QATAR ↘ 06
QCDC HIGHLIGHTS 2024 MILESTONES IN ANNUAL REPORT



BUSINESS ↘ 12
'QATAR CONTINUES TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION AS A GLOBAL INVESTMENT HUB'



SPORT ↘ 13
MARC MARQUEZ SURVIVES COLLISION WITH ALEX TO CLAIM 'FANTASTIC' QATAR GP TRIUMPH



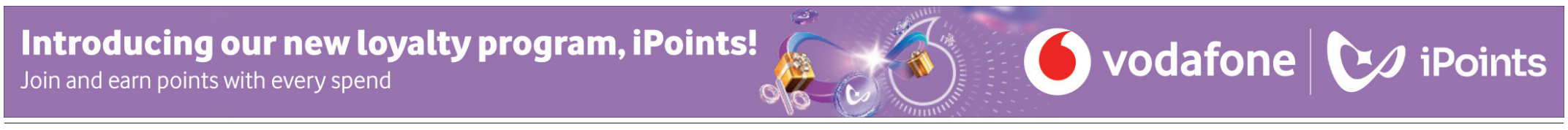
EDITORIAL ↘ 07
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The Peninsula

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14 APRIL 2025
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Qatar, Indonesia to establish $4bn investment fund



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and President of Indonesia H E Prabowo Subianto witnessing signing of an MoU.



Amir welcomes President of Egypt

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani led the well-wishers to welcome President of Arab Republic of Egypt H E Abdel Fattah El Sisi and the accompanying delegation upon their arrival at the Amiri Terminal in Hamad International Airport yesterday, on an official visit to Qatar. The Egyptian President was also welcomed by Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani; Chief of the Amiri Diwan H E Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khulaifi; Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs H E Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Sayed; Qatar's Ambassador to Egypt H E Tariq bin Ali Al Ansari and Egyptian Ambassador to Qatar H E Amr El Sherbini.

تميم بن حمد
@TamimBinHamad

Today, I held constructive discussions with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Doha, during which we discussed prospects for expanding our bilateral partnership. We also reviewed ways to develop economic relations through increased trade and investment. Relations between Qatar and Indonesia are solid and growing, and the two countries are working together to fully utilize the potential to meet shared aspirations and advance cooperation to broader horizons.

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani held yesterday at his Amiri Diwan office a session of official talks with President of the Republic of Indonesia H E Prabowo Subianto.

The meeting started with H H the Amir welcoming H E Prabowo and the accompanying delegation and wishing them a pleasant stay.

His Highness stressed the importance of relations between the two friendly nations and voiced hopes the visit would advance cooperation to serve the two countries' shared interests and benefit their friendly peoples.

Meanwhile, H E Prabowo expressed his thanks and appreciation to H H the Amir for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, expressing his keenness to bolster bilateral cooperation and development relations, elevating them to broader horizons across all fields.

The two sides agreed to equally establish a joint $4bn investment fund.

The talks addressed bilateral relations and ways to foster them across various fields, particularly in the areas of economy and investment. Also on the table were regional and international issues of common concern.

The talks session was attended by Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Amiri Diwan Chief H E Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Khulaifi, Minister of Culture H E Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al Khulaifi, alongside several senior officials.

The Indonesian side was represented by Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sugiono, Minister of Defence H E Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, Minister of Investment and Downstream H E Rosan Perkasa Roeslani, Minister of Culture H E Fadli Zon, Minister of Housing and Settlement Areas H E Maruarar Sirait along with other senior officials accompanying H E the President.

H H the Amir and the Indonesian President held a one-on-one discussion on the latest regional and international developments and joint efforts to promote peace and stability.

They also attended the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the governments of the two countries on strategic dialogue.

Besides, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia H E Sugiono signed an MoU to launch a Strategic Dialogue between Qatar and Indonesia on April 13, 2025, in Doha, marking a milestone in bilateral relationship between the two countries.

The signing of the MoU took place on the sidelines of the visit of H E President of Indonesia to Qatar. — *QNA* ➔P3

MoT begins developing Qatar Public Transport Master Plan

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Transport has started developing the Qatar Public Transport Master Plan (QPTMP) aimed at creating a more efficient and competitive public transportation system and striking a balance between Qatar's rapid urban growth and its commitment to sustainability, leading ultimately to a more efficient and future-ready public transit system.

The QPTMP also aims at improving accessibility and coverage, raising service reliability, and exploring innovative mobility solutions that keep pace with latest advancements.

Bypassing conventional frameworks, the QPTMP will strategically guide the evolution of the transit system to address challenges associated with escalating vehicular dependency, congestion, and environmental impact. The QPTMP will study the status quo of traffic congestion of both private vehicles and public transportation and carbon emissions and their impact on Qatar's climate quality with a view to suggesting suitable solutions.

Leveraging advanced and efficient public transportation solutions, and sustainable and ecofriendly infrastructure is among QPTMP's top priorities through providing advanced electric transportation systems to help lower carbon footprint. ➔P6

Qatar slams Israeli bombing of Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza

DOHA: Qatar has condemned in the strongest terms the bombardment of Al Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza, considering this act a brutal massacre and a heinous crime against defenseless civilians as well as a brazen encroachment upon the provisions of international humanitarian law.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed Qatar's unequivocal rejection of the Israeli attacks on civilian objects, including hospitals, schools, and population assembly points in the Gaza Strip.

The ministry warned of the crumbling health system in the Gaza Strip, along with the expansion of the conflict cycle in the region due to the unabated Israeli atrocities, calling on the international community to uphold its responsibilities in protecting defenceless civilians.

The ministry reiterated Qatar's position in supporting the Palestinian cause and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. — *QNA*



People check the destruction in the aftermath of an Israeli strike on the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza City yesterday. (AFP)

ICAO Council approves Doha FIR/UIR Phase Two implementation

THE PENINSULA

Phase Two is a critical step towards fully realising the benefits of airspace modernisation.

DOHA: The Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has approved the implementation of Phase Two by the State of Qatar for the management of the Doha Flight Information Region/Upper Information Region (FIR/UIR) and the Search and Rescue Region (SRR) following the successful implementation of Phase One where Qatar fulfilled all safety and security requirements.

The Phase Two, which covers the management of air traffic over international waters north of Qatar, is a critical step towards fully realising the benefits of airspace modernisation. The implementation of Phase Two applies to vertical limits extending from sea level to an unlimited altitude.

By standardizing altitude limits, Phase Two will enhance safety, protect the environment, and improve operational efficiency, benefiting both national and regional interests. This phase also brings numerous operational and environmental advantages, including reduced fuel consumption and emissions, increased capacity, and greater flexibility. In addition, it will strengthen safety, boost efficiency, improve regional and international connectivity, and reinforce Doha's strategic position as a key global aviation hub. Furthermore, it will enable more efficient operations for airlines.

"We, in Qatar, are proud of the qualitative achievements we have achieved over the past few years, which contributed to reinforcing the country's positioning on the map of global aviation industry and enhancing its effective role in that vital industry," said Minister of Transport H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla bin Mohammed Al Thani. ➔P6

First edition of Beach Sports Festival to be held from April 20 to 26

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF), in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and Youth and the Qatar Sports for All Federation, yesterday announced the first edition of the Aspire Beach Sports Festival, which will be held from April 20 to 26 at the Aspire Park.

The tournament, which features three major sports, including beach soccer to be supervised by the Qatar Football Association; beach volleyball under the supervision of the Qatar Volleyball Association; and beach tennis to be supervised by the Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation, is being organised as part of AZF's ongoing efforts to promote sports culture and an active lifestyle within the community.

The matches will be held daily from 4pm to 9pm with participation open to men's teams (over 18 years old) under the supervision of the respective sports federations.

Addressing a press conference yesterday, AZF Events & Venues Director Ahmed Al Hassan noted that the organisers are very excited about the tournament, which is open to everyone in the community.

"The Aspire Beach Sports Festival reflects our commitment to Aspire Zone's vision of becoming an integrated sports hub that supports both community and specialized sports. Through this initiative, we aim to offer sports enthusiasts a unique experience that combines competition, entertainment, and a healthy lifestyle — all within a well-organised, high-quality environment that leverages Aspire's advanced infrastructure," Al Hassan noted.

He added that about QR100,000 is up for grabs in prize money, making the tournament more exciting.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al Dosari, representative of the Ministry of Sports and Youth and Executive Director of the Qatar Sports for All Federation, praised the partnership with the Aspire Zone Foundation, highlighting its role in increasing community participation through such tournaments aimed at Qatari youth and residents.

He pointed out that the collaboration with Aspire contributes to expanding community involvement and utilising sports facilities in line with the ministry's vision of playing sports as a way of life. ➔P4

THE VIEW HOSPITAL | In Affiliation With Cedars Sinai



GLOBAL HOSPITAL RATING

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

statista | Newsweek

Evaluated 3/25 – license valid for 3 years

The View Hospital

The First Qatari Hospital in Newsweek's Global Ranking

- **World-Class Healthcare:** Recognized globally for clinical excellence.
- **Patient-Centered Care:** Every patient is treated with compassion, respect, and professionalism.
- **State-of-the-Art Technology:** We use the latest medical innovations to ensure the highest quality care.
- **Comprehensive Services:** From primary care to specialized treatments, we offer a wide range of services tailored to your needs.

The View Hospital in affiliation with Cedars-Sinai is proud to announce its recognition as the first Hospital in Qatar in the highly esteemed 2025 Global Hospital Ranking published by Newsweek and Statista, marking a significant achievement in the institution's ongoing mission to provide world-class healthcare.



Commenting on the recognition, Dr. Fatih Mehmet Gul, CEO of The View Hospital, stated:

"We are honored to see The View Hospital recognized in the Global Hospital Ranking by Newsweek. This unique achievement and the only one of its kind in Qatar is a testament to our unwavering commitment to our core pillars: creating a healing environment, embracing cutting-edge technology, and advancing academic care. It reflects the dedication of our entire team in delivering exceptional patient-centered healthcare, and inspires us to continue setting new benchmarks for excellence."

This prestigious recognition underscores The View Hospital's commitment to delivering exceptional, patient-centered care, setting the bar high for clinical excellence in Qatar's healthcare sector.

By combining cutting-edge medical technology with a compassionate and healing environment, The View Hospital ensures that every step of a patient's journey is met with the utmost care and professionalism.

The View Hospital is renowned for its use of advanced medical technologies and offers a wide range of services from primary care to specialized treatments.

The hospital's multidisciplinary approach brings together experts across various medical fields, ensuring that patients receive comprehensive and individualized care tailored to their specific needs. Whether it's through advanced diagnostics, minimally invasive surgeries, or innovative treatments, The View Hospital is committed to improving patient health and well-being.



Joe Hazel, CEO of Apex Health, commented on the recognition:

"The recognition of The View Hospital as the first and only hospital in Qatar featured in the Global Hospital Ranking by Statista and Newsweek is a proud moment for all of us at Apex Health. It reflects the level of excellence we consistently uphold across our network of hospitals and medical facilities."

The View Hospital continues to raise the standards of healthcare in Qatar by creating an environment focused on trust, comfort, and exceptional care.

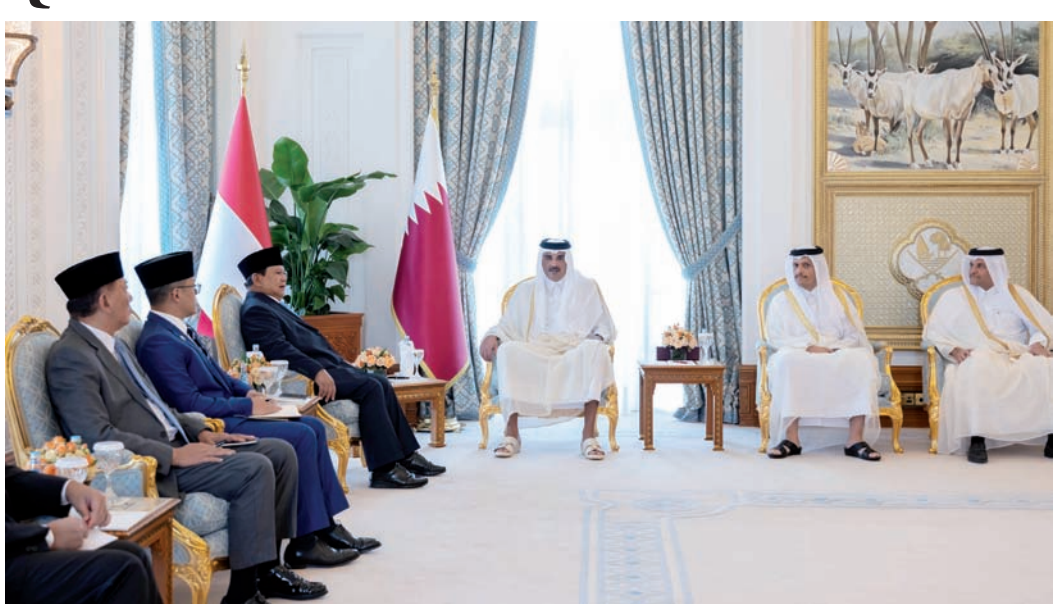
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Qatar and Indonesia to establish $4bn joint investment fund









Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani received President of Indonesia H E Prabowo Subianto at the Amiri Diwan yesterday. The two leaders held an official talks session and a one-on-one discussion on the latest regional and international developments and joint efforts to promote peace and stability.

FROM PAGE 1

The Strategic Dialogue underscores the strength of the bilateral relations and highlights mutually beneficial opportunities to deepen cooperation, marking a new chapter in the partnership between the two countries.

This includes deepening collaboration in a range of key sectors, including political cooperation on international and regional issues of mutual interest, advancing security, defence, and counter-terrorism efforts and enhancing economic cooperation, particularly in trade, investment, alongside fostering greater cultural exchange, building cultural bridges, and strengthening people-to-people connections.

Qatar and Indonesia believe their strong and historic partnership will benefit the two countries, elevating their bilateral relations to a higher level of cooperation.

Meanwhile, H H the Amir hosted a luncheon banquet in honour of H E the President and the accompanying delegation. H E Prabowo was accorded an official reception upon arriving at the Amiri Diwan.

Qatar slams attacks on displacement camps in Darfur, Sudan

DOHA: Qatar has strongly condemned the attacks targeting the Zamzam and Abu Shouk displacement camps in the Darfur region of the Republic of the Sudan, which resulted in casualties and injuries, considering them a blatant violation of international humanitarian law. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasised the urgent need to protect civilians and humanitarian workers in the city of Al Fasher and its surroundings, and to ensure the sustainable delivery of aid to address the humanitarian crisis in the region. The ministry reiterated Qatar's full support for all regional and international efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in Sudan. — ***QNA***

11th 'Al Muhaddith Al Saghir' competition attracts 8,328 contestants

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In the presence of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, H E Dr. Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Ghanem Al Thani, the Department of Dawah and Religious Guidance concluded the school qualifying tests for 11th Al Muhaddith Al Saghir' competition for school students which lasted for three days. The eleventh edition of the competition witnessed a wide turnout of students and parents, where about 8,328 participated, including male and female students and parents.

The competition has witnessed remarkable development, as 12,381 registered in the current edition, of which 8,328 students from 443 schools participated, along with 1,313 guardians.

The tenth edition witnessed the participation of 6,672 contestants, of whom 4,958 students and guardians won, while 55 students received shields in honour of their highest scores in the public competition.

Al Muhaddith Al Saghir competitions are an extension of the Quranic competitions spread in various regions of Qatar, and are the fruit of cooperation between the Department of Dawah and Religious Guidance, the General Directorate of Endowments, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Jassim bin Hamad Secondary School for Boys, Umm Al Qura Primary School for Boys, and Al Iman Secondary School for Girls.

The Director of the Department of Dawah and Religious Guidance, Jassim Al Ali, praised the remarkable turnout and wide participation witnessed in the competition, expressing his pride in the outstanding performance of the students and the keenness of parents to participate side by side with their children. He stressed that this initiative contributes significantly to refining students' skills and enhancing their religious culture, which will reflect positively on their educational achievement and community interaction. The competition, with its various categories, targeted the participation of male and female students of all ages in all public and private schools in Qatar, in addition to the participation of parents, which enhanced communication between parents, students, and schools. The winners are scheduled to be honoured on April 20 and 21, as the organising committee of the competition allocated valuable financial prizes with the support of the Endowment Fund for the Service of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the General Directorate of Endowments.

The competition also allocated honourary shields to the winning students of the public competitions after obtaining the highest grades in the fifth level "Elite 1" in recognition of their excellence in memorisation and public competitions.



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, H E Dr. Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Ghanem Al Thani with other officials during the event.

'Egyptian President's visit to Qatar provides strong impetus to Gaza ceasefire, aid efforts'

Ambassador says Qatar-Egypt trade increased by 38 percent in 2024, reaching approximately QR746m versus QR540m in 2023.

CAIRO: The Ambassador of Qatar to Egypt H E Tariq Ali Faraj Al Ansari **(pictured)** said President H E Abdel Fattah El Sisi's visit to Doha helps elevate bilateral strategic relations to broader horizons.

The Ambassador told QNA that this visit follows Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's visit to Egypt in June 2022 and President El Sisi's visits to Doha in September 2022 and in November 2022. These visits profoundly bolstered bilateral relations and extended cooperation avenues to include many political and economic issues. Al Ansari added that El Sisi's third visit to Doha comes at a critical phase for the Middle East and the Arab world and at a time when the Doha-Cairo relations are significantly growing across all fields, especially in the political, economic, and cultural spheres. It also coincides with the rapidly evolving events in the region, particularly the Palestinian issue, prompting further coordination and consultation.

The Ambassador added that both countries are aware of and addressing the regional and global challenges responsibly and honestly.

This visit, added Al Ansari, provides a strong impetus to the tireless and sincere efforts of Egypt and Qatar, under the prudent leaderships of both countries and their pivotal roles in negotiation and mediation, to halt the Israeli aggression, consolidate the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, and allow the entry of humanitarian, medical, and shelter aid into the Strip.



He also noted the continuation of joint mediation efforts with the United States, noting that the two countries share a unified position on Arab, regional, and international issues. Al Ansari added the visit would give an opportunity for consultations on the Gaza reconstruction and the Cairo Conference for Early Recovery and Reconstruction, ensuring the continued presence of Palestinians on their lands. He said the visit reflects both sides' desire to continue coordination to work towards de-escalation in the region, to prevent the region from slipping into further tensions, and the necessity of joint action between the two sides to reach a political settlement that ensures stability in the region, through the establishment of a Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as a final solution to the conflict.

Al Ansari affirmed that El Sisi's visit is the culmination of the progress made in the 5th session of the Qatar-Egypt Supreme Committee in 2024, to advance the prospects for political coordination and investment and economic cooperation between the two countries, and to explore investment prospects between the two sides, as Qatari-Egyptian relations have witnessed development in these areas.

Al Ansari said that the volume of trade exchange between Qatar and Egypt increased by 38 percent in 2024, reaching approximately QR746m versus QR540m in 2023.

These cultural and social ties are specially bolstered through the Egyptian community in Qatar, estimated in 2024 at approximately 200,000 people. — ***QNA***

Old Doha Port wraps up Fishing Exhibition, competition

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: After four vibrant days of activities, Old Doha Port has successfully concluded its inaugural Fishing Exhibition and its accompanying and highly anticipated Fishing Competition, solidifying its place as Qatar's premier cultural and sporting celebration of the sea.

The exhibition brought together sea lovers, industry professionals, and families for a rich celebration of Qatar's maritime heritage and modern fishing culture.

The exhibition highlighted the port's commitment to preserving cultural heritage and supporting fishing and marine sports enthusiasts while establishing itself as a one-stop destination for fishing.

The exhibition garnered incredible public and media attention, with visits from VIPs and dignitaries from various sectors, underscoring its cultural importance and national appeal within the event calendar of both the port and country. Exhibitors reported overwhelming footfall and strong sales throughout the event, with many noting it as one of the most commercially successful activations of the season.

A key highlight of the event was the Old Doha Port Fishing Competition, held in collaboration with Doha Marine Sports Club. As the largest competition of its kind in the country in terms of participation and winning prizes for fishing competitions, it saw a remarkable turnout of 578 participants across 132 teams.

The competition concluded with 25 winners honoured during a lively awards ceremony on the exhibition's final evening.

Engineer Mohammed Abdullah Al Mulla, CEO of Old Doha Port, commented: "At Old Doha Port, we see ourselves not just as a destination but as the proud custodians of Qatar's everlasting bond with the sea. This week, that spirit came alive — in every wave of excitement, every echo of tradition, and every cast line during our Fishing Exhibition and Competition. It was a beautiful reminder that heritage, when shared with heart, becomes a living experience. We look forward to growing this annual celebration as the kick-off to the fishing season into one of the region's defining marine traditions."

"We are also pleased by the great reception the Fishing Competition received and the unprecedented number of participants and fishing enthusiasts, reflecting our passion and strong connection to the marine environment. In turn, Old Doha Port is committed to further supporting these marine activities by increasing the number of competitions in the port's event calendar and hosting the Fishing Competition annually as part of the Fishing Exhibition in its next edition." Eng. Al Mulla concluded.



CEO of Old Doha Port, Engineer Mohammed Abdullah Al Mulla (right, front) and others with the winners.

Amir welcomes as President of Egypt arrives for official visit





Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani led the well-wishers to welcome President of Egypt H E Abdel Fattah El Sisi and the accompanying delegation upon their arrival at the Amiri Terminal of Hamad International Airport yesterday, on an official visit to Qatar.

'President's visit a new milestone on path to strategic partnership'

DOHA: Ambassador of Egypt to Qatar H E Amr El Sherbini **(pictured)** affirmed that Egyptian-Qatari relations are witnessing steady progress across all levels, thanks to the strong political will of both countries' leaderships and their commitment to advancing bilateral cooperation toward broader horizons.

He noted that the current visit of President H E Abdel Fattah El Sisi to Doha marks a new milestone on the path to a long-term strategic partnership between the two brotherly nations.

In a statement to QNA, the ambassador stated that the momentum in Egypt-Qatar relations since 2022 is a clear indication of the mutual understanding and respect shared between the two countries.

He added that the exchange of high-level visits helped build a solid foundation of trust, which is now being translated into tangible cooperation in the fields of politics, economy, culture, and development.

El Sherbini highlighted that economic cooperation remains a cornerstone of bilateral ties, stressing that Egypt welcomes Qatari investments and offers a conducive environment with attractive incentives.

The ambassador noted a



significant increase in trade exchange between the two countries in recent times, adding that they both are working to strengthen this further by exploring new opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, industry, agriculture, and tourism. On cultural cooperation, he pointed to the Egyptian Cultural Week hosted in Doha earlier this year as a vivid example of how cultural diplomacy can bring peoples closer together.

Speaking about the Egyptian community in Qatar, El Sherbini said that Egypt places great importance on its citizens abroad, describing the Egyptian diaspora as a bridge of communication between the two nations with a key role in enhancing cultural and social ties. On regional and international affairs, he stated that Egyptian-Qatari cooperation plays an effective role in supporting Arab and regional issues.

He emphasised that joint coordination between the two countries contributes to regional stability and helps address current challenges, particularly in areas such as security, counter-terrorism, and humanitarian efforts.

He concluded his remarks by affirming that Egypt and Qatar are entering a new phase of comprehensive cooperation, grounded in mutual respect and shared interests reflecting the depth of relationship between two peoples united by history and a common destiny. — *QNA*

First edition of Beach Sports Festival to be held from April 20 to 26

FROM PAGE 1

It would be recalled that AZF started beach competitions with the first edition of the Aspire Beach Volleyball Tournament held from April 17 to April 18, 2015, at the Sand Pitch at Aspire Zone.

Aspire Zone collaborated with the Qatar Volleyball Association to host this landmark event as it aimed to diversify the sporting events that it offers the local community.

The inaugural Aspire Beach Volleyball Tournament was a unique opportunity for local residents to compete separately in a fantastic initiative, where they had the chance to walk away with the best beach volleyball male/female team title in front of an enthusiastic homegrown crowd.

Athletes and teams interested in participating are invited to register via Aspire Zone Foundation's official website: www.aspirezone.qa.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador meets Qatar's Envoy

QUITO: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador H E Gabriela Sommerfeld met with Ambassador of Qatar to Ecuador H E Fahad Ahmed Jassim Al Hamar. The meeting discussed cooperation and relations between the two countries. — *QNA*

Katara Tech Forum launches specialised digital art training workshop

DOHA: The Katara Tech Forum yesterday launched a specialised digital art workshop in collaboration with the Aptech Qatar Computer Education Centre.

Running through April 20, the event is part of a broader series of technological and cultural initiatives adopted by the Forum since its inception.

It aims to hone participants' skills in artistic disciplines linked to digital transformation, while furnishing them with technological tools that empower creative expression through the language of the modern age.

Addressing the inaugural session, Director of the Information Technology Department at the Cultural Village Foundation Katara and Chair of the Katara Tech Forum, Thamer Al Qadi, stated that the workshop is part of the Forum's vision to build a technologically erudite generation and keep abreast of the evolution of technological advancements.

He noted that joining hands with the Aptech Center in delivering a successful workshop serves as an exceptional addition to the training pathway the forum offers to the public.

The event is one of the forum's flagship activities launched this year, specifically devoted to designers and individuals interested in graphic design and visual innovation. It comprises a package of professional courses in the most renowned digital design programs.

Katara Tech Forum is dedicated to the intersection of technology and culture. — *QNA*

HBKU delivers forum for Women in Academia

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Building upon the recent establishment of its Women in Academia Committee (WiAC), Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) staged its inaugural Forum for Women in Academia at Education City's Minaretein Building.

The Forum gathered faculty members, postdoctoral researchers and students from across Qatar Foundation (QF) to discuss topics shaping the diverse roles women play in academia. These included career advancement, building an inclusive academic landscape, and the importance of celebrating female academic achievements.

In doing so, the Forum provided a platform for networking and professional development, opportunities to collaborate on research projects, and more.

The Forum for Women in Academia also highlighted the overarching objectives of the WiAC, as well as key work already undertaken by committee members. Participants also had the opportunity to sign up to the Women in Academia Network, an initiative designed to enhance female academics' career prospects by connecting with like-minded colleagues. Not only is the Network expected to increase awareness of the important role women play in academia, but also build a community for female academics across Education City and Qatar based on existing and newly-established relations.

Following opening remarks by Dr. Ahmad M. Hasnah, President, HBKU, Dr. Luluwah Al Fagih, WiAC Chair and Associate Professor, College of Science and Engineering, provided an overview of the WiAC before handing over to Lora Gailly, Associate Project Officer, Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Section, UNESCO, for a discussion on the importance of closing the gender gap in science. A series of speeches, workshops, and panel discussions were then delivered by academics from across HBKU's six colleges. Proceedings were also informed by representatives from the Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women and Qatar Research Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council.



A panel discussion during the forum.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Forum, Dr. Al Fagih commented: "This event was the first of its kind in Qatar dedicated specifically to women in academia. It comes at a time when female representation in academic positions remains at a low level within universities around the world. The WiAC seeks to increase the participation of women by facilitating sustainable career and development opportunities for female academics. Today's Forum complemented this objective by highlighting how individuals and institutions alike can create a more equitable, diverse, and innovative academic environment."

HBKU's Women in Academia Committee (WiAC) works to advance the participation of women in academia. In its efforts to achieve this goal, the WiAC offers numerous programs, including mentoring, leadership training, and the Women in Academia Network.



Officials and partners at the Visit Qatar pavilion at WTM Africa.

Visit Qatar concludes participation at WTM Africa 2025 in Cape Town

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Visit Qatar concluded its participation at WTM Africa 2025, held from April 9 to 11 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, with notable recognition by receiving the award for the Most Innovative Stand.

The delegation featured nine key partners from Qatar's travel and hospitality sectors including Qatar Airways, Discover Qatar, Experience Qatar, Al Messila Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Doha, Ali Bin Ali Travel and Tourism, Marsa Malaz Kempinski, Radisson Blu Hotel Doha, Satguru Travel and Tours, and Tawfeeq Holidays.

Qatar's stand drew strong interest from international trade professionals and media, showcasing the country's cultural richness, world-class hospitality, and year-round event calendar. Highlights included an augmented reality photo booth featuring animals symbolic of Qatar's natural heritage and an interactive Qatar Calendar booth spotlighting the country's events and experiences.

Al Mujadilah enriches women's Islamic knowledge, experience

THE PENINSULA

Throughout Ramadan, Al Mujadilah offered a range of programmes for women.

DOHA: In its second Ramadan since opening to the public in early 2024, Qatar Foundation's Al-Mujadilah Center and Mosque for Women welcomed more than 16,000 women for nightly Tarawih and Qiyam prayers. Enriched by specialised programming and social gatherings, this year's offerings drew many new participants to the community.

"Ramadan is a time to draw closer to Allah, focus on religious practice, and strengthen our faith. It is also a time to prioritise and embrace family and community," Dr. Sohaira Z. Siddiqui, Executive Director of Al-Mujadilah, said.

"We met familiar faces from last year and welcomed new members of the community we had not seen before. Each one of us is at a different point in our personal and religious journey but under one roof, Al-Mujadilah offers a space for all. Women from diverse backgrounds and ages gathered each night to pray together. And in their diversity, we are reminded of our membership within a wider Muslim family and the rights we have on each other."

Al-Mujadilah once again served as a donation center for the Keswet Al Eid initiative, led by Education Above All Foundation in partnership with Qatar Red Crescent. The campaign collected new clothing and school bags as Eid gifts for children in Gaza and Syria.

Throughout Ramadan, Al Mujadilah offered a range of programmes, encouraging Muslim women to continue their ongoing learning, as well as offering opportunities to reflect on the principles and ethical insights within the Prophetic Hadith, and strengthen their connection with the Quran.

These included programmes dedicated to analysing Surah An Nissa, Surah Al Naml, and Quranic memorisation (Hifth).

Noora Al Rawahi, a PhD candidate at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), regularly attended the Intensive Hifth programme and successfully memorised Surah Al Naml.

This Ramadan was her first observance in Qatar. She strengthened her connection to the Qur'an and also developed a newfound sense of community.

"Attending the programme, which included both Quran recitation and Tadabbur – reflecting on the message of Quranic verses – boosted my confidence in memorising the Quran," she said. "I was able to see my progress alongside a community of women who, like me, wanted to make the most of Ramadan by strengthening our bond with the sacred verses. I now feel more connected, not only to the Quran, but also to the welcoming community here in Qatar that surrounds it." Imam Ahmed Al Qattani led Tarawih and Qiyam prayers through the 27th night of Ramadan, with guest Imam Mohammad Al Barrak leading the congregation on the 28th and 29th nights.

The first of two post-Tarawih talks was delivered by Dr. Farid Al Hindawi – a Sharia expert within the Zakat Fund Management department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. His talk focused on the practical aspects of Zakat and was followed by a Q&A titled 'The Essentials of Zakat'.

The second series of post-Tarawih talks was led by Sheikh Ahmad Al Dosari – an imam, lecturer, and PhD researcher. His bi-weekly 'Ramadan Reflections' offered religious reminders, including on the virtues of Sadaqa (voluntary acts of charity) during the Holy Month.

The 2025 spring cycle of programming at Al Mujadilah will begin in April.



Speaker of Shura Council, President of Italian Chamber of Deputies discuss developments in Gaza Strip

DOHA: Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim met yesterday with President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic H E Lorenzo Fontana, who is visiting the country.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to enhance cooperation between Qatar and Italy, especially in the parliamentary field. They also emphasized the importance of strengthening parliamentary cooperation channels and intensifying coordination in international parliamentary forums.

The meeting also addressed the developments in the Gaza Strip, as H E Speaker of the Shura Council stressed the need for parliaments to play their moral and humanitarian role in pressuring for an end to the aggression against the Palestinian people, and pushing for the adoption of more effective positions by European parliaments, which would contribute to halting the worsening humanitarian tragedy and supporting international efforts to achieve justice and peace.

Secretary-General of the Shura Council H E Nayef bin Mohamed Al Mahmoud also met yesterday with Secretary-General of the Italian Chamber of Deputies H E Fabrizio Castaldi who is visiting Qatar. Discussion during the meeting focused on ways to enhance bilateral cooperation, exchange expertise, and learn about leading practices in the work of general secretariats, in addition to strengthening coordination channels to achieve common institutional goals. — *QNA*

Municipality Ministry launches competition to raise environmental awareness among students

THE PENINSULA



DOHA: The Ministry of Municipality announced the launch of the 'Green Strokes' competition, in partnership with the Seashore Group. Under the slogan "Together for a better, cleaner classroom," the competition targets school students at all levels.

This competition is part of efforts to spread the culture of public cleanliness, waste separation at the source, and environmental awareness among young people.

The competition aims to raise students' awareness of the importance of public cleanliness and environmental conservation, and encourage them to express these values creatively through innovative artworks that contribute to conveying effective awareness messages to the community. It also promotes the concepts of sustainability, recycling, and the optimal use of resources.

The competition revolves around creating artworks that depict clean and sustainable environmental scenes or the stages of recycling in waste separation. It also highlights the impact of recycling on environmental protection and resource sustainability, while imagining the future of Qatar with the widespread application of these environmental practices.

This partnership between the Ministry of Municipality and the Seashore Group stems from the pioneering goals in the field of recycling, which focus on promoting values and raising community awareness of public cleanliness and waste segregation.

This partnership also includes community engagement in educational initiatives as a key objective, empowering youth in entrepreneurship, volunteer work, environmental work, and leadership in environmental education to build an informed generation capable of facing future challenges and building a sustainable society.

The competition will continue until May 2025. Entries will be accepted electronically in PDF format, including student and school information and contact numbers, via the dedicated email address (Seashore@seashorerecycling.com).

Entries will be evaluated by a specialised committee comprising representatives from the Ministry of Municipality, Seashore Group, and several art and design specialists.

The evaluation mechanism will be based on criteria of artistic creativity, quality of concept implementation, clarity of the awareness message, use of colour, and innovative expression.

The organising committee intends to announce the awards for the first-place winners at a later date, in recognition of their efforts and to encourage them to continue adopting positive environmental behaviours, promoting public hygiene practices, and separating waste at the source.

الأكاديمية العربية الدولية
ARAB INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

Tender Announcement

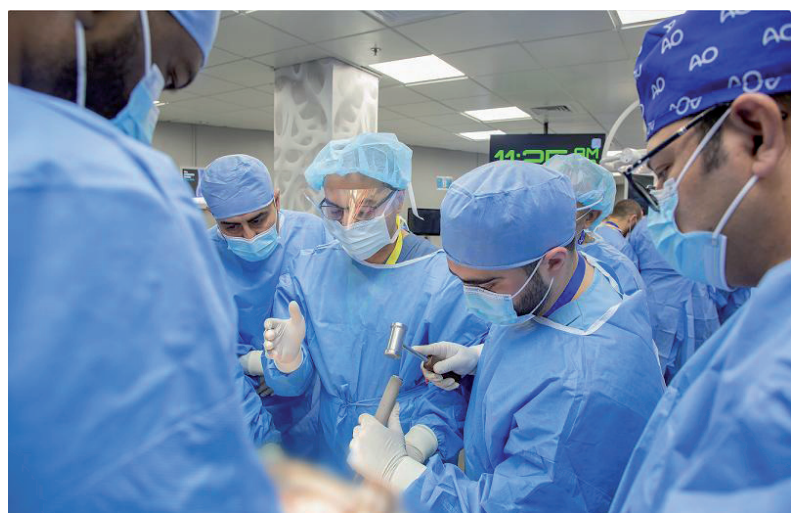
Arab International Academy (AIA) Procurement Committee

Tender Ref. No.	Bid Document Procedure	Subject	Bid Bond	Tender Fee	Closing Date
AIA/02/25	Two Sealed envelopes, 1 Technical & 1 Financial	Supply & delivery of information and communication technology items (ICT) for Arab International Academy -Doha and Lusail branches	QAR 50,000 /- to be issued by the bidder, valid for 120 days	500 QR (Cash) are not refundable.	Monday 28/04/2025 12:00 pm

- Tender fees (500 QR) (Cash Payment) are not refundable.
- Tender Documents can be collected starting from Tuesday, 15/04/2025. from 08:00 am—02:00 pm, from Arab International Academy—Lusail– Admin Building—Reception, until Monday, 21/04/2025 @02:00 pm.
- Clarifications start from 15/04/2025 to 23/04/2025. Inquiries must be sent to s.zidat@aia.qa / a.alsabah@aia.qa /y.mullantakath@aialusail.qa / s.romdhane@aialusail.qa.
- Technical and financial bids can be submitted from 08:00 am – 02:00 pm, starting from Thursday , 24/04/2025 until Monday, 28/04/2025 @12:00 pm.
- The bid documents (financial offer, technical offer, and tender bond) must be submitted in separate sealed envelopes at the office of the AIA Procurement Coordinator at (Arab International Academy – Lusail – Admin building) and shall be addressed to The Head of the Procurement Committee in addition to the tender Ref number and subject. Any envelope that shows the company name, logo, or any other info related to the company that submitted the offer will be excluded.
- To obtain the tender / bid documents mentioned above, a letter of authorization from the company / institution and a copy of the commercial registration must be presented.
- The Tender Bond can be in a separate envelope or with the technical envelope.
- For your inquiries, and for more information about the tender, please send them to the following email address: s.zidat@aia.qa , d.ghanem@aialusail.qa.

Advanced spinal surgery techniques highlighted at Aspetar's AO Spine Course

THE PENINSULA



Aspetar's experts explaining the techniques during the course.

DOHA: Aspetar, Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital successfully hosted the AO Spine Advanced Specimen Course: Deformity—Advanced Techniques and Complex Cases on April 12–13, 2025, for the second consecutive year. Held at Aspetar's state-of-the-art Surgical Training Center in Doha, Qatar, the course brought together elite spine surgeons and experts from around the world to share knowledge, refine skills, and discuss the latest advancements in managing complex spinal deformities.

Organised in collaboration with AO Spine, a global leader in spine surgery education, the two-day intensive course featured lectures, interactive case discussions, and hands-on practical sessions using human anatomical specimens. Participants had the opportunity to practice advanced correction techniques such as pedicle subtraction osteotomies, posterior vertebral column resections, multirod constructs, sacropelvic fixation, and anterior spinal surgery approaches. The course also explored emerging technologies like surgical navigation systems and biologics to enhance patient outcomes.

Dr. Abdulaziz Jaham Alkuwari, CEO of Aspetar and Chairperson of the event, emphasized the significance of hosting such a high-level educational program: "Aspetar is proud to partner once again with AO Spine to deliver this important course in spinal surgery. Hosting this event for the second year in a row underscores our commitment to advancing medical education and facilitating knowledge exchange in highly specialized fields like orthopedic surgery. This initiative directly contributes to enhancing surgeons' skills and ultimately improving care for patients with spinal deformities."

Aspetar's Surgical Training Center is the first of its kind in the region, offering surgeons an unparalleled environment to develop their expertise in orthopedic and sports injury surgeries. Equipped with up to 10 fully functional surgical stations and cutting-edge arthroscopy facilities, the center regularly hosts workshops and training courses in collaboration with international organizations. Its realistic training environment ensures that surgeons can master techniques that lead to improved patient care and treatment outcomes.

The AO Spine course further solidifies Aspetar's position as a regional leader in orthopedic education and its dedication to promoting surgical excellence both locally and internationally. As part of Aspire Zone Foundation, Aspetar remains committed to fostering innovation through education, research, and collaboration with global institutions like AO Spine.

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

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

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

Clarifications:

- Materials can be inspected at the company's site in Zekreet / Dukhan starting from Sunday 13/4/2025 until Thursday 17/04/2025 from 6 am to 12 pm.
- The entry of any person into the auction confirms that he has fully inspected the materials being auctioned and that he accepted it in that condition.
- Price offers must be submitted in a sealed envelope at the company's main office in Tornado Tower 9th Floor by latest Tuesday 22/04/2025.
- Applicants to bid must submit a temporary cash margin amounting to QAR 15,000 and the Company has the right to confiscate this amount if the winner of the bid withdraws.
- The bid envelopes will be opened on Thursday 24/04/2025, and then the concerned parties to whom the auction will be awarded will be addressed.
- When the auction is concluded, 20% of the sale value will be paid as a non-refundable deposit and the full sale price will be paid on the next day.
- If the buyer does not pay the full sale price within two working days of closing the auction, the Auction Committee may re-offer the materials for auction again or sell it to another buyer. It is not permissible to claim the advance sale price paid.
- The handover of materials will take place only after paying the full sale price.
- The ID card or company commercial registration must be presented when the auction is awarded to complete the sale procedures.
- For further inquiries and inspection purposes, please call 55376744 / 51014871.

Open Invitation **Black Cat Engineering and Construction W.L.L.**

مناطق manateq
شركة المناطق الاقتصادية، قطر
ECONOMIC ZONES COMPANY, QATAR

تدعو شركة مناطق الاقتصادية (مناطق) الشركات المحلية والعالمية للاشتراك بالمناقصة الآتية

مناقصة Tender

MANATEQ (Economic Zones Company) would like to invite competent local and/or international Companies for the following Open Tender.

رقم المناقصة Tender No.	موضوع المناقصة Tender Subject	قيمة التأمين الابتدائي Tender Bond	رسوم المناقصة غير مستردة / Tender Fee / Non-refundable	موعد الإغلاق Closing Date
TC/02/2025	ادارة خدمات تكنولوجيا المعلومات Manateq IT Infrastructure Managed Services	20,000.00 QR	500.00 QR	06th May 2025 9:00am -12:00pm

Description of work :
Manateq wants a vendor to Manage Manateq services / network and security devices / platforms / applications / databases 24x7 in a real time in accordance with this tender.

وصف العمل:
ترغب شركة مناطق في مزود لإدارة الخدمات للعمل على إدارة / أجهزة الشبكات والأمن / المنصات / التطبيقات / قواعد البيانات على مدار الساعة طوال أيام الأسبوع وفقًا لهذه المناقصة.

Collection Date and Location:
Starting 13th April 2025 (09:00am to 02:00 pm)
MANATEQ - Small and Medium Industries Zone.
Jameel Khan - IT Support - T: +974 40323357
Email :j.khan@manateq.qa

موعد ومكان استلام وثائق المناقصة
بدءاً من 13 إبريل 2025 (9 صباحاً حتى الـ2 ظهراً)
مناطق- منطقة الصناعات الصغيرة والمتوسطة
جميل خان | مساعد فني - هاتف: +974 40323357
البريد الالكتروني : j.khan@manateq.qa

Tender Fees could be paid through a cheque, payable to 'Economic Zones Company QSC (Manateq) ~ or electronically as per below:

يتم دفع رسوم المناقصة من خلال شيك قابل للدفع بإسم شركة المناطق الاقتصادية (مناطق) أو عن طريق تحويل بنكي للحساب التالي:

Account Name : Economic Zones Company - Manateq
Bank : Qatar National Bank Account No. : 0013-026499-001
IBAN No. : QA19QNBA000000000013026499001 SWIFT CODE : QNBAQAQA

Collect the tender documents must comply with the following:
1 - Delegation for receiving tender documents.
2 - Copy of representative ID.
3 - Tender fees bank account depositing slip

لتحصيل وثائق المناقصة يتعين الإلتزام بما يلي :
1- احضار تفويض لاستلام وثائق المناقصة.
2- صورة من البطاقة الشخصية للمندوب الذي سوف يحصل على وثائق المناقصة.
3 - ايصال ايداع رسوم وثائق المناقصة.

Submission location
Tenders Committee Secretary - Economic Zones Company - Small and Medium Industries Zone, P.O.Box : 29000 - Doha - Qatar - T: 40323333

موقع التسليم
أمين سر لجنة المناقصات - شركة المناطق الاقتصادية - منطقة الصناعات الصغيرة والمتوسطة
ص.ب : 29000 الدوحة - قطر - هاتف : 40323333

تحتفظ شركة المناطق الاقتصادية بكامل حقها في تعديل شروط المناقصة في أي وقت بدون إبداء أسباب و/ أو إلغاء المناقصة بدون إبداء أسباب وبدون أدنى مسئولية عليها في هذا الصدد أياً كان نوعها او مصدرها
Economic Zones Company reserves its right in modifying terms of the tender at any time and\or cancelling the tender at any time without need of providing reasons and without any responsibility on its part whatever its kind

MSDF wraps up cultural crafts preservation programme

DOHA: The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), represented by the Family Empowerment Department, on Sunday wrapped up the cultural crafts preservation programme.

The year-long programme continued in partnership with Qatar Museums (QM), represented by Qatar's epicenter for innovation and entrepreneurship in design, fashion, and technology (M7), alongside the Social Development Center (NAMA).

In a statement on Sunday, the ministry highlighted that the programme focused on Sadu weaving techniques, along with the importance of preserving and advancing them to keep up with the world of modern design.

Director of the Family Empowerment Department, Fatima Al Nuaimi, affirmed that the programme aspires to transform participants into professional craft owners rather than mere consumers, and empower individuals who wield the skill of Sadu weaving to internalize this skill by training owners of productive ventures. — *QNA*



Al Hammadi meets Ambassador of Nepal

Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi met yesterday with Ambassador of Nepal to the State of Qatar H E Ramesh Chandra Paudel. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Aman Center renews ISO 9001:2015 certification, receives new ISO 45001:2018 certification

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Center (AMAN), one of the centers of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, has announced that it has obtained renewal of its Quality Management System certificate, by the international standard ISO 9001:2015.

This comes after internal and external audits of the administrative and executive procedures followed in the center, the workflow mechanisms, and the services provided to the target groups of women, children, and victims of family disintegration due to violence, were carried out through the application of the standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

A committee of external auditors approved the renewal of the certificate by conducting a comprehensive audit of all procedures and operations carried out by the center's departments and divisions, and ensuring their compliance with international quality management standards and criteria.

The center announced that it has obtained a new certificate in the ISO 45001:2018 occupational health and safety management system.

In this context, Fadhel bin Mohammed Al Kaabi, Acting Executive Director of Aman Center, said, "We are committed to providing high-quality services to the targeted groups of women, children, and victims of family disintegration and violence, and working to protect, rehabilitate, and integrate them into society.

"We have been working diligently to renew the Quality Management System certification by international standards."

He said that this is due to the Aman Center's commitment to following the procedures and processes implemented by each department to improve the quality of work and provide the best protection, rehabilitation, and social integration services to the targeted groups.

Al Kaabi also emphasized that the effort to renew the quality certificate by international standards and regulations is an ideal experience and a positive step towards changing the internal work style and improving the quality of services provided to target groups.

QCDC highlights 2024 milestones in annual report

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC), founded by Qatar Foundation (QF), has released its 2024 Annual Report, showcasing a year of dedicated efforts toward building national capacity and preparing the next generation of talent in line with the nation's drive toward a knowledge-based economy and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The report highlights the Center's remarkable progress over the past year in empowering Qatar's youth and promoting career development and guidance across Qatar and beyond. It also emphasizes QCDC's leadership role in fostering workplace inclusivity and expanding access to its innovative programmes and services, which are designed to keep pace with the dynamic demands of today's labour markets, both locally and globally.

Saad Abdulla Al Kharji, Acting Director of QCDC, stated: "Since our inception, QCDC has been committed to building a flexible and sustainable national career development ecosystem that equips young people to navigate change and seize emerging opportunities. The year 2024 marked a defining moment in this journey, as we expanded our positive impact and further empowered career guidance practitioners in alignment with the ambitions of Qatar National Vision 2030."

According to the newly published report, QCDC implemented more than 22 programs and initiatives in 2024, benefiting nearly 187,000 students. Among them, over 2,300 students participated in job shadowing experiences facilitated by the Center. In addition, more than 390 academic advisors and career guidance practitioners have engaged in QCDC's training programmes.

The Center's educational and awareness content also witnessed impressive growth in reach and engagement, with its digital platforms attracting 141,000 user interactions and 176,000 website visitors. Meanwhile, QCDC's flagship publication, Career Guide, maintained a strong readership, reaching 64,000 readers over the year.

One of the year's standout initiatives was the launch of the Glossary of Career Development Terms Search Engine—the first of its kind in Arabic.



Officials and students at one of the events organised by QCDC.

This interactive platform provides an invaluable resource for Arabic-speaking career practitioners, researchers, and academics across Qatar and the wider Arab world.

The Center also released the fifteenth edition of Career Guide magazine, dedicated to celebrating the achievements of Qatari women across various sectors, further reinforcing QCDC's commitment to nurturing a scientifically grounded career culture across all segments of society.

Furthermore, QCDC strengthened its international presence by representing Qatar at several major conferences and through strategic partnerships, including participation in the National Career Development Association (NCDA) Conference in the United States, the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) Conference in Finland, and the Arab Career Development Conference (ACDC) in Egypt. These efforts reflect QCDC's growing role as a key driver in shaping the future of career guidance locally, regionally, and globally.

ICAO Council approves Doha FIR/ UIR Phase Two implementation

FROM PAGE 1

"These achievements have been crowned recently with an ICAO Council's approval to going ahead with implementing Phase Two of the Doha FIR in a significant step towards improving the management of air traffic over international waters north of Qatar and providing more efficient and resilient operations.

"This approval is the culmination of the success over the past two years since the implementation of Phase One began and the State of Qatar has proven its deservedness and compliance with highest safety and efficiency standards, something which strengthened the international community's belief in our technical and operational capabilities," he added.

As Phase Two begins, he said, "we will progress on our ambitious course to create a modern civil aviation system consistent with our national vision and in step with best and highest universal practices in the industry."

Mohamed Faleh Alhajri, in charge of managing the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority said that the ICAO Council's decision adds up to the advanced steps and previous achievements by Qatar since the approval to go ahead with implementing Phase One of Doha FIR, which was a milestone in the history of Qatari civil aviation.

In this regard, he added, Qatar has gone a long way in developing its air navigation systems in line with latest global standards and specifications, something that reflects the excellence it has reached it terms of providing air services to the best efficiency levels, let alone its compliance with highest safety, security and sustainability standards.

The QCAA has over recent months implemented a range of operational practices and requirements to prepare for the activation of the Phase Two. That included adopting safety procedures and committing to ICAO standards, ensuring a seamless transition to the next phase without compromising operational safety.

Ministry of Transport begins developing Qatar Public Transport Master Plan

FROM PAGE 1

They are aimed at improving Qatar's climate quality in step with the QNV 2030's pillar of environmental development, in addition to serving a diverse audience, including policy-makers, government officials, developers, investors, consultants, engineers, and planners by equipping those stakeholders with actionable frameworks and guidelines for effective planning, design, implementation, and operation of public transit services.

The QPTMP will also encompass prescriptive policies, laws and regulations, accompanied by a robust monitoring programme for integrated and comprehensive solutions through harnessing innovation to meet the growing needs for a coherent, advanced, and sustainable national public transportation system. This aligns with the MoT's endeavour to achieve the goals of the National Development Strategy and QNV 2030.

The QPTMP is poised to serve as bedrock of a future where public transportation could significantly contribute to generating economic, social, human, and environmental opportunities, and enhancing resilience and progress for all who live and thrive in Qatar.

The QPTMP's ripple effects will have far-reaching societal and environmental benefits, supporting healthier lifestyles, fostering economic vitality, and mitigating the ecological footprint of urban expansion through reducing carbon emissions utilizing smarter transit solutions and rubber-stamping Qatar's commitment to sustainability.

The MoT believes in the importance of society's participation and pays great attention to fulfilling their aspirations in the QPTMP to provide solutions that meet their needs. For that, the MoT will be conducting public surveys to gather data on people's mobility preferences and opinions on public transportation modes. The surveys will be conducted from April to August 2025 at metro, tram and bus stations, public markets, and shopping malls.

The MoT is pleased to invite the public to cooperate with its survey teams and take a few minutes to answer the survey to ensure the accuracy of the data gathered and help reach a better understanding of people's needs in this respect. All the data gathered will be treated with full privacy and confidentiality and used exclusively for the purposes of the survey.

'Gift of Gold' offers from Malabar Gold & Diamonds, get assured gold coins on jewellery purchase

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with an extensive retail network of over 390 outlets across 13 countries, has unveiled their 'Gift of Gold' offers providing customers the chance to get free gold coins.

With this offer, customers can get assured gold coins with diamond jewellery purchases above QR3500.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds will also be showcasing an exquisite array of jewellery collections in gold, diamond and precious gems across their numerous sub brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaz, Ethnix & Divine etc., which are assured to be favourites amongst their customers. The limited period offer can be availed across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets till May 3.

As part of the Golden Gift offers, for every diamond or precious gem jewellery purchase worth worth QR6,000, customers will get free 1gm Gold Coin and for diamond and precious gem jewellery purchase worth QR3,500 they will be eligible for ½ gm Gold Coin. Customers can also exchange their old 916 jewellery for the latest designs from Malabar Gold & Diamonds at zero deduction.

"The Gift of Gold offers from Malabar Gold & Diamonds will definitely be a great compliment to the prosperity that our customers usher in when they buy jewellery. With the assurance of free gold coins on jewellery purchase along with many more offers, we are certain that connoisseurs of jewellery across the nation will flock to our showrooms. Offering great value on purchase along with a wide host of trendy designs that are a treat for jewellery lovers, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is once again solidifying its position as the go-to place for jewellery shopping," commented Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.



The special designs has been made available across a wide range of sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaz, Ethnix and Divine, comprising of 22k gold, diamonds and precious gem jewellery. Enthralling designs in 18K collection has also been made available as part of the collection.

In light of the gold rate fluctuations, customers can take advantage of the Gold Rate Protection offer provided by Malabar Gold & Diamonds, wherein customers can block the prevailing gold rates by paying just a 10% as advance, valid till the May 3.

If the gold rate goes up during this period, customers can purchase at the blocked rate and if the rate happens to go down, customers can draw mileage from the lower rate. The Gold Rate Protection offer can be availed by visiting any of Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets, or online through their mobile app.

VCUarts Qatar to host 'Design for Humanitarian Crisis Response' lecture and panel discussion

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: VCUarts Qatar and Anthro-Tech Ateliers will host a public lecture and panel discussion titled "Design for Humanitarian Crisis Response" on April 14, in collaboration with the Embassy of Sweden to the State of Qatar. The event will explore how design thinking and innovation can help communities affected by displacement, conflict, and environmental crises.

The session will begin with welcome remarks by the Dean of VCUarts Qatar, Amir Berbić, followed by a keynote lecture from Johan Karlsson, managing director at Better Shelter, a humanitarian nonprofit developing temporary shelters for displaced people. Johan will share insights from over a decade of work at the intersection of design, engineering, and humanitarian response.

"As designers, we have the unique responsibility not only to create beautiful and functional spaces but also to address the critical needs of those affected by disasters and conflict. This panel discussion highlights the transformative power of design in humanitarian efforts, offering innovative solutions that can provide shelter, dignity, and hope to those in need during the most challenging times. It is our privilege and duty to be part of this conversation and to drive change through thoughtful, empathetic design," said Amir Berbić, Dean, VCUarts Qatar.

The event will explore how design thinking and innovation can help communities affected by displacement, conflict, and environmental crises.

"Sweden has long championed innovation with purpose – where design, sustainability, and human rights go hand in hand. This event reflects our strong belief in the power of creativity to solve real-world challenges. We are proud to support a conversation that brings together designers, academics, and humanitarian actors to co-create solutions that offer safety, restore agency, and rebuild lives in times of crisis," stated Gautam Bhattacharyya, Ambassador of Sweden to the State of Qatar, underscoring Sweden's commitment to global humanitarian innovation.

The keynote will be followed by a panel discussion between Dr. Alkindi Aljawabra, Director, Qatar Museums and Johan Karlsson, Better Shelter, moderated by Dr. Johan Granberg, Professor of Interior Design at VCUarts Qatar.

This event aims to inspire dialogue around how designers, architects, and students can contribute to global humanitarian efforts through creative, scalable, and culturally responsive thinking and practice.

"At Better Shelter, we believe that thoughtful, human-centered design, developed in collaboration with humanitarian organisations, donors, and academia, can help restore a sense of agency and hope for people who have lost everything. I look forward to sharing our journey and learning from others working at the intersection of creativity and crisis."

The Peninsula
ESTABLISHED IN 1996

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EDITORIAL

Tackling climate change

SUSTAINABLE development and combating climate change are among the top priorities of Qatar. It was one of the first nations to ratify the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1996.

In September 2021, Qatar's Council of Ministers approved the National Climate Change Plan, a strategic framework reflecting Qatar's long-term sustainability goals and need to respond effectively to the climate crisis. An integral part of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the plan sets out Qatar's commitment to tackle climate change by diversifying the economy, building capabilities, and optimising the use of natural resources.

It establishes national climate targets to enhance climate resilience through more than 35 measures and over 300 adaptation initiatives focused on mitigation.

In November 2024, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MECC) launched its 2024-2030 strategy. The strategy's is based on four key pillars, with environmental sustainability and climate change as being the first focus.

The second pillar centres on supporting research, innovation and digital transformation. The third pillar refers to strengthening environmental legislation and policies, adhering to sustainability standards and providing protection for ecosystems from cyber risks within the governance framework. The fourth pillar focuses on building sustainable institutional development.

The National Climate Change Action Plan of Qatar aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by at least 25%, equivalent to 37 million tonnes of CO2 by 2030. It includes reducing emissions by between 13.8 and 16.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from the oil and gas sector, between 5.1 and 6.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from the energy and water sector, and between 3 and 3.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from the transportation sector, and between 1.6 and 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from the building, construction and industry sector.

Besides, additional measures have been taken to achieve the reduction target of 8.3 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent from other sources.

The measures include carbon capture and storage, energy efficiency programme, energy conservation in buildings, expansion of renewable energy projects, improving energy and water production efficiency, increased use of public transportation, environmentally friendly electric vehicles, and green building standards, among many others.

France can and must do more than recognising Palestinian statehood



XAVIER ABU EID
AL JAZEERA

ON Wednesday, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that France is preparing to recognise Palestinian statehood within a few months. If it proceeds, Paris would become the 12th European Union member to officially accept the existence of the Palestinian state. Last year, Slovenia, Ireland and Spain did so, bringing the total number of EU states recognising Palestine to 11 out of 27.

The French recognition would be a significant step in the right direction, especially if it affirms Palestine's 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, respecting international law provisions and the international consensus.

This could move other European countries to do the same, including Luxembourg and Portugal and could put significant pressure on others, notably the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Belgium.

However, France is at risk of turning its recognition of Palestine into another empty gesture to save face amid growing opposition among Europeans to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the genocide in Gaza.

Under Macron, France has been far from meeting its legal and political obligations towards Palestine, turning a blind eye to Israel's horrific crimes and violations. In this context, the French announcement can be seen as a diplomatic move that is too little, too late.

Until recently, Western powers largely conditioned the recognition of Palestine on the outcome of peace negotiations, which in reality meant giving Israel a veto right over Palestinian statehood. This is because Israel does not want negotiations to produce a solution – whether a two-state one along the 1967 borders or a one-state one in which Palestinians and Israelis have equal rights.

Israeli law opposes recognition of Palestine and the fulfilment of the Palestinian right to self-determination, but Western powers have continued to act as if this was not the case.

Israel was given this leverage over Palestine despite the fact that its own statehood was based on United Nations Resolution 181, which called for the creation of two states, and its membership in the UN was conditioned on the implementation of Resolutions 181 and 194 – the latter pertaining to the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Successive Israeli governments have systematically violated both resolutions as well as many others without facing any consequences from their Western allies.

Now that the Israeli government has finally made clear that its plan is ethnic cleansing and annexation of all of Palestine, some Western countries seem to be reconsidering their stance and are opting to recognise Palestinian statehood.

While recognition is important, it cannot be the only step a country such as France should take to implement the Palestinian right to self-determination. France is a former colonial power in the Middle East, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a leading member of the EU, one of Israel's most important trading partners and an important donor for Palestine.

As such, it has the moral and legal obligation to do more than that. Recognition on its own is not going to stop the ongoing ethnic cleansing and annexation. These processes continue unabated because countries like France fail to act and hold Israel accountable.

For example, France was one of the first European countries to grant de facto immunity to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against him in November. Paris has opened its airspace on several occasions for Netanyahu to fly over on his way to the United States in violation of its obligations under the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC.

Despite growing calls for an arms embargo on Israel, France has continued to sell weapons to the Israeli army during the ongoing genocide. French citizens face no repercussions for engaging in settler-colonialism in the occupied West Bank or serving in the Israeli occupation forces, which have been repeatedly accused of committing horrific war crimes.

Likewise, France continues to tolerate the fundraising for illegal Israeli settlements while several French companies have contributed to the ongoing annexation process of occupied Palestinian territory.

France has been granted a special role in Jerusalem with regards to protecting the status quo benefits of Christian denominations. However, it has hardly taken any concrete measures to stop ongoing Israeli attempts to impose illegal taxes on churches and take over church property.

If France is truly interested in being a broker of peace in the Middle East, it needs to do more than just recognising Palestinian statehood. It must act in accordance with its obligations under the UN Charter and the Rome Statute. It must put real pressure on Israel to end its occupation and colonisation of Palestinian land and take action against French citizens and companies involved in them. It must reverse its decision to grant immunity to Israeli officials wanted by the ICC.

At the EU level, France must join Spain and Ireland in demanding a review of the EU-Israel Association Agreement in light of Israel's flagrant violation of Article 2, which stipulates that relations should be based on respect for human rights.

It goes without saying that the Israeli government opposes any recognition of Palestine and will make use of its available tools to prevent it. It could apply pressure by mobilising domestic opposition, coordinating with close Israeli allies, such as the United States, and taking action against diplomats based in Jerusalem – among other tactics.

This will force France to face its moment of truth: Is it willing to stand up for its principles, or will it succumb to Israeli blackmail? Will it lead the way in Europe on respecting international obligations, or will it let its recognition of Palestine remain an empty gesture? At a time when US President Donald Trump's administration endorses ethnic cleansing as an official policy and the EU is at its lowest political point with regards to Palestine, France has the opportunity to make a difference. It can join other EU members, like Spain and Ireland, which along with the Global South are pushing for a rules-based international order where Palestine is no longer the exception to the norm. It can live up to its own motto of "liberté, égalité, fraternité" by supporting the Palestinian people's pursuit of liberty, equality and fraternity.

–Xavier Abu Eid is a political scientist, PhD candidate at Trinity College Dublin and former adviser to the Palestine Liberation Organization.



People watch as Palestinian rescuers try to pull casualties from the rubble after an Israeli strike on the Manoun family home in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on yesterday (AFP)

Why should Iran believe anything the US threatens or promises?



ANDREAS KLUTH
BLOOMBERG/
WASHINGTON POST

FEWER than 100 days into his second term as president, Donald Trump can so far claim at least one kind of success: He's restarted negotiations between the US and some of its adversaries, first Russia and now Iran. On Saturday, Trump's "special envoy" for seemingly everything, Steve Witkoff, met high-level Iranians in Oman to discuss ways to constrain Tehran's nuclear program and avert war.

The problem – as hostage negotiators, relationship therapists and others can confirm – is that talking doesn't always solve a problem and can even make it worse, depending on the intentions, interests and mental states of the interlocutors. The Iranians (like the Russians) are notoriously shifty negotiators. But so are the Americans, now that they're led by Trump.

His fans keep reciting the canard that he intuits the Art of the Deal or plays multi-dimensional chess. In reality, the president has been contradicting himself and garbling his signals to an extent that now hampers negotiations with any rational actors, whether they're in Tehran, Beijing, Moscow or Pyongyang, or even (when the subject is tariffs) in Brussels, Ottawa or Mexico City. Not to mention irrational actors.

The confusion starts with his underlying shtick, sometimes called the Madman Theory. As MAGA stans gloat, Trump is so unpredictable that his opponents get scared, which allegedly makes them weak and him strong. As the scholar Roseanne McManus has shown, however, this strategy, or disposition, easily backfires. Adversaries may conclude that the madman is a wild card who cannot be trusted to abide by any agreement, so that yielding is at best pointless and at worst suicidal.

That is how Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, probably sees the American president. In his first term, Trump backed out of a multinational deal dating to his predecessor that limited Iran's nuclear program. That agreement wasn't perfect, but Iran was complying with it, by allowing monitors to observe its activities and restricting the technologies to civilian uses. Trump instead applied "maximum pressure" by tightening sanctions and ordering the assassination of an Iranian commander.

Now Trump is once again exerting maximum pressure, while simultaneously offering talks and threatening war, and neither of those convincingly. When hosting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week, the president mused that "doing a deal would be preferable to doing the obvious" – a military strike, he meant – because "the obvious is not something I want to be involved with." On he went in this ambiguous way, hinting that "if the talks aren't successful ... I think Iran is going to be in great danger." Does that mean that Trump would accede to Netanyahu's preference and join Israel in attacking Iran? His promise to his MAGA base has been the exact opposite: to keep American out of foreign wars and be a "peacemaker." And what would satisfy Trump enough to call the talks "successful"? His advisers have said that the Iranians must "give up their entire" atomic program, even though the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty explicitly allows signatories, including Iran, to develop civilian nuclear infrastructure. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has warned that the US could "go further and perhaps even threaten the regime." What Trump seems to demand, and what Netanyahu has explicitly called for, is the "Libya model." That refers to a decision in 2003 by that country's former dictator, Moammar al Qaddafi, to scrap weapons of mass destruction in return for sanctions relief. This is exactly the wrong precedent, as any decent negotiator should know. Having disarmed, Qaddafi soon felt betrayed by the US. In 2011, American and NATO forces backed Libyan insurgents, and Qaddafi met a gruesome end. Both North Korea and Iran concluded that the Libya model was a compelling reason not against, but for, their nuclear programs.

An approach with better odds of success, if it came across as credible, might be to ask Iran not to ditch nuclear technology altogether but only to forswear its weaponization and to accept rigorous international verification. That conforms with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (which also obliges the US and other nuclear powers to work toward their own disarmament, as it happens). If it lets the ayatollah think that he could again rev up a weapons program in future, that might be an advantage in getting him to sign on, just as Trump and Netanyahu need to believe they could return to a war footing at any point.

The contradictions in Trump's messaging don't end there. If keeping Iran from getting nukes is his priority, the president should also be lining up support from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states and build a regional anti-Tehran coalition. Instead, by letting Netanyahu resume his campaign in the Gaza Strip unfettered, he's making Arab cooperation all but impossible.

And so the incongruities keep piling up: Trump can't be a credible negotiator while simultaneously impersonating a madman (let's keep assuming he's impersonating). He can't be a peacemaker if he also keeps threatening to bomb regimes out of existence. He can't permanently and verifiably keep Iran's nuclear program peaceful and limited while demanding that Tehran must stop all work with fission.

At a meeting with his inner circle, Khamenei apparently called the Trump administration "bullying" and opined that "talks for them are a pathway to have new demands, it is not only about Iran's nuclear issue." As theory predicts, he seems to fear that caving to "maximum pressure" will only invite even more pressure, that conceding anything to Trump will make him end like Qaddafi.

This problem now haunts Trump's Iran policy, his tariff campaign, his efforts to end the war in Ukraine and all his other diplomatic initiatives. Why should foreign leaders haggle with him when he changes his mind several times in one day? Why should they give assurances when they don't expect him to honor America's? The madman shtick isn't working for Trump, in Iran or anywhere. Being whimsical, mercurial and unpredictable may sell when you're a star on reality television. But an American president needs to set realistic objectives and then send signals that are clear, credible and consistent.

– Andreas Kluth is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering US diplomacy, national security and geopolitics.

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Gaza hospital hit as 30 killed in Israeli attacks



Relatives mourn over the bodies of Palestinians killed in an Israeli strike, at the Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital, in Deir El Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday. (AFP)

GAZA CITY: An Israeli air strike early yesterday heavily damaged one of the few functioning hospitals in Gaza, with the Israeli military saying it had targeted a Hamas "command and control centre" operating within the facility.

Palestinian medical sources said the occupation forces continued their bombing of various areas of the Gaza Strip since dawn yesterday, killing 30 citizens and wounding several others.

Since the outbreak of war, tens of thousands of Gazans have sought refuge in hospitals, many of which have suffered severe damage in the ongoing hostilities.

The strike on Al Ahli Hospital in northern Gaza — also known as the Baptist or Ahli Arab Hospital — caused no casualties, but came a day after Israeli forces seized a key corridor in the territory and signalled plans to expand their campaign.

It also came as aid agencies and the United Nations warned that medicines and related supplies were rapidly running out in Gaza as casualties surged.

Hospitals, protected under international humanitarian law, have repeatedly been hit by Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas on October 7, 2023.

"The bombing led to the destruction of the surgery building and the oxygen generation station for the intensive care units," Gaza's civil defence rescue agency said.

It came "minutes after the (Israeli) army's warning to evacuate", the agency added.

AFP photographs showed massive slabs of concrete and twisted metal scattered across the site after the strike.

The blast left a gaping hole in one of the hospital's buildings, with iron doors torn from their hinges. An Iraqi broadcaster said one of its TV vans was also damaged.

A separate air strike yesterday on a vehicle in the central city of Deir El Balah killed seven people including six brothers, the civil defence agency said.

Mahmud Abu Amsha, who witnessed the strike, said those killed were distributing aid.

"They do not care about children or people being killed... This aid was being provided to the displaced people," he told *AFP*. On Saturday, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz announced that the military planned to expand its offensive as it completed the takeover of the "Morag axis" between the southern cities of Rafah and Khan Yunis.

Patients, relatives and medical personnel evacuated the Al Ahli hospital in haste following the military's warning. Many found themselves stranded in the surrounding streets.

Naela Imad, 42, had been sheltering at the hospital but had to rush out of the complex.

"Just as we reached the hospital gate, they bombed it. It was a massive explosion," she told *AFP*. "Now, me and my children are out on the street. We've been displaced more than 20 times. The hospital was our last refuge." The Israeli military asserted that Hamas fighters were operating "a command and control centre" inside the hospital compound.

Hamas condemned what it described as a "savage crime" committed by Israel "with blatant US cover and complicity", dismissing the claim that the facility was a used militarily.

Qatar, which helped mediate a fragile ceasefire between the warring parties that fell apart last month, also denounced the strike as "a heinous crime".

Hospitals, protected under international humanitarian law, have repeatedly been hit by Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas on October 7, 2023.

Al Ahli was heavily damaged by an explosion in its car park on October 17, 2023 that caused multiple fatalities.

Aid agencies and the UN say that only a few of Gaza's 36 hospitals remain partially functional.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy urged Israel yesterday to halt the "deplorable attacks" on hospitals, calling for diplomacy to "achieve a lasting peace". — ***AFP/QNA***

Syria leader makes first visit to United Arab Emirates

DAMASCUS: Syria's interim President Ahmed Al Sharaa, whose war-devastated country seeks Gulf financial support, travelled to the United Arab Emirates yesterday for his first visit since Bashar Al Assad's overthrow, state media said.

Nearly a week after rebels toppled Assad in December, UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash said his government found the Islamist affiliation of Syria's new rulers "quite worrying".

But in mid-January Sharaa spoke by phone with H H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Emirati president, about ways to reinforce ties and "ensure the stability and development of the region," Syria's state news agency SANA said at the time.

On its Telegram channel, SANA yesterday said Sharaa was travelling with Foreign Minister Asaad Al Shaibani to the Gulf country to hold talks on "numerous common issues". — ***AFP***

China calls on US to 'completely cancel' reciprocal tariffs

BEIJING: China yesterday called on the United States to "completely cancel" its reciprocal tariffs after Washington announced exemptions for consumer electronics and key chipmaking equipment.

"We urge the US to... take a big step to correct its mistakes, completely cancel the wrong practice of 'reciprocal tariffs' and return to the right path of mutual respect," a commerce ministry spokesperson said in a statement.

The world's two largest economies have been engaged in a tit-for-tat tariff war since US President Donald Trump announced this month sweeping global tariffs — since escalating the blanket duty on Chinese goods to 145 percent.

Retaliatory Chinese import tariffs of 125 percent on US goods took effect on Saturday. — ***AFP***

Sudan paramilitaries kill 56 over two days in Darfur town: Activists

PORT SUDAN: Sudan's paramilitaries killed 56 civilians over two days of attacks on a town they seized on the road to El Fasher, the last major city in the Darfur region still in army hands, activists said yesterday.

The killings on Friday and Saturday targeted residents in Um Kadadah "on an ethnic basis", according to the local resistance committee, part of a network of volunteers coordinating aid across Sudan since the war between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) began on April 15, 2023. The attacks on Um Kadadah, about 180km east of El Fasher, came one day after RSF fighters said they took the town from army forces.

The RSF have stepped up attacks on North Darfur's besieged capital of El Fasher since the army last month recaptured the Sudanese capital Khartoum, around 1,000km to the east. — ***AFP***

Iran: Talks with US to focus on nuclear issue, lifting sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry said yesterday that talks with the United States slated for next weekend will remain "indirect" with Omani mediation, and focused solely on the nuclear issue and lifting of sanctions.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff held talks Saturday in Muscat, marking the highest-level Iran-US nuclear negotiations since the collapse of a 2015 accord. They agreed to meet again in seven days.

"Negotiations will continue to be indirect. Oman will remain the mediator, but we are discussing the location of future negotiations," foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said in an interview with state TV.

He said the talks would only focus on "the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions," and that Iran "will not have any talks with the American side on any other issue."

Analysts had said the US would push to include on the agenda discussions over Iran's ballistic missile programme along with Tehran's support for the "axis of resistance" — a network of militant groups opposed to Israel. Tehran has, however, maintained it will talk only about its nuclear programme. Donald Trump in 2018 pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers during his first term as US president.

Saturday's rare negotiations came weeks after Trump sent a letter to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urging nuclear talks while warning of possible military action if Iran refuses. — ***AFP***

HK Democratic Party approve plan to disband

HONG KONG: Members of Hong Kong's Democratic Party voted yesterday to move forward with plans to dissolve the party as its leaders first proposed in February, the party's chair said.

The party is the latest Hong Kong civil society group to meet its end amid a years-long political crackdown, with scores of activists arrested, jailed or in exile.

The vote "means most of our members are willing to allow the Central Committee to take steps to dissolve the party", said Lo Kin-hei, chair of the 30-year-old party that was once the city's stalwart opposition force.

"This is not the final decision that the party is dissolving," Lo told a news conference.

"In the coming few months, I hope there will be another general meeting (where) we actually will get that motion into debate and vote."

Lo declined to comment on media reports that Beijing is exerting pressure on the group via middlemen to shut down the party before December's legislative elections.



Lo Kin-hei (second right), chairman of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, and vice-chairman Mok Kin-shing (right) attend a press conference in Hong Kong, yesterday. (AFP)

More than 90 percent of the 110 or so attendees supported the motion to let party leaders deal with the procedures required for dissolution, such as accounting requirements.

The liquidation of the party, which is registered as a Hong Kong company, may not be completed within the year, said vice-chair Mok Kin-shing.

"Even if we hand over the matter to a liquidator, it is not something that can be dealt with quickly," Mok said.

Lo said in February the disbandment was due to Hong Kong's "overall political environment" but declined to say if the group had come under pressure from Beijing.

The party was not experiencing financial stress, he said at the time. A vote to dissolve the party will require the support of 75 percent of meeting participants. — ***AFP***

South Korea: Yoon to face insurrection trial

SEOUL: Former South Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol will face his first criminal trial today for insurrection after his short-lived imposition of martial law in December, which plunged the democratic country into political turmoil.

Yoon sought to impose military rule on the country when he ordered the suspension of political activity and the censorship of media on December 3. The decree lasted just six hours as it was voted down by opposition MPs.

The disastrous attempt led to Yoon's impeachment by the National Assembly shortly thereafter, with the Constitutional Court fully stripping him of his presidential duties on April 4. Although he has lost all presidential privileges, Yoon still faces a criminal trial on insurrection charges, which will kick off today. — ***AFP***

World in brief

Tanzania opposition party barred from elections

DAR ES SALAAM: Tanzania's main opposition party has been disqualified from upcoming general elections, the country's election chief said, after it refused to sign an electoral code of conduct. The opposition Chadema party has accused President Samia Suluhu Hassan of returning to the repressive tactics of her predecessor, John Magufuli. — ***AFP***

Togo accepts mediator role in DR Congo conflict

NAIROBI: Togo's leader has accepted a role as the African Union's mediator in the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Togolese foreign ministry said yesterday. President Faure Gnassingbe will take over from Angolan President Joao Lourenco, who last month relinquished the role he was appointed to in 2022. — ***AFP***

Yemeni forces raid Al Qaeda hideout

ADEN,: Yemeni government forces launched a security operation yesterday targeting an Al Qaeda hideout in the southeastern oil-rich province of Shabwa, a military official told Xinhua. The operation resulted in the arrest of a mid-level Al Qaeda commander and the death of another militant, the official said. Six soldiers were wounded during the raid and ensuing clashes. — ***XINHUA***

Ethiopia's mega dam project 98.66% complete

ADDIS ABABA: The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has reached 98.66 percent completion, with six generating units currently in operation, the state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported Saturday.

Officials noted that the dam is nearing full completion and is playing a critical role in expanding the country's electricity generation and regional power supply. — ***XINHUA***

Sri Lanka: Over 117kg heroin, crystal meth seized

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan police arrested two suspects yesterday morning after seizing more than 117 kg of heroin and crystal methamphetamine, police said.

The drugs, including 65.7 kg of crystal methamphetamine and 52.3 kg of heroin, were discovered during a vehicle inspection near the Kudawella fishery harbor in southern Sri Lanka, police said. — ***XINHUA***

World Expo opens in Japan in rocky times

OSAKA: World Expo opened yesterday with 160 countries and regions showcasing their technology, culture and food, with host Japan hoping to provide the world with some much-needed hope.

Highlights at the show in Osaka until mid-October include a Mars meteorite, a beating artificial heart grown from stem cells and Hello Kitty figures in algae form.

Surrounding most of the pavilions — a chance for architects' fancies to run wild — is the world's largest wooden structure, the "Grand Ring".

Its creator Sou Fujimoto told *AFP* that Expo is a "really beautiful, precious opportunity where so many different cultures... and countries come together in one place to create diversity and unity".

But with conflicts raging and US President Donald Trump's tariffs causing economic turmoil, that may be optimistic.

"Not for sale" states a yellow and blue sign over Ukraine's booth — echoing defiant comments from leader Volodymyr Zelensky about the war with Russia, which is absent at Expo 2025.

Yahel Vilan, head of Israel's equally compact pavilion — there is also a Palestinian one — featuring a stone from Jerusalem's Western Wall, told *AFP* that "we came with a message of peace".

The US building has the theme "America the Beautiful", but with no mention of Trump's trade policies.

Instead it focuses on the country's landscapes, AI tech and space, including a simulated rocket launch where dry-ice blasters appear to ignite above visitors' heads.

The nearby Chinese pavilion, evoking a calligraphy scroll, focuses on green technology and lunar samples brought by the Chang'e-5 and Chang'e-6 probes. — ***AFP***



Visitors take photos in front of "Myaku-Myaku", the mascot of the 2025 Osaka Expo, as the gates open to the public on the first day of the six-month 2025 Osaka Expo in the city of Osaka yesterday. (AFP)

Spain busts ring bringing Moroccans in via Romania

MADRID: Spanish police said yesterday they had broken a ring that had brought in up to 2,500 Moroccan irregular immigrants via Romania, arresting four suspects.

The four were detained in the southeastern Murcia province on charges of belonging to a criminal organisation and facilitating irregular migration, the Guardia Civil said in a statement. The Moroccans entered Europe by plane to Romania, from where they were transported to Spain, with each one charged €3,000 for the voyage, it said. The suspects were alleged to be the ringleaders of the organisation. Their nationalities were not specified. Spanish authorities believe the ring organised 50 such trips over the past two years, each one composed of between 20 and 50 Moroccans, making for a total of between 1,000 and 2,500 irregular immigrants. — ***AFP***

'Tech tariff exemptions may be short-lived'

WASHINGTON: Recent exemptions to sweeping US import tariffs may be short-lived, top officials warned yesterday, as China urged the Trump administration to simply abandon its aggressive trade tax policy altogether.

The world's two largest economies have been locked in a fast-moving, high-stakes game of brinkmanship since US President Donald Trump launched a global tariff assault that particularly targeted Chinese imports. Tit-for-tat exchanges have seen US levies imposed on China rise to 145 percent, and Beijing setting a retaliatory 125 percent band on American imports.

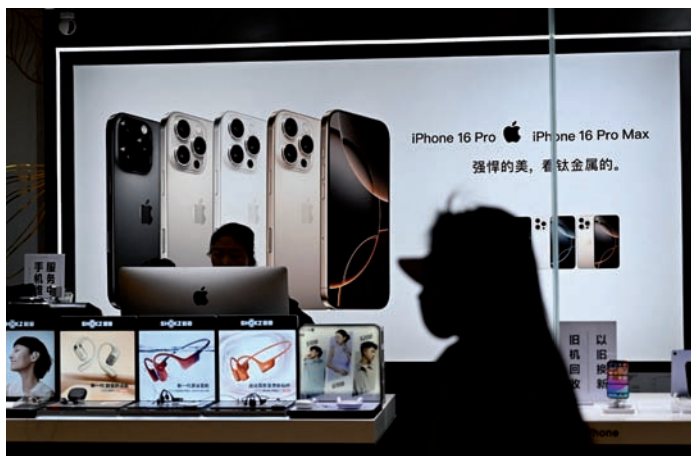
The US side appeared to dial down the pressure slightly on Friday, listing tariff exemptions for smartphones, laptops, semiconductors and other electronic products for which China is a major source.

But Beijing's Commerce Ministry said the move only "represents a small step" and insisted that the Trump administration should "completely cancel" the whole tariff strategy.

The new exemptions will benefit US tech companies like Nvidia and Dell as well as Apple, which makes iPhones and other premium products in China.

The relief could, however, be short-lived with some of the exempted consumer electronics targeted for upcoming sector-specific tariffs on goods deemed key to US national defense networks. Trump has said he will give "very specific" details today, and his commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, said semiconductor tariffs would likely be in place "in a month or two."

The US president sent financial markets into a tailspin earlier this month by announcing sweeping import taxes on dozens of trade partners, only to abruptly announce a 90-day pause for most of them. China was excluded from the reprieve.



A woman walks past an electronics store at a shopping mall in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

The White House says Trump remains optimistic about securing a deal with China, although administration officials have made it clear they expect Beijing to reach out first.

Trump's trade representative Jamieson Greer told CBS "Face the Nation" on Sunday that "we don't have any plans" for a talk between the president and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

China has sought to present itself as a stable alternative to an erratic Washington, courting countries spooked by the global economic storm. Xi today kicks off a five-day Southeast Asia tour for talks with the leaders of Vietnam, a manufacturing powerhouse, as well as Malaysia and Cambodia. — ***AFP***

Russian strike on city centre of Ukraine's Sumy kills 34

SUMY: A Russian missile strike yesterday in the city centre of Ukraine's city of Sumy killed at least 34 people, Kyiv said, with European and US officials condemning the attack — one of the deadliest in months.

Kyiv said Moscow hit the northeastern city, close to the Russian border, with two ballistic missiles yesterday morning and that the attack also wounded nearly 100 people. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, responding to what he described as a ballistic missile attack on Palm Sunday, said: "Only bastards do this."

US President Donald Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, retired lieutenant general Keith Kellogg, said the attack by Russian forces on civilian targets "crosses any line of decency".

"As a former military leader, I understand targeting and this is wrong," Kellogg posted on X, formerly Twitter.

The strike came two days after US envoy Steve Witkoff travelled to Russia to meet with President Vladimir Putin and push Trump's efforts to end the war. — ***AFP***

World in brief

First round of US-Iran talks 'positive': White House

CHICAGO: US special presidential envoy Steve Witkoff met with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi on Saturday and had "very positive and constructive" discussions, said the White House. "Special Envoy Witkoff underscored to Dr. Araghchi that he had instructions from President (Donald) Trump to resolve our two nations' differences through dialogue and diplomacy, if that is possible," it said in a statement.

"These issues are very complicated, and Special Envoy Witkoff's direct communication today was a step forward in achieving a mutually beneficial outcome," it said, adding that the two sides plan to meet again next Saturday. Earlier Saturday, Iranian media also described the talks as "constructive" and revealed plans for more discussions next week. — ***XINHUA***

First regional ballot test for Argentina's Milei

ROSARIO: Argentine leader Javier Milei's small political party yesterday faces its first electoral test since his presidency began, with a regional vote that could provide clues for October's midterm polls. The election in Argentina's third-most-populous province of Santa Fe, with 2.8 million voters, will pick delegates to a convention set to reform the regional constitution, which has gone unchanged for 63 years.

Libertarian party La Libertad Avanza (Liberty Advancing, LLA) was created in 2021 to power the presidential ambitions of Milei, a telegenic economist-turned-member of parliament that same year.

At stake is whether the party can compete in regional politics, having surfed on Milei's personal brand to score a decisive 2023 presidential win with 55.6 percent of the vote.

Milei's ultra-laissez-faire economic policy has succeeded in slashing inflation, from 211 percent year-on-year in 2023 to 59 percent more recently. He was rewarded Friday with the promise of $42bn in support, a vote of confidence from several global institutions including the International Monetary Fund. — ***AFP***

Lawyers for wrongly deported man ask judge for US contempt hearing

WASHINGTON: Lawyers for a Maryland man mistakenly deported to a mega-prison in El Salvador asked a federal judge on Saturday to order the Justice Department to show by 10am Monday why it should not be held in contempt for failing to say what it has done or will do to immediately return him to the United States after a Supreme Court order.

In a Justice Department filing at 5pm Saturday, US State Department official Michael G. Kozak confirmed that 29-year-old Kilmar Abrego García is being held in El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Center under that country's sovereign authority. However, the government did not update US District Judge Paula Xinis of Greenbelt about what concrete steps it is taking to bring him home as she had ordered Friday.

Abrego García's legal team wrote that the limited response was the latest sign of the government's lack of urgency and failure to comply with her April 4 order for it to "facilitate" Abrego Garcia's release from custody, a decision the Supreme Court upheld 9-0 Thursday evening. Attorney Jonathan G. Cooper in a written motion asked Xinis to order the government to take "whatever ... steps are within its power" to aid Abrego García's release, including sending personnel to ensure his safe passage, flight and reentry to the United States. — ***THE WASHINGTON POST***

Police probing 'arson' at top US Democrat's official residence

WASHINGTON: US police said yesterday they were investigating an alleged arson attack at the official residence of Democratic heavyweight and Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro.

Shapiro, who was tipped as a vice presidential candidate last year, was inside with his family when the fire broke out in a different part of the Georgian-style mansion in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, state police said.

"While the fire was successfully extinguished, it caused a significant amount of damage to a portion of the residence," the force said in a statement. It offered a reward of up to $10,000 for the arrest and conviction of anyone responsible for the blaze, which fire officials responded to at around 2am local time (0600 GMT) yesterday morning. — ***AFP***

Macron urges 'strong measures' to impose ceasefire on Russia

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday that "strong measures" are needed to force Moscow to agree to a ceasefire in Ukraine, after a bloody attack by Russian forces on the city of Sumy.

"Everyone knows: this war was initiated by Russia alone," Macron said on X, formerly Twitter. "And today, it is clear that Russia alone chooses to continue it -- with blatant disregard for human lives, international law, and the diplomatic efforts of President (Donald) Trump," he said. "Strong measures are needed to impose a ceasefire on Russia," Macron said, adding the attack had caused "numerous civilian casualties, including children once again". A Russian missile strike on Sumy's centre killed at least 32 people and wounded 99, according to Ukraine. — ***AFP***

Serbian president holds nationalist rally to counter student demos

BELGRADE: Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic declared the launch of a new political movement on Saturday as he rallied nationalist supporters in Belgrade to push back against months of protests against him.

Serbia has been gripped by a wave of protests since November, when 16 people died in the collapse of the newly renovated rail station in the city of Novi Sad -- a tragedy widely blamed on corruption and poor oversight. Hundreds of thousands have marched for months against corruption and mismanagement, culminating in the biggest protests in decades last month.

Vucic claims the student-led protests are threatening the Balkan nation's peace and stability, accusing the protesters of being paid by "foreign intelligence agencies". — ***AFP***

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Bulgaria receives first US F-16 fighter jet

GRAF IGNATIEVO: Bulgaria on Sunday welcomed its first US-made F-16 fighter jet ordered as part of the eastern-flank NATO member's landmark efforts to modernise its air force.

To replace its Soviet-era MiG-29 jets, Bulgaria has ordered 16 American F-16s for a cost of around €2.4bn euros ($2.7bn), in the largest contract to overhaul its armed forces since the fall of communism in 1989.

At a ceremony marking the jet's delivery at the Graf Ignatievo military base in central Bulgaria, Prime Minister Rossen Jeliazkov said those in attendance were celebrating "the inexorable and irreversible modernisation of the Bulgarian army.

US defence official David Baker hailed the jet's delivery as a "significant milestone". — *AFP*

Rubio says 10 more 'criminals' sent from US to El Salvador

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday that 10 "criminals" from two Latin American gangs had arrived in El Salvador, a key ally in Washington's crackdown on undocumented migrants.

The deportees were "from the MS-13 and Tren de Aragua Foreign Terrorist Organizations," Rubio wrote on X, a day before Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele is due in Washington for talks with President Donald Trump.

Trump and Bukele have become close partners, with the Salvadoran agreeing to accept hundreds of migrants deported from the United States as criminals — mostly alleged members of Venezuela's Tren de Aragua or the Salvadoran MS-13 gang.

Attorneys for a number of the men say they have never been convicted of a crime, and that some were linked to the gangs merely by their tattoos.

The deportations have been questioned by Democrats and rights groups who say migrants are being sent to a notoriously harsh Salvadoran prison without due process.

One case has drawn particular criticism — that of a Salvadoran man who was deported despite a federal court ruling in 2019 that he could not be expelled to El Salvador, where his life could be in danger.

The Trump administration has been slow-walking its response to court orders — including from the Supreme Court — to "facilitate" the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia.

The administration has never clearly explained its difficulty in bringing Abrego Garcia back, except to say he is now under Salvadoran control. — *AFP*

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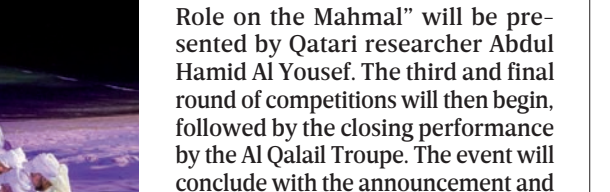




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Since 1928, the Paris-based International Exhibitions Bureau has run the World Expos. More than 180 countries are members and the host city is chosen by a vote of its general assembly.

Naham Al Khaleej 2025 festival opens

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: General Manager of Cultural Village Foundation - Katara, Prof Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti yesterday inaugurated the Katara Al Nahma Festival and Award - Naham Al Khaleej 2025 at Katara Beach.

The ceremony was attended by those interested in maritime heritage and folk arts, amidst a distinctive festive atmosphere that reflects the deep connection of the people of the Gulf to their authentic maritime heritage.

Addressing the event, Al Sulaiti said the Katara Al Nahma Festival and Award – Gulf Nahma 2025 is a unique cultural event that embodies the Katara Cultural Village Foundation's commitment to preserving authentic artistic heritage and reviving it in a manner befitting its place in the hearts of Gulf peoples.

He added: "Al Nahma is not just a song associated with the sea and the voyages of our ancestors. Rather, it is the voice of the people of Qatar and the Gulf, who sing about life, work, patience, and longing. It reflects the feelings of a society that lived by the sea and relied on it for its survival, transforming its suffering into immortal melodies that express pain and hope."

Al Sulaiti said: "We at Katara are pleased to celebrate this ancient art today, and to host an elite group of Naham masters from Qatar and the Gulf states, in a sophisticated artistic competition that honors our heritage and expresses our collective spirit."

He pointed out that the festival represents a platform for documentation, interaction, and renewal, and reflects Katara's constant commitment to keeping heritage alive, renewed in all its forms, and vibrant as it has always been.

The opening ceremony included a distinguished artistic performance by the Bahrain Children's Band, followed by an introduction to the jury and participating countries, and the launch of the first round of the award's competitions.

The festival continues from April 13 to 15, from 6 pm to 10 pm. It features the participation of 17 Nahamas from various Gulf countries, as follows: 4 Nahamas from Qatar, 1 Nahama from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 3 Nahamas from Kuwait, 3 Nahamas from the United Arab Emirates, 3 Nahamas from the Sultanate of Oman, and 3 Nahamas from Bahrain.

The three-day festival will feature a series of cultural seminars and heritage performances. On the second day, a seminar titled "Rhythmic Arts among the Gulf States - Haddadi Arts" will be presented by Kuwaiti researcher Abdul Hamid Al-Saqr, and another titled "Working Arts between the Sea and the Night" will be presented by Bahraini artist Youssef Adam. The second round of the award will follow.

On the third day, a meeting titled "The Function of the Nahham and His Role on the Mahmal" will be presented by Qatari researcher Abdul Hamid Al Yousef. The third and final round of competitions will then begin, followed by the closing performance by the Al Qalail Troupe. The event will conclude with the announcement and honoring of the winners.

The festival will be accompanied by a variety of heritage events at the festival site, including a live drawing competition, a fine arts exhibition, a photography competition, and a marine exhibition documenting the history of traditional diving and fishing.

A view from the Naham Al Khaleej 2025 at Katara Beach.



Editor-in-Chief meets Ambassador of Pakistan

Editor-in-Chief of *The Peninsula* Dr. Khalid Mubarak Al-Shafi received Ambassador of Pakistan to Qatar H E Muhammad Aamer at the newspaper's office yesterday. The Ambassador was briefed about the newspaper's history, mission and digital presence. The conversation also focused on fostering collaboration between the embassy and the newspaper to strengthen ties between the two countries.

China develops AI robot capable of farming tasks

SHANGHAI: A slender bionic arm weaves through tomato plants, with its 3D vision scanning the environment. Pausing at a flower, sensors on its fingertips assess pollen viscosity as algorithms process data in milliseconds.

Once adequate conditions are confirmed, high-frequency vibrations atomize the pollen, depositing it precisely on neighboring blossoms and completing artificial pollination with remarkable accuracy. The robot then navigates its way to the next plant autonomously, avoiding obstacles with a human-like level of awareness.

The intelligent agricultural robot was developed by researchers at Fudan University. Its system integrates multiple advanced technologies covering areas such as 3D vision perception, autonomous navigation, cloud-based decision-making and AI deep learning, culminating in a prime example of embodied intelligence.

Its seamless operations are the result of four years of development and four generations of prototypes -- the work of a research team led by Shang Huiliang, an associate professor at the university. The multi-functional robot handles the entire tomato cultivation process. — ***XINHUA***

Moviegoers digging 'Minecraft Movie,' tops in American theatres

LOS ANGELES: "A Minecraft Movie" easily held on to the top spot in North American theaters this weekend with estimated ticket sales of a solid $80.6m, analysts said Sunday.

That was roughly half the total of its huge opening last weekend. But with $281m in domestic ticket sales to date, along with $269m internationally, "Minecraft" has set records in its short run. The Warner Bros/Legendary PG film, starring Jack Black and Jason Momoa, ranks as the most successful film adaptation from a video game.

The film's huge popularity helped put the movie industry's overall box office performance on a par with the same period last year, Hollywood Reporter said.

Four new releases came in far behind.

"The King of Kings," an animation that has a young Charles Dickens narrating the story of Jesus, placed second at an estimated $19.1m during its strategic release a week before Easter, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported.

Kenneth Branagh, Pierce Brosnan, Uma Thurman and Mark Hamill lead the voice cast for the latest production from Angel Studios, the Utah-based indy media company known for its faith-based films.

Angel offered free admission to children coming with paying adults, and the family-friendly movie received a rare A+ rating from ComScore.

In third place was Disney and 20th Century's thriller "The Amateur," at $15m. Rami Malek plays a nerdy, self-effacing CIA analyst who turns vicious as he tracks down those behind an attack that killed his wife. Rachel Brosnahan, Laurence Fishburne and Jon Bernthal also star.

Combat thriller "Warfare" from A24 placed fourth, at $8.3m. The film, based partly on the experiences of co-director Ray Mendoza as a navy SEAL, follows a platoon of soldiers — the ensemble cast includes Joseph Quinn of "Stranger Things" fame — moving warily through unfriendly territory. And in fifth place was Universal and Blumhouse's horror film "Drop," at $7.5m. It tells the story of a widowed mother ("White Lotus"'s Meghann Fahy) who receives a creepily ominous phone call while in the middle of a first date. — ***AFP***

Scottish rowing brothers aim for record-breaking Pacific crossing

LIMA: Three Scottish brothers have embarked on a mammoth journey from Peru hoping to set a record time for rowing across the Pacific Ocean.

Ewan, Jamie and Lachlan MacLean set off in a carbon fiber dinghy from Lima, aiming to reach Sydney in Australia 9,000 miles (14,500km) away in about four months.

The trio from Edinburgh, who previously rowed across the Atlantic Ocean, are hoping to raise more than $1m for clean water projects in Madagascar in the process.

"We're going to be rowing nonstop with no outside support, so we'll be on our own," Lachlan MacLean told AFP before boarding.

They departed shortly after 4pm (2100 GMT) on Saturday after a brief ceremony during which youngest brother Jamie played the bagpipes accompanied by the Peruvian Navy band.

"One of the real challenges is the sleep deprivation. You're rowing through the day and through the night continuously and shifts," eldest brother Ewan said. "It's absolutely relentless."

The brothers plan to sleep five to six hours every 24 hours and row 12 to 14 hours a day for 120 to 150 days.

"This project is all to raise money for clean water projects in Madagascar" through their charity, the MacLean Foundation, Lachlan said.

"Clean water is the most basic human need on the planet but 10 percent of people worldwide don't have access to it," they said on their website.

Only 14 percent of Madagascar's rural population has access to a clean water source, they said.

"Ocean conservation and keeping our oceans clean, it's all part of the same parcel," Lachlan said.

The brothers broke three world records crossing the Atlantic Ocean in 2020, without ever having rowed professionally, raising more than $260,000 for charity. — ***AFP***

Ketchup to Moon rock: What's the point of a World Expo?

OSAKA: Expo 2025 kicked off yesterday in the Japanese city of Osaka but in the age of online information and mass tourism, what is the purpose of a World's Fair?

The huge events, which draw millions of visitors to a chosen city every five years or so, hark back to London's 1851 Great Exhibition held inside the Crystal Palace.

As 160 countries and regions show off their technological and cultural achievements at the six-month Osaka Expo, AFP looks at what it's all about:

What is a World Expo?

Expanding on national expositions in Paris at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, Imperial Britain built an immense glass Crystal Palace to host 14,000 exhibitors from 40 countries.

That marked the start of the Expo phenomenon that over the decades introduced the world to ketchup, the telephone and X-ray machines among myriad other technologies.

The Paris edition of 1889 featured the Eiffel Tower -- intended as a temporary attraction -- and Pablo Picasso's anti-war painting "Guernica" was first shown at one in 1937.

Historically, World's Fairs did not just exhibit new technologies but also included racist displays of actual people from the colonies of the time.

Do we still need Expos?

While World Expos still showcase future technologies, some argue that the advent of the internet, mass media and cheaper foreign travel have made them redundant.

Global turmoil in the form of conflicts and trade wars has also led critics to question the idealistic values of unity and development touted at the events.

But organisers of Expo 2025 in Osaka have stressed that in-person exchanges between nations and the resulting "unexpected encounters" are still important.

Middle school teacher Yusuke Nagasawa said attending was a "valuable learning experience, to be able to actually experience the realism and warmth of the people, which cannot be conveyed through a screen".

"I've seen the excitement, and people from various countries have approached me for chats," added Nagasawa, who plans to bring about 140 pupils to the Expo next month.

Among the dizzying number of displays this year are a meteorite from Mars, a beating "heart" grown from stem cells, and the world's largest wooden architectural structure.

Where are they held?

Since 1928, the Paris-based International Exhibitions Bureau has run the Expos. More than 180 countries are members and the host city is chosen by a vote of its general assembly.

This is Osaka's second World Expo after the 1970 edition -- featuring a Moon rock -- that was attended by 64 million people, a record until Shanghai in 2010.

The United States once held frequent World's Fairs, as they are known there, leaving behind landmarks such as the Space Needle in Seattle and New York City's Unisphere.

But the world's largest economy last hosted one in 1984, with some experts saying their popularity has been overtaken by the Olympic Games and attractions such as Disneyland. — ***AFP***



Dancers perform on the stage during the official opening ceremony of the 2025 Osaka Expo in the city of Osaka, Japan, yesterday. (AFP)

TRENDING IN QATAR

On *The Peninsula* social media platforms

Tunisian woman in Qatar succumbs to injuries after fall from fourth floor

The head of Tunisian Community Council in Qatar issued a statement confirming the death of Amna Chekron, who fell from the fourth floor.

Phones, other electronics exempt from new tariffs

The Trump administration has spared smartphones, computers and other electronics from "reciprocal" tariffs.

Bangladesh reintroduces 'except Israel' on passports

Bangladesh has restored an "except Israel" inscription on passports, local media reported.

Death toll from Israeli aggression on Gaza rises

The death toll from Israeli attacks on Gaza since October 7, 2023, has climbed to 50,944, with 116,156 injured, the Palestinian Ministry of Health reported.