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# Qatar and Togo sign several agreements

- **Amir and Togolese President review ties**
- **Agreements include abolition of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and private passports**

QNA

**DOHA:** Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani held a session of official talks with the President of Togolese Republic, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, at the Amiri Diwan yesterday.

During the talks, H H the Amir and the President discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them in various fields, especially in investment field. They discussed a number of issues of common concern.

H H the Amir and the Togolese President witnessed the signing of a number of cooperation agreements and memorandums of understanding between the two governments. They witnessed the signing of an agreement on the abolition of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and private passports, the signing of a memorandum of understanding on conducting political consultations on issues of mutual interest, the signing of an agreement on

mutual encouragement and protection of investments, and an agreement on economic, trade and technical cooperation.

H H the Amir and the President of Togo also witnessed the signing of an agreement on legal cooperation and a memorandum of understanding between Qatar Chamber and Togo Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The meeting and agreement signing were attended by a number of Their Excellencies the Ministers. They were also attended by members of the official delegation accompanying the President of Togo. The President of Togolese Republic had arrived earlier at the Amiri Diwan, where he was accorded an official reception.

H H the Amir hosted a luncheon banquet, at the Amiri Diwan yesterday, in honour of the President of Togolese Republic and the delegation accompanying him. The banquet was attended by a number of Their Excellencies the Ministers.



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani with President of the Togolese Republic, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, at the Amiri Diwan yesterday.

→SEE ALSO PAGE 2

## Reforms caused decline in rentals: QC

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** President of the Qatar Chamber Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim Al Thani said yesterday that the decline in rents seen lately in the country began in 2015 as a result of reforms and not due to the unjust blockade on Qatar.

The President said in a press statement that the State has resorted to policies that would lead to a correction in rent prices

as they had seen unjustified increases in previous years, and due to its impact on inflation, QNA reported. Some of the policies included offering temporary warehouses and establishing new housing for workers. Other companies also established economic residential compounds, all factors that contributed to the decline.

He referred to real estate statistics issued by the Ministry of Development Planning and

Statistics, the Ministry of Justice and a number of real estate companies to demonstrate the validity of these conclusions. The real estate transactions witnessed a remarkable growth in 2017 with 3,988 real estate transactions with a total trading value of QR32.7bn compared to 3,343 transactions during the year 2016 with total financial turnover of only QR27bn.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## Qatar becoming model for other Gulf states: ITUC

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** General Secretary of International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Sharan Burrow has praised the steps taken by the State of Qatar as well as its achievements in improving the work environment and ensuring the rights of workers, confirming that Qatar is on its way to becoming a model for the other Gulf states.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ITUC General Secretary described the opening of the International Labor Organisation (ILO) office in Doha as historic and a great step. She said it is one of the major steps in implementing labour reforms that the Qatar Government agreed on with ILO last November.

Burrow stressed the importance of the ILO office in Doha for promoting cooperation with the Qatari Government in order to activate collaboration in the field of workers' rights.

She said that the program

**The ITUC General Secretary stressed the importance of the ILO office in Doha for promoting cooperation with the Qatari Government in order to activate collaboration in the field of workers' rights.**

signed between Qatar and ILO last year has the full support of the IUTC, adding that the program will improve labour conditions in Qatar. She said: "We are very grateful to the State of Qatar for these achievements." Burrow added that the formal agreement between Doha and the ILO with the support of the Confederation, has led to the best practices when it comes to implementing labour reforms in the State of Qatar.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## FIFA names Qatar's Abdulrahman Al Jassim as 2018 World Cup VAR

THE PENINSULA

**ZURICH:** FIFA has named Qatari referee Abdulrahman Al Jassim as one of 13 Video Assistant Referees (VAR) for the 2018 World Cup finals, which kicks off on June 14 in Russia.

The choice of officials was "based on their experience as video match officials in their respective association and confederation competitions, in addition to their successful participation in several preparatory seminars and FIFA competitions, where they enhanced their Video Assistant Referee knowledge and skills by using the system," FIFA said in a statement.

The list also features nine referees from Europe; three from Italy, two from each of Germany and Portugal, and one from Netherlands and another from Poland.

The list also features three referees from South America, while Al Jassim is the only official from Asia.

"Each match at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia will have a VAR together with three assistants, AVAR1, AVAR2, AVAR3," FIFA said.

"Some of the referees and assistant referees who have been selected for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia will also act as video match officials during FIFA's flagship competition," the statement added.

VAR will be used for the first time in the history of the FIFA World Cup in Russia next month.

VAR has been successfully used in top football events in Qatar also this season.



## Sheikh Dr. Khalid presides over Umnia Bank general assembly

Sheikh Dr. Khalid bin Thani Al Thani (left), Chairman of Umnia Bank, presiding over the ordinary general assembly of the bank in Casablanca. Umnia Bank is a joint venture between Qatar's QIIB, Crédit immobilier et hôtelier (CIH) and Moroccan Deposit and Management Fund. →SEE ALSO PAGE 17

## Massive crackdown on food outlets ahead of Ramadan

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH  
THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Municipal inspectors armed with advanced gadgets for booking violations have launched a massive crackdown on eateries, outlets serving

special Arab dishes, cafeteria, sweet shops, butcheries, chicken and fish shops to ensure they are ready for the holy month of Ramadan.

Feeling the heat of the inspection drive, the outlets made necessary preparations to avoid punishments that included

hefty fine and closure, manager of a restaurant operating at Salata Al Jadeed told *The Peninsula*.

Under pre-Ramadan inspection drive, two outlets offering popular Arab cuisines for banquets known as Al Matbakh Al Shabi (kitchen) at

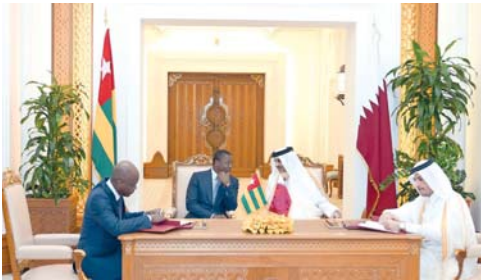
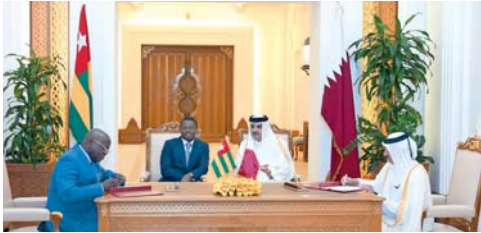
Al Rayyan Municipality were shut down for two weeks for flouting food safety rules, said the Ministry of Municipality and Environment in a statement.

Umm Salal Municipality also issued administrative orders to shut down four food outlets for

violating health rules. The inspectors of health monitoring unit at Al Rayyan Municipality were provided modern devices to book violation during the inspection drive to ensure the market is ready for Ramadan.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

# Amir and Togolese President witness signing of several pacts, MoUs



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the President of Togolese Republic, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, during the official reception ceremony at Amiri Diwan, yesterday. The Amir and the visiting Togolese leader held talks and witnessed the signing of many agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs).

# Advisory Council discusses draft law on road transport of hazardous substances

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** The Advisory Council held its regular weekly session yesterday under the chairmanship of Deputy Speaker of the Advisory Council, H E Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Sulaiti. The Advisory Council discussed a draft law on road transport of hazardous substances.

The Deputy Speaker of the Advisory Council stressed the importance of the draft law, which was necessitated by the industrial development witnessed by the State of Qatar that requires the use of hazardous substances such as fuel, inflammable materials, chemicals and radioactive materials.

The Deputy Speaker noted that the draft law comes within the framework of a series of draft laws presented to the Advisory Council by the esteemed government, aiming at keeping pace with the movement of development, construction and modernization in the country, and issuing the laws and legislations necessary to maintain the health and safety of citizens and protect the environment.

The draft law sets the standards that must be met in the means of transport of hazardous substances and the universally recognized necessary precautions in their transportation. The draft law also imposes severe penalties on violators. The Advisory Council decided to refer the draft law to the Services and Public Utilities Committee for further study, and to report thereon to the Council.

Meanwhile, The Advisory Council's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee held a meeting yesterday within the 46th Ordinary Session, chaired by its rapporteur Ali bin Abdulatif Al Misnad.

At the meeting, the Committee examined a draft law regulating the investment of non-Qatari capital in economic activity and decided to continue studying it at its next meeting.

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# Qatar opens permanent office at ICAO in Montreal

THE PENINSULA

DOHA/MONTREAL: Minister of Transport and Communications, H E Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti, yesterday inaugurated the State of Qatar's Permanent Office at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), in Montreal, Canada.

President of the ICAO Council Dr Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu, ICAO Secretary-General Dr Fang Liu and representatives of a number of ICAO Member States and some officials representing the Government of Canada participated in the inauguration event.

Qatar's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Chairman H E Abdulla bin Nasser Turki Al Subaey, Ambassador to Canada, H E Fahad Mohammed Yousef Kafod, Qatar Aeronautical College Director-General, Sheikh Jabor bin Hamad Al Thani and the Director of International Organisations

**"The State of Qatar welcomes the inauguration of its Permanent Office at ICAO, which emphasises Qatar's deep-rooted and continuing cooperation with all international and regional organisations and which is consistent with Qatar's foreign policy and role as an active partner in the international community," said the Minister of Transport and Communications, H E Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti.**

Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yousef bin Sultan Yousef Laram, were present.

"The State of Qatar welcomes the inauguration of its Permanent Office at ICAO, which emphasises Qatar's deep-rooted and continuing cooperation with all international and regional organisations and which is consistent with Qatar's foreign policy and role as an active partner in the international community," said the

Minister in remarks on the occasion.

Al Subaey underlined the qualitative addition of Qatar's ICAO Permanent Office to the civil aviation industry in Qatar through its permanent and effective participation in all ICAO events and initiatives, and also its role in boosting cooperation and the exchange of expertise with all member states that have Montreal-based delegates.

He said Qatar's ICAO Permanent Office "will have an impressive array of civil aviation experts and will work on conducting regular training courses for Qatari personnel who work in the field in Qatar."

Qatar's decision to create a permanent office at ICAO came in July 2017 and it named Essa Abdulla Almkias as ICAO Permanent Representative.



Minister of Transport and Communications, H E Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti, inaugurating the State of Qatar's Permanent Office at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), in Montreal, Canada, yesterday.

## Amir meets Ambassador of Kosovo



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani met at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with the Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo, Rajab Boya, who called on the Amir to greet him on the occasion of ending his tenure in the country. The Amir wished the Ambassador success in his future mission, and progress and development in the relations between the two countries. For his part, the Ambassador expressed thanks and appreciation to the Amir and the State's officials for the cooperation he received and contributed to the success of his work in the country.

## Massive crackdown on food outlets ahead of Ramadan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The inspection drive aims at ensuring food safety and create awareness to food handlers about food safety rules and regulation.

According to the Ministry of Municipality and Environment, the intensified inspection drive will continue in coming days and throughout Ramadan.

The health monitoring unit at Umm Salal Municipality has also intensified inspection drive on food outlets ahead of Ramadan. A total of 36 violations were recorded since the inspection drive launched and

administrative decisions were issued to close four outlets for violating health rules.

"We expect surprise raids by municipal inspectors ahead of Ramadan and during the holy month so we made necessary preparation to avoid any punishment," Saleem Khan, manager of a popular restaurant operating at Salal Jadid, told The Peninsula.

He said that the inspectors focused on hygiene and food safety during their visits to the eateries. "The inspectors ensured proper storage of food items as we are required to store

meat, chicken and fish separately," said Khan. He said that as per the rule, restaurant are not allowed to put the frozen chicken, meat or fish in hot or cold water for melting the ice.

He added that as per the instruction such items should be taken out few hours before cooking to let it come to the room temperature gradually.

Speaking on other health rules and regulations, Khan said: food handlers should wear gloves and caps to avoid any unhealthy thing mixing up with foods.

## Amiri Air Force concludes 'Saqr 20' exercise

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Amiri Air Force concluded yesterday 'Saqr 20' exercise which started on April 22nd. The closing ceremony was attended by Commander of the Amiri Air Force Major General (Pilot) Mubarak Mohammed Al Khayarin.

Participating in 'Saqr 20' exercise were each of the Amiri land forces, the Amiri naval forces in addition to Joint Special Forces, in cooperation with friendly forces.

This exercise is considered as the main exercise for the

Amiri Air Force, which aims to highlight the role of the air forces in defending the country's airspace, especially economic zones, and in supporting military operations of land and sea formations with the possibility of transition to joint operations with friendly forces if necessary.

The aim of the exercise is to train officers and staff officers to plan and control all types of air combat from operations centers and to coordinate between all sectors of the internal and external air forces, this year's edition was successful.



Amiri Air Force Commander, Major General (Pilot) H E Mubarak Mohammed Al Khayarin, met yesterday at Al Udeid Air Base with a number of chiefs of staff of US. The meeting reviewed a number of issues of common concern between the State of Qatar and the United States. RIGHT: Amiri Air Force members who participated in the 'Saqr 20' exercise.



**FUEL PRICE HIKE**  
Petrol prices will increase by up to 10 dirhams from today, according to the new price list issued by Qatar Petroleum.

**QR2.00**  
Price of super grade petrol for a litre.

**QR1.90**  
Price of premium grade petrol for a litre.

**QR2.00**  
Price of diesel for a litre.

## CMU-Q celebrates 90 new graduates

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) yesterday celebrated the graduation of the class of 2018, with 90 students receiving their degrees in front of family, friends, faculty and alumni.

The class of 2018 consists of eight biological sciences graduates, 37 business administration graduates, 13 computer science graduates and 32 information systems graduates. Members of the class represent 18 nations, with almost 40 percent are Qatari nationals.

"The pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong commitment. Especially amid the rapidly evolving technological landscape, the world must be your canvas, your stage, your classroom," CMU-Q President Farnam Jahanian said in the keynote address.

CMU-Q Dean Michael Trick presided over his first graduation in Qatar. "Class of 2018, as you finish this chapter of your lives and embark on new ventures, always remember: you are Carnegie Mellon graduates. You are thinkers, collaborators, problem solvers and innovators. You are leaders. Take what you have learned at



Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) students during the graduation ceremony.

Carnegie Mellon and shape your world".

Biological sciences graduate Boshra Al Sulaiti spoke on behalf of the class of 2018, and described her academic and social growth during her four years at CMU-Q.

"CMU-Q gave us the willingness to go the distance, to know ourselves better, to reach higher than we have ever reached before, and to never stop. Our friends urged

us to never stop. Our professors urged us to never stop. CMU-Q urged us to never stop. So, my friends and fellow graduates, never stop. Never stop dreaming, believing, and achieving," she said.





The class of 2018 brings the total number of CMU-Q alumni to 769, and they join more than 100,000 Carnegie Mellon alumni worldwide.

## Reforms caused decline in rentals: QC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

He called for the need to address all rumours and claims that seek to destabilise the economy by saying it is negatively affected by the blockade. He added that those who spread these rumors are working against the interest of the state's economy and policies, which will remain firm.

He also cited the Quarterly Estimates of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) issued by the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, which indicated that nominal value added (in current prices) of the real estate activity in the country increased in the third quarter of 2017 to QR10.8bn. The President of the Qatar Chamber added that the total value added of real estate activity according to the same source for the same period witnessed a remarkable increase of QR9.65bn, an increase of 4.1 percent compared to the same period of 2016.

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
	Ministry of Municipality and Environment The Tender and Auction Committee	TC/B/46-598/2018	Purchase and supply of (10) 5500-gallon water tanks for tree irrigation, (10) 4000-gallon sanitary tanks, (10) 1000-liter equipped vehicles for pesticide spraying (Second Group) for the (Mechanical Equipment Department)	5,000 Qatari Riyal	500,000 Qatari Riyal	Two Envelopes (Technical/ Financial)	13/5/2018
	Ministry of Municipality and Environment The Tender and Auction Committee	TC/B/47-600/2018	Supply of surveying objects for two (2) years - system on call-off basis for (Lands & Survey Department)	600 Qatari Riyal	60,000 Qatari Riyal	Two Envelopes (Technical/ Financial)	13/5/2018
	Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)	643-2018	SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF INDOOR AIR QUALITY ANALYZERS - For more information : <a href="http://www.MOPH.gov.qa">www.MOPH.gov.qa</a> Announcement	500.00 (Five Hundred Only)	6,000.00 (Six Thousand Only)	Two Envelopes	Sunday, 20th. Of May 2018 12:00 hrs
	Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation - Kahramaa	Auction No. A/LTC-1330/2018	Sale of Obsolete Stock Materials & Used Oils Materials Department km.qa	500	For Full Quantity & As One Lot 15,000	One Envelope	13/05/2018

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



# Planetarium and Katara Hills to be ready by year-end

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Katara Cultural Village is adding more attractions, including a high-tech planetarium, luxury shopping mall, exclusive shopping facility for children and green hills, among others.

The Southern Expansion Project at Katara which is underway is scheduled to be completed in the last quarter of this year.

This project, integrating culture and leisure consists 12 diverse buildings and a unique parking area overlooking the sea.

The buildings will house a chain of restaurants and cafes, libraries, exhibition hall, cinema and several cultural centres.

The Southern Expansion Project also features a planetarium and Astronomical Observatory promising an amazing experience to visitors.

Occupying 2,240sqm area, the planetarium is expected to become one of the main attractions at Katara. Blending education and entertainment, it will offer a rare experience to visitors especially students, families and astronomy enthusiasts.

The planetarium hall, the main

component of the building, will have a seating capacity of 200 people, four seats for the disabled and another four for the elderly. It will feature a huge 22-meter screen, equipped with state-of-the-art digital projectors.

A vast terrace overlooking the sea will serve as a platform for events and activities. This project is expected to be completed in the last quarter of this year.

The Marina District at Katara is currently finalising work on a maritime restaurant, comprising a main eatery and eight exclusive marine chalets. This project, which is now in the second phase, will provide matchless dining experience to visitors.

Katara Plaza is a luxury shopping complex being built on an area of more than 38,000sqm, in partnership with Ali Bin Ali Group. Blending traditional and modern architecture, this shopping mall will gather leading global brands in fashion, luxury goods, accessories, perfumes, cosmetics, entertainment, watches and jewelry.

The project, in the final phase of construction, provides a perfect blend between architecture, technical innovation and maximum comfort.



A view of Katara Plaza's children's mall.

Katara Plaza will host the first Evian Spa in the Middle East and the second of its kind in the world, in exclusive partnership with water giant Evian. The Evian SPA is a luxurious interpretation of "health through water", offering a refined spa experience.

Katara Plaza will also have a children's mall, a unique and pioneering experience in the region and an example

of innovation and architectural genius. Its design portrays the form of two big gifts wrapped in red and gold. Katara Plaza will offer a rare experience, with its landscapes and sandstone buildings, paved passages, arches and breezy walkways.

Katara Hills, a distinctive landmark and an eye-catching tourist destination at Katara, is expected to be completed

in December this year.

This project featuring gardens and green meadows, is divided into Northern and Southern Hills that are unique in design and boast many recreational facilities.

The gardens occupy an area of 361,500sqm and are designed in innovative and aesthetic style.

The Hills reflect the diversity of plants and trees (3,300 trees) from different continents, grown in the Qatari environment, serving as a meeting point for cultures and civilizations, along with a spacious yard symbolising the universal mind.

Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Sulaiti, general manager of Katara Cultural Village, said that the ambitious projects make Katara a global cultural and tourism hub, helping to strengthen communication between different cultures and peoples.

"Katara's strategy focuses on supporting art, culture, humanity, and consolidating national identity and heritage. It also aims to utilise the facilities and buildings to create a suitable environment to nurture art and creativity to make Katara an Arab and global cultural icon," said Al Sulaiti.

## 'Super Wi-Fi' on QA Boeing and Airbus fleet

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Qatar Airways passengers can now experience 'Super Wi-Fi' high-speed broadband connectivity using Inmarsat's GX Aviation technology. The broadband service is being progressively rolled out on all Boeing 777 aircraft and Airbus A350 aircraft in Qatar Airways' young fleet. Qatar Airways is the first airline in the MENA region to have invested in the technology to provide this quality of service for passengers.

The progressive fit-out will equip its Boeing 777 and Airbus

**The broadband service is being progressively rolled out on all Boeing 777 aircraft and Airbus A350 aircraft in Qatar Airways' young fleet.**

A350 aircraft with the new technology. Passengers on flights fitted with GX Aviation can receive one hour free access to the 'Super Wi-Fi' to further enhance the award-winning level of service provided by the world's best

airline. If more time is needed, passengers can purchase full-flight access to the service selecting from a range of affordable options.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Akbar Al Baker, said "In another first for the MENA region, Qatar Airways passengers can now enjoy high-speed broadband connectivity, providing rich content without restriction, whether using the internet for work or relaxation during their journey. Business travellers in particular will be able to maximise their 'office in the sky' with seamless continuity".

President of Inmarsat Aviation, Philip Balaam, said: "Qatar Airways is renowned as one of the greatest innovators in global aviation with passengers being at the centre of everything they do."

"We are delighted that they are now pioneering our game-changing GX Aviation inflight broadband across the globe. This unprecedented service adds to the airline's award-winning, five star onboard experience by allowing passengers to seamlessly browse the internet, stream videos, check social media and more during flights".

## QNL organises lecture on historical maps

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Qatar National Library (QNL) organised a lecture on historical maps that included the geographical location of Qatar's peninsula.

A number of researchers and historians participated in the lecture, which was held yesterday in the context of the events accompanying the celebration of the official opening of Qatar National Library.

The researches highlighted that Qatar has been a known place on maps for almost 2,000

years, but the peninsula itself was represented on some maps from 1548 to 1596, then disappeared completely until 1823.

In this lecture, QNL Information Services Librarian - Historical Maps Christopher Alario and QNL Director of Historical Research and Partnerships Dr. James Onley discussed how and why this happened. UCL-Q archaeologist and Gulf studies expert Dr. Robert Carter shed light on the information that can be learnt about early settlements in Qatar from these historical maps.

## QMC wins two awards in Arab Radio and TV Festival

QNA

**TUNIS:** Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) was crowned with two awards at the 19th Arab Radio and TV Festival in held in Tunis from April 26-29.

QMC won the first prize in the field of the television drama about the series of "Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal" produced by Qatar TV, the second was in the category of TV shows on the program "fifth string nights" also produced by Qatar TV. The of "Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal" was crowned with the awards of television creativity

in the field of clothing design won by Amin Al Sayed, and the best decor award won by Mowafaq Al Sayed.

QMC's Media Consultant and head of the Qatari delegation at the festival Abdulrahman Nasser Al Obaidan expressed to Qatar News Agency (QNA) pleasure with this result as QMC has been producing outstanding works, especially historical dramas, due to the strong support of the corporation. He congratulated the winners and all those who worked hard, calling for more effort and perseverance to

enrich the Arabic and local listener and viewer.

It is worth mentioning that the late musician Abdulaziz Nasser Al Obaidan was honored at the opening ceremony of the festival. The honorary award was received by his brother Abdulrahman Nasser Al Obaidan.

The 19th Arab Radio and TV Festival witnessed the participation of 277 works in the various competitions distributed among 132 television works and 145 radio works. ASBU exhibition was held on the sidelines of the festival.

## Lulu Cookery Contest winners announced



Winners of Lulu Cookery Contest with officials at Lulu Group Regional Office on D-Ring Road.

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Distribution of prizes and certificates to the winners of Lulu Cookery Contest was held on Thursday, April 26 at Lulu Group Regional Office on the D-Ring Road. Regional Director of Lulu Group Shailesh MO and Regional Manager Shanavas PM distributed the prizes to the winners in the presence of other Lulu officials.

In the Non-Vegetarian

category, Shaguftha Zahir Panwala, Ismath Bevi Najimudeen and Karle Haven P. Reyes won the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Prizes; in the Vegetarian category, Aisha Alumma, Shabina Khajoon Ansari and Seema Sachdeva won the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Prizes and in the Dessert category, Sabna Zamil, Salma Khanam and Omar Abdel Aty won the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Prizes.

Special Prizes were given to Geetha Priya in the

Non-Vegetarian category and Jaseena Shafeeqe in the Dessert category.

Besides, Consolation Prizes were given to all short-listed participants. Final judgement was done by the expert panel of judges namely famous Chef Anil Kumar, Nagesh, Chief Chef of Qatar Airways and Ravishankar Thangavel, Regional Chief Chef of Lulu Group. Out of 400 applications received, 52 applications were shortlisted for the contest.

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# CNA-Q hosts experts' meeting on TVET

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** In partnership with Unesco, College of the North Atlantic-Qatar (CNA-Q) hosted the International Experts' Meeting on TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) for Sustainable and Inclusive Development recently.

The Experts' Meeting brought together 70 government, academic, and industry experts from 12 countries, including Dr. Hamda Al Sulaiti, Secretary-General of the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (QNCECS), Dr. Muna Salim Al Jardaniyah, Under-secretary from Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Manpower for Technological Education and Vocational Training, and Dr. Azzah Ahmed Al Maskari, Dean of Ibra College of Technology in Oman.

The objective of the Experts' Meeting was to establish a



Delegates during International Experts' Meeting on TVET for Sustainable and Inclusive Development

research agenda for TVET in Qatar that responds to the rapidly changing demands of 21st Century work, and recognizes the importance of supporting sustainable and inclusive development.

The highlight of the meeting was drafting the 'Doha Declaration on Strengthening and Upgrading Research in TVET for Sustainable and Inclusive Development.' The draft acknowledged the progress made during

the 2005-2014 UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and endorsed the 2015 Unesco Recommendations of TVET. It elicited a commitment from those present to work towards the reorientation of TVET as an important means of achieving sustainable and inclusive development here in Qatar.

Delegates reflected on the areas driving TVET's transformation including youth,

environment, social equity, and industry. Deliberations were grounded on the Qatari context but also extrapolated to encompass regional and global experiences.

Dr. Anna Paolini, Director of the Unesco Doha Office, delivered closing remarks, thanking participants for their contributions and restating Unesco's commitment to work with partners to transform TVET for the future.

# Blueair wins Swedish body's recommendation

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Well-respected Swedish Asthma and Allergy Association recommended four of the world's leading air purifier manufacturer Blueair's products: The Classic 405, Classic 480i, Classic 605 and Classic 680i, recently.

The Classic range is among Blueair's most high performing and is sold in 60 countries around the world. It removes at least 99.97 percent of pollutants, such as pollen, smoke, dust and pet dander, from indoor air.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease causing inflammation in the airways of the lungs. More than 235 million children, women and men around the world suffer from asthma. For people who have asthma, there are ways to relieve the symptoms and minimize asthma attacks.

Asthma is common,



especially among children: Nearly eight percent of all kids in the USA suffer from asthma, while in China, almost five percent of children have asthma. In the UK, one in 11 children have asthma. It's thought that many of the lifestyle choices we make today, such as our housing and diet, may have contributed to increase the number of people with asthma over the past few decades.

"Blueair air purifiers are sustainably designed to improve the health and well-being of people everywhere," said CV Rappal, Director & CEO, Digital Innovations in a statement.

# Toyota MC 86 clinches first place in SUPER GT 300 series opener

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Toyota started off the 2018 AUTOBACS SUPER GT 300 series recently with a bang thanks to an astounding victory and a thrilling podium finish at Okayama International Circuit.

UPGARAGE 86 MC, driven by Yuhki Nakayama and Takashi Kobayashi, won the race, while HOPPY 86 MC co-piloted by Takamitsu Matsui and Sho Tsuboi finished third in the tightly-fought opening round of the new season.

"We would like to congratulate the teams for an excellent start and exceptional

performance in the opening round of the season," said Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative of Middle East & North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation.

"At Toyota, we believe that racing events such as the AUTOBACS SUPER GT series are an opportunity to not only test the mettle of our performance machines and leading technologies, but also to guide the future development of Toyota vehicles, as we continue to make 'ever-better' cars. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our fans for their support and constant encouragement for our racing

initiatives."

At the start of the GT300 class race held at Okayama International Circuit, the No. 88 rival team held the lead, followed by the No. 11 and the No. 21 competitor teams. But tightly-fought battles ensued as No. 25 HOPPY 86 MC, with Sho Tsuboi at the wheel, joined the competition for the top four positions, showing off its superior performance.

As the leading No. 88 gradually began to fall off the pace, No. 11 managed to pass it on the hairpin of lap nine and Sho Tsuboi in the No. 25 HOPPY 86 MC also managed to get by No. 88 on the tenth lap.



A wide range of notable personalities from both academia and industry attended the workshop organised by CLPP.

# HBKU concludes workshop on international investment law

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Hamad Bin Khalifa University's (HBKU) College of Law and Public Policy (CLPP) hosted a workshop on "Comparative and International Investment Law: Prospects for Reform."

The workshop dealt with the significant backlash against international investment law

and arbitration by governments in different parts of the world.

Some countries have already terminated a number of their Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and others plan to replace BITs with a domestic law applicable to both national and foreign investors; other states are in the process of developing new types of international investment treaties.

According to the workshop organizer and CLPP Assistant Professor, Georgios Dimitropoulos, the goal of the workshop was to bring comparative law methodology into the study of international investment law. "Participants at the workshop," Dimitropoulos said, "compared domestic systems to draw general conclusions on the international investment regime, but also to address how international investment law and arbitration has been and should be influencing domestic investment laws."

The workshop included two panels – both chaired by HBKU CLPP Founding Dean, Clinton W. Francis – the first was on "Conceptualizing the Mutual Interplay between International and Domestic Investment Laws," and the second on "Domestic Investment Law and Policies, and the Reform of International Investment Law."

Both panels were followed by discussions between the international experts and local participants from Qatar Investment Authority, Qatar Rail, Qatar National Bank, Manateq, Qatar Science and Technology Park, and Ashghal.

During the workshop, Dean Francis highlighted new research initiatives at CLPP, which will benefit both the college and Qatar. "One important outcome of this workshop is the launch of our International Law and Policy Research Program (ILPRP) – an initiative that seeks to bridge the gap between academia and industry through research opportunities conducted in collaboration with CLPP's stakeholders."

# CONDOLENCES

We offer our heartfelt condolences  
to the family of

**Chitra Bahadur Khatri**  
(Employee of Dar Al Sharq)

on his sad and untimely demise

We pray to the Almighty to bless his soul  
and give fortitude to his family  
to bear this great loss

**The Peninsula** Local focus, Global vision



**QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY**  
INVITATION TO TENDER

**QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER**

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER COLLECTION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-351237	OVERHAULING, REPAIR AND RETURN OF MOTORS	500/- (non-refundable)	7,000/- (Seven Thousand Only)	01.05.18 02.05.18 03.05.18 06.05.18 07.05.18 08.05.18 09.05.18	23.05.18

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures are specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Tender Documents may be collected between 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (non-refundable), from the QAFCO Housing Section, relocated to Training Center Building (near Al Banash Club) at Mesaleed Residential Area, Tel: 44780093 / 44770330.
- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
  - Account Name: **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
  - Account Number: **0013-025828-058**
  - IBAN: **QA51QNBAA0000000013025828058**
  - Bank Name: **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and produces it during tender collection as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also bring a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from his company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender, while collecting the Tender Document.
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Housing Section, between 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".



# Al-Fikra business competition winners announced

## THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The five-months rigorous Al-Fikra National Business Competition came to a close yesterday. Held at the Grand Hayyat Hotel, Qatar Development Bank (QDB) recognised the efforts of the winning team among the august presence of industry veterans at the glittering gala dinner. QDB announced the three winning entries that were developed during the course of the contest. Al Fikra National Business Competition was sponsored by Ooredoo as the official communication sponsor, and Sasol as golden sponsors, in addition to the participation of CMU-Q as the competition's academic partner.

This year, the event witnessed a record number of registrations, which was close to 390 applications as compared to 90 in the last edition. Among these entries, 188 of them were Qataris. The number itself speaks the growing importance of this platform among the community.

After submitting the business plan ideas, the jury which is

comprised of members from academia, the business community, and QDB officials, finalized 36 applications who then presented the idea to the judges. Having heard their competitive pitches, final three entries were announced as the winners at the ceremony. The first winning entry was "Mashrou" by Shaha Alkhulaifi. According to the jury members, "Mashrou" is the first independent incubator for Doha's creative economy and a home for the art & design community; a place for people to come together, collaborate, research, and make meaningful work in an inspiring setting. The "Mashrou" team will run a regular public program of cultural events (film screenings, workshops, and academic lectures) to nurture community dynamics and sustain our creative ecosystem.

Second finalist was "Tadweer" by Ahmed Yousef Fakhro. The project involves recycling organic waste and re-uses it to the ground so as to maintain the fertility of the land. It uses materials that enter the organic fertilizer industry



Minister of Economy and Commerce H E Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani (fifth left); H E Sheikh Abdulla Saoud Al Thani (centre), Governor of Qatar Central Bank; Abdul Aziz bin Nasser Al Khalifa (third left), CEO of QDB; and other officials with the winners of Al-Fikra Awards during the ceremony yesterday. PIC: ABDUL BASIT/THE PENINSULA

through the remnants of farms and gardens (paper trees and herbs) & kitchen waste, thereby producing a rich fertilizer of microorganisms, fungi, phosphorous and other materials for good soil health. The third winning entry was "GarGor Finder" by Rashid Al Muhannadi. The first place winner was Rashid Al Muhannadi, who

presented "GarGor Finder" idea, and in the second place was Ahmed Yousef Fakhro, who presented the idea "Tadweer", while the third place was Shaha Alkhulaifi for the "Mashrou" idea.

The value of the awards amounted to more than QR500,000, and prizes ranged from access to finance, incubation time and advisory services

to help the successful entrepreneurs translate their business ideas into reality and commence operations on ground.

Acknowledging the efforts of participants during the awards ceremony, Abdul Aziz bin Nasser Al Khalifa, Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Development Bank, said: "In line with our efforts to stimulate

entrepreneurial growth, we are honoured and feel proud to have initiative this one-of-its-kind platform. Through this growing tribe, in the seventh edition, we have been able to shortlist some of the best entrepreneurial ideas to help them lead the growth path. Going ahead too, we will keep on supporting and stimulating the growth of small and medium-sized national enterprises, in particular the skills necessary to enhance economic growth, and to build bridges of joint cooperation with all stakeholders to support entrepreneurship in the country in order to integrate the roles and efforts to support Qatari youth".

Talking about the sponsorship, Yousef Abdulla Al Kubaissi, COO, Ooredoo Qatar, said: "Ooredoo is a vital supporter of SME and start-up businesses in Qatar and we support a number of incubators in the country. SMEs and start-ups make up a huge part of Qatar's businesses, which is why we invest heavily in helping digitise these businesses and are proud to be sponsoring such an important programme for Qatar".



Dr Ahmed Al Emadi and Nasser Al-Jaber exchanging the MoU.

# QU-CED and Teach For Qatar sign MoU

## THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar University College of Education (QU-CED) and Teach For Qatar recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster their long-term collaboration and ensure the development of teachers and the betterment of education in Qatar.

Although both parties have been collaborating since the launch of Teach For Qatar, the MoU reinforces their mutual benefit of investing in highly qualified individuals to become teachers and educate Qatar's future leaders.

In the terms of the MoU, CED and Teach

**The CED is demonstrating its commitment to expand its collaborations with educational institutions with the aim to promote the education sector in Qatar.**

For Qatar will further collaborate on the exchange of experiences and expertise such as workshops, teacher training and educational research and guidance. CED will also assist Teach For Qatar in its plan to incorporate a fourth subject, Arabic, to the program. The organization currently

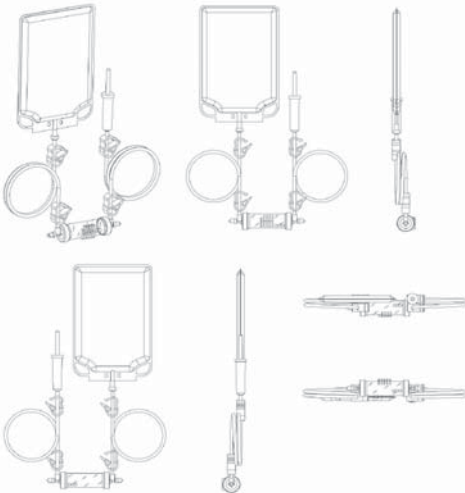
recruits fellows to join the Leadership Journey and teach classes ranging from fifth to ninth grade in English, Mathematics and Science. In his remarks, CED Dean Dr Ahmed Al Emadi said: "Through signing this MoU, CED is demonstrating its commitment to expand its collaborations with educational institutions with the aim to promote the education sector in Qatar."

Teach For Qatar CEO Nasser Al-Jaber said: "We at Teach For Qatar are keen on formalizing and strengthening our existing relationship with the College of Education at Qatar University which will help us in continuing to enhance teacher training and educational research."

## CAUTIONARY NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **Lipogems International Spa** located and doing business at Viale Bianca Maria 24, I-20129 Milano, Italy is the sole owner and exclusive proprietor in Qatar of the following designs of Medical apparatus:

## CARLO TREMOLADA



For which a community design application was filed under No. 002569962-0001 on November 03, 2014.

This notice is published in confirmation of the previous cautionary notice published in Peninsula Issue No. 6419 dated May 3, 2015.

A copy of the specification of the aforesaid design may be obtained upon application to the abovementioned owners.

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## Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation "KAHRAMAA" Announces the following Pre-Qualification Questionnaire

Pre-Qualification Questionnaire ("PQQ") for Tender No:	Pre-Qualification Questionnaire Title	Statement Of Qualification ("SOQ") Submission	SOQ Submission Deadline
GTC- 882- 2017	Solar Photo Voltaic (PV) Independent Power Project Pre-Qualification Questionnaire for Developers	(i) One original in Envelope 1 marked "original" (ii) Four copies in Envelope 2 marked "copy" (iii) a scanned soft copy of the same in PDF format via e-mail	Sunday, 24 June 2018, not later than 12:00 pm Doha time

### Brief Description:

Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation "KAHRAMAA" is pleased to invite interested Solar IPP developers to participate in a Pre-Qualification process in respect to the development of a new solar PV power plant with power generation capacity of approximately 500 MW. Interested developers will need to satisfy certain pre-qualification requirements in order to be shortlisted to receive the Request for Bid(s) ("RFB").

### Who should respond to this pre-qualification questionnaire:

Organizations that have a track record of development of utility scale Solar Power Projects as a Developer

Date and Mode of Issue of the PQQ document	Place of submission of SOQ
From 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2018, the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire can be downloaded from the KAHRAMAA website:  km.qa/consultant	(1) Envelopes: Office of the Manager, Planning and Development of Production and Water Resources Department 31st Floor, KAHRAMAA Main Bldg. Corniche Street, Al-Dafna Area, Doha. (2) Scanned soft copies e-mail: km_solar@km.qa

Queries, if any, regarding the PQQ must be received by hand delivery to the address specified above during KAHRAMAA working hours and by email to: km\_solar@km.qa, no later than the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 12:00pm.

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EDITORIAL

A safe haven for workers

Today, the whole world is celebrating the International Labour Day. The State of Qatar has more reasons to celebrate this May Day after the opening of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) first office in the Middle East in Doha on Sunday. The opening of the ILO office is yet another step in ensuring Qatar's exemplary legal system reflect global best practices. Qatar has been at the forefront in providing the best possible facilities for the workers and making sure that the employers safeguard and respect the rights and welfare of their workers.

Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, H.E. Dr. Issa bin Saad Al Jafali Al Nuaimi, said that Qatar welcomes the opening of the ILO office and there is no doubt that it is another step in Qatar's path to applying a system that simulates the best global standards. In ILO, "Qatar has a new partner to help it promote and protect the labour rights in the country," the Minister said.

Qatar and the ILO signed a technical and cooperation agreement last October and the opening of the office is the first step toward implementing the pact. Qatar holds a leading position in the region with regards to labour rights.

The technical agreement will augment Qatar's pioneering position in safeguarding workers' rights as the pact focuses on improving wages, improving work and occupational health and safety inspections, implementing a continual system and improving work conditions and procedures and enforcing complaint mechanism.

Qatar has already made great progress in all these areas. The implementation of Qatar Labour Law in 2004 was a big leap in this regard. The authorities have taken several steps to help employers in meeting the required labour standards through several workshops, training sessions and conferences among others.

On Saturday, the ILO and the Building and Wood Worker's International (BWI) hailed Qatar's commitment to the rights of workers and achievements it has made at the institutional and legislative levels to guarantee these rights. Deputy-Director General of Operations and Partnerships at the ILO, Mousa Oumaro, said that Qatar has worked hard to make arrangements for a safe working environment in the World Cup projects. Secretary-General of BWI, Ambit Yusen, said: "Qatar gives a strong signal that the safety of workers is a priority."

Vice-President of BWI, Dietmar Sheffers, said, "The work environment for construction projects in Qatar has witnessed significant achievements and developments in order to improve working conditions and provide a safe and secure environment."

These statements are clear acknowledgments of Qatar's efforts in safeguarding the welfare of its workforce. The country can boast of work site safety standards which not only meet, but often beat world's best practices. Enjoyable living conditions, good food and entertainment it provides to its workers and the cooperation with ILO will make the labour environment in Qatar the best in the world.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Keep the young men from the border, move the children away, we do not want to become handicapped people.

**Mahmoud Abbas**  
Palestinian President

Armenia may find it arduous task to deliver on citizens' demands

MARIAM MATEVOSYAN & GRAEME ROBERTSON  
THE WASHINGTON POST

This month, mass protests in Armenia's capital, Yerevan, have forced the prime minister to resign — and put this nation's political future up in the air.

The unrest began in March after then-President Serzh Sargsyan, leader of the ruling party, tried to circumvent limits on his power. Facing term limits as president, Sargsyan changed the government to a parliamentary system and stepped into the position of prime minister. Nikol Pashinyan, a member of the Armenian legislature, launched a public campaign to stop him. Intense street protests forced Sargsyan to resign after less than a week in the post of prime minister.

So what is going on? Here's the background. Once part of the Soviet Union, Armenia has spent most of the past 20 years as a soft authoritarian state in which the ruling elite has closely controlled political and economic opportunities. Although the country is nominally democratic, all democratic institutions, including elections and the mainstream media, have been controlled by the ruling Republican Party and its leaders since 1999.

Sargsyan has led the country as president since 2008 and was facing constitutional limits on his term in 2018. And so in 2013, he launched a constitutional review that transformed the country from a semi-presidential system into a parliamentary republic, giving the prime minister most powers formerly invested in the president. What's more, a new electoral system was introduced that grants disproportionate advantages to the ruling Republican Party,

giving it the ability to form a stable parliamentary majority. Protests started in March as part of a wave of self-organised, nonviolent acts of civil disobedience across Armenia. In a country marked by low trust in democratic institutions,

the movement's success has largely depended on the tactics and tools of networked protests that we have seen the world. Using social media & networks of students, employees of big and small companies, civil society organisations and many others, the protesters organised multiple actions simultaneously.

record-high levels of poverty and corruption, the protesters unified around calls for Sargsyan's resignation. More profound was that Armenians demanded justice, dignity, the rule of law and the end of government corruption.

The protests were distinctly peaceful, drawing tens of thousands of people into the streets. After Sargsyan stepped down, people celebrated with barbecues in the streets — and then continued protesting, demanding that Nikol Pashinyan be approved as prime minister and that the ruling Republican Party be dismissed from parliament.

According to the Constitution, if the



prime minister resigns, the parliamentary factions have seven days to nominate candidates for prime minister. As political negotiations continue, Nikol Pashinyan has announced that he is the only legitimate candidate for the prime minister's post. The Republican Party has announced it will not nominate a candidate. The speaker of the parliament has already called for the vote on the prime minister's election May 1. To win, a candidate needs 53 of the parliament's 105 votes.

The Republican Party has 58 members, giving it an absolute majority. That means that even if all other parliamentary factions unify to vote for Pashinyan, the protest leader, he cannot become prime minister without at least six Republican votes. While the Republicans are unlikely to risk nominating one of their own, given the mass street mobilisations against them, protesters fear that if Pashinyan is rejected as prime minister twice, according to the law, snap parliamentary elections have to be organised within 45 days.

However, major reforms in electoral institutions and law enforcement bodies are needed to make it possible to organise elections in line with democratic standards. Protesters fear that if snap elections are held, the Republican Party will exploit its control of the executive branch and its inbuilt advantages in the electoral system to falsify the vote and continue to dominate the country.

Why have the protests been so successful? Armenia is far from alone among former Soviet nations in being a poor, ill-governed country dominated by an oligarchic political system. As has been true in most of these countries, major street protests hardly seemed possible just a few years ago. This movement has emerged gradually from steady growth in citizen activism and growing cooperation between civic activist groups and the political opposition. In part, this new activism seems to have been the result of the rise of a new generation that has no memory of the Soviet period and was not part of the "transition" generation.

The movement's success has largely depended on the tactics and tools of networked protests that we have seen the world over. Using social media and networks of students, employees of big and small companies, civil society organisations and many others, the protesters

organised multiple actions simultaneously in many cities throughout the country. During the day, the protesters undertook such activities as blocking streets, public transportation and government buildings; each evening, protesters held massive gatherings in big squares.

As was the case in the Ukrainian revolution of 2014, these public gatherings and meetings helped build the movement gradually. In coming together at the end of each day to discuss events and agree on further steps, activists started face-to-face communication among a range of previously isolated societal groups. Many activists reported to us that the streets were transformed into open educational spaces in which citizens cooperated to reject the ruling regime, peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and spontaneously creating acts of protest.

Unlike the Ukrainian revolution, however, the Armenian protests have so far remained strictly nonviolent. This has proved highly effective, when police became violent, using stun grenades, arbitrary detention and excessive force against protesters and reporters, the protests remained peaceful — attracting even more people to the streets.

As protests continue, the political elite seem to be abandoning Sargsyan and uniting in support of Pashinyan and opposition forces. Two parliamentary factions, Tsarukyan Dashink and Yelk, have announced that they support the movement. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnakcunyun party left the government coalition; its members resigned from government posts on Thursday. A party leader said that, while there's not yet a final decision, they will most likely support Pashinyan.

Meanwhile, Sargsyan has resigned from the leadership of the Republican Party. Because he was the figure who united the otherwise divergent interests of the party's oligarchs, that puts the party's support in jeopardy.

During an open meeting in Yerevan's Republic Square, Pashinyan announced that a number of Republican members are ready to defect if protests continue. Most movement leaders now support trying to install Pashinyan as prime minister, giving them time to implement legislative electoral reforms before holding new elections.

Questions mount over bloodshed in Central African capital

AFP

Nearly three weeks after more than two dozen people were killed in the worst fighting in the Central African Republic's capital since 2015, what happened on that fateful day remains clouded by contradictions. On April 10, hours-long clashes unfolded in a mainly Muslim flashpoint district, sparking a wave of anger at UN peacekeepers tasked with shoring up the volatile nation.

According to the UN mission MINUSCA, the fighting began when a joint patrol of Rwandan UN troops and the Central African army (FACA) was attacked on the outskirts of the mainly Muslim PK5 district as they pursued a security sweep against militia groups. Hospital workers say 27 people were killed and more than a hundred injured — a toll that mounted over several days as casualties were brought in. One of the fatalities was a UN soldier.

In a dramatic protest, local people brought in 17 bloodied corpses with bullet wounds the day after the killing and laid them in front of the UN base in the centre of Bangui. They said the fatalities were simply unarmed civilians — a version fiercely contested by MINUSCA, which is struggling to overcome accusations of inaction and sexual abuse by some of its troops in the past. "We need to find out if it was the peacekeepers or the FACA who shot these people, and if so, whether they were unarmed civilians or fighters," said an observer, speaking on condition of anonymity.

One of the UN's most ambitious peacekeeping

operations, MINUSCA deployed 12,000 troops and police to CAR, which exploded into bloodshed after the 2013 overthrow of longtime leader Francois Bozize by a mainly Muslim rebel alliance, the Seleka. Bozize's successor, Faustin-Archange Touadera, elected in 2016, can only claim to control a fraction of the country — the rest is in the sway of ex-rebels and vigilante militias. A committee has been formed in PK5 to count and identify victims of the battle, while MINUSCA has opened an internal inquiry.

In spite of autopsies undertaken by UN experts in the morgue of the communal hospital, along with ballistic analysis and the gathering of testimony from witnesses, questions remain unanswered. Were there militia fighters

among the 27 dead? If so, how many of these men were killed? Who did the killing?

The distinction between fighters and civilians is sometimes tricky to make in the PK5 district, which has been a battleground on and off for years. "Local people got mixed up in the war, some of them also possess weapons," one community leader told, asking not to be named.

Tensions within the PK5 district had also been running high, both between armed groups and between militia and traders fed up with paying extortion money. In November and December, two attacks left 14 dead and more than 20 injured.

For now, a UN source admitted: "The versions are contradictory. The fact is that we don't know what happened."



# Macron offers a third way for Trump in Syria



PASCAL-EMMANUEL GOBRY  
BLOOMBERG

**F**rance and the US may have worked together to strike the Syrian regime's chemical weapons infrastructure on April 13, but the two countries have had different objectives.

US President Donald Trump has said he wants to reduce the US presence there, while French President Emmanuel Macron has stepped up French engagement in the region. Macron is now hoping his pomp-filled Washington visit will help convince Trump to follow his lead.

Trump should listen. France worries that a US pullout from Syria would risk turning what's left of the country into a haven for terrorism.

It would also be a precursor to massive bloodshed while Bashar Al

Assad finishes off his enemies, something France finds unacceptable. France's official goals in Syria — a negotiated end to the conflict that gives all the parties a credible stake in the country's future, defeats terrorist movements, and pushes for as much humanitarian support for civilians as possible — are the right ones. But while America's leadership dithers over its options in Syria, Macron has displayed a combination of flexibility and toughness that not only serves France's interests but should suit Trump's too.

Macron's position took shape soon after his election when, with cunning realism, he reversed France's previous policy of making Assad's ouster a precondition to talks on the country's future. At the same time, he made a "red line" declaration of his own, purposefully echoing the warning made but not enforced by former US President Barack Obama and French President Francois Hollande.

When it became clear that the Assad regime had crossed that line, Macron declared that he wanted an international effort to strike Assad's chemical weapons infrastructure, but

signaled that he would act alone if need be. Trump too was eager for a show of force that contrasted with Obama's inaction. The rest was easy, but what comes next isn't.

In France, the strikes were viewed positively. They damaged, if not crippled, Assad's WMD infrastructure and made Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had positioned sophisticated air defenses in the region, look weak. The episode also strengthened French credibility in the region.

Macron's approach to Syria isn't all muscle, though. France has worked hard to be a pivotal power in the Syrian conflict and is pretty much the only party to the conflict that can command the respect and attention of all other parties. France wants to be seen as an honest broker, able to enforce red lines but also sensitive to the complex interests of different parties.

France is one of the most active countries in the UN on Syria issues. While aligned with the US and UK in pushing back against Russia's provocations, France consistently insists on dialogue and refrains from rhetoric that would anger Moscow. In a TV interview held shortly after the strikes, Macron emphasised that he spoke with Putin multiple times before and after.

All of these positions have been carefully cultivated and make France a key US ally in any resolution to the conflict. France has vital interests in Syria: Islamic State, now in its death throes, has many French fighters keen to return home to wreak havoc there



**France has worked hard to be a pivotal power in the Syrian conflict and is pretty much the only party to the conflict that can command the respect and attention of all other parties. France wants to be seen as an honest broker, able to enforce red lines but also sensitive to the complex interests of different parties.**

once defeated in Syria; France wants to ensure they are not able to do that.

Macron rightly feels that France cannot afford to defend the international community's interests all by itself.

Meanwhile, Trump, consciously or not, is grasping for a third way in Syria that is neither a complete disengagement that would make him look weak, nor a heavy presence that goes counter to his foreign policy instincts and that he knows would be unpopular. He should let his French counterpart take the lead.

*The writer is a Paris-based writer and fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.*



SEBASTIAN RODRIGUEZ  
REUTERS

**C**osta Rica will reach 200 years of independence in 2021 and the country's new president plans to mark it with a revolution of his own: A plan to end the use of fossil fuels in transport.

"When we reach 200 years of independent life we will take Costa Rica forward and celebrate... that we've

Costa Rican sustainability expert and director of Costa Rica Limpia, which promotes renewable energy and electric transport, said that in a country already rapidly weaning itself off fossil fuels, focusing on transport — one of the last major challenges — could send a powerful message to the world. "Getting rid of fossil fuels is a big idea coming from a small country. This is an idea that's starting to gain international support with the rise of new technologies," she said in an interview. Costa Rica's push toward clean energy faces no large-scale backlash, in part because the country has no significant oil or gas industry.

But demand for cars is rising, as is use of other transport systems, and that may prove one of the biggest challenges in meeting the new goal, Lara said.

According to data by the National Registry — the country's records agency — there were twice as many cars registered as babies born in 2016.

Transport is today the country's main source of climate changing emissions. According to the country's National Meteorological Institute, 64 percent of Costa Rica's emissions come from energy use, and more than two thirds of that is from transport.

According to data from the State of the Region report, put together by a council of Costa Rica's university leaders, public transport has struggled to meet the transport needs of the country.

As a result, demand for private vehicles has risen dramatically, with the car industry growing 25 percent in 2015 alone, making Costa Rica one of the fastest growing auto markets in Latin America, according to the report. One problem in cutting back on fossil fuels is that the country's budget depends on them, Lara said.

According to Ministry of Treasury data, 22 percent — more than a fifth — of the government's income comes from fossil fuel taxes, and most of those are levied on transport.

That is particularly problematic because the country has run a budget deficit since 2009, with its debt now having climbed to more than 6 percent of GDP last year, according to the Treasury.

The International Monetary Fund noted in 2017 that "public

debt continues to rise rapidly" despite efforts to curb it.

But the president's proposal to eliminate fossil fuel use for transport could force a rethink of Costa Rica's financial dependence on a pollution source, Lara said.

The country could, for instance, consider broader new taxes on carbon emissions, Araya said, a move that could provide cost-savings benefits, including less spending by the country's health services on respiratory problems.

The new president-elect, a former national employment minister under the country's current center-left government, envisions eliminating transport fuels as just another step toward a full phase-out of fossil fuels.

Such an achievement would be a defining moment in the country's history, akin to the country's abolition of its army in 1948, he said.

The effort to end the use of transport fossil fuels is expected to start with reform of the country's hydrocarbon laws. Araya said that the rapid international scale-up of renewable power and electric transport could make things easier — and be a big economic opportunity for Costa Rica.

"For example, it took almost 20 years to get to one million electric cars (worldwide). It took 18 months to reach two million. The third million happened in around the next eight months. This is exponential growth," she said.

Prices are falling and efficiency growing in new clean energy technologies, including battery storage, she said. The biggest barrier to seeing them much more widely used may simply be that people aren't yet used to them, she added. "Tackling resistance to change is one of the most important tasks we have right now," Araya said.



## Costa Rica's President promises plan to speed up clean transport

removed gasoline and diesel from our transportation" plans. Carlos Alvarado promised in his victory speech this month.

The 38-year-old progressive beat rival Fabricio Alvarado, an evangelical preacher and musician, with 60 percent of the vote in second-round elections, and will take office on May 8. The president-elect's promise marks the first time a Costa Rican leader has backed such a move, though green organisations have previously urged it.

According to Alvarado's environmental advisors, no date has yet been set for a full phase out of fossil fuels in transport, but the plan should be ready by 2021. Achieving zero-carbon transport quickly — even in a Central American country well-known for its environmental commitment — will be a significant challenge, energy experts say. Jose Daniel Lara, a Costa Rican energy researcher at the University of California-Berkeley, said completely eliminating fossil fuels within just a few years is probably unrealistic — though the plan will lay the groundwork for faster action toward the goal.

"A proposal like this one must be seen by its rhetoric value and not by its technical precision," Lara told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Oscar Echeverria, president of the Vehicle and Machinery Importers Association, said the transition away from fossil fuels in transport can't be rushed as the clean transport market is so far undeveloped.

"If there's no previous infrastructure, competence, affordable prices and waste management we'd be leading this process to failure. We need to be careful," Echeverria said.

But economist Monica Araya, a



**Transport is today the country's main source of climate changing emissions. According to the country's National Meteorological Institute, 64 percent of Costa Rica's emissions come from energy use, and more than two thirds of that is from transport.**

The Peninsula

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# Abducted aid workers in South Sudan freed

AP

JUBA: Ten aid workers have been released after being abducted in South Sudan almost a week ago, said the UN yesterday.

Three UN staff and seven aid workers, all South Sudanese nationals, went missing last week when their convoy traveling in Central Equatoria province was hijacked.

The aid workers, employed by a variety of organisations including the South Sudanese Development Organization, ACROSS, Plan International and Action Africa Help, were flown back to Juba by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

This is the second kidnapping of aid workers in less than a month. Seven aid workers were abducted earlier this month and later released in the same area.

The UN said it's "outraged" at the deteriorating situation for aid workers in the country. Last week a humanitarian was killed in Leer County, bringing to 100 the number of aid workers killed since the onset of South Sudan's five-year civil war.

"I am deeply concerned by the insecurity faced by aid workers in South Sudan, who



**Right groups are calling on all warring factions to stop targeting aid workers and for South Sudan's authorities to investigate the attacks and hold those responsible to account.**

are risking their lives to save others," said the UN's humanitarian coordinator for South Sudan, Alain Noudehou.

Opposition forces loyal to former Vice-President Riek Machar have claimed responsibility for the most recent abductions saying that the UN is sending humanitarians into rebel-controlled areas without clearance.

"This is undermining the leadership of the (opposition) and it has to stop immediately as it has resulted into misunderstandings and endangering of lives of the workers and our displaced population," opposition spokesman, Lam Paul Gabriel said in a statement. "The opposition's leadership found out about the detained aid workers

two days ago and immediately ordered their release."

But the UN said it never enters into an area to deliver aid until negotiations with all parties are completed.

South Sudan's government said the opposition is executing a "mass starvation" strategy for people in the Equatoria region and wants rebel commanders to be held to account by the East African regional bloc leading the upcoming peace talks, the government's army spokesman Lul Rual Koang said, adding that the opposition should also be condemned by Norway, Britain and the United States, countries that helped South Sudan reach independence.

Right groups are calling on all warring factions to stop targeting aid workers and for South Sudan's authorities to investigate the attacks and hold those responsible to account.

"Attacks on aid workers have become the norm in South Sudan with dozens killed, injured or have disappeared since the conflict began. This flagrant violation of international law must come to an end," said Seif Magango, Amnesty International's deputy regional director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (left) and Uzbekistani President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during a press conference following their meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, yesterday.

## Turkey eyes improved ties with Uzbekistan

ANATOLIA

ANKARA: Turkey is working with Uzbekistan to enhance bilateral ties in all areas, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday.

"We discussed all topics related to Turkey-Uzbekistan — politics, military, economy, trade, culture, the defense industry — and what we can do in the process after this."

"We found the opportunity to discuss these," Erdogan said at a joint news conference with his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev in capital Tashkent.

"We exchanged views on regional and global issues. Last year in October, we brought Turkey-Uzbekistan relations to a strategic partnership on the occasion of my distinguished brother's visit to my country with his family."

"In our meeting today, we have taken steps to strengthen the infrastructure of our strategic partnership."

The presidents signed agreements comprising 25 items, which Erdogan regarded as "a beginning of a long journey for Turkey and Uzbekistan".

The meeting of the

Turkey-Uzbekistan High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council will be held annually, the first of which will be held in Turkey, Erdogan said.

The Turkish president said Turkey remains determined to boost bilateral ties "from economy to the defence industry, education to culture, environment to energy, agriculture to tourism, in all areas".

He also "welcomed" the developments in economic relations, saying the trade volume between the two countries went up by 20 percent in the first quarter of the year.



An image grab shows the scene of missile attacks targeting central Syria the previous night.

## 26 pro-regime fighters dead in central Syria missile strike

AFP

BEIRUT: Missile strikes on central Syria killed 26 pro-regime fighters, most of them Iranians, a monitor said yesterday, in a raid that bore the hallmarks of Tehran's archfoe Israel.

The Syrian regime, which denounced a "fresh aggression" after the strikes, meanwhile continued to flush out armed groups from the capital with more deals to transfer fighters to the country's north.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group, missile strikes hit two military targets in Aleppo and Hama provinces late Sunday.

The strike on Hama province hit a base known as the 47th Brigade where pro-regime fighters are stationed. Both hits destroyed surface-to-surface missiles, the monitor said.

"At least 26 fighters were killed, including four Syrians," in the Hama strike, said Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the Britain-based monitoring group. "The others are foreign fighters, a vast majority of them Iranians," he said. "Given the nature of the target, it is likely to have been an Israeli strike."

Israeli Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz said yesterday morning that he was "not aware" of the latest strikes.

But, he said, "all the violence and instability in Syria is the result of Iran's attempts to establish a military presence there. Israel will not allow the opening of a northern front in Syria."

Syria President Bashar al-Assad, whose main allies are Russia and Iran, did not explicitly mention the overnight strikes but said "hostile countries have shifted to a stage of direct aggression".

## US-led coalition to end war against IS in Iraq

REUTERS

BAGHDAD: The US-led coalition signalled yesterday the end of major combat operations against IS militant group in Iraq by announcing the "deactivation" of its land forces command headquarters.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi declared victory over the IS militants in December, five months after his forces recaptured the country's second city Mosul in a protracted battle with the jihadist militants.

IS militant group, however, continues to carry out bombings, assassinations and ambushes in different areas of Iraq, and remains active in neighbouring

**The US-led coalition said its relationship with the Iraqi armed forces would evolve "from supporting and enabling combat operations to the training and development of self-sufficient Iraqi security-related capabilities".**

Syria.

In a statement, the US-led coalition said its relationship with the Iraqi armed forces would evolve "from supporting and enabling combat operations

to the training and development of self-sufficient Iraqi security-related capabilities".

"The Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command Headquarters was deactivated today at a ceremony in Baghdad, signifying the end of major combat operations against ISIS (militant group) in Iraq and acknowledging the changing composition and responsibilities of the coalition."

Bret Mc Gurk, the US envoy to the coalition, tweeted: "From Falluja to Tikrit, Baiji, Ramadi, Sinjar, Mosul and points in between, our coalition has been proud to stand beside Iraqi forces and (Kurdish) Peshmarga as they liberated their country

and 4.5 million fellow citizens from ISIS."

Nato nations agreed in February to a bigger "train-and-advise" mission in Iraq as part of a broader international effort to help rebuild the country from more than a decade of war as combat operations wind down.

The United States wants to avoid a repeat of its 2011 withdrawal from Iraq and the subsequent rise of Islamic State as security unravelled.

"The lesson learned from Iraq (is that) it is dangerous to leave too early because we may be forced back into combat operations," Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in February.

## Somalia elects new Parliament Speaker

REUTERS

MOGADISHU: Somalia's Parliament elected a former defence minister as its speaker yesterday.

Mohamed Mursal Abdurahman (pictured) resigned as minister earlier this month to stand for the position after the previous speaker resigned ahead of a confidence motion against him.

Abdirahman secured over half of the votes from lawmakers that took part in the vote, deputy speaker Abdiweli Ibrahim Muudey said.

The previous speaker, Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawari, had held his position since 2013



but quit after a dispute with the president that analysts said was fuelled in part by a crisis in the Gulf spilling into the Horn of Africa country.

The president and the

former speaker have long been rivals, analysts said. But much of their recent enmity was fuelled by the perception that they back opposite sides in the dispute that erupted last year between Qatar and Turkey against Saudi Arabia and its ally, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"I assure the Somali citizens that I will honestly serve the country in accordance with the interest of the religion, people and the country," Abdirahman said after the result of parliament's vote was announced.

Somalia has been in a state of lawlessness since 1991, when warlords overthrew dictator Siad Barre and then turned on each other.

## EU delegation to visit Turkey over visa waiver

ANATOLIA

ANKARA: A delegation from the EU will visit Turkey in mid-May to discuss a visa-free deal and the issue of refugees, according to EU sources yesterday.

A working plan for Turkish citizens to travel to Schengen countries visa-free, submitted by Turkey to Brussels in February, is currently being examined, said the source requesting anonymity due to restrictions on speaking to the media.

The technical delegation from the EU Commission will convey their views on the seven outstanding criteria out of a total of 72 that Ankara was expected to fulfil.

On April 4, Turkey's EU Affairs Minister Orhan Celik told lawmakers in the Parliament's foreign affairs committee that they had already discussed the proposal of visa-free travel with European Commission's First Vice-President Frans Timmermans.

"They will send a technical delegation [on visa liberalisation] to Turkey this month," Celik said, adding, "They will convey their views [on visa liberalisation] to us."

## Iraq to use electronic voting system in May

AP

BAGHDAD: Iraq plans to use a new electronic system in next month's national elections that will limit fraud and allow for the announcement of results within hours of polls closing, the election commission said yesterday.

The Independent High Electoral Commission said that 60,000 devices will be distributed nationwide to send voting data via satellite. Employees have tested the system and found it to be as

reliable as hand-counting, the commission said.

In previous elections, voters filled out ballots and then dipped their fingers in purple ink, a measure that was designed to prevent repeat voting.

But the voting process itself was cumbersome. Ballots had to be collected and then transported to Baghdad to be counted by hand. It would be weeks before results were known, though partial results were sometimes released.

In the upcoming elections,

voters will insert electoral cards into a machine before marking the ballots with an electronic pen. Afterward, the ballots will be put into a scanner to tally and record the results.

"This new process will ensure both a quick and free-of-fraud election process," said Aziz Al Kheikan, a spokesman for the electoral commission.

Some 2.3 million people are still uprooted from their homes following the three-year military campaign against the IS militant group.



An official checks a voter's documents as people cast their vote during an election test process, in Arbil, in northern Iraq, yesterday.



# Top Hizbul commander among 3 dead in Kashmir

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: A top Hizbul commander, Sameer Tiger, and his associate Aquib were dead yesterday in a gunfight with security forces while a civilian also lost his life during clashes in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district.

Police sources said Sameer Tiger, who was on the list of most wanted militant commanders in south Kashmir, was killed in Drabgam village.

Three soldiers including a Major were injured in the gunfight. Police said that although firing had stopped, security operations in the area were still going on. A teenager, Shahid, 14, was killed during clashes between protesters and the security forces in Drabgam village. Fifteen other civilians were injured in the clashes.

The Rashtriya Rifles, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Special Operations Group (SOG) of Jammu and

**As the troops came closer to a cluster of homes, rebels fired at them, triggering a fierce exchange of gunfire which lasted for several hours, police said.**

Kashmir Police surrounded Drabgam village on Friday morning following information about the presence of militants.

Police said that as the security forces closed on the hidden militants, they opened fire, triggering an encounter. Mobile Internet facility has been suspended in south Kashmir as a precaution.

As the troops came closer to a cluster of homes, rebels fired at them, triggering a fierce exchange of gunfire which lasted for several hours, police said. The two slain rebels included a top commander of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Kashmir's largest mil-

itant group, police said.

Earlier, as fighting between the troops and rebels raged, anti-government militants chanted pro-rebel slogans and tried to march to the site to help the trapped militants escape, leading to clashes between rock-throwing villagers and government forces who fired live ammunition, shotgun pellets and tear gas.

An army helicopter hovered over the area to coordinate the operation with ground troops, officials said.

Kashmiri separatist leaders who challenge India's sovereignty over the region politically condemned the killings and called for a protest strike today.

In recent years, some rebel Kashmiris, mainly youths, have displayed open solidarity with militants and sought to protect them by engaging troops in street clashes during military operations. Last year at least 29 civilians were killed and hundreds wounded during such



People rush a civilian to a hospital in Srinagar after he was injured in clashes between protesters and police at Drabgam village in Pulwama District, yesterday.

clashes. A new generation of Kashmiri rebels, especially in the southern parts of the region, has

revived the militancy and challenged government rule with guns and effective use of social

media. India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the rebels, a charge Pakistan denies.

## Lalu shifted from AIIMS to Ranchi, blames Modi

IAN S

**NEW DELHI:** Convicted RJD chief Lalu Prasad yesterday blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he was told to leave AIIMS where he was being treated to return to Ranchi, shortly after Congress President Rahul Gandhi called on the former Bihar Chief Minister.

"I (shifting from AIIMS to Ranchi hospital) is under the pressure from the Centre, from

Narendra Modi that I am being sent back there. It is entirely due to political rivalry," Lalu Prasad said as he came out of AIIMS on a wheelchair after being discharged.

The RJD leader said shifting him back to the Rajendra Institute of Medical Science (RIMS) in Ranchi was a conspiracy so that his health would deteriorate further. "I am being shifted to a place where there are no facilities. It is a tough time,

but I will face it." But AIIMS spokesman B N Acharya said the decision followed the recommendation of a medical board set up for his treatment which found significant improvement in his health and that "he was discharged on Saturday" itself.

Saying Lalu Prasad was currently stable and fit to travel, Acharya said in a statement: "The medical board met on April 28, reviewed his progress and decided that he was fit to be

discharged. However, due to his chronic problem of hypertension, diabetes and backache he was advised to be on regular follow up and management at RIMS Ranchi. He was therefore discharged on Saturday. However he requested to be kept in hospital as he wanted to travel later." Some supporters of the RJD leader, annoyed over his "sudden discharge", allegedly misbehaved with the hospital staff and even damaged the glass

door of Cath Lab, resulting in injury to a security guard. AIIMS asked police to lodge an FIR. Earlier, Rahul Gandhi called on Lalu Prasad at AIIMS and had a half hour meeting with him. Lalu Prasad, who was admitted to AIIMS on March 29 of heart ailments, wrote in a letter to AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria: "If I am sent from AIIMS to Ranchi medical college, in case of any danger to my life, sole responsibility will be on you all.

## Kavinder Gupta sworn in as J&K Deputy CM

IAN S

**JAMMU:** In a major cabinet overhaul, Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Speaker Kavinder Gupta was sworn in as the new Deputy Chief Minister in the Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP-BJP coalition government, replacing Nirmal Singh who is set to become the Speaker.

The Bharatiya Janata Party also inducted Satpal Sharma, its state unit chief, as a cabinet minister along with new faces Rajiv Jasrotia, Sunil Kumar Sharma, Devender Kumar Maniwal and Shakti Raj Parihar.

The oath of office and secrecy was administered by Governor NN Vohra at the Jammu Convention Centre. The BJP also withdrew three ministers — Nirmal Singh, Bali Bhagat and Priya Sethi. The BJP's move comes after Chander Prakash Ganga and Choudhary Lal Singh resigned following their participation in a controversial rally supporting the Kathua abuse and murder accusation. Following their resignation, all BJP ministers resigned from the government.



United Nations Security Council delegation arrives at Naypyidaw airport yesterday for a meeting with Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and visit Rakhine state.

## Rohingya probe: UN team meets Suu Kyi

AP

**MYANMAR:** Members of a UN Security Council team probing Myanmar's crisis over its ethnic Rohingya Muslim minority met yesterday with the country's leader and military chief after visiting Bangladesh, where about 700,000 Rohingya who fled military-led violence live in refugee camps.

The 15-member UN delegation, including Security Council President, Gustavo

Meza-Cuadra, met in Myanmar's capital with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and military commander Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing. They are to travel today to Rakhine state, the area from which the Rohingya fled.

They are expected to see the aftermath of the army's crackdown there as well as the government's preparations for taking back the refugees from Bangladesh.

"The ministers will discuss in detail the repatriation of the

refugees agreed by the two countries and resettlement plans for the returnees," Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary Myint Thu said. He said the UN delegates would be taken to refugee reception centres as well as villages in northern Rakhine. The army launched counterinsurgency sweeps in Rakhine after attacks last August on security personnel. The military has been accused of massive human rights violations.

## 400 cops will be slain for shooting 40 Maoists, warns ex-journalist

IAN S

**MAHARASHTRA:** Security forces in Maharashtra went in a tizzy yesterday following apprehensions expressed on Facebook that "400 cops will be killed for shooting 40 Maoists" in the biggest anti-Maoist security operation here last week that left 40 ultras, many of them women, dead.

The post has been made by Pune-based journalist-turned-social worker, Raosaheb Dokhe, who has raised questions on the Maoists gunned down in two separate gun battles with police in deep jungles of the district on April 22 and 23.

Contacted for reactions, an official of Gadchiroli police said that they have taken "serious note of the posts" and passed it onto the IT Cell for further investigations.

"We shall find out the antecedents of the person who has issued these open challenges to the police and government in such objectionable posts... and take appropriate action," the official said.

In his post, Dokhe asks: "Were they all Maoists? How many policemen were killed?"

It means they were not real Maoists." "40 Comrades have been killed by the government in the Fake Encounter (staged gunfight). This will be definitely avenged — Blood for Blood — 400 cops for 40 (Maoists) killed," said the post.

It also challenged the government of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and said: "Wait for sometime — b>Your future is not good," before signing off with a "Lal Salam".

A day earlier on April 28, Dokhe had urged: "Let us kill all those police, who killed our comrades brutally."

Contacted for his comments, the 51-year Dokhe said he is an "unarmed person" and his post was merely reflecting an ideology in the wake of what has happened in Gadchiroli. "Does the post say I will do anything? What has happened is wrong... I have expressed apprehensions that more wrongs will take place in future. How can I be blamed?" Dokhe said. However, he said that he was also a "wronged Dalit" and if injustice continues in this manner, he would not hesitate to "take to arms" to defend the truth and the Constitution.

## Italian climber dies in Nepal

AFP

**KATHMANDU:** An Italian climber has died on Nepal's rugged Mount Dhaulagiri, officials said yesterday, the first fatality of the busy spring climbing season.

Simone La Terra, 37, was blown off the 8,167-metre (26,795-foot) mountain — the world's seventh highest peak — by a strong gust of wind on Sunday. His body was found yesterday.

Dambar Parajuli of Prestige Adventure, which organised the Italian's expedition, said La Terra was inside a tent at 6,900 metres when he was swept off the mountain. His team members searched for him on foot while a rescue helicopter struggled against bad weather to search higher up the mountain. Parajuli said.

"His body was found this morning at 800 metres below the spot where he had been camped," he said. Ram Prasad Sapkota, spokesman for Nepal's tourism department, also confirmed the death.

## Cambodia registering parties for July vote after main opposition dissolved

REUTERS

**PHNOM PENH:** Cambodia began registering political parties yesterday for a July general election likely to extend the 33-year-old rule of Prime Minister Hun Sen after the Supreme Court dissolved the main opposition party.

The National Election Committee (NEC) said Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) was the first to register along

with the little known, pro-government Cambodian Youth Party (CYP). Registration will end on May 14.

"Many political parties will register — 16 parties have collected forms to fill in," NEC spokesman Dim Sovannaron said. The registration comes amid a campaign by Hun Sen against his critics, including the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party. The CNRP was dissolved and its lawmakers banned

from politics in November after the Supreme Court ruled that it had tried to overthrow the government with US help.

Both the CNRP and the United States deny the accusation.

The CNRP, which had drawn the support of a new generation of voters not content with what they see as the corruption and nepotism that has stalked the Southeast Asian nation's politics.

The dissolution of the CNRP was followed by the arrest of its leader, Kem Sokha.

Rhona Smith, a UN human rights expert on Cambodia, said Hun Sen's party has "one final opportunity to reverse the current trajectory" and called for the immediate release of opposition leaders and removal of a ban on the opposition.

"No election can be genuine if the main opposition party is barred from taking part," Smith

said in a statement on Monday. "A liberal multi-party democracy is an essential, entrenched and non-amendable feature of the Constitution of Cambodia." Hun Sen defended the election, saying it would involve multiple political parties with different viewpoints and take place as planned on July 29. "The process of multi-party democracy continues," Hun Sen told students at a university graduation ceremony yesterday.

# Nine journalists among 25 dead in Kabul twin blasts

**AFGHANISTAN:** A coordinated double suicide bombing by the Islamic State group hit central Kabul yesterday morning, killing at least 25 people, including nine Afghan journalists, officials said.

An AFP photographer, a cameraman for the local Tolo TV station and several reporters for the Afghan branch of Radio Free Europe were among the fatalities, police said.

At least 45 people were wounded in the twin attacks, according to Kabul police spokesman, Hashmat Stanekzai, who also said four policemen were among those killed.

The attack was the latest in a relentless string of deadly large-scale bombings and assaults that have struck Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan so far this year. And even as the Afghan capital reeled from yesterday's assault, a suicide car bombing a few hours later in the southern province of Kandahar killed 11 children, a police spokesman said. Eight Romanian Nato soldiers were wounded in that bombing.

In a statement posted on an

**Stanekzai, the police spokesman, said the first suicide bomber was on a motor bike while the second explosion meant to hit those scrambling to get to the scene to help the victims of the first blast.**

IS-affiliated website, the Islamic State group said two of its martyrdom seekers carried out the Kabul bombings, targeting the headquarters of the "renegade" Afghan intelligence services.

The blasts took place in the central Shash Darak area, home to Nato headquarters and a number of embassies and foreign offices — as well as the Afghan intelligence service.

Stanekzai, the police spokesman, said the first suicide bomber was on a motor bike while the second explosion meant to hit those scrambling to get to the scene to help the victims of the first blast.

The second attacker was on foot, in a crowd of reporters



Afghan security forces at the site of a second blast in Kabul, Afghanistan, yesterday.

rushing to the site of the first attack, pretending to be one of the media, the spokesman said. The bomber then detonated his explosives while still among the reporters, Stanekzai said, intentionally targeting journalists.

Agence France-Presse said the news agency's chief photographer in Kabul, Shah Marai, was among those killed. AFP said Marai died in a blast that struck journalists who had rushed to the scene of the earlier attack.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders said along with the nine journalists killed, six

were wounded. However, Sediqullah Tawhidi, an official with the Afghan Journalist Safety Committee, said only five journalists were wounded. Conflicting casualty tolls are common in the immediate aftermath of big attacks. The Paris-based group named the journalists, working for media organizations from multiple countries, adding that Monday's attack was the deadliest targeting reporters since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. The group, also known by its French acronym RSF, said 36 media workers have been killed in

Afghanistan in attacks by IS or the Taliban since 2016.

RSF urged the Afghan government to do more to protect journalists. Survivors and witnesses recounted scenes of mayhem. Jawed Ghulam Sakhi, a 28-year-old a taxi driver said "when the explosion happened, everywhere was covered with dust and fire, it was such a horrific scene" with bodies and body parts "thrown about on the street and the pavement." "I saw journalists covered with blood, this time they targeted the media," Sakhi added.

# US defers decision on restrictions for Pakistani diplomats

**INTERNEWS**

**ISLAMABAD:** The United States has delayed its decision to restrict the movement of Pakistani diplomats in America as both countries try to resolve the differences that have strained their relations, official sources said.

Last week, a spokesman for Pakistan's Ministry for Foreign Affairs confirmed that the United States planned to impose new restrictions on its diplomats.

Recent reports in the Pakistani media suggest that the US government has already alerted Pakistani authorities of its plan to do so.

According to a notification sent to the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, Pakistani diplomats in the US capital and at consulates in other cities would be barred from travelling more than 40km from their posts without prior permission. Media reports said the restrictions could take effect as early as May 1, unless

"certain issues" were resolved before that.

But official sources said that the decision had now been delayed, at least till mid-May, as both sides were engaged in efforts to remove their differences. The efforts focus on some recent developments in Islamabad where US diplomats and visitors to US Embassy and consulates are facing additional security measures.

Pakistan has prevented foreigners, including diplomats,

from travelling to certain areas, such as Fata, Karachi and some areas of Balochistan have also been added to the list following continued militant attacks on both Pakistani and foreign targets.

Visitors to the US missions in Pakistan also have to go through strict security and identification routines. Pakistan argues that such measures aim at enhancing the security of foreign missions and their employees and have no other motive.

But Americans appear particularly upset with a new practice, applying the same security measures to those invited by the US missions or diplomats to their offices and homes.

Previously, such guests only had to go through metal detection devices and a quick frisking to ensure they were not carrying weapons. They were not asked to show identity papers or disclose the purpose of their visit, as they are now.

# Islamabad weighs another option to curb bogus voting

**INTERNEWS**

**ISLAMABAD:** Almost five years after undertaking a controversial and flawed exercise of using magnetic ink to discourage fake votes, Pakistan's top electoral body is now weighing an alternative option to prevent bogus voting in the upcoming 2018 general elections.

The option, currently under consideration at the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), provides using a voter's identity card number for stopping fake voting. The country's top database authority has sent a proposal to the ECP, suggesting it not to publish the last three numbers of the 13-digit identity card in the final electoral rolls.

The missing last three digits from the electoral rolls will make it impossible for the polling staff or others to fill out the identity card number column on the counterfoil of a ballot paper until the voter presents his or her CNIC.

The ECP officials claimed that the proposed option would "fairly minimise chances of bogus voting on the polling day" and "is a viable alternative solution" to ensure transparency.

The process would also make the verification of votes by the National Database and

Registration Authority (Nadra) convenient in case a post-poll controversy arose in any of the constituencies.

In case of dispute between the winner and the runner-up candidates, the verification of polled votes would be carried out through counterfoils.

In 2013 general elections, thumb impressions of voters were taken on counterfoils using magnetic ink.

At the time, it was claimed that use of ink would help in the audit of every vote in case any controversy arose after announcement of the results. But it proved a futile exercise when it came to verifying the votes. Later, the ECP officially admitted that it failed to achieve the desired results even after spending Rs85 million on purchasing the magnetic ink.

The Nadra claimed that the ECP had not purchased the recommended high-quality magnetic ink and for that reason the authority failed to verify thousands of thumb impressions in disputed cases. Later, the Nadra chairman had himself admitted that "it (use of magnetic ink) was a useless exercise".

The Nadra processed the election material in some 43 disputed cases related to the national and provincial assemblies' constituencies on the directions of election tribunals.

# Trump suggests truce village for summit

**AFP**

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump suggested yesterday that his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un be held in the truce village that straddles the border separating the two Koreas.

Trump has previously listed a number of locations under consideration for the historic summit — which would be the first between a sitting US president and a leader of North Korea — but this is his first

public comment on a potential site.

"Numerous countries are being considered for the meeting, but would Peace House/Freedom House, on the Border of North & South Korea, be a more Representative, Important and Lasting site than a third party country? Just asking!" Trump tweeted.

The Peace House in Panmunjom, the truce village in the Demilitarised Zone that separates the two Koreas, was where Kim and South Korean President

Moon Jae-in met on Friday for a historic summit. Kim, the first North Korean leader to set foot in the South since the 1953 armistice that halted the Korean War, walked with Moon to the Peace House on the southern side of the border for their meeting.

Preparations for a Trump-Kim summit have gathered momentum since the summit, which saw North and South Korea promise to pursue the complete denuclearization of the peninsula and a permanent peace.

# Manila names 'narco' officials ahead of polls

**AFP**

**MANILA:** The Philippines yesterday released the names of over 200 local elected officials with alleged links to drugs, rejecting concerns it amounted to a "hit list" in President Rodrigo Duterte's deadly narcotics crackdown.

The names were made public on Duterte's orders two weeks ahead of local polls in a nation where electoral campaigns often result in bloody violence.

"The disclosure of the names of barangay (district) officials involved in the illegal drugs business is first and foremost a direct order from President Rodrigo Duterte," Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency chief Aaron Aquino told reporters.

Authorities said the list was



Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Director, Aaron Aquino (left), and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary, Eduardo Ano (right), hold lists of alleged politicians involved in drugs at PDEA Headquarters in Manila, yesterday.

a way to name and shame the 207 officials as the May 14 local elections approach, but rights

advocates said it could amount to an incitement to kill. "These lists subvert due

# Malaysia convicts first person under fake news law

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A Malaysian court yesterday handed a Danish man a one-week jail term for breaking a law against "fake news", the first person to be punished under the controversial legislation.

The law, passed in early April, makes the deliberate dissemination of false information punishable by up to six years in jail and a hefty fine. It has sparked outrage from rights groups, who believe it is aimed at cracking down on dissent. Salah Salem Saleh Sulaiman, a 46-year-old of Yemeni descent, admitted making and posting on YouTube a video accusing emergency services of responding slowly after a Palestinian Hamas member was gunned down in Kuala Lumpur.

# Freed Thai editor calls for election

**BANGKOK:** The editor of a political magazine who was convicted of insulting Thailand's monarchy said after his release from prison yesterday that he will join public demonstrations to call for elections and an end to military rule. Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, a labor activist, was detained in 2011 for publishing two pseudonymous articles in his now-defunct Voice of Thaksin magazine, which he launched in 2009 to provide news to supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a 2006 military coup.

# Trump can have Nobel Peace Prize: S Korea

**SEOUL:** South Korean President Moon Jae-in yesterday played down the prospect of winning the Nobel Peace Prize for his historic summit with North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Un, saying Donald Trump can have it instead.

"President Trump can take the Nobel prize. All we need to take is peace," Moon said. The US leader's war of words with Kim last year sparked global fears of another conflict on the peninsula once left in ruins by the 1950-53 Korean War.

Trump warned of "fire and fury" against the nuclear-armed North and traded colourful personal insults with Kim, branding him "Rocket Man" while Kim called Trump a "dotard".

process and (are), at best, a form of trial by publicity. At worst, it is a hit list." Carlos Conde, a Filipino campaigner for the US-based monitor Human Rights Watch, said.

Duterte vowed in the 2016 presidential campaign to kill 100,000 criminals to rid the country of the scourge of drugs, and police have since killed more than 4,100 alleged drug dealers and addicts whom they accused of resisting arrest.

Rights groups allege the actual number of dead is at least three times that figure, including those murdered by shadowy vigilantes.

Philippine elections have a history of localised violence that predates the drug war, as some politicians resort to force to eliminate opponents or prevent rival supporters from voting.



# UK Parliament votes to amend Brexit bill

BLOOMBERG

**LONDON:** The UK's upper house sought to make it harder for Prime Minister Theresa May to take Britain out of the European Union without a deal by defeating her for a seventh time over the government's flagship Brexit legislation.

The House of Lords voted 335 to 244 in favour of an amendment to the government's European Union (Withdrawal) Bill to give Parliament a vote before May can walk away from negotiations with the EU without a deal.

It was sponsored by peers across the political spectrum: former Conservative Cabinet minister Douglas Hogg, Labour's Dianne Hayter, William Wallace of the Liberal Democrats, and David Hannay, an independent.

"Whatever the outcome, terms, or no terms, this country's future should be determined by Parliament, ultimately by the House of Commons, and not by ministers," Hogg told peers.



**The House of Lords voted 335 to 244 in favour of an amendment to the government's European Union (Withdrawal) Bill to give Parliament a vote before May can walk away from negotiations with the EU without a deal.**

The defeat is yet another headache for May, coming less than 24 hours after Home Secretary Amber Rudd resigned for "inadvertently" misleading lawmakers over immigration targets — depriving the prime minister of a key ally on Brexit. Brexit Minister Martin Callanan told the Lords that the "true motivations" of many of the amendment's supporters was "thwarting Brexit."

"This amendment will bolster those who wish not to secure the best deal with the EU, but rather who wish to frustrate Brexit altogether," he said.

"It would create a perverse negotiating incentive for the EU to string out negotiations for as long as possible. It is not in the UK's interest to hand the EU negotiators a ticking clock and the hope that the more they delay, the more they can undermine the position of the UK government."

Yesterday's amendment builds on one put forward in the House of Commons by former Attorney General Dominic Grieve, May's sole defeat on the legislation so far in the lower chamber.

A dozen Tory lawmakers — dubbed "mutineers" by the pro-Brexit press — rebelled on that vote, showing there may be appetite in the lower chamber to support the Lords amendment as well.

"We and others seek to ensure our country's future should be determined by



Anti-Brexit protesters demonstrate opposite the Houses of Parliament, in London, Britain, yesterday.

Parliament," Hayter, Hannay and Wallace wrote in the *Independent* newspaper yesterday.

"It seems extraordinary that we should even have to argue that case. Even more so that we should be called mutineers or saboteurs for upholding democratic principles."

Leaving the EU without a deal would mean no protection for UK citizens living in the bloc, no rights for EU citizens living in Britain, a hard border between

Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and "immediate customs duties on the flow of goods," the three peers wrote in the *Independent*. "Any such outcome must be taken by Parliament, not just ministers."

Hogg went even further, saying that without amendment, "Parliament will not have a genuine, meaningful vote" on the Brexit deal.

He argued that Parliament should be able to vote on

whether to leave the EU on May's terms, and if it rejected them, there would be three options: instruct her to renegotiate a new deal, choose to stay in the bloc on current terms, or leave the EU without a deal.

As with May's previous defeats in the upper chamber, the amendment can be overturned when the bill returns to the House of Commons at a date yet to be specified. The earlier amendments include:

## Accused denies sharing Prince George details in 'terror guide'

AP

**LONDON:** An alleged supporter of the IS militant group charged with sharing information about Prince George on social media has denied committing terrorism offenses.

Prosecutors said a post by 32-year-old Husnain Rashid on the encrypted messaging app Telegram contained a photo of the 4-year-old prince, the address of his school, a silhouette of a jihadi fighter and the message "even the royal family will not be left alone."

Rashid also is accused of several other posts allegedly encouraging violent attacks and of researching how to go to Syria to join IS group.

Rashid was arrested on November 22 and charged with preparing terrorist acts, encouraging terrorism and disseminating a terrorist publication.

He denied all the charges during a hearing yesterday at London's Woolwich Crown Court. His trial is due to start May 14.

## Body of 7-year-old boy found in tub; woman arrested

AP

**BERLIN:** A 69-year-old woman is being held in the death of a 7-year-old boy she was looking after in southern Germany.

The child was found dead on Saturday in a bathtub at the woman's home in Kuenzelsau, 38km northeast of Heilbronn.

Police and prosecutors in Heilbronn said yesterday that an initial autopsy showed the boy did not drown, but died as a result of force to the neck.

The woman was arrested on suspicion of manslaughter on Sunday. Local media reports say she had regularly minded the boy for several years.

She hasn't been named in keeping with German privacy laws.

A judge has ordered her held in prison while an investigation continues.



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny during a rally in central Moscow, yesterday.

## Rally in Moscow against Telegram ban

AFP

**MOSCOW:** Thousands rallied yesterday in Moscow in support of Internet freedom after Russian authorities tried to block access to the popular messaging app Telegram in the latest onslaught against dissent under Vladimir Putin.

In an usually strong turnout, at least 8,000 people including top opposition leader Alexei Navalny turned up in the centre of the Russian capital, many holding placards and shouting paper airplanes, the Telegram symbol, a witness said.

A volunteer movement that counts attendees at opposition rallies said more than 10,000 people turned up. Police said 7,500 attended.

Earlier this month, a court ruled to block Telegram in Russia after it refused to give state security services access to private conversations that are normally encrypted.

But in seeking to deny access to Telegram, the state telecoms regulator blocked millions of IP addresses, disrupting the work of many businesses.

Roskomnadzor has failed to fully block Telegram, with Russians turning to VPNs and proxies to bypass the ban.

"Your energy is changing the world," Telegram's maverick founder Pavel Durov wrote on the Russian internet, with the telecoms watchdog saying Facebook could also be blocked if it did not comply with local legislation.

Ahead of the rally he said Russians had a "historic chance"

to prevent the onset of full-blown Internet censorship in Russia.

"Russia is at a crossroads — full-scale censorship has not been introduced yet," the 33-year-old said. "Without action Russia will lose Telegram and other popular services."

Under Putin, who was re-elected for a fourth Kremlin term last month, top television channels and most newspapers have been muzzled, with Internet remaining the only public venue for free self-expression.

But over the past months the authorities have moved in on the Russian internet, with the telecoms watchdog saying Facebook could also be blocked if it did not comply with local legislation.

## UK minister quits over migration scandal

REUTERS

**LONDON:** Britain's interior minister resigned yesterday after Prime Minister Theresa May's government faced an outpouring of indignation over its treatment of some long-term Caribbean residents who were wrongly labelled illegal immigrants.

The loss of one of May's closest allies is a blow as she navigates the final year of negotiations ahead of Britain's exit from the European Union in March 2019. It also deprives the cabinet of one of its most outspoken pro-European members.

In a resignation letter to May, Amber Rudd (pictured) said she had inadvertently misled a parliamentary committee last Wednesday by denying the government had targets for the deportation of illegal migrants. May accepted her resignation.

For two weeks, British ministers have been struggling to explain why some descendants of the so-called "Windrush generation", invited to Britain to plug labour shortages between 1948 and 1971, had been denied basic rights.

The Windrush scandal overshadowed the Commonwealth summit in London and has raised questions about May's six-year stint as interior minister before she became prime minister in the wake of the 2016 Brexit referendum.

"The Windrush scandal has rightly shone a light on an important issue for our



country," Rudd said in a resignation letter to May.

Rudd, who was appointed Home Secretary in 2016, said voters wanted those who had the right to reside in Britain to be treated fairly and humanely but also that illegal immigrants be removed.

The opposition Labour Party, which had repeatedly called on Rudd to resign, said May was responsible and should explain her own role in the government's immigration policies.

"The architect of this crisis, Theresa May, must now step forward to give an immediate, full and honest account of how this inexcusable situation happened on her watch," said Diane Abbott, Labour's spokeswoman on interior affairs.

Abbott called on May to give a statement to the House of Commons explaining whether she knew that Rudd was misleading parliament about the deportation targets.

The government has apologised for the fiasco, promised citizenship and compensation to those affected.

## France & Australia set to discuss defence ties

REUTERS

**PARIS:** French President Emmanuel Macron (pictured) heads to Australia today in hopes of cementing defence ties, pursuing his agenda to boost France's profile beyond Europe in a region where it maintains a string of island territories.

Presidential aides said the military partnership with Australia was becoming crucial at a time of tension in the South China Sea between rival emerging nations, a region that is also a focus of global trade.

France cites its small island territories in the Indian and Pacific oceans in its claims as an Asia-Pacific

regional power.

Macron will be travelling with a delegation of small- and mid-sized military and naval contractors to build on a \$38bn contract France won in 2016 to supply submarines to Australia.

"The idea is to transform this partnership, which made a very impressive jump forward with the submarine contract, into a catalyst to boost trade," an official from Macron's office said.

Australia selected France's DCNS — now called Naval Group — in 2016 as its preferred bidder to build its fleet of 12 submarines, ahead of other offers from Japan and Germany — one

of the world's most lucrative defence contracts.

Macron's trip will be the first strictly bilateral visit by a French president to Australia and comes soon after a three-day visit to Washington, where he flouted his friendship with President Donald Trump while challenging many of his policies, urging the United States to engage more with the world, step up the fight against climate change and stay in the Iran nuclear pact for now.

Macron's time in Australia will also provide plenty of the photo opportunities at iconic sites of which the energetic 40-year-old French leader is fond.



# Nigeria seeks US support in war on Boko Haram

AFP

**WASHINGTON:** Nigeria's fight against the Boko Haram jihadist group was expected to top the agenda in talks between President Donald Trump and Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari, leader of Africa's most populous and wealthiest country.

Buhari became the first leader from sub-Saharan Africa to visit Trump when he arrived at the White House at midday.

As they opened discussions in the Oval Office, Trump said it was important to meet face-to-face, "especially on terrorism and terrorism-related" issues.

"We have a very big trade deal we're working on for military equipment, helicopters and the like," Trump added.

Buhari is seeking support in the battle against Boko Haram extremists, who for nine years have attacked cities and towns in the country's northeast, killing more than 20,000 people in a bloody quest to establish an IS military group.

But Trump said he is also focused on the killings of Christians in Nigeria.

"We've had serious problems



**We have a very big trade deal we're working on for military equipment, helicopters and the like," Trump**

with Christians who have been murdered, killed," Trump said, an apparent reference to the attack on April 24 on a church in central Nigeria, where 18 people, including two priests, were murdered.

"We're going to work on that problem and working on that problem very, very hard," Trump said.

Both security and business were on the menu for discussion.

Buhari wants to seal a deal to buy a dozen A-29 Super Tucano turboprop light attack aircraft for use in the fight against Boko Haram, a deal worth a reported \$496m.

In January 2017, then-president Barack Obama froze the

deal after Nigeria's air force bombed a refugee camp, killing more than 100 people, on a mission against Boko Haram.

Washington is now ready to allow the sale to go forward, officials said. But it has come under scrutiny inside Nigeria, where lawmakers are accusing the president of illegally withdrawing funds to purchase the planes.

Nigeria is also seeking support for its farm and transport sectors. Buhari is scheduled to meet with potential investors in Nigerian farming and food processing.

Amid intensifying competition with China and Europeans for the business of oil-rich Nigeria, officials accompanying Buhari also will be meeting with aviation giant Boeing, according to his office.

On Friday, General Electric announced that an international consortium it leads has signed a deal for a \$2bn project to refurbish Nigeria's narrow-gauge railway.

Trump, meanwhile, has to overcome the hard feelings left by his insulting reference to "shithole countries" in questioning why the US should accept



US President Donald Trump (right) and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari during a meeting in the Oval Office of the White House, in Washington, DC, yesterday.

immigrants from Africa and elsewhere.

The US president also raised eyebrows in March by firing Rex Tillerson as secretary of state while he was visiting Nigeria, in part to prepare the ground for Buhari's visit.

But Trump's receiving Buhari at the White House just after visits by France's Emmanuel Macron and Germany's Angela Merkel is a positive signal, analysts said.

"The fact that the president of Africa's most populous

country is visiting Washington at all may be more important to strengthening the US-Africa relationship than any discussion of policy during the trip," said John Campbell, a former US ambassador in Abuja who is now at the Council of Foreign Relations.

## Asylum seekers denied US entry

AP

**TIJUANA:** After traveling through Mexico with great fanfare for a month under the Trump administration's watchful eye, nearly 200 Central American migrants attempting to seek asylum in the United States were stopped in their tracks when border inspectors

said that a crossing facility didn't have enough space to accommodate them.

President Donald Trump vowed last week to "stop" the caravan while Cabinet members said they would deliver a swift response.

The asylum seekers held firm, setting up a possible showdown.



Migrants wait to be received by US authorities outside "El Chaparral" port of entry to US, in Tijuana, Baja California State, Mexico, yesterday.

In an anticlimactic twist, about 50 asylum seekers were allowed past a gate controlled by Mexican officials to walk across a long bridge but were stopped at the entrance to the US inspection facility at the other end. They were allowed to wait outside the building, technically on Mexican soil, without word of when US officials would let them claim asylum.

Another 50 or so camped on blankets and backpacks in Tijuana outside the Mexican side of the crossing, prohibited from even getting close to the US inspection building.

The asylum-seekers began the day with anticipation, traveling in red-and-white school buses under police escort to a beachfront rally in Tijuana, where a steel fence juts out into the Pacific Ocean.

They sang the Honduran national anthem, and supporters on the San Diego side of the

fence waved a Honduran flag.

After a final briefing from lawyers and minutes before they were to begin a short walk to the border crossing, US Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan announced that the San Ysidro border crossing, the nation's busiest, had "reached capacity" for people without legal documents and that asylum-seekers may need to wait in Mexico temporarily.

Trump has commented frequently on the caravan since it started in Mexico on March 25 near the Guatemala border and headed north to Tijuana. His broadsides came as his administration vowed to end what officials call "legal loopholes" and "catch-and-release" policies that allow people requesting asylum to be released from custody into the US while their claims make their way through the courts, which can take years.

## Human trafficking victims rescued in 13 countries

REUTERS

**BOGOTA:** Hundreds of suspected victims of modern slavery were rescued in a major crackdown on human traffickers in 13 countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America, Interpol said yesterday.

About 350 possible victims of exploitation and forced labour were discovered and 22 people arrested this month in an Interpol-led swoop in nations such as Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Jamaica and Venezuela, the global police organisation said.

Men, women and children were discovered working in nightclubs, farms, mines, factories and open-air markets, having been lured across

borders by traffickers targeting desperate and vulnerable people with promises of a better life, Interpol said.

"What traffickers don't advertise are the working conditions their victims will be subject to once their final destination is reached," Cem Koclu of Interpol said in a statement.

During this operation, we identified women being forced to work out of spaces no bigger than kolcu, for example," added Koclu, the coordinator of its trafficking in human beings unit.

Following the cross-border operation – the culmination of 30 months of preparation – social services and charities conducted interviews and provided support to victims, the agency said.



A file photo of actress Stephanie Clifford with her lawyer Michael Avenatti (right), in Lower Manhattan.

## Actress sues Trump for defamation

AP

**WASHINGTON:** The actress alleging an affair with President Donald Trump is escalating her legal fight, suing the president for defamation.

Stormy Daniels filed the complaint in federal court in New York yesterday. At issue is a tweet Trump made in which he dismissed a composite sketch that Daniels said depicted a man who threatened her in 2011 to stay quiet about her alleged sexual encounter with Trump.

In the tweet earlier in April, Trump said: "A sketch years later about a nonexistent man. A total con job, playing the Fake News Media for Fools (but they know it!)"

The filing said the tweet was "false and defamatory," arguing that Trump was speaking about Daniels and that he "knew that his false, disparaging statement would be read by people around the world, as well as widely reported." It also said that Daniels has been "exposed to death threats and other threats of physical violence."

Daniels, whose legal name is Stephanie Clifford, is seeking a jury trial and unspecified damages. Her attorney Michael Avenatti said yesterday: "We intend on teaching Mr. Trump that you cannot simply make things up about someone and disseminate them without serious consequences."

The lawsuit is the latest legal move from Daniels, who already is suing to be released from a non-disclosure deal she agreed to days before the 2016 election in exchange for \$130,000.

## Arizona wildfire forces evacuation of communities

AP

**CLINTS WELL:** A wildfire in north-central Arizona continues to grow and has burned an unknown number of structures as firefighters expect that winds and dry conditions may help it increase in size.

The US Forest Service said in an update yesterday on its incident information management system website the blaze grew to 34.9sqkm as authorities work to evacuate residents and protect homes near Clints Well.

Residents of 10 small nearby communities were ordered to evacuate yesterday.

Strong southwest winds will continue to be a problem until today while around 510 firefighters and 13 crews specialising in containing wildfires work to slow the fire's path in the Coconino National Forest.

Officials said an unknown number of structures have been damaged and it is not known how many people have been evacuated. The blaze currently is 0 percent contained.

The wildfire's cause is under investigation.

## Toronto holds vigil after van attack

AFP

**TORONTO:** Thousands gathered at a vigil yesterday paying tribute to 10 people mowed down by a van in downtown Toronto last week.

Ten candles, sheltered from the wind by tealight holders, were placed on a stage in memory of the eight women and two men struck by a rental van driven by Alek Minassian last Monday.

The victims, who ranged in age from 22 to 94, were killed when the suspect drove along a

sidewalk in the north end of Canada's largest city. Sixteen others were injured.

"Love for all, hatred for none," was the message seen on large posters and blue T-shirts in the crowd, which included Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Governor General of Canada, Julie Payette – representing Queen Elizabeth II – Toronto's Mayor John Tory and provincial heads of government also stood in the crowd, anonymous.

"Our sorrows are reflected

in the eyes of the stranger beside to us. We stand together," said Reverend Alexa Gilmore of the Windermere United Church, opening the somber event, which saw representatives from each of Toronto's diverse range of religious communities offer tribute.

"Toronto has felt the pain of other cities," affected by vehicle ramming attacks, such as London, Paris and Berlin, said Rabbi Baruch Frydman.

The victims' names were recited, with white roses placed by each candle in their memory.



People attending a vigil for the victims of Monday's van attack, in Toronto, Canada, yesterday.



Food fest reflects rich Philippine culture: Envoy

RAYNALD C RIVERA  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The week-long Philippine Food Festival which launched on Sunday at The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa is a rare treat to tantalise the taste buds of adventurous foodies in Doha with wide-ranging authentic Filipino cuisine on offer.

The food fest takes foodies on a culinary journey around the Philippines featuring well-known Filipino Chef Michelle Adrilana who brought a slice of the Philippines for people to savour through Filipino specialities on offer at Seasonal Tastes Restaurant.

From popular street food such as the ubiquitous Kwek Kwek, fish balls and Dinamita to varieties of Pares, Adobo, Sinigang and Ginataan, the festival is a feast to a wide range of tastes, not to mention an array of Filipino staple food rice cooked in different styles

The food festival runs until May 5 at Seasonal Tastes Restaurant at The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa.

using unique ingredients, a profusion of meat, seafood and poultry dishes as well as sumptuous Filipino desserts.

Adding to the festive ambience, the restaurant was decked out with colourful iconic symbols that depict Philippine culture and tradition. Officially launching the food festival, Philippine Ambassador to Qatar Alan L Timbayan underscored the rich culture of the Philippines reflected through its cuisine whose diversity of flavours reveal varied influences from centuries of interactions with other cultures.

"Tonight, we wish to share with you the rich history, arts, culture, tradition and music of

the Philippines through our cuisine. It is a celebration of the vibrant life of the Filipinos and showcases the connectivity of our country's history to the rest of the world through the infusion of Malay, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and American flavours in our food," said the envoy.

He also stressed that food is an essential element of Filipino life and a highlight of celebrations and festivals across the Philippines.

"Filipinos celebrate the important events and milestones in life through our culinary expressions as well as colourful festivals celebrated in the different regions of the country. Through this project, we hope to share with you bits and pieces of our country through the expression of our food," he said.

Ambassador Timbayan, along with Ammar Samad, hotel manager of The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa, and Chef



Alan L Timbayan (second left), Ambassador of the Philippines to Qatar, cutting a ribbon with Ammar Samad (third right), Hotel Manager, The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa; Chef Michelle Adrilana (second right), and other guests during the opening of the Philippine Food Festival at Seasonal Tastes Restaurant at The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa on Sunday.  
PIC: ABDUL BASIT / THE PENINSULA

Michelle opened the festival. Officials of other diplomatic missions including Thailand, Vietnam and Brunei were among the guests at the launch event which also featured live

entertainment. The food festival, presented in cooperation with the Philippine Embassy, runs until May 5 at Seasonal Tastes Restaurant at The Westin Doha Hotel & Spa.

QA sponsors Al Noor Institute musical performance

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Airways was the sponsor of the annual Al Noor Institute Musical Performance and Graduation Ceremony at the Qatar National Theatre, yesterday.

The event saw stunning performances by 20 of Al Noor Institute's most talented students, who performed in front of the Institute's graduating students and hundreds of members of the local community. The musical performance saw students showcasing their national pride and loyalty to Qatar. The performance was attended by the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs H E Dr Issa bin Saad Al Jafali Al Nuaimi and marked the 2018 annual graduation of the students of Al Noor Institute for the Visually Impaired.

Qatar Airways and Sasol were the main sponsors

of the graduation ceremony and musical performance. During the ceremony, a number of partners including Qatar Airways were recognised for their support. Qatar Airways Senior Vice-President Human Resources, Nabeela Fakhri, received a token of appreciation from Al Noor Institute. It was handed over by H E Dr. Issa Al Nuaimi. Nabeela Fakhri, said: "Qatar Airways is proud to sponsor this inspiring event by Al Noor Institute and to support its students. We would like to congratulate the talented performers and the graduating class and look forward to seeing their future achievements in our country. As the national carrier

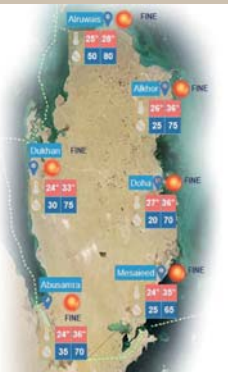


The students of Al Noor Institute perform during the event.

of the State of Qatar, we are proud advocates of social and humanitarian initiatives, and we follow our duty and responsibility to support and enrich the local community that we serve. We are delighted to work closely with Al Noor Institute and trust that this event will further build awareness and appreciation for their hard work and impact in Qatar."

PRAYER TIMINGS			
FAJR	03.37 AM		
SHOROOK	04.58 AM		
ZUHR	11.31 AM	MAGRIB	06.06 PM
ASR	03.00 PM	ISHA	07.36 PM

WEATHER TODAY



27°C | 35°C  
Minimum | Maximum

Relatively hot daytime with slight dust at places and some scattered clouds at times.

HIGH TIDE 05:00 - 18:30 LOW TIDE 11:15 \*\*\*\*  
Courtesy: Qatar Meteorology Department

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BREAK TIME

CROSSWORD ACROSS 1 Comic Jay 5 Antlered animal 8 "Shool" 12 Maffly of baseball 13 Six, in Sicily 14 Docile 15 Penny 16 Male cat 17 Europe's neighbor 18 Change gradually 20 Rowboat needs 22 Like some Jersey 26 Regarding 29 Guest's bed 30 Mangy mutt 31 Diner employee 32 — Moines 33 Tom Joad, for one 34 Capote nickname DOWN 1 Lingerie trim 2 Hgt. 3 Taboo 4 Forecast 5 Laundry of cosmetics 6 Zodiac feline 7 Geisha's garments 8 Fab Four drummer 9 Long clerical vest-ments 10 "Blue?" 11 Afternoon social section 19 Tivo precursor 21 Astern 23 Bitter Paris 24 Night, in Paris 25 "— chiel!" 26 Per- forms 28 Number of lines in a sonnet 32 Visionary 33 Bay Area city 35 Heart chart (Abbr.) 36 TV type 38 Hawk-eye 39 Super-market section 42 Com-poser Stravinsky 43 Astro-nauts' org. 44 Earl— tea 45 Big shot 46 White House nickname 48 PC name

NOVO Pearl Qatar Rampage (2D/Action) 10:30am, 12:15, 2:30, 4:45, 7:00, 9:15 & 11:30pm Avengers: Infinity War (2D) 10:20, 10:30, 11:00am, 12:30, 1:30, 1:45, 2:00, 2:15, 4:00, 4:40, 5:00, 5:30, 7:30, 7:50, 8:00, 8:15, 8:30, 8:45, 11:00, 11:15, 11:20, 11:30, 11:45, 11:50pm 3D 11:20am, 2:30, 5:40pm & 12:00am The Big Bad Fox (2D) 10:00am, 2:00 & 6:00pm Backstabbing For Beginners (2D) 11:45am, 3:45, 7:45, 10:00pm & 12:10am A Quiet Place (2D/Drama) 10:00am, 2:00, 6:00 & 10:00pm Truth Or Dare (2D/Horror) 12:00noon, 4:00, 8:00pm & 12:00midnight Avengers: Infinity War (3D/IMAX) 11:20am, 2:30, 5:40, 8:50pm & 12:00midnight

MALL Avengers: Infinity War (2D/Action) 11:30am, 2:00, 3:30, 4:45, 5:30, 6:15, 7:30, 9:00 & 11:30pm Mohanal (2D/Malayalam) 8:30pm Here Comes The Grump (Animation) 12:15, 2:00 & 3:45pm The Big Bad Fox And The Other Tales (2D/Animation) 2:00pm Diya (2D/Tamil) 11:45pm Finding Your Feet (2D/Comedy) 12:00noon & 12:00midnight Backstabbing For Beginners (2D/Drama) 10:15pm

LANDMARK Mohanal (2D/Malayalam) 2:15 & 8:45pm The Big Bad Fox And The Other Tales (2D/Animation) 2:30 & 5:15pm Here Comes The Grump (Animation) 2:15, 4:00 & 7:00pm Avengers: Infinity War (2D/Action) 4:15, 5:45, 6:45, 8:30 & 11:55pm Truth Or Dare (Thriller) 9:30 & 11:30pm Diya (2D/Tamil) 2:15 & 11:30pm

FLIK Mirqab A Quiet Place 11:00am Avengers: Infinity War 10:40, 11:45am, 12:30, 1:45, 4:40, 5:35, 7:35, 9:40, 10:30, 11:50am, 12:10pm 2:40, 3:25, 6:20, 8:30, 9:15 & 11:25pm Backstabbing For Beginner 2:40, 5:00, 7:15 & 9:10pm Here Comes The Grump 3:35 & 6:15pm Masha And The Bear 11:40am, 5:35 & 7:25pm Mohanal 11:40am, 3:00, 6:20, 9:40, 11:25pm & 12:35am Peter Rabbit 10:30am, 1:30, 3:00 & 4:15pm Rampage 11:20am, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:20 & 10:35pm

CRYPTOQUIP Y ULHV L FVTBYBLE, WKPEQZ TPCFABWYYP Q KP ELKYPQ VHYENKUYQZ PAK, NPA CZYUK WLN Y LBPBK L BPK. Yesterday's Cryptopig: DIALECT THAT FOLKS COULD USE IF THEY TALK ARTICULATLY IN FRONT OF A GROUP: SPEAKINGISE. Today's Cryptopig Chef: F equals P

ROYAL PLAZA The Big Bad Fox And The Other Tales (2D/Animation) 2:00pm Here Comes The Grump (Animation) 2:15 & 6:30pm Avengers: Infinity War (2D/Action) 2:00, 3:45, 5:30, 8:15 & 11:00pm Mohanal (2D/Malayalam) 4:30 & 11:00pm Masha & The Bear 4:00pm Rampage (2D/Action) 5:00 & 9:00pm Diya (2D/Tamil) 8:15pm Backstabbing For Beginners (2D/Drama) 7:30pm Finding Your Feet (2D/Comedy) 9:30pm Truth Or Dare (2D/Thriller) 11:30pm

ASIAN TOWN Bharat Ane Nanu (Telugu) 7:00pm Parul (2D/Malayalam) 10:00pm Diya (Tamil) 6:15 & 11:55pm Mohanal (2D/Malayalam) 6:00, 7:00, 9:00 & 12:00midnight Kuttanadan Marappa (Malayalam) 8:30pm Sudani From Nigeria 01:00am

ROXY Here Comes The Grump (Animation) 10:30am, 12:45, 3:00 & 5:15pm Avengers: Infinity War (2D/Action) 10:30am, 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 7:30, 10:00 & 11:00pm Mohanal (Malayalam) 10:30am, 1:45, 5:00, 6:15 & 9:30pm Diya (2D/Tamil) 10:30am, 12:40, 2:50 & 7:30pm Rampage (Action) 5:00 & 9:40pm

AL KHOR Avengers: Infinity War (Action) 10:45, 11:45am, 1:45, 2:45, 4:45, 5:45, 7:45, 8:45, 10:45 & 11:45pm Mohanal (2D/Malayalam) 12:15, 5:45 & 11:15pm Diya (2D/Tamil) 3:30 & 9:00pm

Note: Programme is subject to change without prior notice.



A family is forced to live in silence while hiding from creatures that hunt by sound.

VILLAGGIO & CITY CENTER SEE IT FIRST IN GULF MALL NEW FINDING FEET HERE COMES THE GRUMP THE BIG BAD FOX AND THE OTHER TALES THE AVENGERS INFINITY WAR SEE IT FIRST IN MALL, 3D, 3D+IMAX, 3D+4D

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