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Sheikha Moza attends graduation of 349 QU health sector students

DOHA: Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF) H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser attended yesterday the graduation ceremony of students from Qatar University (QU)'s health sector colleges for the 2026 Class.

The ceremony honoured 349 graduates and was attended by a number of Their Excellencies senior officials as well as members of the academic and administrative staff, and families of the graduates.

This cohort included 130 graduates from the College of Health Sciences, 94 from the College of Pharmacy, 36 from the College of Nursing, 66 from the College of Medicine, and 23 from the College of Dental Medicine, reflecting the diversity of specializations that supply the health sector in the country with qualified personnel.

The ceremony brought together undergraduate and postgraduate graduates across QU's Health Sector and marked a key milestone with the graduation of the first cohort from the College of Nursing, reflecting QU's continued expansion of its academic offerings in support of the healthcare sector in Qatar.



Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF) H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser attending the ceremony.

For the first time, the ceremony also featured the Health Oath Recitation, symbolizing graduates' transition into professional practice and reaffirming the values at the heart of health professions, service, responsibility, compassion, and

integrity. The moment marked not only the completion of their academic journey, but also their commitment to ethical and professional standards in patient care.

The oath further reflected the Health Sector's role at QU

as a national leader in health professions education, preparing graduates for practice across medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, biomedical sciences, public health, nutrition, and physiotherapy. It also highlighted the sector's

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emphasis on interprofessional education, where students learn with, from, and about one another within a shared commitment to improving health and serving communities.

After the ceremony, Her Highness met with a group of high-achieving graduates from across the Health Sector colleges, engaging in a conversation on their academic journeys and future aspirations.

In her remarks, the Guest of Honor, Founding Dean of the College of Nursing at QU Dr. Nabila Al Meer said, "At the outset, I extend my sincere appreciation to Qatar University's leadership for this

invitation to a meaningful occasion, one that carries decades of memories and culminates today in the graduation of the first cohort of the College of Nursing."

"For many years, I envisioned a College of Nursing at our national university, one that prepares qualified national cadres to serve the country and strengthen the healthcare system in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030. That vision came to life shortly before my retirement, when Qatar University invited me to take on the role as Founding Dean. This step reflected a forward-looking approach to strengthening the link between academia and society," she added.

She stressed: "This was evident in how the University shaped the identity of the College, bringing in leadership that combines professional expertise, policy development, and academic practice. This approach reflects a clear understanding of today's healthcare challenges and the need to prepare a new generation of nurses capable of contributing to an integrated healthcare system." — QNA → P2

93% of MoM services completed electronically in 2025

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Ministry of Municipality has unveiled its 2025 annual report, highlighting major achievements in digital transformation, sustainability, urban development, and food security as part of efforts to advance the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The report showcased a year of accelerated progress across municipal services, environmental initiatives, and smart governance projects, with the ministry emphasizing innovation and sustainability as key

The report highlighted the ministry's continued partnership with the private sector through outsourcing projects related to waste collection, transportation, sorting, incineration, and public cleaning services across several areas.

pillars of its strategy.

Among the most notable milestones was the launch of 172 electronic services through the

ministry's website and 127 services via the "Oun" mobile application, with total requests submitted across digital platforms surpassing 618,990 during 2025. The ministry also reported that 93 percent of all transactions were completed electronically, while customer satisfaction with digital services reached 86.4 percent.

The ministry said it achieved significant advances in digital transformation aimed at delivering more proactive municipal services and improving customer experience through smart technologies.

A landmark development

during the year was the introduction of Qatar's AI-powered building permit system, launched. According to the report, the platform made Qatar the first country in the world to implement a fully integrated electronic building permit system capable of issuing permits within 120 minutes.

Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah described the project as a strategic leap in government service efficiency and quality, noting that it reflects the ministry's broader efforts to adopt advanced technologies in support of urban development.

The report also highlighted the ministry's continued partnership with the private sector through outsourcing projects related to waste collection, transportation, sorting, incineration, and public cleaning services across several areas. Agricultural partnerships were also expanded to strengthen local production and support food security goals.

In the environmental sector, the ministry announced the successful completion of the first phase of the Doha anti-desertification project, which focused on expanding vegetation cover in urban areas. → P2

PM, Pakistan PM discuss US-Iran mediation efforts

DOHA: Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani held a phone call yesterday with Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan H E Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

They discussed bilateral cooperation and ways to strengthen it, in addition to the latest regional developments and Pakistan's efforts to support de-escalation and promote security and stability.

During the call, the Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's efforts, along with other mediating parties, in facilitating the ceasefire between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He reaffirmed Qatar's full support for mediation efforts aimed at resolving the crisis through peaceful means, stressing the importance of all parties responding constructively to create conditions for renewed negotiations leading to a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement. — QNA

Ashghal completes over 1,800km of pedestrian and cycling paths in five years

DOHA: The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) announced yesterday the completion of more than 1,800 kilometers of pedestrian and cycling paths between 2020 and 2025, as part of its comprehensive strategy to enhance sustainable mobility and provide a safer road environment.

The Authority said the paths are part of highway, main road, and internal road projects aimed at separating pedestrian and cyclist traffic from vehicles, thereby improving traffic safety levels and enhancing traffic flow in cities and residential areas. The network includes shared pedestrian and cycling routes as well as dedicated cycling lanes to ensure a safe

and comfortable mobility experience for users, while also providing infrastructure that encourages active and healthy modes of transport.

Ashghal stated that these achievements reflect its commitment to developing a modern and integrated road network that supports sustainable development goals and enhances the quality of life for citizens and residents.

The authority has also developed several landmark cycling routes across the country, including the Olympic Cycling Track and dedicated paths along Al Khor Road and Doha Expressway, aimed at promoting safe and sustainable mobility. — QNA



Qatar warns of global impact of Strait of Hormuz closure

Qatar's Permanent Representative to United Nations H E Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani alongwith representatives of US and Gulf states addressing the press regarding Security Council draft resolution on the Strait of Hormuz. → See Also P2

Innovation drives steady growth in agriculture sector

JOEL JOHNSON
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's agricultural sector is poised for sustained expansion over the coming years, supported by strong government policies, technological innovation, and rising private investment to strengthen food security and reduce reliance on imports.

According to a recent report by Mordor Intelligence, the market is estimated to grow from \$370.2m (QRI.3bn) in 2026 to \$519.2m (QRI.8bn) by 2031, at a CAGR of 7 percent during the forecast period.

The data highlights a significant transformation in the

country's agricultural landscape, with Qatar increasingly shifting from an import-dependent model toward greater domestic production.

This transition has been driven by sustained investment in climate-controlled farming systems, water-efficient irrigation technologies, and renewable energy integration, particularly solar-powered agricultural solutions.

Speaking to *The Peninsula*, industry experts say the country's push toward food sovereignty has accelerated innovation across the sector.

"Qatar has made remarkable progress in building

a resilient agricultural ecosystem in a relatively short period," said Dan Mitchell, an agribusiness analyst. "The combination of policy support, financing mechanisms, and technology adoption is creating a strong foundation for long-term growth."

Consumer preferences are also shaping the sector as growing demand for fresh, locally produced food with clear traceability has encouraged farms to adopt advanced techniques such as vertical farming and container-based agriculture, allowing for year-round production in controlled environments.

"Consumers in Qatar are

increasingly conscious about food quality and sustainability," said Mitchell. "This is pushing producers to innovate, not only to meet demand but also to differentiate themselves in a competitive market."

The report notes that fruits and vegetables accounted for nearly half of the market share in 2025, underscoring their importance in the domestic agricultural mix.

Meanwhile, segments such as pulses and oil seeds are expected to register the fastest growth through 2031, supported by diversification efforts and evolving consumption patterns, the data showed. → P2

EDITORIAL

Investing in quality education

QATAR'S graduation season for the Class of 2026 is more than a ceremonial milestone; it is a national statement about the country's long-term investment in human development, knowledge, and modern state-building. Across universities and colleges in the country, including Qatar University and the universities operating under Qatar Foundation, thousands of students and their families are celebrating years of dedication, sacrifice, and academic achievement. These moments of pride belong not only to graduates, but also to the nation that has made education a central pillar of its development vision.

The attendance of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Chairperson of Qatar Foundation H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, alongside ministers, senior officials, and distinguished public figures, at graduation ceremonies carries profound significance. It demonstrates that education in Qatar is not treated as a secondary social service, but as a strategic national priority closely tied to economic progress, social stability, and global competitiveness.

For years, Qatar has pursued a development strategy that recognises that the strength of nations in the modern era is measured not only by natural resources, but by the quality of their human capital. This vision has translated into sustained investment in schools, universities, research centres, scholarships, innovation programmes, and international academic partnerships. The country has worked systematically to create an educational ecosystem capable of preparing generations who can lead in science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, media, engineering, and entrepreneurship.

The graduation ceremonies reflect the tangible results of that vision. They symbolise the emergence of a generation equipped with knowledge, confidence, and global awareness while remaining deeply connected to national identity and cultural values. The diversity of academic disciplines represented among graduates also highlights Qatar's commitment to building a diversified and knowledge-based economy aligned with the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030. Equally important is the role of families in this achievement. Behind every graduate stands a family that believed in the transformative power of education. The celebrations taking place across the country are therefore collective celebrations of perseverance, ambition, and shared national purpose. They reinforce the social culture that values learning, excellence, and contribution to society.

Qatar's educational progress has also strengthened its regional and international standing. Through institutions that attract students, academics, and researchers from around the world, the country has positioned itself as a centre for educational excellence and intellectual exchange in the region. This enhances not only Qatar's soft power, but also its capacity to contribute meaningfully to global conversations on innovation, sustainability, and development. The scenes witnessed at this year's convocations therefore represent far more than academic success. They are a reflection of a state steadily building its future through knowledge, empowering its youth through quality education, and investing in people as the most valuable resource for sustainable national progress.

Sheikha Moza attends graduation of QU health sector students

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The graduates' address was delivered by Mohammed Al Hor, a graduate of the College of Medicine, who said, "Today, we step into professional life with our focus on a nation that has only grown stronger through challenges. Qatar stands as a model of resilience and progress and a place of knowledge, stability, and care. We take pride in belonging to this country and in a leadership that has strengthened its standing."

Addressing the Health Sector graduates, he said, "Today, we carry a shared responsibility, different roles, but one purpose. Among us are physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, and health specialists, each contributing to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Together, we form a unified system, working side by side to support Qatar's healthcare sector."

Graduate Johara Saleh Al Jarmoozi, from the College of Health Sciences, delivered remarks as the master of ceremonies, saying, "Determination is the foundation of achievement, and reaching this moment, where effort gives way to results, is a milestone we take pride in. We celebrate those who placed people at the center of their purpose. In closing, we congratulate ourselves on reaching what we set out to achieve. We also congratulate our nation, and we will continue striving to be the best it deserves."



TOP: Chairperson of Qatar Foundation H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser attending the graduation of Qatar University's 49th Health Sector cohort (Class of 2026). ABOVE: H H Sheikha Moza meeting a group of high-achieving graduates from QU's 49th Health Sector cohort.

Committee to oversee visitor entry, premium residency applications via Hayya platform

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's Cabinet has approved the establishment of a "Permanent Committee for Managing the Entry of Visitors and Applicants for Premium Residency in the State of Qatar (Hayya platform)" under the Ministry of Interior.

According to a decision published in the Official Gazette on May 7, 2026, the committee will oversee procedures related to visitor entry and premium residency applications through the Hayya digital platform in coordination with relevant authorities.

The committee aims to facilitate entry procedures, improve visitor experience and unify application mechanisms through the platform.

Its responsibilities include receiving exceptional entry requests through the Hayya platform for categories stipulated under Article 46/5 of Law No. 21 of 2015; implementing and following up on procedures related to the entry of visitors and premium residency applicants in coordination with the competent authority at the Ministry of Interior.

Establishing standards to facilitate entry procedures to Qatar through the Hayya platform in coordination with relevant entities; and unifying and standardising mechanisms for receiving applications and

The committee's responsibilities also include receiving exceptional entry requests through the Hayya Platform for categories stipulated under Article 46/5 of Law No. 21 of 2015.

sharing data in a way that enhances visitor experience are also part of its responsibilities.

Its mandate include ensuring that Hayya platform procedures comply with laws, public policies and international agreements to which Qatar is a party; periodically reviewing visa-related procedures, fees, requirements and processing timelines.

Other responsibilities mentioned in the Official Gazette include developing mechanisms for receiving visitors and premium residency applicants, including exempted cases determined by the Minister of Interior, and reviewing and issuing related visas after verifying compliance with all requirements.

Coordinating with entities concerned regarding unified visas for events and occasions, as well as organising permits for organisers, visitors and premium residency applicants

through the Hayya platform.

Evaluating and following up on marketing and promotional plans for the Hayya platform; approving technical and administrative development plans for the platform and monitoring their implementation; and following up on technological development and cybersecurity updates in line with local and international standards are also committee mandate.

Its further responsibilities include supervising procedures related to awarding contracts to companies operating the platform and obtaining the necessary approvals; implementing and following up on procedures related to the entry and residency of premium residency applicants in coordination with relevant authorities; and undertaking any additional tasks assigned by the Minister of Interior within the committee's jurisdiction.

The committee will also determine categories eligible to apply for premium residency in accordance with Law No. 21 of 2015.

The decision stated that all relevant authorities are required to implement the new regulations within their respective jurisdictions. The committee's establishment will take effect from the day following the publication of the decision in the Official Gazette.

Innovation drives steady growth in agriculture sector

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The report stated that financial support has also been a key enabler of growth, as access to low-interest financing and funding initiatives, particularly through various institutions, has reduced the cost barriers associated with adopting advanced greenhouse technologies and modern farming systems.

"Access to capital is critical in agriculture, especially when it comes to adopting new technologies," said Omar Hassan, an agricultural economist.

"Qatar has successfully created a supportive financing environment that encourages both local entrepreneurs and investors to enter the sector."

Beyond production, the report also underscores that the sector's development aligns closely with broader national strategies focused on sustainability and resilience.

By investing in efficient resource management and innovative farming practices, Qatar is positioning itself to better withstand global supply chain disruptions and environmental challenges.

As the country continues to scale up its agricultural capabilities, experts believe the sector will play an increasingly important role in economic diversification.

"Agriculture in Qatar is no longer just about food production," Hassan said, adding that it's becoming a strategic pillar that connects sustainability, technology, and economic growth.

With continued investment and innovation, Qatar's agriculture sector appears set to maintain its upward trajectory, reinforcing the nation's long-term vision of achieving greater self-sufficiency and sustainable development.

93% of MoM services completed electronically in 2025

FROM PAGE 1

The ministry further reported achieving 100 percent completion of plans aimed at increasing organic farming areas, supporting farm owners, enhancing agricultural production databases, and improving production quality and marketing mechanisms.

Waste management initiatives also recorded progress, with Doha achieving an 85 percent waste separation rate at source under the city's source-separation program.

The ministry launched the "Himmah" electronic system in January 2025 as an integrated platform for managing strategies and projects, monitoring initiatives, and measuring institutional performance.

Another milestone was the publication of Qatar's first comprehensive government sustainability report documenting environmental practices, agricultural development, and digital transformation efforts.

The report was described as a key reference tracking the country's progress toward building more sustainable cities, enhancing food security, accelerating digital transformation, and improving community wellbeing.

The ministry added that smart city initiatives continued to expand through the adoption of artificial intelligence and Internet of Things technologies to improve operational efficiency and deliver higher-quality government services.

Qatar warns of global impact of Strait of Hormuz closure at UN briefing

NEW YORK: The State of Qatar has warned that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has caused significant economic disruption and risks escalating regional tensions into a global crisis.

The remarks were made yesterday by Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, H E Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, during a UN media briefing on a draft

Security Council resolution related to the strategic waterway.

The media stakeout also featured Their Excellencies the permanent representatives of the United States of America and several Gulf Cooperation Council countries, including the Kingdom of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait.

Sheikha Alya said the closure of the vital maritime passage since March has had major economic consequences across Gulf states and the wider world, particularly affecting global energy markets.

According to her remarks, around 20 percent of global oil and liquefied natural gas trade has been disrupted, while supply chains have been fragmented and more

than 20,000 seafarers remain stranded at sea.

Her Excellency warned that the situation threatens not only global energy security and economic stability but also worsens humanitarian conditions and undermines regional stability, posing a serious risk to international peace and security.

She stressed that ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait is not only

a requirement under international maritime law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, but also a shared international responsibility.

The State of Qatar expressed its hope for continued engagement with UN member states to build support for the draft resolution aimed at safeguarding maritime routes and ensuring freedom of navigation. — QNA

Thai Embassy launches culinary initiative celebrating partnership with Qatar

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Thailand stands firmly in solidarity with Qatar and its people, ensuring a relationship defined by mutual respect and long-standing goodwill, Thai Embassy said in a statement.

It added that in this spirit the Royal Thai Embassy in Doha launched "Together at the Table: Thailand & Qatar" from 22 April to 9 May 2026.

"We've partnered with twelve Thai restaurants nationwide under the theme "From Thailand with Care." Food, in its universality, has the power to unite, to comfort, and to sustain. By

offering curated menus and bespoke dining experiences, the initiative serves as a purposeful expression of partnership, using food to connect communities and foster human connection."

It said that "Together at the Table" reflects Thailand's support for these broader objectives, in alignment with the vision of Qatar's National Food Security Strategy 2030. "It highlights the role of gastronomy not merely as cultural expression, but as a platform for dialogue, connectivity, and sustainable development.

"Economic fundamentals further reinforce this



partnership. In 2025, bilateral trade between the two countries reached approximately \$3.6bn with food products constituting a vital component. Thailand's exports of

processed seafood, rice, and fruits continue to meet the demands of a discerning market, reflecting both quality and reliability. These flows are not incidental; rather, they are the result of long-standing cooperation and a shared commitment to food security and open, rules-based trade."

The statement added that Thailand is actively transforming its food sector to meet future demands. "The Royal Thai Government is promoting high-value and emerging industries, including functional foods, plant-based products, and biotechnology, supported by

value-added agricultural processing, innovation-driven production, and strengthened food-safety standards. At the same time, farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises are being empowered through modern technologies and more efficient supply chains.

"Precision agriculture, smart irrigation, drone application, and IoT-enabled systems are enhancing productivity while reducing costs. Public-private investment in R&D is also being strengthened to build climate resilience and support long-term agricultural sustainability."

Shura Council Speaker affirms Qatar's support for diplomacy, peaceful solutions

PODGORICA: Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim affirmed that the State of Qatar, under the leadership of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, leads a steady foreign policy that is based on dialogue, mediation, and peaceful solutions, pursuant to the principles of its constitution. Such approach, he noted, has contributed to supporting several paths to de-escalation and bridging viewpoints on numerous regional and international issues.

Addressing the first summit of Speakers of Parliaments and Presidents of Houses of Representatives of Member and Partner States of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, held today in Budva, Montenegro, as part of the 20th session of the Assembly, he explained that the Shura Council plays a supportive role in the State of Qatar's foreign policy

by activating parliamentary diplomacy tools, actively participating in various parliamentary forums, and working to coordinate positions on issues of common interest, thereby strengthening international parliamentary cooperation.

He noted that this summit, dedicated to discussing parliamentary diplomacy and its role in strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions, comes amidst escalating international crises and tensions, and the security, political, and humanitarian repercussions witnessed in the region. He pointed out that the continued Israeli aggression against the occupied Palestinian territories and its worsening humanitarian and security consequences underscore the urgent need to bolster international efforts aimed at consolidating security and stability and respecting international law.

In this context, he

commended the adoption of the emergency item proposed by the State of Qatar's Shura Council, in cooperation with several other countries, which was added to the agenda of the recent General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Istanbul, Turkey. He explained that the item calls for concerted parliamentary efforts to uphold ceasefire agreements and support the establishment of peace, and it received broad support from various parliamentary groups, reflecting the importance of joint parliamentary action in supporting international peace and security.

He emphasised that parliaments represent the voice and will of the people and play a fundamental role in expressing citizens' aspirations and safeguarding their interests. He pointed out that strengthening communication and dialogue channels between countries

and consolidating a culture of understanding among peoples has become essential in light of the increasing challenges facing the international system and the declining effectiveness of international institutions concerned with maintaining international peace and security.

The summit featured speeches by the participating speakers of parliaments and houses of representatives, addressing the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in fostering dialogue and understanding among nations and peoples, and supporting the resilience of democratic institutions in the face of current political, security, and economic challenges. They also emphasised the importance of joint parliamentary action in promoting stability and peace.

Alongside the General Assembly meetings, the summit discussed several key topics,



Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim addresses a session of the Assembly.

most notably parliamentary diplomacy and its role in strengthening institutional resilience, as well as issues of political and security cooperation, interfaith dialogue and human rights, economic and environmental challenges, and the issues of migration and children in armed conflict. These discussions aimed to enhance parliamentary

coordination and the exchange of expertise among member and partner states.

This summit is a significant milestone in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, bringing together speakers of parliaments to discuss regional and international issues and strengthen joint parliamentary action. — QNA

Shura Council Speaker meets parliamentary leaders

PODGORICA: Speaker of the Shura Council H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim met with President of the Senate, Faisal Akef Al Fayed, and Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mazen Qadi, on the sidelines of the first Summit of Speakers of Parliaments and Presidents of Houses of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, held yesterday in the Republic of Montenegro.

During the meeting, they reviewed parliamentary cooperation relations and discussed several topics on the summit's agenda, including parliamentary diplomacy, strengthening dialogue and cooperation between parliaments, and enhancing the resilience of democratic institutions.

Al Ghanim also met with President of the Parliament of

the Republic of Montenegro, Andrija Mandic, where they discussed ways to enhance parliamentary cooperation and reviewed several issues of mutual interest, in addition to the summit's agenda.

He further met with Speaker of the Maltese House of Representatives, Angelo Farrugia, where discussions focused on parliamentary cooperation between the two sides, as well as an exchange of views on the main themes of the summit.

In a related context, Secretary-General of the Shura Council Nayef bin Mohammed Al Mahmoud met with Secretary-General of the Parliament of Montenegro Boban Stanisic, where they reviewed administrative and parliamentary cooperation and coordination, and exchanged views on a number of issues of mutual interest. — QNA

CGB organises workshop on evacuation procedures, workplace safety

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In a continued drive to foster a robust culture of security and safety within government workplaces, the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau (CGB) recently organised a specialised workshop titled "Evacuation Procedures for Facilities and Occupational Safety and Health Standards in the Work Environment." According to posts on CGB's social media accounts yesterday, the workshop was conducted for CGB staff in coordination with the Police Academy at the Ministry of Interior (MoI). It forms part of broader initiatives aimed at elevating institutional preparedness and strengthening preventive awareness to ensure safe and sustainable working environments across Qatar's public sector.

Participants explored

approved procedures for evacuating buildings during emergencies, alongside best practices for implementing professional safety and health standards in government settings. Practical sessions highlighted critical response techniques, including the correct use of firefighting equipment such as extinguishers, as demonstrated by expert trainers from the Police Academy.

Speaking on the objectives, organisers emphasised the workshop's role in equipping employees with essential knowledge to handle potential crises efficiently.

"This initiative reflects the CGB's ongoing commitment to enhancing workplace safety culture," a statement from the Bureau noted. By reviewing emergency evacuation protocols and safety benchmarks, staff gain the tools needed to mitigate risks and respond effectively should incidents arise.

The sessions delved into real-world scenarios, emergency planning, risk assessment, and the importance of clear communication during evacuations. Qatar places high priority on occupational health and safety as part of its National Vision 2030, which seeks to build a secure, productive, and forward-looking society. Such training programmes align with national efforts to professionalise public administration and protect human capital – the cornerstone of sustainable development.

CGB employees actively participated, gaining insights that they can further disseminate within their departments. The collaboration with the Police Academy ensured that content was both authoritative and practically oriented, drawing on law enforcement expertise in crisis management.

This workshop is the latest in a series of capacity-building activities by CGB, which continues to invest in staff development to support efficient, responsive, and safe government operations. Officials indicated that similar programmes will be expanded to reach more employees across various ministries and agencies.

By prioritising safety training, the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau not only complies with international best standards but also reinforces Qatar's reputation as a secure and well-governed nation. As governments worldwide face evolving challenges, from natural disasters to man-made emergencies, proactive measures like this workshop play a pivotal role in building resilience. The Diwan's proactive approach sets a strong example for other entities in the public sector.

Two more airline partners resume services at HIA

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: More airline partners are gradually resuming operations at Hamad International Airport (HIA) continuing to support smooth passenger flow.

HIA stated that Saudia and Kuwait Airways have resumed services to and from Doha, adding to the 22 airline partners previously announced.

Qatar Airways and a number of additional airlines are currently operating in and out of the country.

HIA said flight operations are being updated in coordination with authorities and airline partners.

Qatar concludes joint security exercise

DOHA: The Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) concluded yesterday a joint exercise, with participation from the Qatar Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior, as part of efforts to enhance coordination and integration between military and security agencies.

The closing ceremony was attended by HE Deputy Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Major General Mohammed Mesfer Al Shahwan.

The final drill featured a scenario simulating riot-control operations to assess readiness and the ability to manage emergency situations efficiently through joint inter-agency coordination.

Participating units included Qatar Military Police Forces (QMPF), GHQ Support Force,



Officers during the closing ceremony.

Joint Special Forces, Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC), and Signal Corps, alongside the Ministry of Interior's support forces, the National Command

Centre (NCC), Special Operations Command, Support and Reinforcement Group, and Lekhwiya's Female VIP Protection Unit. — QNA

Sama Jordan TV channel joins Es'hailSat's video hotspot on Es'hail-2 Satellite

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Es'hailSat, the Qatar Satellite Company, has expanded its channel offerings by incorporating Sama Jordan TV channel into its video distribution lineup at the 26° East orbital position, facilitated by the Es'hail-2 satellite.

The Es'hailSat satellite footprint strategically encompasses the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, optimising signal coverage and enabling significant viewership potential for the news broadcaster's channel from Jordan throughout this expansive area.

the Middle East and North Africa. Es'hailSat's two satellites at 25.5/26 East together with our 50,000 sqm Tier-4 certified teleport facility provides reliable and robust connectivity services.

"Es'hailSat is delighted to welcome Sama Jordan TV channel and bring on board one of the region's leading news broadcasters to our satellite hotspot," said President and CEO of Es'hailSat Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari.

"We believe that the reliability and expertise in providing satellite services by Es'hailSat aligns perfectly with Sama Jordan's vision to

Ehsan launches 9th Scientific Research and Innovation competition

DOHA: The Centre for Empowerment and Elderly Care (Ehsan), affiliated with the Qatar Social Work Foundation, has launched the ninth edition of its Scientific Research and Innovation Competition.

The initiative is organised in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council, with sponsorship from Al Rayan Bank.

This year's edition introduces an expanded scope, adding categories for senior citizens as well as researchers and academics, alongside students from preparatory and secondary levels in both public and private schools.

The move reflects a strategic effort to broaden participation and foster integration across generations and expertise.

Director of Planning and Development at Ehsan Anoud Mohammed Al Marr said the competition underscores the centre's commitment to empowering the elderly and reinforcing



Participant and officials during the competition.

their role as active contributors to development and innovation.

She highlighted that selecting artificial intelligence as the central theme aims to promote advanced technological solutions that enhance seniors' quality of life while opening new avenues for their engagement and knowledge production.

For his part, Ghanem Saad Al Humaidi, representing the

Ministry of Education and Higher Education and Acting Head of the Research, Talent and Innovation Section, emphasised that the ministry's participation reflects its commitment to strengthening the research ecosystem and advancing students' innovation skills in line with modern demands.

The competition witnessed strong participation across all targeted groups, reflecting growing

This year's edition introduces an expanded scope, adding categories for senior citizens as well as researchers and academics, alongside students from preparatory and secondary levels in both public and private schools.

societal awareness of the importance of scientific research and innovation in addressing issues related to the elderly and improving their quality of life, in line with Qatar's vision for a knowledge-based economy.

Submissions were evaluated by a panel of distinguished academics and experts, with entries demonstrating a high level of innovation and diverse research-driven solutions aimed at supporting and enhancing the well-being of senior citizens. — QNA

Es'hailSat سهيل سات
Qatar Satellite Company الشركة القطرية للأقمار الصناعية

The scope of the agreement includes Direct-to-Home satellite distribution on Es'hail-2 as part of the bouquet uplinked from Es'hailSat's Tier-4 certified Teleport facility in Doha. This channel growth underscores Es'hailSat's commitment to delivering a diverse range of content to satisfy regional demand.

Sama Jordan News is a leading Jordanian digital media platform delivering comprehensive coverage of local, regional, and global developments through its official website and active social media presence.

Es'hailSat provides satellite, broadcast, teleport and managed services from Doha, Qatar and brings to this relationship more than 15 years of being in the business of catering to broadcasters, telecommunication companies, enterprises, mobility applications and governments across

serve as a leading news broadcaster, providing comprehensive and reliable information to the country's public."

CEO of Sama Jordan TV Rabea Al-Awamleh stated: "We have chosen to broadcast via the Es'hailSat satellite due to its strategic importance at the orbital position of 26° East. This ensures that Sama Jordan TV will be alongside the majority of key channels in the region that also transmit through Es'hailSat, strengthening our presence and accessibility to audiences

The channel is now part of the Es'hail-2 channels bouquet which further adds to the attractive line up of premium content currently broadcast via Es'hail-2 satellite. You can tune in to these TV channels on Es'hail-2 with the following details:

Sufficient sheep stock available to meet demand during Eid Al Adha

DOHA: Livestock Department of the Ministry of Municipality affirmed that the current stock of local sheep, along with the quantities supplied and imported according to the approved plan for the season, is sufficient to cover market needs during Eid Al-Adha.

The Ministry noted that data related to the size of the supply is continuously updated according to supply and demand data, and announced through official channels in a timely manner.

The Ministry pointed out its early preparation for the season by implementing an integrated operational plan aimed at ensuring the availability of Eid sacrifices in sufficient quantities, enhancing the smooth flow of supply and the balance of supply and demand, through continuous monitoring of the available livestock in the country, in coordination with local producers and approved import companies, in addition to enhancing the readiness of veterinary quarantine facilities and regulated markets.

In regard to support for local production, the Ministry pointed out the coordination with

Widam Food Company and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry within the initiative to encourage local sheep production, to purchase the breeders' production at competitive prices, in addition to supporting participants with free concentrated feed.

The Ministry also announced that the sheep supply for Widam Food Company will begin on Thursday, May 7, in addition to providing technical and in-kind support for sheep breeding and fattening projects, with the aim of increasing the contribution of local production to meeting market needs.

Regarding import operations, the Ministry of Municipality indicated that it is continuously monitoring the conditions of companies and import licenses, while providing new sources for imports according to the epidemiological situation of exporting countries, while maintaining full readiness for veterinary quarantine facilities.

The Ministry indicated that local and imported livestock is subjected to a series of strict health and preventive measures. For imported livestock, this

begins with monitoring the epidemiological situation in the country of origin, ensuring compliance with animal health standards approved by the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), passing through veterinary quarantine and laboratory tests at the ports of entry, and ending with periodic monitoring in the markets.

In the context of regulating markets, the Ministry said that the import of Eid sacrifices is done according to a permit system subject to clear health requirements, which ensures the diversification of import sources and the continuity of supply. The Ministry noted the continued support for local production through free veterinary services, subsidized feeds and the provision of organized marketing channels.

The Ministry of Municipality called on consumers to buy Eid sacrifices only from approved markets, and to ensure that the animal is free from any signs of illness, such as lethargy or abnormal secretions. It also recommended not slaughtering outside of authorized slaughterhouses in order to protect public health. — *QNA*



UAE President meets Prime Minister

President of the United Arab Emirates H H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Qatar attends GCC ministerial meeting on food safety

DOHA: Qatar participated in the 10th ministerial committee meeting on food safety for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, held virtually yesterday.

Qatar was represented by Minister of Public Health H E Mansoor bin Ebrahim Al Mahmoud.

The meeting addressed a

range of key food safety issues, including facilitating the flow of food commodities across GCC markets through temporary exemptions under current exceptional circumstances, the GCC guide for imported food control, and the unified GCC food law. They also discussed the GCC

Center for Food Risk Assessment, novel foods regulations, mechanisms for imposing and lifting bans on imports of animal-origin food products, the development of a unified GCC food safety policy document, and a proposed regional food safety action plan. — *QNA*

Ashghal developing infrastructure to serve 250 land plots for citizens in Mebaireek

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) announced the continuation of package 2 of the Remaining Roads and Infrastructure Works in Mebaireek, aimed at developing the road network and infrastructure services in the area.

Eng. Mohammed Al-Rumaihi, the project engineer in Ashghal's Drainage Networks Projects Department, stated that the project aims to serve 250 residential plots in Mebaireek by providing integrated infrastructure services, developing road networks, and enhancing traffic safety, thereby improving traffic flow and the quality of life in the area.

Eng. Al-Rumaihi stated that the



The project relies on local materials and manufacturers, with the local component accounting for 85% of the total materials used.

second package of the Mebaireek project includes the construction of 12 km of roads, the installation of

approximately 397 lighting poles, the provision of 2,239 parking spaces, the construction of 65 pedestrian crossings,

The second package of the Mebaireek project includes 12 km of roads, 397 lighting poles, 2,239 parking spaces, 65 pedestrian crossings, and the planting of more than 460 trees.

and the planting of more than 460 trees.

The scope of work also includes the development of 7 km of sewage networks, approximately 13 km of stormwater drainage networks, and an 11.5 km treated water network.

Regarding the ongoing works, Eng. Mohammed Al-Rumaihi explained that

excavation work is currently underway for the sewage, stormwater drainage, and treated water networks. Additionally, the installation of kerbstones and interlocking is being carried out, along with the preparation of planting spaces the roadsides, all of which contribute to improving the overall appearance of the area.

It is worth noting that the project relies on local materials and manufacturers, with the local component accounting for 85% of the total materials used. These materials include elements such as gabbro, lighting poles and fixtures, directional signs, sewage and stormwater drainage pipes, asphalt, precast manholes, concrete, and reinforcing steel.

Awqaf Ministry issues 7th international 'Waqf' journal

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Endowment Studies Center at the General Directorate of Endowments, under the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, has released the seventh issue of its peer-reviewed international scientific journal "Waqf", reinforcing its role as a leading knowledge platform in the fields of Islamic endowments, Islamic economics, and charitable work.

The latest edition comes in line with evolving development priorities and contemporary issues in the endowment sector, offering research contributions aimed at modernizing waqf tools and enhancing their developmental impact.

The journal seeks to provide researchers and specialists with an academic platform to publish peer-reviewed studies in both Arabic and English, while also promoting knowledge dissemination through print and digital formats. It aims to enrich scholarly dialogue and expand awareness around endowment practices and Islamic finance.

Dr. Khalid Al-Aoun (pictured), Head of the Endowment



Studies Center, said the journal reflects a diversity of development-focused topics, serving as a valuable scientific reference for researchers and practitioners in the waqf and Islamic economics sectors. He described the publication as an important resource for policymakers, academics, and professionals working in the field.

He added that the seventh issue offers a strong knowledge base that supports the development of scientific perspectives and opens new research avenues through applied studies rooted in real-world waqf practices. These studies are supported by practical recommendations designed to strengthen legislation and address sector gaps. Dr. Al-Aoun emphasised that the issue highlights modern

research trends focused on improving waqf tools, enhancing institutional efficiency, and keeping pace with digital and economic transformations. These efforts aim to ensure the sustainability of endowments and maximize their socio-economic impact.

The seventh issue includes a range of specialized studies, notably a strategic analysis on food security in waqf throughout Islamic history, highlighting the historical role of endowed assets in establishing sustainable food safety nets. Another study explores taxation and waqf during the Mamluk era, examining the balance between state revenue needs and the protection of endowment rights.

The issue also presents a scholarly discussion on the principle "the airspace of a waqf is itself waqf", addressing how upper spaces of endowed properties can be utilized as productive assets in line with contemporary needs.

In addition, it features an economic modeling study of public waqf (government endowments), analyzing their contribution to macroeconomic

stability and financial systems.

A dedicated section addresses Sharia governance challenges of smart waqf platforms, offering critical insights into regulating emerging endowment technologies within sound governance frameworks.

The journal's seventh issue is available online, alongside previous editions, through the official website of the General Directorate of Endowments. The publication is supported by an advisory board comprising distinguished academics from across the Arab and Islamic world. The Endowment Studies Center invites researchers and writers to contribute their studies and research papers related to waqf and its associated fields.

The General Directorate of Endowments also called on individuals interested in establishing charitable endowments to contribute through various channels, including online donations via its official website, mobile services, and dedicated contact numbers, as part of ongoing efforts to promote sustainable charitable giving and community development.

MoPH launches booklet for pilgrims' mental health

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In partnership with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has launched a booklet entitled "Pilgrimage: A Psychological and Behavioural School." This awareness booklet focuses on promoting mental and behavioural health for pilgrims.

The booklet is introduced as part of preparations for the Hajj season and in dedication to enhancing the health and safety of pilgrims.

It aims to raise pilgrims' awareness of the importance of mental health whilst performing the rituals and to cultivate the values of patience, humility, and self-restraint.

This, in turn, reflects positively on the pilgrim's psychological state and enhances their feelings of contentment and happiness.

Furthermore, the booklet addresses the importance of prior psychological preparation before undertaking the obligatory Hajj pilgrimage. It outlines a set of practical guidelines to

help reduce stress both before and during the rituals, most notably by planning in advance, organising basic needs, and preparing a list of essential supplies. Alongside this, it advises on remaining calm when handling emergency situations, managing and utilising time appropriately whilst performing the rituals, and ensuring one stays in suitable locations during periods of overcrowding or high temperatures.

The publication emphasises the importance of fostering positive behaviour during Hajj, such as offering assistance to others, particularly senior citizens, because this has a significant impact on boosting feelings of gratification and happiness.

Additionally, it highlights how Hajj enhances pilgrims' mental health by fostering peace of mind, tranquillity, and psychological comfort, alleviating anxiety and stress, and developing patience and the ability to adapt to challenges. Finally, the booklet highlights the importance of behavioural health in fostering discipline and a sense of individual responsibility.

PHCC expert advises patients to manage allergies through preventive measures

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: With changing seasons and fluctuating weather conditions, along with the spread of dust in our homes and workplaces, many people experience bothersome symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, and itchy eyes.

These symptoms are not merely a passing "cold"; they are often signs of allergic rhinitis, commonly known as "nasal allergy." It is a widespread condition that can significantly affect quality of life.

Consultant Family Medicine at Mesameer Health Center, part of the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Dr. Nizar Haddad

(pictured) explains that allergic rhinitis is an exaggerated immune response to substances that are usually harmless, known as allergens. When these substances are inhaled, the body releases histamine and other chemicals that trigger the symptoms.

Allergies are generally classified into two main types: seasonal allergies, which occur at specific times of the year due to pollen from trees and grasses, and perennial (year-round) allergies, caused by continuous exposure to environmental triggers such as dust mites, animal dander, or mold.

Symptoms include a runny or blocked nose, frequent sneezing (especially in the

morning), itching in the nose, eyes, or roof of the mouth, and sometimes the ears, as well as dark circles under the eyes due to chronic congestion.

In more severe cases, patients may also experience headaches, general fatigue, and a reduced sense of smell and taste, which can negatively impact concentration at work or school.

Dr. Haddad notes that scientific studies indicate allergic rhinitis is a significant health challenge in the Gulf region. In Qatar, allergic skin conditions are among the most common health issues seen in primary care. A study conducted by PHCC and published in November 2024, analysing



data from 937,553 patients, showed that 27% of dermatology clinic attendees suffered from dermatitis and eczema—conditions strongly associated with allergies.

According to medical guidance, allergic rhinitis can

be managed through three main strategies first reducing exposure to triggers (environmental control); using air purifiers with specialized filters in bedrooms; washing bed linens and pillows weekly in hot water (at least 60°C) to eliminate dust mites; removing carpets and heavy curtains where possible and replacing them with washable materials; and keeping indoor humidity below 50% using dehumidifiers.

The second important step is to follow medication and antihistamines (anti-allergy medications) such as loratadine or cetirizine, which are effective in relieving sneezing, itching, and runny nose. These are available over the counter.

Also use corticosteroid nasal sprays such as fluticasone, which are the most effective treatment for controlling all symptoms, especially nasal congestion, but require regular use for several days to achieve full effect.

Dr. Haddad emphasises that allergic rhinitis is not a minor condition that can be ignored, as it affects work, education, and daily life for millions of people in Qatar. Consulting a family physician is advised if symptoms interfere with sleep or daily productivity, do not improve with over-the-counter medications, or if asthma symptoms such as wheezing or shortness of breath appear.



Qatar continues Consultations on Human Rights Action Plan

Consultative sessions on the National Human Rights Action Plan (2026-2030), organised by the committee tasked with preparing the plan, continued yesterday under the chairmanship of Minister of State for International Cooperation H E Dr. Mariam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad. The session, which forms part of the committee's participatory approach to gathering views and exchanging perspectives to contribute to the development of a comprehensive and implementable national plan, was hosted by Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs H E Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa Al Hassan Al Mohammadi.

Qatar takes part in Euro-Mediterranean, Arab and Balkans Foreign Ministers meeting



The State of Qatar participated yesterday in a meeting of foreign ministers from the EU Mediterranean group (MED9), the League of Arab States, and Western Balkan countries, held via video conference. Qatar was represented by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi. The meeting discussed strengthening food security and facilitating access to fertilisers.

Qatar Tourism, Qatar Foundation for Social Work sign MoU to promote inclusive tourism

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable tourism, Qatar Tourism and Qatar Foundation for Social Work have announced the signing of a strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU).

The collaboration aims to support the integration of all segments of society within the tourism sector, and to create a more accommodating and comfortable environment for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

The MoU includes the launch of the "Autism-Friendly Spaces" initiative as a pilot phase in one of the country's hotels, as an innovative step towards empowering individuals with autism. The framework of cooperation also encompasses the implementation of joint awareness initiatives, the development of specialised training programmes for tourism sector workers to enhance their understanding of the diverse needs of



Officials of Qatar Tourism and Qatar Foundation for Social Work during the signing ceremony.

visitors, as well as the exchange of technical and advisory expertise.

Commenting on the initiative, Chief of Tourism Development Sector at Qatar Tourism, Omar Al-Jaber, stated: "The memorandum of understanding between Qatar Tourism and the Qatar

Foundation for Social Work represents an important step towards cementing the concept of inclusive tourism in the State of Qatar, and reflects our ongoing commitment to constructive collaboration with various government entities to achieve a positive and sustainable

impact. Through this partnership, we are working to develop and support qualitative initiatives, including the 'Autism-Friendly Spaces' initiative, which contributes to enhancing the visitor experience and empowering all segments of society. We also reaffirm our commitment to embedding the principles of social responsibility and encouraging the tourism sector to adopt best practices that reflect the values of inclusivity and innovation, in support of Qatar's position as a leading and integrated tourism destination".

In this context, CEO of Qatar Foundation for Social Work, Rashid Mohammed Al Hamda Al Naimi, affirmed that this initiative reflects the Foundation's commitment to its role in advocating for and promoting the rights of people with disabilities, through the development of practical and innovative models that contribute to creating environments that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all, thereby

enhancing their active participation in various aspects of life.

He added that the strategic partnership with Qatar Tourism represents a fundamental pillar for achieving a sustainable impact, by translating field expertise into real-world applications that contribute to enhancing quality of life and supporting the integration of all segments of society, while opening new horizons for the development of joint initiatives with tangible outcomes.

This strategic partnership aligns with Qatar Tourism's objectives of developing a sustainable tourism sector that caters to the needs of all, and reflects the country's commitment to supporting social responsibility and empowering and integrating all segments of society. The initiative also seeks to encourage all entities operating within the tourism sector, including hotels, facilities, and service providers to adopt similar practices that elevate the visitor experience.

Aman Centre concludes awareness campaign across health centres

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (Aman), one of the centres under the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, has concluded a series of awareness activities organised in collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation and the Primary Health Care Corporation.

The initiative was conducted across several health centres to promote social protection awareness and highlight services available to vulnerable groups.

The campaign featured dedicated awareness booths introducing Aman's role and the range of services it provides to women, children, and victims of family disintegration and domestic violence. The initiative aimed to enhance community awareness and educate the public on key issues related to social protection and psychological well-being.

The activities were hosted at Al Sadd Health Centre, Muaiter Health Centre, and the Women's Wellness and Research Centre. Through these platforms, Aman engaged directly with the public, offering information about its free services and support mechanisms for those affected by violence or family instability.



Visitors and representatives at the awareness booth.

Acting Executive Director of Aman, Fadhil Al Kaabi, emphasised the importance of collaboration with the healthcare sector, describing it as a fundamental pillar in safeguarding women and children who are victims of domestic violence. He highlighted the centre's goal of raising awareness about mental health challenges faced by these groups, noting that psychological abuse can significantly impact behaviour, thinking, and overall well-being.

Al Kaabi stressed the need for joint efforts among relevant entities to promote understanding of mental health issues and provide appropriate solutions. He reaffirmed Aman's

commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment for women and children by delivering protection, rehabilitation, empowerment, and legal, psychological, and social support services in line with quality and transparency standards.

According to Aman, the awareness booths attracted more than 1,700 visitors over two days at each participating health centre. Visitors included men and women from diverse nationalities, all seeking to learn more about the centre's services and its role in providing social protection.

Dr. Zeina Bousherbak Al Mansouri, CEO and Medical Director of the Women's

Wellness and Research Centre at Hamad Medical Corporation, described the initiative as a model of integration between healthcare providers and social support institutions.

She noted that the collaboration aims to strengthen a culture of awareness and prevention while empowering women with access to information and services that support both physical and mental health.

Bakhita Al Ghayathin, Director of Community Awareness at Aman, highlighted the importance of reaching the general public and targeted groups within healthcare settings. She noted that the initiative opens broader opportunities for collaboration with health centres in designing awareness and educational programmes, as well as contributing to future research and studies.

Hanan Al Ali, Director of the Communication and Media Office at Aman, stressed the need to strengthen community and international partnerships, particularly with Qatar's healthcare sector.

She pointed out that such cooperation helps raise awareness about the risks of psychological stress and its impact on women and children exposed to violence.

QSTP, TotalEnergies launch WaterTech Accelerator

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP), a member of Qatar Foundation, in partnership with TotalEnergies, has marked the start of the QSTP WaterTech Accelerator. The programme brings together a global community of founders working on innovative solutions across the water sector.

The programme officially commenced with its opening session held virtually on April 27, welcoming more than 200 startups and scale-ups from across the applicant pool. The session introduced participants to the programme journey and set the context for engagement with partners, industry stakeholders, and the wider ecosystem in the months ahead.

An expert panel featuring Sead Bajrovic, Founding Partner at Water Impact Partners; Sonia Weymuller, Co-Founder and General Partner at VentureSouq; Alina Truhina, Founding and Managing Partner at UTOPIA Capital; Iheb Triki, CEO and Co-founder of Kumulus Water; and Sami Khoreibi, Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of Wisewell, brought together perspectives from investment and

entrepreneurship in the water and climate space.

Following these sessions, participants took part in a dedicated discussion focused on understanding Qatar's innovation ecosystem. Delivered by representatives from QSTP, Qatar Development Bank, and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council, the session provided founders with practical guidance on company setup, funding pathways, and opportunities for collaboration within the country.

The accelerator has attracted 226 applications from 79 countries, reflecting strong global interest in water innovation. Regionally, the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region accounted for 32 percent of applications, followed by Europe at 25 percent, with further participation from North America, South Asia, and Africa. The programme also received 19 applications from within Qatar, underscoring its international reach and local engagement.

Applications span a wide range of sectors, with key areas including industrial water and wastewater, municipal water, agriculture and irrigation, smart cities and drinking water.

PHCC marks World Hand Hygiene Day with nationwide public awareness campaign

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, is participating in the World Hand Hygiene Day 2026 campaign, held for the eighteenth year under the global initiative "Save Lives: Clean Your Hands." The campaign aims to reinforce hand hygiene as a fundamental measure to reduce healthcare-associated infections, enhance patient safety, and improve service quality, given its direct impact on limiting the spread of germs within healthcare facilities and the community.

Among the key objectives of this year's campaign are strengthening adherence to the World Health Organisation's "Five Moments for Hand Hygiene" within healthcare settings, integrating hand hygiene into policies, operational

procedures, and monitoring indicators at the facility level, and promoting a sustainable culture of infection prevention through training, monitoring, feedback, and supportive environments.

Executive Director of Preventive Health at PHCC, Dr. Hamad Al Mudahka emphasised that hands are a major vehicle for transmitting many disease-causing microbes, making hand hygiene a cornerstone of prevention within health centres. He added that infections may spread through direct contact or contaminated surfaces; therefore, proper hand cleaning significantly reduces disease transmission and protects patients and visitors.

We can protect ourselves and others from infection by following simple practices, most importantly: washing hands regularly, especially before eating, after using the bathroom,

and after coughing or sneezing; avoiding touching the face before cleaning hands; using tissues when coughing or sneezing and disposing of them properly; and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces such as phones and door handles.

Washing hands with soap and water is the preferred option when hands are visibly dirty or after using the restroom. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser (at least 70% alcohol) is an effective and practical alternative when soap and water are not available.

Manager of Health Protection at PHCC, Dr. Khalid Elawad noted that hands are a key means of transmitting many infectious diseases, whether through direct contact or via contaminated surfaces and tools in public places. He added that even a single touch of a contaminated surface followed by touching the face may be enough



FROM LEFT: Dr. Hamad Al Mudahka, Dr. Khalid Elawad and Dr. Ahmed Hashem

to cause infection, highlighting the importance of proper and regular hand hygiene.

IPAC Specialist at PHCC, Dr. Ahmed Hashem stated that hand hygiene is a simple and easy practice, yet it makes a significant difference in reducing infections within healthcare facilities. He confirmed that improving compliance could reduce healthcare-associated infections by up to 50%.

Through this campaign, PHCC aims to strengthen and

sustain hand hygiene practices and motivate the community and healthcare workers to reduce healthcare-associated infection rates, as this is a shared responsibility.

The Corporation is committed to promoting a culture of hand hygiene through, providing alcohol-based hand sanitisers across facilities, training healthcare workers on the 'Five Moments for Hand Hygiene,' ensuring continuous awareness and availability of sanitisers

within clinics, awareness activities and events

Activities marking World Hand Hygiene Day include educational lectures and workshops on the importance of hand hygiene, distribution of brochures and awareness materials to staff and visitors, and the establishment of awareness booths in health centres featuring educational content. Surveys are also conducted to measure visitors' awareness levels and satisfaction.

PHCC emphasises that hand hygiene is not merely a routine practice, but a first line of defense that protects patients, visitors, and healthcare workers alike. The Corporation calls on all members of the community to make handwashing a consistent daily habit at home, school, and work—because with a simple step, we can prevent many infections and create safer healthcare together.

Israeli strikes kill at least 12 in Lebanon

NABATIEH: Lebanon's health ministry reported at least 12 people killed, including two children and a paramedic, in a series of Israeli airstrikes carried out yesterday in spite of a ceasefire.

In separate statements, the ministry reported 11 people killed, two of them children, in strikes on three different villages in Nabatieh district. Another strike in Marjayoun district killed one paramedic from a Hezbollah-affiliated rescue service and wounded another, the ministry said.

Israel pummelled southern Lebanon yesterday, state media and AFP correspondents said, a day after it targeted a Hezbollah commander in its first strike on Beirut's southern suburbs since a truce sought to end weeks of fighting.

A ceasefire in the war between Hezbollah and Israel began on April 17, but combat has largely not stopped in southern Lebanon.

Wednesday's strike near the capital, however, came as a shock in Lebanon. AFP photographs taken in the southern suburbs showed the top floors of a residential building totally destroyed, and rescuers searching through the rubble yesterday morning.

Lebanese state media reported Israeli strikes across a number of southern towns and villages, and the Israeli army issued fresh evacuation warnings to three villages north of the Litani River, and outside the area occupied by Israeli troops following their ground invasion of the border area. Some of the Israeli strikes, on the southern city of Nabatieh, targeted

a shopping centre and residential buildings, state media and an AFP correspondent said.

In the nearby village of Toul, two rescuers from the Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health Committee were wounded in an Israeli strike as they were dispatched following a previous attack, spokesperson Mahmoud Karaki told AFP. The team's ambulance was heavily damaged, he added. The Israeli military said in a statement yesterday that an "explosive drone impact" wounded four soldiers — one severely — in southern Lebanon the previous day. Lebanon and Israel will hold a new round of peace talks on May 14-15 in Washington, a US official said yesterday. Next week's talks will be the third between Israel and Lebanon. — **AFP**



First responders arrive at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Habbouch yesterday. (AFP)

GCC urges international action to protect energy security, global supply chains

RIYADH: GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohammed Al Budaiwi called for concerted international efforts to protect energy security and take the necessary measures to ensure the stability of supply chains, safeguard the continuity of international maritime navigation, and achieve global food security.

Al Budaiwi said maintaining maritime security and the security of the region as a whole

constitutes a fundamental pillar for preserving regional and international security and stability, stressing the need to adhere to international law to protect the security and freedom of navigation in maritime routes, in accordance with relevant international resolutions and treaties.

He also stressed the importance of ensuring a permanent halt to Iranian attacks on the territories, ports, and interests

of GCC member states in Gulf waters, preventing their recurrence, and taking all necessary measures to guarantee the continuity of international navigation through all maritime straits, particularly the Straits of Hormuz and Bab El-Mandeb.

His remarks came during a virtual meeting held yesterday to discuss a new political initiative titled "Supporting Food Security and Access to

Fertilizers," attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Italy Antonio Tajani and Croatian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlic Radman.

The GCC Secretary-General said GCC states moved swiftly to protect supply chains and ensure their continuity by activating alternative logistics corridors and redirecting shipments from Gulf ports to alternative ports on the Red Sea and

Arabian Sea, supported by customs and logistical facilities to maintain the flow of supplies and meet global demand for energy and fertilizers under the current circumstances. He noted that Iran's aggression against the sovereignty of GCC countries, the disruption of maritime navigation, and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz constitute blackmail against the entire world. — **QNA**

Pakistan optimistic about US-Iran deal

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has voiced optimism over the prospects of a swift agreement between the United States and Iran to end the ongoing conflict.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Tahir Andrabi said Islamabad continues to support diplomatic efforts toward a peaceful resolution, expressing confidence that Washington and Tehran could reach a deal sooner rather than later.

He also called for a sustainable political settlement to restore regional stability.

The remarks came as Iran said it was reviewing the latest US peace proposals, while US President Donald Trump warned of renewed military strikes if no agreement is reached, including measures to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to international shipping.

In a social media post, Trump said the two-month conflict could end soon and that disrupted oil and natural gas shipments may resume.

Media reports indicated momentum toward a breakthrough. — **QNA**



Displaced Palestinians make their way along a street with destroyed buildings at the Jabalia refugee camp, in the northern Gaza Strip on May 6, 2026. (AFP)

Israeli strike kills top Hamas official's son in Gaza: Hospital

GAZA CITY: A Gaza hospital and Hamas yesterday said the son of the Palestinian movement's chief negotiator had died from wounds sustained in an Israeli strike a day earlier.

Azzam Khalil Al-Hayya, 23, the son of top Hamas official Khalil Al-Hayya, "was martyred after succumbing to wounds sustained in an Israeli airstrike targeting him yesterday," Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital said in a statement.

The city's Al-Ahli hospital and a security source said on Wednesday that a strike on the Al-Daraj neighbourhood

of Gaza City in the evening killed one person and wounded 10 others, including Azzam Khalil Al-Hayya.

Azzam Khalil Al-Hayya is the fourth of Khalil al-Hayya's seven sons to be killed in Israeli attacks, according to a Hamas source. In a statement, Hamas said that the killing of Azzam Khalil Al-Hayya "came within the framework of attempts to exert pressure on the resistance leadership and its negotiating delegation, after the occupation's failure to impose its conditions or achieve its declared objectives." — **AFP**

China hands suspended death sentences to two ex-ministers for graft

BEIJING: A Chinese military court handed suspended death sentences to two former defence ministers for corruption yesterday, state media said. The sentences against Wei Fenghe, 72, and Li Shangfu, 68, will be "commuted to life imprisonment" after a two-year reprieve, the Xinhua state news agency reported.

The ex-ministers, who served between 2018 and 2023, were also former members of China's powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), which oversees the military. They also appeared regularly on television along with other officials.

Wei was convicted of accepting bribes and Li was convicted of accepting and offering bribes, Xinhua said.

The pair were also stripped of their political rights for life as well as their personal property. — **AFP**

ASEAN FMs reaffirm regional unity ahead of bloc summit

MANILA: ASEAN foreign ministers convened in Cebu, the Philippines, yesterday for a high-level meeting.

Ministers from ASEAN members reviewed recent progress in ASEAN community-building, including preparations for the commemorative activity marking the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), scheduled for July 2026, as well as the ongoing integration of Timor-Leste following its formal admission into the bloc. The meeting reaffirmed ASEAN's role as a united, resilient and forward-looking community at a time of mounting global uncertainty, including the escalating crisis in the Middle East. — **XINHUA**

Japan fires missiles during drills, China voices concern

PAOAY, PHILIPPINES: Japan fired surface-to-ship missiles and sank an old warship in waters between the Philippines and Taiwan as part of major military exercises that include US forces.

The firing on Wednesday of two Type-88 missiles formed part of exercises in the Philippines between US, Australian, Filipino and Japanese troops as well as contingents from France, New Zealand and Canada. Japanese and Philippine defence ministers

observed the launch in the northern province of Ilocos Norte, some 400 kilometres from Taiwan, an AFP reporter at the scene said. The two projectiles hit the target, a retired Philippines navy corvette, around 75 kilometres offshore in the South China Sea, causing it to sink, officials said.

The 19-day Balikatan exercises, meaning "shoulder-to-shoulder" and which wrap up today, have involved some 17,000 military personnel including Japanese combat

troops for the first time.

On Wednesday Beijing lashed out at the missile test, calling it "another example of the Japanese right-wing forces' push for accelerated remilitarisation of Japan." Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular briefing that "not only has Japan, the aggressor, failed to deeply reflect on its historical crimes, it has even sent military forces overseas and fired offensive missiles under the pretext of security cooperation." — **AFP**

Some 1,500 ships trapped in Gulf due to Iran conflict: IMO

PANAMA CITY: Around 1,500 ships and their crews are trapped in the Gulf due to the Iranian blockade in the strait of Hormuz, the secretary general of the UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO) said in Panama yesterday.

"Right now, we have approximately 20,000 crewmen and around 1,500 ships trapped," Arsenio Dominguez told the Maritime Convention of the Americas.

Dominguez said that maritime shipping moves over 80 percent of total consumed products in the world.

The stranded crew members "are innocent people

who are doing their jobs every day for the benefit of other countries," but "are trapped by geopolitical situations outside their control," Dominguez told the gathering of industry executives and IMO representatives.

Before the conflict's outbreak, a fifth of the world's total petroleum and gas passed through the Strait of Hormuz. The closure has led to a significant global surge in the price of hydrocarbons. On Monday, US President Donald Trump announced a naval operation to escort the trapped ships and force the opening of the strait, but called off the push shortly after. — **AFP**

Women linked to IS fighters arrested after landing in Australia

SYDNEY: Counter-terrorism forces arrested two women for slavery yesterday as they returned to Australia from Syria, where they allegedly committed "crimes against humanity" while supporting Islamic State militants.

The women and their children — all Australian citizens — landed yesterday evening after years spent in a Syrian detention camp.

Police arrested the women immediately after they landed at Melbourne international airport.

They were among four women and nine children returning to Australia. — **AFP**



World in brief

Myanmar military claims recapture of trade artery

YANGON: Myanmar's military claimed yesterday to have recaptured a key northern transport corridor towards China after a 15-month battle, touting a counterblow to rebels in the civil war.

The military said it crushed "terrorist insurgent groups" along a route linking the central and second largest city of Mandalay to the northern hub of Myitkyina, about 50 kilometres from China's border. AFP was not immediately able to verify the claim.

"The operations lasted for over one year and three months, during which a total of 322 major and minor engagements were fought," the Myanmar commander-in-chief's office said in a statement. It said the bodies of 138 rebels were seized and some military members "also made the ultimate sacrifice" — without confirming the number of military fatalities. — **AFP**

Sri Lanka arrests 261 foreigners over cybercams

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan authorities arrested 30 Chinese and Vietnamese nationals yesterday in the latest crackdown on cybercams, raising the number detained since the weekend to 261, police said. The latest arrests were made in Werahera, a suburb of the capital, police said, adding that 74 Vietnamese nationals arrested elsewhere in the capital on Wednesday were remanded in custody until May 14. Crime groups around the world have carried out online scams, defrauding victims of tens of billions of dollars annually, often through cryptocurrency fraud and fake romantic relationships. — **AFP**

South Korea ex-PM's sentence cut to 15 years

SEOUL: A South Korean appeals court reduced the sentence of former prime minister Han Duck-soo yesterday by eight years for crimes relating to ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol's martial law declaration.

A lower court had sentenced Han in January to a heavier-than-expected jail term of 23 years for engaging in the declaration. An appeals court in the capital Seoul cut that by eight years yesterday, with the presiding judge announcing: "We sentence the defendant to 15 years in prison." The court still maintained most of Han's convictions. — **AFP**

Chad declares mourning after new attack

N'DJAMENA: Chad declared three days of national mourning after a new attack by Boko Haram militants Wednesday killed two generals in the volatile Lake Chad Basin.

On Monday evening, an attack on the Barka Tolorom military base on the Chadian shore of Lake Chad left at least 24 soldiers dead and several wounded, according to a military source.

On Wednesday afternoon, security and defence force boats patrolling the lake's island area "fell into a Boko Haram ambush," an officer from the General Staff told AFP, adding that two generals were killed.

The government in a statement

declared national mourning "from Wednesday, May 6 at midnight to Saturday, May 9 at midnight...in memory of the martyrs who fell on the field of honour during the attacks by terrorist groups that occurred on May 4 and 6".

During this period, flags will be flown at half-mast and all festive activities are banned throughout the country, it said.

"We will continue the fight with renewed determination until this threat is completely eradicated," Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno had said after Monday's attack.

Chadian soldiers are frequently targeted by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region. — **AFP**



Chadian soldiers patrol on Lake Chad by boat from a military base in Lake Chad Province on May 6, 2026. (AFP)

Iran can outlast Trump's Hormuz blockade for months: US intelligence

WASHINGTON: A confidential CIA analysis delivered to administration policymakers this week concludes that Iran can survive the US naval blockade for at least three to four months before facing more severe economic hardship, four people familiar with the document said, a finding that appears to raise new questions about President Donald Trump's optimism on ending the war.

The analysis by the US intelligence community, whose secret assessments on Iran have often been more sober than the administration's public statements, also found that Tehran retains significant ballistic missile capabilities despite weeks of intense US and Israeli bombardment, three of the people familiar with it said.

Iran retains about 75 percent of its prewar inventories of mobile launchers and about 70 percent of its prewar stockpiles of missiles, a US official said. The official said there is evidence that the regime has been able to recover and reopen almost all of its underground storage facilities, repair some damaged missiles and even assemble some new missiles that were nearly complete

when the war began.

Trump painted a rosier picture in Oval Office remarks on Wednesday, saying of Iran: "Their missiles are mostly decimated, they have probably 18, 19 percent, but not a lot by comparison to what they had."

Three current and one former US official confirmed the outlines of the intelligence analysis, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

Asked for comment, a senior US intelligence official emphasized the blockade's impact. "The President's blockade is inflicting real, compounding damage - severing trade, crushing revenue, and accelerating systemic economic collapse. Iran's military has been badly degraded, its navy destroyed, and its leaders are in hiding," the official, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said in a statement. "What's left is the regime's appetite for civilian suffering - starving its own people to prolong a war it has already lost."

Trump, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and other officials have consistently presented the war as an overwhelming US military victory, despite



US President Donald Trump speaks about the upcoming "UFC Freedom 250" event at the White House on May 6, 2026, in Washington, DC. (AFP)

Iran's rejection of Washington's demands that it abandon nuclear enrichment, surrender its uranium stockpiles, reopen the Strait of Hormuz and take other steps.

Trump called the blockade "unbelievable" on Wednesday. "The Navy has been incredible. The job they did ... it's like a wall of steel. Nobody goes through," he said.

A day prior, he said Iran's

economy "is crashing," its currency is "worthless," and it "can't pay" its troops.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, touting the president's sanctions regime, dubbed "Economic Fury," noted in late April that Iran's main oil terminal would soon reach capacity, "causing permanent damage to Iran's oil infrastructure." — **THE WASHINGTON POST**

Ukrainian, US negotiators to meet this week, says media

KIEV: Rustem Umerov, Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council secretary, will travel to the United States this week for talks with US special presidential envoy Steve Witkoff, the Interfax-Ukraine news agency reported yesterday.

According to the report, the meeting could take place in Miami, Florida. In March, Ukrainian and U.S. delegations met in Miami and discussed security guarantees and humanitarian issues in settling the Ukraine crisis. — **XINHUA**

Mexico asks US for evidence against officials accused of drug links

MEXICO CITY: Mexico has asked the United States to provide evidence supporting accusations against Ruben Rocha Moya, governor of the northwestern state of Sinaloa, who has temporarily stepped down, and nine other officials allegedly linked to drug and arms trafficking, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Wednesday.

Sheinbaum said the request was sent through a diplomatic note from Mexico's Foreign Ministry to the US Department of Justice, following a legal consultation by Mexican prosecutors. The goal, she said, is for Washington to provide "solid evidence" that would allow Mexican authorities to investigate the case under national law. — **XINHUA**

Canada mining company leaves Cuba, fearing US sanctions

HAVANA: Canada's Sherritt mining company said Thursday it was leaving Cuba, where it mines cobalt and nickel, for fear of US sanctions affecting its operations.

"Sherritt has suspended its direct participation in joint venture activities in Cuba, effective immediately," the Toronto-based firm said in a statement, adding that it was "taking steps to repatriate Sherritt's expatriate employees in Cuba."

The company has not yet been formally designated under US President Donald Trump's sanctions on the island, but believes that "such a designation could occur at any time." — **AFP**

Brazil lawmakers approve bill incentivizing mineral exploitation

BRASÍLIA: Brazil's Chamber of Deputies on Wednesday approved a bill that expands governmental powers over rare earth minerals and incentivizes the private sector to exploit the country's vast reserves. The bill's approval came one day before President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was set to meet his US counterpart Donald Trump at the White House, where the pair will discuss the coveted minerals among other things.

Brazil holds the world's second-largest reserves of these elements used in everything from electric vehicles, solar panels and smart phones to jet engines and guided missiles. — **AFP**

Russia scolds ally Armenia for hosting Zelensky

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday that it was "incomprehensible" its ally Armenia hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for a European summit earlier this week, and cautioned the country against deeper European integration.

Ties between Armenia and its former imperial ruler Moscow have frayed in recent years. The former Soviet republic froze its membership in the Russian-led CSTO military alliance in 2024 over Russia's failure to defend it against Azerbaijan, and has expressed an interest in joining the European Union, angering the Kremlin. "Russian society, with deep indignation and bewilderment, not only saw, but above all remembered, the fact that Armenia, which we are accustomed to considering a friendly, fraternal country, had served as a platform. For whom? For a terrorist," Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a weekly briefing.

Since launching its full-scale military offensive in February 2022, Russian officials have regularly hurled insults at Zelensky and routinely call Kyiv a "terrorist state" — outbursts rejected and dismissed in Kyiv as baseless wartime propaganda. "No one in Armenia's current leadership snubbed Zelensky. So whose side are you on, historically?" she asked. — **AFP**

WHO warns of more hantavirus cases in 'limited' outbreak

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said yesterday that more cases of the hantavirus could emerge but expected the outbreak to be "limited" if precautions are taken, after the disease killed three passengers from a cruise ship.

Another sick passenger from the MV Hondius landed in Europe earlier in the day, as the vessel headed to a Spanish island and health officials scrambled to map the outbreak of the potentially deadly human-to-human strain. The fate of the Hondius sparked international alarm after three people travelling on it died, though health officials have played down fears of a wider global outbreak from the rat-borne virus, which is less contagious than Covid-19.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (*pictured*) told journalists in Geneva that five confirmed and three suspected cases had been reported overall, including the three deaths.

"Given the incubation period of the Andes virus, which can be up to six



weeks, it's possible that more cases may be reported," he said, referring to the rare strain detected aboard the Hondius, which can be transmitted between humans.

His prediction was proved swiftly correct, with the Leiden University Medical Centre in the Netherlands announcing later on Thursday another patient had tested positive.

But the WHO's emergency alert and response director Abdi Rahman Mahamud insisted: "We believe this

will be a limited outbreak if the public health measures are implemented and solidarity shown across all countries."

People thought to have contracted the virus are being treated or isolating in Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and South Africa.

"This is not the start of an epidemic. This is not the start of a pandemic," WHO epidemic and pandemic preparedness and prevention director Maria Van Kerkhove insisted. "This is not Covid." Hantavirus is a rare respiratory disease that is usually spread from infected rodents and can cause respiratory and cardiac distress as well as haemorrhagic fevers.

There are no vaccines and no known cure for it, meaning that treatment consists solely of attempting to relieve the symptoms.

A passenger is thought to have contracted the virus before boarding the ship in Argentina and eventually infected others on board as it sailed across the Atlantic. — **AFP**

France's far-right leaders court Israel, Germany envoys ahead of vote

PARIS: France's far-right leaders have met the ambassadors of Germany and Israel in recent months as their party, once deemed antisemitic, seeks to court foreign envoys in the run-up to next year's presidential elections.

Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally (RN) party is eyeing its best chance yet at taking power, with President Emmanuel Macron stepping down after hitting the two-term limit.

Le Pen hopes to run for

president for a fourth time in 2027, after twice making it to the runoffs against Macron in the last two votes.

But if an appeals court in July bars the 57-year-old from public office over an alleged fake jobs scam in European Parliament, her lieutenant Jordan Bardella, 30, is expected to run in her place.

France is home to western Europe's largest Jewish population, at around half a million people. — **AFP**

Spain summons Israeli envoy over 'intolerable' activist arrest

MADRID: Spain summoned Israel's top envoy in Madrid to protest the "unacceptable and intolerable" detention of a Spanish activist from a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, the foreign minister said yesterday.

The countries' latest diplomatic clash came as Spain decorated the outspoken UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, who has divided Western countries and infuriated Israel.

An Israeli court has extended until Sunday the

detention of Saif Abu Keshek, a Spanish national of Palestinian origin, as well as another activist, Brazilian Thiago Avila, snubbing international demands for their release.

On Wednesday, "we again summoned Israel's charge d'affaires to convey to her how unacceptable and intolerable it is to extend the detention of our citizen," Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told parliament.

The Global Sumud Flotilla was the second initiative in a year aiming to break an Israeli blockade on war-ravaged

Gaza, which has suffered shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel since the Israel-Hamas war broke out in 2023.

Israeli forces intercepted the flotilla in international waters off Greece last week, expelling the activists to Europe but arresting Abu Keshek and Avila.

Rights groups say the arrests were illegal and that the men have suffered abuse in jail.

Israeli authorities have rejected the abuse allegations but have filed no charges against them. — **AFP**

Britons set to punish Starmer's Labour in local polls

LONDON: Britons voted yesterday in local elections set to heap more pressure on beleaguered Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer and energise the rise of hard-right and left-wing populists.

The ballot across Scotland, England and Wales is Starmer's biggest electoral test since his July 2024 general election landslide victory over the Conservatives.

Opinion polls predict grim results for Labour, which could amplify calls for Starmer, 63, to resign or face a long-romoured party leadership challenge.

The prime minister and his wife voted at a polling station near parliament in Westminster.

Nigel Farage's anti-immigrant Reform UK and



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria Starmer (R) leave after casting their votes at a polling station in Westminster Chapel, central London, yesterday. (AFP)

the left-wing Greens, led by self-described eco-populist Zack Polanski, are expected to benefit from widespread disillusionment.

Melanie Garson, associate

professor of politics at University College London, said the vote was a "huge barometer for how the country is feeling about this political establishment". — **AFP**

EU prosecutors probe alleged misuse of funds linked to France's Bardella

PARIS: European Union prosecutors have launched a probe into a possible misappropriation of EU funds, after a complaint alleged France's far-right National Rally had used European grants to benefit its leader Jordan Bardella, a source close to the case told AFP yesterday.

The complaint, filed in Paris last December by anti-graft association AC!Anti-Corruption, was forwarded by the National Financial Prosecutor's Office (PNF) to the European Public Prosecutor's Office for assessment.

"Following a preliminary review, an investigation has been opened on suspicion of fraud," said the source.

The launch of the probe

comes as Bardella's mentor, Marine Le Pen, is seeking to overturn a court ruling that convicted her of embezzlement in 2025 and could derail her presidential bid next year.

If an appeals court in July bars the 57-year-old from public office over an alleged fake jobs scam in European Parliament, Bardella, 30, is expected to run in her place. Bardella is head of the Patriots for Europe group, the EU legislature's third-largest bloc that was co-founded by former Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban. Contacted by AFP, a spokesman for the Luxembourg-based EPP said: "It is the European Public Prosecutor's Office's policy not to comment on ongoing investigations." — **AFP**

Norway arrests Chinese woman for alleged spying

OSLO: Norway's interior security service, PST, announced yesterday that it had arrested a Chinese woman suspected of spying on Norwegian satellite data.

Searches were carried out at two addresses, one of which is on the island of Andoya in the Arctic Circle and which hosts both a rocket launch pad and a weapons testing site.

"The operation is based on suspicions that a company registered in Norway is being used as a cover for an attempt by a Chinese state actor to establish a receiving station to download data from satellites in polar orbit," Thomas Blom, police prosecutor at PST, told AFP in a statement.

The data in question could "harm Norway's fundamental interests if it came into the hands of a foreign state", Blom added.

No further details were disclosed about the Chinese national, who is suspected of having attempted to engage in "aggravated intelligence activities targeting state secrets". — **AFP**

Anti-graft reformer Radev named Bulgarian PM

SOFIA: Rumens Radev, who won Bulgaria's elections last month on promises to fight graft, was named prime minister yesterday, raising hopes of a stable government in the EU member after eight elections in five years.

Radev, an EU critic who wants renewed dialogue with Russia and who resigned as

president earlier this year to run in the election, has vowed to dismantle the "oligarchic model".

Through the vote, Bulgarians "confirmed their desire for stable institutions and for the defence of freedom, democracy and justice," Radev said after receiving the mandate from President Iliana Iotova. — **AFP**

Meloni hails solid ties in talks with Hungarian PM-elect

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who had endorsed outgoing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, said relations with Budapest were solid yesterday after meeting his victorious rival Peter Magyar.

"The conversation confirmed the solidity of relations between Italy and Hungary,"

the government said in a statement after the talks in Rome with Magyar, who is due to be formally installed as prime minister on Saturday.

Magyar said the meeting had been "successful and forward-looking".

"We concluded that Italy and Hungary share similar

positions on many issues" including "taking decisive action against illegal migration," he wrote on Facebook.

Orban's re-election bid had been endorsed by fellow hard-right leaders from around the world, including Meloni, who even appeared in one of his campaign videos. — **AFP**