he wants to celebrate dictatorship and whitewash the Nazi past, he looks very little like classic populists like Perón and much more like Hitler and Mussolini.

Will Brazil create a 21st-century fascism? It is not yet clear, but Bolsonaro's troubling embrace of increasingly extreme fascist rhetoric should be a signal to those who believe in democracy that they must resist rising illiberalism not only with votes and demonstrations, but also with a defense of history.



Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro looks on during an Army Day ceremony, in Brasília, Brazil.

Tackle population decline, promote regional revitalisation

JAPAN NEWS-YOMIURI

Maintaining functions in cities, towns and villages in provincial areas faced with growing depopulation is no easy task. The national and local governments must appreciate the urgency of the issue and implement measures to reinvigorate such areas.

The second half of the last unified local elections of the Heisei era has ended, with the heads of city, ward, town and village governments - except for those of government ordinance-designated cities - as well as local assembly members decided. In a noticeable number of cases, candidates were elected unopposed, repeating a similar serious situation that occurred in the first half of the elections.

Voting did not take place in more than 30 percent of 86 city mayoral races and close to half of 121 town and village mayoral elections. In five consecutive elections, the winner of the Hitachi city mayoral race in Ibaraki Prefecture has been confirmed on the day the election was announced. The same has taken place in 12 consecutive races for the mayoral office in Shosanbetsu, a village with a population of about 1,200 in Hokkaido.

In eight town and village assembly elections in Hokkaido, Nagano and other prefectures, the number of candidates fell below the numbers of seats in each assembly, leaving the

assemblies short of representatives.

The decrease in the number of people aspiring to enter regional politics could cause a decline in the quality of local assembly members. For voters, this means a loss of opportunities to think about the future of their local governments and make better choices. It must be said that stemming the decline in regional areas will be difficult.

Some local governments and assemblies experiencing a shortage of people willing to serve in positions are starting to take necessary measures on their own initiative.

An assembly election has been held in the village of Okawa, Kochi Prefecture, for the first time in eight years. This comes after the village considered the idea of abolishing its assembly and instead establishing "chōson sokai," or general meetings attended by local voters. This success has been achieved through efforts to clarify rules on assembly members seeking to hold side jobs, thereby making it easier for local residents to run in assembly elections.

More than a few local governments have raised the low-level salaries of their assembly members.

Some have highlighted the low level of salaries received by town and village assembly members, among other things. It is indispensable to improve their treatment to some degree. Efforts should also be made to make progress in properly managing political activities-related allowances that local assembly members are eligible to receive.

It is important to run assemblies in a flexible manner through such means as holding sessions at night or on holidays. It is worth considering the idea of establishing a system to enable local government employees to be elected members of assemblies in areas other than where they work.

There is great significance to creating a system that enables a diverse range of people to stand. The central

government must implement necessary legislative measures to achieve the objective. The latest city assembly elections have seen a record number of female candidates and winners. One of the factors behind this may have been the influence of a law enacted to support women seeking to gain seats in such assemblies.

According to an estimate by the Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry, Japan's total population has continued to decline over eight consecutive years. While Tokyo's population has kept increasing for more than 20 years, flight from provincial areas has been accelerating.

By squarely facing the declining population and aging society, local governments of cities, towns and villages must carefully expedite their programs on education, welfare and town building.

To maintain services for residents in their communities, it is vital for local governments to strive for efficient public administration. Clarifying the priority of policies and proceeding with feasible measures will be crucial.

It is necessary for neighboring cities, towns and villages to consider measures to maintain administrative functions through collaboration across wide areas. Prefectural and municipal governments must cooperate to formulate schemes to promote industries and tourism in a large zone and tackle them in a strategic manner.

Attention should also be paid to qualities unique to provincial areas. Natural environments are suitable for child-rearing. Vacant houses and abandoned farmland could offer opportunities for starting businesses.

It is important to create jobs that appeal to young people and venues for learning, while making use of local resources. In order for people to be able to raise their children with a sense of assurance, it is also a matter of urgency to expand child-rearing support.

The Peninsula

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The latest city assembly elections have seen a record number of female candidates and winners. One of the factors behind this may have been the influence of a law enacted to support women seeking to gain seats in such assemblies.

PM Modi among millions vote in third phase polls

AFP
AHMEDABAD, INDIA

Tens of millions of Indians, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, voted on India's "Super Tuesday" in the third round of polls when the biggest number of seats are decided in the country's marathon election.

Nearly 190 million voters were eligible to vote on 17 seats spread across 15 Indian states, stretching from the Himalayas to the Indian ocean, in the third of the seven phases of the mega polls.

Heavy security has been put in place, with violent clashes erupting between rival groups in eastern India's West Bengal state, killing one political worker.

State election official Amit Yyoti Bhattacharya said that a 30-year-old man was killed in the clashes near a polling booth in Murshidabad region.

Two more people were injured elsewhere in the state in similar clashes.

Suspected Maoists also detonated an improvised explosive device in neighbouring Jharkhand state without causing any damage.

After casting his ballot in his home state of Gujarat, which he ruled for over a decade before leading his party to national power in 2014, Modi compared the experience of voting to the Hindu practice of cleansing sins by bathing in the Ganges river.

"By voting, I feel the same sense of purity that one gets by taking a bath at the Kumbh fes-

Nearly 190 million voters were eligible to vote on 17 seats spread across 15 Indian states, stretching from the Himalayas to the Indian ocean, in the third of the seven phases of the mega polls.

tival," he said.

The nationalist leader, who is seeking a second term, met his 98-year-old mother and then waved to supporters from an

open top car that took him to vote in Ahmedabad, Gujarat's main city.

His right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is considered the frontrunner in the vote but faces a significant challenge from regional parties and lead opposition Congress party of Rahul Gandhi.

Modi has made national security and fighting terrorism his main campaign theme to blunt opposition attacks on his handling of the economy.

Many see the election as a referendum on his five-year rule — which has seen impressive economic growth but not the jobs that the BJP promised.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right), flashes the victory sign as he holds the granddaughter of BJP President Amit Shah (left) after arriving to cast his vote during the third phase of general elections at a polling station in Ahmedabad, yesterday.



Former prime minister Manmohan Singh after casting his vote in Guwahati in Assam, yesterday.

Gujarat sends 26 lawmakers to the Indian parliament and the right-wing BJP won all of those seats in 2014. Modi voted in the

constituency where his close associate Amit Shah, the BJP president and key powerbroker, is contesting his maiden election.

Officials travel deep into jungle to allow one priest to vote

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

Indian officials travelled nearly 70km through lion-infested jungle this week to ensure a 69-year-old holy man got his chance to take part in the world's biggest democratic exercise.

A four-member team of election officials, accompanied by a policeman, set up a special polling station deep in the Gir wildlife sanctuary in Gujarat state so a sole voter — Bharatidas Darshandas — could vote in the general election.

A priest who has lived at his remote forest temple for two decades, Darshandas has not missed an election since 2002, and cast his vote yesterday by walking nearly a kilometre to the special polling station.

Darshandas looks after a Shiva Temple in the 350 sq km wildlife sanctuary, home to some 600 of the last remaining Asiatic lions.

India has more than 900 million eligible voters who can cast their ballots at 1 million polling stations.

Officials often have to travel to remote regions over days to get to voters. But an arduous trip for just one voter is not so common.

"The fact that the government is taking so much effort to ensure the casting of one vote speaks to the importance of each and every vote," Darshandas told Reuters partner ANI in an interview.

66% voter turnout; Odisha and Goa record lower

IANIS
NEW DELHI

The third phase of Lok Sabha polls saw a voter turnout of 66 percent compared to 69.03 per cent in 2014 with some states such as Odisha and Goa recording lower turnouts and a few others like Bihar witnessing a higher participation.

Addressing a press conference here, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha said the polling percentage is expected to improve once the final figures come from states.

"The overall polling percentage in third phase was 66 per cent. It was 69.03 per cent

in 2014," he said. The third phase election took place on 17 constituencies spread across 13 states and two union territories.

"With the third phase election, election has been concluded in 22 states and union territories," he said.

The polling percentage was quite low at 12.86 per cent in six assembly constituencies of Anantnag that went to the polls on Tuesday. The poll percentage was 39.37 per cent in 2014. Anantnag has a three-phase schedule.

The interim polling percentage was 74.05 per cent in Assam compared to 80.21 per cent in 2014. Chhattisgarh 64.02

per cent (69.01 per cent in 2014), Karnataka 60.42 (67.2 per cent in 2014), Goa 70.9 per cent (76.86 in 2014), Gujarat 59 per cent (63.34 in 2014), Kerala 73.06 per cent (74.02 in 2014), West Bengal 78.97 per cent, Tripura 79.64 per cent (83.02 in 2014), Bihar 60 (59.08 in 2014), Maharashtra 62 per cent (62.86 in 2014), Odisha 64 per cent (73.75 in 2014) and Uttar Pradesh 60.52 per cent (61.48 in 2014).

The polling percentage was 71.43 per cent in Dadra and Nagar Haveli (84.08 in 2014) and 73 per cent in Daman and Diu (77.84 in 2014).

Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain said there was

an incident of EVM button not working in Thiruvananthapuram and it was resolved to satisfaction of all candidates.

He said election officials received a complaint that vote was going to a particular party on pressing the button, but it was discovered that button against the name of Congress candidate was not working. He said the complaint was received after 76 votes had been cast in the polling station.

He also said there were reports of 11 deaths in the state due to natural causes.

Officials also said that there was a report of boycott in a polling station in Assam.

Kerala turnout surpasses 2014; all three fronts upbeat

IANIS
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Technical glitches notwithstanding, more than 75 per cent of Kerala's over 2 crore strong electorate had cast their votes in polling to the state's 20 Lok Sabha constituencies in the third round yesterday.

While voting in a few polling booths got delayed, the final figures are expected later and it could well touch 77 per cent, up from 73.89 per cent in 2014, said officials. Based on reports, election officials have sought a report from

district authorities on the death of 10 voters, most of who collapsed either at polling booths or while travelling to vote, while another person collapsed soon after returning from casting his vote.

This increased turnout, cutting across constituencies, brought a lot of cheer to the all three political fronts with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, of the ruling Left Democratic Front, saying it "will go a long way in strengthening democracy".

While voting formally ended at 6pm, election authorities had said all those who enter the

polling station compound before that time will be allowed to cast their votes and at several places, voting continued even after the official close of time.

Leader of Opposition, Ramesh Chennithala of the Congress, said that the signs are favourable for them. In Wayanad, from where Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is contesting, the turnout was an impressive 79 per cent so far against 73.23 per cent in 2014. But it was Kannur where the highest turnout (80 per cent) was recorded. According to the poll



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan arriving to vote with his family in Pinarayi, Kannur.

officials, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) failed to

function in some booths and were subsequently replaced.

Congress petitions EC against Modi and Amit Shah

IANIS/NEW DELHI

The Congress yesterday petitioned the Election Commission against Prime Minister Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah, saying both had conducted illegal rallies over the past 24 hours.

"Both the PM and Amit Shah grossly and as part of a coordinated campaign carried out illegal rallies which are so brazen in the scope and extent of their violation that the Commission is left with no choice but to take action. We request a written order be passed," the Congress memorandum submitted to the EC said.



Message of solidarity

Indian Muslims holding placards outside the Sacred Heart Cathedral as they pay tribute to the victims of the Sri Lankan terror attacks, in New Delhi yesterday.

India to observe US sanctions on Iranian oil

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

India said yesterday it will buy crude oil from other major oil producing countries in view of the United States' decision this week to end waivers that allowed it to buy Iranian oil without facing US sanctions.

External Affairs Ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar said the Indian government would continue to work with partner nations, including the United States, to find ways to protect

India's energy and economic security interests.

New Delhi said its refineries will have adequate oil supplies, thanks in part to imports from other producers, despite the United States' demand that buyers of Iranian oil stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions.

"There will be additional supplies from other major oil producing countries from different parts of the world," Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said in a statement, adding it had a robust plan in place to

ensure supply. "The Indian refineries are fully prepared without any problem to meet the national demand for petrol, diesel and other petroleum products in the country."

India bought 23.6 million tonnes of Iranian oil in the financial year ending in March 2019, said V K Baweja, Petroleum Ministry spokesman. He did not give details of India's plans after the US waiver ends on May 2.

Iran was the third largest oil supplier for India after Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Imports account

for more than 80% of India's oil needs.

In November, the US granted a six-month waiver to India and seven other countries to continue importing oil from Iran. Washington decided to eliminate all Iranian oil revenue, which it says funds destabilizing activity throughout the Middle East and beyond.

The sanctions would choke off more than \$50bn a year in Iranian income, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in Washington on Monday.

SC orders Gujarat govt to rehabilitate Bilkis, pay Rs5m as compensation

IANIS
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court yesterday directed the Gujarat government to rehabilitate and pay Rs50m compensation to Bilkis Yakub Rasool Bano (pictured), who was gang-raped at the age of twenty-one in the post-Godhra riots in 2002.

A bench of CJI Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjay Khanna expressed concern about the victim after learning that she had been living a nomadic life and is actually on charity.

The court directed the Gujarat government to give her a state government job and provide her accommodation at a place of her choice.

Bilkis Bano was pregnant when she was gang-raped by a mob, which also killed seven members of her family at Randhikpur village near Ahmedabad on March 3, 2002. The court also observed that her infant daughter was "smashed" against the wall in their house before her.

Chief Justice Gogoi pointed out that the rehabilitation of the victim is at priority, after her lawyer contended before the court she has lost everything in the tragedy.

"In today's world, money is the best healer. We are not sure,



if it can heal her, but what else can we do for her... As per her condition, ask for whatever compensation you want and we will pass orders accordingly," he told the lawyer.

As Gujarat's counsel Hemantika Wahi tried to intervene, the Chief Justice, in a sharp reply, said: "You are lucky, we are not observing anything against you... How many years has this case been pending?"

The apex court also rubbished the Gujarat counsel's contention that the compensation was too high for the victim. Earlier, the state government had given Rs500,000 compensation.

Regarding increase in compensation for the victim, the CJ asked: "You tell us how much compensation you want to give?" As counsel said Rs1m is sufficient, the CJ replied that the court will give her Rs5m.

IS group claims Sri Lanka carnage; toll 321

AGENCIES
COLOMBO

Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the deadly terrorist blasts in Sri Lanka, as investigations intensified into Sunday's coordinated attacks that killed 321 people in churches and high-end hotels.

"Those who carried out the attack that targeted citizens belonging to the alliance countries and Christians in Sri Lanka are fighters with the Islamic State," according to a statement on IS news agency Amaq carried by SITE, which tracks jihadist groups.

The Sri Lankan government yesterday blamed the Islamist National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ) group for the blasts, saying they were carried out in retaliation for last month's attacks on two mosques in New Zealand. The presidency said there was intelligence that "international terror groups" were backing Sri Lankan extremists.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe addressed the media in Colombo yesterday and

Sri Lanka began a day of national mourning yesterday with three minutes of silence to honour more than 300 people dead in the blasts. Security forces were on alert for more attacks and the government imposed emergency rule giving police extensive powers to detain and interrogate suspects. An overnight curfew has also been in place since Sunday.

acknowledged the government needed to make policy changes in to 'avoid security lapses'.

"The security apparatus is of the view that there are foreign links, and there is evidence that points to that," Wickremesinghe said. "We will be following up on the claim by IS — there were some suspicions that there were links with IS."

Yesterday was a day of mourning. Three minutes of silence was observed that started at 8:30am. More than 1,000 mourners gathered for a mass funeral at St. Sebastian church in the coastal city of Negombo, just north of the capital, Colombo, where more than 100 parishioners were killed.

Security forces were on alert for more attack and the government imposed emergency rule giving police extensive powers to detain and interrogate suspects. An overnight curfew has also been in place since Sunday.

The government also said it had blocked online messaging services to stop the spread of inflammatory rumours that it feared could incite communal clashes. "We blocked WhatsApp because we didn't want to take a chance," Wickremesinghe said.

In a special session of the parliament yesterday, State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene said the Easter Sunday bombings could have been retaliation for the terrorist attacks on two New Zealand mosques last month, but declined to give further details.

The government said other nations had shared intelligence ahead of the blasts. Seven suicide bombers carried out the assault on churches and luxury hotels, targeting Christians and foreign tourists, it said. Over 40 suspects were in custody, national police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said.

Sri Lanka confirmed that 34 foreigners who died in the attacks had been identified — including citizens of India, Portugal, France, Turkey, Australia, Japan, the UK and US — and said 14 foreigners were still unaccounted for. Most were targeted at the Shangri-La,



Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, gestures as he answers questions from a journalist during a press conference in Colombo yesterday. Sri Lanka began a day of national mourning with three minutes of silence to honour the 321 people dead in suicide bomb blasts.

Kingsbury and Cinnamon Grand hotels in the capital.

As many as 45 children — both Sri Lankan and other nationalities — were among the dead and scores more have been injured, Unicef said yesterday, while many have lost one or both parents.

So far only Sri Lankan citizens had been taken in for questioning, he said, noting some may have travelled abroad and returned. Interpol and FBI have joined the investigation to help identify potential international connections.

The Islamic State group, in a statement, gave the noms de guerre of seven people who it said were behind the carnage. It also released a photo of eight men it said were behind the

blasts. Seven of them had their faces covered and three of them held knives. The one man who displayed his bearded face also appeared to carry an assault rifle.

Police sources said that two Muslim brothers — sons of a wealthy Colombo spice trader — were among the perpetrators of the attacks. They blew themselves up as guests queued for breakfast at the Shangri-La and Cinnamon Grand hotels in the capital.

The IS statement said three fighters it named as Abu Obaidah, Abu Baraa and Abu Moukhtar were behind the attacks on the Shangri-La, Cinnamon Grand and Kingsbury hotels. Three other fighters it named as Abu Hamza, Abu Khalil and Abu Mohammad carried out attacks on three

different churches in the cities of Colombo, Negombo, and Batticaloa, it said. The seventh fighter, Abu Abdallah, killed three police officers in an attack in a Colombo suburb, it said.

President Trump called Wickremesinghe to pledge US support "in bringing the perpetrators to justice," the White House said overnight. Chinese citizens were warned against traveling to Sri Lanka, the embassy said in a statement on its website.

Billionaire fashion tycoon Anders Holch Povlsen, Denmark's wealthiest man, lost three of his four children, the Press Association reported, citing Jesper Stubkier, communications manager for Holch Povlsen's wholesale fashion business Bestseller.



A Sri Lankan woman cries during a burial service for a victim, in Colombo, yesterday.

Dissidents of PPP and PML-N likely to form political party

INTERVIEWS
LAHORE

The increase in the number of disgruntled leaders and workers of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) coupled with serious allegations levelled against the central leadership of both parties have led to a new development in the country's political landscape with competent and political circles of the country deciding to constitute a new political party.

This political party is expected to serve the role of an alternate platform to the PPP and PML-N in the next general election. The name and manifesto of the new party is expected to be decided after sometime, while preparations to register it in the election commission have also been made.

A senior politician named Muhammad Ali Durrani is busy in its constitution and is in contact with the estranged workers and leaders of both the parties.

Sources have revealed that a roadmap has been prepared for the foundation of this party according to which a new platform is required keeping in mind the political limitations and other legal difficulties faced by both the political families.

In such a situation, the new political party will come to the fore as a big alternate which will have the support of a strong block in every electoral constituency.

The Zardari and Sharif families, owing to their clash with the state institutions and cases filed against them, are not in a position to play the role of the opposition.

The new political party is being founded with the aim of providing the government with an effective opposition in parliament.

Polio vaccine fears spread panic in Pakistan

AFP
PESHAWAR

More than 25,000 children were rushed to hospitals in northwest Pakistan after rumours spread that some had suffered reactions to a polio vaccine, officials said yesterday.

The panic came as health workers were carrying out a three-day vaccination campaign in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where many residents are already suspicious of the polio vaccine.

Authorities said the fears were unfounded, but declared an emergency at major hospitals in three provincial districts as the panic spread.

A witness in Peshawar visited two hospitals where he



A Pakistani father rushes his daughter to a hospital after receiving a polio vaccination, in Peshawar.

saw thousands of panicked parents arriving in cars, motorcycles and other vehicles with their children.

Most of the parents later said that their children exhibited no signs of any problems after being vaccinated, but that they had

rushed them to hospital anyway after hearing the rumours.

Qazi Jamil, police chief in the provincial capital Peshawar, told reporters that the rumours began when dozens of children complained of vomiting after they were vaccinated at a private school in a village outside the city on Monday.

After hearing of the complaints, local mosques began using their loudspeakers to warn people against the vaccine.

"The announcements ignited a panic and villagers came out of their homes," Jamil said, adding that a group of some 500 people later set a local health centre on fire in anger. No one is believed to have been injured in the incident.

The panic was compounded

by anti-vaccination videos which quickly began circulating on social media. Hisham Inamullah, provincial health minister, said "around 25,000 kids were taken to hospital".

"Despite all our assurances, parents were worried," Inamullah told reporters yesterday, adding that just two children were still in hospital but expected to be released soon. Police are investigating the incident, and authorities said the vaccination campaign would continue until today.

Polio is endemic in only three countries in the world — Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria — although a relatively rare strain was also detected in Papua New Guinea at the end of last year.

Over 50 dead in landslide at Myanmar jade mine

AFP
YANGON

More than 50 people were feared dead after a landslide in northern Myanmar engulfed jade miners while they were sleeping, local police said yesterday, the latest deadly accident in a notoriously dangerous industry.

Dozens die each year in landslides caused by jade mining, a poorly regulated industry rife with corruption and sandwiched between the country's borders with China and India.

Local police described a freak accident in Kachin state on Monday night so big it created a huge "mud lake" that buried the miners as well as some 40 vehicles. "Fifty-four people are missing in the mud," a duty officer from Hpakant township police station said.

"There's no way they (the missing) could have survived." Only two bodies had been recovered so far. The Ministry

of Information confirmed the accident and number of missing, adding that the area was mined by Myanmar Thura Gems and Shwe Nagar Koe Kaung companies. Myanmar Thura Gems director Hla Soe Oo said he was on his way to the site and had no further details.

Local media shared images that showed the walls of a mine stretching vertically a couple of hundred metres above a vast pool of mud, revealing only the tops of two yellow excavation vehicles. Hundreds of onlookers gathered nearby, staring at the site and taking photos with their phones.

The open jade mines in Kachin's Hpakant township have turned the remote area into a vast moonscape-like terrain.

Fatal landslides in the area are common with victims often from impoverished ethnic communities looking for scraps left behind by big firms. A major collapse in November 2015 left more than 100 dead.

Myanmar court rejects appeal by Reuters reporters

AFP
NAYPYIDAW

Myanmar's Supreme Court rejected an appeal yesterday by two Reuters journalists jailed for seven years each on charges linked to their reporting on the Rohingya crisis, one of the defence lawyers confirmed.

Reporters Wa Lone, 33, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 29, have been behind bars since their arrest in December 2017 under the Official Secrets Act. The initial conviction in September was upheld by the Yangon High Court in January.

Yesterday, the reporters were not at the Supreme Court in the capital Naypyidaw to hear the ruling that once again went against them. "Our appeal was rejected," Khin Maung Zaw said. "They upheld the ruling of the lower court."

High-level appointments and transfers in Pakistan Army

INTERVIEWS
RAWALPINDI

The Pakistan Army yesterday announced a number of appointments and transfers in its ranks. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed has been appointed Assistant Chief of Pakistan Army at the General Headquarters (GHQ).

Lieutenant General Azhar Abbas has been named Director General Joint Staff, while Lieutenant General Nauman

Mahmood has been appointed Inspector General Communications and IT. Lieutenant General Sahir Shamsad Mirza will continue as Vice Chief of General Staff. Lieutenant General Adnan has been appointed Commander Bahawalpur Corps.

On April 12, the ISPR announced Major General Sahir Shamsad Mirza, Major General Nauman Mahmood, Major General Azhar Abbas and Major General Faiz Hameed have been promoted to the rank of lieutenant general.

Imran's slip of tongue criticised

INTERVIEWS | ISLAMABAD

Pakistan People's Party leader and former foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khan yesterday criticised Prime Minister Imran Khan's alleged "slip of the tongue" during a meeting with a delegation in Tehran. Addressing a session of the National Assembly, Khan said, "This was not a slip of the tongue. The Prime Minister has distorted both geography and history for all of us." She continued, "The honourable prime minister went at length to explain how Germany and Japan are neighbours and how post World War II they shared a border. Japan is located in East Asia while Germany is located in Europe."



Chinese President Xi Jinping poses for a group photo with international navy delegates before a meeting to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the China's navy, in Qingdao, yesterday. RIGHT: Chinese Navy's guided missile destroyer Talyuan taking part in a naval parade off the eastern port city of Qingdao.

China displays its naval might

REUTERS
QINGDAO, CHINA

China showed off the first of its new generation of guided missile destroyers yesterday as President Xi Jinping reviewed a major naval parade through mist and rain to mark 70 years since the founding of China's navy.

Xi is overseeing a sweeping plan to refurbish the People's Liberation Army (PLA) by developing everything from stealth jets to aircraft carriers as China ramps up its presence in the disputed South China Sea and around self-ruled Taiwan, which has rattled nerves around the region and in Washington.

The navy has been a major beneficiary of the modernisation,

with China looking to project power far from its shores and protect its trading routes and citizens overseas.

After boarding the destroyer the Xining, which was only commissioned two years ago, Xi watched as a flotilla of Chinese and foreign ships sailed past, in waters off the eastern port city of Qingdao.

"Salute to you, comrades. Comrades, thanks for your hard work," Xi called out to the officers standing on deck as the ships sailed past, in images carried on state television.

"Hail to you, chairman," they replied. "Serve the people."

China's first domestically produced aircraft carrier, which is still unnamed and undergoing

China displayed the first of its new generation of guided missile destroyers as President Xi Jinping reviewed a major naval parade to mark 70 years since the founding of China's navy.

sea trials, was not present, though the carrier the Liaoning was, the report said.

The Liaoning, the country's first carrier, was bought second-hand from Ukraine in 1998 and refitted in China.

State television also showed pictures of the Nanchang at the

review, the first of a new fleet of 10,000-tonne destroyers, though details of that and other ships were hard to determine from the footage, due to the intermittent thick mist and rain. China had said it would also show new nuclear submarines, and state television did show submarines taking part in the display.

Singapore-based regional security expert Collin Koh said that based on the available evidence, the larger submarine on show was a modified version of China's existing Jin-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines — a key part of its nuclear deterrent.

The navy has four Jin-class submarines, which are based in Hainan Island in the south, and

the Pentagon says it believes construction on a new generation of ballistic missile submarines will start in the 2020s.

Yesterday's parade featured 32 Chinese vessels and 39 aircraft, as well as warships from 13 foreign countries including India, Japan, Vietnam and Australia. A total of 61 countries have sent delegations to the event, which includes a naval symposium today and tomorrow.

Earlier, meeting foreign naval officers at Qingdao's Olympic sailing centre, Xi said the navies of the world should work together to protect maritime peace and order. "The Chinese people love and long for peace, and will unwaveringly follow the path of peaceful development," Xi said, in

remarks carried by the official Xinhua news agency.

"Everyone should respect each other, treat each other as equals, enhance mutual trust, strengthen maritime dialogue and exchanges, and deepen pragmatic cooperation between navies," he added. "There cannot be resorts to force or threats of force at the slightest pretext," Xi said.

"All countries should adhere to equal consultations, improve crisis communication mechanisms, strengthen regional security cooperation, and promote the proper settlement of maritime-related disputes."

The United States has sent a low-level delegation to Qingdao, led by the naval attaché at its Beijing embassy, and no ships.

Second quake strikes in Philippines

AFP
PORAC, PHILIPPINES

Philippine rescuers raced yesterday to reach some two dozen people still feared buried under a building near Manila that collapsed a day earlier in a deadly earthquake, as a powerful second tremor hit the nation.

The US Geological Survey put the second quake — on the central island of Samar — at 6.4 magnitude, stronger than the one that wrought significant damage Monday near the capital in the north.

The latest quake sent terrified locals fleeing into the streets, with the authorities reporting 10 injuries — mostly from falling objects and one person who panicked and injured a leg jumping off a building. "No one started crying, but of course some panicked because it was really strong," said Rey Estrobo, a supervisor at a hotel in Borongan town, near the epicentre.

At the same time, the toll in Monday's quake rose to 16, with most of the fatalities in the worst-hit northern province of Pampanga, national disaster officials said. More than 100

others were injured by falling rubble on Monday, including in Manila, according to police.

However, initial reports indicated relatively minor destruction in Samar given the strength of Tuesday's quake, which could be down to differences in ground composition.

"The damage is more pronounced if the houses and buildings are built on a foundation of soft soil," seismologist Myla Advincula said, referring to Pampanga's soft sediment.

"It enhances the shaking effect." "We're thankful we avoided serious damage compared to Pampanga," regional civil defence chief Henry Torres said, adding damage in Samar was limited to road and building cracks, a collapsed church wall, and a brief power outage.

Scores of rescuers in the northern town of Porac spent yesterday using cranes and jackhammers to peel back the pancaked concrete structure of a four-storey market building where the Red Cross said 24 people were unaccounted for.

"Every minute, every second is critical in this rescue," Cris Palcis, a volunteer rescue



People gather near debris which collapsed and blocked a road after a quake hit Pampanga province, in the Philippines.

dog handler, said. "Time is short for the people under the rubble so we have to be quick." Pampanga Governor Lilia Pineda told journalists that

Duterte in war of words over Canada garbage row

AFP
PORAC, PHILIPPINES

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday demanded Canada take back tonnes of trash it had illegally shipped to Manila or risk "war" in the latest incident to strain bilateral ties.

The Philippines has urged Canada to take back scores of garbage containers shipped to the country in 2013 and 2014, alleging they contain toxic waste. But Ottawa has said it had no authority to compel a private shipper to return the shipment to Canada.

Speaking to officials during a visit north of Manila, an area

ravaged by an earthquake on Monday, Duterte said he did not care if his stance on the issue turned the two countries into enemies.

"I want a boat prepared. I'll give a warning to Canada maybe next week that they better pull that thing out, or I will set sail for Canada and dump their garbage back there," he said.

"Let's fight Canada. I will declare war against them," added the President, who frequently uses coarse language and hyperbole in public speeches about opponents. The garbage is among several festering issues that have soured ties between the two governments.

6 Philippine troops dead in rebel ambush

AFP / MANILA

Communist guerrillas killed six Philippine soldiers and wounded six others yesterday, the military said, in one of the deadliest recent attacks in the country's 50-year-old Maoist insurgency.

Members of the New People's Army (NPA) detonated bombs in a pre-dawn ambush of soldiers marching through a mountainous area of central Samar Island, triggering a four-hour firefight. "Our troops had received a report that NPA forces were extorting money from residents and so they went there to take action," said regional military spokesman Captain Reynaldo Aragon.

Rebel casualties had not been determined, but Colonel Ramon Zagala confirmed the soldiers' deaths.

The 4,000-strong NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, has waged a guerrilla campaign that has killed up to 40,000 people since 1969.

Thai anti-junta party leader may face disqualification

AFP
BANGKOK

The billionaire leader of an upstart anti-junta party which scooped up millions of votes in Thailand's disputed election last month faced fresh legal woes yesterday after authorities accused him of illegally holding shares while running for office.

Last month's poll remains in dispute after a political party backed by the junta that has ruled Thailand since 2014 and its main rival both claimed victory.

The youth-oriented Future Forward meanwhile became the third-most popular party in the country, garnering six million votes in the March 24 election thanks to the telegenic appeal of its billionaire leader, Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit.

But legal assaults have trailed his success at the ballot box and could affect final results expected next month, with the Election Commission announcing yesterday a fresh probe into the party chief for allegedly holding shares in a media company during the campaign.

The punishment could be a disqualification for Thanathorn and members of his party, commission secretary-general Jarungwit Pumsa said. "The decision is still not clear at the moment," he added.

Thanathorn, who is traveling in Europe, said on Twitter that the case was "political sabotage" and he would return soon. He has a week to respond to the complaint.

His deputy Piyabutr Saengkanokkul told reporters Monday that the shares in V-Luck Media had been legally transferred in January before Thanathorn's run.

Japan university stops hiring professors and teachers who smoke

AFP
TOKYO

A Japanese university has stopped hiring professors and teachers who light up, officials said yesterday, as the nation steps up an anti-smoking campaign ahead of the 2020 Olympics.

Nagasaki University spokesman Yusuke Takakura said that they have "stopped hiring any teaching staff who smoke", although applicants who promise to kick the habit before taking up their post could still be offered employment.

The university will also ban smoking entirely on campus from August, opening a clinic for those who cannot give up, said Takakura.

"We have reached a conclusion that smokers are not fit for the education sector," the spokesman said, adding that the university had sought legal advice and does not believe the policy contravenes discrimination laws.

Local media said it was the first state-run university to

introduce such a condition of employment and the move comes after Tokyo's city government passed strict new anti-smoking rules last year ahead of the 2020 Summer Games.

Japan has long been an outlier in the developed world, considered a smoker's paradise where lighting up is allowed in many restaurants and bars.

Tokyo's new laws ban lighting up at restaurants in the capital, regardless of size. Restaurants can set up separate indoor smoking areas, but customers cannot eat or drink there.

Smoking is also banned entirely on school premises from kindergartens to high schools, although space can be set aside outside university and hospital buildings. The World Health Organization has given Japan its lowest rating for efforts to prevent passive smoking, and it even scores poorly in the region compared with countries like China and South Korea.

Despite that, tobacco use in Japan has been falling in line with a broader global trend.

May under fire as Brexit talks resume

AP LONDON

British Prime Minister Theresa May faced renewed pressure yesterday from her restive Conservative Party to resign as lawmakers returned to Parliament - and to Brexit wrangling - after an 11-day Easter break.

Britain's European Union exit, long scheduled to take place last month, has been delayed as the government tries to win Parliament's backing for a divorce agreement. The bloc has given Britain until October 31 to ratify an agreement or leave the 28-nation EU without a deal to smooth the way.

Parliament has thrice rejected the divorce agreement that May struck with the bloc last year, amid opposition from pro-Brexit lawmakers who think it is too much of a compromise and pro-EU legislators who believe it cuts the UK off from its biggest trading partner.

Talks on striking a compromise between May's government and the main opposition Labour Party resumed yesterday. But several days of talks earlier this month failed to produce a breakthrough, and there were few signs of progress, as each side accused the other of dragging its feet.

"We'll see how it goes but the government really does need to move on a bit," Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said.

Downing Street spokesman James Slack said May told her Cabinet that "progress needed to be made urgently as it was vital to deliver on the result of the referendum and for the UK to leave the European Union as

Prime Minister Theresa May has said she will step down once Parliament has approved a Brexit deal.

soon as possible."

Pro-Brexit Conservative lawmaker Nigel Evans said calls for May's departure are "growing into a clamour" and she should resign "as soon as possible." "I believe the only way we're going to break this impasse properly is if we have fresh leadership of the Conservative Party," Evans told the BBC.

Many Conservative Brexiters think May should be replaced with a more staunchly pro-Brexit leader such as the former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson. But May survived a no-confidence vote among party colleagues in December, and under Conservative rules she can't face another challenge until a year has passed.

Some Conservative lawmakers are discussing whether the rules could be changed to allow a new vote on May's leadership. May has said she will step down once Parliament has approved a Brexit deal.

May retains hope that she can strike a deal with Labour and get an agreement through Parliament by May 22. If she doesn't, Britain will hold elections the next day for UK seats in the European Parliament.

The government is desperate to avoid participating in the poll, which is likely to be used by voters to express displeasure with the Conservatives. But both pro- and anti-EU parties are hoping for a surge in support.



Russia to hold Victory Day parade

Russian honour guards rehearse for the Victory Day military parade on Dvortsovaia Square in Saint Petersburg. Russia will celebrate the 74th anniversary of the 1945 victory over Nazi Germany on May 9.

N Korea's Kim to meet Putin tomorrow

REUTERS MOSCOW/VLADIVOSTOK

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet tomorrow in the Russian Pacific port of Vladivostok to discuss the international standoff over Pyongyang's nuclear programme, a Kremlin official said.

The visit is part of Kim's effort to build foreign support after the breakdown of a second US-North Korea summit in Vietnam in February meant no relief on sanctions for North Korea, analysts said.

The summit will be the first between Putin and the North Korean leader and the nuclear row, and how to resolve it, would be the main item on the agenda.

Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters.

"In the last few months, the situation around the peninsula has stabilised somewhat, thanks in large part to North Korea's initiatives of stopping rocket testing and closing its nuclear test site," Ushakov said. "Russia intends to help in any way possible to cement that positive trend." The North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said yesterday the visit would happen soon, but did not elaborate on a time or location.

Kim's chief aide, Kim Chang Son, was seen in Vladivostok on Sunday, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Vladivostok is the closest major Russian city to the short stretch of border that Russia and North Korea share, and can be

reached from the border via train. Kim's preferred mode of international transport.

Russia has for years been involved in efforts to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear programme. It was involved in so-called six party talks - along with the two Koreas, Japan, the United States and China - that were last held in 2009.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said it understood the agenda would include Russia-North Korea relations, denuclearisation, and regional cooperation. "Russia shares our viewpoints such as the achievement of complete denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula and the settlement of permanent peace," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Kim In-chul said in Seoul.

Zelensky wins Ukraine election with 73% vote

AGENCIES KIEV

Full preliminary results yesterday showed TV comedian Volodymyr Zelensky won Ukraine's presidential election with 73% of the vote.

The Ukrainian Central Election Commission yesterday published the full and final count of votes in Sunday's election which also showed incumbent Petro Poroshenko with only 24%.

Zelensky, 41, is a political novice who is promising to build a "new country," free of graft and the old, corrupt political establishment.

Zelensky's campaign was extremely vague, leaving pundits wondering how he is going to tackle thorny issues like the separatist movement in eastern Ukraine and relations with Russia which annexed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula in 2014.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin is not planning talks with Zelensky. Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters yesterday.

Zelensky is expected to take office next month.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's office said she called Ukraine's President-elect to congratulate him, saying the vote gives him "a strong mandate." Merkel spoke yesterday with Volodymyr Zelensky.

Merkel's office said she invited Zelensky to visit Germany, while he thanked her for supporting Ukraine and expressed an interest in continuing four-way talks with Russia and France on resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Politician quits in Austria over racist poem

AP BERLIN

Austria's Vice-Chancellor said yesterday that a member of his party will resign after penning a poem that compared migrants to rats, drawing widespread criticism and angering Chancellor Sebastian Kurz.

Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache said Christian Schilcher will leave the anti-migration Freedom Party and resign as Deputy Mayor of Braunau am Inn, the Austria Press Agency reported. The town on the German border was the birthplace of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

The ditty titled "The Town Rat" appeared in a local publication of the Freedom Party in Braunau. It warned against mixing cultures and drew strong criticism from the centre-left opposition.

Kurz, a conservative who has governed Austria with the Freedom Party as his coalition partner since late 2017, demanded on Monday that its branch in Upper Austria province distance itself from the poem.

He said that "the choice of words is abhorrent, inhuman and deeply racist." A top official with the Freedom Party's regional branch, Erwin Schreiner, later on Monday said that "the allegory of rat and human is historically loaded, and so tasteless and to be rejected."

The poem said that "just as we live down here, other rats who (came) as guests or migrants, including the ones we didn't know, must share our way of life! Or get out of here fast!" Strache said Schilcher was resigning of his own accord "to prevent damage to the party." He said the Deputy Mayor's behavior was not in accordance with the Freedom Party's principles.

New IRA claims murdering Northern Ireland reporter

AFP LONDON

Dissident republican group the New IRA yesterday took responsibility for killing Northern Irish journalist Lyra McKee last week as police said they had arrested a 57-year-old woman in connection with the shooting.

The New IRA "offer our full and sincere apologies to the partner, family and friends of Lyra McKee for her death," it said in a statement to The Irish News. The newspaper said

the paramilitary group used a recognised codeword - an established method of communication during the decades of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland known as "The Troubles".

McKee, 29, was shot in the head on Thursday as dissident republicans clashed with police in the Creggan housing estate in Northern Ireland's second city Londonderry, also known as Derry.

Police in Northern Ireland said yesterday that a 57-year-old woman had been arrested under

the Terrorism Act in connection with the murder. Two men aged 18 and 19 who were arrested earlier in the investigation have been released without charge.

Tributes to McKee, who was also a writer, were led by her partner Sara Canning, who said her "amazing potential was snuffed out by this single barbaric act".

While admitting responsibility, the New IRA attempted to justify its actions by claiming she was killed during an attack on "enemy forces", and accused

police of provoking the riot which preceded her death.

"In the course of attacking the enemy Lyra McKee was tragically killed while standing beside enemy forces," the statement said.

"On Thursday night, following an incursion on the Creggan by heavily armed British crown forces which provoked rioting, the IRA deployed our volunteers to engage," the New IRA statement said, according to The Irish News. In the wake of McKee's death, Northern

Ireland's six main political parties - including rival unionists and republicans who have been unable to form a devolved government for more than two years - issued a rare joint statement.

"It was a pointless and futile act to destroy the progress made over the last 20 years, which has the overwhelming support of people everywhere," it said.

A car-bombing and the hijacking of two vans in Londonderry earlier this year were also blamed on a dissident paramilitary group.



Workers install temporary tarpaulins to protect Notre-Dame Cathedral from rain, in Paris, yesterday.

Notre-Dame covered for protection from rain

AFP PARIS

Climbers were brought in yesterday to unfurl protective tarpaulins over Notre-Dame to protect it from the rain after the Parisian cathedral was left badly damaged and open to the elements by fire last week.

With intense efforts still

underway to shore up sections still at risk from collapse, experts faced a new challenge as the national weather service forecast several days of rain.

The risk is that the surviving part of the roof and the famed vaulted ceilings could suffer further damage, prompting a race to erect a temporary protective cover. Forecasters

expected the rain to begin on Tuesday night, with conditions taking a turn for the worse on Thursday. "The biggest priority is to protect the cathedral from the coming rain," the cathedral's Chief Architect Philippe Villeneuve told BFMTV, saying he wanted to "speed up" efforts to erect the tarpaulin before the heavens opened.

Former French PM Fillon to face trial over fake jobs

AFP PARIS

Former French Prime Minister Francois Fillon, whose 2017 bid for the Presidency was torpedoed by a fake job scandal involving his wife, is to face trial over the allegations, a judicial source said yesterday.

Investigating judges have recommended that Fillon be tried on charges of misusing public money, misuse of corporate assets, conspiracy and failing to fully disclose his financial assets to a French watchdog.

His Welsh-born wife Penelope faces the lesser charges of complicity in the misuse of public money and conspiring to misuse corporate assets, the legal source said.

"It's the normal next step in the process," one of Fillon's political allies said on condition of anonymity.

Fillon was widely viewed as being on course to win the French presidency before revelations published by the investigative newspaper Le Canard Enchaîné in January 2017 shattered his credibility.

His fall from grace opened the way for centrist Emmanuel Macron to win the election and

dealt a blow to his conservative Republicans party, one of the mainstays of French political life, from which it is still struggling to recover.

Over several articles, Le Canard Enchaîné said it had seen paylists showing that Penelope Fillon had been paid 680,000 euros (\$725,000) as a parliamentary assistant to her husband between 1986 and 2013, but had done little or no work at the National Assembly.

She had also been paid a monthly salary by a magazine owned by a billionaire friend of the couple, La Revue des Deux Mondes, despite the editor never having seen her.

Fillon has also admitted taking an interest-free loan of 50,000 euros from the owner of the magazine, Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière, without declaring it to a transparency watchdog.

A lawyer for Fillon, Antonin Levy, said that news about the trial had been leaked to the press before his client had been informed. "It demonstrates how this investigation has been carried out and we will react to the facts once we have seen the document ourselves," he added.

Fillon has always denied the allegations.

Trump to visit UK, France in June

AFP
LONDON

US President Donald Trump will make a state visit to Britain on June 3 to 5, just ahead of D-Day commemorations in France, officials said yesterday, as campaigners announced large-scale protests against him.

Trump is a major supporter of Brexit but has been highly critical of the way Prime Minister Theresa May has sought to implement the result of a 2016 referendum.

Trump and First Lady Melania will be guests of 93-year-old Queen Elizabeth II, becoming only the third US presidential couple during her reign to receive the honour after George W Bush in 2003 and Barack Obama in 2011.

Trump will also hold talks with May during the trip, with the

issue of post-Brexit trade ties looming large.

"We do more together than any two nations in the world and we are both safer and more prosperous because of our cooperation," May said in a statement on the visit.

She said it would be "an opportunity to strengthen our already close relationship in areas such as trade, investment, security and defence, and to discuss how we can build on these ties in the years ahead."

The pomp associated with state visits will prove particularly controversial in Britain, where House of Commons Speaker John Bercow has already said he does not want the US President to attend Parliament.

Even the official White House statement drew hilarity online because it referred to

The US President will also attend a military ceremony in Portsmouth, England, from where ships left for D-Day landings 75 years ago.

Queen Elizabeth by the non-existent title of "Her Royal Majesty".

"At least they spelled it right," wrote one user.

May invited Trump for a state visit in January 2017 when she went to Washington just days after he took office in what was widely seen as an attempt to curry favour as Britain negotiated its break-up with the EU.

An online petition to cancel Trump's state visit reached 1.9 million signatures in 2017 and the trip has been delayed several times since then.

On the last day of his visit, June 5, Trump will attend a big military ceremony in

Portsmouth, southern England, from where ships left for D-Day landings 75 years ago in the largest seaborne invasion in history.

Downing Street said the event would be "one of the greatest British military spectacles in recent history" involving 26 RAF aircraft and 11 Royal Navy vessels.

The event will include veterans of the operation and representatives of allied nations and Germany.

"The freedom we have today would not be possible without the incredible sacrifice of troops from across the world 75 years ago," May said.

"I am proud that the UK will host representatives and veterans from allied nations to pay tribute to that sacrifice and recognise the extraordinary cooperation that made the Normandy landings possible," she said.

Trump is then to visit Normandy on June 6 for the main D-Day commemorations, the statement said. The White House said Trump would visit the Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer and hold talks with French President Emmanuel Macron on "shared economic and security interests".

British anti-Trump campaign groups meanwhile pledged to mobilise in "huge numbers" to protest against the President.

When Trump last visited Britain in July 2018, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in opposition.

Venezuela govt calls two new counter protests

AFP
CARACAS

Venezuela's government has announced two new marches to counter the ones opposition leader Juan Guaidó has planned.

The street demonstrations in favour of President Nicolás Maduro will take place on Saturday, and May 1 Labour Day. Saturday's event will also mark Venezuela's official exit from the Organisation of American States, two years after Maduro made the decision to leave the bloc, accusing it of being part of a US campaign to "intervene" in Venezuela.

"We want to summon our members to two great demonstrations," said Hector Rodríguez, a leader of Maduro's United Socialist Party in Venezuela (PSUV).

"We summon the whole chavista population to mobilise and celebrate the definitive exit from this area of US domination and subordination," he added.

The government's announcement comes three days after Guaidó revealed his plans for events on those two dates, including what he said would be "the biggest demonstration in the country's history" on May 1 to demand the end of Maduro's "usurpation".



Protest against citizenship question in census

Demonstrators rally outside the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC, yesterday, to protest a proposal to add a citizenship question in the 2020 census. In March 2018, US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced he was going to reintroduce for the 2020 census a question on citizenship abandoned more than 60 years ago. The decision sparked an uproar among Democrats and defenders of migrants.

Biden may announce 2020 election run tomorrow

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

Former US Vice-President Joe Biden plans to announce that he is seeking the Democratic Party's presidential nomination for the 2020 election tomorrow, NBC News and CNN reported yesterday.

Biden, 77, a longtime Senator who served for eight years under

Democratic President Barack Obama, would join a crowded field of nearly 20 other candidates seeking to defeat Republican President Donald Trump.

The Atlantic previously reported that Biden would announce his candidacy today.

Biden's announcement would end months of speculation over whether he would seek to challenge Trump, who

followed Obama in the White House following his 2016 victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Next Monday, Biden will meet with union workers in Pittsburgh, a pivotal election region in Pennsylvania that backed Trump in 2016, an NBC News reporter said on MSNBC, citing unnamed sources involved in the planning. CNN also reported the planned event.

Armed border group leader accused of assassination training

REUTERS
LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

The head of an armed group that stops migrants who cross the US-Mexico border illegally allegedly boasted of training volunteers to kill former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, an FBI agent said in court papers.

Larry Hopkins, leader of the United Constitutional Patriots, appeared in court in Las Cruces, New Mexico, on Monday to face charges of being a felon in possession of a firearm. The FBI said it found guns during a 2017 visit to his home.

The UCP has helped the US Border Patrol detain some 5,600 migrants in New Mexico in the last 60 days, the group said.

Defence attorney Kelly O'Connell said Hopkins planned to plead not guilty to the firearms charge. He said the charges were unrelated to UCP's actions at the border.

"This is not even dealing with what's going on right here," O'Connell said. The UCP has said its two-month presence at the border was intended to support US Border Patrol, which has been overwhelmed by record numbers of Central American families seeking asylum.

In court papers, the FBI said

witnesses in 2017 accused Hopkins of saying the UCP was training to assassinate Obama, Clinton - who was the Democratic presidential candidate in 2016 - and George Soros, a financier who supports liberal causes. The accusations were made during an investigation into "militia extremist activity," the agency said. The American Civil Liberties Union and other critics accuse the UCP of being a "fascist militia" whose members illegally detain and kidnap migrants by impersonating law enforcement.

UCP members, many of whom have served with US Special Forces, take turns living in a camping trailer close to the border near Sunland Park, New Mexico and patrolling a five-mile section of border.

Armed with rifles and wearing camouflage uniforms with the group's eagle insignia, the group has posted dozens of videos showing the volunteers instructing migrant families to sit and wait until Border Patrol agents arrive. New Mexico's Democratic Governor, Michelle Lujan Grisham, on Friday ordered an investigation of the UCP. She said "menacing or threatening migrant families and asylum-seekers is absolutely unacceptable and must cease."

Colombia: Death toll in landslide rises to 30

AP
BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

The death toll in a devastating landslide that flowed over homes in a small community in southwestern Colombia has risen to 30. National disaster response agency Director Eduardo González said workers initially recovered the bodies of 17 people following the slide early on Sunday in Las Rosas, a town about 400 miles from Bogotá. Rescue workers have since found the lifeless remains of another 13 more.

Heavy rains have been pounding much of Colombia, swelling rivers, ruining crops and triggering mudslides destroying homes. Authorities say a total of 47 people have been killed, including those in Las Rosas. More than 150 rescue workers are searching for survivors.

Three mountaineers die in Canada avalanche

AFP
MONTREAL

Three world-renowned professional mountaineers killed by an avalanche in the Canadian Rocky Mountains had reached the summit of difficult Howse Peak and lost their lives on the descent, officials said.

The mountaineers, Jess Roskelley, 36, of the United States, and Austrians Hansjörg Auer, 35, and David Lama, 28, disappeared last week on a climbing expedition at the east face of Howse Peak, a particularly tough summit in Alberta's Banff National Park.

Parks Canada federal agency announced that their bodies had been found.

"While details are limited, the Roskelley family confirmed that the three climbers were successful at summiting Howse Peak," Parks Canada said in a statement read during a telephone press conference.

The agency described the east face of the Peak as "remote and an exceptionally difficult objective, with mixed rock and ice routes requiring advanced alpine mountaineering skills." Brian Webster, a Parks Canada official, added that the trio had

"submitted at noon and were descending when the accident happened." He said he did not know at what height the avalanche hit the men, saying their remains had been found at the bottom of the mountain's east face. Webster said the men were apparently rappelling down when the avalanche struck.

They had begun their assault on Howse Peak the morning of April 16. The accident occurred the same day.

Their remains were found five days later, on Sunday, with the help of a specially-trained "avalanche dog," Parks Canada said. The men did not carry beacons that would have located them in an avalanche, Webster said, adding that the devices would not have made any difference to their fate. They would, however, have accelerated the search, which was delayed by very bad weather and the risk of further avalanches.

On April 17, when the climbers were reported overdue after failing to check in, Parks Canada "visitor safety specialists" responded immediately. They saw signs of multiple avalanches "and debris containing climbing equipment," leading to a conclusion that the men had been killed, Parks Canada said.

Mexican police detain hundreds of migrants

AP
PIJIJAPAN, MEXICO

Mexican police and immigration agents have detained hundreds of Central American migrants in the largest single raid on a migrant caravan since the groups started moving through the country last year.

Police targeted isolated groups at the tail end of a caravan of about 3,000 migrants who were making their way through the southern state of Chiapas with hopes of reaching the US border.

As migrants gathered under spots of shade in the burning heat outside the city of Pijijapan, federal police and agents passed by in patrol trucks and vans and forcibly wrestled women, men and children into the vehicles.

The migrants were driven to buses, presumably for subsequent transportation to an immigration station for deportation processing. As many as 500 migrants might have been picked up in the raid.

Some of the women and children wailed and screamed during the detentions on the roadside. Clothes, shoes, suitcases and strollers littered the scene after they were taken away.

Kevin Escobar, a 27-year-old from Honduras, was one of about 500 migrants who fled onto private property to avoid immigration agents. Sitting on the property, he yelled to them: "Why do you want to arrest me?" Escobar vowed that he will never return to his hometown of San Pedro Sula, saying "the gangs are kidnapping everyone back there." Agents had encouraged groups of migrants that separated from the bulk of the



A Central American migrant argues with Federal Police and Immigration officers during a raid on their journey towards the United States, in Pijijapan, Mexico.

caravan to rest after some seven hours on the road, including about half of that under a broiling sun. When the migrants regrouped to continue, they were detained.

Agents positioned themselves at the head of the group and at the back. Some people in civilian clothing appeared to be participating in the detentions.

After seeing what happened, some migrants began walking in dense groupings and picked up stones and sticks.

Officials from the National Human Rights Commission observed the action from a distance.

"We are documenting what is happening," said Jesus Salvador Quintana, a Commission official. "We cannot tell authorities in charge what to do, but yes, we are documenting and we will investigate." Mexico welcomed the first caravans last year, but the reception has gotten colder since tens of thousands of migrants overwhelmed US border crossings, causing delays at the border and anger among Mexican residents.

On last Friday, local media reported a series of detentions of migrants in nearby Mapastepec, where thousands were awaiting normalisation of their migratory status.

HBKU to host lecture on Qatar family law

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The College of Islamic Studies (CIS) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), is to host a public lecture on 'Qatari Family Law: Features and Gaps' led by guest speaker Dr Ibrahim Alwan, professor of Shari'a at the Qatar Police College.

Dr Alwan will shed light on the intrinsic role of the Qatar Family Law as well as its applications, justifications, and inferences.

He will use real life examples to illustrate important themes within the law, and provide a comprehensive and balanced analysis of its articles.

Speaking about the upcoming lecture, Dr Mohamed El Gammal, associate professor of contemporary comparative law at CIS, said: "The Qatar Family Law



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safeguards families and contributes to an integrated and cohesive social and cultural infrastructure.

The lecture will highlight



Dr Ibrahim Alwan

legal aspects that enshrine this body of law and deem it to be comprehensive, relevant, and free of sectarian bias, while drawing attention to identifiable gaps and possible areas of improvement."

The Qatari Family Law plays an integral role in nurturing and preserving the family unit – a

cornerstone for the development and survival of all modern societies – and ensuring the equitable representation of all of its members.

The law, which comprises 301 articles, became legally binding in 2006 and outlines a robust framework for three key areas, including marriage, spousal separation, and inheritance.

Last month, CIS hosted a lecture on Domestic Workers and their Impact on the Psychological Stability of Children, posing important questions on how outsourced childcare can complement or contradict society's principles, beliefs, ethics, and legal system.

The Qatari Family Law lecture will be held in Conference Room 1 at Minaretin (formerly known as the College of Islamic Studies building) in Education City on today from 7 pm to 9 pm.

QF and Mall of Qatar to present VCUarts Qatar's 'Edge' fashion show

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), Qatar Foundation and Mall of Qatar will be presenting "Edge", the University's 20th Annual Fashion Show, on April 27 from 6pm to 7pm at the Ooredoo Stage at Mall of Qatar. The show features collections from sophomore, junior, and senior students from VCUarts Qatar, as well as three senior students from the University's Richmond campus.

The 2019 fashion show is a platform to inform the audience about a group of emerging young designers who are exploring what fashion design is today and into the future. This event will increase the visibility of diverse design talent and celebrate collaboration.

The show is designed to support the vision of a uniquely developing fashion design industry in Qatar and hopes to highlight the potential of the University's graduates in becoming leaders of that movement.

"The 'Edge' theme is about undefining boundaries to discover new and unique opportunities," said Kimberly Guthrie, the Interim Chair of VCUarts Qatar's Fashion

Design program. "EDGE" is the university's 20th annual fashion show.

"We are thrilled to be hosting Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar's annual fashion show at the iconic Ooredoo stage. It is an honor to showcase the creativity and innovation of the community. Join us to celebrate the talented young designers as their unique creations make their runway debut," said Stuart Elder, CEO, Mall of Qatar.

VCUarts Qatar alumna Maryam Al Darwish, who graduated with a BFA in Fashion Design from VCUarts Qatar in 2015, will be the guest designer at the show, where she will present her most recent collection. Her senior collection titled, "The Details" won the W Doha Award. Maryam also won the "Emerging Talent Award" from Grazia Magazine in 2018. The fashion event is being sponsored by the Mall of Qatar, Salam International, HEYA, and has partnered with Tajmeel Qatar International Beauty Academy, Trinity Talent Qatar, and MARTIANs.

Awards will be presented by Kimberly Guthrie for outstanding university and departmental design and academic achievements.

Birla Public School marks World Heritage Day

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The students of Birla Public School (BPS) celebrated World Heritage Day on April 18 under a theme of 'International Day for Monuments and Sites'. Heritage is a possession being indirectly handed over by our

ancestors.

"We have a lot of heritage sites in India as well as in Qatar, our second home. For example: Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, Red Fort in India and Al Zubarah Archaeological Site, Al Rakayat Fort in Qatar," said Rajesh Pillai, Vice Principal (Co-Scholastic) in a statement.

He said that the members Birlasphere, BPS's Eco Club prepared a presentation showcasing the important heritage sites of India and Qatar.

It was displayed in the primary, middle and secondary section during the life-skill period.

"This day 18th April every

year is set aside to celebrate the joint history and heritage of the human race.

It encourages us to celebrate all the world cultures, to bring awareness to important cultural monuments and sites, and to espouse the importance of preserving the world's cultures," said Pillai.

Al Attiya Motors to introduce Kia Telluride to Qatar

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Al Attiya Motors & Trading Company (AMTC), the sole distributor for Kia vehicles in Qatar, is set to introduce the popular South-Korean automaker's brand new SUV, the all-new 2020 Kia Telluride in an upcoming event.

Designed at the Kia Design Centre in Irvine, California, the All-New Telluride is an embodiment of comfort and capability. The SUV, with its big and burly-shouldered shape, is all about big skies, open deserts, smooth highways and long coastal drives.

The burly 8-seater has been designed to convey a 'go-anywhere, do anything kind of attitude', that is sure to grab the attention of every automobile consumer in the region.

Al Attiya Motors & Trading Company is eagerly waiting to launch the exciting, All-New Telluride in Qatar that will provide the public with all the details about Kia's latest offering.

In the meantime, the distributor has released some key details, including that the latest addition to Kia's SUV line-up will be available with a 3.8-litre V6 engine, capable of belching out 291 HP and 262 lb.-ft. of torque.

While the All-New Telluride



The all-new 2020 Kia Telluride.

gives an impression of big, bold and rugged on the outside, the sophisticated exterior accents do drop subtle hints at a hidden interior luxury. The interior of the All-New Telluride has been designed to continue the impression of upscale exploration with a great deal of emphasis on comfort and luxury.

A wide console conveys spaciousness through artistic use of premium trim features while the rest of the cabin boasts plenty of hip, shoulder, leg and head-room for all the rows.

The All-New Telluride will

be available in 3 different trims, starting with the LXI, followed by the LX2 and lastly the SX. The SUV will also boast a wide range of technologies catering to the comfort, convenience and safety of the occupants, including Nappa leather seats, 20" alloy wheels, 10.25" display with navigation, LED DRLs, Tyre Pressure Monitoring System, Smart Cruise Control, Forward Collision Avoidance Assist and much more.

Al Attiya Motors & Trading Company plans to launch the All-New 2020 Kia Telluride during the second quarter of the year.

Qatar Charity rehabilitates food-processing units in Gaza

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Qatar Charity (QC) rehabilitated two food-processing units at the Women and Child Empowerment Centers of the Ministry of Social Development in the Gaza Strip the cost of up to \$29,000. The rehabilitation of the units came with the support of benefactors in Qatar as part of the bakery and traditional food project to provide various high-quality services efficiently and empower women with limited income economically.

The project, which is one of the economic empowerment projects, included rehabilitating the premises, establishing a bakery equipped with all the equipment required for operation such as automatic kneaders, gas and electric ovens, mixers, refrigerators, electronic grinder, and other cooking utensils.

The project has contributed to the employment of some poor women who take care of their families, as the rehabilitation of the two units in the Gaza Strip has provided steady employment for 40 women.

Wafa Mustafa, a mother of six, whose family was jobless, has expressed her happiness at



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finding her new job at one of these units, which will enable her to support her family with her monthly salary.

During the last year, Qatar Charity implemented 328 income-generating projects in the Gaza Strip at the cost of \$740,507, in coordination with many local and governmental institutions.

These projects benefited 328 families with a total of 2,462 persons, who were

sponsored by Qatar Charity under the Social Welfare and Sponsorship Programme, in addition to poor families, who were not sponsored.

The projects targeted five main sectors, which are agriculture, fishing, profession and craft, trade, and livestock, to contribute to alleviating the economic and social pressures on orphans and their families, as well as improving their income.

Public healthcare providers work together to raise awareness on thyroid cancer

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

In recognition of Thyroid Cancer Awareness Month, Qatar's public healthcare providers along with Qatar Cancer Society are working together to raise awareness of thyroid cancer through public engagement and media activities.

The aim of this collaboration is to raise awareness of thyroid cancer in Qatar, highlighting the signs and symptoms of the disease to increase public understanding of the importance of prevention and early detection, as well as maintaining a healthy lifestyle to reduce the risk of this disease.

Thyroid cancer is the

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second most common cancer among the female population in the State of Qatar and it accounted for 53 new cases (8.63%) according to the QNCR 2015 Annual Report and the Thyroid Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) at HMC diagnosed 63 females with thyroid cancer in 2018.

Catherine Gillespie, Director of the National Cancer Programme highlights the continuing collaboration between

the Ministry of Public Health and the providers of healthcare across the country to help raise awareness of thyroid cancer. She said, "Individuals diagnosed with thyroid cancers have a very high chance of successful treatment."

As with many cancers, it is important that a diagnosis is made at an early stage of the disease. Working together with our colleagues, we aim to ensure an awareness of the

disease and encourage people who are worried they may be experiencing symptoms to see their primary healthcare physician."

Dr Mohamed Salem Al Hassan FRCS, Chair of the Thyroid MDT and Chair of Surgical Oncology said: "Most thyroid cancers are very curable; thyroid cancer can occur in any age group, although it is most common after the age of 30, and its aggressiveness increases significantly in older patients. Approximately 1.2 percent of all men and women will be diagnosed with thyroid cancer during the course of their lifetime. Less than 1% of all thyroid nodules are cancerous in nature and the five-year sur-

vivorship is 98%.

The Thyroid MDT at Hamad Medical Corporation provides a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach to the management of thyroid cancer; all suspected thyroid cancer cases referred to HMC are seen by a dedicated multi-disciplinary thyroid team within 48 hours of referral.

"If the physicians identify any likelihood of thyroid cancer, the patient will be referred to HMC within 48 hours for an immediate action - where experienced staff with the right expertise to conduct the appropriate investigations and management will see the patient," said Dr Shaikha Abu Shaikha, Manager of Screening Programs, Primary Healthcare

Corporation.

Symptoms may include: unexplained swelling of the neck, rapid growth of neck lump, and unexplained changes in the voice.

If you experience any of these symptoms, it is important to visit your primary healthcare provider so they can be investigated.

Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) launch the Thyroid Cancer Conference on April 19 and 20 and is to be a global platform bringing together over 1,000 specialists and experts inside Qatar and abroad, in co-operation with the MOPH, HMC, Qatar Doctor's Society, and Qatar Austrian Medical Team. The conference will feature public awareness sessions.

