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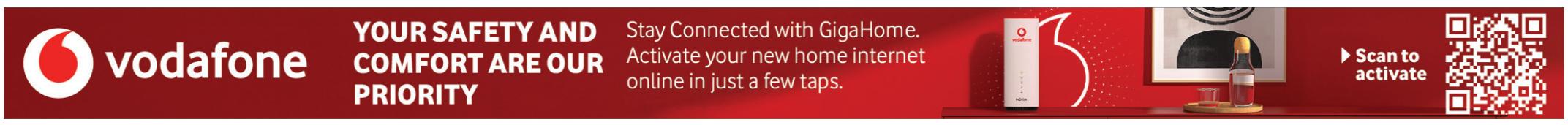
EDITORIAL ↘ 07
HARNESSING SOLAR ENERGY

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MoEHE launches private school admission guide 2026 with new reforms

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

- *Updated document introduces a comprehensive set of regulatory frameworks governing admissions, transfers, and student records across all private educational institutions in Qatar.*
- *Qatar's education sector continues to witness steady development, reflected in the quality of educational services and the efficiency of systems and procedures aligned with international best practices.*

DOHA: The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has launched the second edition of the 2026 guidance document regulating student admission and registration procedures in private schools and kindergartens.

Issued by the Private Schools Licensing Department, the updated document introduces a comprehensive set of regulatory frameworks governing admissions, transfers, and student records across all private educational institutions in Qatar.

The new edition incorporates several key updates, most notably the adoption of a unified timeline for registration and student transfers, the expansion of exceptions to ensure greater flexibility and fairness, the regulation of student withdrawal procedures, and strengthened controls for admitting students with disabilities and learning difficulties.

It also allows, under specific conditions, students to transfer between certain curricula without grade demotion, addressing the needs of students and parents while maintaining academic standards.

The announcement was made during a press conference held at the Ministry's headquarters, attended by Dr. Ibrahim bin Saleh Al Nuaimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education; Omar Abdulaziz Al Naama, Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs; and Dr. Rania Mohammed, Director of the Private Schools and Kindergartens Department and Acting Director of Private Schools Licensing Department, along with ministry officials, school license holders, and administrators.

In his remarks, Dr. Al Nuaimi emphasised that Qatar's education sector continues to witness steady development, reflected in the quality of educational services and the efficiency of systems and procedures aligned with international best practices. He noted the consistent increase in student enrollment across schools, universities, and educational institutions nationwide.

Dr. Al Nuaimi highlighted the critical importance of accurate and reliable data in supporting effective decision-making, managing school capacity, facilitating admissions and transfers, and ensuring that students receive appropriate educational support based on their needs.

Dr. Rania Mohammed presented an overview of the updated guide, describing it as a comprehensive regulatory framework and an official reference for all private schools in Qatar. She stressed that the guide represents a strategic step toward unifying and clarifying procedures, ensuring equal opportunities for students, and streamlining registration and transfer processes in line with approved laws and regulations.

Dr. Mohammed said that the guide clearly defines admission age requirements for each educational stage, outlines required documentation, and details procedures for registration, transfer, and student withdrawal. It also addresses exceptional cases under clearly defined criteria and includes approved equivalency tables for grade placement across different curricula.

She said that its scope covers all private schools and kindergartens in Qatar, including those following the Qatari curriculum, international schools, embassy schools, and institutions offering special education and learning support programs.

Dr. Mohammed said that the guide is built on core principles such as equal opportunity, adherence to school capacity limits, accurate student data documentation within the national system, and institutional accountability in implementing procedures.

Regarding embassy schools, she said that the document takes into account their unique nature while ensuring compliance with the national regulatory framework, balancing the preservation of educational identity with adherence to quality and discipline standards, and safeguarding students' rights and academic continuity. ➔P2



Undersecretary of Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr. Ibrahim bin Saleh Al Nuaimi and Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs Omar Abdulaziz Al Naama with other officials during the launch of new admission guideline.

Qatar passport climbs in Henley global rankings

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's passport has climbed to 45th place in the latest Henley Passport Index, underscoring the country's growing diplomatic influence and enhanced global mobility for its citizens.

According to the latest official ranking published on its website, Qatari passport holders can now access 111 destinations visa-free or with a visa-on-arrival, placing the country ahead of several European and Asian nations.

The improvement marks a two-place jump from its 47th position in the January 2026 update, where it also held a score of 111 destinations. This latest ascent continues a steady upward trend for Qatar. Just over a year ago, in January 2025, the passport stood at 47th after a six-spot gain from 53rd the previous year, when access stood at 108 destinations. In the broader historical context, Qatar has advanced more than 20 places since the early 2020s, reflecting sustained progress in international agreements.

The Henley Passport Index, the original and most authoritative ranking of 199 passports, relies on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). It measures the number of countries and territories accessible without a prior visa. While top spots remain dominated by Asian and European powers, Singapore leads with access to 192 destinations, Qatar's rise highlights the shifting dynamics in global mobility, particularly for smaller, strategically positioned nations in the Middle East.

Economically, the jump bolsters Qatar National Vision 2030 goals by enhancing connectivity. Stronger passport power supports tourism recovery, foreign investment inflows, and talent attraction. ➔P4

Loan deferral move signals proactive step to safeguard financial stability

THE PENINSULA

"Banks in Qatar enjoy high liquidity levels that are sufficient to meet market needs and customer demands. Qatari banks also maintain strong capital bases exceeding regulatory requirements set by the central bank, while provisions remain adequate to cover credit risks."

DOHA: Director of the Banking Supervision Department at Qatar Central Bank Ali Hamad Al Marri has underscored the importance of the decision to defer loan instalments and interest payments for three months, describing it as a proactive step to maintain financial stability and support both individuals and businesses in managing their financial obligations.

In a statement to Qatar TV, Al Marri explained that Qatar Central Bank is closely monitoring developments in the financial sector amid the current geopolitical conditions in the region. He emphasised that this ongoing assessment focuses on key indicators and aims to ensure the resilience of the banking system.

Al Marri noted that the findings of these assessments highlight three main strengths within the sector. "First, banks in Qatar enjoy high liquidity levels that are sufficient to meet market needs and customer demands," he said. He added that Qatari banks also maintain strong capital bases exceeding regulatory requirements set by the central bank, while provisions remain adequate to cover credit risks.

Despite these positive indicators, Al Marri stressed that the current geopolitical fluctuations prompted the central bank to take precautionary measures. "As a proactive step, Qatar Central Bank has introduced a package of decisions divided into two main components," he said.

He explained that the first component focuses on monetary policy measures aimed at enhancing liquidity within banks and the broader financial sector. The second component directly targets affected customers, allowing for the postponement of loan repayments and interest for a period of three months.

Al Marri concluded that these measures are designed to reinforce confidence in the financial system while providing temporary relief to borrowers, enabling them to better reorganise their financial commitments during uncertain times.

To recall, Qatar Central Bank had conducted a comprehensive assessment of the financial sector, in light of evolving regional geopolitical developments, according to a press release of QCB by the end of last month. The review confirmed that the financial system continues to operate from a position of strength. Liquidity continues to be strong, capital levels significantly exceed regulatory requirements, and provisioning provides strong coverage against credit risk. The review noted that banks continue to hold substantial liquidity in both domestic and foreign currency and that resources are sufficient to meet customer demand, support normal market activity, and meet any short-term funding pressures under stressed conditions.

Borrower Support Measures: QCB will permit banks to offer borrowers affected by the current circumstances the option to defer loan principal and interest payments for a period of up to three months. Any such payment deferrals will be applied in accordance with banks' internal policies and supervisory guidance.

MoPH sets minimum shelf life for medicine imports

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Public Health recently issued a circular requiring imported medicines to have at least two-thirds of their remaining shelf life upon entry into Qatar. The directive, issued by the Ministry's Department of Pharmacy and Drug Control, aims to strengthen the quality standards and ensure the safety of pharmaceutical products in Qatar.

Under the circular, licensed pharmaceutical agents and importers are instructed to refrain from importing medicines that do not meet the above requirement, unless they obtain an official exemption approval granted by the Department of Pharmacy and Drug Control in accordance with the provisions of the Exemptions Guide.

The Ministry also provided a detailed exemptions guide available on its website and Department of Pharmacy and Drug Control's electronic system.

The Ministry added that any misuse, misrepresentation, or non-compliance with this guideline may result in the following: suspension or revocation of exemption approvals, regulatory corrective actions, and enhanced inspections or audits. Further regulatory measures may be applied in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

The Ministry affirmed that this new directive takes immediate effect and overrides any previous instructions that conflict with its provisions.

Qatar positions itself as cyber resilience hub in Middle East

JOEL JOHNSON
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar is emerging as a regional leader in strengthening cyber resilience, underpinned by robust national frameworks and a clear strategic vision, according to regional market experts.

The country has established comprehensive initiatives, including the National Cyber Security Strategy 2024–2030 and national incident management systems, which are helping organizations shift toward a more proactive and prepared security posture.

"To take full advantage of these frameworks, organisations must shift from compliance to real resilience," Amer Bazerbachi, Partner and Head of CyberSecurity Advisory at KPMG Qatar, told The Peninsula. "In this environment, resilience is not a support function; it is a condition for business survival and national security."

Bazerbachi noted that while Qatar's progress is notable, the broader cybersecurity landscape across the Middle East is becoming increasingly complex and interconnected.

Risks are no longer confined to the digital domain, but instead reflect a "blended" environment where cyber threats intersect with physical disruption and geopolitical instability.



National Cyber Security Strategy 2024–2030 and national incident management systems, which are helping organizations shift toward a more proactive and prepared security posture.

Recent developments illustrate this shift as regional disruptions highlight how vulnerabilities now extend beyond direct cyberattacks to include disruptions impacting cloud providers, supply chains, and critical services.

"The threat landscape has evolved to include ransomware and extortion, identity compromise, and exploitation of internet-facing systems, all layered with physical disruption and misinformation pressure," Bazerbachi said.

"Resilience today depends on redundancy, alternate sites, recoverable backups, and the ability to operate even when parts of the digital estate are unavailable."

Abdul Rashid, a regional cybersecurity expert, noted the positive trajectory within Qatar's market, stating that the country is effectively translating strategy into execution.

"Qatar is ahead of many peers in embedding cybersecurity into business and national priorities," Rashid said. "There is stronger regulatory alignment, increased investment in secure digital infrastructure, and growing awareness at the executive level. This is creating a more mature, resilient market that is better prepared to handle both cyber and real-world disruptions."

Across the region, several key threat trends continue to shape organizational risk. Ransomware and extortion remain dominant, with figures from Microsoft showing they account for more than half of cyberattacks. Identity-based attacks are also rising sharply, largely driven by password vulnerabilities. ➔P4

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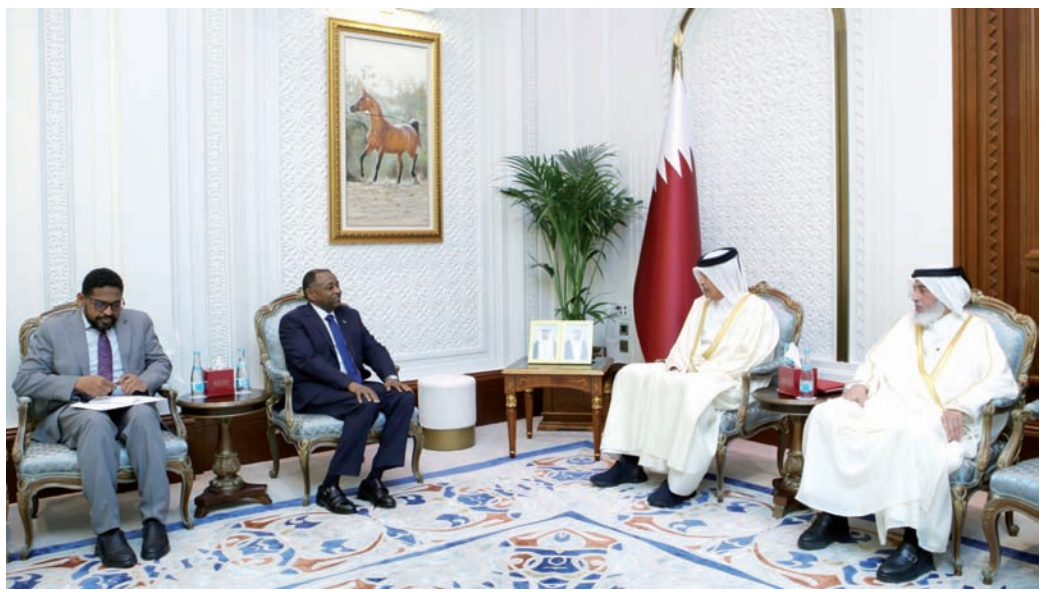
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Shura Council Speaker meets Sudan, Senegal Ambassadors

The Speaker stressed Qatar's rejection of the Iranian attacks targeting the State, which constitute a violation of international law and a threat to the security and stability of the region.



Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim meeting Ambassador of Sudan to Qatar H E Badr Al Din Abdullah Mohammed Ahmed yesterday.

DOHA: Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim yesterday met separately with Ambassador of the Republic of the Sudan to the State of Qatar, H E Badr Al Din Abdullah Mohammed Ahmed and Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to the State of Qatar, H E Cheikh Tidiane Sall.

During the meetings, the Speaker of the Shura Council affirmed the strength of the relations between Qatar and both Sudan and Senegal, and their ongoing development.

He also emphasised the importance of strengthening parliamentary cooperation and intensifying coordination in international parliamentary forums, which contributes to unifying positions on issues of common interest.

The Speaker also stressed Qatar's rejection of the Iranian attacks targeting the State of Qatar, which constitute a violation of international law and a threat to the security and stability of the region. He noted the importance of prioritising diplomatic solutions.

Regarding Sudan, he expressed Qatar's keenness on its security, stability, and territorial integrity. The Sudanese Ambassador, for his part, reviewed the developments in his country, expressing his appreciation for Qatar's role in supporting Sudan and preserving its unity.

In his meeting with the Senegalese Ambassador, the Speaker emphasised the importance of strengthening coordination with African parliaments and supporting the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The Ambassador addressed the situation in West Africa, commending Qatar's role in conflict resolution and the role of parliaments in supporting mediation and bridging differences.

In both meetings, the ambassadors affirmed their countries' rejection and condemnation of Iranian aggression against the State of Qatar and other countries in the region.

They also expressed their full solidarity with the State of Qatar and their support for all efforts aimed at enhancing regional security and stability. — ***QNA***

EDITORIAL

Harnessing solar energy

AMID global challenges posed by the climate change, exploring new sources of clean and enduring energy is the pursuit of all nations. Qatar has adopted an ambitious strategy to meet its renewable energy goals. It has implemented major projects to reduce reliance on biofuels in line with the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The country seeks to produce 20 percent of electricity from renewable sources by 2030, slash greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent and invest in solar energy storage research and grid integration projects.

One of Qatar's flagship renewable energy projects is the Al Kharsaah solar power plant, west of Doha. With a production capacity of 800 megawatts across 10 square kilometres and equipped with more than 1.8 million solar panels, the plant supplies electricity to roughly 60,000 homes. It covers up to 10 percent of the nation's electricity needs at peak times and delivers power at a highly competitive rate.

With abundant solar radiation throughout the year, Qatar is well-positioned to harness solar energy as a reliable and clean resource. Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) has highlighted the growing role of its 'BeSolar' service in accelerating the country's transition towards renewable energy, supporting both environmental sustainability and economic efficiency.

The BeSolar service enables customers to install solar energy systems and benefit from a net billing mechanism, allowing them to generate electricity on-site while exporting surplus power to the national grid.

The excess energy is credited to subsequent electricity bills, making solar adaptation more financially viable. The service represents a significant step towards reducing carbon emissions, achieving long-term financial savings, and promoting the use of clean energy sources.

The service operates through a net metering system that calculates the difference between electricity consumed and exported. This mechanism helps lower monthly bills and allows customers to gradually recover installation costs.

Kahramaa offers flexible solar installation options tailored to different facility types. These include rooftop photovoltaic systems for optimal efficiency, solar canopies over parking areas that provide both electricity and shade, and ground-mounted systems suitable for large-scale or open-land projects.

The initiative is part of Qatar's broader efforts under the Qatar National Renewable Energy Strategy (QNRES), which aims to expand renewable energy adoption and build a sustainable energy system. The strategy focuses on reducing carbon dioxide emissions, increasing renewable energy penetration, while maintaining grid stability, and maximising socio-economic benefits.

Awqaf Ministry opens new mosque in Rawdat Rashid

THE PENINSULA

Built on a spacious land area of 2,500 square metres, the mosque complex includes an imam's residence and accommodation for the muezzin.

DOHA: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Mosques Management Department, has inaugurated the Khamis Owaidha Sarheed Muraikhi Mosque in the Rawdat Rashid area, as part of its ongoing efforts to expand and develop mosques across the country. Built on a spacious land area of 2,500 square metres, the mosque complex includes an imam's residence and accommodation for the muezzin. The mosque, endowed by Saeed Khamis Owaidha Al Muraikhi, stands as a place of worship dedicated to prayer, remembrance, and the recitation of the Holy Quran.

The opening of the mosque aligns with the ministry's strategic plan to keep pace with urban growth and population increase, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. The endowment is regarded as a significant charitable act, offering continuous reward as a form of ongoing charity (sadaqah jariyah).

The mosque, designated as mosque (No. M.S. 360), features a main prayer hall accommodating up to 850 worshippers, in addition to a women's prayer hall with a capacity of 50, bringing the total capacity to 900 worshippers.

Facilities at the mosque include a spacious ablution area and a large number of public parking spaces, some of which are designated for people with disabilities. The site also features well-organised entrances and exits, as well as a prominent minaret.

The ministry's Engineering Affairs Department oversees the provision of mosque infrastructure across the country, including planning, construction, and maintenance. It also supervises the development of mosque projects and imam housing in accordance with approved technical and engineering standards, while maintaining a comprehensive database of mosques and their staff.

Additionally, the Ministry provides an online service on its official website that allows users to locate mosques geographically using precise maps and global navigation systems, facilitating easy access to mosques across all cities in the country.



A view of the newly-built Khamis Owaidha Sarheed Muraikhi Mosque in the Rawdat Rashid area.

Al Muraikhi, Bolivia FM discuss regional developments

DOHA: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi received a phone call yesterday from Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia H E Fernando Aramayo.

During the call, the two sides discussed the latest regional developments in light of the ceasefire announcement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to several issues of common interest.

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs reiterated the State of Qatar's welcome of the ceasefire announcement and stressed the need to build upon it urgently to prevent the escalation of tensions in the region.

He emphasised the importance of ensuring the security of maritime routes and the freedom of navigation and international trade in accordance with the rules of international law, which contributes to maintaining regional stability and global supply chains.

For his part, the Bolivian Foreign Minister expressed his country's solidarity with the State of Qatar in light of the developments taking place in the region. — ***QNA***

'Al Jazeera 2' launched

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Al Jazeera Media Network has announced the launch of its new service, "Al Jazeera 2," aimed at delivering broader and more in-depth coverage of pressing regional and global issues.

The new service, introduced yesterday by Al Jazeera Arabic, dedicates seven hours of daily programming to exploring key topics, spanning developments in Palestine, Sudan, Syria, and other major files shaping the current geopolitical landscape. "Al Jazeera 2" is designed as a significant platform to enhance the network's programming output, offering extended space for news bulletins and analytical shows that deepen editorial coverage and provide richer context for audiences.

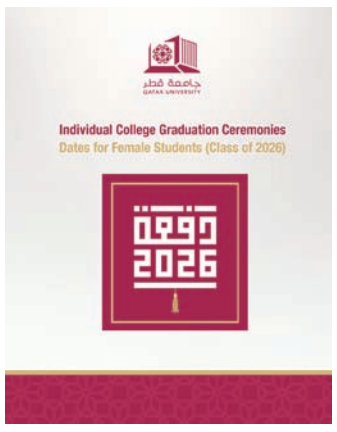
Director of Al Jazeera Arabic, Asef Hamidi, said the launch reflects an editorial response to the evolving situation in the region. He noted that the service aims to allocate dedicated airtime for news and programmes focusing on the most impactful and widely followed issues.

Hamidi said the initiative aligns with Al Jazeera's ongoing efforts to develop its media tools and adapt its platforms to reach wider audiences.

QU announces dates for college graduation ceremonies for female students

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As part of its preparations to organise the graduation ceremony for the Class of 2026, Qatar University (QU) announced in a statement that it will organise separate graduation ceremonies for its Class of 2026 female students, which will take place in the mornings and evenings starting from Tuesday, May 5 and ending on Saturday, May 9, 2026 in the QU Sports and Events Complex.



The graduation ceremonies will be streamed live on the QU YouTube Channel. The graduates will be received on stage by the Dean of their respective college as well as ceremony organisers.

The graduation ceremony for the Class of 2026 will include graduates of the following semesters: Summer 2025, and Fall 2025, in addition to those who are expected to graduate by the end of Spring 2026.

The graduation ceremonies of College of Education will be held on 5 May 2026 at 4:00 pm; College of Sharia and Islamic Studies and College of Law will take place at 6 May 2026 on 9:00 am; College of Health Sciences, College of Pharmacy, College of Medicine, College of Dental Medicine, and College of Nursing will be held on 7 May 2026 at 9:00 am; College of Business and Economics will take place on 7 May 2026 at 4:00 pm; College of Arts and Sciences (Including Mass Communications, History, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology, Applied Geography and GIS, Art Education) will be held on 9 May 2026 at 9:00 am; College of Arts and Sciences (Including Graduate Studies – Biology and Environmental Sciences, Statistics, Chemistry, Sports Science, Mathematics, Arabic Language, English Literature, Linguistics, International Affairs, Policy, Planning, and Development) will take place on 9 May 2026 at 4:00 pm.

MoEHE launches private school admission guide 2026 with new reforms

FROM PAGE 1

The updated guide introduces a range of facilitations and exceptions, including students transferring from outside Qatar under the same or equivalent curriculum, who may be admitted based on their last academic certificate, regardless of age, provided they pass the school's admission test and receive approval.

Similarly, students transferring within Qatar under the same or equivalent curriculum may also be enrolled based on their latest academic record, regardless of age, subject to passing admission requirements.

Students arriving without certified academic certificates are granted a two-month grace period to complete attestation procedures. If certification is not possible, decisions are referred exclusively to the Private Schools Licensing Department after evaluating the academic program.

Students on a visit visa are given two months to obtain residency, extendable by an additional two months. In cases where a student's ID card has expired, parents are granted a two-month grace period to renew it upon signing a formal commitment.

For students holding online education certificates, enrollment is subject to approval by the Licensing Department after verifying the accreditation of the learning program.

Additionally, students transitioning at the kindergarten or preparatory level from the British curriculum to the American system (or equivalent) may be enrolled without grade demotion, provided their age aligns with the required level. This applies from the start of the academic year until the end of September.

Registration remains open throughout the academic year, subject to available vacancies, while enrollment for students arriving from outside the country continues until the end of the last week of May. Requests for grade repetition are accepted until the end of September of the academic year.

According to the current guidance document, the Ministry has outlined a unified timeline for student registration and transfers in private schools and kindergartens:

The registration mechanism is announced to parents in the second week of December, followed by the start of application submissions in the first week of March.

Registration remains open throughout the academic year, subject to available vacancies, while enrollment for students arriving from outside the country continues until the end of the last week of May. Requests for grade repetition are accepted until the end of September of the academic year.

Transfers between different curricula are permitted until the end of January, whereas transfers within the same curriculum are allowed until the end of February.

The updated guide also strengthens regulations governing the admission of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, including adjustments to the maximum age limits for admission across all educational stages to better accommodate their needs.

Ali Jassim Al Kuwari, Academic Advisor at the Office of the Undersecretary, presented the Compulsory Education Enrollment Platform. The platform aims to streamline student registration across all educational stages through an integrated digital system.

He explained that the platform aligns with Law No. (25) of 2001 on compulsory education, guaranteeing every child's right to education for both citizens and residents. It is designed to simplify and unify registration procedures while accommodating the needs of diverse student groups.



Al Muraikhi receives copy of credentials of Portugal's Ambassador

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi received yesterday a copy of the credentials of Ambassador of the Portuguese Republic to the State of Qatar, H E Ana Filomena da Costa Rocha. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs wished the Ambassador success in fulfilling her duties, affirming commitment to providing all the support to enhance bilateral relations to closer cooperation in various fields.

Early screening key to improving autism outcomes: Expert

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As Autism Acceptance Month spotlight on inclusion and understanding, healthcare leaders in Qatar are underscoring the importance of early detection and intervention in improving the lives of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Assistant Medical Director of Children and Adolescent Services at the Primary Health Care Corporation, Dr. Sadriya Al Kohji stressed that timely action remains critical to achieving better developmental outcomes.

"The success of programmes provided for autism spectrum disorder depends on early screening, early diagnosis, and early intervention," she said in a video message posted on Ministry of Public Health social media handles. "The earlier a diagnosis is made, the earlier the child can receive therapeutic services, which significantly improves outcomes on behavioural health and medical levels that we aim for."

Dr. Al Kohji explained that the journey often begins at primary healthcare centres through routine well-baby clinic visits. "The journey typically begins with primary healthcare services through well-baby clinic visits at 18 months and 30 months, that is at one-and-a-half years and two-and-a-half years of age where early screening is conducted twice," she said.

If developmental concerns arise during these stages, children are referred to specialised institutions such as Hamad Medical Corporation or Sidra Medicine for further evaluation. "There, the child is formally diagnosed and enrolled in early intervention programmes," she added.

According to Dr. Al Kohji, this structured screening and referral pathway applies to all children accessing well-baby services across health centres, covering approximately 30,000 children annually. "All newborns typically receive care through primary healthcare centres. This process is monitored every six months to ensure that the required level of early screening and referral to specialised entities are maintained," she said.

Globally, April is recognised as Autism Acceptance Month (formerly Autism Awareness Month) to promote understanding, inclusion, and acceptance of individuals on the autism spectrum. It also highlights the importance of support in education, employment, and daily life, while celebrating neurodiversity.

The month includes World Autism Awareness Day, which was established following a 2007 call by H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser and adopted by the United Nations without a vote.

In Qatar, national efforts are being strengthened through long-term planning and innovation. The Qatar Foundation Autism Strategy 2025–2035 outlines a comprehensive roadmap aimed at enhancing services and opportunities for individuals with autism. The strategy focuses on expanding inclusive education, leveraging artificial intelligence, advancing genetic research, and streamlining healthcare pathways.

Among its key targets are reducing the average age of diagnosis by 25 percent, increasing participation of individuals with autism in higher education and the workforce by 50 percent, boosting autism-focused technological innovations by 50 percent, and improving the quality of life for families by the same margin.

In 2016, Qatar Foundation launched Renad Academy, the country's first specialised school for children with autism. This was followed in 2018 by the launch of the BARAKA–Qatar study at Sidra Medicine, aimed at building a comprehensive national autism database.

UDST, CCQ sign MoU to strengthen academic collaboration

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) and the Community College of Qatar (CCQ), have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) establishing a strategic framework for academic cooperation and knowledge exchange between the two institutions.

The agreement reflects a shared commitment to advancing applied, technical, and academic education in Qatar, while supporting the development of highly skilled graduates aligned with the evolving needs of the labour market.

Under the terms of the MoU, both institutions will collaborate across several key areas, including the development of academic programmes and the facilitation of diploma students from the Community College of Qatar to transition into bachelor's programmes at the University of Doha for Science and Technology, thereby enhancing the learning experience through integrated and applied curricula.

Commenting on the signing, Dr. Salem Al-Naemi, President of UDST, said, "This partnership reflects our commitment to strengthening Qatar's higher education ecosystem through meaningful collaboration. By aligning our academic pathways and expanding opportunities, we reaffirm our dedication to providing students and graduates with exceptional education experiences while supporting national priorities for human capital development."

Dr. Khalid Mohammed Al-Horr, President of the Community College of Qatar, said, "This memorandum establishes an institutional framework for academic cooperation based on mutual respect and parity. It includes the development of academic programmes, facilitation of student mobility, exchange of research and training, and the shared use of facilities and available resources."

He added, "This collaboration enhances the quality of education and the readiness of graduates, supporting Qatar National Vision 2030 and contributing to the development of qualified national talent that advances the knowledge-based economy and sustainable development."



President of UDST Dr. Salem Al-Naemi and President of the Community College of Qatar Dr. Khalid Mohammed Al-Horr signing the agreement.

This MoU underscores the importance of institutional partnerships in fostering innovation, enhancing academic quality, and supporting lifelong learning. Both institutions will work closely to implement joint initiatives that contribute to student success, academic excellence, and the broader development of Qatar's education sector.

The View Hospital performs augmented reality knee replacement

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The View Hospital in affiliation with Cedars-Sinai performed the first total knee replacement using Augmented Reality (AR) technology and Patient-Specific Instrumentation successfully in the Middle East and Africa.

Led by a senior consultant orthopaedic and knee surgeon at The View Hospital, Dr. Mohamed Al-Ateeq one of the pioneer users of advanced Robotic technology in the region, the surgical team used the technology with precision and confidence, setting a new standard for how joint replacements can be performed in the region.

The procedure marks the first use of augmented reality and patient-specific tools in joint replacement surgery in the region, bringing together advanced visualisation with real-time guidance and custom-fitted surgical tools designed specifically for the patient.

Before surgery, Dr. Al-Ateeq used advanced imaging software to create a virtual 3D model of the patient's knee. This enabled the team to evaluate damaged bone and cartilage and determine the ideal placement for the implant, based on the patient's individual anatomy.



Dr. Mohamed Al-Ateeq

During the procedure, the surgeon wears a pair of augmented reality glasses to view the patient's specific knee anatomy in 3D. Two small sensors are attached to the patient's leg to provide real-time soft tissue feedback, such as the tension of the ligaments.

The AR-based platform enables the surgical team to easily adjust, better visualise and determine the accurate placement of the implant by the millimetre, given the patient's specific anatomy, which is key to a successful knee replacement procedure.

"Augmented reality gives us a more dynamic and three-dimensional visualisation of the joint," explained Dr. Al-Ateeq. "This advanced technology enhances surgical planning and allows us to position the implant precisely for each patient, tailoring the outcome to every patient and their specific needs."

The procedure marks the first use of augmented reality and patient-specific tools in joint replacement surgery in the



Dr. Fatih Mehmet Gul

region, bringing together advanced visualisation with real-time guidance and custom-fitted surgical tools designed specifically for the patient.

The ultra precise technology marks one of the most significant advancements in joint replacement surgery and has been recognised globally for improving clinical results and recovery experience.

"This milestone reflects the advanced care we're proud to offer at The View Hospital and our ongoing commitment to leading the way in orthopaedic innovation in Qatar," said CEO, The View Hospital, Dr. Fatih Mehmet Gul.

"Our focus remains on clinical excellence and ensuring that world-class treatments are more accessible than ever for our patients." The View Hospital's ability to deliver such specialised care reflects its commitment to staying ahead of patient needs and bringing advanced surgical solutions to the country, treatments that were once only available abroad.

Beyond compliance: How Vodafone Qatar champions health and safety

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In the fast-paced world of telecommunications, where infrastructure, technology, and people intersect, maintaining a strong health and safety (H&S) culture is a necessity.

Vodafone Qatar recognises that a resilient and proactive approach to safety is fundamental to both operational excellence and employee well-being.

From corporate offices to retail outlets, Vodafone Qatar has embedded a structured H&S framework that goes beyond compliance, fostering a culture where safety is ingrained in daily operations and business activities.

With Vodafone Qatar's leadership actively implementing safety measures, maintaining rigorous risk management protocols, and promoting continuous employee training and well-being initiatives, the company is setting the benchmark for occupational safety in the industry.

Vodafone Qatar has been advancing its H&S agenda through programmes focused on compliance and risk management, employee and contractor engagement, and health and wellbeing.

The company has a structured, future-driven approach to H&S, ensuring a safe workplace for employees, contractors, and visitors. Vodafone Qatar also runs routine Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (HIRA) to proactively mitigate risks and performs regular internal safety audits to ensure compliance with safety protocols.

Vodafone Qatar was recently awarded the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO 45001:2018) Occupational Health and Safety Management Certification in recognition of its effectiveness across leadership, planning, operational control, performance evaluation, and its commitment to continual improvement.

The certification underscores the company's adherence to international best practices and requirements, underpinned by years of rigorous practice and a deep-seated culture of caring for its people, partners, and stakeholders.

A comprehensive training approach is provided to ensure all employees and vendors are well-equipped with essential safety knowledge. This includes the mandatory 'Doing What's Right' (DWR) training, which forms part of Vodafone Qatar's learning and development program. DWR encompasses annual H&S training for all staff, onboarding safety inductions for new employees, and emergency preparedness and response training — such as Fire Marshal, Basic Life Support, and first aid courses for various staff members. In addition, Vodafone Qatar conducted 18 H&S activities, engaging approximately 1000 employees. An often-overlooked facet of H&S is employee wellbeing. Vodafone Qatar endeavours to achieve holistic corporate welfare and doing so requires a strong commitment to improving both employee mental and physical wellbeing. Health seminars covering topics like stress management and nutrition are routine at Vodafone Qatar.

Vodafone Qatar also hosts various health-focused CSR events, such as flu vaccinations and blood donation drives. Internally, various sports tournaments (padel, football, cricket) are organised throughout the year to encourage physical fitness.

Beyond its corporate offices in Lusail and Msheireb, Vodafone Qatar maintains its H&S ethos across its diverse network of business partners. In its ongoing commitment to upholding the highest safety standards, the company has strict safety requirements for all its vendors and contractors, including mandatory site inspections and safety reporting, prohibition of unsafe behaviour such as driving while using a phone.

Vodafone Qatar's H&S team maintains open dialogue with vendors and partners to explore opportunities for enhancing safety standards and ensuring seamless compliance.

These collaborative efforts focus on identifying potential risks, sharing best practices, and implementing proactive measures that strengthen workplace safety.

QFC
مركز قطر للمال

Tender Announcement

Qatar Financial Center Authority ("QFCA") would like to invite competent local Service Providers for the following open Tender/s:

Tender Title	Tender No.	Non-refundable Tender Fee (QAR)	Bid Submission Closing Date
QFCA- Event Management & Audio-Visual Production -Call-Off Agreement	RFP-2026-A-0020-M	500	5 May 2026

In accordance with the following conditions:

1. The Tender Documents will be available from 15 April to 22 April 2026.
2. Tender Documents will be issued electronically only upon submission of the following requirements to tenders@qfc.qa
   - Copy of deposit slip for the non-refundable tender fee (as mentioned above), stamped by Commercial Bank
   - Copy of the Authorization Letter signed by the authorized person from the company
   - Copy of a valid Commercial Registration (CR)
   - Copy of a valid Trade License and Computer ID
3. The non-refundable Tender fee must be deposited to the following account:

Beneficiary Account Name:	Qatar Financial Centre Authority
Bank Name:	Commercial Bank
Bank account number:	4010-103883-201
IBAN	QA33CBQA00000000 4010103883201
SWIFT CODE	CBQAQAQA

4. All bids must remain valid for 120 days from the closing date and must be submitted in two (2) separate files: one for the Technical Proposal and one for the Commercial Proposal.
5. QFCA's Tendering Terms and Conditions apply. For any inquiries, please contact us at tenders@qfc.qa.

Qatar Financial Centre Authority
PO Box 23245, Doha, Qatar
T: +974 4496 7777
F: +974 4496 7676
E: info@qfc.qa
W: qfc.qa
QFC مركز قطر للمال



Qatar's envoy attends meeting of Nepal PM with accredited Ambassadors

Ambassador of Qatar to Nepal H E Mishaal bin Mohammad Ali Al Ansari participated yesterday in the meeting of Prime Minister of Nepal H E Balendra Shah with Their Excellencies Ambassador accredited to Nepal. During the meeting, the foreign policy features of the new government in Nepal were explained.

QNA launches training course on video filming and montage

DOHA: Qatar News Agency (QNA) launched yesterday a five-day training course on video filming and montage as part of QNA Training Centre's 2026 training plan, with the participation of media professionals from the agency and several government bodies.

Represented by photography and montage expert at QNA, Anwar bin Ammar, the course aims to develop participants' skills in producing visual content according to professional standards, by introducing them to modern photography techniques and methods of producing visual materials in line with the requirements of media work, in addition to enhancing their capabilities in field work and refining their visual storytelling skills through specialised practical applications.

The training course includes theoretical and practical components, such as introducing photography equipment like cameras and lenses, as well as the basics of lightning and how to use it, in addition to reviewing the different types of photography and their uses in media work.

The course also includes montage (video editing) skills using various applications, with a focus on choosing the right tools for each type of content, along with colour correction and image quality improvement techniques, in addition to the principles of art direction and building an integrated visual story.

This training course comes as part of QNA's efforts through the QNA Training Centre to develop national media competencies and keep pace with the rapid developments in the digital content industry in order to contribute to enhancing the quality of media production. — ***QNA***

Registration open for Qatar Private Sector Nationalisation Award

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Labour has announced that registration for the Qatar Private Sector Nationalisation Award is now open via the Himmah platform, inviting individuals and private sector entities to participate in one of the country's key initiatives aimed at strengthening national workforce development.

The Ministry has set the final deadline for registration as 9 May 2026, urging eligible participants to apply through the official Himmah platform as part of the drive towards "Empowering Qatar" and promoting excellence in nationalisation efforts across the private sector. The Qatar Private Sector Nationalisation Award aims to advance excellence in the national workforce through several core objectives.

These include encouraging constructive competition among private sector entities to enhance workforce nationalisation initiatives, showcasing Qatari talent by highlighting professionals contributing significantly to private sector growth, recognising visionary leadership and innovative practices that support sustainable human capital development, and acknowledging measurable progress by rewarding organisations that achieve nationalisation targets and demonstrate tangible results.

PISQ primary wing launches Art Festival with strong parent participation

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The primary wing of Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) successfully launched the first day of its Art Festival, marked by vibrant creativity and meaningful collaboration between students and parents.

The opening day featured Grade 1 students working closely with their mothers in an engaging art competition that highlighted both artistic talent and family bonding. Participants created impressive 2D and 3D models using recycled materials, promoting sustainability while offering a refreshing break from digital routines.

The event also saw participation from vice principals of other school wings, who joined in a special colouring session to honour parents and encourage their creative involvement. Mothers were warmly welcomed with cards and refreshments, adding a personal touch to the celebration.

Organisers noted that the initiative received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with visible joy among both students and parents. The event not only showcased artistic expression but also provided families with an opportunity to experience the dynamic and interactive learning environment at PISQ, while other classes continued their regular academic activities.

The school administration expressed gratitude to the principal of PISQ for his continued support and leadership, which played a key role in the successful organisation of the event. The primary wing looks forward to continuing the Art Festival with more activities that foster creativity and community engagement.



LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Half Pay Back' promotion

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: LuLu Hypermarket announced the launch of its highly anticipated 'Half Pay Back' promotion, running until May 2, 2026.

Crafted to deliver exceptional value, the campaign gives customers the opportunity to enjoy significant savings across selected fashion categories.

Shoppers can explore a wide selection of international fashion brands and enjoy incredible deals on ready-made garments, sarees, churidars, footwear, ladies' handbags, baby accessories, and Vishu festive wear.

Adding to the excitement, customers who spend QR200 will receive an instant QR100 free shopping voucher, making every purchase even more rewarding.

The promotion features an impressive lineup of globally recognised brands, including Skechers, Reebok, Louis Philippe, Arrow, Crocs, Adidas, Doc & Mark, Peter England, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, Sunnex, Twills, SIN, Tom Smith, Ruff, Marco Donateli, Anta, Cortigiani, Eten, De Backers, John Louise, and many more,



ensuring shoppers have access to the latest trends and premium-quality fashion under one roof.

In addition to fashion, LuLu Hypermarket is simultaneously running Digi Tech Offers, presenting unbeatable deals on the latest home appliances, laptops, tablets, smartphones, gaming products, and gadgets, catering to the evolving lifestyle needs of modern consumers.

Enhancing the overall shopping experience, LuLu's Happiness Loyalty Programme brings added value to customers by rewarding their everyday purchases. Shoppers buying from selected categories will receive 15% back as Happiness Points, making routine shopping more rewarding.

The offer covers a wide range of popular essentials, including boxed chocolates, potato canisters, coffee capsules, fibre biscuits, breakfast cereals, peanut butter, canned hummus and tahina, individual cakes, cream caramel, sliced cheese, frozen green peas, cat litter, aluminum foil, conditioners, and deodorants. The promotion is valid until April 15, 2026.

With its continued commitment to delivering value-driven campaigns, LuLu Hypermarket once again sets a benchmark in the retail industry by combining affordability variety, and customer rewards in one dynamic promotion. Customers are encouraged to visit LuLu Hypermarket outlets and take full advantage of these exciting, limited time offers.

Qatar passport climbs in Henley global rankings

FROM PAGE 1

Expatriates and investors view Qatar more favourably when relocation or frequent travel becomes simpler.

Diplomatically, the gains stem from proactive visa liberalisation pacts and robust bilateral ties, positioning Qatar as a bridge between East and West.

Regionally, Qatar maintains its edge as the second-strongest passport among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, trailing only the UAE. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain follow further behind. This intra-GCC hierarchy reinforces Qatar's soft power and competitive standing in the Arabian Peninsula.

Experts note that such improvements rarely happen in isolation. They signal effective foreign policy, economic stability, and a reputation for reliability, qualities that encourage more countries to ease entry for Qatari nationals.

As global travel rebounds post-pandemic and geopolitical landscapes evolve, Qatar's passport strength offers a competitive advantage in an increasingly interconnected world. The Henley Index updates monthly, and analysts expect further gains if Qatar continues forging new agreements. This leap is not merely symbolic; it embodies progress, empowerment, and a brighter horizon for global engagement. Qatari travellers can now explore more of the world with confidence, carrying a passport that is increasingly respected on the international stage.

Qatar Shell GTL Limited

INVITATION TO TENDER

The Qatar Shell GTL Tender Committee Requests Property Owners to Tender for the following Services:

SR No.	Tender Ref.	Title	Tender Fee	Tender Issue Date	Tender Closing Date
1	WS2704357779, CW998540	Al Khor lease	N/A	12th Apr	17th Apr

General Instructions:

- Requirement for **one or two adjacent residential compounds** totalling **506 units** (apartments and villas).
- Compound(s) must be located **within the city of Al Khor** (within 30 km of Pearl GTL; Al Khor proximity preferred).
- All units must be **air conditioned; minimum 3 bedrooms** per villa/apartment (family units).
- Buildings must be **completed and ready for immediate occupancy,** with valid **Municipality Building Completion** and **Civil Defense** certificates.
- Compounds must comply with **Shell Health and Safety & Worker Welfare** requirements.
- **Minimum capacity per bidder: 25%** of total scope (≈125 units).
- **Facilities & services (Landlord scope):** full facility management, security & maintenance; gated access; clubhouse (gym & games room); at least one sports court; for family packages–children's playground and swimming pool.
- The tender will be administered **exclusively online via SAP Ariba Platform;** Tender Documents will be shared only with registered and approved bidders.
- **Eligibility:** valid **Commercial Registration (CR)** and an **authorization letter on company letterhead** to obtain access to Ariba.

Contact (registration of interest & Ariba onboarding):
Reem Al Abdulla – Real Estate Qatar Department
Email: Qatar-Accomodation@shell.com

مؤسسة قطر
Qatar Foundation

INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
QF-RFQ-1262	Pre-qualification of Suppliers for the Supply of Medical and Laboratory Instruments, Consumables, and Chemicals.	100.00	N/A	28 May-2026 2:00 PM

SUPPLIER PRE-QUALIFICATION

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above supplier prequalification tender. To receive the supplier prequalification tender documents, please follow the below steps

1. **Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration to complete the Supplier Registration process.

   Fee: Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.
   All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

   Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Prequalification Tender Fee online will be from **13th April 2026 to 23rd April 2026**.

2. All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required prequalification tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Supplier prequalification Tender Document.

3. Submittals for supplier pre-qualification need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.

Qatar positions itself as cyber resilience hub in Middle East

FROM PAGE 1

At the same time, attackers are operating with increasing speed as research from Google Threat Intelligence Group and Mandiant indicates that the time between vulnerability disclosure and exploitation has narrowed significantly, often to just a few days.

Geopolitical tensions have further intensified the threat environment, contributing to a rise in disruptive cyber campaigns, website defacements, and data theft linked to hacktivist and state-aligned groups. Industry leaders also warn of the growing influence of misinformation,.

"Organisations must address both the technical and human dimensions of cybersecurity. People remain a critical factor, so awareness, leadership support, and clear communication must complement strong technical controls," Rashid added.

Experts say the country is not only strengthening its own resilience but also setting a benchmark for the wider region by demonstrating how strategic investment, governance, and execution can turn risk into a foundation for sustainable growth.

Islamic Cultural Center organises educational lectures at schools

THE PENINSULA





DOHA: The Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center has organised a series of educational lectures on the blessing of safety and security at West One School and Ebla International School, as part of its ongoing efforts to promote religious awareness and strengthen educational cooperation with schools across the country.

The lectures were held in full compliance with approved safety measures, particularly with regard to the number of participating students and the selection of suitable venues. Approximately 50 students attended the lectures at each school.

During the sessions, speakers highlighted the significance of safety and security as among the greatest blessings bestowed upon human, stressing their vital role in ensuring stability and well-being in both individual and community life.

They also explained the importance of expressing gratitude for this blessing through faith, responsible conduct, and adherence to moral and religious values.

The speakers further commended the considerable efforts undertaken by the State to preserve and maintain this blessing, noting that such efforts require, in return, gratitude to Allah Almighty, as well as commitment to public guidance and regulations.

They also emphasised the importance of safeguarding this blessing by avoiding wrongdoing and drawing closer to Allah through acts of worship and obedience during times of peace and stability.

The organisation of these lectures reflects the Center's commitment to building strong partnerships with educational institutions, responding to their educational and developmental needs, and enhancing communication with students through awareness-driven and faith-based initiatives aimed at strengthening their religious and moral consciousness.

During the sessions, speakers highlighted the significance of safety and security as among the greatest blessings bestowed upon human, stressing their vital role in ensuring stability and well-being in both individual and community life.

The Center continues to implement a variety of outreach and educational programmes designed to serve different segments of society and to reinforce values that contribute to building a well-informed and responsible generation.

Center holds awareness lecture on noble values at Education City students residence

THE PENINSULA



DOHA: The Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center organised an awareness lecture at the student residence in Education City on the importance of moral values, remaining steadfast in upholding them, and the benefits they bring in both this life and the Hereafter.

The lecture witnessed notable engagement and positive interaction from the participating students. It was held in coordination with the Student Housing Administration at Education City, which provided the necessary facilitation and full support for the successful delivery of the programme.

During the lecture, the Center's delegate highlighted the importance of cultivating and adhering to sound moral values for the benefit of the individual in both worldly life and the Hereafter.

He explained that maintaining a strong focus on the Hereafter serves as the principal motivation for commitment to noble values and upright character.

He further noted that a person's ability to resist desires and remain steadfast in faith when faced with doubts and temptations is what grants true distinction in this world and the next, and guides the individual toward goodness and success in both.

The organisation of this programme reflects the Center's ongoing commitment to responding to the needs of its target groups and strengthening cooperation with various local institutions, in a way that contributes to spreading ethical and behavioural awareness, addressing community needs, and enhancing religious understanding.

The believer in times of crises

In determining the way in which a Muslim should deal with a time of crisis, it is important to analyse exactly what, essentially, a crisis is in the context of Islamic understanding; particularly as this relates to the Qadar (predestination) of Allah.

A crisis, by definition, indicates a pivotal period of time in which a situation or condition seems unstable, chaotic, and liable to sudden, drastic, and most often, dangerous change. It implies the precipice that gives way to disaster; when every move is crucial, either facilitating a healthy and progressive resolution or initiating the descent into catastrophe.

Now, Islamically, such a situation does not exist. Life does not proceed so haphazardly; but rather all things occur, can only occur, according to the Decree of Allah. We understand, therefore, that a 'crisis' basically means that circumstances seem to be other than we would like them to be. That is, our own personal vision of how our lives and situations should be developing finds itself opposed in one way or another with what Allah has decreed for us.

We therefore reject the validity of external crisis, insofar as this is understood to mean a random and volatile unfolding of events; and rather understand the conflict that arises between our own private will and the will of Allah as an internal crisis of belief.

Allah says (what means): "No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah – He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowing of all things..."[Quran 64:11]

It was narrated that 'Alqamah, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "He (i.e., the person referred to in the above verse) is the one who, when calamity strikes, knows that it is from his Lord and accepts it with equanimity and submits (himself to Allah's Will)."

In other words, the contradiction between what we desire for ourselves with what Allah Almighty desires for us, produces an inner crisis, a pivotal moment in our hearts when we can either decide to bemoan our situation and succumb to anxiety and dissatisfaction, or when we can acknowledge the superiority of Allah's Will, and persevere with the assurances that Allah knows best.

Not only has Allah informed us that we will face circumstances that we will regard as hardships, but He, Almighty, has shown us how to face them. He, Almighty, Says (what means): "O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."[Quran 2:153]

Not only has Allah informed us that we will face circumstances that we will regard as hardships, but He, Almighty, has shown us how to face them. He, Almighty, Says (what means): "O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."[Quran 2:153]

And Allah told us (what means): "And be patient, [O Muhammad sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention)], and your patience is not but through Allah. And do not grieve over them and do not be in distress over what they conspire. Indeed, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good." [Quran 16:127-128]

Furthermore, the believer understands that undergoing external crises, experiencing the oftentimes sharp contrast between our expectations and the manner in which our circumstances actually develop, or when our circumstances appear dire beyond conceivable resolution, it is an indication, in fact, of Allah's favour. Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention) said: "Whenever Allah wills good for a person, He subjects him to adversity." [Al-Bukhari]

Indeed, for the one who accepts what Allah has decreed, and endures his or her trials patiently, there is only good to come from external crises, the greater the crisis, the greater the good, if the believer engages their circumstance with Iman (faith).

Imam At-Tirmithi (may Allah have mercy upon him) stated that the Prophet sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention) said: "Verily, the greatness of the reward is tied to the greatness of the trial: When Allah loves a people, He (Allah) puts them to trial. Whoever accepts it, will enjoy Allah's pressure and whoever is displeased with it, will incur Allah's displeasure." [At-Tirmithi]







TEST YOUR ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE & WIN QR300

Weekly Islamic Knowledge Contest

Think you know Islam? Put your knowledge to the test and win QR300 shopping voucher every week!

How to Join:

- Every Monday, a new Islamic question will be published.
- Scan the QR code to submit your answer.
- **One lucky winner will be selected from the correct entries.**
- **Submission deadline: Thursday at 11:59pm**

This Week's Question:

Which action does not invalidate fasting?

(A) Eating intentionally — (B) Drinking intentionally
(C) Vomiting unintentionally — (D) Smoking

Know the answer?
Scan, submit, and win!

A new chance to win every Monday – Don't miss out!

World urges respect for truce after US-Iran talks end with no deal

Pakistan said it would keep facilitating dialogue and urged both countries to continue respecting the temporary truce.

ISLAMABAD: Iran and the United States failed to strike a deal yesterday to end the war in the Middle East, but there was no immediate return to hostilities and world leaders quickly urged both sides to pursue the diplomatic route to peace.

US Vice President JD Vance left Pakistan after the talks — the highest-level meeting between the two sides since 1979 — and warned that Washington had made Tehran its "final and best offer" for a deal. "We leave here with a very simple proposal," he said. "We'll see if the Iranians accept it."

During a refuelling stop in Germany's Ramstein Air Base for Air Force 2, a US official told reporters that no members of the US negotiating team stayed behind in Islamabad, including chief negotiators Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Iran's parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said his negotiating team had "put forward constructive initiatives but ultimately the other side was unable to gain the trust of the Iranian delegation in this round of negotiations".

The failure of the talks will raise concerns that a return to fighting could drive world energy prices higher.

"We feel despair and hopelessness. We are tired of this uncertainty," said Nahid, a 60-year-old housewife in Tehran, contacted by AFP.

Saudi Arabia's energy ministry said yesterday its key east-west oil pipeline was back in service after it was damaged in earlier strikes.

Pakistan, which hosted the talks and whose leadership had ushered the rival sides to the table, said it would keep facilitating dialogue and urged both countries to continue respecting the temporary truce.

"It is imperative that the parties continue to uphold their commitment to ceasefire," Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the Sultan of Oman, H M Haitham bin Tariq, and both leaders agreed it "was vital there was a continuation of the ceasefire, and that all parties avoided any further escalation".

An EU spokesman said diplomacy would be "essential" to securing peace and hailed Pakistan's mediation efforts, while Russia's President Vladimir Putin called Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian to offer his services to the diplomatic effort. "Vladimir Putin emphasised his readiness to further facilitate the search for a political and diplomatic settlement to the conflict, and to mediate efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East," the Kremlin said, in its readout of the call. Iran and the US had entered the talks mediated by Pakistan with maximalist positions, with Washington piling pressure by saying it had sent minesweeping ships through the vital Strait of Hormuz maritime route.



US Vice-President JD Vance speaks during a news conference after negotiations with representatives from Iran, in Islamabad, Pakistan, yesterday. (AFP)

Signs of strain in the negotiations appeared when Iranian media accused the United States of making "excessive demands" over the strait, through which one-fifth of the world's oil transited before its effective closure by Iran during the war.

Iran's demands for any agreement to end the war include unfreezing sanctioned Iranian assets and ending Israel's war against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The opening of the Strait of Hormuz has also presented a friction point.

Throughout the war, Iran has wielded global economic leverage by asserting control of the maritime route. — ***AFP***

At least five dead as Israel pounds south Lebanon

BEIRUT: Lebanese official media reported extensive Israeli strikes across the country's south yesterday as the health ministry said at least five people were killed and the war's overall toll rose to 2,055 dead.

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported Israel attacks on around 30 locations in the country's south yesterday, with additional strikes on the adjacent West Bekaa area.

The health ministry said an Israeli strike on Qana killed five people, including three women, and wounded 25 others, while the NNA said the raid targeted "homes and infrastructure".

An AFP photographer in the southern town saw huge destruction as an excavator worked to clear debris and first responders carried a body out from under the rubble.

The ministry raised the overall toll in Lebanon to 2,055 dead, including 165 children and 87 health workers, since war erupted on March 2.



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted an area in the southern Lebanese city of Nabatieh yesterday. (AFP)

In south Lebanon's Bazuriyeh, Hassan Berro, a rescue worker from the Risala Scout association said: "Our emergency centre was hit and completely destroyed, along with all its contents, including beds and medical equipment." The AFP photographer saw windows shattered and debris covering several hospital beds in the building, where walls and ceilings were also damaged.

Hezbollah said it launched attacks on Israeli targets across the border and inside Lebanon, including against troops in the southern town of Bint Jbeil, where the NNA reported heavy fighting.

Officials from Lebanon, Israel and the United States are due to hold direct talks in Washington on Tuesday. — ***AFP***

Indonesian President to meet Putin in Russia for oil talks

JAKARTA: Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto will depart for Russia yesterday for talks with counterpart Vladimir Putin on oil, Prabowo's office said.

The presidency in Jakarta confirmed to AFP that Prabowo would leave Sunday evening. Foreign Minister Sugiono said yesterday that oil, which is "of strategic importance for the Indonesian nation", would be on the agenda.

"He will meet with President Putin and will also discuss global geopolitics and, certainly, the energy situation," said Sugiono, who like many Indonesians has only one name. Prabowo, who recently travelled to South Korea and Japan, has defended his foreign travels.

"Brothers and sisters, it's to secure oil, I have to go everywhere," he said in an address to his cabinet last week. — ***AFP***

Malawi arrests ex-finance minister

LILONGWE: Malawian police arrested the former finance minister yesterday on suspicion of money laundering and abuse of office, in the latest move in a widening post-election crackdown on former senior officials.

Simplex Chithyola, the leader of the opposition in the current parliament, handed himself to police after hearing he was sought by investigators, his lawyer George Kadzipatike said, confirming to AFP the charges against his client.

Chithyola was finance minister between 2023 and 2025 in the government of ex-president Lazarus Chakwera that was replaced in September elections dominated by soaring costs of living in the southern African country.

Figures linked to the former Malawi Congress Party (MCP) administration have come under legal scrutiny in a series of investigations into alleged corruption and financial misconduct during its term. — ***AFP***

Australia PM to travel to Malaysia, Brunei for fuel talks

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will travel to Brunei and Malaysia to discuss energy and food security, his office said yesterday, continuing regional efforts to shore up fuel supplies for a nation reliant on imports.

Albanese will travel to Brunei and Kuala Lumpur from April 14 to 17 to meet with Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, his office said in a statement. Australia is one of the world's top exporters of liquefied natural gas (LNG), but is largely reliant on Asia for fuel and the fertiliser needed for farmers to produce food crops.

Asian nations have come under pressure from soaring global energy prices caused by the war in the Middle East.

Australia and Singapore agreed to the continued flow of refined fuel and LNG during a visit by Albanese to Australia's top fuel supplier on Friday.

Malaysia is Australia's third-largest source of refined fuel, while Australia supplies 95 percent of Malaysia's imported LNG.

Brunei and Malaysia are also significant suppliers of fertiliser to Australia. "We are taking every step to reinforce relationships and engage with key partners to keep our fuel supply flowing," Albanese said in a statement. — ***AFP***

China to boost Taiwan exchanges as opposition leader ends visit

BEIJING: China will implement a series of measures to enhance exchanges with Taiwan, Beijing said yesterday on the final day of a rare visit by an opposition party delegation from Taiwan.

Kuomintang (KMT) chairwoman Cheng Li-wun is the party's first leader to visit China in a decade.

Beijing released a list of 10 measures to "promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations and enhance the well-being of compatriots", state news agency Xinhua said, hours before Cheng's delegation wrapped up its six-day visit and departed Beijing for Taipei yesterday afternoon.

Among the policies authorised by Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) is an effort to "promote the resumption of the pilot programme for individual travel" to Taiwan's main island for residents of Shanghai and Fujian province, Xinhua said.

In a potential further boost to travel links, the TAO said authorities will push for a "full resumption" of direct flights between Taiwan and various cities, including Urumqi, Xi'an, Harbin, Kunming and Lanzhou.

China will also allow the importation of Taiwanese dramas, documentaries and animations, although they must be "correctly oriented, wholesome and high-quality", Xinhua said.

KMT Vice Chairman Chang Jung-kung said in a statement the measures were "highly welcome".

"They are particularly in line with the expectations of various sectors in Taiwan and constitute a significant boost to the peaceful development of cross-strait relations," Chang said. The announcement came two days after Cheng's closely watched meeting with President Xi Jinping in the Chinese capital. — ***AFP***

Legendary Indian singer Asha Bhosle dies aged 92

MUMBAI: Legendary Indian playback singer Asha Bhosle, whose voice defined Bollywood music through the 1970s and 80s, died yesterday in Mumbai aged 92, her family said.

Two-time Grammy nominee Bhosle breathed her last at the Breach Candy hospital where she was admitted with complaints of "extreme exhaustion" and chest infection.

Bhosle recorded more than 12,000 songs in multiple Indian languages over a seven-decade career.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "deeply saddened" by her death.

"Her extraordinary musical journey, spanning decades, enriched our cultural heritage and touched countless hearts across the world," he said in a post on X. — ***AFP***

World in brief

Saudi Foreign Minister discusses regional updates with South Korean presidential envoy

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister H H Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah met yesterday with the South Korean President's Chief of Staff and Special Envoy, Kang Hoon-sik, who is visiting Riyadh. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral cooperation between the two countries and discussed regional developments and their implications for regional security and the global economy. — ***QNA***

Oman FM urges US and Iran to continue talks

MUSCAT: Oman's foreign minister yesterday called for more talks between Iran and the US and for the ceasefire to be extended, hours after negotiations failed to reach a deal during a high-stakes meeting in Pakistan. "I urge that the ceasefire be extended and talks continue," Badr Al-Busaidi wrote in a post on X. "Success may require everyone to make painful concessions, but this is nothing as compared to the pain of failure and war." — ***AFP***

Kuwait announces disposal of explosive remnants

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Army General Staff announced that the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team of the Land Forces Engineering Corps was handling unexploded ordnance and shrapnel yesterday.

According to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the General Staff confirmed in a press conference that any explosions heard during this period were a result of the ongoing EOD operation.

Kuwait has faced daily attacks from Iran over the past weeks, targeting oil facilities and civilian areas, resulting in human and material losses. — ***QNA***

Bahrain reports heightened readiness

MANAMA: The General Command of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) announced that all its weapons and units are at the highest levels of readiness and defensive preparedness.

The BDF affirmed that since the start of the heinous Iranian attacks, it has been able to intercept and destroy 194 missiles and 516 drones that targeted Bahrain. It urged everyone to be careful not to approach or touch any strange or suspicious objects that may be remnants of the Iranian attack. — ***QNA***

New Iraqi President officially assumes office

BAGHDAD: New Iraqi President Nizar Amidi officially assumed office yesterday. The Iraqi Presidency stated in a press release that President Amidi officially assumed his duties as President of the country during a presidential ceremony held at Baghdad Palace. The statement added that following the official ceremony, the new President met with his predecessor, Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid, where the handover ceremony took place.

Amidi affirmed that the peaceful transfer of power is a fundamental pillar in consolidating the foundations of democracy and strengthening the stability of the state, praising the efforts made by President Rashid during his tenure.

The Iraqi Parliament elected Nizar Amidi, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) candidate, as the new President of Iraq yesterday, with 227 votes, making him the sixth President of the Republic of Iraq since 2003. — ***QNA***

Death toll from floods in Afghanistan rises to 179

KABUL: The death toll from the devastating floods and torrential rains that recently struck several provinces in Afghanistan has risen to 179, in addition to 236 injured.

In a statement, Afghanistan's disaster relief authorities said that 22 people had died in the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 179 since late March due to heavy rains and floods. Afghanistan is subject to extreme weather fluctuations. — ***QNA***



Benin's incumbent President Patrice Talon arrives to cast his ballot at a polling station in Cotonou, yesterday. (AFP)

Finance minister favourite as Benin votes for president

COTONOU: Benin election officials began counting votes after yesterday's election for a president, with Finance Minister Romuald Wadagni favourite.

The head of the electoral commission, Sacca Lafia, said the election had passed off peacefully.

But an electoral monitoring platform set up by civil society groups reported around a hundred incident 'alerts' that morning.

These cases involved voting stations that had opened early or where voting boxes appeared full before the start of voting.

Nearly eight million voters were eligible to cast ballots to choose a successor to Patrice Talon, who steps down after two five-year terms, having endorsed Wadagni as his successor.

Voting stations started closing at 4:00pm (1500 GMT) and the count started soon afterwards. Wadagni cast his vote to little fanfare in his southwestern home town of Lokossa.

But crowds of clapping supporters greeted Talon, the outgoing president, as he arrived to do the same in Cotonou's business district of Zongo. "The best is to come for Benin," he said as he emerged from the polling booth.

"My wish is to see a great and powerful Benin in which everyone finds their place," he added.

While Talon said he intended to retire and would not be seeking to influence his successor, he added: "It is illusory to think that one can fade into the background."

Backed by the two main ruling parties, Wadagni is being challenged by Paul Hounkpe, an opposition figure whose campaign has been very low-key. — ***AFP***

Trump orders US naval blockade of Strait of Hormuz

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump yesterday ordered a US naval blockade of the Strait of Hormuz in the wake of failed peace talks with Iran a significant escalation that would test an already fragile ceasefire.

In lengthy social media posts and an interview on Fox News, Trump acknowledged that the marathon negotiations in Islamabad had gone "well" and "most points were agreed to." But he said Tehran had been "unyielding" in its refusal to give up its nuclear ambitions, and had failed to open the strait, through which a fifth of the world's crude oil passes a condition of the two-week ceasefire currently in place.

And he threatened China with a massive 50 percent tariff on its goods entering the United States if it decides to help Tehran militarily.

"Effective immediately, the United States Navy, the Finest in the World, will begin the process of blockading any and all Ships trying to enter, or leave, the Strait of Hormuz," Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

"Any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be blown to hell!" Trump initially suggested that "other countries" would be involved in the blockade effort, and then told Fox's "Sunday Morning Futures with Maria Bartiromo" that Britain "and a couple of other countries" would be sending minesweepers.

US Vice President JD Vance left Pakistan without a deal after weekend talks with a team led by Iran's parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf -- the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the 1979 Islamic revolution.



US President Donald Trump at Miami International Airport in Miami, yesterday. (AFP)

The talks were meant to solidify a fragile two-week ceasefire with a final deal to end the conflict that has engulfed the Middle East, leaving thousands dead and roiling global markets. But no conclusions were reached.

"We leave here with a very simple proposal, a method of understanding that is our final and best offer. We'll see if the Iranians accept it," Vance told reporters.

Trump said he had been fully debriefed by the US negotiating team of Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law.

The US leader slammed Iran for "knowingly" failing to deliver on a pledge to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, writing: "As they promised, they better begin the process of getting this international waterway open and fast!"

Iran has effectively blocked the strait for weeks, since the United States and Israel launched a bombing campaign against the Islamic republic more than six weeks ago.

The US military announced that two of its warships had transited the strait at the start of a mine clearance operation.

Trump yesterday warned China that it would face a high price if it were to help Tehran militarily at this phase of the war.

"If we catch them doing that, they get a 50 percent tariff, which is a staggering that's a staggering amount," Trump told Bartiromo.

He also reiterated a threat to destroy Iranian power plants and other civilian energy infrastructure if no lasting deal is reached, and warned that US forces would "finish up the little that is left of Iran" if necessary.

"We are fully 'locked and loaded," he wrote. — ***AFP***

Ukraine and Russia trade Easter truce breach barbs

KYIV: Ukraine and Russia accused each other yesterday of violating a truce in place for Orthodox Easter thousands of times, as the war dragged on into its fifth year.

Both sides had agreed to observe the halt to hostilities for the religious holiday, after Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed on Thursday to a proposal made by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky more than a week before.

"As of 12 April, 2,299 ceasefire violations were recorded. Specifically: 28 enemy assault actions, 479 enemy shellings, 747 strikes by attack drones and 1,045 strikes by FPV drones," the Ukrainian military's general staff said in a post on Facebook.

"There were no missile strikes, guided aerial bomb strikes, or Shahed-type UAV strikes," it added.

In turn, Russia's defence ministry accused Kyiv of nearly 2,000 breaches of its own.

"A total of 1,971 ceasefire violations by units of the Ukrainian armed forces were recorded on April 12," the ministry said, as reported by the TASS news agency. — ***AFP***

Orban concedes 'painful' defeat to conservative Magyar in Hungary polls

BUDAPEST: Nationalist Viktor Orban, who has ruled Hungary for 16 years, yesterday conceded defeat to conservative Peter Magyar in parliamentary elections.

With votes in almost 67 percent of precincts counted, Magyar's party stood to have gained 137 seats, or more than two-thirds of all 199 parliamentary seats, according to official election results.

The vote yesterday was being closely watched across Europe and in the United States, with US President Donald Trump endorsing Orban, a self-described "thorn" in the EU's side and a defender of "illiberal democracy" who is also close to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"The election results, though not yet final, are clear and understandable; for us, they are painful but unambiguous," Orban, 62, told reporters.

"We have not been entrusted with the responsibility and opportunity to govern. I congratulated the winning party," he said.

Magyar, 45, a political newcomer and former government insider, posed on social media that Orban "just called to congratulate us on our victory".

Turnout in the election reached a record 77.8 percent.

Orban, who was seeking a fifth straight term, has transformed his country into a model of "illiberal democracy", publicly clashing with Brussels over rule-of-law issues, as well as over support for war-torn Ukraine.

Magyar burst onto the scene just two years ago, promising to fight corruption and offering better public services, amassing support against a backdrop of economic stagnation, despite an electoral system skewed in favour of Orban's Fidesz party.

Both camps have alleged foreign interference during the campaign in the central European country of 9.5 million people.

US Vice President JD Vance visited Hungary this week to rally with Orban, attacking the alleged interference in Hungary of Brussels "bureaucrats", while Trump has promised to bring US "economic might" to Hungary if Orban's party secures victory.

The head of the European Union, Ursula von der Leyen, welcomed the defeat of Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban in legislative elections. "Europe's heart is beating stronger in Hungary tonight," she posted on X."

Hungary has chosen Europe. Europe has always chosen Hungary," she added. "A country reclaims its European path. The Union grows stronger." — ***AFP***

Polls open as Peru picks ninth president in a decade

LIMA: Polls opened in Peru's presidential and legislative elections yesterday, with crime and instability dominating a crowded race to choose the country's ninth leader in a decade.

From the Amazon to the Andes, about 27 million Peruvians are obliged to vote.

The presidential field includes 35 candidates, among them a comedian, a media baron, an autocrat's daughter, and a hard-line ex-mayor who likens himself to a cartoon pig.

The ballot paper itself is almost half a meter long.

Conservative candidates led pre-election polls, suggesting Peru may be the latest nation to welcome a tide of right-wing governments sweeping Latin America.

The frontrunners have tried to outdo each other with promises to kill hitmen, hunt migrants and lock up delinquents in snake-ringed jungle jails.

On the eve of the vote, frontrunner Keiko Fujimori told *AFP* she would "restore order" in her first 100 days: sending the army into jails, deporting illegal migrants and strengthening the border.

The presidential field includes 35 candidates, the ballot paper itself is almost half a meter long.

In the last decade, Peru's homicide rate has more than doubled. Reported extortion cases jumped more than eightfold, from 3,200 to 26,500 a year.

But many voters say they are also fed up with the political class, and with scandals and backstabbing that have seen a string of presidents removed and prosecuted.

The trend is so common that Peru even has a special jail for ex-presidents.

"I wouldn't vote for anyone. I'm so disappointed with everyone in power," clothing merchant Maria Fernandez, 56, told *AFP*.

"We've been governed by nothing but corrupt, thieving scoundrels." Pre-election surveys show no candidate polling above 15 percent, far short of the 50 percent needed to win outright.

Barring an upset, a June runoff looks likely. — ***AFP***

Mexico plans fracking push to cut US gas reliance



A Pemex well and machinery installed among lemon crops in Veracruz on Saturday as Mexico moves to expand natural gas extraction through hydraulic fracturing. The plan, announced by President Claudia Sheinbaum, aims to reduce dependence on US imports but the method has drawn criticism from environmental groups.(AFP)

Irish ministers to hold emergency meet over fuel cost protests

LONDON: The Irish government to hold an emergency cabinet meeting to sign off on measures aimed at ending fuel cost protests that have endangered the functioning of the country's emergency services.

Hauliers and agricultural contractors began a series of protests over spiralling petrol and diesel prices amid the Middle East war.

Since then the protests have grown from slow-moving convoys on motorways and restricted access to Dublin's busiest streets, to a part blockade of Ireland's only oil refinery and restricted access to at least two other fuel depots.

Finance Minister Simon Harris said on Saturday ministers had held meetings with transport and agriculture sector representatives. — ***AFP***

World in brief

Portugal halts biometric system checks at airports

LISBON: Portuguese authorities yesterday suspended biometric data collection at the airports of Lisbon, Porto, and Faro due to excessive passenger waiting times, a spokesperson for the Public Security Police (PSP) said.

The suspension, announced affects departures from Humberto Delgado Airport, Francisco Sa Carneiro Airport, and Gago Coutinho Airport.

"There is a large number of people leaving the Schengen Area through the airports of Lisbon, Porto, and Faro," said Sergio Soares, noting that efforts were being made to keep waiting times manageable without compromising border security. Soares said biometric data collection would resume once waiting times return to acceptable levels. — ***XINHUA***

Vienna forum highlights clean energy amid tensions

VIENNA: The International Vienna Energy and Climate Forum, which concluded over the weekend, marked the first major global energy gathering since the latest US-Israel-Iran tensions, a conflict that erupted on Feb 28 and sent global energy prices sharply higher amid fears of supply disruptions.

Under the theme "Powering Prosperity, Security and Stability," discussions focused on energy access, transition pathways and climate goals. Set against a backdrop of geopolitical uncertainty, the forum underscored a key message while the Middle East crisis has exposed vulnerabilities in Europe's energy system, it is strengthening the case for accelerating the global shift toward clean energy. — ***XINHUA***

Putin praises Russia's space industry

MOSCOW: Russia's space industry remains confident despite longstanding challenges, President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday ahead of Russia's Cosmonautics Day.

"This year, we also celebrate the 65th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's historic flight. Last year was generally positive for the industry 17 launches and 97 spacecraft were sent into orbit. Consolidated revenue grew by 10 percent, exceeding 500 billion rubles," Putin noted.

During a meeting with Putin, Dmitry Bakanov, head of Russia's state space corporation Roscosmos, highlighted that two weeks ago, Roscosmos and its private partners successfully launched a new low-orbit broadband satellite constellation, bringing Russia's orbital grouping to 364 spacecraft.

He emphasised that the launch from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome went ahead despite external attempts to disrupt it. — ***XINHUA***

Artemis crew urges unity on 'lifeboat' Earth

HOUSTON: Artemis II astronauts expressed awe on Saturday over their record-setting lunar flyby mission, urging unity on Earth after witnessing the planet's isolation like a "lifeboat" in space.

The crew spoke at a news conference as NASA took a victory lap following the success of the mission.

The astronauts did the first slingshot around the Moon in more than 50 years and travelled deeper into space than any humans before culminating in a smooth splashdown Friday off the coast of California.

Flanked on stage by mission commander Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Jeremy Hansen, astronaut Christina Koch called for people on Earth to embrace their shared humanity.

"What struck me wasn't necessarily just Earth, it was all the blackness around it. Earth was just this lifeboat hanging undisturbingly in the universe," said Koch.

"There's one new thing I know and that is: Planet Earth you are a crew." Hansen called on fans of the Artemis mission to see themselves in the crew of four, who marked a series of milestones: Glover was the first person of colour to fly around the Moon, Koch was the first woman, and Canadian Hansen the first non-American.

"I would suggest to you that when you look up here, you're not looking at us. We are a mirror reflecting you," Hansen said.

"And if you like what you see, then just look a little deeper. This is you." While hurtling through deep space and zipping around the Moon, the Artemis astronauts took thousands of photographs, amassing a stunning portfolio of images.

They also witnessed a solar eclipse along with extraordinary meteorite strikes on the lunar surface.

"Artemis II will always be remembered. It was the moment we all saw the moon again, where childhood dreams became missions. You helped the world start believing again, and this is something no one's ever going to forget," NASA administrator Jared Isaacman said.

Artemis II was the inaugural crewed mission of NASA's programme aiming to install a sustained presence on the Moon, including the eventual construction of a base that could be used for further exploration including to Mars.



NASA Artemis II mission astronauts during a welcome ceremony at Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Texas, on Saturday. (AFP)

NASA is hoping it can put boots on the lunar surface as soon as 2028. — ***AFP***