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# Qatar and Bosnia vow to boost ties

Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani held official talks with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denis Zvizdic.

The two sides discussed bilateral relations and signed a number of MoUs in various fields.

QNA

DOHA: Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani held a session of official talks with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denis Zvizdic, at the Emir Diwan yesterday.

During the talks session, the two sides discussed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries, ways of developing and enhancing them in various fields and reviewed regional and international developments of common concern, especially the situation in the region.

The Prime Minister and Interior Minister and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding on health field, drug production and employment of health workers, memorandum of understanding on cooperation in youth field,

memorandum of understanding on education, higher education and scientific research, in addition to a twinning agreement between the municipality of Doha city and the city of Sarajevo.

A number of Their Excellencies the ministers attended the session of official talks and the signing ceremony of the agreement and the memorandums of understanding, along with members of the accompanying official delegation from the Bosnian side.

The Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh and the Bosnian Chairman of the Council of Ministers also held a bilateral meeting during which they reviewed a number of issues of common concern.

The Prime Minister and Interior Minister also hosted a luncheon banquet in the honour of Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and his accompanying delegation.

→SEE ALSO PAGE 2

## Emir receives written message from Sudan President



Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani received a written message from President of the Republic of the Sudan, Field Marshal Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir, pertaining to the bilateral relations and ways of enhancing them. The message was handed over by Dr Mustafa Othman Ismail, Permanent Representative of Sudan to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Assistant to the President of Sudan and presidential envoy, when H H the Emir met him at the Al Bahr Palace yesterday.

## FM: No talks with siege nations at the cost of sovereignty

QNA

DOHA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani reaffirmed that any dialogue with the siege countries will not be at the expense of the sovereignty of Qatar, stressing the need to have basic principles for any dialogue, with these principles shielded by a clear mechanism to settle conflicts.

Speaking yesterday as he laid out the foreign policy of Qatar before the Advisory Council, the minister said that the siege countries have violated all articles of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Charter, reiterating the importance of having a clear and binding mechanism to settle GCC conflicts.

H E Sheikh Mohamed spoke about the constants of the foreign policy of Qatar, pointing out that

it is based on building friendly relations with world countries, protecting the interests of the state, defending Arab and Islamic issues and issues of the vulnerable, working to establish international peace and security through adherence to international laws, activating cooperation in multilateral frameworks at the United Nations and specialised bodies.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## Emir issues instruments of ratifications

DOHA: Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani issued yesterday an instrument of ratification approving a draft agreement on air transport between Qatar and the USA, signed in Washington on October 3, 2001.

H H the Emir also issued an instrument of ratification approving a draft MoU for cooperation in the field of youth and sports between Ministry of Culture and Sports of Qatar and Ministry of Youth and Sports of Iraq, signed in Doha on January 16, 2018. The Emir issued an instrument of ratification approving an agreement on cancellation of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and private or service passports between Qatar and Ethiopia, signed in Doha on November 14, 2017.

## Emir issues decrees

DOHA: Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani issued yesterday Decree No. 11 of 2018, ratifying a memorandum of understanding about cooperation in the education, higher education and scientific research fields between Qatar and Somalia, which was signed in Doha on March 18, 2015, annexed to this decree and to have the force of law in line with Article 68 of the constitution.

The Emir also issued Decree No. 13 of 2018, ratifying a twinning agreement between Doha Municipality and Bishkek Municipality, which was signed in Doha on December 8, 2014, annexed to this decree and to have the force of law in line with Article 68 of the constitution. The two decrees are effective starting from their date of issue and are to be published in the official gazette.

## Record decrease in traffic deaths, injuries

SIDI MOHAMED THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The average deaths in road traffic incidents in Qatar last year were 5.4 per 100,000 persons, a figure far below than world average of 17.4 per 100,000 persons.

This was announced by the General Directorate of Traffic yesterday in a press conference held at its headquarters about the traffic statistics of 2017 compared to 2016. The traffic statistics 2017 showed remarkable progress regarding reduction in the number of deaths and traffic injuries.

Brigadier Ibrahim Saad Al Sulaiti, Head of Statistical Analysis at Office of Interior Minister of Interior said that the most important international indicators achieved by Qatar last year, is the reduction in the mortality rate due to traffic accidents compared to global averages. The press conference was attended by Brig Ibrahim Saad Al Sulaiti, Head of Statistical Analysis office, Brig Mohammed Saad Al Kharji, DG of General Directorate of Traffic and Brig Muhammad

Abdullah Al Mallik, Secretary of National Traffic Safety Committee and other senior officials.

Al Sulaiti added that the number of traffic deaths per ten thousand vehicles, as per the

World Health Organisation (WHO) is 10 - 12 deaths, whereas Qatar has recorded 1.17 deaths for the same number of vehicles. Also, global figures recorded three deaths per 100 injured

while figures recorded in Qatar were two deaths for the same number persons of injured. Despite the number of vehicles increased in 2017 compared with 2016, the number of traffic

accidents declined by 2.4 percent and injuries declined by 1.3 percent as 6,140 cases were reported in 2016 while it was 6,061 in 2017. Serious injuries also declined by 14.8 percent from 872 in 2016 to 743 in 2017 and fatalities by 0.6 percent. About 97.5 percent of 240,333 traffic accidents reported in 2017 were without injuries.

Brigadier Muhammad Saad Al Kharji said that the positive achievements were due to enhancement of measures such as traffic awareness, road traffic control, driver qualification, test development, vehicle inspection and quality of ambulance services, which reduced the number of deaths as the ambulance response time reduced to 5 to 7 minutes in Doha.

Out of 177 died in road accidents in 2017, 45 percent were drivers, 23 percent passengers while 32 percent were pedestrians. He said the causes of mortality were high speed and reluctance to fasten seat belts. He said that the department has developed curricula in driving schools, which helped make drivers responsible.

## Smart device to impound cars at home

DOHA: The General Directorate of Traffic has introduced smart device connected to Directorate, which is capable of tracking and locating the seized vehicle to ensure the period of custody specified by the traffic.

With the introduction of the new device the motorists in Qatar will be able to keep impounded vehicles at their own premises instead of leaving it at police-designated impounding yards.

The announcement was made yesterday at the General Directorate of Traffic during a press conference at its headquarters about the traffic statistics of 2017 compared to 2016.

'Smart Impound' enables tracking and locating the



vehicle during house impound to ensure compliance with the specified duration of the penalty. Captain Riyadh Ahmad introduced the smart device. He said that it is an electronic device connected to the General Directorate of Traffic.

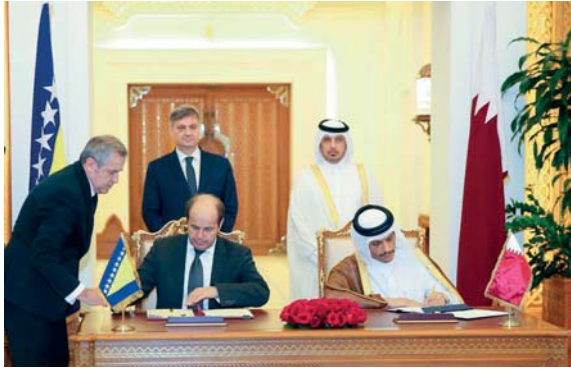
The purpose of the device is to stop paper transactions,

fast completion of the task, and the location of the seized vehicles and accessibility as well as ensuring the safety of the property of others by confiscating the vehicle at home.

Previously people had to take the impounded vehicle to police yard in Industrial Area for keeping these vehicles for the duration of punishment. The duration varies depending on the offence.

"The option to impound the vehicle at the house of the perpetrator is not for all traffic violations," Ahmad added. Text messages will be sent to the offender and the device will be installed in the car by specialists from the Traffic department. The battery of the device can work more than six months.

## PM, Bosnia & Herzegovina official hold talks



Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani held a session of official talks with Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denis Zvizdic, at the Emiri Divan yesterday. The Prime Minister and Interior Minister and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers witnessed the signing of memorandums of understanding on health field, drug production and employment of health workers, memorandum of understanding on cooperation in youth field, memorandum of understanding on education, higher education and scientific research, in addition to a twinning agreement between the municipality of Doha city and the city of Sarajevo.

## Qatar to update laws tied to children rights

AMNA PERVAIZ RAO  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs H E Dr Issa bin Saad Al Jafali Al Nuaimi yesterday reiterated Qatar's continuous keenness to develop and update its laws and legislations related to children rights to comply with the related international standards.



Minister of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs H E Dr Issa bin Saad Al Jafali Al Nuaimi and other dignitaries at the Forum yesterday. PIC: BAHER AMIN / THE PENINSULA

He was speaking at a forum on 'Children Safety' organised by the Department of Family Affairs at Ministry Of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) and Aman Centre (Protection and Rehabilitation Centre) at Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC). The forum was aimed at enhancing the procedures taken by the state institutions to enhance safe childhood. It was also aimed at establishing a platform for cooperation between state entities and non-governmental organisations working in that field which would enable the exchange of expertise in order to promote safety for children.

The Minister said: "Under the wise leadership of the Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatar does not spare any effort in giving importance to children rights, on a legislative and institutional level. The Qatari constitution and other legislations included many provisions that consider family, maternal and children rights". "Qatar has attempted to put into practice the basic principles and provisions of the convention and its protocols to protect and promote the rights of the children."

The Minister said importance of enriching culture, consolidating, promoting and protecting child's rights and extracting their creative energy to create a new generation that is able to lead in the future. "This contributes to finding a generation which is able to positively interact with the society and adheres to the culture of community which serves the family and particularly children."

It is also working on updating the programmes that guarantee all rights, which complies with the Qatar National Vision 2030, which aims to make the State able to achieve sustainable development. The Minister also expressed his hope for the

activities of the forum to be full of educational, social, health, cultural, skills, intellectual, creative and literary scenes among children in Qatar in various fields. He said the forum will lead to the development of plans to achieve safety of children and a promising future for children in Qatar.

Amal Abdullahi Al Mannai, CEO of QFWS, stressed on the importance of commitment to provide a better and safer future for children as it is the most righteous task in the world. She said: "Qatar is based on its national standards and its community culture has been supporting the international declarations and charters, including the Convention on the Rights of children." "The absence or weakness of parental responsibility has harmful effects on the development of the child during the early years of life. This may lead to emotional disorders in adolescence and aggressive behaviour and intervention among young people," she added.

Mansoor Al Saadi, Executive Director of Aman Centre said: "All entities which come under the umbrella of Qatar Foundation of Social Work which include, Aman Centre (Protection and Rehabilitation), Wifaq (Awareness and Consulting), Drama (Empowerment of the Orphans), Best Buddies (Friendship, Support and Inclusion) and Nama (Empowerment and Entrepreneurship) have played an important role in benefiting children as per their rights in the society". He said: "In the State of Qatar, there are total of 4,211 children who have been part of QFWS entities and have benefited by the services of these entities, which include 424 children at Aman Centre, 2,273 at Wifaq, 78 at Dreama, 99 at Nama, 644 at Shafallah and 693 at Best Buddies according to 2017 statistics".



Officials at the meeting.

## Qatar and Kuwait to enhance air transport ties

THE PENINSULA

KUWAIT: Chairman of Qatar's Civil Aviation Authority H E Abdullah bin Nasser Turki Al Subaie met with President of Directorate General of Civil Aviation in Kuwait, Sheikh Salman Sabah Al Saleem Al Hamoud Al Sabah.

They discussed ways to enhance joint cooperation between the two countries in the

## Qatar adhering to GDA commitments

SANAUULLAH ATAULLAH  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar is working to fulfill its commitments for supporting the Global Dryland Alliance (GDA), said Minister of Municipality and Environment H E Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Rumaihi.

"The Ministry of Municipality and Environment and other government sectors are working to implement Qatar's commitments to GDA within the stipulated time," said the Minister in his inaugural speech at a meeting of the First Ordinary Session of the Executive Board of the Global Drylands Alliance here yesterday. "We met four months ago to sign the founding agreement of the Global Dryland Alliance in a bid to have an effective framework to unite our efforts to meet the challenges," said the Minister, adding that the first goal is to ensure food security and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change on development in countries in general. The Minister highlighted the concerns of the Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to this international organisation, which was set up upon his initiative, adding that His Highness directed to follow-up and support it at all stages.

He said that within the framework of the draft agenda of the council, a draft agreement for the headquarters of the

Alliance was included that will be signed by concerned authorities in Qatar, so that the organisation can have status of a full-fledged legal body and benefit from the advantages granted to similar international organisations.

"The draft agenda also includes the discussion of the financial resources of the Alliance and the adoption of an innovative and sustainable mechanism that will contribute to the financing of the programme and projects required to be implemented in our countries on priority basis and to enhance the financial resources of the Alliance," said the Minister.

Ambassador Bader bin Omar Al Dafa, Executive Director of the Global Dryland Alliance, spoke about the activities of the executive secretariat of the Alliance during the past three months.

He added that this period witnessed a number of activities including the implementation of the recommendations of the founding countries of the Alliance, working visits to some member

states or countries wishing to join the Alliance, and the preparation of a paper on the sources of funding of the Alliance.

Al Dafa said that the activities of the Alliance also include the preparation of a proposal for the administrative and organisational structure of its executive secretariat, as well as the preparation of a convention to be signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country having its headquarters and the expansion of the temporary headquarters.

GDA is an international organisation of dryland countries established with the purpose of achieving food security by sharing knowledge and best practices; assisting in the development of capabilities to prevent food crises; and by providing mutual assistance needed at the times of emergency such as natural disasters or unrest.

On October 15, 2017, Doha hosted the GDA's founding conference where the convention of the new international organisation based in Doha was signed.



Minister of Municipality and Environment H E Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Rumaihi speaking at a meeting of Global Drylands Alliance in Doha yesterday.

## Don't allow children to drive without licences, parents urged

SIDI MOHAMED  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Juvenile Police Department in collaboration with Media and Traffic Awareness section at the General Directorate of Traffic yesterday organised a discussion on 'driving without licence, risks and solutions'.

The session focused on the risks of driving without licence and responsibility of parents in this regard emphasising that parents must not give children permission to drive before reaching the legal age. The speakers in the session included Captain Shaheen Rashid Al Ateeq, Head of Awareness and Media section at the Juvenile Police Department, Captain Ali Hamad Al Aswad, Head of Traffic Investigation section in Madinat Khalifa, and First Lieutenant Fahd Sherida, Traffic Awareness official, among others.

The speakers stressed that the security services are not able to fully play their role in raising awareness and educating the youth about the dangers of driving without a license if there are



Officials at the event.

parents who are lenient in this matter. Al Ateeq called on all parents to cooperate with security services and not allow their children to drive before the legal age to protect their lives and those of other road users.

Al Aswad spoke on the role of traffic patrols to control the cases of driving without licence in general, pointing out that when traffic patrols catch a person driving without a licence they impound the vehicle, in addition to other procedures like referring the person to the public prosecution.

On the role of traffic in raising students' awareness of the

dangers, Sherida said the Directorate conducts many awareness activities to educate school students on various aspects of traffic safety, especially driving without a licence.

The speakers urged parents to guide their children and educate them on respect for the law, which does not allow them to drive cars without obtaining a driver's licence.

Some students who attended the discussion raised questions about the legal issues in obtaining a driver's licence, as well as the punitive measures that a person driving a vehicle without a licence can be subjected to.

participation of Qatar in Kuwait Aviation Show, which was successful in its first edition, adding that this success gave a message that Kuwait is ready to enter as a major competitor in the aviation market in the region.

Following the meeting, the Director General of Kuwait Civil Aviation Eng. Yousef Al Fouzan said the meeting discussed means of cooperation in the fields of air transport,

safety systems and exchange of experiences between the two sides to hold joint technical sessions.

Al Fouzan explained that the meeting also touched on the possibility of using the Fifth Freedom, which provides for transport exchange rights and the provision of facilities in a manner that achieves flexibility for air carriers between the two countries.



# 'No talks with siege nations at the cost of sovereignty'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Adherence to international conventions and international development is also the basis of Qatar's foreign policy. In addition to the delivery of Qatari humanitarian assistance to those affected anywhere in the world.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister described the fabricated crisis of the siege as unprecedented in the modern history of Qatar, labelling it as treachery. He said that Qatar, under the leadership of Emir

HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, took a strategic decision to deal with the siege in a civilised and legal way, and to rise above the level of the siege countries in the way they treat the Qatari people.

He also reviewed the stages of the crisis since its beginning and the measures the state took to counter the siege under directives of the Emir, pointing out that there are no actual reasons for the crisis but it aims to place Qatar under the guardianship of these countries, and direct Doha's internal and external policy and exploits its resources to serve the interests of these countries.

Sheikh Mohamed hailed the great role of Emir of the fraternal State of Kuwait HH Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah and his good endeavours to resolve the crisis, noting that has welcomed and supported this role. He also pointed to the role of the different ministries and government entities at the political, economic and legal levels to address the repercussions of the siege.

Asked about Qatar's membership in the GCC, H E Sheikh Mohamed said that Qatar does not intend to leave GCC and will continue to work through it as long as the body remains. "If the siege countries want to go and found another entity, let them do." He said that Qatar is now strengthening its cooperation with Asian

countries and is considering cooperation in the framework of multilateral regional organisations to join and benefit from them.

The State of Qatar speaks with the different world countries in the language of interests rather than threats as the siege countries do, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister said, adding that Doha has achieved many objectives in this regard as major countries condemned the siege and demanded its lifting.

On the latest developments in the crisis, he warned that the siege countries are keen to normalize the crisis and continue it in an attempt to weaken the Qatari economy in the hope that Doha would make concessions, stressing that Qatar has thwarted all of these attempts to harm the economy. "The last of these attempts was pressuring the Qatari currency and bonds."

Sheikh Mohamed said that the directives of the Emir are to move forward without closing the door to dialogue, stressing that the State of Qatar will pursue its rights to obtain them if the siege countries want to normalize the siege.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister stressed that the social and humanitarian element is what drives the State of Qatar to consider solutions to this crisis. The rest of the situation is stable, he said, warning that the siege countries went far and hoped that Qatar will collapse and have a new political regime, expressing regret for this unjustifiable hostility.

In response to a question on when the crisis would see a breakthrough, he stressed that the State of Qatar has moved on from the issue of the siege but at the same time the door remains open to dialogue in accordance with clear and transparent principles that respect international law and the sovereignty of the state. Sheikh Mohamed added that Qatar, over



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

eight months, sought dialogue but the siege countries closed the door, noting that there are no endeavours on Qatar's side now in this regard but it welcomes any constructive efforts.

There are no new efforts now except from the United States, especially those related to the Camp David summit, he said, noting that no one was invited to the summit yet, and if the invitation was sent, the State of Qatar will attend, adding that the US is in touch with Doha regarding proposals to resolve the crisis.

In a related context, he reiterated that there are no positive indicators from the siege countries, but rather they move from an escalation to another and prepare new waves of future escalations.

As for participation in the upcoming Arab summit, he said that Qatar will attend the summit regardless of its place, and if the host state is one of the siege countries and does not provide the necessary measures, that country will be the violating state and not the State of Qatar.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister said that the State of Qatar continues to convey the correct picture regarding the siege crisis and its consequences,

adding that thanks to the wise policy of HH the Emir, the State of Qatar has overcome many of the negative aspects of the crisis and all countries that work with Qatar are convinced that what is happening is a slander against the state and unjust measures.

Sheikh Mohamed noted that Doha understands that these countries can not show a strong supportive position due to the balance of interests with the siege countries and the pressures exercised on them.

Speaking before the Advisory Council, he touched on the positions of the State of Qatar on regional and international issues, particularly the Palestinian issue, the Syrian crisis, the war in Yemen, the situation in Libya and the relationship with Iran.

He reiterated the State of Qatar's firm position on the Palestinian issue and its support for a just solution according to the Arab Peace Initiative, which guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as supporting all the segments of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

With regard to the Syrian crisis, he reiterated the position of

the State of Qatar calling for a political solution to the crisis and its stand with the Syrian people. He said in this regard that the State of Qatar had no motives to change the Syrian regime and tried and sought to have a solution to the crisis at the beginning, but there was no response.

When the regime started using violence against the people, Qatar stood by the Syrian people, he said, adding that Qatar continues to support the Syrian people by providing humanitarian and political support to reach a political solution in accordance with international decisions and the Geneva I resolutions in particular.

On the Yemen crisis, he expressed his belief that it has begun to take a controversial framework because of the continuation of the war. He added that Qatar's participation in the Coalition to Support Legitimacy was based on the conviction that what happened was a coup against legitimacy and should not be accepted. He stressed that Qatar's participation in the coalition was based on its duty and commitment to the collective security of the GCC countries.

Sheikh Mohamed added that Qatar sent its troops to the Saudi border to protect the kingdom and did not participate in the war in Yemen.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister pointed out that the war continues until today and the Yemeni people suffer from difficult humanitarian conditions, noting that there are 20 million Yemenis below the poverty threshold as well as the spread of diseases and epidemics that kill thousands, while no political solution looms so far.

For Libya, he said that the State of Qatar supported the Skhirat Agreement and committed to this support although there are other countries that support parties outside international

legitimacy. On the Qatari-Iranian relations, he said the relationship between the two countries should be based on clear bases due to geographical proximity and participation in the largest gas field, which requires constant communication between the two sides.

He added in this regard that the State of Qatar and Iran have many points of disagreement on foreign policy, and Qatar still disagrees with Iran on them despite the latter's stand with Doha after the siege.

In response to a question on the US-Qatari strategic dialogue, he explained that this dialogue came in accordance with the directives of the Emir to establish a strategic platform to frame the Qatari-American relations according to a clear and coordinated mechanism that brings together all the political, economic, defence and energy sectors. He added that there have been fruitful meetings with US counterparts, which produced positive results.

In response to another question, he said the US will abide by the declaration of joint defence between the two countries to provide all kinds of support to the State of Qatar in the event of any external attack and this agreement has been in place for years but was highlighted after the strategic dialogue.

He noted that this is a message from the US to the siege countries that Washington does not stand by their side and that it will seek to resolve the crisis and will not allow the escalation of the dispute out of concern about its interests in the Gulf region.

On the performance of Hajj this year, he said this matter is in the hands of the Saudi government, noting that the concerned parties in Qatar will communicate with the channels set by the Saudi authorities in this regard but attributed the last say on this issue to the Saudi government.

## Qatar begins distribution of \$9m emergency aid for Gaza

MOHAMMED OSMAN THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Chairman of the National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, Ambassador Mohammed bin Ismail Al Emadi, yesterday began the distribution of \$9m of emergency aid for medicines, medical supplies, foodstuff and fuel to operate hospital generators in Gaza Strip.

The emergency aid was based on the directives of the Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani issued on February 8 and is mainly for health sector in Gaza which suffers from the siege imposed by the Israel. Ambassador Al Emadi, speaking yesterday during a press conference at Al Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza, revealed details of the disbursement of the recent Qatari grant of QR31m (\$9m).

Al Emadi said that \$2.6m would be allocated for food parcels, blankets and upholstery, \$500,000 for hospital fuel, sewage pumps and the Ministry of Health, noting that they will be good for a month. He added that \$2m will be dedicated to medicines.

As for renovating homes of the poor, Al Emadi said that \$1 million was allocated for that purpose, while another \$1 million will be used to pay the fees of university students. Finally, \$2m will be allocated for humanitarian and morbidity cases.

Al Emadi said that under the current difficult and complicated circumstances, Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was proudly at the forefront of those taking the initiative to extend a helping hand to



The Chairman of the National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, Ambassador Mohammed bin Ismail Al Emadi, and other officials at a press conference at Al Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza.

the people of Gaza at a time when they suffer from oppression.

The Ambassador added that H H the Emir's move proves that he stood by the people of Gaza before and now, and will continue to do that in the future.

Ambassador Al Emadi expressed hope that the State of Qatar's move to provide humanitarian relief will act as a strong incentive, after which an international move would take place in order to save the people of Gaza from the humanitarian tragedy they are experiencing.

He stressed the need to find a permanent solution to the issue of Gaza employees within the framework of the Palestinian reconciliation, saying that if the reconciliation happens, the crisis of the employees will end. He added that there must be radical solutions to the issue of employees not only the salaries of a month or two.

The Chairman reaffirmed


that the State of Qatar is in constant contact with the Palestinian government, the United Nations and international institutions for joint coordination and cooperation so as to help the people of Gaza.

For her part the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lulwah Al Khater tweeted "Qatar has worked relentlessly on developing the infrastructure in Gaza: \$407m grant was allocated by Father Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in addition to \$11m by Qatar Fund, to build the Palace of Justice Complex".

She released several pictures of the event and said "Head of Gaza Reconstruction Committee today distributing H H the Emir's grant. Qatar's grant is primarily to support the health sector, medical supplies, hospitals' needs etc. Deterioration of the health sector in Gaza has been tragic due to the inhumane blockade".

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# Ooredoo to showcase future of networking at MWC

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Ooredoo Group will showcase a wide range of transformative advanced and emerging technology solutions at the Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2018, held under the theme of "Enriching People's Digital Lives" in Barcelona, Spain.

Ooredoo will highlight how the latest innovations across the Smart Stadium, Smart City, Ooredoo Network 2022, Digital Partnerships, and Digital Customer Experience can transform customer and citizen experiences across cloud, mobility, security and the Internet of Things.

Sheikh Saud bin Nasser Al Thani, Group Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo Group, said: "Mobile World Congress presents the global platform to demonstrate how Ooredoo is an international innovation leader in driving the future of digital solutions to transform daily lives and businesses, and to enrich people's digital lives".

"Ooredoo is embracing the Digital Economy and Internet of Things exchanging best practices from across our international geography in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. Our ecosystem of cross-connected merchants and partners

Ooredoo will showcase the Smart Stadium experience, which enables an end-to-end football fan journey from arrival to departure in Doha. The journey begins at the airport, where visitors receive a smart bracelet for digital payments and tickets, and then digitally check in to a smart hotel. Fans can then take an autonomous vehicle to a smart stadium with smart gates, wayfinding, and concessions, and take the connected metro on the way back with personalised geo-targeted offers.

are delivering seamless experiences across smart cities, smart stadiums, and engaging with communications companies," added Sheikh Saud.

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Leveraging Ooredoo

infrastructure as the foundation of Qatar's nationwide digital transformation, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and push for a sustainable "green" economy, along with smart irrigation and smart metering demonstrations.

Smart meters can display real-time energy usage, and help city planners manage power and water demand. Smart irrigation can also help farmers monitor and limit their water usage for supporting Qatar's self-sufficiency in agricultural production and food security.

Underlining Ooredoo's showcases will be the company's "Evolution to 5G" and the network of the future in the year 2022. The showcases will illustrate how ultra-fast 5G networks



A view of the Ooredoo Pavilion at Mobile World Congress 2018.

can support a city-wide Internet of Things platform.

In securing mobile devices, Ooredoo will showcase how it can provide customers with a security solution that protects against viruses, fraud, and malicious software without customers needing to download any apps. Customers can opt-in with a one-click solution and safely enjoy the Internet.

Driving new digital revenue streams, Ooredoo will also give a demonstration of sponsored data. Customers can opt-in to an Ooredoo app promotion in which they can receive ads when they unlock their phone. For every ad watched, they can earn points that can be turned into free data or a reward via the customer loyalty programme.

Ooredoo will also demonstrate how communications companies can offer real-time control of core and digital services, from SMS to data, through a mobile app to transform the customer experience. At the Mobile World Congress, visitors can check the Ooredoo pavilion in Hall 2 - Stand 2H60 at the Fira Gran Via in Barcelona from February 26 through March 1 2018.

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**The Transport Company (MOWASALAT)**

The Tenders Committee announces the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Subject	Document Fees	Tender Bond	Closing Date
003-TC/ST02/2018	Supply of Tires	2000/Qr	Qrs. 775, 000.00	08th March 2018
003-TC/SB02/2018	Supply of Batteries	800/Qr	Qrs. 150, 000.00	08th March 2018

**CONDITIONS:**

- Copies of Tender document can be collected starting on 18, 19, 20, 21 & 22 Feb 2018 from The Secretariat, Tenders Committee office during working hours on payment of document fees (non-refundable) to: Mowasalat Bank Account No. 0013-011272-060 with Qatar National Bank and present an authorization letter to collect tender document on Company letterhead.
- Required documents: 1) Authorization Letter (indicating collectors name and ID No / Company Contact Details: Tel, Fax, Email), 2) Original Bank Receipt, 3) Copy of collectors I.D. 4) Copy of Commercial Registration.
- Tenders should be accompanied by a Tender bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar as a temporary deposit and valid for 180 days from the closing date.
- The successful Tenderer shall submit a Performance bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar equivalent to 10% of the contract sum that shall be valid for 30 days after the completion date of the contract.
- Any Tender Bid that doesn't include the tender bond shall not be considered. (Tender Bond must be in a Separate Envelope)
- Offers should be valid for 180 days commencing from the above closing date.
- Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (IN RED WAX) envelope as per the following form:
  - Technical Bid (1 Original + 1 Copy + 1 Non-Editable CD)
  - Commercial Bid (1 Original + 1 Copy + 1 Non-Editable CD)
  - Tender Bond (1 Original)
- Mowasalat shall have the right to increase or decrease the scope of work by 20%.
- Mowasalat shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other tender and is under no obligation to show reasons thereof.
- Tenders should be submitted not later than 12.00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited into the Tender box provided in the office of The Secretary-Tenders Committee, located in the 1st Floor, at the Transport Company-Abu Hamour and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman-Tenders Committee quoting the Tender No. and subject.
- Offers arriving after the closing date & Time Shall not be Accepted.
- Note: the Shortest Delivery Time is an essential part of evaluation for the selection of the successful Bid.

TEL : 44580991      FAX : 44588850

CHAIRMAN – TENDERS COMMITTEE

## MEC inspects food shops in Muaither; outlet fined

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In a bid to monitor compliance with intellectual property rights laws, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce has carried out surprise inspection campaigns targeting food shops in Muaither area to monitor the compliance of retail outlets with intellectual property rights laws and regulations.

These ongoing inspection campaigns come within the framework of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce's efforts to monitor markets and commercial activities as part of an integrated plan covering all retail outlets across the country.

The campaigns are aimed at cracking down on counterfeit products and commodities in order to protect intellectual property rights and curb the proliferation of counterfeit goods.

The inspection campaign resulted in a fine for one shop for importing and distributing counterfeit canned fruits of various kinds bearing the mark of an original National Product brand contrary to the provisions of Law No. 9 of 2002 regarding trademarks, commercial records, geographic indicators, designs and industrial models.

The Ministry stressed that it will not



Counterfeit products displayed in a shop.

tolerate any violations of the intellectual property rights laws and will refer those who violate laws and ministerial decrees to competent authorities.

## Ministry of Education takes part in student robotics meet in Kuwait

QNA

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education and Higher Education participates in the student robotics conference in Kuwait, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the establishment of Kuwait Robotic Center, which provides and implements activities for students of all levels, in addition to the dissemination of culture and awareness of robot science knowledge and its role in scientific and technological progress.

The conference aims to provide an incubator environment for students innovations in the field of robotics and to present distinctive models in this field, as well as urging students to take advantage of robot technology.

The Qatari student delegation and its supervisors stressed that the conference will allow them to exchange and discuss experiences in this field, as well as to learn and share experiences in the field of robot and its uses in scientific field.

On the first day of the event, Ahmed bin Hanbal Secondary School Team from Qatar presented the project (Rapid Intervention for Firefighting and Human Rescue) as a scientific and technical project highlighting the role of robot and its importance in serving the community. The head of the Qatari student delegation Mariam Al Awadhi will present a working paper on robotics and its uses in education.

### Tenders and Bids of Government Organizations subordinate to the Law of Organizing Tenders and Bids no. 24 for the Year 2015

Logo	Organization	Tender No.	Subject	Tender Fees (QR)	Tender Bond Amount (QR)	Tender System	Closing Date
	Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation - Kahramaa	LTC-1316/2017	Supply of Uninhibited Insulating Oil for Electrical Transformers/Switch Gears and SF6 Gas for Electrical Equipment Materials Department www.km.qa	500	17,000	Two Envelopes	01/04/2018
	Public Works Authority	PWA/ITC/012/2018	4 (FOUR) YEARS OFFICE BOYS SERVICES FOR PUBLIC WORKS AUTHORITY BUILDINGS GS/2018/S/002/1	8,050	805,000	Two Envelopes (Technical + Financial)	11/03/2018
	Ministry of Defense Qatar Armed Forces	103/2017	Supply of spiral wire and iron angles	500	19000	Two Envelopes (Tech./Fin.)	11/03/2018
	Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)	218-2018	DATA COLLECTION FOR EXISTING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTHCARE FACILITIES For more information: www.MOPH.gov.qa Announcement	500.00 (Five Hundred Only)	40,000.00 (Forty thousand Only)	Two Envelopes	Sunday, 11th. of March 2018 12:00 hrs
	Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)	71-2018	EXTENSION NO. 2 FOR TENDER HEALTH CARE LAND-BASED DEALS - DEVELOPMENT OF THREE COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITALS ON LAND PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THIS PURPOSE For more information: www.MOPH.gov.qa Announcement	QR. 1000.00 (One Thousand Only)	QR. 100,000.00 (One Hundred Thousand Only)	One Envelope	Sunday, 1st. of April 2018, 12:00 hrs

For more details, please refer to the unified website of government procurement <http://monaqasat.mof.gov.qa>



# QU meet discusses legal challenges in digital age

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Qatar University (QU) launched the international conference yesterday on "Law and Digital Age" organized under the patronage and in the presence of H E Jassim bin Saif Al Sulaiti, Minister of Transport and Communications.

Organized by QU colleges of Law (LAWC) and Engineering (CENG) and sponsored by Ooredoo Qatar, the 2-day event aimed to highlight the fast development and legal challenges in the field of digital technology and to find ways to develop the country's legal system. It also aimed to underline the effectiveness of legal regulations to solve these issues and challenges and the necessity to propose legislative and technical approaches that keep with the fast technological and technical development in the area of information and communication technology.

Attending the opening ceremony were H E Jassim bin Saif Al Sulaiti, Minister of Justice, H E Dr Hassan Lahdan Saqr Al Mohannadi, QU President Dr Hassan Al Derham, LAWC Dean, Dr

**The program agenda featured five panel sessions titled "Novelties related to electronic transactions", "Rights related to the digital world", "Contemporary trends on counter-cyber terrorism and cyber security", "Data protection and privacy in the digital age", and "Electronic means of dispute settlement".**

Mohamed Abdulaziz Al Khaluifi, CENG Dean Dr Khalifa Al Khalifa, Ooredoo Qatar Chief New Business Officer Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Nasser Al Thani, and QU officials, as well as LAWC and CENG faculty, students and staff.

The program agenda featured five panel sessions titled "Novelties related to electronic transactions", "Rights related to

the digital world", "Contemporary trends on counter-cyber terrorism and cyber security", "Data protection and privacy in the digital age", and "Electronic means of dispute settlement".

Dr Hassan Al Derham said: "Community engagement is one of the important goals of QU Strategy (2018-2022). QU strives to excel in serving its society and to promote its role as a source of expertise to serve the nation's needs in various areas. In this regard, the University continues in its efforts to provide solutions to the society's issues and challenges. Additionally, the University offered sustainable solutions to overcome the negative impact of the crisis. H H the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani stated in his speech last July: "This crisis has driven Qatari society not only to explore its human values as I have indicated, but also to draw on its sources of strength that lie in its unity, will and determination."

He added: "This timely conference highlights numerous issues that are of the interest of society such as the contemporary trends to combat cyber terrorism and promote cyber security, the



Minister of Justice H E Dr Hassan Lahdan Saqr Al Mohannadi (left), Minister of Transport and Communications H E Jassim bin Saif Al Sulaiti (second left) and QU President, Dr Hassan Al Derham, and other dignitaries during the conference.

rights of digital age, privacy protection, and electronic means in conflicts resolution. We look forward to the vibrant discussions and recommendations that will emanate from the conference's sessions."

Dr Mohamed Abdulaziz Al Khaluifi said: "This conference comes at a time when the world is witnessing a major transition towards digital knowledge and technology. The world is currently facing serious challenges to manage knowledge, the methods to deal with its tools, and how to invest in it in engineering and legal fields. The development of knowledge in the field of digital technologies should not make us forget the legislative wisdom to understand these phenomena. Despite their innovative characteristics, digital programs remain a physical response to human will, which

is the source of legislative discourse in civil, criminal and administrative responsibilities. Through organizing this conference, the Colleges of Law and Engineering reveal the correlation between engineering and law as the design of digital applications and the usage of electronic devices are at the heart of engineering sciences, and their usage and activities are subject to the rules of regulatory assets that are addressed by legal sciences."

Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Nasser Al Thani said: "In the light of the current tremendous technological development, digital transformation is not only limited to legal professions. However, it has become a necessity for various institutions working in this field in order to keep abreast of the growing needs of their customers and to facilitate their

access to safe services. With the electronic threats faced by various institutions across the world, cyber security has become an important priority for the institutions working in the field of law and other areas. Hence, institutions need more than ever to strengthen their information security systems. Over the past few years, Ooredoo launched a number of techniques for information security in Qatar, while its data centers play an important role in the provision of cloud computing and security services. Ooredoo also provides various institutions in Qatar with security control through the Security Operations Centre. This service enables institutions to investigate and respond to the incidents to which they are exposed, conduct the necessary analysis, and maintain continuity of work, even if their data are hacked."

# Seek medical care if travel-related illnesses persist: Expert

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Hamad Medical Corporation's (HMC) has urged residents who are experiencing signs of illness after travelling outside the country to seek medical attention, particularly if they've travelled to a developing country or region known for mosquito-borne illnesses such as Malaria, Dengue, West Nile Virus, and Zika.

Dr Mohamed Abu Khattab, Consultant specialising in Communicable Diseases and Travel Medicine at HMC, says although most travellers who become sick

will experience only mild illness, it is important for residents to be vigilant and to monitor their health. He says that while most infections will result in symptoms within two to six weeks of travel, incubation periods vary and some conditions can present months to years after initial infection.

Anyone who has travelled outside the country and is experiencing persistent symptoms, specifically fever (high temperature) or diarrhoea, should immediately consult their doctor or visit the Travel Clinic at HMC's Communicable Diseases Center,



Dr Mohamed Abu Khattab

or another health center that provides travel medicine services.

"Persistent fever can be a symptom of serious disease. Any resident who has travelled abroad and is experiencing symptoms of illness or is generally feeling unwell should seek medical advice, particularly if they have not taken precautions before travelling to countries that have reported cases of Malaria, Dengue, West Nile Virus, and Zika," said Dr Abu Khattab.

"Other symptoms that should not be ignored include

abdominal pain, cough or shortness of breath, and loss of appetite. It is important for travellers to be educated about their risk of contracting diseases and medical conditions such as Typhoid Fever, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and intestinal parasites. These conditions can be serious and require medical intervention," added Dr Abu Khattab.

An initial diagnosis for most travel-related illnesses can be

quickly made if the patient is able to provide specific details regarding the destination traveled to and the potential risk factors he or she has been exposed to.

Dr Abu Khattab says it is important not to ignore persistent symptoms of illness and when seeking medical attention to inform the treating doctor of any recent travel. To book an appointment at HMC's Travel Clinic, call 4025 4003.

# Month-long awareness drive to detect cancer

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Reminding people of the importance of the early detection of cancer in saving lives, 'Screen For Life', Qatar's National Breast and Bowel Cancer Screening program, is launching a month-long awareness drive to mark the International Bowel Cancer Awareness Month in March.

Under the tagline 'Don't wait for symptoms', Screen For Life's Bowel Cancer Awareness Month is an initiative formed to tell people that because bowel cancer can be a non-symptomatic illness it is paramount not to wait until you feel the symptoms and to undergo screening as a precautionary measure.

Bowel cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in Qatar and a leading cause of death among men and women in the country.

In line with the global Bowel Cancer Awareness month, the 'Screen For Life' campaign will involve a series of reminder messages urging both men and women, specifically in the target age bracket of 50-74, to take a proactive approach to their health and book an appointment at one of the three dedicated screening facilities at Al Wakra, Leasab and Rawdat Al Khail Health Centers.

The public will be reminded that they can carry out the Faecal Immuno-chemical Test (FIT) test with ease in the privacy of their own home and they can collect their complementary kit from one



Bowel Cancer Screening is an Annual Test for Men and Women Aged 50-74

Call: 800 1112

of the PHCC screening centers at Al Wakra, Leasab and Rawdat Al Khail Health Centers. The overarching message of the 'Screen For Life' campaign will reinforce the vital role screening plays in the early detection of bowel cancer.

"Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, and specifically the 'Don't wait for symptoms' tagline is a great way for 'Screen For Life' to remind people that even though they aren't experiencing any symptoms they should still take the initiative and get screened."

"It is a vitally important message to get across. Our month-long campaign is a great opportunity to further remind people that screening is available now and all-year round, and that there

is somewhere people can turn for help and advice," said Dr Shaikha Abu Shaikha, Cancer Program Manager, PHCC.

"We will be delivering powerful messages encouraging people that everybody has a part to play in raising awareness and sharing the importance of screening as collectively we work to tackle this illness and ease the local and global burden of cancer."

Bowel Cancer Awareness Month will be marked by a dark blue awareness ribbon which will be distributed in the screening clinics, and throughout the awareness activities.

To book an appointment for screening, call the dedicated call center on 800112.

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MOPH)**  
Announce the Extension No. 2 for a Public Tender According to Dates Mentioned Below:

TENDER NO. AT THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE		TENDER TITLE		
71-2018		HEALTH CARE LAND-BASED DEALS – DEVELOPMENT OF THREE COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITALS ON LAND PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THIS PURPOSE		
MOPH/TAC/HFI/003/2018				
TENDER CLOSING DATE	TENDER BOND	TENDER VALIDITY PERIOD	TENDER FEES	SUBMISSION SYSTEM
Sunday, 1st of April 2018, 12:00 hrs.	QR: 100,000.00 (One Hundred Thousand Only)	120 Days (One Hundred & Twenty Days from Closing Date)	QR: 1000.00 (One Thousand Only)	One Envelope

**Brief Description:**  
Three plots of lands have been allocated for the private sector by the government to design, build and operate three (3) new General Hospitals. The sizes and locations of the plots are as follows:  
 • General Hospital Plot 1 – 42,904 m<sup>2</sup> in Abu Hamour – capacity of 150 beds (58 out of them for maternity care);  
 • General Hospital Plot 2 – 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> in Abu Hamour – capacity of 40 – 60 general beds;  
 • General Hospital Plot 2 – 45,000 m<sup>2</sup> in Al Shamal City - 100 general beds (including staff accommodation).  
 The Allocation for each plot will be based on an initial operational period of 25 years. During this period, the operator will pay a nominal rent to government of one (1) Qatari Riyal per square meter per month. At the end of the first concession period, subject to satisfactory performance, the concession may be renewed for a further 25 years.  
 Proposals to establish maternity and mental health inpatient facility or services will be favorably evaluated for the two hospital plots in Abu Hamour, and health and wellness services and medical tourism in Al Shamal plot.

**Who should respond to this Tender:**  
Local, regional or international firms and companies with extensive experience and specialist skills and knowledge in design, build and operation of Hospitals.

DATE AND TIME OF ISSUE AND COLLECTION	PLACE OF ISSUE AND COLLECTION
From Sunday, 18th. February 2018 Until Thursday, 29th. March 2018. (30 working days) 08:00 hrs. to 12:00 hrs.	Contracts & Procurement Dep't, 5th Floor Ministry of Public Health -HQ Onaiza St. Next to Civil Defense Signal Light P. O. Box 42, Doha, State of Qatar. Fax: +974 44070-861

**General Conditions and Terms:**

- Awarded bidder is required to submit a Performance Bond amounting 10% of the value of the Contract and shall be valid for a period not less than seven (07) calendar days after the CONTRACT SCHEDULED COMPLETION DATE
- MOPH has the right to increase or decrease the work/service in compliance with General Conditions of Contract by up to 20% of the Contract Sum.
- Validity of offers must be 120 days from the Closing Date

Interested bidders may obtain the Tender Documents for the above mentioned Tender by taking the following steps:  
**BASED ON THE NEW TENDER LAW NO: 24/2015 AND THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE ANNOUNCEMENT, ALL COMPANIES MUST BE REGISTERED AND CLASSIFIED IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE BEFORE BUYING ANY TENDER/PROG DOCUMENTS FROM ANY GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

- Return of a duly completed Secrecy Declaration, which is available on faxed request from the address mentioned above from the date of this advertisement. It also can be downloaded from Ministry of Public Health website (www.moph.gov.qa).
- At the time of collection representatives of interested parties must provide an original letter clearly authorizing to collect the documents on behalf of the bidders and show the identity card.
- Presentation of receipt for Tender Fees of QR. 1,000.00, to be paid with a Credit/Debit card to MOPH cashier at the address mentioned above.

Any questions or concerns regarding the Tender must be received in writing by fax no later than seven (7) days prior to closing date and the responses will be circulated to all participants.

**THE TENDER BOND MUST BE ISSUED OR ENDORSED BY A LOCAL BANK OR BANK BRANCH OPERATING IN QATAR**



The participants of 'The Emergence of Art from the Desert' exhibition along with Katara General Manager Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti and other officials at the opening of the show on Sunday at Katara Building 11.

## Artworks reflect 'Fath Al Kheir 3 Voyage' at Katara exhibition

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Qatari artist Fahad Al Maadid documented the month-long voyage of traditional Qatari dhow Fath Al Kheir to Oman and Kuwait through his 50 sketches on display at "The Story of Fath Al Kheir 3 Voyage" exhibition which opened on Sunday at Katara Building 19.

The exhibition inaugurated by Katara General Manager Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti aimed at documenting the third journey of Fath Al Kheir which was an important part of the seventh edition of the Katara Traditional Dhow Festival.

The 50 artworks reflect the major events of the voyage which aimed to revive Qatar's ancient maritime heritage, and spread love and peace to its neighbouring countries.

"The exhibition was a great challenge. I wanted to document the story of the voyage in all its stages and details. It was a beautiful and interesting adventure, and a rare experience," said Fahad. He added: "It is the first-of-its-kind exhibition in Qatar as



Qatari artist Fahad Al Maadid and Katara General Manager Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti.

nobody has done it before as it tells the story of the voyage and conveys a message of love and peace to our brothers in Kuwait and Oman."

Fahad explained that most of the sketches were mainly of the people he met and places he visited during the voyage to Kuwait and Oman.

"I used English ink and English handmade paper for their high quality and I didn't limit my work to this exhibition only. I want this work to continue as I am representing Qatar not only myself," he added.

"I had done many of my sketches right on the spot where the scene is, and I aimed to change the stereotypical picture

on maritime voyages and point out that it is not limited only for a sailor or a marine expert," he explained.

He pointed out that the idea was also to revive the old method of recording events before cameras were invented, where painters or poets documented events.

Another exhibition titled "The Emergence of Art from the Desert" also opened on Sunday focusing on supporting young and amateur artists.

Fifty-five artworks by 11 students and alumni from the Al Jazeera Academy are on display at the exhibition located at Katara Building 22.

Among the participants were Jawhara Al Mana, a graduate who contributed seven artworks at the exhibition. Khalid Al Muraikhi, a student, used faces as a main element for his nine artworks at the exhibition.

"My artworks are expressive. I want to give the viewers a chance to see them from different perspectives," he said.

The exhibitions are open to public until February 28.

## Qatar Airways and QDF congratulate Kvitova

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Qatar Airways and Qatar Duty Free (QDF), the official airline and retail sponsor of the Qatar Total Open Women's Tennis Tournament 2018, congratulated Petra Kvitova on her victory in the tournament's final match last night.

The thrilling competition was held at state-of-the-art Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha from 12-18 February 2018, and proved to be a great success among international and local fans alike. The new champion earned her title after defeating Garbine Muguruza with a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory in the final match of the competition.

Qatar Airways Senior Vice-President Marketing and Corporate Communications, Salam Al Shawa, said: "Qatar Airways is thrilled to congratulate Petra Kvitova, winner of this year's annual Qatar Total Open, on her incredible victory. Qatar Airways prides itself on being a major sponsor of many sporting events around the world and of using sport as a means of bringing people together. We look forward to many more thrilling events coming up this year, including the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, with Qatar Airways leading the way as the Official Air-line Partner of FIFA."



Petra Kvitova with trophy after winning the Qatar Total Open Women's Tennis Tournament 2018.

Head of Qatar Duty Free, Thabet Musleh, said: "Qatar Duty Free is pleased to congratulate Petra Kvitova on her incredible win at this year's Qatar Total Open 2018. Thanks to all the spectators who visited our Qatar Duty Free booth and participated in our special competition. We would also like to congratulate the lucky winners who were awarded special prizes signed by the tournament's top players."

Qatar Total Open Women's Tennis Tournament Director, Saad Al Mohammedi, said: "Congratulations to Petra Kvitova for

winning the Qatar Total Open 2018. The championship was a magnificent success and a thrilling competition for both international and local fans. We would like to thank all the participating players and passionate spectators for making this year's Total Open a successful and unforgettable week."

Qatar Airways, the Official Airline partner of FIFA, is a leading supporter of major global sporting events, including the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ and the FIFA Club World Cup.

## Local languages under threat: Expert



Prof Janet Watson, Professor of Linguistics at Leeds University.

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** The Center for Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) at Qatar University College of Arts and Sciences (QU-CAS) organised a three-day (February 18-20) symposium on "Language and Nature in

Southern and Eastern Arabia". This Symposium aimed to examine the symbiotic relationship between local languages and nature in southern and eastern Arabia through a multidisciplinary network of ecosystem and humanities.

The event brought together experts from Canada, Oman, Qatar, Russia, The Netherlands, the UK, and the USA. The opening session featured remarks by CHSS Director, Prof Kaltham Al-Ghanim and Professor of Linguistics at Leeds University Prof Janet Watson.

The event's programme featured numerous sessions delivered by speakers from QU, Leiden University (The Netherlands), Middlebury College (USA), Ministry of Education in

Oman, National Research University (Russia), Royal Botanical Gardens (UK), Sultan Qaboos University (Oman), University of Carleton (Canada), and University of Leeds (UK).

Discussions focused on a wide range of topics such as "The Modern South Arabian languages", "Poetry, figurative language and nature in Modern South Arabian poetry", "Is the Qatari dialect an endangered language?", "Kumzari and the languages of Musandam", "Flora of Southern and Eastern Arabia", and more.

In her remarks, Prof Kaltham Al Ghanim said: "Local languages are under threat in many parts of the world, this is of global concern because these languages reflect the close relationship between people and their natural environment, embodying the complex relationship with landscape and seasons. When the languages are lost, these connections are broken. Areas of the world which enjoy the greatest language diversity tend to exhibit the greatest biodiversity, and loss of the one commonly precipitates loss in the other."

Prof Janet Watson said: "We are delighted that this symposium on the symbiotic relationship between language and nature in southern and eastern Arabia is being hosted by Qatar University. This event, which comes within an Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK funded international network, is the first interdisciplinary symposium to examine the language - nature relationship in southern and eastern Arabia. The symposium brings together participants from eleven different disciplines, from seven different states and speakers of eleven different languages. We envisage this initiative as taking forward an ambitious research agenda to make a significant societal impact, build capacity, and encourage interdisciplinary research through enabling international collaboration to develop major strategic partnerships."



### Public Announcement Public Auction for the Sale of detained vehicles

The Ministry of Interior, announces the sale of the confiscated vehicles, which have completed the legal period by detain in the industrial area in accordance with the following conditions:

**Auction Place :** Industrial Area – Vehicle Detention Area – Street (52)  
**Auction Date :** Starting from (Sunday) 25/02/2018 and will continue until all vehicles are sold.

**Auction Time:** from 3:30 pm to 9:00 pm only  
**Note:**

- 1) The auction card can be obtained from the auction site during the morning period from the first day of auction till the end of auction.
- 2) The auction committee will continue the working throughout the week except official holidays and the week end.
- 3) All vehicles are deleted from the record of the General directorate of traffic, and there are no legal or financial restrictions.

**Auction conditions:**

- 1- The entering of any person to the auction is considered a full inspection of the vehicles offered for sale and acceptance to their current conditions in addition to his knowledge of all necessary conditions to enter the auction.
- 2- Those who wish to enter the auction, should obtain (Auction Card), sold at the auction area, against payment of QRs (3,000.00) refundable at the end of the each auction day with possibility to keep this card till the end of the auction and use it for further purchases.
- 3- The Auction Card shall be withdrawn in case the bidder failed to pay down payment of the vehicle and card shall be considered as the sale down payment with necessary settlement (if any).
- 4- The auction will deal only with those holding the (Auction Card).
- 5- Upon being awarded the auction, a rate by 20% of the sale value shall be paid by the bidder as nonrefundable advance payment and to a minimum of 5,000.00 Qrs. This amount shall be paid in full at the next day. It is also possible to pay the whole vehicles price upon awarding the auction.
- 6- If the buyer did not pay the whole sale amount within [24] hours after being awarded the auction, the committee would be entitled to re-put the vehicle/s for auction once again and the buyer shall not be able to claim for his down payment (deposit).
- 7- The Buyer should finish all purchasing procedures & receive all relevant documents, and should also move the purchased vehicle/s out of the auction area within [24] hours after payment; otherwise the committee shall remove the vehicle/s out of the auction area without any responsibility to Ministry of Interior.
- 8- The buyer is not entitled to change his name, in the down payment receipt, with another name unless full sale payment is made and payment of QRs 200.00 as fees.
- 9- The buyer should present his ID card upon winning the auction to complete all procedures
- 10- The committee may exclude the bidders, who did not pay the due amounts prior to the auction, and those, who commit deeds causing confusion to the auction committee.
- 11- If the auction did not achieve the desired profit, the committee is entitled to postpone the sale for another time.
- 12- Re-sale of the vehicle/s inside the auction area is prohibited and the auction committee is not liable for any vehicle/s sale within the auction area.
- 13- Smoking is strictly prohibited inside the auction area.

**For Inquiry: Please contract (Captain : Khalid Ibrahim El. Emadi - Tel.: 55001070 Public Invitation**

**Condolences**

We offer our heartfelt condolences to

**Mujeeb Rehman  
Shafeeq Rehman  
(ALWRAQ Printing Press)**

On the sad demise of their father  
**Faisal Rehman**

May Allah bless the departed Soul and give fortitude to the bereaved family members to bear this loss

**The Peninsula**



# 44 dead in regime strike in Syria's rebel enclave

AFP

**HAMMURIYEH, SYRIA:** Heavy Syrian bombardment killed 44 civilians in rebel-held Eastern Ghouta yesterday, as regime forces appeared to prepare for an imminent ground assault.

The escalation came as pro-government forces were expected to enter the northern Kurdish-controlled enclave of Afrin, to take a stand against a month-old Turkish assault there.

Held by rebels since 2012, Eastern Ghouta is the last opposition pocket around Damascus and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has dispatched reinforcements there in an apparent bid to retake it. A barrage of air strikes, rocket fire, and artillery slammed into several towns across Eastern Ghouta yesterday, killing 44 civilians and wounding dozens more.

**Syrian government air strikes and artillery killed 71 people in the eastern Ghouta pocket near Damascus over the past 24 hours, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.**

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 20 were killed in air strikes on Hammuriyeh and nine others in bombardment on Saqba.

The rest were killed when other areas were pounded. Four children were among the dead.

Syrian government air strikes and artillery killed 71 people in the eastern Ghouta pocket near Damascus over the past 24 hours,

the Britain-based group said, bombardment of the insurgent-held enclave started escalating on Sunday evening, wounding 325 people. There was no immediate comment from the Syrian military.

"The regime is bombing Eastern Ghouta to pave the way for a ground offensive," said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. Residents of Hammuriyeh could be seen rushing inside in a panic as soon as they heard the sound of airplanes.

Alaa al-Din, a 23-year-old Syrian in Hammuriyeh, said civilians were afraid of a potential government offensive.

"Ghouta's fate is unknown. We've got nothing but God's mercy and hiding out in our basements," he said. Shelling also hit the town of Douma, where a correspondent saw five toddlers brought to a



Syrian civilians and children run for cover amid the rubble of buildings following government bombing in the rebel-held town of Hamouria, in the besieged Eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus, yesterday.

hospital, covered in dust and wailing uncontrollably. Medics offered them biscuits to calm

them down, to no avail. Eastern Ghouta is held by two main Islamist factions, but jihadists

control small pockets including one directly adjacent to the capital.

## Turkey renames street near US Embassy

AP

**ANKARA:** Turkish authorities yesterday renamed a street where the US Embassy is located with the name of Turkey's military offensive in Syria that had led to tensions between the allies.

Ankara municipal workers put up the new sign in Turkish for the Olive Branch Street, replacing the one named after late Ankara governor Nevzat Tandogan.

Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch last month to drive a Syrian Kurdish militia out of northwest Syria. The militia group is a major US ally in fighting the Islamic State group. Turkey regards them as terrorists. When asked last week about the upcoming name change, US State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said that "they can call it whatever they want. As long as it's in accordance with their own law, we're fine with that."

In November, Turkey renamed the street where the United Arab Emirates has its embassy after a long-dead Ottoman military commander. It was a reaction to an Emirati minister's retweet of a claim that the Turkish president's "forefathers" pillaged the holy city of Madinah.

# Israeli warplanes pound Gaza after new rocket attack

AFP

**GAZA CITY:** Israeli warplanes carried out a fresh round of strikes in the Gaza Strip yesterday after a rocket fired by Palestinians slammed into southern Israel, the army said.

The cross-border exchange followed a weekend escalation in violence seen as among the most serious since Israel and the coastal enclave's Hamas rulers

fought a war in 2014. The Islamist militant group was quick to say that it did not seek further confrontation.

Israeli fighter jets "targeted underground infrastructure in the southern Gaza Strip, in response to the projectile that was launched at Israel earlier," an army statement said.

It did not give further details, but Palestinian security sources said several missiles were fired

at farmland east of Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip.

No casualties were reported on either side. Yesterday's strikes followed fierce exchanges over the weekend after an improvised bomb apparently planted by Palestinian militants exploded Saturday, injuring four Israeli soldiers inspecting the border fence.

Israel responded by pounding 18 Hamas facilities in two waves of air strikes on

Saturday and Sunday, according to the Israeli military. Israeli ground forces also killed two Palestinian teenagers in the enclave in cross-border fire. But senior Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar said that his organisation had no wish to see fighting with Israel intensify. "The resistance does not want to waste its energy on this escalation," he told the Hamas-affiliated Al Risala website. He added that efforts

were under way "to stop escalation and a new war", although he did not elaborate. Another source close to Hamas said it was sending messages to Israel through neighbouring Egypt, which frequently mediates between the two sides. The source said that Hamas representatives in Cairo "had officially informed the head of Egyptian intelligence that the movement is not interested in any escalation in Gaza."



## Funeral parade for Tsvangirai

Mourners watch as the coffin passes at the funeral parade held for the late Movement For Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai in Harare, Zimbabwe, yesterday.

## Iranian rescuers find plane wreckage

AP

**TEHRAN:** Iranian search and rescue teams yesterday reached the site of a plane crash that authorities say killed all 65 people on board, Iran's *Press TV* reported.

The Aseman Airlines ATR-72, a twin-engine turboprop used for short-distance regional flying, went down on Sunday in foggy weather, crashing into Mount Dena in a remote area of southern Iran. The airliner said all on board Flight EP3704 were killed, including six crew members.

The crash of the aircraft, brought back into service only months ago after being grounded for seven years, was yet another fatal aviation disaster for Iran, which for years was barred from buying necessary airplane parts due to Western sanctions over its contested nuclear programme.

Press TV said search teams reached the crash site before dawn yesterday. The station said the weather had improved, though it was still windy. The semi-official Tasnim news agency cited the military as saying Russia had helped locate the crash site. Russia and Iran are close military allies.

The TV broadcast footage of a helicopter joining the search and showed ambulances and rescue vehicles preparing to reach the site on Mount Dena, which is about 4,400 metres (14,400 feet) tall. The site is reportedly at a height of 3,500 metres (11,500 feet).

Other Iranian news outlets and officials did not confirm that the crash site had been reached. State radio said five helicopters and five drones are active in the search operation. Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency said that more than 150 climbers have joined the operation.

**QATARGAS OPERATING COMPANY LIMITED**  
Public Announcement  
To all Ships, Fishermen and Mariners  
Acquisition of geophysical, environmental, and geotechnical surveys\*

**Warning of geophysical, environmental, and geotechnical surveys Offshore Qatar from 8th February- 30th April 2018**

Pursuant to and under directives from the Department of Marine Regulations, Ministry of Transport and Communications, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all the Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen that QATARGAS Operating Company Limited intends to acquire: geophysical, environmental, and geotechnical surveys in the locations bound by the coordinates shown in the diagram below.

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QATARGAS Operating Company Limited takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation, following publication of this notice.

Geographic Locations	WGS84 Latitude	WGS84 Longitude	Geographic Locations	WGS84 Latitude	WGS84 Longitude
Site-1	25° 57' 32.73270000" N	51° 16.1407' E	Site-5	25° 54' 32.5870" N	52° 08' 02.457" E
Site-2	25° 56' 43.76900000" N	51° 45.0154" E	Site-6	25° 57' 27.06760000" N	52° 07.31468" E
Site-3	25° 56' 11.8876" N	52° 07' 48.3327" E	Site-7	25° 51' 51.56760000" N	52° 28.1374" E
Site-4	25° 01' 05.3876" N	051° 11' 16.487" E	Site-8	25° 51' 54.58760000" N	52° 38.587" E

Survey area has approximately 3km radius from the center of site

Any further inquiries should be addressed to: Tel: +974 44742222

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Public Announcement  
To all Ships, Fishermen and Mariners  
Acquisition of geophysical, environmental, and geotechnical surveys\*

**Warning of geotechnical surveys Offshore Qatar from 8th February- 30th March 2018**

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Location	Latitude	Longitude
Site-1	25° 28' 33.5270" N	52° 02.3021" E
Site-2	25° 28' 36.4670" N	52° 07.3321" E
Site-3	25° 28' 36.7970" N	52° 07.3321" E
Site-4	25° 28' 32.7970" N	52° 01.3344" E

Geoid: Datum: WGS84

Any further inquiries should be addressed to: Tel: +974 44742222

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## South Sudan rebels release Kenyan pilots after compensation paid

**JUBA:** South Sudanese rebels have released two Kenyan pilots they were holding after receiving compensation for the family of a civilian killed when their plane crashed last month, a rebel spokesman said. The plane came down in Akobo, in the Greater Upper Nile region in early January, and the rebels asked for compensation for the family of a woman who was killed, and for others who lost livestock. Lam Paul Gabriel, deputy spokesman of the rebel SPLA-IO said that \$107,700 had been paid.

## Govt steps up action against Zuma-linked family

**JOHANNESBURG:** South African authorities are escalating an anti-corruption drive against a business family linked to former president Jacob Zuma, saying they could seek Interpol's help to track suspects believed to be out of the country. Police Minister Fikile Mbalula said in an interview with state broadcaster SABC that the search for several suspects, including a member of the Gupta family, is focusing on India, China or Dubai. One of the missing suspects is India-born Ajay Gupta, accused along with his brothers of using connections to Zuma to manipulate state companies for their own financial benefit.

## Government and opposition begin talks in Togo

**LOME:** Long-awaited talks between Togo's government and the opposition began yesterday to try to end a six-month political stand-off that has seen thousands take to the streets in almost weekly protests against the ruling party. President Faure Gnassingbe, who has been in power since 2005, has faced calls to quit and instigate constitutional reform since last August. But after a stalemate, the two sides agreed to meet in talks brokered by Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo and Guinea's Alpha Conde.

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## EDITORIAL

## Yet another milestone

**T**he transportation sector is a strong factor in terms of economic and regional development. It also plays a major role in national integration to the world economic market. Sea transport, the cheapest available mode of transport, is a major catalyst for the economic development of a country. A sea port is not only the gateway to a country, but also the mainstay of industrial and agricultural development and most importantly food security. If the country is dependent on importing most of its foodstuff.

The opening of the Hamad Port on September 5, 2017 was a great leap for Qatar's growth and prosperity as the country relies on imports for most of its day to day requirements of supplies. Since the opening, the port has proved its efficiency consistently by the way it handles visiting vessels with the most modern technology at the state-of-the-art facility. There has been a steady increase in the number of ships calling at the \$7.4bn port.

A report said that the port has received a total of 182 vessels in January, which was the highest number of ships handled in a month since the start of operations. The traffic at the port has increased significantly since the blockade was announced on June 5 last year. While just 99 vessels called at the port in June, the numbers rose to more than 180 last month showing an impressive rise of 84 percent.

The port has also maintained a consistent rise in vessels traffic, which allowed uninterrupted supply of goods for the residents. Goods ranging from foods to raw materials for construction projects continue to enter the country through the sea route. The port is capable of handling 5,000 vessels per year and has a general cargo terminal that can handle 1.7 million tonnes of general goods per year.

Being the largest port in the region with nearly six months into operation, the facility has already become a centrepiece of regional transport and a bulwark for Qatar's economic growth

and food security.

With the opening of the flagship port, imports to the country has become much easier, cheaper and timely. It has liberated the country from dependence on UAE ports for imports and exports as well. The country can now reach out to the international markets on its own.

With the huge logistic facility and the opening of economic zones, Qatar is fast emerging as a major trans-shipment hub. The leadership of the country deserves plaudits for their vision and the efforts to make it materialise in a timely manner.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Australia is very keen to pursue a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom. I think that would be precluded if the United Kingdom were to rejoin the customs union.

Julie Bishop

Australia's Foreign Minister

## Syria's future: A frozen conflict

SAMUEL RAMANI  
ANATOLIA

**O**n January 30, the Sochi talks on Syria's political future came to a frustrating conclusion. Even though Russian policymakers were initially optimistic that the Sochi framework would promote dialogue between Syrian President Bashar Al Assad's supporters and Syrian opposition factions, both the Sunni opposition and the Kurdish nationalist forces boycotted the talks.

As the Sochi talks broke down just weeks after both the Geneva and Astana processes failed to ease tensions between the conflicting parties in Syria, prospects for the swift implementation of a Syrian peace settlement appear remote. This grim assessment is substantiated by the unwillingness of both pro-Assad and pro-opposition factions to accept a military de-escalation, and the plethora of competing interests within these coalitions that hinder the development of a viable peace deal.

Although the formal establishment of de-escalation zones in Syria in September 2017 gained broad international support, actors on both sides of the conflict have violated these agreements to combat perceived security threats.

In recent weeks, Russia and Iran have intensified their attacks on opposition targets in Idlib, and have justified these military activities by claiming that a genuine de-escalation of the Syrian conflict can only be achieved once Jabhat Al Nusra is vanquished.

Some Kurdish factions, like the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and People's Protection Unit (YPG) militias, have hindered international efforts to

create a de-escalation zone in Syria's northern region of Afrin. These obstructionist policies caused the Turkish military to intervene in Afrin to secure Turkey's border with Syria.

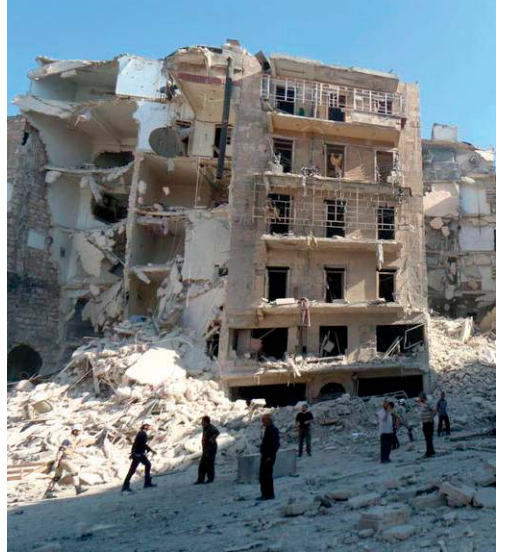
To further complicate matters, leading Syrian opposition factions have refused to accept a political settlement that includes Assad, and have

attempted to preserve their remaining territorial holdings through the use of military force.

Even if both pro-Assad and pro-opposition factions eventually conclude that their goals cannot be achieved through military force alone and agree to a cease-fire, competing interests within these factions will likely stymie the implementation of a workable Syrian peace settlement.

Within the pro-Assad bloc, Russian and Iranian policymakers disagree on what Syria's post-civil war political system should look like. Russia wants to establish a federal system that recognises Assad's control over Syria's largest cities, while giving Kurdish nationalists and selected Sunni opposition factions autonomy over their zones of influence. The Iranian government opposes this compromise, as Tehran rejects the legitimacy of any political settlement that does not recognize Assad's control over the entirety of Syria.

Amongst anti-Assad actors, there are similar disagreements on the ideal power balance within a reconstructed Syrian state. Even though the United States has periodically acquiesced to Assad playing a role in the peace process, Washington views Assad as an Iranian proxy and will likely continue to



undertake military actions to prevent Assad from recapturing additional Syrian territory.

Turkey shares Washington's perspective on Assad's illegitimacy, but opposes US military support for Kurdish factions and the creation of an autonomous Kurdish enclave in Rojava.

The implausibility of a peace settlement that sufficiently accommodates the competing interests of all major stakeholders in the Syrian conflict ensures that the most likely long-term outcome in Syria is the establishment of a frozen conflict.

This scenario would give Assad political hegemony over the majority of Syrian territory, and convert the Syrian civil war into a lower-intensity conflict with more sporadic violence. Yet Assad's actual political power would be limited, as he would have to constantly defend his authority against Sunni insurgents that aim to weaken his hold on power and Kurdish nationalists seeking to secede from a fragile Syrian state.

The establishment of a frozen conflict in Syria will influence the Middle East geopolitical environment in three main ways. First, Russia will emerge as the chief guarantor of the Syrian state's stability and unity. A frozen conflict scenario would safeguard Russia's naval base in Tartus and air base in Khmeimim, giving Moscow considerable military resources to project power in Syria.

If popular unrest were to break out in Syria, Russia would likely utilise its military presence to strengthen Assad's position, while using diplomacy to prevent the re-escalation of the Syrian conflict into a full-blown civil war. Moscow has been able to maintain this delicate balance in other frozen conflict zones – like Nagorno-Karabakh and Eastern Ukraine – and it is well-equipped to achieve a similar outcome in Syria.

Second, a frozen conflict is likely to make Syria a proxy in the Saudi Arabia-Iran struggle for regional dominance. As Riyadh remains staunchly opposed to Assad's retention of power, Saudi Arabia could provide financial support for Sunni opposition factions in Syria who reject Assad's legitimacy and disdain Iran's hegemony over Syria's political system.

These hardline opposition factions could use Saudi financial support to instigate an insurgency in the regions held by the Assad regime.

If Assad struggles to unilaterally contain sectarian violence in Syria, Iran is likely to engage in a targeted military intervention on behalf of Damascus.

As an Iranian intervention to support Assad would drain Tehran of critical military resources and potentially provoke unrest from isolationists at home, Saudi Arabia



**Even though the international community has launched numerous peace processes aimed at bringing rival Syrian factions to the bargaining table and achieving a durable political settlement, the unwillingness of both sides to de-escalate their military campaigns and competing interests between rival international actors have stymied these efforts.**

would exploit Assad's fragile hold on power to weaken Iran and challenge Tehran's influence over other Middle East states.

Third, implementing a peace settlement that gives Syria's Kurdish territories de facto autonomy without de jure recognition could create a permanent state of instability on Syria's northern border with Turkey.

To protect this volatile frontier, the Turkish military might need to engage in periodic military interventions in Syria that resemble its 2015 operation against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) factions in eastern Turkey.

As YPG retaliations against Ankara's military intervention in Afrin have caused civilian casualties in Turkey, the Turkish government will likely be forced to militarise its border with Syria to prevent future terrorist attacks.

Even though the international community has launched numerous peace processes aimed at bringing rival Syrian factions to the bargaining table and achieving a durable political settlement, the unwillingness of both sides to de-escalate their military campaigns and competing interests between rival international actors have stymied these efforts.

As the establishment of an international consensus on what a reconstructed Syria should look like appears increasingly unlikely to occur, the Syrian civil war is poised to transition into a frozen conflict. This trajectory will ensure that Syria remains a fragile state and nexus of instability in the Middle East for years to come.

*The writer is a DPhil candidate in International Relations at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. He is also a journalist who contributes regularly to The Washington Post and The Diplomat.*



# Stop abuse of Africa's resources to end migration



LORENZO KAMEL  
AL JAZEERA

ON January 17, Italy's parliament approved the deployment of up to 470 troops in Niger to combat "irregular migrant flows" and the trafficking of people towards Libya, and, from there, to Europe. A number of other European countries are pursuing similar policies, including France, Germany, and Spain.

These policies have been preceded, in recent years and months, by a plethora of studies and articles. Many of them were focused on measures that differentiate between distinct migratory waves, with the purpose of "divert[ing] migration rather than attempting to stop it". Others investigated the costs and benefits of "outsourcing" migration control, the European Union's strategy for "Sahel Security", and the "financial" cost of the "migration crisis" for European countries.

No less attention was given to the "lucrative business" of NGOs in relation to migratory waves, to the role of organised crime in the "smuggling of migrants" to Europe, and, last but not least, to the importance of "showing solidarity towards these desperate people".

But none of these claims or efforts, nor the related policies

carried out by European countries in the region, offer long-term solutions to, and deep understanding of, the key structural conditions at the base of the ongoing migratory waves. These short-term policies and analyses speak to the "gulf" of European public opinion but fail to provide structural answers to present and future generations.

The acronym OPL 245 means little. If anything, to most people. Yet, it is the name of the deal for the acquisition of the largest oil block (over 9 billion barrels of crude) in Africa. It is situated off the coast of Nigeria, from where, historically speaking, 12 million slaves were exported to European colonies in the Americas beginning in the 15th century. It is the most populous country in the continent and the one from which the largest number of migrants have arrived by sea to Italy in 2016.

The \$1.1bn invested by European oil and gas companies in the acquisition of this oil block would have covered over 80 percent of Nigeria's entire health budget for 2015. The ordinary citizens of Nigeria did not see a penny from the deal. The acquisition, finalised through blackmail, benefitted only a very limited number of corrupt officials and money launderers.

OPL 245 is hardly an exceptional case. Indeed, the natural resources (fuel, gold, gas etc) of most, if not all, African countries and a number of the states in the Eastern Mediterranean are still being siphoned off through offshore companies that, to a large extent, are linked to European and American companies and businessmen. As the Panama Papers confirmed, anonymous companies (about 1400) and tax havens are used to exploit the natural wealth of some of the world's poorest countries.

Only by opening Europe to African products beyond raw materials — while guaranteeing an equal share of the benefits to African populations — and addressing the structural conditions that undermine the development capacity of millions of people, will the EU be able to implement a vision based on sustainable solutions.

Some of the countries are among the major recipients of the almost \$1.5bn in rifles, rocket launchers, heavy machine guns, mortar shells and anti-tank weapons currently exported from Europe (largely via the Balkans) to the Middle East: some of these arms are currently being used in Syria and Yemen, contributing to the destabilisation of the region as a whole.

And "destabilisation" is indeed another key aspect to be considered when addressing the structural conditions that are fostering "migration and the trafficking of people". It is a story as old as the world: People tend to migrate when they feel unsafe or unable to fulfil their needs. In this context, it is enough to mention that, according to data provided by the US State Department, "incidents of terrorism" increased by 6500 percent (199 attacks in 2002, 13,500 in 2014) since George W Bush started the so-called "war on terror" in 2001.

How will migration affect Africa and Europe in the

coming decades? The answer is to a large extent bound to demographics. The total population of Africa will grow from the current 1.2 billion to 2.5 billion by 2050, while some European countries will see their populations decline or stay relatively stagnant over the same period. For example, the EU predicts Italy's population to decline from nearly 61 million to under 59 million by 2050.

This further explains why tackling migration and the trafficking of people by deploying troops or diverting human flows is a red herring. Only structural solutions will enable the EU and other international players to turn the challenges that these numbers bring with them into opportunities. From the perspective of the EU, these structural solutions include five main policies:

1. Exposing and sanctioning the ongoing exploitation of Africa's natural resources by private and public European companies in order to tackle some of the structural causes of migration — those hindering the development of many countries in the region.

2. Overcoming the self-serving cliché of "investing in African countries", while opening Europe — including by involving multinational corporations — to African products and enabling local populations to sustain their economies.

3. Monitoring and stemming the flow of weapons produced in European countries and sold in African and Middle Eastern countries affected by wars (Yemen first and foremost).

4. Providing legal protection and opportunities — possibly using some of the 6bn euros (\$7.5bn) allocated by the EU to strengthen Europe's external borders — for "climate migrants", that is those (millions of people) who flee African countries because of the effects of climate change.

5. Moving from crisis management to crisis prevention. This includes rejecting the policy of "outsourcing" migration management, a short-term "solution" that has created an economic boom in a number of centres, some located in desert areas, becoming an industry that profits off the most vulnerable.

It could be claimed that none of these policies is realistic, or fully feasible. If so, it is necessary to at least deconstruct the common image of a generous Europe committed to finding humanitarian solutions to "millions of migrants", and that has to cope with the consequences of "others' problems".

Indeed, too often we tend to approach the dramatic present of many Middle Eastern and African countries as something that pertains to peoples and contexts that are largely detached from our political, historical and economic past and present. This mindset is often part of an ongoing medievalisation of these regions, that is, the tendency to juxtapose an allegedly "medieval" Middle East and Africa with a modern, secular, normative West.

It is necessary to overcome this segregated interpretation of "our history" and "their history", paving the way for a more humble approach towards the peoples' region and their suffering.

This new attitude will help to reshape the paradigmatic schemes through which to look at the "European Neighbourhood" and to realise Eric Hobsbawm's wish to rescue not only "the stockinger and the peasant, but also the nobleman and the king".

The author teaches History of Colonial Spaces at the University of Bologna and is a senior fellow at IAI.



It is necessary to at least deconstruct the common image of a generous Europe committed to finding humanitarian solutions to 'millions of migrants', and that has to cope with the consequences of 'others' problems'.



DAVID VON DREHLE  
THE WASHINGTON POST

"FALSEHOOD flies, and the truth comes limping after it," wrote Jonathan Swift more than 300 years ago. What would he have said in the age of Twitter?

A sobering paper published in the winter edition of Strategic Studies Quarterly — the strategy journal of the US Air Force — explains how propagandists manipulate social media in their cyberwars against the United States. Hostile forces, employing

of Missouri. A dispute over benefits for graduate teaching assistants had escalated into broad allegations of racism on campus. Spotting the trending hashtag #PrayforMizzou, a Russia-linked Twitter account, @Fanfan1911, tweeted a photo of a bruised African-American youth that was lifted from an unrelated story. "The cops are marching with the KKK!" the tweet declared. "They beat up my little brother! Watch out!" This untrue message, signed "Jermaine," was retweeted hundreds of times by Russian bots — enough to unleash it as a viral contagion among duped Americans, including Missouri's student body president.

As other accounts in the orbit of @Fanfan1911 added fake details, Jermaine demanded the news media cover the nonexistent Klan rampage. Twitter-obsessed reporters ran in search of a story. Though the facts eventually came limping onto the scene, lasting damage was done. Morale and enrollment sagged at the university. Trust in media and police took another hit. The reputation and economy of Missouri absorbed a blow.

Not bad for a single shift at the disinformation factory. In each incarnation, the agent employs the same tools: distorted or fabricated narratives, legions of retweeting bots, existing networks of unsuspecting partisans ready to believe the worst, allegations of elite corruption, and the viral engine of trending hashtags.

Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats reported to Congress this last week that such efforts are designed "to exacerbate social and political fissures in the United States," "to create wedges that reduce trust and confidence in democratic processes," and "to encourage anti-US political views."

It's working. That's why this challenge is critical to our national security. We cannot tackle either threats or competition from China, North Korea, Russia or violent Islamist extremists without a common sense of purpose at

home and supportive allies abroad.

Prier wraps up his paper by calling on social media companies, political leaders and journalists to come to the aid of the country. Twitter, he notes, faces a particular quandary because bot networks and the trending-topic feature — two key weapons in the enemy's arsenal — are both integral to the company's business model. Advertisers love Twitter bots, while the trending algorithm lends an air of urgency and authority that the platform would otherwise lack.

On the other hand, I see no good reason journalists can't go straight to work curbing our "overreliance on social media for breaking news," as Prier puts it. Reporters should treat every tweet with skepticism and demand real-world confirmation of tweeted "news" before sharing it.

What we need from politicians is sufficient leadership to raise the issue of cyberdefence above the muck of partisan advantage. Sparring over the Trump-Russia investigation is of passing importance compared with the survival of open societies.

Uncle Sam wants you, and your smartphone. It is up to this generation of Westerners — every woman, man and child — to show that self-government can survive the digital revolution. To educate ourselves in the use and abuse of personal tools of mass communication, and to employ these tools without stoking social division.

We are being tested. The authorities are already taking the other path, protecting their rule by controlling digital access. The same will happen in the West, if we can't control ourselves.

The author writes a twice-weekly column for The Post. He was previously an editor-at-large for Time Magazine, and is the author of four books, including "Rise to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln and America's Most Perilous Year" and "Triangle: The Fire That Changed America."

## Fighting back against the fabrications

automated bots, leverage the blind spots and biases of unwitting Americans to help them send falsehoods flying to spread division and demoralisation.

Figuring out how to fight back, in a free society of open communication, is the most urgent national security challenge we face. Friday's indictments by special counsel Robert Mueller III of a Russian trolling operation is a welcome sign that we are joining the battle. But so far, we are losing. And should we fail, the future will belong to authoritarian states that protect their virtual borders by controlling Internet access.

In his paper, "Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare," Lt. Col. Jarred Prier examines strategies and tactics used by both the Islamic State and the Russian government to seize command of trending topics on Twitter and, to a lesser degree, Facebook. By hijacking these algorithms, enemy agents and their armies of bots inflame tension and erode trust across American society.

A striking example, which Prier documents in detail, came during the November 2015 protests at the University



What we need from politicians is sufficient leadership to raise the issue of cyberdefence above the muck of partisan advantage.

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# Canada open to immigration, says Trudeau in Gujarat

IANS

**AHMEDABAD:** Dressed in traditional Indian attire, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, his wife and three children landed in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hometown Gujarat yesterday.

The visiting Prime Minister and his family, here on a day-long visit, were received at the Sardar Vallabhbhai International Airport here by Gujarat Minister Ganpat Vasava and State Chief Secretary.

The first engagement of the Trudeau family, dressed in shades of festive yellow and red, was a visit to the Sabarmati Ashram. After paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, the Canadian Prime Minister tried his hand at the spinning wheel.

Trudeau appeared at ease as though on a family tour instead of an official visit and sported an attractive red bandhgala kurta accompanied by a cream-coloured churidar and even a matching stole.

Similarly, his wife Sophie Gregoire Trudeau was in a bright yellow long kurta which she teamed with white palazzo pants. She wore drop-down earrings, gold bangles and a little bindi to give her a completely traditional Indian look.

Writing in the visitor's book at the Sabarmati Ashram, Trudeau said: "A beautiful place of peace, humanity and truth that is as needed today as ever." He then



**On trade front, Trudeau said that current bilateral trade of \$8bn in goods & \$2bn in services had a potential to grow.**

proceeded to the Akshardham Temple in state capital Gandhinagar and spent about 40 minutes there.

His last destination was the premier B-school Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, for a townhall where he had a lively session with the students, taking questions and replying in great detail.

Trudeau said Canada was open to immigration and trade. On trade front, the Prime Minister said that current bilateral trade of \$8bn in goods and \$2bn in services had a potential to grow.

"When you think of natural connections between India and Canada, especially in field of agriculture or pulses, where we have slight challenges. We are discussing potential of growth in pulses." Referring to the issue of immigration, especially in context of most of the countries globally looking inwards and raising barriers, Trudeau said that he and Canada

firmly believed that the new reality for 21st century is going to be heterogeneous societies.

"India has done fairly well and Canada too has done fairly well to see that differences can become source of strength and not weakness. As you get more pluralistic, language, religion, ethnicity, ideology should be anchored in shared values that society subscribes to." Trudeau went on to say that dividing society on the basis of ethnicity and religious lines was an 'tribal' approach to civilisation that has over thousands of years ripped apart these beliefs.

"There are two paths - you can either amplify the anxiety in the world by blaming a particular ethnic or religious group for all the troubles in the society or you can take a more successful pluralistic approach, when you actually meet people with different story and believe that we meet them and grow." The Canadian Prime Minister also had a word for the media, which he called "frustrating" at times but in the same breath said that it was important to support it as it tells the governments where it is wrong. "Independent media is essential for a successful democracy." Trudeau again summoned the name of Mahatma Gandhi to be his inspiration. "He should be an inspiration to all. Idea of extraordinary strength in compassion, peace and non-violence."



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (third right) and his wife Sophie Gregoire Trudeau (left) with their daughter Ella-Grace (second left) and their sons Xavier (right) and Hadrien pose for a photo during their visit to Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad, yesterday.

## India to host World Environment Day 2018

IANS

**NEW DELHI:** India will host the World Environment Day 2018. Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan and United Nations Environment Program chief Erik Solheim said yesterday.

The theme for the World Environment Day-2018, held every year on June 5, is 'Beat Plastic Pollution'. Canada hosted the event in 2017.

Calling the announcement the 'beginning of the end of plastic', Harsh Vardhan said the ministry will take the lead in discouraging the use of plastic.

"For India, World Environment Day 2018 is not a symbolic celebration but a mission," the Minister said, adding that environmental issues are not merely technical but real moral issues.

Voicing concern over the oceans being polluted due to plastic, Erik Solheim said that plastic pollution is a huge environment and health issue.

"When big plastics degrade into small pieces, it gets into the ocean. Small plastic particles are eaten by fish. We eat fish and the plastic gets into our body. So plastic pollution is a huge environment and health issue," Erik Solheim said.

Meanwhile, Harsh Vardhan also launched the first electric charging facility at the Lodhi Road UN office - the first ever in a UN office in India.

## PNB fraud points to 'supervisory failure at central bank'

REUTERS

**MUMBAI:** India's government has said the \$1.77bn fraud at state-run Punjab National Bank was a 'manifestation of supervisory failure' at the country's central bank, local media reported yesterday.

In a letter to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the government said the failure to detect the fraud, the biggest ever in India's banking sector, raised questions about the central bank's efficacy of supervision to detect and check systemic failure", NewsRise and other local media reported.

"Either the framework designed by RBI to prevent and detect such frauds is inadequate or RBI is unable to ensure its effective implementation," they

quoted the letter as saying. The RBI did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday, which was a holiday in Mumbai. A finance ministry spokesman declined comment.

Rajeev Kumar, the top government bureaucrat overseeing banks, said in New Delhi the finance ministry had written to the country's banks to take effective steps to avoid a repeat of a PNB-like fraud. Kumar declined to comment if the government had written to the RBI.

The government action comes as federal police briefly locked down the PNB branch in south Mumbai that was at the heart of the scam and continued searches yesterday to gather evidence. The bank would have been closed yesterday anyway because

of the holiday. A source at the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said the branch was likely to resume operations today.

Besides searching the premises, the police also questioned more PNB officials on yesterday, the CBI source said, taking the total number bank staff who have been questioned so far to 13.

Three people, including two employees of PNB, India's second largest state-run lender, were arrested and presented before a Mumbai court over the weekend in the case that involves billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi.

Police also questioned some executives from Nirav Modi's group, the source said.

The bank has said that the two employees arrested by police colluded with companies

belonging to Modi and another jeweller Mehul Choksi, who heads jewellery retailer Gitanjali Gems Ltd and other companies.

Jeweller Modi, whose clients include Hollywood stars such as Kate Winslet and Dakota Johnson, has not commented on the allegations. Police have said Modi and his family left India before PNB filed a complaint on the alleged fraud.

Choksi has also not commented, and police have said he also left India last month.

PNB has said the two bank officials issued fraudulent letters of undertaking to overseas branches of other Indian banks which lent money to the jewellers based on the guarantee from PNB. All the letters of undertaking were issued by the two

employees who were working at the Brady Road branch in south Mumbai.

PNB shares slid for a fourth straight day yesterday, closing 7.2 percent lower. The sell off has wiped out about \$1.7bn, or more than a quarter of the bank's market value, since it disclosed the fraud last Wednesday.

Meanwhile in a sign of the widening fallout from the PNB case, shares of Choksi's Gitanjali Gems fell 9.9 percent after its chief financial officer and company secretary resigned yesterday.

In a letter shared with stock exchanges, Company Secretary Pankhuri Warange said she was resigning because of the company's lack of disclosure despite her advice to be forthcoming.



## Protest in Srinagar

Kashmiris, with injuries sustained by pellet guns during the 2016 unrest, protest to draw attention to their plight in Srinagar yesterday. Rough estimates put the number of people with pellet shell injuries during the 2016 unrest at more than 6,000, with more than 1,100 sustaining injuries to their eyes.

## Bangladesh to meet with Myanmar on Rohingya trapped on border

REUTERS

**DHAKA:** Representatives from Bangladesh and Myanmar will meet today to discuss the repatriation to Myanmar of more than 6,500 Rohingya Muslims trapped on a strip of unclaimed land between the two countries, Bangladeshi officials said.

"It is about taking them back to Myanmar." Relief and Refugee Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam, said yesterday. "They are on the zero line and actually on the Myanmar side." However, several officials contacted in neighbouring Myanmar said they were not aware of plans for a meeting, which Kalam said would take place on the 'zero

line' near a place called Gundum.

A spokeswoman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which will not be involved in the talks, said the agency was concerned the Rohingya may be forcibly returned to Myanmar without due consideration for their safety.

Nearly 700,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar's Rakhine state and crossed into Bangladesh since last August, when attacks on security posts by insurgents triggered a military crackdown that the United Nations has said amounts to ethnic cleansing, with reports of arson attacks, murder and rape.

## Maldives leader seeks nod to extend emergency

REUTERS

**MALE:** Maldives President Abdulla Yameen yesterday sought parliamentary approval to extend a state of emergency for 30 days in the Indian Ocean archipelago as "the situation has not changed", a top parliamentary official said.

Yameen imposed the emergency on February 5 for 15 days to annul a Supreme Court ruling that ousted convictions against nine opposition leaders and ordered his government to free those held in prison. Deputy Parliamentary Secretary General

Fathmath Niusha told the legislature Yameen wanted its vote to prolong the emergency.

The opposition responded that this would not be possible without a quorum of at least 43 MPs in the 85-member parliament. No opposition MPs showed up for yesterday's session, leaving only 39 present from the ruling party. In its ruling late last month, the high court also ordered the reinstatement, on constitutional grounds, of 12 lawmakers stripped of their parliamentary seats by Yameen's party for defecting last year.

## Arrested accused real culprits in Kannur murder case

IANS

**KANNUR:** The two CPI-M men arrested in connection with the murder of a young Congress worker are the real culprits and not 'dummy accused', said a senior police official yesterday.

Youth Congress worker Shoab, 30, was waiting at an eatery near Mattanoor around 10:45pm yesterday last week when four persons riding a car hurled bombs to create panic and then fatally slashed him with a sword.

"Accused Akash and Rijin Raj were also involved in another murder case. Their

arrest has been recorded and they have been taken for medical check-up," said the officer.

What has shocked many is a picture of the two accused with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) state secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, which has appeared in the state.

Speaking to the media here for the first time since the incident, Director General of Police (North Zone) Rajesh Diwan said he decided to speak to the press to clarify some false news appearing here and there.

"for some reason, politics is getting mixed with this case.

When we began the case, the only thing we knew was that a white car had been used. Today, we have two people in custody and they are CPI-M workers and they are the real culprits.

The probe is going forward and I personally assure that we will not fall in our duties," said Diwan.

The Congress party has begun a huge protest in Kannur and in the state capital, saying that the police were not doing a 'clean job' and that 'dummy accused' were being framed.

With the police clearly stating that the arrested accused were CPI-M workers, the

earlier statement from the Kannur unit of the party, which denied any role in the murder, has fallen flat.

Senior Congress leader K Sudhakaran, who is the senior-most Congress leader in Kannur, yesterday launched a 48-hour fast to protest the 'callous attitude' of the police.

"It's strange that although CPI-M Kannur district secretary P Jayarajan says the party has no role in this murder case, one of the arrested persons is a close aide of Jayarajan and is very active in the cyber world for the CPI-M, yet he says he has no clue," said Sudhakaran.



# Pakistan seeks China's help to soften US stance

INTERNEWS

**ISLAMABAD:** State officials from Pakistan have sought assistance from its long-standing strategic partners China and Saudi Arabia to convince US to soften its aggressive approach against Pakistan.

The move comes after the efforts to iron out differences with Washington by Islamabad are making headway.

An official said the decision was made to acquire more weightage to Pakistan's perspective. He complained that the United States was only giving selective hearing to their concerns.

"We hope China being a major international player can talk to the US directly on our legitimate concerns," said the official, who has asked to remain anonymous as he is not authorised to speak to the media.

The official reiterated that Pakistan has its own list of grievances but at the moment it is concerned about the manner in which the US is not only putting pressure through unilateral actions but also seeking multilateral organisations on board.

Washington is currently making efforts to place Pakistan on the list of countries that finance terrorism.

A few weeks back, US along



**Relations between Pakistan & the US have been tense since President Donald Trump announced a new strategy for Afghanistan & South Asia.**

with UK moved the Paris based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to place Pakistan on the global watch-list of terror financing countries. Pakistan is worrisome because US has successfully attracted other key western countries including UK, Germany and France on this matter.

The intergovernmental organisation that sets global standards against illicit finance is - FATF is set to consider the US request in the upcoming meeting in France. The foreign office has called it a "politically motivated" move to undermine Pakistan's economic progress.

He states this has been one of the reasons that prompted Pakistan to go for this step. When asked how China could play a positive role in this, he replied, "Beijing has many levers up in its sleeves to persuade Washington to review its tough stance towards Pakistan."

As part of a diplomatic outreach, Islamabad has requested Saudi Arabia to talk to the US to lower the rhetoric for Pakistan.

As both countries maintain a strategic relationship, Pakistan is hoping Riyadh could be of great help.

Pakistan has decided to send additional troops to Saudi Arabia, signaling improved ties. The officials hope that Saudi Arabia would urge the US to stop putting further pressure on them.

Relations between Pakistan and the US have been tense since President Trump announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia where he said Pakistan provides safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror.

US President Donald Trump's New Year tweet in which he accused Pakistan for 'lies and deceit' gave further blow to the already fragile relationship.

Trump's tweet was followed by a White House announcement that it was suspending entire security assistance to Pakistan until it decides to take action against the alleged safe heavens of Haqqani network.

Pakistan has repeatedly denied the allegations of double play and insisted that it cannot be made scapegoat for the America's failure in Afghanistan.



## Imran Khan ties the knot yet again

A picture released by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) yesterday shows Pakistani cricketer-turned-opposition leader and head of the PTI party Imran Khan (second right, sitting) posing for a photograph with his new wife Bushra Wattoo (second left, sitting) along with relatives during their wedding ceremony in Lahore.

## Afghan nomads trapped, hungry as Pakistan blocks access to grazing land

REUTERS

**PHNOM PENH:** Donors have refused to support 200,000 nomadic herders in Afghanistan who are running out of food and stranded with their dying animals after Pakistan closed the border, blocking access to pastureland, an aid group said yesterday.

The Kuchi nomads number about 2.4 million and traditionally migrate in winter from eastern and central Afghanistan

to graze their herds in frontier areas inside Pakistan.

This year, Pakistan has closed its border crossings amid tensions with its neighbour. Afghanistan accused Pakistan of failing to move against the Taliban after two attacks in January that killed hundreds in the Afghan capital Kabul. A recent assessment by a German aid group found that 200,000 Kuchis were trapped in Afghanistan's eastern province of Khost with enough food for only

two weeks, said Kinga Komorowska, country director for French charity Action Against Hunger.

She said her charity had approached two major aid donors, which she declined to name, with requests for assistance. One donor said there was not enough data - despite the needs-assessment - while another said the situation 'fell outside its mandate', according to Komorowska.

# Philippine arrests alleged former IS commander

AP

**MANILA:** Philippine police and army troops have arrested an Arab man they believe was a former commander of the Islamic State group along the Syria and Turkey border in a raid on a Manila apartment, where they found bomb-making materials and an IS-style flag, the national police chief said yesterday.

Police Director General Ronald dela Rosa said Fehmi Lassoued, who is reportedly from Egypt, and his Filipina companion, Anabel Moncera Salpada, were arrested last week based on intelligence provided by foreign counterparts.

He said investigators were looking into possible links between the two suspects and local and foreign militant groups, and whether they were involved in any terrorist activity. Dela Rosa said at a news conference that Lassoued has a fake Tunisian passport and may be a militant recruiter, but did not offer any evidence.

Clad in an orange detainee shirt, handcuffed and held on both sides by soldiers,

Lassoued stood with his head often bowed in front of a table where bomb-making parts and other evidence were displayed at the news conference.

Salpada is from the southern town of Upi in Maguindanao province, where Muslim militants operate, according to her identity card. Lassoued apparently entered the Philippines in July 2016 from Iran using a fake passport which Philippine immigration personnel failed to detect, dela Rosa said, adding that he traveled to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and the Turkish city of Istanbul from 2016 to 2017.

Investigators were also trying to determine if Lassoued was involved in a siege by hundreds of Islamic State group-aligned militants on the southern Islamic city of Marawi last year, dela Rosa said. The five-month uprising left more than 1,100 combatants dead, mostly Muslim militants, and displaced hundreds of thousands of villagers before troops crushed it with ground assaults and airstrikes.

The Marawi siege, which was joined by several Indonesian, Malaysian and Arab

militants, reinforced fears that the Islamic State group was gaining a foothold in

Southeast Asia following battle setbacks in Syria and Iraq.



Egyptian national Fehmi Lassoued is presented to members of the media after being arrested allegedly in possession of assorted explosives and bomb-making paraphernalia during a press conference at the Philippine National Police general headquarters in Quezon City, Metro Manila, yesterday.

## Air New Zealand warns of flight disruptions

REUTERS

**WELLINGTON:** Air New Zealand warned yesterday flights in and out of New Zealand faced major disruptions this week due to Cyclone Gita, set to hit the country today, and encouraged passengers to defer travelling. "We are anticipating significant disruption to our domestic network as well as some international services over the coming week," the airline said in a travel alert on its web site.

Air New Zealand said it would not reimburse passengers for any costs or penalties like hotels and meals if flight schedules were disrupted.

"Any customer who chooses to commence their journey as planned must be advised that they do so at their own risk," the airline said.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the government was keeping a close eye on the cyclone and urged people to take local civil defence warnings seriously.

New Zealand's MetService issued severe weather warnings for most of the country's South Island, expected to be hit by heavy rain and gale-force winds, while it said western areas of the North Island will face strong northerly winds.

Cyclone Gita hit the Pacific island nations of Fiji and Tonga last week, packing winds up to 275 km per hour and causing widespread destruction and flooding. It earlier caused extensive damage in Samoa and American Samoa.

Authorities along the country's remote West Coast were meeting on Monday evening to decide whether to declare a state of emergency for the region, parts of which were still reeling from a huge storm that hit at the start of February.

## Two-thirds of Australians want deputy PM to resign

REUTERS

**SYDNEY:** Two-thirds of Australian voters want Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce to resign following his extramarital affair with his former press secretary, a poll showed yesterday, adding pressure on a government already fractured by the scandal.

Joyce, a Catholic who campaigned on 'family values' and who has been married for 24 years, refused to resign when it was made public he was expecting a child with his former staffer.

Some 65 percent of voters want Joyce to step down as leader of the rural-based National Party, the junior partner in the government led by the Liberal Party, The Australian newspaper's Newspoll showed.

The Liberal-National coalition has existed since 1923, with the National leader usually taking on the deputy prime

ministership. The scandal has damaged the government's reelection chances, according to NewsPoll. The government, which has only a one-seat majority, now trails the main opposition Labour Party by a margin of 53-47 percent on a two-party basis.

The government must call an election by May 2019.

With mounting public pressure, Joyce sought to turn the tide of public opinion, giving a rare interview yesterday with the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper, where he blamed public life for the breakdown of his marriage.

Joyce has begun a highly unusual week-long leave of absence at the urging of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who will this week travel to Washington, which would have typically seen Joyce installed as acting prime minister. Finance Minister Mathias Cormann will now be acting leader.

## Afghan political crisis deepens as second governor refuses to resign

AFP

**KABUL:** A governor in northern Afghanistan has become the second in the region to defy an order by President Ashraf Ghani to step down, deepening a political crisis facing the US-backed government in Kabul.

Abdul Karim Khadam, the governor of northern Samangan province, was sacked along with four other provincial governors last week.

But he followed Atta Mohammad Noor, the heavy-weight governor of neighbouring Balkh province, who refused to leave office after he was also sacked in December.

Noor's refusal to step down has turned the so-called 'King of the North' into one of Afghanistan's most infamous politicians and a potential contender in presidential elections due in 2019, while underscoring the weakness of Ghani's

government. Khadam's decision to follow suit has deepened the crisis and threatened to further ethnic divisions between Tajiks and the Pashtun-dominated south, which often dominate Afghanistan's politics.

An ethnic Turkmen, Khadam belongs to the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-e-Islami party, of which Noor is also a member.

"The decision is unfair and unjust. It is against the principles. I condemn this decision and don't accept it. I will wait for Jamiat party stance about this," he told reporters late on Sunday.

Jamiat in a statement yesterday said his removal was "unjustified and yet another step toward increasing tension in the country." The dispute comes at a bad time for Ghani's US-backed government, which is facing growing public fury over recent deadly attacks in Kabul and elsewhere in the war-torn

country that have laid bare its inability to protect civilians.

Ghani, who belongs to the country's largest Pashtun ethnic group, took the presidency in 2014 in a US-brokered power-sharing deal with his rival, Jamiat-backed Abdullah Abdullah, who was named chief executive.

Jamiat has accused Ghani of failing to fulfil the terms of the agreement and has submitted demands to the president's negotiators, including a restructuring of parliament.

Noor has used the ongoing crisis to show off his strength, holding televised rallies and meeting representatives of various ethnic groups and political parties from across the country.

But as the talks drag on there are growing fears the crisis could turn violent, sparking calls from the White House and others for a peaceful resolution.

# Duterte plays down China's sea militarisation

REUTERS

**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (pictured) sought yesterday to allay fears about China's construction of military bases on manmade islands in the South China Sea, saying these were built to defend against America rather than confront neighbouring states.

Duterte also blamed past governments for not building up the country's defences in the Spratly archipelago at a time when Beijing was only starting to build its artificial islands and turning them into military bases.

"We did nothing," the fire-brand leader said in a speech to Chinese-Filipino businessmen. On China's construction, adding

**Philippine leader played down concerns about the recent moves by China to assign Chinese names to several undersea features in Benham Rise, an area which the United Nations awarded to the Philippines as part of its continental shelf.**

that, "It's not intended for us. The contending ideological powers of the world or the geopolitics has greatly changed. It's really intended against those who the



Chinese think would destroy them and that is America."

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a strategic waterway where \$3 trillion

worth of goods passes every year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have overlapping claims.

The United States has criticised China's build-up of military facilities on the islands and is concerned they could be used to restrict free movement along the trade route.

China and the Philippines have long sparred over the South China Sea, but relations have improved considerably under Duterte, who has been courting Beijing in hopes of winning business and

investment.

In 2014, Beijing started expanding the seven features it occupies in the Spratlys, reclaiming and building artificial islands which are now becoming military bases with airstrips, ports and anti-air and surface-to-surface missiles sites based on satellite and aerial photos.

Duterte defended himself from critics who say he is not doing enough to protect the country's interests in the South China Sea. He said he "will not commit the lives of the Filipinos only to die unnecessarily. I will not go into a battle which I can never win."

He also played down concerns about the recent moves by

China to assign Chinese names to several undersea features in Benham Rise, an area the size of Greece in the Pacific Ocean which the United Nations awarded to the Philippines as part of its continental shelf.

"That is ours, period," he said. "I am not allowing any expedition anymore. China went there and put up markers. Those are just directions and of course, they can do it in Chinese, it's their dialect."

Before ending his speech, he cracked a joke offering the Philippines to become a province of China. "If you want, you can make us a province. Like Fujian, Province of the Philippines, Republic of China," he added yesterday.

## Former Thai premier calls for party unity

REUTERS

**BANGKOK:** Fugitive former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra met lawmakers from his Puea Thai Party in Hong Kong where he called for party unity ahead of an approaching general election, party members said yesterday.

Many are watching to see how Puea Thai Party performs in a vote which the military government has promised to hold in November but which could be delayed.

Thaksin, who founded Advance Info Service Plc, Thailand's largest mobile phone operator, was prime minister from 2001 to 2006 when he was overthrown in a military coup supported by the Bangkok-based establishment.

Thaksin, who is based in

Dubai, continues to loom large over Thai politics and remains popular in the northeast 'Isaan' region which, along with the north, forms the stronghold of parties aligned with Thaksin which have won every election since 2001 by appealing to poorer voters.

Thaksin was convicted in absentia in 2006 on conflict of interest charges.

Prayuth Sirinpanich, a Puea Thai Party member and its former representative for the northeastern province of Maha Sarakham, said ten lawmakers flew to Hong Kong on Saturday and returned yesterday.

"Thaksin asked lawmakers to be united and not to break that unity," Prayuth said. "He asked that lawmakers meet their constituents because the election is fast approaching."



## Diplomacy

The US Army's Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley (left) with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during their meeting at Abe's official residence, in Tokyo, yesterday.

## Tourists trapped in Malaysia cable car accident

AFP

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Hundreds of tourists were stranded for hours after a cable car broke down on the Malaysian island of Langkawi, authorities said yesterday, with some left dangling in cabins over a jungle-clad mountain as night fell.

Over 1,000 tourists and scores of cable car workers were trapped on Sunday when a faulty part caused the popular attraction to grind to a halt, officials said.

Almost 90 people were travelling on the cable car -- which is on the island's second-highest peak and offers panoramic views over the palm-fringed tourist hotspot -- at the time of the accident. The majority were at the top of Mount Machinchang, or at a station halfway down.

## Duterte aide faces frigate deal probe

REUTERS

**MANILA:** Philippine senators began a public inquiry yesterday into the \$300m purchase of two navy frigates, to determine whether President Rodrigo Duterte's closest aide had interfered in the procurement process.

The inquiry was prompted by media reports that carried a leaked document with an annotation that links the president's longtime special assistant, Christopher "Bong" Go, to the process of procuring a combat management system for the frigates from a South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries.

The hearing called by the Senate committee on national defence and security is looking to establish whether or not Go had gone beyond his remit by getting involved in a defence contract. He has not been accused of corruption.

Go denies any wrongdoing and read a statement criticising of the media, calling it "fake news". He said he was simply passing on to the defence department a "complaint" the Office of the President had received.

## Indonesia steps up effort to curb online content

REUTERS

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia has blocked more than 70,000 websites displaying "negative" content such as pornography or extremist ideology in the first month of using a new system to help purge the internet of harmful material, the communications minister said.

The world's most populous Muslim-majority country has stepped up efforts to control online content after a rise in hoax stories and hate speech, and amid controversial anti-pornography laws pushed by Islamic parties.

The so-called "crawling system" developed by a unit of



state-run Telekomunikasi Indonesia Tbk (Telkom) was launched in January, using 44 servers to search Internet content and issue alerts when inappropriate material is found.

"We just put some sort of key words there, most of them are pornography," said Minister of Communication and Information Rudiantara (pictured), who uses one name.

"Because after 2017 we have blocked almost 800,000 sites and more than 90 percent (of these were) pornography," said the minister.

According to ministry data, the system, installed at a cost of around \$15m, helped block 72,407 pornography sites in January.

The ministry also acts to get content removed from social media platforms if there are complaints from the public.

Indonesia threatened last

year to block Facebook Inc's WhatsApp Messenger, which is widely used in the country, unless obscene Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) images provided by third parties were removed.

Authorities also blocked access to some channels on encrypted messaging service Telegram last year, saying it had several forums that were "full of radical and terrorist propaganda".

The minister also said that nine tech companies, including Google and Facebook, had recently pledged to help authorities fight fake news and hate speech during upcoming elections in the world's third-biggest democracy.

## Indonesian volcano erupts, spews ash

AFP

**KARO:** An Indonesian volcano erupted yesterday, sending a massive column of ash and smoke some 5,000 metres into the air, leaving local villages coated in debris and officials scrambling to hand out face masks to residents.

Mount Sinabung on Sumatra island, which has been rumbling since 2010 and saw a deadly eruption in 2016, spewed the thick plume after activity picked up recent days.

"This was the biggest eruption for Sinabung this year," said volcanology agency chief Kasbani, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

There were no reports of injuries or deaths.

No one lives inside a previously announced no-go zone around the volcano.



Schoolchildren walk together as thick volcanic ash from Mount Sinabung rises into the air following another eruption, in Tiga Pancur village, in Karo, North Sumatra, yesterday.

But hundreds of houses outside the seven-kilometre danger zone were covered in volcanic ash.

Officials have distributed face masks and urged local residents to stay indoors to avoid respiratory problems, said local

disaster mitigation agency official Nata Nail Perangin-angin.

"In some villages the visibility was barely five metres after the eruption -- it was pitch black," Perangin-angin added.

"Pressure inside the crater was threatening to spark collapses in its dome," the official said.

Sinabung roared back to life in 2010 for the first time in 400 years. After another period of inactivity it erupted once more in 2013, and has remained highly active since.

In 2016, seven people died in one of Sinabung's eruptions, while a 2014 eruption left 16 people dead.

Indonesia is home to around 130 volcanoes due to its position on the "Ring of Fire," a belt of tectonic plate boundaries circling the Pacific Ocean where frequent seismic activity occurs.

## Cambodia found nest of endangered 'royal turtles'

REUTERS

**PHNOM PENH:** Wildlife experts in Cambodia have discovered a nest with 16 eggs built by the nearly extinct "royal turtle", in the first such discovery this year, the non-profit Wildlife Conservation (WCS) Society said yesterday.

The southern river terrapin, known in Cambodia as the "royal turtle" because its eggs were historically reserved for royalty, is one of the world's 25 most endangered freshwater turtles, the WCS says.

Over the past two years, just three such nests have been found in Cambodia, it added. "Illegal clearance of flooded forest and illegal fishing puts this species at risk," said Som Sitha, a technical adviser to the WCS.

"Everyone can help conserve our national reptile by not purchasing or eating their meat and eggs."

Wildlife rangers in the southwestern province of Koh Kong, where the eggs were discovered along a river by villagers and conservationists, including the WCS, are guarding them until they hatch, the conservation group said in a statement.

Populations of Batagur affinis, as the species is known to zoologists, are "severely depleted", it added, as it is hunted for its flesh and large eggs, and faced with habitat destruction.

The turtle was believed extinct in Cambodia until 2000, when a small population was rediscovered by conservationists.



# US indictment lacks evidence: Kremlin

REUTERS

**MOSCOW:** The Kremlin said yesterday that US charges against 13 Russians and several Russian companies accused of meddling in the 2016 US presidential election campaign contained zero proof of Russian state involvement.

The comments were the Kremlin's first reaction to charges drawn up by the office of US Special Counsel Robert Mueller which centred on a Russian businessman nicknamed 'Putin's cook' by the Russian media who US officials say has extensive ties to the country's military and political establishment.

The full indictment, released on Friday, said that a Russian propaganda arm funded by the businessman, Evgeny Prigozhin, oversaw a criminal and espionage conspiracy to tamper in the 2016 US presidential campaign to support Donald Trump and disparage Hillary Clinton.

The charges are awkward for the Kremlin which is keen to try to build a relationship with Trump in the hope that could eventually lead to US sanctions imposed over its role in Ukraine being lifted.

The election-meddling allegations have soured US-Russia ties further however, triggering

**Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the US indictment centred purely on individuals and presented no tangible proof that the Kremlin itself or Russian government agencies were involved.**

new sanctions as well as pressure for more restrictions.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said yesterday that the US indictment centred purely on individuals and presented no tangible proof that the Kremlin itself or Russian government agencies were involved.

"They (the Americans) are talking about Russian citizens, but we have heard in announcements from Washington accusations about the involvement of the Russian state, the Kremlin and the Russian government," Peskov said during a conference call.

"There are no indications that the Russian state could have been involved in this and nor can there be any. Russia did not meddle, does not have the habit of meddling in the internal affairs of other countries, and is not doing so now."

The US indictment of Prigozhin, nicknamed 'Putin's cook' because of his catering business that has organised banquets for the Russian leader and other senior political figures, is uncomfortable for the Kremlin.

Prigozhin, 56, has boasted of meeting Putin and of the Russian leader being impressed with his business acumen. The Kremlin did not refer to Prigozhin by name in its yesterday's comments.

The US Treasury had sanctioned Prigozhin previously, in 2016, for providing material support to senior Russian government officials, saying he has extensive business dealings with the Russian Defence Ministry.

Friday's indictment accused him of funding the St Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, known for its trolling on social media.

Companies which he directly or indirectly owns or controls are listed in an official corporate database as having won lucrative state contracts for the Russian presidential administration, parliament, and the defence ministry.

His biggest business appears to be supplying food to state-run schools and universities. One of the firms he owns and manages won contracts in that sector worth \$8.15bn between 2011 to 2017, the same database shows.



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May addressing students and staff during her visit to Derby College, in Derby, Britain, yesterday.

## UK reviews high tuition fees

REUTERS

**LONDON:** British universities must offer students value for money, Prime Minister Theresa May said yesterday, launching a review that could reduce fees and restore grants in a bid to entice younger voters who helped punish her party at an election last year.

In a speech designed to show her programme for Britain is more than just its departure from the European Union, May said she wanted not only to look at the funding of education but also at ways of raising the importance of technical studies

to prepare the country for life after Brexit in the high-tech age.

Her pitch was also aimed at the opposition Labour Party, which, some pollsters say, won over young voters by promising to get rid of student fees and which threaten to force the Conservatives out of several London councils in local elections in May.

"We now have one of the most expensive systems of university tuition in the world," she said at a college in the northern English city of Derby, adding that she shared the concerns of students and their carers.

"The review will now look at the whole question of how

students and graduates contribute to the cost of their studies," she said, dodging a question whether taxpayers would have to pay more towards the university education of students.

Labour's education policy adviser, Angela Rayner, described the speech as an admission by May "that her government got it wrong".

"This long-winded review is an unnecessary waste of time. Labour will abolish tuition fees, bring back maintenance grants and provide free, lifelong education in Further Education colleges."

## Merkel taps close ally for CDU party head

REUTERS

**BERLIN:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel put forward close ally Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer yesterday to take over as secretary-general of her Christian Democrats (CDU), heading calls from within the party to inject new blood and groom a successor.

The decision to entrust Kramp-Karrenbauer with bolstering the CDU after it lost ground in last year's election is significant as some party members are starting to look ahead to a post-Merkel era.

Merkel, who was CDU secretary-general before becoming chancellor, said



German Chancellor Angela Merkel (centre); State Premier of Saarland, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and Peter Tauber (left), Secretary-General of Christian Democratic Union (CDU), pose ahead of leadership meeting at the CDU headquarters, in Berlin, yesterday.

Kramp-Karrenbauer, premier of the tiny western state of Saarland, would bring "a lot of

weight" to the role in what she called "difficult times, uncertain times".

The chancellor has been under pressure from within the CDU to bring fresh faces into senior positions and to begin planning for her own succession. By promoting Kramp-Karrenbauer she achieves both, and moves an ally into a key role.

"We have known each other a long time and can rely on each other, even if we have our own views," Merkel, 63, told a joint news conference with Kramp-Karrenbauer, 55.

Asked if she saw Kramp-Karrenbauer as a possible successor, Merkel replied: "It is your privilege that you are always three laps ahead of others... We have our hands full managing the business of the day."

Though Merkel has said she is available as chancellor for four years, the succession debate has been supercharged by the inclusion of a clause in a coalition deal with the Social Democrats (SPD) that envisages a review of the next government's progress after two years to assess whether any changes to its mission are needed.

Kramp-Karrenbauer is expected to be voted into her new role at a February 26 party congress. Her promotion is a setback to Jens Spahn, a 37-year-old arch-conservative long seen as a rising star in the CDU with an eye on the succession.

Outgoing secretary-general Peter Tauber is giving up the role after a period of illness.

## French violinist Didier Lockwood dies at 62

AFP

**PARIS:** Noted French jazz violinist Didier Lockwood, a disciple of the late Stephane Grappelli, has died of a heart attack in Paris, his agent said.

Lockwood, who turned 62 on February 12, died on Sunday. The night before his death, he had performed at Paris jazz venue Bal Blomet. "His wife, his three daughters, his family, his agent, his co-workers and his record label are sad to announce the sudden passing of Didier Lockwood," his agent said in a statement.

Lockwood was playing at a jazz festival when he met Grappelli, another French jazz great who founded a string quintet the Hot Club of France in 1934.

The violinist invited the then 20-year-old Lockwood to join him on a European tour, kicking off an international career in which he gave around 4,500 concerts and released more than 35 records.

"That was the start of my career, the launchpad that got me into the world of popular jazz," Lockwood told Radio France in 2008.

Lockwood was committed to music education, in 2001 setting up the Didier Lockwood Music Centre in a town south of Paris teaching improvisation.

French culture minister Francoise Nyssen described Lockwood as "deeply generous and outgoing" and he would be missed by "his friends, music and all the children he wished to enlighten with his passion".

## France urges UN court to dump E Guinea case

AFP

**THE HAGUE:** France accused Equatorial Guinea yesterday of wanting to "paralyse" French criminal procedure in a top-level corruption probe, as it urged judges to throw out a case against it before the UN's top court.

Malabo has dragged Paris before the International Court of Justice in a bitter diplomatic row, accusing it of violating the diplomatic immunity of its vice president Teodorin Obiang.

Son of Teodorin Obiang, long-time leader of the oil-rich central African country, Teodorin Obiang has been prosecuted by a French court on charges of embezzling \$180m of public funds to finance his jet-set lifestyle.

France's representatives however hit back as a hearing opened before the Hague-based ICJ, with delegation member Alain Pellet saying Equatorial Guinea attempted to "slow down, or even paralyse" the criminal procedure launched in France. Malabo's decision to take the matter to the ICJ is an attempt "to give their case more prominence" argued

Pellet, who said Paris challenged the ICJ's jurisdiction.

"France has not accepted the jurisdiction of this court under any title whatsoever to entertain those facts on which Equatorial Guinea seeks the court to rule," French representative Francois Alabrunne added.

Obiang, 48, was tried in absentia and sentenced in October to a three-year suspended sentence for corruption.

The top official from the small central African state was also given a suspended fine of \$35m for money laundering, corruption and abuse. His lawyer has said he will appeal.

But Equatorial Guinea has also lodged a complaint with the ICJ in The Hague, the UN's top court set up to resolve disputes between countries.

Four days of hearings opened yesterday, with France setting out its reasons why it believed the ICJ is not competent to hear the case.

Paris has challenged the ICJ's jurisdiction in the case since it first opened, citing the UN's Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.



## Basel carnival

Revellers with lanterns parade through the streets of Basel during the traditional 'Morgestreich' procession, in Switzerland, yesterday. Hundreds of time and drum players parade with illuminated canvas lanterns in the old town with public lights turned off.

## Serbia arrests four foreigners over drone flight

AP

**BELGRADE:** Two US and two Ukrainian citizens have been arrested in Serbia for trying to photograph the military security headquarters in downtown Belgrade with a drone.

A Serbian state TV report yesterday did not identify the four or give details, saying only that the two Ukrainians are women and that they are all in police custody.

Another American was arrested in Serbia earlier this

month for possession of an unmarked gun.

Pro-government media alleged that he was a former Navy SEAL and had planned the assassination of unidentified Serbian officials.

Serbian President

Aleksandar Vucic mentioned the arrest of a "group" of foreigners,

but added that their case is "nothing especially serious." The arrest took place amid a mounting anti-Western media campaign in Serbia and increasing Russian influence.

# Trump backs efforts to bolster FBI gun checks

AP

**WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA:** President Donald Trump offered support yesterday for an effort to strengthen the federal gun background check system as he hunkered down at his private Florida golf course just 40 miles from last week's deadly school shooting.

Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the president spoke on Friday to Sen. John Cornyn, a Texas Republican, about a bipartisan bill designed to strengthen the FBI database of prohibited gun buyers.

"While discussions are ongoing and revisions are being considered, the President is supportive of efforts to improve the Federal background check system," Sanders said in a statement.

Trump, who is spending the weekend at his private Palm Beach estate, started President's Day at his nearby golf club. The White House did not immediately answer questions about whether he was playing golf.

The president spent most of the weekend at Mar-a-Lago, as White House aides advised against golfing too soon after the shooting at a Parkland high school that left 17 dead.

Trump spent much of the holiday weekend watching cable television news and grousing to club members and advisers about the investigation of Russian election meddling.

In a marathon series of furious weekend tweets from Mar-a-Lago, Trump vented about Russia, raging at the FBI for what he perceived to be a fixation on the Russia investigation at the cost of failing to deter the attack on a Florida

**Trump has been a strong supporter of gun rights and the National Rifle Association. Last year, he signed a resolution blocking an Obama-era rule designed to keep guns out of the hands of certain mentally disabled people.**

high school. He made little mention of the nearby school shooting victims and the escalating gun control debate.

Surviving students have called for tougher gun control and are planning a march in Washington next month. Trump has focused his comments on mental health, rather than guns.

The White House said Sunday the president will host a "listening session" with students and teachers this week, but offered no details on who would attend or what would be discussed.

The bipartisan background check legislation would be aimed at ensuring that federal agencies and states accurately report relevant criminal information to the FBI. It was introduced after the Air Force failed to report the criminal history of the gunman who slaughtered more than two dozen people at a Texas church.

Trump has been a strong supporter of gun rights and the National Rifle Association. Last year, he signed a resolution blocking an Obama-era rule designed to keep guns out of the hands of certain mentally disabled people.

Trump was last seen

publicly Friday night when he visited Parkland. He fired off tweets Saturday and Sunday and met House Speaker Paul Ryan Sunday afternoon. He also visited the golf club Sunday night.

President Barack Obama took heavy criticism in 2014 when he went golfing during a vacation just minutes after denouncing the militants who had beheaded an American journalist. He later regretted playing golf so soon after the killing.

Trump has grown increasingly frustrated since the indictment from special counsel Robert Mueller on Friday charged 13 Russians with a plot to interfere in the U.S. presidential election.

On Twitter, Trump stressed that the Russian effort began before he declared his candidacy and asserted that the Obama administration bears some blame for it. He also insisted he never denied that the Kremlin interfered in the 2016 U.S. campaign, although in fact he has frequently challenged the veracity of the evidence.

Trump tweeted about the nation's "heavy heart" after the shooting in Parkland. But he also sought to use the shooting to criticize the nation's leading law enforcement agency.

Trump said late on Saturday that the FBI "missed all of the many signals" sent by the suspect and argued that agents are "spending too much time trying to prove Russian collusion with the Trump campaign."

The FBI received a tip last month that the man now charged in the school shooting had a "desire to kill" and access to guns and could be plotting an attack. But the agency said Friday that agents failed to investigate.



Residents stand out in the street following a 5.9 magnitude quake in Mexico City early yesterday. A medium intensity earthquake struck southwestern Mexico, scaring residents already shaken by a powerful quake two days earlier, though there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

## 5.9 quake hits southern Mexico

AP

**MEXICO CITY:** A magnitude 5.9 earthquake shook the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca yesterday, days after a more powerful tremor hit the same area.

State and national emergency officials said they had no immediate reports of damage from the latest shake, but

schools were cancelled across the state yesterday.

It was felt in Mexico City, where quake alarm sirens had people springing out of their beds and into the streets.

The US Geological Survey said the quake hit at 12:57 am (0657 GMT). It was centered 40km beneath the surface at a point 54km east-northeast of

Pinotepa Nacional and 111km southwest of the state capital, Oaxaca city.

It appeared to be an aftershock of a magnitude 7.2 earthquake that struck near the same area on Friday.

That quake caused no deaths, though 13 people were killed in the crash of a helicopter sent to assess the damage.

## Fire destroys 5 ambulances, causes \$2m damages

**WOODSTOWN, NEW JERSEY:** Authorities say a fast-moving fire gutted an ambulance squad's building in New Jersey, destroying five ambulances and causing at least \$2m in damage overall.

The fire at the American Legion Ambulance Association, in Woodstown, broke out around 4am yesterday and was extinguished about two hours later. Officials say oxygen tanks inside some of the squad's ambulances exploded shortly after

the fire began, helping the flames to quickly spread.

Four squad members who were on duty at the time were inside the building when the fire erupted but were able to safely escape. Authorities say one of the workers smelled smoke and soon discovered the fire, then alerted co-workers to leave the building.

The cause of the blaze remains under investigation.

## Trump revives push for limits on immigrants bringing family

**NEW YORK:** When the US government approved Ricardo Magpantay, his wife and young children to immigrate to America from the Philippines, it was 1991. By the time a visa was available, it was 2005, and his children couldn't come with him because they were now adults.

More than a decade later, his children are still waiting.

Magpantay gets worried when he hears the White House is aiming to limit the relatives that immigrants-turned-citizens can sponsor, a profound change to a fundamental piece of the American immigration system.

"It is really frustrating and it is very dreadful for me, because after a long wait, if this will be

passed, what will happen for them?" said Magpantay, a 68-year-old mechanical engineer in the Southern California city of Murrieta. "I won't be able to bring them forever."

For the past 50-plus years, family reunification has been central to US immigration law. Those who become naturalized citizens can bring spouses and minor children and petition for parents, adult children and siblings to get their own green cards and become Americans in their own right, with their own ability to sponsor.

Many on opposing sides of the immigration debate have long felt the family reunification system needs reform. Immigration advocates want a reassessment of the quotas on how many

people can come from a given country in a given year, which has created decadeslong backlogs for citizens of some countries.

Self-described "restrictionists," including President Donald Trump, want a narrower, nuclear definition of family, making spouses and minor children the only relatives a citizen could sponsor.

That's a central plank of the sweeping immigration overhaul Trump has proposed, a move that activists say could cut legal immigration in the US by half.

Congress rejected competing bills last week meant to resolve the status of hundreds of thousands of young people brought to the US illegally, including one plan

that mirrored Trump's overall immigration proposal. The lack of resolution on an issue that was pivotal to Trump's election leaves it as potential tinderbox for the midterm congressional elections this fall.

In his State of the Union speech last month, Trump referenced an attempted bombing by a Bangladeshi immigrant in New York in December as proof of the need to curtail what he and others term "chain migration" in favor of a more skills-based system.

"This vital reform is necessary not just for our economy, but for our security and for the future of America," he said.

Trump is giving a spotlight to an idea that "was clearly

out in the wilderness" in a policy sense, and something only its advocates were really talking about, said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which has long pushed for limits on family sponsorships.

"He has forced issues to the forefront that need to be debated," Krikorian said. Advocates of family reunification call the rhetoric around merit and skills a smoke screen. "They're being disingenuous - their goal is to reduce immigration overall," said Anu Joshi, director of immigration policy at the New York Immigration Coalition. "This is just about cutting family, it's a family ban."

## Bodies found in Mexico belong to 2 kidnapped federal agents

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexico's federal Attorney General's Office says two bodies found in a car have been confirmed to be those of two prosecution agents kidnapped Feb. 5 and forced to appear on a video by a drug gang.

The office called it "a terrible act," but didn't release details Sunday on how they died. The remains were found in Xalisco, a town in the Pacific coast state of Nayarit, which is known for trafficking heroin to the United States.

They worked for the Criminal Investigation Agency, a kind of federal detectives' bureau. The video showed them bound and on their knees, confessing supposed rights violations while masked men pointed guns at them. The gunmen thought they were undercover intelligence agents, but the office said the two were off duty when they disappeared.

## Inmate in landmark Supreme Court case denied parole

**NEW YORK:** A 71-year-old Louisiana inmate whose case led to a landmark US Supreme Court decision on juvenile-offender sentences was denied parole on Monday, more than a half-century after he killed a sheriff's deputy at age 17.

A three-member panel from the state parole board voted 2 to 1 to keep Henry Montgomery imprisoned. The hearing was his first chance at freedom since his conviction decades ago.



## Anti-Temer protest in Brazil

A man cleans a client's shoe next to a banner and stickers that read, "We Are on Strike," at Itaú Unibanco bank, at a protest against Brazil's President Michel Temer's proposal to reform the social security system in Sao Paulo, Brazil, yesterday.

## Guards retake control after Brazilian prison riot

APF

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** The last of 18 hostages seized in a prison riot near Rio de Janeiro have been freed and guards have retaken control of the facility, officials said.

The uprising in the overcrowded prison began Sunday and was quelled after a few hours, the state penitentiary administration said in a statement late Sunday.

Eight guards and 10 inmates had been held hostage. Three prisoners were injured during the incident, the statement said.

According to authorities, the riot began "when security inspectors and administrators from the penitentiary

prevented an escape attempt by inmates."

Most Brazilian prisons are seriously overcrowded and plagued by gang violence. In one of the bloodiest episodes, 56 people were killed in an uprising at a prison in the Amazon city of Manaus early last year.

The Rio prison unrest came two days after President Michel Temer signed a decree putting the army in charge of security across the state, where crime is spinning out of control and one policeman is killed on average every three days.

Brazil's lower house of Congress was expected to vote on the decree late Monday, with the Senate due to consider the measure afterwards.



# Cuban Hospital sees sharp rise in patient visits

**FAZEENA SALEEM**  
THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** The Cuban Hospital has seen a sharp rise in the patient visits over the past five years. The hospital recorded 74,331 inpatient visits and 4,536 inpatients in 2017, compared to 256 inpatients and 17,345 outpatients it registered in 2012.

The number of surgeries performed at the hospital increased from 259 in 2012 to 3,100 in 2017. It also recorded 677 births in 2017, a major jump from nine births in 2012, according to senior officials at the Cuban Hospital.

"Cuban Hospital provides all medical and surgical services in more than 25 specialties. We aim at providing improved

services and reducing the waiting list for patients. Mainly the hospital receives patients from the western part of the country as well as some from Doha," said Dr Angel Mario Felpe Garmendia, Medical Director of the Cuban Hospital, speaking to media recently.

Located in Dukhan, The Cuban Hospital was officially opened in January 2012, as a joint project between the government of Qatar and Cuba. It functions in collaboration with the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and has around 450 Cuban staff including doctors, nurses and technical staff. The hospital has 75 beds and seven operating theatres.

"We are working on to expand our services and open

more evening clinics, laser eye surgeries and dental in plant services this year. Also a bone and joint centre will open aiming at providing comprehensive orthopaedic services including surgeries and a full cycle of rehabilitation," said Dr Garmendia.

The Cuban Hospital mainly serves people in Dukhan which has about 5,000 staff of Qatar Petroleum and Zekreet which has about 7,000 labour camps, Shahaniya, the biggest city close to Dukhan and Umm Bab a nearby small town.

"We also receive many patients from Doha seeking services in all specialties. About 35 per cent of all patients are coming from Doha and are referred from by HMC

hospitals," said Mohamed Amer Al Marri, Assistant Executive Director Business and Staff Services, Top Administration Department, Cuban Hospital. In 2016, the Cuban Hospital started providing bariatric (weight loss) surgeries and conducted 176 procedures within a year.

"Initially we conducted bariatric surgeries only once a week and increased it to twice a week in March 2017. Also the outpatient clinic for bariatric services see 10 to 14 patients per week," said Al Marri.

Concept of the Cuban Hospital was created by the Father Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani when he visited Cuba in 2002. It was built by Qatar Petroleum and completed



**FROM LEFT:** Mohamed Amer Al Marri, Assistant Executive Director Business and Staff Services, Top Administration Department, Cuban Hospital, and Dr Angel Mario Felpe Garmendia, Medical Director of the Cuban Hospital during a media briefing held recently.  
PIC: ABDULL BASIT / THE PENINSULA

construction in 2009. The soft opening was in May 2011 and was run by the Ministry of Public

Health (then Supreme Council of Health). Later it was brought under the HMC in January 2012.



## Orientation for DPS-MIS Class XII students held

**DOHA:** An orientation seminar, focusing on preparation for the Board exams was organised for DPS-MIS Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) students of Class XII recently.

The orientation aimed at preparing the students to cope with pressure of competing with other students across India and abroad.

Principal Asna Nafees;

Headmistress (Sr Sec) Soma Bhattacharjee; School Counsellor Sumati Ramachandra and HoDs of all subjects shared tips to guide students to face examination and score well in the exams.

The students were briefed on subject-specific strategies to be adopted to get higher marks.

They were advised that a thorough revision of syllabus,

written practice and time management are factors not to be ignored. They were also given tips on relaxation techniques.

At the end of the orientation, the students took home the message that being in extreme pressure and stress won't get you good marks; instead proper time management and smart work will fetch you the best score card.

# Farewell for MES Class XII

**DOHA:** MES Indian School bade farewell to its current batch of Class XII students at a ceremony held at the school's KG Auditorium recently.

A total of 516 students and over 150 school staff took part in a function that marked the culmination of schooling term.

Mixed emotions were high as students fondly recollected their cherished moments at school.

The students also expressed their sense of gratitude towards the institution.

"In the cycle of life, accomplishing success is an ongoing process which is assuming different shapes and forms. Its requirement differs from one period of time to other. You can accomplish it with your unlimited talents and potential. As you are in the threshold of facing

realities of the world, be dignified in your action, adorn noble qualities of trustworthiness and piety and exercise utmost respect to elders and parents," said A P Khaleel, Director, Cultural/Co-Curricular Activities, MES Governing Board.

Hameeda Kadar, the school principal, after announcing the names of the best students remarked, said, "The school on its part equips you with the required knowledge and skill to confront the world outside and thus preparing you for the next phase of life with the guidance and blessings of parents, teachers, and well wishers. We are also fulfilling our obligation as trust worthy custodians of the parents, who have entrusted you all for the intellectual growth and the holistic development at the formative years of your life.



### CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**

1 Disparaging remark  
5 Succor  
8 Mid-month date  
12 Peace-keeping org.  
13 "Ulaume" writer  
15 Sub-machine gun  
16 Massage  
17 Untalkative one  
18 Trattoria desserts  
20 Papeete's island  
22 Sinbad's bird  
23 Pants part  
24 Joel of "Cabaret"  
27 The West  
32 Many millennia  
33 Greek cross

**DOWN**

1 Comfortable  
2 Lounge  
3 Gas co.  
4 Prayer beads  
5 Peach-like fruits  
6 Chit  
7 Arrears  
8 Moved slowly  
9 Industrial outfit  
10 Coup  
11 Big rig  
12 Kilt  
13 Guessers' words  
14 Surrealist  
15 Salvador  
16 Kitten's sound  
17 Despot  
18 Stitches  
19 Corral

**Solution time: 24 mins.**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14		
15			16					17		
18				19			20	21		
22			23							
24	25	26		27	28	29			30	31
32									34	
35			36	37					38	
			39				40	41		
42	43			44	45			46	47	48
49				50	51				52	
53									55	
56				57				58		

Yesterday's answer 2-15

### NOVO Pearl Qatar

**Black Panther (2D/Action)** 10:00, 10:30, 11:30am, 12:45, 1:15, 2:30, 3:30, 4:00, 5:30, 6:15, 6:45, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 11:30, 11:45pm & 12:15am

**Den of Thieves (2D/Action)** 10:30am, 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30 & 11:00pm **The 1517 To Paris (2D/History)** 10:00, 2:15, 6:30 & 10:45pm

**Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle (2D/Action)** 12:00noon, 4:15, 6:30 & 8:30pm

**Rupture (2D/Horror)** 10:00am, 12:10, 2:20, 4:30, 6:40, 8:50 & 11:00pm

**Braven (2D/Action)** 10:00am, 12:00noon, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00pm & 12:00midnight

**Winchester (2D/Horror)** 10:00am, 12:00noon, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00pm & 12:00midnight

**All I See Is You (2D/Drama)** 10:00am, 12:00noon, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00pm & 12:00midnight

**Black Panther (2D MAX/Action)** 11:00am, 2:00, 5:00, 8:00 & 11:00pm

### ROYAL PLAZA

**Aadhi (2D/Malayalam)** 2:00, 6:30 & 11:00pm  
**Black Panther (2D/Action)** 2:15, 4:30, 6:30, 8:45 & 11:15pm  
**Okdet El Khawaga (2D/Arabic)** 4:45 & 9:15pm  
**All I See Is You (2D/Drama)** 4:45pm  
**Rupture (2D/Horror)** 7:00pm  
**Aiyaara (2D/Hindi)** 2:00 & 11:00pm  
**Naachiyar (2D/Tamil)** 9:00pm

### ASIAN TOWN

**Aadhi (Malayalam)** 5:30, 7:00, 8:30, 9:00, 10:00, 11:30, 11:45pm  
**Naachiyar (Tamil)** 7:30 & 9:45pm  
**Aiyaara (2D/Hindi)** 6:00pm  
**Awe (Telugu)** 5:00pm

### VILLASIO & CITY CENTER

**THE PANTHER**

SEE IT IN THE GULF MALL  
SEE IT IN THE 3D & IMAX 3D

### MALL

**Aadhi (2D/Malayalam)** 2:15, 8:45 & 11:30pm  
**Black Panther (2D/Action)** 2:15, 4:45, 7:00, 9:00 & 11:30pm  
**Aiyaara (2D/Hindi)** 2:15 & 11:30pm  
**Awe (2D/Telugu)** 5:00pm  
**All I See Is You (2D/Drama)** 5:00pm  
**Rupture (2D/Horror)** 7:00pm  
**Okdet El Khawaga (2D/Arabic)** 7:15pm  
**Naachiyar (2D/Tamil)** 9:30pm

### AL KHOR

**Early Man (Animation)** 10:30am & 145pm  
**Black Panther (Action)** 11:55am, 2:15, 5:15, 8:15 & 11:15pm  
**Aadhi (Malayalam)** 12:30noon, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30pm & 12:30am  
**Naachiyar (Tamil)** 11:30am, 6:30 & 11:30pm  
**Awe (Telugu)** 3:45 & 8:45pm

### ROXY

**The Bread Winner (Animation)** 12:30, 4:30 & 6:30pm  
**Aadhi (Thriller)** 10:30am, 1:20, 4:10, 7:00 & 10:10pm  
**Naachiyar (Tamil)** 10:30am, 12:45, 5:15, 7:30 & 11:50pm  
**Black Panther (Action)** 11:30am, 1:15, 4:00, 6:45, 9:30pm & 12:15am  
**Awe (Telugu)** 8:30 & 11:50pm  
**Okdet El Khawaga (2D/Arabic)** 3:00 & 8:45pm

### LANDMARK

**Black Panther (2D/Action)** 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 8:45 & 11:15pm  
**Aadhi (2D/Malayalam)** 2:15, 8:30 & 11:50pm  
**Aiyaara (2D/Hindi)** 2:15 & 11:15pm  
**Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle (2D/Action)** 5:00pm  
**All I See Is You (2D/Drama)** 5:00pm  
**Okdet El Khawaga (2D/Arabic)** 6:45pm  
**Rupture (2D/Horror)** 7:00pm  
**Naachiyar (2D/Tamil)** 9:15pm

2-15 CRYPTOQUIP

M G J C H R Y H W S X M B U F F H  
R B S I R Y I W V K D W F J C B J  
D U B U C C B J H K F ? D F X

B W M B J X F G I X G B R I F G D U V I  
Yesterday's Cryptopquip: SPLINTER GROUPE  
WAS TO BE VERY TENSE, BUT I GUESS  
RECENTLY THEY HAVE FALLEN OUT OF  
FACTION.

Today's Cryptopquip Clue: M equals W

### den of thieves

A gritty crime saga which follows the lives of an elite unit of the LA County Sheriff's Dept, and the state's most successful bank robbery crew as the outlaws plan a seemingly impossible heist on the

### EARLY MAN

SEE IT IN THE GULF MALL  
SEE IT IN THE 3D & IMAX 3D

**PRAYER TIMINGS**

FAJR 04.49am  
SHOROOK 06.05 am

ZUHR 11.48 am  
ASR 03.04 pm

MAGHRIB 05.32pm  
ISHA 07.02pm



**17°C** | **25°C**  
Minimum | Maximum

Hazy at places at first becomes mild day-time with slight dust at times and scattered clouds, cold by night.

HIGH TIDE 07:45 - 20:15 LOW TIDE 00:45 - 14:30

COURTESY: Qatar Meteorology Department



**Today in History**

February 20, 1998

- ▲ U.S. skater Tara Lipinski, aged 15, became the youngest-ever Olympic figure skating champion when she won the gold medal in Nagano, Japan
- 1472: Norway gave Orkney and Shetland to Scotland after James III of Scotland married Margaret of Norway
- 1986: The Soviet Union launched the Mir space station, with special laboratories and living quarters for three cosmonauts
- 1998: The UN more than doubled the quota of oil-fuel permitted to Iraq under the oil-for-food programme
- 2009: Swedish automaker Saab filed for bankruptcy

Picture: Newscom © GRAPHIC NEWS



Joe Lahoud (third left), Group CEO, Marzooq Shamlan Al Shamlan Holding; with (from left) Saiju Eapen, Retail Manager, Q-Tire; Carine Nehme Kassis, Group Marketing and Communication Director of Marzooq Shamlan Al Shamlan Holding; Abdullah Al Mohtaseb, Drifter; Nada Zaidan, Rally Driver; and Alaa Zarif, Drifter; pose after a media briefing at the Q-Tire headquarters in Doha yesterday. PIC: SALIM MATRAMKOT / THE PENINSULA

## Q-Tire is partner in Red Bull-Qatar 'Car Park Drift'

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Q-Tire, a renowned, original-concept retail and servicing chain providing adequate automotive solutions and services, will be a partner in the Red Bull-Qatar 'Car Park Drift' to be held on February 23.

Marzooq Shamlan Al Shamlan Holding is the parent company of Q-Tire. The high-profile motorsport event is to be held under the support and supervision of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation, and in partnership with Vodafone Qatar, Losail Circuit Sports Club, TOTAL, and Falken Tires. The annual drift showdown will be held at the Losail Circuit Sports Club at 7pm and is expected to attract dozens of contestants as well as thousands of motorsports fans.

Contestants are expected to display their proficiency behind the steering wheel as they will take on a challenging new course inspired by the masterful Red Bull Athlete, Abdo Feghali, who will be supervising and performing at the event.

"We're going to be setting up at the Losail Circuit Sports Club, which means we have even more space for the drifters to comfortably demonstrate all their skills, techniques and control. I'm looking forward to crowning Qatar's next King of Drift that will qualify for the grand finale in Lebanon." said Drift Champion Abdo Feghali. The contestants are judged based on their skills, precision and creativity as they aim to attain the highest scores. The higher the score, the closer they become to being crowned Qatar's 2018 King of Drift.

The Red Bull Car Park Drift Series has become critically acclaimed by thousands of fans and motorsport enthusiasts in Qatar. This comes with a high standard of safety and security that guarantees an entertaining environment for both the participants as well as the audience.

Aligned with its strategy to spread road safety awareness +Q-TireOnTheRoad & support young Qatari automotive sports initiative and after the successful contribution in "Qatar Custom Show", Q-Tire will be having its presence in the VIP area as Q-Tire Service Vehicle will take care of provision of tires changing facility on Prequalifier (February

22), and provision of tires changing facility on qualifier (February 23).

Q-Tire will also be sponsoring "The Brother Team". I. Abdullah Al Mohtaseb 2. A Zarif. And for the first time, Nada Zaidan, the archer and road racer, will be taking part in the Car Drift as the first female contributing.

Q-Tire is expanding with two new branches at Aiziya and Old Airport. It also launched a new retail concept which is customer centric. It also marked the launch of Q-Lube Q-Tire launched its first service outlet in Qatar in 2005. The Q-Tire retail and servicing chain acts as a one-stop-shop that offers a wide-range of internationally renowned tire and battery service options, such as Good-year, Falken, Bosch, Amaron and Sonax, to individuals and businesses that range from fleet operators to car rental companies.

Q-Tire outlets, some of which are open till 3am, are equipped with state-of-the-art technologies and products, to ensure exceptional world-class solutions for all automotive complications. Among these innovative technologies are The Turner Perfect 3D Alignment system and a Compu-Perfect wheel balancer.

Q-Tire retail and servicing chain outlets are strategically located across the country, to supply the market's ever evolving demands and maintain a far reach. With sites in Al Ruwais stretching far to Mesaieed, Q-Tire is continuously expanding their network.

Q-Tire is the first retail chain of its stature to be awarded with a TIA (Tire Industry Association) certification, which signifies the technicians' excellence in strictly adhering to the highest of standards in delivering quality service and innovation.

Marzooq Shamlan Al Shamlan Holding, an internationally renowned organisation established in 1958, specialises in providing automotive and luxury retail services, as well as engaging in industrial and logistics operations. The group has maintained its position as a leader in local and international luxury markets. Under the helm of Marzooq Al Shamlan, the Group's Founder, and under his creative vision and leadership, the group has continuously revitalised and revolutionised the nation's commercial, industrial and service sectors.

## World's first-ever Angry Birds World to open at DFC



THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The world's first ever Angry Birds World, a one-of-a-kind entertainment park, will soon open at Doha Festival City (DFC), it was announced yesterday.

Designed and developed over a sprawling 17,000 square meter area at DHFC, Angry Birds World will draw visitors into a maddening adventure with the furious flock through a range of over 20 high-thrill rides for all ages. The park will also have a large array of F&B outlets, retail shops, edutainment activities and a host of attractions that will engage and entertain the whole family.

The park's indoor section is quickly shaping up for a launch within the upcoming months, followed by the opening of its outdoor area. Its anticipated inauguration will mark a historic milestone for the country as the world's first-ever Angry Birds World in Qatar. The mega-million project is being developed in line with the Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030 (QNTSS). It aims to drive the country's revenue by actively contributing towards boosting tourism in Qatar, while building novel experiences for residents and

visitors on a national level. It is a pioneering concept introduced and developed by Trimoo – the world's groundbreaking experience innovators; in collaboration with Talal bin Mohammed Trading (TBMT), the exclusive licensee for Qatar, and Rovio Entertainment Corporation, the world's biggest mobile game brand licensor and the developer and distributor of the hugely popular Angry Birds game that has 4bn downloads since 2009.

Riad Makdessi, CEO of Trimoo, said: "With this entertainment park, we aim to offer our visitors a uniquely immersive experience that will delight the whole family – children and adults alike."

Simo Hämmäläinen, Senior Vice President, Brand Licensing at Rovio said, "Opening world's first Angry Birds World™ is an exciting new chapter for Rovio and Angry Birds brand."

The unique entertainment destination will be home to Snow Dunes™ – the country's first indoor snow park set in an ancient Arabian village; Virtuosity – the region's first digital and eSports gaming park; and Juniverse™ – the world's first city in space that aims to inspire and entertain children.

## Suzuki GSX-R1000 2017 recalled

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Economy and Commerce, in collaboration with Teyseer Motors, dealer of Suzuki motorcycles in Qatar, has announced the recall of Suzuki GSX-R1000 model of 2017 because of a fault in the ECM and drive chain inspection.

The ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that dealers follow up on bike defects and repairs.

The ministry said that it will coordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out. The Ministry urges all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department.



Dr R. Seetharaman (centre), Group CEO of Doha Bank, receives 'Excellence Award' from ASP Lyanage, Sri Lankan Ambassador to Qatar, and Sanath Kohovillage, President Sri Lanka Coordinating Committee Qatari, during the cultural event held to celebrate Sri Lanka's v-th Independence Day at QNCC. PIC: BAHAR AMIN / THE PENINSULA

## Sri Lankan community marks I-Day

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Sri Lankan community in Qatar celebrated its 70th Independence Day which fell on February 4, with a cultural programme recently at Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC).

The event was organised by the Sri Lankan Embassy in Doha in collaboration with Sri Lanka Coordinating Committee Qatar. Sri Lankan Ambassador, A S P Lyanage, was the chief guest. Also present were Dr R Seetharaman, Chief Executive Officer, Doha Bank; R. Kohularangan, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Sri Lanka; Balakrishnan Pirathapan, Country

Manager SriLankan Airlines, as well as officials from Public Relations Department at the Ministry of Interior. The event featured lighting of the traditional oil lamp, speeches by dignitaries, presentation of Awards of Excellence and unveiling of the 70th Independence Day souvenir.

The 'Pathum Danansooriya Cultural Ensemble' who were flown in from Sri Lanka for the first time for the celebrations and performed many traditional dance and drumming items. Sri Lankan singer Tissa Jayawardana also performed during the celebrations. Ooredoo was the Platinum sponsor of the event together with St. Regis Doha as the hospitality partner.

## 'Video Games Live' concert on Friday

RAYNALD C RIVERA  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Gamers and music enthusiasts in Qatar are in for treat as globally acclaimed "Video Games Live" concert spectacular returns for the third time at Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC) on Friday.

The phenomenal video game music show will play loved music from the most popular video games of all time such as Super Mario Bros, Halo, Warcraft, Final Fantasy, The Legend of Zelda, Sonic the Hedgehog, among others. This is the third consecutive year the concert will be staged in Doha following the success of the previous shows.

With the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra providing the music under the baton of award winning Irish composer and conductor Eimear Noone, the concert promises a dazzling show featuring synched video, lights, lasers, and effects.

Noone is known for composing music for video games, feature films, television, and commercials, and conducting classical and game music concerts. Most recently, she composed and conducted for the iconic video game, World of Warcraft and its new expansion, Warlords of Draenor, the score of which received the 2014 Hollywood Music in Media Award for "Best Video Game Score" and was nominated for five Annual Game Music Awards, and the



Award winning Irish composer and conductor Eimear Noone conducts Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra at the Video Games Live concert last year.

ASCAP Composer's Choice Award for Game Score.

To be held at QNCCA Al Mayassa Theatre, the concert hosted by Laura Intravia will highlight performances by Qatar Philharmonic Choir with the participation of Qatar Concert Choir. Giovanni Pasini will be the music director and Felicitas Fuchs the choirmaster.

German soprano Fuchs has appeared on numerous occasions with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, including Magic Flute, Hänsel and Gretel, as well as Mozart arias under the baton of James Gaffigan. A versatile concert artist and committed recitalist, she has performed at renowned places such as Philharmonie Warschau, Herkulesaal München and has been a welcome guest at many

national and international festivals.

There is more to the concert as Virtuosity provides show games attending the show three activities which will be open before the concert, during the intermission, and after the concert ends. The first area will offer free play on the latest game systems. A second, music-based area includes the opportunity for concertgoers to gamify music and play through favorite songs. A third area showscases ways to see video game music in a new light in an interactive setting.

Video Games Live is an immersive concert event created and produced by game industry veteran Tommy Tallarico. The show has seen top orchestras and choirs around the world perform along with exclusive synchronized video footage and music arrangements, synchronized lighting, well known Internet solo performers, electronic percussion, live action and unique interactive segments resulting to a complete entertainment experience. It has performed more than 400 international shows and has set several Guinness World Records titles.

Concert tickets can be purchased at [http://qatarphilharmonicorchestra.org/concerts/purchase\\_tickets](http://qatarphilharmonicorchestra.org/concerts/purchase_tickets)