

CYPRUS PRESIDENT COMMENDS QATAR'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING DE-ESCALATION



QATAR SEES OVER 73 MILLION PAYMENT SYSTEM TRANSACTIONS



GAUFF FRENCH OPEN TITLE DEFENCE ENDS AS OSAKA, SABALENKA SET UP CLASH



CHAMPIONS OF EUROPE AGAIN

SUNDAY 31 MAY 2026 14 DHUL-HIJJA 1447

# The Peninsula

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THE PERFECT GIFT? THE ONE THEY CHOOSE |

### Deputy Prime Minister participates in third plenary session of Shangri-La Dialogue 2026

**SINGAPORE:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani participated in the third plenary session of the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026, held in Singapore under the theme "Asia's Maritime Security Disorder." The session was chaired by Director-General and Chief Executive of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Dr. Bastian Giegerich, alongside Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Australia H E Richard Marles, and Minister for Armed Forces and Veterans of France H E Catherine Vautrin. His Excellency also participated in the ministerial roundtable alongside 34 other ministers responsible for defense and security from around the world. — QNA

## Over 3 million tonnes of recycled materials drive circular economy

**SANAULLAH ATAULLAH THE PENINSULA**

**DOHA:** Qatar made significant strides in advancing its circular economy and sustainability agenda during 2025, with more than 3 million tonnes of recycled construction materials produced and a growing network of recycling facilities helping transform waste into valuable resources, according to the Ministry of Municipality's 2025 Annual Report.

The report highlights the ministry's key achievements during a year marked by accelerated implementation of initiatives supporting Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly in sustainability, digital transformation, and service development.

A major pillar of the ministry's environmental efforts was the work of the Waste Recycling and Treatment Department, which continued to expand recycling operations and resource recovery programmes across the country.

At the Domestic Solid Waste Management Centre in Mesaieed, waste was converted into useful resources, generating approximately 249,568 megawatt-hours of electricity and producing more than 32,000 tonnes of organic compost during the year.

The centre also recovered thousands of tonnes of recyclable materials, contributing to the country's environmental and economic sustainability goals.

The report revealed that 37,596.8 tonnes of recyclable materials were sorted and recovered for recycling, including approximately 25,199.44 tonnes of plastics and 12,397.36 tonnes of metals. These figures demonstrate the increasing efficiency of Qatar's waste recovery system and the growing value extracted from materials that would otherwise be discarded.

A key driver of Qatar's circular economy progress has been the continued expansion of the recycling industry. The report noted that 51 recycling factories were either operational or undergoing development procedures during 2025.

Of these, 25 factories were fully operational, 21 were under construction, while five plots of land had been allocated for future recycling facilities. → P7

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## Consumers in Qatar balance e-commerce convenience with traditional Eid shopping

JOEL JOHNSON THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Qatar's consumers increasingly turned to online shopping and delivery platforms during Eid Al-Adha holidays, driven by convenience, time savings, and the growing availability of digital services.

Many residents told The Peninsula that they order for gifts, clothing, electronics, perfumes, and food delivery services as mobile applications and e-commerce platforms have become an essential part of holiday preparations, allowing them to avoid crowded stores and benefit from promotions and home delivery services.

"I order groceries and household items online because it saves time," said Doha resident Faisal Ahmed. "But for Eid clothes and gifts, I prefer going to the mall with my family. We like to see the products and enjoy the atmosphere."

Another resident, Aisha Mahmoud, said convenience has made online shopping an important part of her Eid preparations.

"I've ordered several items online this year, including gifts and food products. Delivery services are much faster now, and there are plenty of discounts available," she said. "But I still visit shopping centres for clothing and perfumes because I want to see the quality before buying."

She further added, "Most of my Eid purchases were made through apps this year. It's easier, especially with work commitments, and I can also compare prices, place orders, and have everything delivered."

However, analysts noted that physical retail continues to dominate certain categories, particularly fashion, luxury goods, jewellery, and Eid gifts, where customers prefer to inspect products before making purchases.

"E-commerce is growing, but malls remain central to the Eid shopping experience in Qatar," said consumer trends expert Abdul Hassan. "Many families still enjoy visiting shopping centres, comparing products, and spending time together as part of their holiday preparations." → P7

## Entertainment venues, recreation centres enjoy Eid boon

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Entertainment and recreation centres across Qatar experienced a significant surge in visitor numbers as families and residents embraced the festive spirit of Eid Al Adha, with major attractions reporting near-capacity footfall and extended operating hours to meet soaring demand.

From sprawling indoor theme parks and waterparks to cinemas, gaming arcades, and family entertainment centres, leisure destinations throughout the country witnessed

exceptional turnout right from the start of the holiday, as Qataris and expatriates alike seized the opportunity to spend quality time with loved ones.

Staff at several facilities told *The Peninsula* that visitor numbers during the Eid Al Adha break consistently rank among the highest of any period in the annual calendar, surpassing even National Day figures at some venues.

"Eid is always our busiest season," said one venue manager, who requested anonymity. "Families come from all over Qatar, and we also see a lot of visitors from the GCC travelling

specifically to enjoy the holiday here. We prepared for this well in advance by increasing staffing levels and extending our hours to ensure every guest has the best possible experience." The festive atmosphere had extended beyond traditional amusement venues. Shopping malls across Doha recorded exceptional footfall, with dedicated Eid entertainment zones, live performances, and seasonal promotions drawing large crowds throughout the day and well into the evening.

Qatar's thriving food and beverage sector equally felt the Eid effect. Restaurants and cafés reported near-full

bookings across the holiday period, with family dining experiences in high demand. Several establishments introduced special Eid menus and themed experiences to cater to the festive mood.

Cultural and outdoor spaces had also attracted considerable interest. The Corniche waterfront promenade and Katara Cultural Village became lively gathering spots, hosting a variety of Eid-themed events, traditional performances, and outdoor activities that celebrated Qatari heritage while welcoming visitors from diverse backgrounds. → P7

### En route to 2026 FIFA World Cup

Qatar players and officials pose for a group photo with Qatar Airways crew ahead of their departure to the United States from Dublin, as Al Annabi step up preparations for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. After a training camp in Doha and a friendly against Ireland in Dublin, head coach Julien Lopetegui's side now head to North America for the final leg of preparations, including a warm-up clash with El Salvador, before launching their Group B campaign against Switzerland on June 13.



## Uzbekistan eyes stronger cultural, heritage ties with Qatar: Ambassador

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Uzbekistan is seeking to deepen cultural and intellectual ties with Qatar through the promotion of its rich Islamic heritage, with the presentation of the Islamic Civilization Center of Uzbekistan at Katara Cultural Village highlighting growing cooperation in museums, manuscripts, and cultural exchange.

Speaking to *The Peninsula* recently, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Qatar, H E Dr Ashraf Khodjaev, said the initiative aimed to introduce Qatar's community to a landmark institution that celebrates the contribution of Islamic civilisation to global knowledge and scholarship.

The ambassador said the center was conceived to preserve and present the legacy of enlightened Islamic scholarship for future generations, while strengthening understanding of the



*The collaboration focuses on studying manuscripts and artefacts preserved in Qatar that relate to Uzbekistan's history, while also contributing to a wider global publishing effort documenting Uzbek cultural heritage held in leading institutions worldwide.*

H E Dr Ashraf Khodjaev

scientific and cultural achievements that emerged from the Muslim world.

"The main idea is to present this very unique project to the people of Qatar because we all share the values and heritage of Islamic civilisation," Khodjaev said, noting Qatar's important contribution to preserving Islamic history through institutions such as the Museum of Islamic Art and Qatar National Library.

The Islamic Civilization Center of Uzbekistan, initiated in 2017 under the leadership of the President H E Shavkat Mirziyoyev and inaugurated earlier this year, seeks to document the contributions of Muslim scholars in fields including astronomy, medicine, science, and philosophy.

Khodjaev said the center highlights

towering intellectual figures associated with the region, including Imam al-Bukhari and Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarazmi, whose scholarship helped shape human knowledge and scientific progress.

He said the event at Katara also sought to encourage Qatar residents to visit Uzbekistan and experience the country's historical and cultural landmarks firsthand.

A major feature of the evening was the presentation of a growing partnership between the Qatar National Library and Uzbekistan's cultural institutions, particularly in preserving manuscripts and historical materials connected to Uzbekistan's past.

According to the ambassador, a memorandum of understanding signed in 2024 between Qatar National Library and the World Society for the Study, Preservation and Popularization of the Cultural Legacy of Uzbekistan (WOSCU)

has opened the door to closer academic cooperation.

The collaboration focuses on studying manuscripts and artefacts preserved in Qatar that relate to Uzbekistan's history, while also contributing to a wider global publishing effort documenting Uzbek cultural heritage held in leading institutions worldwide.

Khodjaev said Uzbekistan is preparing a Qatar-focused volume as part of a wider 50-volume series cataloguing Uzbek heritage preserved in museums, libraries, and academic institutions around the world, including collections in Cambridge, Oxford, the British Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Qatari edition, expected to be completed by 2027, will bring together information on manuscripts and artefacts in Qatar connected to Uzbekistan's cultural legacy. → P4



يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ رَاجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ الرَّحِيمِ فَتُغْفَرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

صَلِّ عَلَىٰ آلِهِ وَارْحَمِهِمْ

We extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to the sons of the deceased.

**Mr. Hamad bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**Dr. Saud bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**Mr. Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**Mr. Nasser bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**and to all members of the respected**  
**Al-Attiyah family,**

on the passing of their father the late, by Allah's will,

**HE Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

**Former Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Energy and Industry,**

May Allah have mercy upon the deceased and grant him a place in his spacious paradise, and grant his family and beloved ones patience and solace.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ



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صَلَاةُ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمَةِ

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إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

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EDITORIAL

Champions of Europe again

PARIS Saint-Germain's successful defence of the UEFA Champions League crown last night was more than another trophy lift. It was the latest chapter in a remarkable journey that has transformed the French club from domestic powerhouse into a genuine force of European football.

The victory over Arsenal in Budapest secured PSG a second consecutive Champions League title, making them only the second club in the modern Champions League era after Spanish giants Real Madrid to retain the prestigious trophy.

The Parisians also became the first French side ever to win Europe's premier club competition in back-to-back seasons.

For PSG President Nasser Al-Khelaifi, the celebrations were a remarkable sight. Few figures have been more closely associated with the club's ambitions over the past decade. From the early years of investment and expectation to finally conquering Europe and now defending the title, the journey has been long, demanding and ultimately rewarding.

The latest triumph also underlined the outstanding work of head coach Luis Enrique. The Spaniard inherited a team in transition and built a side based on collective strength rather than individual stardom. The result has been a balanced, disciplined and exciting team capable of competing with anyone in Europe.

Enrique's third Champions League title placed him among an elite group of coaches to have won the competition three times.

More importantly for PSG, he has created a football identity that appears sustainable rather than dependent on a particular generation of players.

The Champions League success capped another exceptional season for the club. PSG wrapped up the Ligue 1 title with a game to spare, securing a fifth consecutive French championship and a record-extending 14th league crown.

Dominance at home has become expected, but maintaining that level while conquering Europe remains a far greater challenge.

Much has changed since Qatari ownership took charge of the club. PSG have invested heavily in infrastructure, recruitment, youth development and global growth.

They have attracted some of football's biggest names, increased the club's international profile and consistently challenged at the highest level. Critics once questioned whether European success would ever arrive. That debate has now been settled. PSG are no longer chasing acceptance among Europe's elite; they belong there.

Back-to-back Champions League titles do not guarantee a dynasty, but they provide a powerful foundation. PSG have shown that sustained success is possible when ambition is matched by planning, patience and strong leadership.

Europe has a champion once again, and for the second year running, that champion wears the colours of Paris Saint-Germain.

Singapore President meets Deputy PM

SINGAPORE: President of Singapore H E Tharman Shanmugaratnam met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali Al-Thani at the Presidential Palace (Istana).

The meeting took place as part of the participation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs in the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026, convened in Singapore.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the latest developments and security updates in the region, as well as bilateral cooperation and coordination amid the current conditions.

The meeting was attended by Ambassador Extraordinary and



Plenipotentiary of Qatar to Singapore H E Abdulaziz bin Ahmed Al Malki Al Jehani, along with several top-echelon officers and officials from both sides. — QNA

Amir congratulates President of Croatia on Statehood Day

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, and Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Republic of Croatia H E Zoran Milanovic on the occasion of Croatia's Statehood Day. Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani also sent a cable of congratulations to Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia H E Andrej Plenkovic. — QNA

Deputy Prime Minister meets Singapore's Senior Minister

SINGAPORE: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani met with Senior Minister in the Singaporean Prime Minister's Office and former Prime Minister H E Lee Hsien Loong at the Presidential Palace (Istana), on the margin of His Excellency's participation in the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026.

The meeting discussed the latest security developments and updates in the region, in addition to avenues for joint cooperation and coordination in light of current circumstances.

The meeting was attended by Ambassador of Qatar to Singapore H E Abdulaziz bin Ahmed Al Malki Al Jehani, along with several top-echelon officers and officials from both sides. — QNA

Al Muraikhi receives call from Philippine Foreign Secretary

DOHA: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi received a phone call yesterday from Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines H E Maria Theresa P. Lazaro.

During the call, they discussed bilateral cooperation between the two countries and ways to strengthen and enhance those ties, in addition to several issues of mutual interest. — QNA



Singapore, Qatar discuss security developments in region

Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of Singapore H E Lawrence Wong met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H E Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali Al-Thani, on the margin of His Excellency's participation in the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 held in Singapore. The meeting reviewed the latest security developments in the region and discussed avenues for joint cooperation and coordination in light of current circumstances. Ambassador of Qatar to Singapore H E Abdulaziz bin Ahmed Al Malki Al Jehani also attended the meeting along with a lineup of senior officers and officials from both sides.

MoPH launches awareness campaign to promote hand hygiene

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has launched a national awareness campaign highlighting the importance of hand hygiene and infection prevention and control (IPC) practices in reducing healthcare associated infections and enhancing the safety of both patients and healthcare workers.

The campaign featured a range of awareness activities, conducted both in person and virtually, across healthcare facilities in several foreign languages.

Activities included field visits, distribution of educational materials on the importance of hand hygiene and infection prevention, as well as awareness messages displayed on digital screens, in patient and visitor waiting areas, and across social media platforms.

As part of the campaign, MoPH also organised an interactive

During a regional WHO webinar, Qatar was highlighted as a leading regional model in infection prevention and control systems, with the country's experience showcased during a dedicated session.

online educational webinar delivered by experts from the Ministry of Public Health and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The webinar attracted the participation of more than 6,700 healthcare professionals from governmental, semi-governmental, and private healthcare facilities across the country.

Discussions focused on strengthening hand hygiene practices, increasing compliance with health protocols, and reinforcing their critical role in improving patient safety.

In parallel with regional efforts marking World Hand Hygiene Day, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern

Mediterranean organised a virtual regional webinar entitled 'Hand Hygiene and Infection Prevention and Control During Crises and Conflicts in the Middle East: More Important Than Ever.'

The event brought together leaders and experts from WHO and representatives from several countries, including the State of Qatar.

During the webinar, Qatar was highlighted as a leading regional model in infection prevention and control systems, with the country's experience showcased during a dedicated session.

The Healthcare Quality Management team at MoPH emphasised that advancing surveillance systems contributes directly to

improving the quality of healthcare and ensuring a safe environment for both patients and healthcare professionals.

At the same time, healthcare facilities across the country organised a series of educational and awareness activities, including training sessions, creative competitions, and public awareness booths, in support of World Hand Hygiene Day 2026 and the World Health Organization's ongoing efforts in this field.

MoPH reaffirmed its continued commitment to strengthening infection prevention practices and advancing health awareness programs, contributing to enhanced quality and safety of healthcare services in the State of Qatar.

The Ministry also called on all healthcare professionals and members of the community to continue prioritising hand hygiene practices as shared public health responsibility.

**Qatar Chemical Company Limited**  
Al Dafna – Amwal Tower – First Floor  
P.O. 24646 Doha / Qatar – Tel. 44847111 – Fax 44847695

**ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDER**

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/M/111/26	Machining and Fabrication Services at Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC & RLP on Call-Off Basis for Five Years	QAR 864,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 5th July 2026
<b>Brief Scope:</b> Contractor's Scope of Work includes all machining and fabrication services for mechanical and piping works to be performed at contractor's workshop and Company's site, including fabrication, installation, testing, inspection, and related support services on call-off basis for a period of five (5) years.				
2.	RLP/TC/P/113/26	Call-Off Supply Agreement for Dimethyl Sulfoxide (DMS) for RLP	QAR 318,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 5th July 2026
<b>Brief Scope:</b> Bidders are invited to submit proposals for the supply of Dimethyl Sulfoxide (DMS) as per specifications to RLP plant in Ras Laffan Industrial Area, under a call-off purchase order agreement, for a duration from 1st December 2026 to 31st July 2028.				

Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

**A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email.**

For each tender pay a **non-refundable document fee of QR 1,000/-** Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) – Account Number 001-242007-003 with **HSBC Bank** and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative **via email to [tadvertising@qchem.com.qa](mailto:tadvertising@qchem.com.qa)** In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, **official email address**, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**

**B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email**

Tender documents Issuance from 31st May 2026 to 4th June 2026, 8am-12noon.

**C. Proposal details**

Proposals should be valid for 240 days from the tender closing date.

**D. Submission of Proposals**

Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.

National Cyber Security Agency calls for vigilance in safeguarding personal information online

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar has renewed its call for stronger personal data protection practices, emphasising that safeguarding privacy is a shared responsibility in an increasingly digital world.

In a recent awareness message, the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) urged individuals to exercise greater caution when sharing information online, stressing that every digital interaction carries responsibility and can affect personal privacy and security.

The agency highlighted that protecting personal data is not merely an option but a daily obligation that extends across all aspects of digital life. It noted that increased awareness of data protection practices can help individuals reduce cyber risks, strengthen online security, and prevent unauthorised access to sensitive information.



NCSA encouraged the public to remain vigilant when using social media platforms, sharing photos and personal details, or interacting with digital services. The agency stressed that mindful online behavior plays a

Increased awareness of data protection practices can help individuals reduce cyber risks, strengthen online security, and prevent unauthorised access to sensitive information.

key role in safeguarding personal information and maintaining privacy.

The reminder forms part of the agency's ongoing efforts to promote cybersecurity awareness and foster a culture of responsible digital engagement across society. Through regular public awareness campaigns, NCSA seeks to equip individuals with the knowledge needed to navigate the digital environment safely and securely. "Be more aware to stay more secure," the agency said, underscoring the importance of informed digital practices in protecting personal data and privacy.

Uzbekistan eyes stronger cultural, heritage ties with Qatar: Ambassador

FROM PAGE 1

He described the publication as a unique joint effort between researchers in Doha and Uzbekistan.

The ambassador also highlighted expanding cultural cooperation between the two countries, pointing to exhibitions, cultural weeks, and artistic exchanges that have strengthened bilateral ties.

He credited the momentum to the

leadership and patronage of Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in Qatar and Saida Mirziyoyeva in Uzbekistan, saying their efforts had created strong chemistry for collaboration across culture and the arts. Uzbekistan held a cultural week in Qatar in 2024, while Qatar organised a cultural week in Uzbekistan later the same year.

Looking ahead, Khodjaev

encouraged residents in Qatar to visit Uzbekistan, citing visa-free travel arrangements and the resumption of direct flights between Doha and Tashkent operated by Qatar Airways from June 17. "It is about culture, what makes people close to each other," he said, describing Uzbekistan as a destination rich in museums, architecture, hospitality, cuisine, and ancient cities.

# CONDOLENCES

## Qatar Steel

extends its heartfelt condolences to the family of

His Excellency

**Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

Former Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Energy and Industry

May Allah rest the departed soul in peace and  
give grace and fortitude to the bereaved family.



## Cyprus President commends Qatar's role in supporting de-escalation, promoting dialogue

**NICOSIA:** President of the Republic of Cyprus, H E Dr. Nikos Christodoulides praised the State of Qatar's important and pivotal role, under the leadership of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, in supporting efforts to promote calm and de-escalation, in addition to strengthening dialogue in the region.

His Excellency also renewed Cyprus' condemnation of the attacks that targeted the State of Qatar as well as other Gulf and Arab states, stressing that such actions are unlawful and that the rules of international law must be respected.

This came during His Excellency's honourable attendance of a luncheon hosted by Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Republic of Cyprus, H E

*The President of the Republic of Cyprus affirmed that his country is continuing to exert the necessary efforts to contribute to de-escalation and promote stability in the region.*

Yousef Sultan Laram, in the presence of a lineup of Cypriot officials and Their Excellencies Ambassadors and heads of Arab diplomatic missions accredited in Cyprus.

The President of the Republic of Cyprus affirmed that his country is continuing to exert the necessary efforts to contribute to

de-escalation and promote stability in the region.

Regional developments have a direct impact on Cyprus due to its geographic location and its close ties to the Middle East, he noted.

He expressed hope that the current crisis would be overcome as soon as possible in a manner that advances security, stability, and cooperation among the peoples of the region.

He emphasised the importance of continuing cooperation between Qatar and Cyprus, as well as strengthening communication among relevant authorities and increasing high-level bilateral visits.

Enhancing relations among the European Union (EU) and the countries of the Middle East and



President of the Republic of Cyprus H E Dr. Nikos Christodoulides, Qatar Ambassador to Cyprus H E Yousef Sultan Laram with the Cypriot officials and Their Excellencies Ambassadors and heads of Arab diplomatic missions accredited in Cyprus.

the Arab world is one of the main priorities of Cyprus's presidency of the Council of the European Union, President Christodoulides said.

In turn, the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Cyprus

expressed his gratitude and appreciation to HE the President of the Republic of Cyprus for his country's supportive stances and solidarity with the State of Qatar regarding the attacks that targeted its territory.

Ambassador Laram also commended the efforts of the President in strengthening ties between the State of Qatar, Gulf Cooperation Council states, and Arab states on the one hand, and the EU on the other. — QNA

## QISH Group marks 15 years of excellence

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** QISH Group has marked 15 years of excellence with grand anniversary celebration and key accreditation milestone from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

"As we celebrate the 15th anniversary of QISH Group, we are not only celebrating the passing of years, but also fifteen years of dedication, excellence, commitment, and continuous achievements," said the Group in a statement.

Fifteen years devoted to empowering people with disabilities and providing them with high-quality educational and rehabilitation services that support their growth, independence, and inclusion within society.

Throughout this journey, QISH Group has remained committed to excellence, innovation, and quality in every service provided. By the grace of God and through the dedication of our exceptional team, we have achieved many milestones that we proudly cele-



Officials during the celebrations.

brate today.

"We are especially proud to congratulate QISH Centre for Persons with Disabilities on receiving an "Excellent" evaluation from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in recognition of its successful implementation of quality standards and educational excellence."

The Group added: "We are also honoured that the centre has obtained ISO Certifications, reflecting our ongoing commitment to international standards of quality, institutional development, and pro-

essional excellence."

"On this special occasion, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all our partners, supporters, parents, educators, and staff members whose trust and dedication have contributed greatly to these achievements."

It said: "We look forward to continuing this successful journey together and to achieving even greater accomplishments in the years ahead. Thank you once again for your presence and support. We wish you a wonderful and memorable evening."

## Al Khor and Al Thakhira Municipality hosts Eid Al-Adha event

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** The Ministry of Municipality, represented by Al Khor and Al Thakhira Municipality, organised a special Eid Al-Adha celebration at the City Center Market in collaboration with Seashore Company and the Youth Committee of Al Khor Sports Club.

The event was held as part of the municipality's ongoing efforts to strengthen its community engagement and awareness role while fostering a spirit of joy and togetherness during the blessed Eid Al-Adha holiday.

The celebration featured a range of recreational and educational activities designed to engage visitors of all ages. Through interactive programmes and awareness initiatives, the event highlighted the importance of sustainability and environmental conservation, encouraging community members to adopt environmentally responsible practices in their daily lives.

Organisers emphasised that the initiative reflects the municipality's commitment to supporting national efforts aimed at promoting environmental awareness and sustainable development. By combining entertainment with educational messages, the event sought to create an enjoyable experience for families while reinforcing the values of environmental stewardship.

The participation of Seashore Company and the Youth Committee of Al Khor Sports Club contributed to the success of the event, providing a variety of activities and programmes that

attracted residents and visitors throughout the Eid celebrations.

The municipality noted that such community events play an important role in strengthening social bonds, enhancing public awareness, and encouraging active participation in initiatives that benefit society and the environment.

Visitors enjoyed a festive atmosphere filled with family-friendly activities, reflecting the spirit of Eid and providing opportunities for community members to come together and celebrate the occasion. The event also served as a platform to deliver educational messages in an engaging and accessible manner, particularly on issues related to sustainability and the protection of natural resources.



Children participating in a sustainability initiative activity during the celebrations.

## Al Jazeera documentary to premiere Ali Bin Towar's cycling journey across Morocco as part of Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture legacy

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Al Jazeera Documentary will premiere a new documentary following Qatari adventurer, presenter, and cyclist Ali bin Towar Al Kuwari on an extraordinary cycling journey across Morocco, created in partnership with the Years of Culture initiative as part of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture. The documentary will premiere on Al Jazeera Documentary on May 31, 2026 at 8pm

Al Jazeera Documentary

Channel Managing Director Ahmed Mahfouz said: "At Al Jazeera Documentary, we believe storytelling has the power to build understanding between cultures and communities. Our partnership with the Years of Culture initiative on this documentary reflects a shared commitment to authentic human stories that celebrate dialogue, exploration, and cultural exchange across the Arab world and beyond."

The documentary captures a deeply personal and immersive exploration of

Morocco's layered cultural identity, as Ali bin Towar travels through historic cities, mountain landscapes, coastal communities, and centuries-old medinas by bicycle. Along the route, the film highlights encounters with local historians, artisans, cultural figures, academics, and residents, offering viewers an intimate portrait of Morocco through human connection and shared experience.

Ali bin Towar Al Kuwari said: "This journey was about discovering Morocco through the people we met along the way. Travelling by bicycle changes your relationship with a place. You move slowly, you listen more, and you become part of the environment around you. What we found was an incredible generosity of spirit, deep cultural pride, and so many human connections that reminded us how close our societies truly are."

From Tangier and Chefchaouen to Fez, Rabat, and Marrakesh, the documentary explores the diversity that defines Morocco, a country shaped by Amazigh, Arab, Andalusian, African,

Mediterranean, and Islamic influences, while preserving traditions passed down through generations. Through architecture, music, craftsmanship, food, storytelling, and everyday life, the journey reveals how Morocco has cultivated a distinctive cultural identity rooted in openness, heritage, and continuity.

Developed in partnership with the Years of Culture initiative, the documentary reflects the spirit of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture by celebrating the longstanding cultural connections, shared heritage, and people-to-people exchanges that continue to strengthen ties between the two countries.

Known for his documentaries exploring civilisations, traditions, and cultural narratives around the world, Ali bin Towar uses cycling as a way to move beyond conventional travel formats and engage with people and places at a human pace, fostering deeper cultural exchange and reflection throughout the journey.

The documentary will premiere on Al Jazeera Documentary on May 31, 2026 at 8pm.

## Blue Moon set to illuminate Qatar's sky today, QCH says



**DOHA:** Qatar's skies are set to be illuminated by the "Blue Moon" phenomenon today (Sunday, May 31), with the Dhu Al-Hijjah lunar Moon becoming full at 11:45 a.m. Doha local time, the Qatar Calendar House (QCH) announced on Saturday.

Bashir Marzouq, an astronomy expert at QCH, highlighted that folks in Qatar will be able to behold this Blue Moon with the naked eye after moonrise on Sunday evening until just before sunrise on Monday.

Moonrise over the sky of Qatar will occur at 6:39pm on Sunday evening, while sunrise on the following day will be at 4:44am Doha local time, Marzouq said.

He added that this Blue Moon is an almost biannual and triennial phenomenon. The

last one was recorded in August 2023, and it is anticipated to occur once again in December 2028.

The Qatari astronomer noted that the occurrence of this phenomenon requires two conditions: first, that the Moon is in the full Moon phase, and second, that this full Moon is the second full Moon within a single calendar month.

Marzouq pointed out that first full Moon lit up Qatar's skies on Friday, May 1, while the Moon will reach the full Moon phase again on Sunday evening, making it the second full Moon of the same month.

He further recalled that though the designation is "Blue Moon", it will not appear blue in color but in its usual color, as is the case with all full Moon events. — QNA



Ali Bin Towar poses with fellow cyclists in Morocco.

## 'Qatar-led efforts to combat tobacco are based on an integrated system'

**DOHA:** Specialist in the Wellness Department at the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Dr. Anas Adel Qalifa, has said that Qatar-led efforts to combat tobacco in its various forms, have come through an integrated system that factors in legislation, prevention, awareness, and the provision of smoking-cessation services.

The State of Qatar has also established clear regulations governing the sale and distribution of tobacco products, Qalifa noted, adding that these measures include prohibiting the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products and banning their sale to indi-

viduals under the age of 18.

These regulations, Qalifa added, also include preventing their sale in the vicinity of schools and educational and training institutions. In addition, smoking has been prohibited in enclosed public places, with violators subject to legal sanctions.

Qalifa further elucidated that, compared with the experiences of other countries in the region, Qatar's anti-tobacco efforts can be viewed as an advanced and comprehensive model.

He indicated that the nation's strategy does not rely solely on public awareness campaigns; rather, it adopts a more

universalistic approach, combining regulatory policies, effective oversight, the protection of younger age groups, and direct treatment services for those seeking to quit smoking.

Through healing services and smoking-cessation clinics, Qalifa stressed that PHCC projects itself as a leading national platform that is closer to the community, translating these efforts into preventive and practical therapy.

These services, he underlined, include medical consultation, pharmacological treatment, and persistent follow-up under the supervision of trained and accredited physicians, thereby supporting

individuals throughout their smoking-cessation journey and contributing to the building of a healthier society.

Dr. Qalifa highlighted that modern smoking-cessation protocols are based on the principle that nicotine dependence is a treatable medical condition rather than merely a bad habit.

He noted that treatment extends beyond medication or general advice, beginning with a comprehensive assessment and incorporating behavioural counselling, pharmacological treatment when necessary, and regular follow-up.

According to sophisticated public health personnel, marketing strategies that emphasise

appealing flavors, colorful packaging, sleek designs, and social media promotion are often aimed at ensnaring teenagers and young adults, leading many to begin using nicotine products at an early age.

The world marks No Tobacco Day annually on May 31, an international observance launched by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to enhance awareness of the health, social, and economic menaces of tobacco and to encourage stronger policies aimed at curbing its spread among all members of society.

For the 2026 campaign, WHO adopted the theme "Unmasking the Appeal

- Countering Nicotine and Tobacco Addiction," reflecting growing global concern over modern marketing techniques that target younger age groups.

The campaign intends to expose the blandishments employed by the tobacco industry to attract new users, particularly adolescents and young adults.

The theme also challenges the notion that newer products, such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, are harmless alternatives. Critics argue that many of these marketing claims amount to mere window-dressing, obscuring the real risks associated with nicotine addiction. — QNA

# Qatar pilgrims complete their return home today from Hajj

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The return of Qatar's pilgrims from the Holy Lands will complete today, marking the successful conclusion of 2026 Hajj season. The final groups of pilgrims will arrive in Doha following a spiritually fulfilling pilgrimage, supported throughout their journey by the Qatar Hajj Mission and its specialised units, which maintained comprehensive oversight from departure to return.

The first groups of pilgrims began arriving in Qatar on Friday evening with arrivals continuing yesterday and concluding today through a series of flights operated by Qatar Airways and Saudia. The smooth repatriation process reflected a high level of coordination and preparedness, ensuring the



safety, comfort and well-being of Qatari pilgrims as they travelled from the holy sites back to the country.

Ibrahim Mohammed Al Namaa (pictured), representative of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs within the Qatar Hajj Mission, said pilgrims completed their religious obligations with ease and peace of

mind. He noted that pilgrims successfully performed the rituals of the Days of Tashreeq in Mina and carried out the stoning of the Jamarat according to Islamic tradition, whether they departed Mina on the 12th or Dhul Hijjah or remained until the 13th.

Al Namaa stressed that the return journey represented a continuation of the integrated care system provided by the mission throughout the pilgrimage.

The Communication and Support Unit maintained close contact with Qatari campaign organisers and coordinators in Mina, ensuring that pilgrims adhered to designated schedules and routes during the stoning rituals. Field teams accompanied pilgrims between Mina camps and their accommodation in Makkah while carrying

*Qatar Hajj Mission said pilgrims completed their religious obligations with ease and peace of mind. The smooth repatriation process reflected a high level of coordination and preparedness, ensuring the safety, comfort and well-being of Qatari pilgrims as they travelled from the holy sites back to the country.*

Qatar Pilgrims Affairs Office flags to facilitate guidance and communication, particularly during the most crowded stages of the pilgrimage.

Healthcare services also played a significant role in supporting pilgrims. The Medical Unit introduced innovative emergency response measures this season, including rapid-response ambulance scooters capable of reaching crowded areas inaccessible to traditional ambulances. Fixed emergency stations were deployed along the Jamarat route,

while mobile medical teams accompanied pilgrims throughout their movements between camps and ritual sites.

These measures strengthened the overall safety framework and provided additional support for elderly pilgrims and women. The initiative highlighted the evolution of healthcare services during Hajj, with greater emphasis on innovation, mobility and rapid intervention.

Following the completion of rituals, the Coordination, Follow-up and Airport Unit facilitated

pilgrims' departure from Makkah after performing the Farewell Tawaf. The unit coordinated directly with airlines and relevant authorities to oversee transfers to King Abdulaziz International Airport and Jeddah Hajj Terminal, ensuring smooth travel procedures and organised departures.

The Qatar Hajj Mission also praised the cooperation of Saudi authorities, noting their continued efforts to enhance the Hajj system and improve services for pilgrims. The mission highlighted the extensive facilities and organisational measures implemented across Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah, as well as the efficient operation of the Mashaer Train and airport services, all of which contributed to a safer and more seamless pilgrimage experience.

## Consumers in Qatar balance e-commerce convenience with traditional Eid shopping

FROM PAGE 1

Retailers have responded by strengthening both online and in-store offerings. Many businesses have launched Eid promotions across digital channels while simultaneously expanding mall-based experiences, entertainment activities, and seasonal events to attract shoppers.

According to industry observers, the strongest online demand this Eid has been for grocery deliveries, restaurant orders, electronics, flowers, gifts, and household products. Meanwhile, physical stores continue to lead in categories such as fashion, luxury goods, jewellery, cosmetics, and family shopping experiences.

Experts note that the trend reflects the growing integration of digital commerce into everyday life rather than a complete shift away from traditional retail.

*According to industry observers, the strongest online demand this Eid has been for grocery deliveries, restaurant orders, electronics, flowers, gifts, and household products.*

"E-commerce is becoming an important complement to physical retail rather than a replacement," Hassan said. "Consumers want convenience for some purchases and the in-person experience for others."

With strong consumer spending expected throughout the Eid holiday period, analysts believe Qatar's retail sector will continue benefiting from both channels, with shopping malls and e-commerce platforms increasingly working together to meet changing customer expectations.

## Municipality Ministry inspects over 14,500 sacrificial animals by third day of Eid

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Municipality announced that a total of 14,584 sacrificial animals had undergone veterinary inspection at slaughterhouses across Qatar by 6pm on Friday, the third day of Eid Al-Adha.

The inspections were conducted through 12 slaughterhouses operating in various regions of the country as part of the ministry's efforts to ensure the safety and suitability of meat for human consumption during the Eid holiday.

The ministry said the veterinary examination and health monitoring procedures form a key component of its comprehensive plan to safeguard public health and provide integrated veterinary services in accordance with the highest health and safety standards. These measures are aimed at ensuring that meat supplied to consumers is safe while maintaining a healthy and secure environment for the public throughout the festive season.

According to official statistics, all inspection and



Municipality Ministry representative inspecting the sacrificial animal at slaughterhouse during Eid holiday.

examination procedures were carried out under the supervision of a specialised team of veterinarians. The team monitored sacrificial animals and verified their health status at approved slaughterhouses nationwide, helping to meet the high demand for slaughtering services during Eid Al-Adha.

The ministry noted that veterinary professionals conducted

both pre- and post-slaughter inspections to ensure compliance with health regulations and to identify any conditions that could affect meat quality or public safety. As Eid slaughtering operations concluded, the Ministry of Municipality highlighted the success of its operational and regulatory plan implemented across the country's slaughterhouses. The plan enabled the

efficient delivery of slaughtering and veterinary inspection services while ensuring that meat distributed to consumers met stringent health and safety requirements.

The ministry emphasised that the coordinated efforts of veterinary and technical teams contributed to the smooth management of slaughterhouse operations despite the increased number of animals processed during the holiday period.

It also expressed appreciation for the public's cooperation and commitment to using approved slaughterhouses for Eid sacrifices, noting that adherence to regulated slaughtering procedures plays an important role in enhancing food safety standards, protecting public health, and ensuring proper veterinary oversight.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining high standards of animal health monitoring and food safety services throughout the year, particularly during peak seasons that witness increased demand for veterinary and slaughterhouse services.

## Eid Al-Adha: A time to strengthen family bonds and shape future generations

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As families across Qatar celebrate Eid Al-Adha, educators and family specialists are highlighting the occasion as far more than a festive holiday.

Beyond the gatherings, gifts and celebrations, Eid offers a valuable opportunity to strengthen family ties, instill positive values in children and reinforce the moral foundations that bind communities together.

Family and educational consultant Noura Al-Mannai says Eid Al-Adha carries profound spiritual and social significance for Muslims. With two major Eids celebrated each year, she notes that Eid Al-Adha stands out because of its deep connection to Islamic teachings and values.

"The Eid season brings people closer to their faith and allows them to renew their commitment to Allah," Al-Mannai explained in remarks to Qatar TV. "The first days of Dhul Hijjah are filled with tranquility, reflection and spiritual

devotion, giving people a unique opportunity to reconnect with themselves and their faith." She emphasised that one of Islam's greatest messages is the promotion of good character and ethical conduct. According to Al-Mannai, these values should be demonstrated through actions, particularly during religious occasions when families spend more time together.

"Children do not learn values primarily from books or magazines," she said. "They learn from what they see. Parents, relatives and caregivers are role models whose behaviour leaves a lasting impression on young minds." Al-Mannai stressed that parents should seize the Eid holidays to model generosity, respect, kindness and responsibility, as children often imitate the attitudes and actions of the adults around them.

Writer Maryam Al-Mohammadi echoed this view, describing Eid as an important educational opportunity that extends beyond celebration and entertainment. She said families should



approach such occasions with awareness and purpose, using them to nurture positive behaviour and emotional intelligence in children.

"Eid is not simply about gatherings and festivities," Al-Mohammadi said. "It is an opportunity to reinforce positive values such as gratitude, forgiveness, generosity and compassion." She highlighted the importance of family visits during Eid, noting that gatherings with grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins help children understand the value of kinship and belonging. Through exchanging greetings, gifts and Eidiyah, children become more connected to their family heritage and cultural traditions.

Al-Mohammadi also underscored the importance of teaching children the spirit of giving. She suggested encouraging youngsters to allocate a portion of their Eidiyah to charitable causes, helping the sick, supporting those in need or purchasing gifts for others.

"These simple acts teach children empathy and social responsibility," she said. "When a child experiences the joy of giving, feelings of affection, kindness and community become deeply rooted within them."

## Entertainment venues, recreation centres enjoy Eid boon

FROM PAGE 1

The Qatar Tourism Authority's ongoing efforts to position the country as a premier leisure destination appear to be bearing fruit, with the Eid holiday serving as a powerful showcase of the nation's diversified entertainment offering. Industry observers noted that the breadth and quality of available attractions have improved markedly in recent years, giving residents far less reason to travel abroad during public holidays.

For many families, the holiday has provided a rare chance to explore venues they had long intended to visit. "We come out every Eid and still find new places to enjoy," said Mohammad Abdullah, a Doha resident. "Qatar keeps adding more things to do, which makes it easy to stay and celebrate here." The boom in activity highlights how entertainment and recreation centres have become central to holiday celebrations in Qatar, offering residents and visitors opportunities to unwind, socialise and celebrate the spirit of Eid in a family-friendly environment.

## Eid family festival draws crowds to 974 Beach

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Municipality, in collaboration with Qatar Tourism, organised the "Eid Family Festival" at 974 Beach, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere that attracted large numbers of families and visitors throughout the Eid holiday.

The event featured a wide range of entertainment and

interactive activities designed to provide enjoyable experiences for people of all ages. One of the festival's main attractions was the appearance of the globally popular Angry Birds characters, which delighted children and offered families memorable opportunities for engagement and entertainment.

Visitors also enjoyed a variety of live performances, recreational programmes,

competitions, and games that added to the celebratory spirit of the occasion. The activities were carefully designed to create an atmosphere of joy and excitement, making the festival a popular destination for families seeking quality leisure experiences during Eid.

The initiative reflects the Ministry of Municipality's commitment to supporting community-oriented events that

*Visitors also enjoyed a variety of live performances, recreational programmes, competitions, and games that added to the celebratory spirit of the occasion.*

enhance public spaces and promote social interaction, while also contributing to the diverse range of entertainment offerings available across the country during national and religious celebrations.

The festival at 974 Beach formed part of a broader calendar of Eid activities organised

in partnership with various national entities to provide residents and visitors with engaging recreational opportunities. The event highlighted the importance of family-friendly destinations and community gatherings in strengthening social bonds and enriching the festive experience.

## Over 3 million tonnes of recycled materials drive circular economy

FROM PAGE 1

The expansion reflects growing investment in waste recycling and resource recovery infrastructure, supporting the country's efforts to divert waste from landfills and convert it into economically valuable products.

These facilities process a variety of waste streams, including construction and demolition waste, plastics, metals, paper, tyres and other

recyclable materials, helping reduce reliance on landfills while creating new economic opportunities from recovered resources.

The construction sector recorded one of the most significant achievements of the year, with the production of more than 3 million tonnes of recycled construction materials by October 2025. The recycled materials are increasingly being used in infrastructure and development projects,

supporting sustainable construction practices and reducing demand for virgin raw materials.

Further strengthening the recycling sector, the ministry reported the treatment of around 8,000 used tyres and the continued provision of financial support for recycling initiatives. These efforts form part of a broader strategy aimed at expanding resource recovery and enhancing environmental protection.

Digital transformation also played a role in improving waste management services. During 2025, approximately 27,000 permits for waste disposal were issued electronically, streamlining procedures and improving operational efficiency.

The report highlighted the importance of waste transfer stations in supporting the sector's operations. During the year, transfer stations received 716,772 tonnes of waste, while

700,360 tonnes were transported onward for treatment, recycling and recovery.

Beyond infrastructure investments, the ministry continued to promote environmental awareness through more than 40 sustainability initiatives, conferences and awareness programmes involving government entities, schools and private-sector partners.

The achievements outlined in the report underscore

Qatar's commitment to building a circular economy in which waste is transformed into a valuable resource. Through expanding recycling capacity, supporting 51 recycling factories, recovering recyclable materials and producing more than 3 million tonnes of recycled construction products, the country is making tangible progress toward its sustainability objectives and the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

# Pentagon chief says US seeks 'stable equilibrium' with China in Asia

**SINGAPORE:** Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth struck a measured tone towards China at a major defence forum yesterday, noting "rightful alarm" over Beijing's military build-up but saying Washington sought a "stable equilibrium" in Asia.

Hegseth's headline speech at Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue, which brings together top defence officials and experts from about 45 countries, contrasted with his strongly confrontational remarks on China at last year's gathering.

It came as Donald Trump struggles to resolve the Middle East war — which has caused oil prices to soar, hurting major Asian economies — and after the US president met his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

"When we look across the



US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth speaks at the 23rd Shangri-La Dialogue summit in Singapore yesterday. (AFP)

region today, there is rightful alarm regarding China's historic military build-up and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond,"

Hegseth said. Washington does not seek "needless confrontation" but rather "a genuinely stable equilibrium (in Asia) that works for Americans as well as

*The Pentagon chief said the United States sought "respectful" and "good-faith" engagement with Beijing.*

our allies", he said. That means "a favourable but durable balance of power in which no state, including China, can impose its hegemony and hold the security or prosperity of our nation and our allies in question", according to Hegseth.

Unlike Beijing, which has sent a panel of military experts and scholars instead of Defence Minister Dong Jun for the second year running, Hegseth is leading a bumper US delegation to the event that provides chances for both open debate and closed-door diplomacy.

The Pentagon chief said the United States sought "respectful" and "good-faith" engagement with Beijing, adding: "I wish my counterpart was here at this conference, but I look forward to other options when we can cross paths." Major General Meng Xiangqing, the head of the Chinese delegation, said following the speech that "stable US-China relations are not only good for both peoples, but also good for regional stability and global peace".

There had been "no change" in Washington's stance towards Taiwan, but "any decision about future Taiwan arms sales... will rest with" Trump, Hegseth said.

Chinese delegate Da Wei, director of the Center for International Security and Strategy at Beijing's Tsinghua University,

told AFP this year's address was "much more moderate".

However, he said Hegseth's depiction of a hegemonic China was "ironic... given what the US is doing in Iran and has done in Venezuela."

US delegate Tammy Duckworth, a Democratic senator and Trump critic, said Hegseth's remarks were overly conciliatory towards China.

"I worry that this administration is being distracted into wars that they've started in other parts of the world at the expense of our commitment here in the Indo-Pacific," she told reporters.

Instead of Dong, China has sent experts and scholars from its army's academic institutions, led by Meng of the National Defense University. — **AFP**

## Hajj season free of epidemic outbreaks: Saudi Arabia

**MAKKAH:** The Hajj season for the year 1447 AH is thoroughly devoid of any epidemic outbreaks or threats that affect public health, the Saudi Ministry of Health confirmed in a statement yesterday.

The statement added that the general health conditions of pilgrims have been stable and assured throughout the whole season, despite the consecutive epidemics that engulfed the world, along with global health developments that precipitated leveraging the highest levels of surveillance and alertness.

This year's pilgrimage season marked global epidemic developments, including Ebola in several nations, as well as the monitoring of cases linked to hantavirus at the global level, the statement reads.

It further noted that this

move has reinforced the importance of early readiness, persistent epidemiological surveillance, coordination with national and international health authorities, and strengthening preparedness to respond to any potential public health risks.

The Ministry reemphasised that no suspected or confirmed epidemics have been reported, including both Ebola and hantavirus among pilgrims during this season.

The health system has been operating 24/7 through leveraging preventive treatment, first aid, and awareness services, alongside epidemiological investigations, rapid response measures, and an ongoing whole-of-government approach employed during Hajj operations. — **QNA**

## Truck accident kills 20 in Afghanistan

**JALALABAD:** A truck overturned in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, killing 20 people on board including 12 children, a provincial official told AFP, updating earlier figures.

The vehicle was carrying Afghan families returning from Pakistan, where they had been living, according to Abdul Malik NiAZAI, spokesperson for the governor of Laghman province.

"Twenty people (have died) — five women, three men and 12 children," the spokesperson said, revising an earlier toll of 18 dead. The accident left 33 people injured.

The accident happened on the road between Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan and capital Kabul. — **AFP**

## China's top diplomat says Canada ties 'fully restored'

**BEIJING:** China's top diplomat said during a trip to Ottawa that high-level political and security talks with Canada would resume, Beijing's foreign ministry said yesterday, in a further sign of improving ties.

The relationship has warmed in recent months even as Ottawa's ties with traditional ally Washington have soured following Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in January.

Wang Yi's short visit to Canada, which began on Thursday, was the first by a Chinese foreign minister in a decade. "Bilateral relations have set sail anew, exchanges and cooperation across all fields have been fully restored and the major economic and trade concerns of both sides have been properly addressed," Wang told his Canadian counterpart Anita Anand, according to the Chinese foreign ministry. "The two sides agreed... to resume consultations on political and security issues at the foreign ministry level, as well as high-level dialogue on national security and the rule of law," the statement said. Beijing lowered some duties on Canadian goods this year, while Ottawa agreed to import tens of thousands of Chinese electric vehicles under preferential tariffs.

According to China's foreign ministry, Anand told Wang that Canada was "looking forward to increasing exports to China by 50 percent before 2030". — **AFP**

## Rescuers free four more men trapped in semi-submerged Laos cave

**VIENTIANE:** Four more men trapped in a semi-submerged Laos cave for 10 days were freed yesterday, rescuers said, after one was successfully brought to the surface a day earlier, but two remained missing.

Lee Kian Lie, a Malaysian rescue diver, told AFP via Messenger that the four were freed after water was pumped out of the cavern.

A video he took from the scene showed teams under a

makeshift tent attending to four people lying on stretchers and covered with thermal blankets.

"Important they already out," Lee said. He declined to speculate on the condition of the two who remained unaccounted for.

The Thailand Rescue Diver Facebook page said in a post that "rescue officials were able to bring out four more people trapped" at about 3:10 pm (0810 GMT) yesterday.

"A total of five people have

now been rescued, while two remain missing," it said.

Seven men had been trapped in the cavern in a remote mountainous area of central Xaysomboun province since May 20, when flash floods stranded them as they searched for gold, early state media reports said.

They were trapped after heavy rains triggered flash flooding that blocked the exit of the cavern.

Five of the men were

located alive on Wednesday, huddling in a narrow shaft around 300 metres (984 feet) from the cave mouth.

Rescuers guided a bedraggled and muddy man over unsteady ground to safety on Friday.

Rescue efforts had focused on pumping out the monsoon flood waters that trapped the men. Rescuers had expressed optimism earlier yesterday about their chances of freeing the four. — **AFP**

## AUKUS nations to develop payloads for uncrewed undersea vehicles

**SINGAPORE:** The United States, Australia and Britain are developing high-tech payloads for uncrewed undersea vehicles under their trilateral security partnership, Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth announced yesterday.

Hegseth met his Australian and British counterparts on the sidelines of the Shangri-La

Dialogue in Singapore, where they reviewed progress on the AUKUS pact, aimed at bolstering their presence in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

"Today, we're pleased to announce the first AUKUS Pillar 2 signature project, focused on fielding advanced uncrewed undersea vehicles, or UUVs," Hegseth told reporters at a

briefing at the US embassy in Singapore.

"This signature project will deliver a suite of highly adaptable multi-mission UUV payloads designed to support undersea operations and maintain our collective advantage in the maritime domain," he said.

British Defence Secretary

John Healey said that the planned technology, a "range of cutting edge sensors and weapons systems" for undersea drones, "will rapidly give our forces the very most advanced battlefield technologies". The systems will be deployed on uncrewed underwater vessels, Healey added. — **AFP**

## Lebanon facing dangerous Israeli escalation: PM

**BEIRUT:** Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam denounced yesterday what he called a dangerous Israeli escalation in the south, urging an immediate ceasefire and insisting that a "scorched-earth policy" would not ensure Israel's security.

In a televised address, Salam also defended his government's direct negotiations with Israel, saying that the talks were the "least costly path" for Lebanon. "In light of the dangerous and unprecedented Israeli escalation over the past few days, it is necessary to step up political and diplomatic efforts to achieve a swift and real ceasefire," Salam said.

He accused Israel of "pursuing a scorched-earth policy and collective punishment" by "destroying towns and villages, and forcing their inhabitants into exile". This will bring



Smoke rises after an Israeli air strike on Lebanese village of Kfar Tibnit yesterday. (AFP)

"neither security nor stability" to Israel, he said.

Salam's broadcast came after Israel's military issued new evacuation warnings for residents of more south Lebanon villages, and a day after military delegations from

both countries held landmark security talks in Washington.

Those talks took place ahead of US-brokered negotiations early next week, the fourth round since the latest Israel-Hezbollah conflict erupted in March. — **AFP**

## Trump 'in excellent health' but should lose weight: Physician

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump's doctor said he was in "excellent health" but advised him to lose weight, the White House said on Friday, after the US president's annual medical check-up weeks before his 80th birthday. "President Trump remains in excellent health, demonstrating strong cardiac, pulmonary, neurological, and overall physical function," said Trump's doctor, US Navy Captain Sean Barbabella, in a memo published by the White House.

The memo provides an overview of Trump's physical examination and diagnostic testing, in which Barbabella concludes that the leader is "fully fit to carry out all duties of the Commander-in-Chief and Head of State." "Preventative counseling was provided, including guidance on diet, recommendation to take a low-dose aspirin, increased physical activity, and continued weight loss," it said.

According to the memo, Trump — who stands at six foot three inches tall — weighs 108 kilograms, 6.4 kilograms higher than his last full annual medical in April last year. Trump's cardiac age is estimated to be "approximately 14 years younger than his chronological age." Trump scored "30 out of 30" in the cognitive assessment. — **AFP**

## WHO chief visits epicentre of Ebola outbreak

**BUNIA:** UN health chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called yesterday for more international help to combat the spread of the deadly Ebola virus in Democratic Republic of Congo as he arrived in the eastern province worst-hit by a severe outbreak.

The World Health Organization director general told reporters in Bunia, capital of Ituri province, that the international community was helping the DRC government cope with the outbreak. But he added that "community ownership" was also needed — including overcoming "mistrust" and false information — and an increase in financial support from other countries.

"We are here to discuss with the community, to see how the response is running and if there are challenges to help," he said.

"You're not alone in this. We're here, we're with you, and we will see this through together," he told people in Ituri at a press conference later.

The highly contagious haemorrhagic fever is already present in three eastern DRC



WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus arrives in Bunia, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, yesterday. (AFP)

provinces and in neighbouring Uganda.

There have been at least 1,077 suspected cases of Ebola in the DRC since the outbreak was declared on May 15, including 246 deaths, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday. There have been nine confirmed infections in Uganda, including one death.

The true reach of the outbreak in the DRC, which is thought to have been

circulating before it was detected, is likely to be much wider, the WHO has warned.

The vast impoverished central African country — whose mineral-rich east has been plagued by three decades of conflict — has limited capacity to conduct laboratory tests to confirm cases.

Uganda closed its border with the DRC this week and ordered a 21-day quarantine for anyone arriving from that country. — **AFP**

## Malta PM fights for re-election in shadow of Mideast crisis

**VALLETTA:** Voters in Malta cast their ballots yesterday in a general election likely to secure a record-setting fourth term for the Labour government, despite concerns about over-construction and corruption in the tiny Mediterranean nation.

Opinion polls point to a win for Prime Minister Robert Abela, 48, who is campaigning on Labour's economic record and a promise to shield import-heavy Malta from geopolitical crises.

His main rival is Nationalist Party (PN) candidate Alex Borg, a 30-year-old lawyer and former "Mr World Malta" beauty pageant winner, who would be the country's youngest leader.

At festive final rallies on Thursday, Abela told flaring supporters that he would be "a captain as strong as steel", while Borg slammed a country "in chaos", from a beleaguered health service to blackouts in sweltering summers.

Located off the coast of Sicily, Malta is the smallest and most densely populated country in the European Union, with around 550,000 people living in 316 square kilometres.

The island has a thriving economy based largely on tourism, online gaming and financial services, and many voters say its economic performance trumps all other concerns. Turnout yesterday mid-afternoon stood at 43.5 percent, higher than in the 2022 elections.

Malta has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU.

The population has grown nearly 30 percent over a decade, driven largely by foreigners; That, in turn, has fuelled a construction boom, filling the skyline with cranes, creating traffic bottlenecks and putting a strain on key services.

Heritage groups have denounced environmental degradation and risks to UNESCO world heritage sites. — **AFP**